Perceptions of Victim Credibility in Child Sexual Assault Cases

By

Ashmyra Voogt BAppSc(Psych)(Hons)

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Psychology (Forensic)

Deakin University

July 2017
I am the author of the thesis entitled

Perceptions of victim credibility in child sexual assault cases

submitted for the degree of Doctor of Psychology (Forensic)

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List of Publications


# Authorship Statements

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The HDR thesis author was the main researcher and writer of the paper. The author refined search criteria, reviewed articles, synthesised findings, drafted, revised, finalised and submitted the paper.

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I am forever indebted to the many people who supported and encouraged me throughout by candidature. First and foremost, I would like to thank my primary supervisor Dr Bianca Klettke. Thank you for taking a chance on a disillusioned student nearing the end of her first year and for providing the praise and enthusiasm that I needed, not only at that time, but throughout my degree. Your good-natured, passionate and (typically German) directive nature provided me with the space to grow both academically and clinically. Thank you for challenging me, supporting me and encouraging me to be the best version of myself. For all the laughs we shared and the disagreements we had, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

To my associate supervisor and co-author Professor Donald Thomson, thank you for your understanding and for all your words of wisdom. Thank you also for your insightful feedback on drafts and for always having a hilarious anecdote to share. To my associate supervisor and co-author Dr Mohammadreza Mohebbi, thank you for your assistance with statistical analyses, your patience in explaining complex statistical procedures and for all your constructive feedback on drafts. To my co-author Professor Angela Crossman, thank you for your invaluable feedback and encouragement with publications. It has been a pleasure to work with you – I hope one day we can meet! Thank you also to Dr Belinda Guadagno for all your assistance throughout my candidature. From providing feedback on my work, to being a friendly ear to ventilate frustrations, I am forever grateful. A special thanks is due also to Luke Barisic for the development and management of the online survey. Thank you for putting up with my constant nagging and for keeping me informed of
the progress of participant recruitment, although I think we’re even – you know what you did!

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Abstract

The Impact of Extra-legal Factors on Perceived Credibility of Child Victims of Sexual Assault

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Victim Gender

Defendant Gender

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Materials

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<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANOVA</td>
<td>Analysis of Variance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>Coefficient of Determination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFA</td>
<td>Confirmatory Factor Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFI</td>
<td>Comparative Fitness Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSA</td>
<td>Child Sexual Assault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSAVCS</td>
<td>Child Sexual Assault Victim Credibility Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSD</td>
<td>Honest Significant Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMSEA</td>
<td>Root Mean Square Error of Approximation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRISMA</td>
<td>Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRMR</td>
<td>Standardised Root Mean Squared Residual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLI</td>
<td>Tucker Lewis Index</td>
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</table>
Abstract

Child sexual assault (CSA) is a global issue affecting at least 12% of all children, often resulting in life-long impacts including the development of serious mental health problems. CSA also has one of the lowest conviction rates, which can be attributed to a lack of perceived credibility of victims. This thesis explores the constructs and measurement of lay perceptions of credibility and investigates the impact of extra-legal factors such as age and gender on perceptions of credibility. The thesis is presented in the order of four manuscripts, comprising two published papers and two papers currently under peer revision. The first publication is a systematic review of the impact of victim and perceiver gender on perceived credibility, concluding that overall females rate victim credibility higher than do males, and that credibility does not appear to be impacted by the gender of the victim. The review highlights the lack of consistent measure of credibility, which, in turn, motivated papers two and three. Publication two proposes a conceptual model of perceived credibility, based on a thematic analysis of the retained articles in publication one. This conceptual model encompasses the five domains of accuracy, believability, competency, reliability and truthfulness. Based on this five-factor model, the Child Sexual Assault Victim Credibility Scale (CSAVCS) was developed and is evaluated in paper three (under review). The evaluation confirms the five-factor model, and demonstrates strong internal reliability and content validity of the CSAVCS. Paper four (under review) utilises the CSAVCS to examine the impact of victim age and gender, as well as perpetrator gender on perceived credibility. Results demonstrate that 5- and 10-year-old victims were rated as more accurate, believable,
competent, reliable and truthful than 15-year-old victims. Victims were rated as more accurate and truthful when the defendant was male than female, however main effects for accuracy and truthfulness were qualified by three-way interaction effects. In addition, male victims were rated as more competent than female victims. The CSAVCS accounted for 42% of variance in guilt ratings, with truthfulness emerging as the strongest predictor of perceived guilt ratings.
Chapter 1. Thesis Overview

Thesis Structure

This thesis begins with an overview of the background research regarding the prevalence and harms caused by child sexual assault, as well as the difficulties encountered in the prosecution of such cases, emphasising the importance of research in this area. The concept of credibility as it relates to the perception of victims is introduced, highlighting the varying conceptual understanding of this construct, and the effects of extra-legal factors are explored. The thesis is then presented in the format of four independent, but related, manuscripts.

Publication one systematically reviews the previous research that has explored the impact of victim and perceiver gender on perceptions of victim credibility in cases of child sexual assault. Publication two explores the measures of credibility included in the retained articles of publication one and utilises a thematic analysis to provide a conceptual framework of credibility encompassing the five domains of accuracy, believability, competency, reliability and truthfulness. These domains are defined and the proposed model is then evaluated in manuscript three (under review).

Manuscript three used a two-phase approach to develop a new instrument to measure perceived credibility. Phase one was a pilot study exploring the internal reliability of the model, while phase two used a confirmatory approach to explore the psychometric properties of the new tool. Following model respecification the five-factor Child Sexual Assault Victim Credibility Scale (CSAVCS) was confirmed.

The fourth manuscript (under review) explores the impact of victim age and gender, as well as defendant gender across the five domains of the CSAVCS. The
paper also investigates which of these domains is the best predictor of perceived guilt of the defendant. The thesis concludes with a discussion of the implications of the research and makes specific recommendations for future research.

**Rationale and Contribution to the Field of Research**

While previous research has investigated factors that influence perceived victim credibility, results have been, to some degree, contradictory and the ability to draw definitive conclusions has been hindered by substantial limitations present in the existing research. The perceived credibility of child victims has been poorly defined and measured in previous research studies. In addition, the majority of studies have been conducted based predominantly on undergraduate student samples. In addition, while it is acknowledged that the majority of CSA cases involve female victims and male defendants (ABS, 2014), there has also been a lack of research pertaining to same sex relationships and those involving male victims and female defendants.

Further, courtroom outcomes of CSA cases are impacted by misconceptions and biases held by potential jurors. In particular, factors such as age and gender can have considerable influence over perceptions of victim credibility. Understanding these differences, and why they exist, has important implications in terms of understanding how best to address the impact of extra-legal factors, ultimately improving outcomes in CSA cases. However, the variability in understanding and lack of standardised measure of perceived victim credibility limits the conclusions that can be drawn from the research conducted to date.
This thesis provides the first step in evaluating a new scale for perceived victim credibility in CSA cases, the CSAVCS, and establishes the reliability and validity of this theoretically driven and multidimensional model of credibility. Given the nature of previous research, it is imperative that there is a consistent measurement of perceived victim credibility in order for comparisons to be made between studies. The development and validation of this multi-dimensional measure of credibility (the CSAVCS) thus provides a unique and substantial contribution to the field. This scale assists how future research in this area is conducted, and enables for a more consistent approach to be used.

As such, the aims of the current thesis are as follows:

1) To systematically review the research pertaining to the impact of 2 extra-legal factors on credibility: perceiver gender and victim gender.

2) On the basis of the findings of the review, to develop and validate a multi-dimensional scale to measure perceived victim credibility in child sexual assault cases;

3) To explore the impact of extra-legal factors on perceived credibility, utilising a multi-dimensional scale;

4) To extend research using participants from the general public and exploring all victim-defendant gender dyads.
Chapter 2. Background

Child Sexual Assault

Definitions of CSA vary greatly between jurisdictions and between past research studies. For the purpose of this thesis, CSA will be defined in line with Victorian legislation, which includes any indecent act, penetrative or otherwise, with a child under the age of 16, and any indecent act with a child aged 16-17 and where the child is under the care, supervision or authority of the perpetrator (Crimes Act 1958, ss45-49). What is of note is that a child cannot legally give consent, such that even explicit verbal consent on behalf of the victim is not a defence, as the child is assumed to be unable to understand the nature of consent or is in a position of vulnerability.

Prevalence research estimates that approximately 12% of all children globally are victims of CSA (Stoltenborgh, van IJzendoorn, Euser & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2011). Specifically, within Australia, male children have a prevalence rate of 4-8% for penetrative and 12-16% for non-penetrative offences (Price-Robertson, Bromfield & Vassallo, 2010). For female children in Australia, who are reported to be at greatest risk of victimization, these prevalence estimates increase to 7-12% and 23-36% respectively (Price-Robertson et al., 2010). While there are many potential reasons why the prevalence rate for female victims is higher than that for male victims, including methodological and reporting issues, these are prevalent and concerning statistics.

CSA has long-term impacts on children’s development, having considerable influence on their early attachment systems, shaping their adult relationships and
functioning, as well as their core beliefs about themselves and the world (Aspelmeier, Elliott & Smith, 2007). Indeed, a vast array of research studies indicate that children who experience sexual victimisation are more likely to develop mental health disorders in adulthood such as Borderline Personality Disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Substance Abuse Disorders and Major Depressive Disorder. For a more comprehensive review of the wide-ranging and pervasive effects of CSA and sexual assault more broadly please see Dworkin, Menon, Bystrynski and Allen (2017), Maniglio (2009), or Mullers and Dowling (2008).

Compounding these impacts for CSA victims, is that if a case successfully reaches court, victims often experience ongoing emotional distress when providing witness testimony (Goodman et al., 1992). The successful prosecution of child sexual assault cases has far-reaching consequences including community protection and deterrence, as well as providing victims with a sense of retribution, and validation from the justice system. However, it is important that the potential negative effects on the victim are taken into consideration when determining whether a child provides evidence at court and whether a case continues through to trial.

Despite the high prevalence of CSA and the significant impact for victims and cost to society, very few cases result in a conviction for the offender. Indeed, of all cases that are initially brought to the attention of law enforcement within Australia, only 8-16% result in a conviction of the alleged perpetrator (Fitzgerald, 2006; Wundersitz, 2003). Attrition of child sexual assault cases occurs throughout the criminal justice system, with a key attrition point occurring during the court process (Fitzgerald, 2006; Taylor, 2007; Wundersitz, 2003). One explanation is that child
sexual assault cases are characterised by being based on little available medical evidence, and often no corroborating witnesses. Consequently, jurors are left to base their decision largely on the testimony of the victim and defendant (Bottoms, Golding, Stevenson & Yozwiak, 2007). Due to the adversarial system, offences of this nature often involve two parties pitted against each other, and thus the perceived credibility of these witnesses becomes a crucial issue. Specifically, the perceived credibility of the victim has been shown to have a direct effect on perceived guilt, with an increase in perceived victim credibility demonstrating a concomitant increase in perceived defendant guilt (Myers, Redlich, Goodman, Prizmich and Imwinkelried, 1999; Wessel, Eilertsen, Langnes, Magnusen & Melinder, 2016). The strength of this relationship however, varies greatly between studies with research demonstrating a correlation of anywhere between .34 to .79, and may depend on the specific case characteristics and the domain of credibility under investigation (Bottoms and Goodman, 1994; McCauley and Parker, 2001). As credibility plays such a critical role in the prosecution and outcomes of CSA allegations, it is important to understand the factors that influence the perceived credibility of child victims.

The current thesis focuses specifically on perceptions of decision makers in the criminal justice system, most particularly that of jurors’ perceptions of victim credibility. It is acknowledged that perceptions of other professionals including that of judges, police officers, attorneys, child protection workers, health care providers and teachers, as well as the perception of family members can also have important consequences for victims. These roles and relationships may have main effects and/or
interactive effects on court outcomes, however investigation of these relationships was beyond the scope of the current thesis.

**Credibility**

Approaches to the conceptualisation of credibility have varied and while for many years researchers have suggested that credibility might be a multi-faceted construct, there has been considerable disagreement regarding what these domains encompass. Early social psychological research proposed that credibility is a two-factor construct consisting of competency (cognitive ability) and honesty (truthfulness) (Ross, Dunning, Toglia & Ceci, 1990; Ross, Jurden, Lindsay & Kenney, 2003). However, in many legal jurisdictions competency is a distinct construct to that of credibility. Specifically, while competency is a question for the court in deciding whether a witness can take the stand, credibility is a question for the jury (Evidence Act 2008, s13). More recently, credibility has been conceptualised as consisting of five domains: reliability, accuracy, credibility, truthfulness and believability (Pozzulo, Dempsey, Maeder & Allen, 2010). Truthfulness refers to the witness’ honesty in recounting events, whereas accuracy refers to the consistency with what actually occurred (Pozzulo et al., 2010). That is, it is possible that a witness can be truthful, but honestly mistaken and thus not accurate. Reliability refers to the dependability of evidence, in that there is consistency within the witness’ testimony, while believability refers to the witness’ willingness to lie and credibility refers to the likelihood that the witness is telling the truth as they understand it (Pozzulo et al.). In sum, credibility is not a tangible or directly observable variable, but a construct that jurors perceive or infer based on the testimony provided. Despite
considerable research interest, there remains no clear and consistent definition or understanding of the domains of credibility.

**Extra-legal Factors**

Criminal trials, in particular those relating to child sexual assault, tend to be adversarial, often involving the provision of contradictory or incomplete information. Ideally, jurors’ decision-making should be based solely on the evidence provided at trial. However, given the limited medical evidence commonly available, there is considerable scope for jurors’ decisions to be influenced by misconceptions, biases or personal beliefs (Bottoms, Golding, Stevenson & Yozwiak, 2007). Such ‘extralegal’ factors lie outside the scope of the law and should not influence the perception of the victim’s credibility. Yet jurors are often left to make decisions in these cases with minimal guidance and extant research indicates considerable misconceptions amongst jurors regarding the reliability of child victim’s memory (Coyle, 2013; Goodman-Delahunty, Nolan, & Van Gijn-Grosvenor, 2017). As such it is important to understand the factors that impact perceived credibility of child victims with the view to addressing such low conviction rates in cases of CSA. The thesis will now provide a published systematic review of past research exploring the impact of two such extra-legal factors on the perceived credibility of child victims of sexual assault – that of perceiver gender and victim gender.
Chapter 3. The Effect of Gender on Perceptions of Credibility in Child Sexual Assault Cases: A Systematic Review¹

[This article can be accessed online through the Journal of Child Sexual Abuse]

¹ This study has been published in a peer-reviewed journal. The full reference is Voogt, A., & Klettke, B. (2017). The effect of gender on perceptions of credibility in child sexual assault cases: A systematic review. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 26(2), 195-212.
Chapter 4. Measurement of Perceived Victim Credibility

The previous paper concludes that females may rate victim credibility higher than do males and that victim gender does not appear to influence perceptions of credibility. However considerable methodological limitations are noted in the existing research making definitive conclusions difficult. Furthermore, it is possible that the influence of extra-legal factors such as victim and perceiver gender is dependent on which of the sub-constructs is under investigation. The review highlights various sub-constructs that have been used to measure credibility, however, there is a considerable lack of consistency in the approach taken to the measurement of credibility.

Of the studies retained in the systematic review paper in chapter three, 12 studies measured credibility via victim believability. It is noteworthy that all of these studies used a single item measure asking participants to rate, for example ‘the believability of the victim’s testimony’ (Allen & Nightingale, 1997). Similarly, 10 studies measured credibility via victim truthfulness, with eight of these 10 studies using a single item measure asking participants to rate for example how truthful the disclosure of the child was (Bornstein, Kaplan & Perry, 2007). The remaining two studies used two separate items, one relating to the victim telling the truth and one relating to the defendant telling the truth, with these items subsequently combined. Three studies measured victim honesty, out of which two used a single item measure. The final study used principal component analysis, which revealed that three items loaded onto one factor, which was subsequently interpreted as ‘victim honesty’ (Davies & Rogers, 2009). Similarly, three studies measured victim reliability and
three studies measured victim accuracy, all of which utilised single item measures asking participants to rate for example ‘how reliable do you find the alleged victim’s testimony?’ (Pozzulo et al., 2010). A further study measured victim trust, using a Q-sort technique, assessing whether ‘s/he is trusted by adults’ (Nunez et al., 2011). Finally, 10 studies measured victim credibility directly by measuring ‘credibility’, with three of these using a single item measure and two studies using multiple items, which were either summed or averaged to obtain a single credibility score. The remaining five studies used factor analysis to extract clusters of items pertaining to credibility. Thus, out of all studies investigating victim credibility, approximately 76% of measures (32/42) were scored based on a single item.

What became apparent from this review, is that firstly, there is no standardised measure of perceived victim credibility. Available research, up to this point, is often inconsistent in its definition and measurement of credibility, with terms such as believability, truthfulness and credibility being used interchangeably. Despite this confusion in terminology, definitions are rarely provided to participants, who are left to base their decisions on their own interpretation when responding to attitudinal items. It should be emphasised that credibility is a complex construct and while existing research is inconsistent regarding how many and which domains encompass the overarching construct of credibility, it is apparent that credibility comprises multiple sub-constructs (Pozzulo, Dempsey, Maeder, & Allen, 2010; Ross, Jurden, Lindsay & Kenney, 2003).

Secondly, there has been an overreliance on the use of single item measures of perceived credibility, which is insufficient to measure even a single domain of
credibility and certainly insufficient to measure the complex multi-dimensional construct of credibility. When considering just one domain of credibility, a single item measure asking participants to rate the victim’s ‘reliability’ does not allow for the measurement of internal consistency and thus contains considerable measurement error (Loo, 2002). Furthermore, when considering the multi-dimensional nature of credibility, a single item lacks scope as it can only measure one domain of credibility and thus is unable to account for the complex nature of credibility (Gliem & Gliem, 2003). In order to reduce the effects of error variance, improve reliability of the measurement of credibility and thus to draw comparisons between studies, a multi-item scale should be developed and utilised in future research.

To overcome the identified limitations outlined above, the thesis will now provide a published conceptual paper describing the development of a proposed model of perceived victim credibility based on a review and synthesis of the previous measurement of credibility in studies retained in the systematic review.
Chapter 5. The Development of a Conceptual Model of Perceived Victim
Credibility in Child Sexual Assault Cases²

[This article can be accessed online through the Journal: Psychiatry, Psychology and Law]

² This study has been published online in a peer-reviewed journal. The full reference is Voogt, A., Klettke, B., & Thomson, D. (online publication). The development of a conceptual model of perceived victim credibility in child sexual assault cases. Psychiatry, Psychology and Law. Doi: 10.1080/13218719.2017.1315764.
Chapter 6. Scale Development

The publication outlined in chapter five proposed a five-factor model of perceived victim credibility which was derived from the extant literature included in the systematic review publication provided in chapter three. It is argued that the proposed model is a more comprehensive approach to the conceptualisation of perceived credibility and that future research investigating the factors that underlie perceived credibility should explore each of these domains. Before such definitive conclusions can be drawn, however, it is important to evaluate the proposed model and develop a reliable scale to measure perceived victim credibility, testing the five-factor model proposed in chapter five.

Although a thorough exploration of the influence of victim age on perceptions of credibility was beyond the scope of the systematic review outlined above, previous research has suggested that young child witnesses are viewed as less competent than adults. This observation is based on concerns regarding children’s cognitive abilities such as the reliability of memory, as well as their understanding of the difference between fantasy and reality (Goodman, Golding, Helgeson, Haith & Michelli, 1987). However, given that younger children tend to be viewed as more sexually naïve than older children and consistent with Kohlberg’s theory of moral developmental (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977), young children may also be more likely to be viewed as truthful. Thus, it is possible that a scale measuring ‘child victim credibility’ without considering child age would not be applicable to all age levels. For this reason, the CSAVCS was validated for a 5-10- and 15-year old child. These ages were modeled on previous research exploring 5, 10, 15 and 20-year-old victims, however as the current thesis was
only interested in child victims, a 20-year-old version was not included (Klettke, Hallford & Mellor, 2016).

While it was not possible to include all victim-defendant relationship types and scenarios, the scale evaluation also explored both male and female victim and defendant relationships. Despite considerable increased understanding of the prevalence of CSA cases (ABS, 2014), there has been a paucity of research exploring male victim and female defendant scenarios as well as same sex scenarios.

In order to manipulate the age (5, 10 and 15 years) and gender (male/female) of the child, as well as the gender of the defendant, 12 versions of a trial transcript were created. In all versions of the transcript the defendant was the step-parent of the child, with the child disclosing two incidents of sexual assault when no other witnesses were present. For the 5-year-old version, the language used was changed to maintain plausibility, however the substantive content of the disclosure was the same across all versions. Examples of the trial transcripts utilised in the thesis for papers three and four can be found in Appendix A of the thesis, while the participant instructions and questionnaire can be found in Appendix B of the thesis.

The two-phase scale evaluation study will now be provided, demonstrating the CSA Victim Credibility Scale’s solid psychometric properties. This study has been accepted for publication with the Journal of Interpersonal Violence. As the development of the CSAVCS is based on a review of literature and a conceptual model (as outlined in chapter five), the model is theory driven rather than data driven. For this reason, Confirmatory Factor Analysis was conducted rather than Exploratory Factor Analysis. The analysis and modification of the proposed
model is guided by the recommendations of Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson (2010). This process involved first examining the original fit indices for the proposed model and refining the model based on an examination of the path estimates, standardised residuals and modifications indices. Based on these guidelines, items were deleted, moved to an alternative subscale or correlated with other items until a suitable model was achieved that was both parsimonious and exhibited suitable fit statistics.
Chapter 7. The Development and Validation of the Child Sexual Assault Victim Credibility Scale: An Instrument to Measure Lay Persons’ Perceptions of Victim Credibility

[This article can be accessed online through the Journal of Interpersonal Violence]

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3 This study has been accepted for publication with the Journal of Interpersonal Violence. The full reference is Voogt, A., Klettke, B., & Mohebbi, M. (in press). The development and validation of the Child Sexual Assault Victim Credibility Scale: An instrument to measure lay persons’ perceptions of victim credibility. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence.*
Chapter 8. Extending Research Regarding Extra-legal Factors

The paper outlined in chapter seven confirms that perceived victim credibility is a multidimensional construct and evaluates the Child Sexual Assault Victim Credibility Scale. This scale is a psychometrically comprehensive and consistent measure of perceived victim credibility which may be used in future research. However, in addition to establishing this psychometrically validated scale, it is also known that other factors may influence the perception of victims. For example, publication one reviewed the impact of perceiver gender and victim gender on perceptions of credibility, demonstrating the largely consistent finding that male and female child victims are rated equally credible and that female perceivers rate child victims as more credible than do males. It is important to extend research in this area utilising a multi-faceted tool, to ascertain whether these results hold true across the various domains of credibility and therefore to understand how to address such concerns. In addition, there has been a relative paucity of research exploring same-sex victim-defendant gender dyads, as well as those involving a male victim and a female defendant. Indeed, there are minimal studies available exploring the impact of defendant gender on perceptions of victim credibility.

The manuscript in chapter six also introduces the importance of considering victim age in research regarding perceptions of victim credibility, highlighting inconsistent results. Many studies have demonstrated no difference based on the age of the child, across ratings of credibility, believability, accuracy, reliability and truthfulness (Allen & Nightingale, 1997; Bottoms & Goodman, 1994, Study 2; Castelli, Goodman & Ghetti, 2005; Connolly, Gagnon & Lavoie, 2008; Crowley, O’Callaghan & Ball, 1994; Esnard & Dumas, 2013; Golding, Alexander
& Stewart, 1999; Golding, Fryman, Marsil & Yozwiak, 2003; Golding, Sanchez & Sego, 1997; McCauley & Parker, 2001; Nightingale, 1993; O’Donohue, Elliott, Nickerson & Valentine 1992; Rogers & Davies, 2007; Rogers, Wczasek & Davies, 2011; Schmidt & Brigham, 1996, Study 2). However, several studies have also demonstrated a significant difference in ratings of credibility, such that younger children are viewed as more credible than older children (Bottoms, Davis & Epstein, 2004; Bottoms & Goodman, 1994, Study 1; Brigham, 1998; Gabora, Spanos & Joab, 1993; Golding, Wasarhaley, Lynch, Lippert & Magyarics, 2015; Nunez, Kehn & Wright, 2011; Rogers, Josey & Davies, 2007; Schmidt & Brigham, 1996, Study 1; Tabak & Klettke, 2014).

Research has also demonstrated a difference in the influence of victim age based on which domain of credibility was under investigation. For example, Davies and Rogers (2009) reported no significant difference in ratings of victim credibility, but demonstrated that a five-year-old was seen as more honest than a 10-year-old child, who in turn was seen as more honest than a 15-year-old child. Furthermore, Nunez, Kehn and Wright (2011) demonstrated that, while perceptions of child victims’ reliability and truthfulness increased until approximately age eight before leveling off, perceptions of honesty were more complicated (Nunez et al., 2011). Victim honesty demonstrated a different relationship for male compared to female victims, with peak honesty ratings for females occurring at age 10, while male victims were seen as most honest at age six. It is therefore possible that the relationship between victim age and perceived credibility depends on both which sub-construct is being measured, as well as the gender of the victim.
Understanding the factors that contribute to perceived child witness credibility in sexual assault cases is of considerable importance in terms of achieving a fair trial and improving outcomes in cases of child sexual assault. This thesis will now provide a paper outlining an evaluation of the impact of victim age and gender, as well as defendant gender on perceptions of victim credibility. This paper is currently being considered under peer-review with Child Maltreatment. Although the importance of exploring the impact of perceiver gender across the domains of credibility has been highlighted above, this variable was not retained in the following study due to insufficient sample size, in particular a low number of male participants recruited across the 12 versions of the transcript. This remains a valuable direction for future research.
Chapter 9. The Impact of Extra-legal Factors on Perceived Credibility of Child Victims of Sexual Assault⁴

Abstract
The current study examined the impact of victim age and gender, and perpetrator gender, across five domains of credibility: accuracy, believability, competency, reliability and truthfulness. The study also investigated which of these sub-constructs of credibility is the best predictor of guilt perceptions. Victim age emerged as having the most consistent effect on the domains of credibility, with the 5- and 10-year-old victims rated as more accurate, believable, competent, reliable and truthful than the 15-year-old victim. Victims were rated as more accurate and truthful when the defendant was male compared to when the defendant was female. A significant main effect for victim gender was found for the competency sub-construct, such that male victims were rated as more competent than female victims. Main effects for accuracy and truthfulness, were qualified by three-way interaction effects. The five-factor model of perceived credibility of child victims of sexual assault accounted for 42% of variance in guilt perceptions, with truthfulness emerging as the strongest predictor of guilt. Implications are discussed.

⁴ This study has been submitted for publication to Child Maltreatment and is currently under peer review. The full reference is Voogt, A., Klettke, B., Thomson, D., & Crossman, A. (2017). The impact of extra-legal factors on perceived credibility of child victims of sexual assault. Manuscript submitted for publication.
The Impact of Extralegal Factors on Perceived Credibility of Child Victims of Sexual Assault

The perceived credibility of child witnesses, in particular of alleged victims, is a key consideration in deciding whether there is sufficient evidence to continue with criminal proceedings in child sexual assault cases. Further, the perceived credibility of the complainants in child sexual assault cases has been demonstrated to be directly linked to court outcomes such that the more credibility ascribed to the victim, the more guilt ascribed the defendant (Goodman-Delahunty, Cossins & O’Brien, 2010; Kaufmann, Drevland, Wessel, Overskeid & Magnussen, 2003; Wessel, Eilertsen, Langnes, Magnussen & Melinder, 2016). The strength of this relationship has been found to be moderate between $\beta = 0.44$ to $0.62$ (Bottoms, Davies & Epstein, 2004; Johnson & Shelley, 2014).

Importantly, the strength of this relationship appears influenced by case characteristics, such as the age of the child or the relationship between the victim and the accused. For example, Bottoms and Goodman (1994) reported correlations ranging from .55 for a 10-year-old child, to as high as .79 for a 14-year-old child. Similarly, McCauley and Parker (2001) found a correlation of .34-.35 for a 6-year-old victim and .46-.49 for a 13-year-old child, depending on whether the defendant was an acquaintance or a stranger respectively. However, research has also indicated that the correlations between victim credibility and defendant guilt may depend on the specific domain of credibility under investigation. Myers, Redlich, Goodman, Prizmich and Imwinkelried (1999) illustrate this point, demonstrating a correlation of .59 between perceived victim honesty and guilt ratings, and a correlation of .72 between perceived accuracy and
guilt ratings. Yet there remains little understanding regarding what exactly
credibility is and what factors might influence lay people’s perceptions of victim
credibility.

**Perceived Victim Credibility**

For many years researchers have suggested that credibility is a multi-
faceted construct, however there has been little agreement on the number of facets
and what they might be. Emerging from early social psychological research on
persuasion, a two-factor model for credibility was proposed, consisting of
cognitive ability and honesty (Ross, Dunning, Toglia, & Ceci, 1990; Ross,
Jurden, Lindsay, & Kenney, 2003). Yet, research has not consistently supported
this two-factor model of perceived victim credibility and various measures of
credibility have been used in the literature. For example, Pozzulo, Dempsey,
Maeder and Allen (2010) recently suggested five theoretically driven domains of
credibility including: reliability, accuracy, credibility, truthfulness and
believability. While studies such as this need to be commended for employing a
multi-faceted approach, they are limited by utilising single item measures of each
of these domains. Specifically, very few studies have utilised a multi-
dimensional, multi-item approach to measuring perceived victim credibility and
the factors that may influence it, such as victim age and victim and defendant
gender.

**Victim Age**

Child witnesses are often viewed as less credible than adults based on
concerns regarding children’s cognitive abilities, such as the reliability of
memory, moral reasoning, and understanding of the difference between fantasy
and reality – issues of ‘expertise’ (Goodman, Golding, Helgeson, Haith &
Michelli, 1987). However, previous research investigating the influence of victim age on perceived credibility has been largely inconsistent. Many studies have demonstrated no difference based on the age of the child across ratings of credibility, believability, accuracy, reliability and truthfulness (see for example Connolly, Gagnon & Lavoie, 2008; Esnard & Dumas, 2013; Rogers, Wczasek & Davies, 2011). In contrast, several studies have demonstrated a significant difference in ratings of credibility, such that younger children are viewed as more credible than older children (see for example Bottoms et al., 2004; Golding, Wasarhaley, Lynch, Lippert & Magyarics, 2015; Rogers, Josey & Davies, 2007). More specifically, regardless of offence type, victim-defendant relationship, or type of measurement of credibility, children under 13 years of age are generally rated as more credible than children aged 15 years or older, with a general trend of perceived credibility decreasing with age. However, a recent meta-analysis investigating the effect of victim age on ratings of perceived credibility concluded that the effect size was small and, when averaged across studies, was non-significant (Font, 2013).

However, findings may differ depending on the specific domain of credibility being measured. For example, Brigham (1998) demonstrated that while a four-year-old child was seen as more honest than an 8-year-old, who in turn was seen as more honest than a 13-year-old, the inverse was true for ratings of accuracy. Indeed, the other studies which explicitly explored perceived accuracy of child victims found a non-significant effect for victim age (Connolly et al., 2008; Connolly & Gordon, 2011; Schmidt & Brigham, 1996, Study 2). Similarly, while Connolly and Gordon found no significant age difference in ratings of accuracy or credibility, they found that a five-year-old child was
viewed as more honest than a 13-year-old child. Therefore, there is some suggestion that the impact of victim age varies depending on the domain of credibility, however given the lack of standardised measure of credibility utilised in previous research, it remains difficult to draw unequivocal conclusions.

**Victim Gender**

Greater consistency is demonstrated in research exploring the impact of victim gender on perceptions of victim credibility. The vast majority of studies reveal no significant difference in participants’ ratings of credibility when the victim was male compared to when the victim was female (see Voogt & Klettke, 2017 for a review). Two studies did report significant differences in perceptions of credibility based on the gender of the victim. However, they were contradictory in terms of whether males or females were viewed as more credible, based on the sub-construct used. Bornstein and Muller (2001) found that male victims were rated as more truthful than female victims, while Nunez, Kehn and Wright (2011) reported that female victims were perceived as more trustworthy than male victims. In both studies, however, when participants were asked to rate the victim’s credibility, honesty and reliability, no significant differences were found between male and female victims. It is also important to note that Bornstein and Muller measured victim truthfulness by asking participants to distribute 100% between the response options of ‘deliberately lying’, ‘honestly mistaken’ or ‘telling the truth’. This approach to measuring truthfulness differs from other research studies in this area, which have primarily utilised Likert scales. Likewise, Nunez et al. utilised a Q-sort technique to measure perceptions of credibility and, as such, it is possible that these differences in psychometric approaches may account for the gender differences observed in their studies.
Defendant Gender

Research exploring the impact of defendant gender on perceptions of victim credibility has yielded largely inconsistent results. While some studies suggest no significant impact of defendant gender on perceptions of victim credibility (Esnard & Dumas, 2013; Pozzulo et al., 2010; Quas, Bottoms, Haegerich & Nysse-Carris, 2002), others suggest that victim credibility is higher when the defendant is male than when the defendant is female (Bornstein, Kaplan & Perry, 2007; O’Donohue, Smith & Schewe, 1998; Rogers & Davies, 2007).

Similar to the impact of victim age, it is possible that the specific sub-construct of credibility under investigation accounts for these differences. Specifically, it appears that victims may be seen as more truthful when then defendant is male than when the defendant is female (Bornstein et al., 2007; Bornstein & Muller, 2001; O’Donohue et al., 1998). However, when considering other sub-constructs such as believability, credibility and accuracy, this gender effect is eliminated (Bornstein & Muller; Esnard & Dumas, 2013; Pozzulo et al., 2010). For example, Pozzulo et al. explored multiple sub-constructs including victim truthfulness, accuracy and believability, finding no significant difference based on the gender of the defendant across these sub-constructs. Based on these findings, no definitive conclusions can be drawn.

The Current Study

Previous findings regarding the impact of extra-legal factors on perceived victim credibility must be interpreted with caution given the methodological limitations and measurement variations present (Voogt & Klettke, 2017). Firstly, many studies have utilised single item measures of victim credibility, which can result in considerable measurement error, fail to allow for the measurement of
internal consistency, and lack precision and scope in the measurement of a multifaceted construct (Gliem & Gliem, 2003; Loo, 2002). Furthermore, items included in the measurement of credibility have often been interpreted loosely. For example, while some studies asked participants to rate a child’s believability, this was subsequently interpreted synonymously with credibility (Voogt & Klettke). This may be a partial explanation for some of the inconsistencies in the findings reported above.

Secondly, recent research has shown that witness credibility seems to be a multi-faceted construct (Voogt, Klettke & Mohebbi, 2017), yet few studies have utilised a multi-faceted tool to measure perceived credibility. Voogt et al. (2017) developed the first multi-dimensional, multi-item scale, based on a systematic review of previous measurement of credibility, entitled the Child Sexual Assault Victim Credibility Scale (CSAVCS). This comprehensive scale has demonstrated solid reliability and construct validity and measures the perceived credibility of child victims in cases of sexual assault across five domains: accuracy, believability, competency, reliability and truthfulness. As a result, the current study explores the impact of extra-legal factors, using this empirically-based, standardised and psychometrically sound measure of credibility. Thus, the present study is the first to explore victim age, victim gender and defendant gender simultaneously across a multi-faceted, multi-item scale. Further, no research has previously identified which of these domains or sub-constructs of credibility makes the strongest unique contribution to explaining variability in guilt ratings.

Given the largely inconsistent findings relating to victim age and the relative scarcity of research relating to defendant gender, no a-priori hypotheses are proposed. Instead, the aims of this exploratory research are to investigate the
impact of the extra-legal factors of victim age, victim gender and defendant gender, on the sub-constructs of credibility and to explore the predictive validity of the CSAVCS on perceptions of guilt.

**Methodology**

**Participants.** Participants initially included 273 adult Australian residents. Research has illustrated that proficient readers can comprehensively read between 300 and 600 words per minute (Nuttall, 1996). As the interview transcripts utilised in the study ranged from 1,196 to 1,316 words, this necessitated at least two minutes to comprehensively read a transcript. For this reason, 42 participants were removed from the sample as they spent less than 120 seconds reading the stimulus material. The final sample comprised 231 participants from the general community, consisting of 67 males (29%) and 164 females (71%), ranging between 18 and 77 years of age ($M = 31.67, SD = 12.52$), with three participants not reporting their age. Half (50%) of the participants were between the ages of 18 and 27 years, and 63 participants (27.3%) identified as a parent. 143 participants (61.9%) reporting an undergraduate or post-graduate degree.

**Materials.**

**Interview Transcripts.** Twelve transcripts depicting an interview with a child disclosing sexual abuse were designed for use in the current study. Transcripts were adapted based on a real life forensic interview and were reviewed by two experts in forensic psychology. To ensure consistency between scenarios, in all versions of the transcript, the accused was the step-parent of the child, with the child disclosing two incidents of digital penetration. With a view to explore the impact of extra-legal factors, the transcripts systematically manipulated the age of the victim (5 years of age; 10 years of age; 15 years of
age), the gender of the victim (male; female) and the gender of the accused (male; female). To manipulate the gender of the victim and accused, the transcript directly stated the child’s name, as well as whether the accused was their step-mother or step-father. Anatomical terminology was also changed between transcripts (e.g. ‘vagina’; ‘bum’). In order to manipulate the age of the victim, transcripts clearly outlined the age of the child. For the 5-year-old victim, language used in the transcript remained consistent with that of the 10- and 15-year-old transcripts in terms of the substantive meaning, differing only in terms of the child’s language sophistication, representative of a 5-year-old child.

Child Sexual Assault Victim Credibility Scale. The CSAVCS is a measure of perceived credibility of child victims encompassing the five domains of: accuracy, believability, competency, reliability and truthfulness. The scale comprises 23 items, rated on a 6-point Likert Scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree, with higher scores indicating higher credibility attributed to the victim. Sub-scale scores were computed as the mean score of the items included within the domain. A full list of the CSAVCS items can be found in Appendix A. The scale has been previously evaluated, demonstrating good internal consistency for the five domains, ranging between .78 and .92 (Voogt et al., 2017). In the current study, the Cronbach alpha coefficients for the five domains of credibility were as follows: accuracy = .85; believability = .87; competency = .78; reliability = .82; and truthfulness = .92.

Guilt Rating. Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed that “this adult is guilty”. Ratings were made on a 6-point Likert-type scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 6 = strongly agree, with higher scores indicating more guilt attributed to the defendant.
Procedure. Participants were recruited via email and social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram and Linked-In, as well as through advertisements on Gumtree, Reddit and via fliers distributed at Deakin University, Burwood Campus. Participants were invited to participate in an anonymous online survey exploring decision-making during court cases and were given the opportunity to be placed into the draw to win one of ten $50 shopping vouchers following their participation. The study was conducted online. Participants were provided with the web link to access the plain language statement and provided informed consent by agreeing to proceed to the survey questions that followed. Ethics approval for this study was obtained through a Victorian University Human Research Ethics Committee.

Participants first completed demographic questions such as age, gender and level of education, and were then provided with some brief information regarding court cases for sexual assault. Participants were informed that child witnesses sometimes do not attend court in Victoria, however that evidence they have provided during interviews will often be tendered as evidence in court. Participants were then asked to read an excerpt of an interview with a child disclosing sexual abuse and to answer the questions that followed. Participants were randomly allocated to one of the 12 versions of the interview transcript and then provided with the CSAVCS and guilt ratings. The order of presentation of items was randomised.

Results

Five separate, 2 (defendant gender) X 2 (victim gender) X 3 (victim age) analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted across the domains of accuracy, believability, competency, reliability and truthfulness. Table 1 reports the means
and standard deviations across these domains of credibility for the three independent variables.
## CSA VICTIM CREDIBILITY SCALE

### Table 1

*Mean credibility ratings across victim age, victim gender and defendant gender*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Defendant Gender</th>
<th>5-year-old victim</th>
<th>10-year-old victim</th>
<th>15-year-old victim</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male victim</td>
<td>Female victim</td>
<td>Total</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td></td>
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<td>M (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4.65 (0.36)</td>
<td>4.84 (0.72)</td>
<td>4.75 (0.58)</td>
<td>4.46 (0.91)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4.45 (0.68)</td>
<td>4.22 (0.64)</td>
<td>4.38 (0.66)</td>
<td>4.13 (0.83)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.53 (0.58)</td>
<td>4.60 (0.74)</td>
<td>4.56 (0.65)</td>
<td>4.24 (0.86)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Believability</td>
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<td></td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4.93 (0.51)</td>
<td>5.01 (0.62)</td>
<td>4.98 (0.57)</td>
<td>4.96 (0.57)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4.93 (0.67)</td>
<td>4.84 (0.74)</td>
<td>4.90 (0.68)</td>
<td>4.71 (0.81)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.93 (0.60)</td>
<td>4.95 (0.66)</td>
<td>4.94 (0.62)</td>
<td>4.79 (0.74)</td>
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<td>Competency</td>
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<td></td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>4.65 (0.83)</td>
<td>4.65 (0.65)</td>
<td>4.48 (0.95)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4.46 (0.94)</td>
<td>4.30 (0.71)</td>
<td>4.41 (0.87)</td>
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<td>Sig.</td>
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<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Reliability</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.36)</td>
<td>(0.72)</td>
<td>(0.72)</td>
<td>(0.60)</td>
<td>(1.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Truthfulness</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>4.74</td>
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<tr>
<td>(0.31)</td>
<td>(0.63)</td>
<td>(0.53)</td>
<td>(0.31)</td>
<td>(0.74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td>5.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.74)</td>
<td>(0.70)</td>
<td>(0.64)</td>
<td>(0.74)</td>
<td>(0.70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.53)</td>
<td>(0.76)</td>
<td>(0.64)</td>
<td>(0.71)</td>
<td>(0.53)</td>
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Significant Victim Age (A), Victim Gender (V), Defendant Gender (D) and subsequent interaction effects found at the: *p < .05, **p < .01, and ***p < .001 levels.
**Accuracy.** A three-way between-groups ANOVA was conducted to explore the impact of victim age, victim gender and defendant gender on ratings of victim accuracy, as measured by the accuracy subscale of the CSAVCS. The main effect for victim age was statistically significant, $F(2, 219) = 16.90$, $p < .001$ (partial eta squared = .13). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the 5-year-old victim ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 0.65$) was rated as more accurate than the 10-year-old victim ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 0.88$), who in turn was rated as more accurate than the 15-year-old victim ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 0.87$). The main effect for defendant gender was also statistically significant, $F(1, 219) = 4.22$, $p < .05$ (partial eta squared = .02), with victims rated as more accurate when the defendant was male ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 0.91$) than when the defendant was female ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.85$). These main effects were qualified by a significant three-way victim age X victim gender X defendant gender interaction effect, $F(2, 219) = 3.34$, $p < .05$ (partial eta squared = .03). Figure 1 illustrates this effect.

![Figure 1. Three-way interaction effect for victim accuracy](image-url)
Simple effects analysis revealed that the 5-year-old male victim ($M = 4.53$, $SD = 0.58$) was rated as more accurate than the 15-year-old male victim ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 0.88$), regardless of the gender of the defendant, $F(2, 105) = 627, p < .01$ (partial eta squared = .11). No significant difference was found between the mean accuracy scores for the 5- and 10-year-old male victims or for the 10- and 15-year old male victims. However, a significant interaction effect was found for female victims, $F(2, 114) = 4.29, p < .05$ (partial eta squared = .07), such that when the defendant was also female, the 5-year-old victim ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.64$) and 10-year-old victim ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.76$) were rated as more accurate than the 15-year-old victim ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 0.89$), however when the defendant was male, the 5-year-old victim ($M = 4.84$, $SD = 0.72$) was rated as more accurate than both the 10-year-old ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 1.07$) and 15-year-old victims ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.72$).

**Believability.** A three-way between-groups ANOVA was conducted to explore the impact of victim age, victim gender and defendant gender on ratings of victim believability, as measured by the believability subscale of the CSAVCS. Levene’s Test of equality of error variance was significant, therefore a more stringent significance level of .01 was utilised for evaluating the results. Figure 2 highlights the pattern within the three-way interaction, however this effect was non-significant, $F(2, 219) = 2.73, p = .07$. No significant two-way interaction effects were found, and the only significant main effect was for victim age, $F(2, 219) = 10.34, p < .001$ (partial eta squared = .09). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean believability scores for the 5-year-old victim ($M = 4.94$, $SD = 0.62$) and 10-year-old victim ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 0.82$) were significantly higher than for the 15-
year-old victim ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.91$). No significant difference was found between the mean believability scores for the 5- and 10-year-old victims.

![Figure 2](image.png)

*Figure 2. Three-way interaction effect for victim believability*

**Competency.** A three-way between-groups ANOVA was conducted to explore the impact of victim age, victim gender and defendant gender on ratings of victim competency, as measured by the competency subscale of the CSAVCS. The three-way interaction was non-significant, $F (2, 219) = 1.45, p = .24$, however the pattern of ratings is illustrated in Figure 3. A significant main effect was found for victim age, $F (2, 219) = 15.28, p < .001$ (partial eta squared = .12). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean scores for the 5-year-old victim ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 0.77$) and 10-year-old victim ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.88$) were higher than for the 15-year-old victim ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 0.86$). No difference was found between the mean competency scores for the 5- and 10-year-old victims. A significant main effect was also found for victim gender, $F (1, 219) = 5.09, p < .05$ (partial eta squared = .02), such that males ($M = 4.34$, $SD = 0.83$) were rated as more competent than
females ($M = 4.01, SD = 0.95$). No further main effects or interaction effects were found.

![Figure 3. Three-way interaction effect for victim competency](image)

**Reliability.** A three-way between-groups ANOVA was conducted to explore the impact of victim age, victim gender and defendant gender on ratings of victim reliability, as measured by the reliability subscale of the CSAVCS. Figure 4 illustrates the pattern in the three-way interaction, however this effect was non-significant, $F(2, 219) = 0.49, p = .62$. The main effect for victim age was significant, $F(2, 219) = 9.73, p < .001$ (partial eta squared = .08). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean reliability scores for the 5-year-old victim ($M = 4.53, SD = 0.76$) and 10-year-old victim ($M = 4.32, SD = 0.70$) were significantly higher than for the 15-year-old victim ($M = 3.91, SD = 0.78$). No difference was found between the mean reliability scores for the 5- and 10-year-old victims. No further main effects or interaction effects were found.
Figure 4. Three-way interaction effect for victim reliability

**Truthfulness.** A three-way between-groups ANOVA was conducted to explore the impact of victim age, victim gender and defendant gender on ratings of victim truthfulness, as measured by the truthfulness subscale of the CSAVCS. The main effect for victim age was significant, $F(2, 219) = 15.91, p < .001$ (partial eta squared = .13). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the 5-year-old victim ($M = 4.86, SD = 0.64$) and 10-year-old victim ($M = 4.66, SD = 0.71$) were rated as more truthful than the 15-year-old victim ($M = 4.17, SD = 0.81$). No difference was found between mean truthfulness ratings for the 5- and 10-year-old victims. The main effect for defendant gender was also significant, $F(1, 219) = 4.25, p < .05$ (partial eta squared = .02), with victims rated as more truthful with a male defendant ($M = 4.68, SD = 0.73$) than with a female defendant ($M = 4.45, SD = 0.80$).

These main effects however, were qualified by a significant three-way victim age X victim gender X defendant gender interaction effect, $F(2, 219) = 5.45, p < .01$ (partial eta squared = .05). Figure 5 illustrates this effect. Simple effects analysis
revealed that the 5-year-old male victim \( (M = 4.75, SD = 0.53) \) and the 10-year old male victim \( (M = 4.71, SD = 0.71) \) were rated as more truthful than the 15-year-old male victim \( (M = 4.27, SD = 0.79) \), regardless of the gender of the defendant, \( F(2, 105) = 5.92, p < .01 \) (partial eta squared = .10). However, a significant interaction effect was found for female victims, \( F(2, 114) = 4.21, p < .05 \) (partial eta squared = .07), such that when the defendant was also female, the 5-year-old victim \( (M = 4.66, SD = 0.70) \) and 10-year-old victim \( (M = 4.70, SD = 0.66) \) were rated as more truthful than the 15-year-old victim \( (M = 3.81, SD = 0.88) \), however when the defendant was male, the 5-year-old victim \( (M = 5.21, SD = 0.74) \) was rated as more truthful than both the 10-year-old \( (M = 4.49, SD = 0.77) \) and 15-year-old victims \( (M = 4.45, SD = 0.62) \).

**Figure 5.** Three-way interaction effect for victim truthfulness

**Guilt Ratings.** Multiple linear regression analysis was used to assess the predictive validity of the five-factor model on perceptions of defendant guilt. The model accounted for 42% of the variance in guilt ratings, \( F(5, 225) = 32.59, p < .001 \). Accuracy and truthfulness were the only significant unique predictors in the
model, with the truthfulness sub-scale recording a higher beta value ($\beta = .59, p < .001$) than the accuracy sub-scale ($\beta = -.26, p < .01$).

**Discussion**

The current study explored the impact of victim age and victim and perpetrator gender on perceptions of an alleged child sexual abuse victim, across five domains of credibility: accuracy, believability, competency, reliability and truthfulness. It also investigated which sub-constructs of credibility best predict guilt perceptions in the context of that abuse allegation.

**Victim Age.** Victim age had the most consistent effect on the domains of credibility, as significant main effects for victim age appeared across all five domains. Specifically, the 5- and 10-year-old victims were rated as more accurate, believable, competent, reliable and truthful than the 15-year-old victim. With the exception of accuracy, no differences across sub-scales were found between the 5- and 10-year-old victims. When it came to accuracy, participants rated the 5-year-old child as more accurate than the 10-year-old. This is consistent with previous research demonstrating that victim credibility decreases with age (Bottoms et al., 2004; Golding et al., 2015; Rogers et al., 2007). Arguably, this is due to the perceptions that a younger child is more sexually naïve and unable to make up sexual abuse allegations, while an older child has a greater understanding of sexual behaviour and an increased capacity to lie about such events (Finkelhor, 1984; Maynard & Wiederman, 1997). Thus, it appears that despite their legal incapacity to consent to sexual activity, 15-year-old victims are viewed as ‘quasi-adults’.
The current study also found that younger children are perceived as more competent than older children, in contrast to findings by previous research based on a two-factor model of credibility. Further, extensive developmental research conducted into children’s cognitive abilities and memory for events has demonstrated that children as young as four years of age can exhibit substantial recall memory, but that the level of detail recalled increases with age (Lamb et al., 2003; Saywitz, Geiselman & Bornstein, 1992). Past research also demonstrated that younger children are perceived by lay persons to have less ‘competency’ or ‘expertise’ than older children (Bottoms, Golding, Stevenson & Yozwiak, 2007; Ross et al., 2003). Alternatively, Schmidt and Brigham (1996) found that a 5- and 10-year old child was rated as more intelligent/self-assured than a 15-year-old. It is therefore possible that ratings of competency are highly reliant on the context, the measures used and the specific phrasing of items, or that the perceptions of child victims may not be congruent with the findings of previous developmental research, as outlined above.

**Victim Gender.** A significant main effect for victim gender was only found for the competency sub-construct, with male victims rated as more competent than female victims. This lack of observed difference between male and female victims, across the sub-constructs of accuracy, believability, truthfulness and reliability is consistent with previous literature (Bornstein et al., 2007; Bottoms & Goodman, 1994; Esnard & Dumas, 2013). Surprisingly, this gender effect emerged for the sub-construct of competency. Only one previous study has demonstrated that male victims were rated as more truthful than female victims, however this effect did not hold for measures of credibility more broadly (Bornstein & Muller, 2001) and no
extant research has demonstrated this effect specifically for the domain of perceived competency. Research exploring social injustice and stereotypes more broadly, however, illustrates that females are presumed to be less competent than their male counterparts (Carli & Eagly, 2001). It is possible that such gendered attitudes already begin in childhood and extend to complainants of sexual assault, with male children viewed as more competent and knowledgeable regarding sexual events than female children.

**Defendant Gender.** Although qualified by a three-way interaction effect, results indicated that victims were rated as more accurate and truthful when the defendant was male compared to female, however this gender effect did not extend to ratings of believability, competency or reliability. Thus, the impact of defendant gender on perceptions of child witness credibility appears dependent upon the sub-construct under investigation. These findings are largely consistent with existing research, highlighting that this gendered effect occurs for victim truthfulness (Bornstein et al., 2007; Bornstein & Muller, 2001; O’Donohue et al., 1998), but not for other sub-constructs such as believability (Bornstein & Muller, 2001; Esnard & Dumas, 2013; Pozzulo et al., 2010).

The finding that victims are rated as less accurate and truthful when making an allegation against a female rather than a male defendant, can be interpreted in line with social expectations. Individuals judge whether a stimulus is surprising or likely according to their past experiences and preconceived ideas regarding what is normal or common (Kahneman & Miller, 1986). Given that cases involving a female defendant, particularly a step-mother, are less common than cases involving a male
defendant (McCloskey & Raphael, 2005), participants may struggle to think of examples and thus have more difficulty agreeing that the child is accurate or truthful. Additionally, as the current study included a predominantly female sample, it is possible that when faced with cases involving a female defendant, participants were more likely to see similarities between themselves and the adult defendant, rather than the child victim. According to defensive attribution theory, viewing the child as less accurate or truthful in such instances is a way to cognitively protect oneself from the fear that such an accusation might be made about themselves (Shaver, 1970).

**Three-way Interaction Effects.** The main effects of victim age and defendant gender, for both accuracy and truthfulness, were qualified by three-way interaction effects between victim age, victim gender and defendant gender. The 5-year-old male victim was rated as more accurate and truthful than the 15-year-old male victim, regardless of defendant gender. However, for female victims, when the defendant was female, the 5-year-old and 10-year-old victims were rated as more accurate and truthful than the 15-year-old victim. When the defendant was male, the 5-year-old victim was rated as more accurate and truthful than both the 10-year-old and 15-year-old victims. As discussed above, 15-year-old children are often seen as ‘quasi adults’, while 5-year-old children are viewed as sexually naïve. Perceptions of the 10-year-old female child, particularly whether they are viewed as more similar to a 5-year-old or 15-year-old, appear contingent on contextual information. When a 10-year-old female makes a claim regarding a female defendant they are rated equal in accuracy and truthfulness to that of a 5-year-old female, however when a 10-year-old female makes a claim regarding a male defendant they are rated equal to that of a 15-year-
old female, perhaps reflecting earlier sexualisation of the 10-year-old in the heterosexual context.

While the three-way interactions for believability, competency and reliability were non-significant, it is noteworthy that the pattern of these relationships was consistent. It is possible that the study failed to detect a significant difference, due to insufficient power to detect a small effect size. Overall, credibility scores were highest for a 5-year-old female victim making a claim against a male defendant, and were lowest for a 15-year-old female victim making a claim against a female defendant. These low scores obtained for the same sex scenario may, in part, be explained by participant’s expectations regarding the occurrence of such crimes.

**Limitations.** Transcripts utilised in the current study explored only one victim-defendant relationship, such that the accused was the step-parent of the alleged victim. While exploration of other relationships and crime scenarios was beyond the scope of the current paper, it is possible that the specific scenario used in the current study may have impacted the results. Participants may have questioned the plausibility of the scenario in the case of a 15-year-old child. In addition, the sample included only Australian participants, comprising 70% female participants, half of whom were under the age of 27 years and reported having completed an undergraduate or post graduate degree. As such, the sample may not be representative of an average jury member. In addition, female respondents typically view child victims as more credible than do male respondents (Voogt & Klettke, 2017). However, exploration of participant gender was not possible in the current study, given the sample size required to run such analyses. Indeed, the removal of 42
participants, due to insufficient reading time, resulted in a reduction in power. However, this is a useful direction for future research.

**Implications and Conclusion.** The finding that truthfulness was the strongest unique predictor of perceptions of guilt in a child sexual abuse context is of considerable importance given that it is this domain of credibility that appears most complex in terms of the impact of extra-legal factors. As such, should future research in this area be unable to use the full CSAVCS, it is advised that the truthfulness domain be utilised. In addition, the study demonstrates the important contribution that perceived credibility has on court outcomes, highlighting that the CSAVCS is able to account for over 40% of variability in perceived guilt. Results of the current study support previous findings that credibility ratings decrease with age. It is therefore recommended that future research investigating perceived victim credibility, include or consider the impact of victim age. Research exploring perceived credibility of 5- and 10- year-old victims cannot be generalised to post-pubescent children (aged 15 years). It is important to be aware that a 15-year old is more likely to be perceived as a quasi-adult and may elicit lower conviction rates compared to younger child victims who are viewed as more credible. Although sexual naivety does reduce with age and there is a potential increase in a 15-year-old’s capacity to lie, there is no evidence that they are any more likely to do so.

This is the first study to demonstrate that younger victims are viewed as more competent than older children. This finding has important implications for the court room, as there is currently a strong emphasis placed on educating jurors regarding young children’s cognitive capacity. This study suggests that such education may be
unfounded, as it is older children who are mistakenly viewed as less competent than younger children. The paper provides potential explanations for this, however further research is necessary to support this finding and understand why this might occur. Given the over-representation of educated females in the study, it is also recommended that further research seek to reproduce these findings using a representative community sample. Research should also seek to extend knowledge in this area via the exploration of different cases to determine whether the results of the current study are consistent across different contexts, including different cultural, legal and national contexts.

The current study also demonstrated that victims were rated as more accurate and truthful when the defendant was male, compared to when the defendant was female and that male victims were rated as more competent than female victims. It is clear that perceptions of child victim credibility are influenced by extra-legal factors such as child and defendant gender and victim age, likely representing misconceptions and stereotypes regarding children’s cognitive abilities, and propensity to lie. One way to address such misunderstandings and the reliance on personal biases in making important attributions regarding child victims, is through public education campaigns. This might serve to correct misunderstandings regarding children’s credibility and the occurrence of female perpetrated sexual assault. Ultimately, to improve procedural fairness, the impact of extra-legal factors on the perceived victim credibility needs to be minimised.
References


Gliem, J. A., & Gliem, R. R. (2003). Calculating, interpreting, and reporting Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient for Likert-type scales. Paper presented at the Midwest Research-to-Practice Conference in Adult, Continuing, and Community Education, the Ohio State University, Columbus, OH.


### Appendix

Table 1A

*Child Sexual Assault Victim Credibility Scale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accuracy</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This child’s version of events was not accurate*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This child will be able to give an accurate description of what happened to the court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This child’s memory for events was accurate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There was consistency within this child’s version of events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There were inconsistencies in this child’s testimony*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Believability</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This child’s testimony was believable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This child was not believable*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This child’s testimony was credible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This child was not a credible witness*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Competency</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This child was able to provide a competent recount of events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This child is not a competent witness*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This child had a good memory for the events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reliability</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This child is reliable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This child is dependable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This child’s testimony can be depended upon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This child’s memory of the incident is likely to be unreliable*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Truthfulness</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This child was telling the truth about these events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This child’s disclosure is truthful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This child was honest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This child’s testimony was provided honestly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This child is trustworthy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I would trust a typical child of this age to be telling the truth

I believe the abuse occurred

* Indicates reverse coded items
Chapter 10. Discussion and Implications

The aims of this thesis were to review the impact of gender on perceptions of credibility, to develop a multi-dimensional scale to measure perceived credibility and to explore the impact of age and gender on credibility utilising a multidimensional approach, extending research using an Australian community sample across all victim-defendant gender dyads. The first paper, a systematic review of the extant research, concluded that female respondents tend to rate child victims as more credible than do males, while no difference was demonstrated between male and female victims. There were varying results pertaining to the interaction of victim and perceiver gender. On the basis of the findings of paper one, paper two proposed a conceptual model of perceived credibility across five domains, including accuracy, believability, competency, reliability and truthfulness. Paper three subsequently developed and evaluated a new scale measuring perceived victim credibility, the CSAVCS, based on the conceptual model proposed in paper two. The scale demonstrated good reliability and level of fit. Finally, paper four returned to an exploration of the impact of victim gender, as well as defendant gender and victim age on perceptions of victim credibility, using the CSAVCS evaluated in paper three. Paper four concluded that 5- and 10-year-old victims were rated as more accurate, believable, competent, reliable and truthful than 15-year-old victims, that male victims were rated as more competent than female victims and that victims were rated as more accurate and truthful when the defendant was male, than when the defendant was female. Potential explanations for these findings were discussed.
Credibility

Collectively these studies highlight the importance of conceptualising and researching credibility as a multi-faceted construct. For example, while paper one concluded that victim gender does not influence perceptions of credibility, some variability was demonstrated between studies, which may be accounted for by the differences in measurement of credibility. Indeed, paper four demonstrated that while no difference was found between male and female victims across accuracy, believability, reliability and truthfulness, the same does not extend to competency, as males are rated higher than females. Therefore, one of the major implications of this thesis is that research exploring credibility perceptions of victims needs to consider and be based on the multi-faceted nature of credibility, especially considering that extra-legal factors appear to have varying influence depending on the sub-construct under investigation. The thesis provides the means to achieve this in the form of the CSAVCS. This thesis further provides the first step in evaluating and applying this scale, however it would be beneficial to further validate this scale across a range of different CSA scenarios, as well as evaluating its utility for real world trials.

Perceiver Gender

Paper one demonstrated that females tend to rate child victims as more credible than do males and suggested that this effect might be moderated by the relationship between the victim and the defendant. While further exploration of the impact of victim-defendant relationship was beyond the scope of the current thesis, this presents as an important area of future research. Paper one also highlighted the lack of available research exploring the interaction effect of perceiver and victim gender. Although the current thesis aimed to extend research
in this area, investigating this interaction effect as well as whether the impact of perceiver gender varied depending on the sub-construct of credibility, these analyses were not possible due to insufficient sample size. As such, it is recommended that future research is conducted in this area.

Paper one also discussed the practical implications of a perceiver gender effect on credibility for the court room. The paper suggests that jury directions to specifically consider and discuss the credibility of the victim, may serve to overcome such discrepancy in judgments between males and females. It may also be beneficial to ensure that juries comprise an equal number of male and female jury members to balance out this effect. However, these suggestions will require exploration and testing to ascertain whether the gendered effect can be successfully minimised or reduced.

**Defendant Gender**

Paper four demonstrated that victims were judged as more accurate and truthful when making a complaint regarding a male defendant rather than a female defendant, possibly stemming from participants’ belief that females do not perpetrate such offences. The paper discusses the importance of public education campaigns regarding the prevalence of CSA, eradicating any misperceptions or stereotypes regarding the type of individual who might commit crimes of a sexual nature.

The current thesis contains one of very few studies that have investigated the impact of defendant gender on perceptions of victim credibility in cases of CSA. While the thesis has therefore made a considerable contribution to the field of research in this area, highlighting the differing effect of defendant gender based on the domain of credibility being explored, there remains considerable
scope for further investigation. In particular, it remains unclear why victims are rated as more accurate and truthful when making an accusation against a male defendant rather than a female defendant and why this effect is demonstrated only on the domains of accuracy and truthfulness. Future research may extend knowledge in this area by exploring these questions.

**Victim Gender**

As highlighted above, this thesis demonstrated that male victims are rated as more competent than female victims. This finding has important implications for practice, as discussed in paper 4, including the possible need for juror and public education regarding victimisation and cognitive capacity of females more broadly. However, given that this is the first study demonstrating this result, it is important to replicate these results and understand further why this may occur. Both study one and study four demonstrated that male and female victims are perceived equally in terms of other domains of credibility which is an encouraging finding suggesting public understanding of the occurrence of male victimisation.

**Victim Age**

One of the major findings of this thesis is that perceived victim credibility decreases with age and that this occurs across all domains of credibility. Paper four provides an in-depth discussion of the implications of this finding for both research and practice. However, what is clear from the extant research and the current thesis, is that 15-year-old victims are perceived as quasi-adults, who have lost their sexual naivety, rendering them less credible in the eyes of the jury. It is important to note however, that legally a 15-year-old child cannot consent to sexual activity with an adult, and simply because they may have an increased
understanding of sex, does not mean that they are any more likely to lie about such events than a younger child. Again, it is possible that public education, or jury directions might assist in reducing the impact of victim age on perceived credibility, however future research is necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of such proposals.

Paper four also indicated that younger children are perceived as more competent than older children. It is possible that the influence of age on ratings of competency is dependent on the context of the case. In the current thesis, the child disclosed two incidents of sexual penetration, allegedly perpetrated by the child’s step-parent. The first incident occurred when the child was home from school, with the accused allegedly assisting the child to wash themselves in the bath. When considering the 15-year-old version of the transcript, it is possible that this scenario was viewed as less plausible than when the same event occurred for a 5- or 10-year-old child, and thus influenced ratings of competency. That is, it is conceivable that participants believed that the 15-year-old child must have a poor memory or be recalling events incorrectly given the low plausibility of this scenario.

In addition, in all versions of the transcript, the child at times stated that he/she could not recall or was unsure about some details. It is therefore possible that when a 15-year-old child makes such statements, perceptions of their competency decreases, whilst for 5- and 10-year-old children, it is expected that some difficult with recall is experienced. In this way, when responding to questions regarding a child’s competency, participants may be responding in line with their expectations of the child’s competency at the stated age, rather than at a standard acceptable to give evidence in court. Nevertheless, the finding that
younger children are *perceived* to have greater competency than older children has important implications for the court as the results stand in direct contrast to what is known in the developmental literature regarding children’s actual competency and memory for events. As such it is recommended that further research seeks to replicate these results for other CSA scenarios and further understand the underlying influences of such perceptions.

**Limitations**

The major limitation of the thesis lies in the over-representation of highly educated, female participants which may have influenced the results. However, it is not uncommon for these types of studies to have more female respondents than male respondents (for example: Bottoms & Goodman, 1994; Cromer & Freyd, 2007; O’Donohue, Smith & Schewe, 1998; Rogers, Lowe & Boardman, 2014). Although the thesis aimed to explore the impact of perceiver gender on perceived victim credibility using the new CSAVCS, this variable was not retained owing to the insufficient sample size. It is of note that the sample for this thesis remains an improvement from the commonly used undergraduate student samples utilised in much of the prior research (see publication one). Nevertheless, replicating the results of the current thesis to ensure generalisability to a typical jury would strengthen its impact further.

In addition, the sample size for the final study was on the small side, owing to the deletion of over 15% of the original sample who did not comprehensively read the provided transcript. While a priori sample size calculation indicted the need for approximately 160 participants for a medium effect size of .25, which was exceeded by the final sample of 210, the small effect sizes observed post-hoc resulted in reduced observed power. This loss of statistical power increased the
risk of a Type II error, that is, incorrectly accepting the null hypothesis, or incorrectly stating that there is no difference between groups, when in fact there is. It is therefore recommended that future research replicate this study using a larger sample size, ideally with an equal distribution of male and female participants.

In addition, the CSAVCS would benefit from a validation across a range of scenarios, including scenarios with higher plausibility when it comes to older children. Exploration of a range of victim-defendant relationships and CSA scenarios was beyond the scope of this exploratory research, therefore this remains a valuable direction for future research. Furthermore, the current research explored the perceptions of victim credibility utilising only a written transcript of the child's testimony. It is acknowledged that this is an artificial jury study given the lack of additional contextual information that would be available during a real trial including other witness testimony, attorney’s arguments, cross examination and judges’ instructions. Bornstein et al. (2017) argue that conducting jury studies using a variety of methodological approaches is valuable on disentangling where differences lies based on study design. As such the current research provided a valuable first step, however including such contextual information may serve to improve the ecological validity of any further research and illustrating how the current research fits within the broader context of sexual assault trials.

**Summary and Conclusion**

The successful prosecution of alleged CSA cases is critical to provide victims with a sense of retribution and validation from the legal system, to punish offenders as well as to deter future offending. However, the successful prosecution of such cases is hindered by low credibility ratings of child victims.
Overall, this thesis highlights that despite considerable growth in research in this area, the understanding of perceived credibility and the factors that impact upon this, remains in its infancy. The thesis provides a new approach to measuring perceived victim credibility by developing the CSACVS and provides the first step in the evaluation of this new scale.

Taken as one body of research, the thesis demonstrates that judgments of child victim credibility are influenced by extra-legal factors such as victim age and gender, perceiver gender and defendant gender, however the influence of these factors appears dependent upon the domain of credibility being explored. To improve procedural fairness, it is important to minimise the impact of personal biases and stereotypes and as such it is argued that public education campaigns and juror directions be introduced as potential strategies. It is hoped that this thesis will stimulate further research interest and researchers are encouraged to utilise the developed CSACVS in future exploration of perceived victim credibility.
References

ABS see Australian Bureau of Statistics.


Crimes Act (1958). (Vic), No. 229A.


Evidence Act (2008). (Vic), No. 47.


Gliem, J. A., & Gliem, R. R. (2003). Calculating, interpreting, and reporting Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient for Likert-type scales. Paper presented at the Midwest Research-to-Practice Conference in Adult, Continuing, and Community Education, the Ohio State University, Columbus, OH.


214.


Appendix A

Trial Transcripts

5-year-old female victim – female defendant.

Hi Jessica. My name is Alice, I’d like to talk to you today about what’s been worrying you. If that’s ok?

Mm’hm.

Before we start our talk, there are just a few things I would like you to know. If there’s anything I ask you and you don’t know the answer, or you can’t remember, you just say, “I don’t know”.

(Nods head).

Or “can’t remember”. Don’t feel like you have to give me an answer, but if you do know or you do remember, it is very important to tell me, okay?

Okay.

Sometimes I will repeat things back to you just to make sure I understand. If I get anything wrong or mixed up, I need you to tell me I’ve got it wrong or mixed up. Okay?

Yeah.

So for example I know your name is Jessica, but if I were to call you Jenny by mistake, what could you say?

Um, I’m Jessica.
Yeah, that would be really good. And anything else I get wrong, you just let me know.

Yep.

Thanks for that. Now let’s get started. Jessica, can you tell me your full name?

Um Jessica MARTIN.

And how old are you, Jessica?

I’m 5.

Thanks for that. Now Jessica do you know what you’re here to talk to me about today?

Mm umm yep.

What have you come to talk to me about?

Ummmm (inaudible). Look I can draw a sun, and, and, and this is me.

That’s beautiful. Jessica, you were going to tell me about why you’re here today.

Cos of um the bad stuff. And I’m making a house. Daddy says I’m good at drawing.
Tell me everything about the bad stuff, even the little bits that you don’t think are important.

Um, it was at home with um my step-mum. I love my daddy but he wasn’t there.

And what about your step-mum?

(Shrugs)

So you said that daddy wasn’t there for the bad stuff?

No.

Where was dad?

Daddy had to go to work and cos um I didn’t go to school cos I was sick, but um I got to stay home and watch the TV.

So you were at home and who was home with you?

Um my step-mum. I got to watch the Let It Go movie and then, and then, and then the um the princess she gets magic powers and everything freezes.

You watched the Let It Go movie with your step-mum?

U’huh. It was fun.

Do you always have fun with your step-mum?

I, I, I, I – I have fun playing games and um, yeah. I have fun. But I didn’t like the bad stuff.
What was the bad stuff?

Um yeah um um cos when um she touched me.

She touched you?

(Nods head).

Can you tell me more about what happened?

Um she – I was in the um the, the bath and um I play with Nemo.

Nemo?

Yeah Nemo is a fish and um I play with Nemo in the bath, but um I don’t have a Dory.

So you were in the bath playing?

Mm’hm.

And where was your step-mum?

She um she was helped me to wash.

She helped you to wash?

(Nods head).

Mm’hm.

I didn’t tell daddy. Do you like my picture? I’m going to draw a flower now.
You didn’t tell daddy that she helped you to wash?

(Shakes head). No, um, no I didn’t tell.

**Does daddy help you to wash when he is home?**

Um yes daddy is a good daddy he helps me with things and um he plays with me and cooks – he cooks dinner.

**Does daddy wash you the same way as your step-mum washed you?**

Daddy he says um that I’m big now and um he only just helps me wash hair but mmmm umm she said she has to help wash me.

**Can you tell me more about how she helped to wash you?**

Um I don’t know what to do so I stood there and um it hurted.

**Where did it hurt?**

(indicates vagina)

**And what do you call that part of your body?**

My gina.

**Mm’hm.**

My gina got sore cos of her hand washing me.

**Tell me more about when her hand was washing you.**

Umm yeah cos when she was washing me umm she washed me with her finger.
Can you tell me, when she washed your gina with her finger, was that on the outside or the inside?

Mmm yeah cos it um went in my gina. Cos she put her finger in my gina.

She put her finger inside your gina?

(Nods).

Mm’hm, and then what happened next?

She finished washed me and helped me get dressed.

Did she talk to you about what she was doing?

(Shakes head). And, and now, I’m going to play with the playdough. I like playdough. You have to help make the legs.

Are we making a person out of playdough?

Yeah.

You’re really good at that, but I will help. Hey Jessica, you were telling me about your step-mum washing you –

You put the legs here and I make the body.

– Can you remember when that happened?

(Nods head). After my birthday. I had chocolate cake for my birthday. Daddy made it from scratches. He makes the best cakes.
Mm’hm. Do you remember how long after your birthday this happened?

Was it days or weeks after?

Umm. I don’t know.

Mm’hm.

I was really sick. I stayed home from school for a while.

Jessica, has anything else like this ever happened?

(Nods head).

Can you tell me what happened?

I was on the couch and she rubbed my back.

Mm’hm.

She um she rubbed my back because I was sick.

So you were still sick when this happened? And you were still home from school?

(Nods). I’m going to make a huge cookie and, and, and you can’t eat it though. Cos playdough you can’t eat it.

Can you remember how long after the bath this happened? Was this the same day or the next day or something different?

Um. I don’t know.
Can you tell me more about what happened?

Um she was rubbing my back first and then on my front.

Mm’hm.

I didn’t wanted to upset her, but I didn’t like it.

Whereabouts did she do the rubbing? Whereabouts on your body?

(indicates lower abdomen and chest), it was (inaudible) –

And was that on top of your clothes or something different?

Something different. I was wearing my favourite jammies, but the jammies came off. Daddy got them for my birthday. They’re not my favourite anymore.

So you said that your jammies came off. Who took the jammies off?

She did.

I’ve got an idea what you’re talking about, but whereabouts on your body did she do the rubbing? What would you call that?

Um boobies and gina.

Mm’hm. And was that on top of your undies or something different?

Um, it was, um I don’t remember.

Oh okay. That’s alright.
(Inaudible).

**Can you tell me anything else about what happened?**

She said it was a special kind of massage.

**Mm’hm.**

And um. She said it was only for special because I was such a good girl. I didn’t like it.

**What did she use to massage you? Did she massage you with her hands or something different?**

Something different.

**How was it different?**

Um cos um it was different with using um her mouth.

**Mm’hm. Can you remember how long the special massage lasted?**

(shrugs). Don’t know. Little while?

**Any idea what made her stop?**

Um don’t know, think daddy was coming home.

**Oh okay. Do you think your dad would’ve seen you on the couch, when he came in?**

Um, don’t know.
So has anything happened since?

(Shakes head). I told daddy about the special massage and now he take me to talk to you.
5-year-old male victim – male defendant.

Hi Steven. My name is Alice, I’d like to talk to you today about what’s been worrying you. If that’s ok?

Mm’hm.

Before we start our talk, there are just a few things I would like you to know. If there’s anything I ask you and you don’t know the answer, or you can’t remember, you just say, “I don’t know”.

(Nods head).

Or “can’t remember”. Don’t feel like you have to give me an answer, but if you do know or you do remember, it is very important to tell me, okay?

Okay.

Sometimes I will repeat things back to you just to make sure I understand. If I get anything wrong or mixed up, I need you to tell me I’ve got it wrong or mixed up. Okay?

Yeah.

So for example I know your name is Steven, but if I were to call you Samuel by mistake, what could you say?

Um, I’m Steven.
Yeah, that would be really good. And anything else I get wrong, you just let me know.

Yep.

Thanks for that. Now let’s get started. Steven, can you tell me your full name?

Um Steven MARTIN.

And how old are you Steven?

I’m 5.

Thanks for that. Now Steven do you know what you’re here to talk to me about today?

Mm umm yep.

What have you come to talk to me about?

Ummmm (inaudible). Look I can draw a sun, and, and, and this is me.

That’s beautiful. Steven, you were going to tell me about why you’re here today.

Cos of um the bad stuff. And I’m making a house. Mummy says I’m good at drawing.

Tell me everything about the bad stuff, even the little bits that you don’t think are important.
Um, it was at home with um my step-dad. I love my mummy but she wasn’t there.

And what about your step-dad?

(Shrugs)

So you said that mummy wasn’t there for the bad stuff?

No.

Where was mum?

Mummy had to go to work and cos um I didn’t go to school cos I was sick, but um I got to stay home and watch the TV.

So you were at home and who was home with you?

Um my step-dad. I got to watch the Let It Go movie and then, and then, and then the um the princess she gets magic powers and everything freezes.

You watched the Let It Go movie with your step-dad?

U’huh. It was fun.

Do you always have fun with your step-dad?

I, I, I, I – I have fun playing games and um, yeah. I have fun. But I didn’t like the bad stuff.

What was the bad stuff?
Um yeah um um cos when um he touched me.

**He touched you?**

(Nods head).

**Can you tell me more about what happened?**

Um he – I was in the um the, the bath and um I play with Nemo.

**Nemo?**

Yeah Nemo is a fish and um I play with Nemo in the bath, but um I don’t have a Dory.

**So you were in the bath playing?**

Mm’hm.

**And where was your step-dad?**

He um he was helped me to wash.

**He helped you to wash?**

(Nods head).

**Mm’hm.**

I didn’t tell mummy. Do you like my picture? I’m going to draw a flower now.

**You didn’t tell mummy that he helped you to wash?**
(Shakes head). No, um, no I didn’t tell.

**Does mummy help you to wash when she is home?**

Um yes mummy is a good mummy she helps me with things and um she plays with me and cooks – she cooks dinner.

**Does mummy wash you the same way as your step-dad washed you?**

Mummy she says um that I’m big now and um she only just helps me wash hair but mmmm umm he said he has to help wash me.

**Can you tell me more about how he helped to wash you?**

Um I don’t know what to do so I stood there and um it hurted.

**Where did it hurt?**

(indicates anus)

**And what do you call that part of your body?**

My bottom.

**Mm’hm.**

My bottom got sore cos of his hand washing me.

**Tell me more about when his hand was washing you.**

Umm yeah cos when he was washing me umm he washed me with his finger.
Can you tell me, when he washed your bottom with his finger, was that on the outside or the inside?

Mmm yeah cos it um went in my bottom. Cos he put his finger in my bottom.

He put his finger inside your bottom?

(Nods).

Mm’hm, and then what happened next?

He finished washed me and helped me get dressed.

Did he talk to you about what he was doing?

(Shakes head). And, and now, I’m going to play with the playdough. I like playdough. You have to help make the legs.

Are we making a person out of playdough?

Yeah.

You’re really good at that, but I will help. Hey Steven, you were telling me about your step-dad washing you –

You put the legs here and I make the body.

– Can you remember when that happened?

(Nods head). After my birthday. I had chocolate cake for my birthday. Mummy made it from scratches. She makes the best cakes.
Mm’hm. Do you remember how long after your birthday this happened?

Was it days or weeks after?

Umm. I don’t know.

Mm’hm.

I was really sick. I stayed home from school for a while.

Steven, has anything else like this ever happened?

(Nods head).

Can you tell me what happened?

I was on the couch and he rubbed my back.

Mm’hm.

He um he rubbed my back because I was sick.

So you were still sick when this happened? And you were still home from school?

(Nods). I’m going to make a huge cookie and, and, and you can’t eat it though. Cos playdough you can’t eat it.

Can you remember how long after the bath this happened? Was this the same day or the next day or something different?

Um. I don’t know.
Can you tell me more about what happened?

Um he was rubbing my back first and then on my front.

Mm’hm.

I didn’t want to upset him, but I didn’t like it.

Whereabouts did he do the rubbing? Whereabouts on your body?

(indicates lower abdomen and chest), it was (inaudible) –

And was that on top of your clothes or something different?

Something different. I was wearing my favourite jammies, but the jammies came off. Mummy got them for my birthday. They’re not my favourite anymore.

So you said that your jammies came off. Who took the jammies off?

He did.

I’ve got an idea what you’re talking about, but whereabouts on your body did he do the rubbing? What would you call that?

Um chest and pee-pee.

Mm’hm. And was that on top of your undies or something different?

Um, it was, um I don’t remember.

Oh okay. That’s alright.

(Inaudible).
Can you tell me anything else about what happened?

He said it was a special kind of massage.

Mm’hm.

And um. He said it was only for special because I was such a good boy. I didn’t like it.

What did he use to massage you? Did he massage you with his hands or something different?

Something different.

How was it different?

Um cos um it was different with using um his mouth.

Mm’hm. Can you remember how long the special massage lasted?

(shrugs). Don’t know. Little while?

Any idea what made him stop?

Um don’t know, think mummy was coming home.

Oh okay. Do you think your mum would’ve seen you on the couch, when she came in?

Um, don’t know.
So has anything happened since?

(Shakes head). I told mummy about the special massage and now she take me to talk to you.
Hi Steven. My name is Alice, I’d like to talk to you today about what’s been worrying you. If that’s ok?
Sure.

Before we start our talk, there are just a few things I would like you to know. If there’s anything I ask you and you don’t know the answer, or you can’t remember, you just say, “I don’t know”.

(Nods head).

Or “can’t remember”. Don’t feel like you have to give me an answer, but if you do know or you do remember, it is very important to tell me, okay?
Okay.

Sometimes I will repeat things back to you just to make sure I understand. If I get anything wrong or mixed up, I need you to tell me I’ve got it wrong or mixed up. Okay?
Yeah.

So for example I know your name is Steven, but if I were to call you Samuel by mistake, what could you say?
My name is Steven.
Yeah, that would be really good. And anything else I get wrong, you just let me know.

Yep.

Thanks for that. Now let’s get started. Steven, can you tell me your full name?

Steven MARTIN.

And how old are you Steven?

I’m 10.

Thanks for that. Now Steven do you know what you’re here to talk to me about today?

Um, my step-dad.

And what about your step-dad?

Um, well he touched me, so yeah, um, yeah.

So how many times did that happen?

It was just like all over, like two months, I think, or a month. I can’t really remember but um, it was when I was really sick.

Mm’hm.

--I’d stay home from school heaps and then um, yeah, and then he’d stay home too, and mum would go to work and then, yeah. I don’t know.
And how old were you when you were sick?

It was early this year. Just after my birthday.

Can you remember the very first time that something happened? What happened the very first time?

Um yeah he like – I was in the um, bath and I – I was surprised, like, I don’t know and I was in the bath and um, he came in and he washed, he washed um, me and like when he washed me, he like bent down and like washed inside me and stuff.

Mm’hm.

-- and he stuck his finger inside me, and like, it was like, really shocking to me.

Mm’hm.

But I didn’t tell mum, but yeah, and then there was another time when I was on the couch and he gave me a massage and he was like sucking on my chest and he like massaged down and stuff – down here and stuff (indicates lower abdomen area) and like, everything, like, yeah.

So all together, how many times do you think something happened?

It was just those two times, I think.

So there was the very first time, when you were in the bath.
(Nods head).

And you said he was washing you and he put his finger inside you?
(Nods head).

Mm’hm. And, so tell me about that time again, like you were in the bath –
Yeah.

--and what’s the first thing that happened when he came in?
Um like, I got a shock and then like he was washing me and then he stuck his finger inside me, and I was like – just didn’t know what to do –

Mm’hm.

--so I just stood there, like, and just lied there, didn’t really know what to do.

Mm’hm. And what did he do with his finger inside you?
Um, he just put it in, I don’t know, like, I was just like, like, in and then like, (inaudible) like, mmm and then like out again.

And how did it feel when he did that?
It was like really sore and yeah.

And I’ve got an idea what you’re talking about, but whereabouts did he put his finger inside you?
Um in my bum.
Mm’hm. Okay. And did anything else happen after that?

No, ‘cause then he like, just like, walked out.

Did you guys talk about it at all? Like did he say anything to you about what he was doing?

(Shakes head).

And what is the next thing that you can remember that happened?

Um, yeah it was like – I was on the couch and yeah he massaged me.

Mm’hm. And so what were you – were you wearing on that day, can you remember?

I don’t think it – oh, I was wearing clothes but they came off because like, I’m gonna get a massage.

Mm’hm.

‘Cause like um, I was like lying on my back at the first –

Mm’hm.

--and then I think I turned over or something, I don’t know why. I was just scared though, I didn’t really know what to do.

And you were still sick, and you were still at home from school?

(Nods head). Yeah.
Mm’hm. And how much longer – after the bath incident – was that?

I can’t really remember.

Like, sort of, just a few days or –

I think so.

--a few months or – okay.

It was like, it might have been the same day.

Oh okay.

But yeah, I can’t even remember sorry.

Okay so the couch thing when you told me about this – doing the massaging?

(Nods head).

So how did that come all about, like did he offer to massage or did you ask him or how did that –

Um, he offered to massage and I was like “oh, okay then”. ‘Cause I thought it was just going to be like my back –

Mm’hm.

And then I just didn’t know what to do so I just like stayed there, just didn’t do anything, kind of froze up.
Whereabouts did he do the massage? Whereabouts on your body?
It was like here and like there and there (indicates lower abdomen and chest), it was like (inaudible) –

And was that on top of your clothes or something different?
Um, it was something different. I think I was like in undies and I had PJs on I think, but the PJs came off, 'cause yeah.

So who took the PJs off?
He did.

And so you sort of indicated where he was massaging, just what would you call that part of your body?
Um my chest and penis.

Mm’hm. And was that on top of your knickers or something different?
Um, it was like, I don’t – I can’t really remember.

Oh okay. Alright.
(Inaudible).

And how was he massaging your penis, like what – what kind of massaging was he doing?
He like sucked on it and everything.
Mm’hm. How long did that go on for? The massaging and sucking and that?

It was probably – it felt like ages. I don’t really know.

Any idea what made him stop?

Um I don’t know, I think mum was coming home.

Oh okay. Do you think your mum would’ve seen you on the couch, when she came in?

Um, I don’t know. I think I just like, it was like – I think we just acted like everything was normal.

So has anything happened since?

No, cause’ like I talked to mum.
15-year-old male victim – female defendant.

Hi Steven. My name is Alice, I’d like to talk to you today about what’s been worrying you. If that’s ok?

Sure.

Before we start our talk, there are just a few things I would like you to know. If there’s anything I ask you and you don’t know the answer, or you can’t remember, you just say, “I don’t know”.

(Nods head).

Or “can’t remember”. Don’t feel like you have to give me an answer, but if you do know or you do remember, it is very important to tell me, okay?

Okay.

Sometimes I will repeat things back to you just to make sure I understand. If I get anything wrong or mixed up, I need you to tell me I’ve got it wrong or mixed up. Okay?

Yeah.

So for example I know your name is Steven, but if I were to call you Samuel by mistake, what could you say?

My name is Steven.
Yeah, that would be really good. And anything else I get wrong, you just let me know.

Yep.

Thanks for that. Now let’s get started. Steven, can you tell me your full name?

Steven MARTIN.

And how old are you Steven?

I’m 15.

Thanks for that. Now Steven do you know what you’re here to talk to me about today?

Um, my step-mum.

And what about your step-mum?

Um, well she touched me, so yeah, um, yeah.

So how many times did that happen?

It was just like all over, like two months, I think, or a month. I can’t really remember but um, it was when I was really sick.

Mm’hm.
--I’d stay home from school heaps and then um, yeah, and then she’d stay home too, and dad would go to work and then, yeah. I don’t know.

And how old were you when you were sick?

It was early this year. Just after my birthday.

Can you remember the very first time that something happened? What happened the very first time?

Um yeah she like – I was in the um, bath and I – I was surprised, like, I don’t know and I was in the bath and um, she came in and she washed, she washed um, me and like when she washed me, she like bent down and like washed inside me and stuff.

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Mm’hm.

But I didn’t tell dad, but yeah, and then there was another time when I was on the couch and she gave me a massage and she was like sucking on my boobies and she like massaged down and stuff – down here and stuff (indicates lower abdomen area) and like, everything, like, yeah.

So all together, how many times do you think something happened?

It was just those two times, I think.
So there was the very first time, when you were in the bath.

(Nods head).

And you said she was washing you and she put her finger inside you?

(Nods head).

Mm’hm. And, so tell me about that time again, like you were in the bath –

Yeah.

--and what’s the first thing that happened when she came in?

Um like, I got a shock and then like she was washing me and then she stuck her
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And how did it feel when she did that?

It was like really sore and yeah.
And I’ve got an idea what you’re talking about, but whereabouts did she put her finger inside you?

Um in my bum.

Mm’hm. Okay. And did anything else happen after that?

No, ‘cause then she like, just like, walked out.

Did you guys talk about it at all? Like did she say anything to you about what she was doing?

(Shakes head).

And what is the next thing that you can remember that happened?

Um, yeah it was like – I was on the couch and yeah she massaged me.

Mm’hm. And so what were you – were you wearing on that day, can you remember?

I don’t think it – oh, I was wearing clothes but they came off because like, I’m gonna get a massage.

Mm’hm.

‘Cause like um, I was like lying on my back at the first –
Mm’hm.

--and then I think I turned over or something, I don’t know why. I was just scared though, I didn’t really know what to do.

**And you were still sick, and you were still at home from school?**

(Nods head). Yeah.

Mm’hm. **And how much longer – after the bath incident – was that?**

I can’t really remember.

**Like, sort of, just a few days or –**

I think so.

--**a few months or – okay.**

It was like, it might have been the same day.

**Oh okay.**

But yeah, I can’t even remember sorry.

**Okay so the couch thing when you told me about this – doing the massaging?**

(Nods head).

So how did that come all about, like did she offer to massage or did you ask her or how did that –
Um, she offered to massage and I was like “oh, okay then”. ‘Cause I thought it was just going to be like my back –

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And then I just didn’t know what to do so I just like stayed there, just didn’t do anything, kind of froze up.

Whereabouts did she do the massage? Whereabouts on your body?

It was like here and like there and there (indicates lower abdomen and chest), it was like (inaudible) –

And was that on top of your clothes or something different?

Um, it was something different. I think I was like in undies and I had PJs on I think, but the PJs came off, ‘cause yeah.

So who took the PJs off?

She did.

And so you sort of indicated where she was massaging, just what would you call that part of your body?

Um my chest and penis.

Mm’hm. And was that on top of your knickers or something different?
Um, it was like, I don’t – I can’t really remember.

Oh okay. Alright.

(Inaudible).

And how was she massaging your penis, like what – what kind of massaging was she doing?

She like sucked on it and everything.

Mm’hm. How long did that go on for? The massaging and sucking and that?

It was probably – it felt like ages. I don’t really know.

Any idea what made her stop?

Um I don’t know, I think dad was coming home.

Oh okay. Do you think your dad would’ve seen you on the couch, when he came in?

Um, I don’t know. I think I just like, it was like – I think we just acted like everything was normal.

So has anything happened since?

No, cause’ like I talked to dad.
Appendix B

Questionnaire and Instructions

Please note that completing and submitting this questionnaire signifies consent to participate in the research study. Please do not provide any identifying information on this questionnaire.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Please select your date of birth from the drop down menu:</td>
<td>DD/MM/YYYY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I identify my gender as:</td>
<td>Male; Female; Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your highest level of education?</td>
<td>Some High School; Completed High School; Technical and Further Education (TAFE) Certificate; TAFE Diploma; TAFE Advanced Diploma; Undergraduate Tertiary Degree; Postgraduate Tertiary Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please specify your cultural background:</td>
<td>Australian; Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander; European; Asian; Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have a child/children?</td>
<td>Yes; No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever worked with children?</td>
<td>Yes; No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Often child witnesses do not physically appear before the court, but evidence they have given during interview will be tendered in court as evidence. Below you are provided with an excerpt of an interview with a child. Please note that the full
The interview has not been provided and as such extensive rapport building with the child can be assumed to have occurred earlier in the interview.

Please carefully read the following interview transcript and answer the questions below.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT HERE (participants given one version of the transcript)

Please read the following statements and rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with them. There are no right or wrong answers.

[order of presentation of below questions randomised. Rated on a 6 point scale: 1= strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3 = probably disagree; 4 = probably agree; 5 = agree; 6 = strongly agree].

1. This child had a false belief regarding these events
2. This child’s version of events was not accurate
3. This child’s testimony was accurate
4. This child will be able to give an accurate description of what happened to the court
5. This child’s testimony was believable
6. This child is capable of lying
7. This child was not believable
8. This child’s version of events was not plausible
9. This child was telling the truth about these events
10. This child’s disclosure is truthful
11. This child was honest
12. This child’s testimony was provided honestly
13. This child was lying
14. This child is trustworthy
15. This child cannot be trusted to give a truthful account
16. This child is reliable
17. This child is dependable
18. There was consistency within this child’s version of events
19. There were inconsistencies in this child’s testimony
20. This child’s testimony can be depended upon
21. This child’s memory of the incident is likely to be unreliable
22. This child is not old enough to be a competent witness
23. This child was able to provide a competent recount of events
24. This child is not a competent witness
25. This child understands the difference between truth and lie
26. This child understands the difference between fantasy and reality
27. This child would understand what it means to take an oath in court
28. This child’s memory for events was accurate
29. This child had a good memory for the events
30. This child’s testimony was credible
31. This child was not a credible witness
32. Police should take this event seriously
33. This child’s life will be negatively effected by the event
34. This child will be traumatised after what happened
35. This child was not responsible for what happened
36. This child should be blamed for what happened
37. I am sympathetic toward this child in this situation
38. I would trust a typical child of this age to be telling the truth
39. Children of this age do not lie about events of this kind because they do not know enough about sex to make up such stories
40. The average child of this age is competent at giving accurate information about this kind of event
41. This adult is guilty
42. This adult is to blame for what happened
43. This adult was responsible for these events
44. There is reasonable doubt in my mind that the adult committed these acts
45. I believe the abuse occurred
46. I believe beyond reasonable doubt that this adult committed these acts.