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Examining the Link between Media Representations and Attitudes towards Sexual Offenders using a Dual-Process Framework

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ABSTRACT

Attitudes towards sexual offenders have been widely studied in forensic psychology and criminology research over the past 25 years. At present, however, studies examining these views are predominantly descriptive in nature. That is, self-report questionnaire measures are typically distributed to different groups (e.g., general public samples, and members of different occupational categories), with the resultant between-groups differences being reported in research papers. While these studies have provided some interesting findings, the results gained from them fail to inform researchers about the psychological mechanisms that underpin views about this offending population. The overarching aim of this thesis was to begin to fill this knowledge gap. That is, a range of studies were designed to use robust experimental methods, within validated theoretical paradigms, in order to examine some of the potential constructs that influence people's attitudes towards sexual offenders.

Chapter 1 presents a review of the current state of the field in relation to attitudes towards sexual offenders, with gaps in current knowledge being identified. In Chapter 2, the theoretical framework within which the empirical aspects of the thesis operate is set out. Key constructs in this section include dual-process cognition, and our reliance on implicit (i.e., non-conscious) mental processes when making decisions. Chapter 3 builds upon criticisms of one measure of attitudes towards sexual offenders in order to reconceptualise its use into one of an outcome measure. This is then used throughout Chapters 4, 5, and 6 as a measure of sentencing and risk judgements, in order to examine the effects of various experimental manipulations. Studies presented in Chapter 4 found that heuristic-based processes based around the principles of *availability* appear to influence decision-making about sexual offenders at the macro (political) level, but not at the micro (individual) level. Instead, individual participants' attitudes and judgements about sexual offenders were dependent on different primes relating to the *representativeness* (Chapter 5) and *affect* (Chapter 6) heuristics. Chapter 7 offers a discussion of the empirical findings presented at earlier points of the thesis, and outlines opportunities to develop further work into the heuristic-based nature of attitudes towards sexual offenders.

The work contained within this thesis is original, in that well-validated theoretical models are used to begin to examine the psychological mechanisms that may underpin attitudes

towards sexual offenders. The apparent dual-process nature of such views calls into question some previously-expressed calls within the literature that presenting fact-based information about sexual offenders may lead to improvements in societal attitudes. Instead, it may be that more indirect and emotional methods may be required to achieve such aims. Towards the end of the thesis, clear opportunities for further work are set out, as are some of the potential implications of this research.

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This thesis represents the culmination of approximately six years of academic work, which started at undergraduate level and continued further than I had ever imagined that it would. As such, I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to a number of people who have guided me in the right direction, kept me on track with my thinking, and challenged me intellectually on some of the decisions that I have made in this process.

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The PhD experience has developed me hugely as an academic. The work arguably raises more questions than it answers, such is the nature of exploratory studies. As such, this is just the beginning, and I’m looking forward to the next chapter...

Craig A. Harper

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION

Sexual crime is a major international public health problem (Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers, 2011). The latest figures from the Crime Survey of England and Wales indicate that 99,609 sexual offences were recorded by police forces in the year ending September 2015 (Office for National Statistics, 2016). This is the highest level of recorded sexual crime figures since the introduction of the National Crime Reporting Standard, and represents a year-on-year increase of 36%.

The rise in reporting rates has coincided with the emergence of several recent scandals involving the alleged perpetration of historic sexual offences by high-profile public figures. These scandals (which have led to widely-publicised policing operations; e.g., ‘Operation Yewtree’; Gray & Watt, 2012) have led to increased coverage of sexual crime, and the establishment of this type of offending behaviour as an ever-increasingly important political issue. In the past five years, for instance, the UK has introduced the Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme, and senior members of Parliament – including Prime Minister David Cameron – have called for internet censorship in an attempt to restrict access to illicit materials online (e.g., Cameron, 2013). The intention of these approaches is to reduce rates of sexual crime and to protect potential victims of abuse. However, there appears to be little evidence for the effectiveness of such punitive approaches in achieving this goal.

Theoretically, it is possible to link increased coverage of sexual crime within news and political discourses to inflated public risk perceptions about the perpetrators of these kinds of offences. However, as will be described in this introductory section, there has been little empirical work examining such psychological processes to date. Further, the enactment of increasingly punitive responses to sexual crime has the potential to restrict the opportunities of people with sexual convictions to properly reintegrate into the community and desist from sexual offending on the completion of their formal criminal sanctions (e.g., Willis, Levenson, & Ward, 2010). As such, examining the psychological underpinnings of attitudes towards sexual offenders is an important and timely empirical endeavour.

Thesis Aims

This thesis is principally concerned with examining the role of dual-process cognition in the formation and expression of attitudes and perceptions about sexual offenders. In this regard, three key aims were set at the beginning of the research programme:

- 1) to examine the role of news media in shaping social and political discourse around sexual crime;
- 2) to understand the importance of heuristic-based information processing in the formation and expression of attitudes and perceptions about sexual crime;
- 3) to investigate whether a dual-processing framework can be used to reverse the trend for punitive responding to sexual crime scenarios.

These aims will be achieved through a number of different methodologies, including analyses of contemporary media coverage of sexual offending, large-scale public surveys, and laboratory-based experiments that examine how people come to make judgements about sexual crimes and the people who perpetrate them.

Thesis Structure

This thesis represents my submission for the qualification of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) at the University of Lincoln. It is comprised of seven chapters, which are arranged as three parts: (1) 'Introduction', (2) 'Empirical Studies', and (3) 'General Discussion'.

Chapter 1 provides a review of the existing literature around what is currently known about attitudes towards sexual offenders. This chapter opens with a discussion of the nuanced differences between attitudes and perceptions within social psychological research. Next, an examination of measurement procedures is offered, before factors known to influence attitudes towards sexual offenders are outlined. Chapter 1 concludes with an analysis as to why it is important to consider such attitudes in both social and clinical contexts.

Chapter 2 uses the review from Chapter 1 to identify major theoretical and methodological gaps within the existing literature in this area. Specifically, this chapter poses a problem statement, along with some initial research questions. Following this, the

theoretical approach to answering these questions is set-out. This theoretical section introduces dual-process and implicit approaches to understanding attitudes (and their effect on decision-making) in a general sense. Specifically, three decision making heuristics that are described within the wider cognitive and social psychological literature (*availability*, *representativeness*, and *affect*) are identified as having potential utility in this area of research.

Chapter 3 begins the ‘Empirical Studies’ section of the thesis. Here, an outcome measure for examining perceptions of sexual offenders is developed. This measure draws upon recent criticisms of one measure of ‘attitudes’ towards sexual offenders in order to formulate an alternative measure to be used throughout the thesis.

Chapters 4-6 systematically examine the roles of the three heuristics identified above in guiding attitudes towards sexual offenders. These chapters draw upon a range of analytical approaches, such as analyses of media stories about sexual crime, large public surveys, and experimental methodologies, in order to explore these constructs.

Chapter 7 represents the ‘General Discussion’ section of the thesis, and brings together the empirical findings presented in earlier chapters. Specifically, a theoretical model of how a dual-processing framework can be applied to the study of attitudes towards sexual offenders is articulated. Finally, the thesis closes with an exploration of its originality and contribution to the existing literature, as well as some suggestions for future research.

Statement of Authorship

The empirical work described in the thesis is derived from research that has been conducted, submitted, and published throughout the PhD studentship period (2013-2016). A list of published papers, as well as conference presentations given during this period, is provided in Appendix A. I confirm that in each of these publications, I contributed the majority of the work, including formulating research plans, study design, data collection and analysis, and manuscript preparation, unless stated otherwise.

Chapter 1 was re-drafted as a review article addressing the importance of understanding attitudes and perceptions about sexual offenders within forensic and community contexts (co-authored with Prof. Todd Hogue and Dr. Ross Bartels). At the time of writing

(September 2016), a revision of this review is under consideration with the journal *Aggression and Violent Behavior*. With regards to further literature reviews and conceptual pieces, an article examining the potential utility of applying moral foundations theory (Haidt & Joseph, 2004) to the study of sexual crime discourse has been published in the *Journal of Sexual Aggression* (co-authored with Prof. Andrew Harris, University of Massachusetts Lowell, USA). This review was borne out of a general reading of the moral psychology literature, and a chance conversation with Prof. Harris at the 2015 Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (ATSA) Conference in Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

With reference to the empirical work presented in Part 2, the findings reported in each of these chapters has been written up in manuscript form. Two of these have been published in print, two are 'in press', two are 'under review', and a further two papers are in preparation. Journals to which these papers have been published include those in the disciplines of forensic psychology and criminology, such as *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice, Psychology, Crime & Law*, and *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*. These papers have been co-authored with Prof. Todd Hogue and/or Dr. Ross Bartels (both based at the University of Lincoln, UK).

CHAPTER 1

ATTITUDES TOWARDS SEXUAL OFFENDERS: WHAT DO WE KNOW, AND WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

1.1. Introduction

The study of attitudes towards sexual offenders is a popular topic for empirical inquiry in the study of social views about the criminal justice system. Previous work has suggested that lay members of the public hold views about sexual offenders that do not correspond with empirical and official statistics. For example, Levenson, Brannon, Fortney, and Baker (2007) reported that Australian members of the public estimated that 75% of sexual offenders reoffend, while empirical work has found this figure to be just 13-19% (e.g., Hanson & Bussière, 1998). Such views are linked, both conceptually and empirically, to preferences for risk-averse social programmes, such as community notification procedures and sexual offender registries (Levenson et al., 2007). Theoretical accounts from criminological and social studies indicate that attitudes towards sexual offenders could have profound implications for clinical and social decision-making (LeBel, Burnett, Maruna, & Bushway, 2008; Willis et al., 2010). For example, societal negativity about sexual offenders has been linked to a range of disadvantages for this group upon their re-entering society after serving criminal sentences. These include difficulties in accessing stable housing arrangements (Clark, 2007), and organized attempts to displace them from local communities (e.g., Kitzinger, 2008). Despite these potential implications, Brown (2009) suggested that there is a dearth of knowledge about the concepts and processes that underpin these attitudes. This lack of knowledge may lead us to attempt to bring about changes in attitudes towards sexual offenders using a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach. This method of influencing attitude change may fail to reap the intended improvements in attitudes if communicators fail to appreciate the complexity of beliefs or attitudinal stances about this group (King & Roberts, 2015).

This chapter sets out to take stock of the current state of the attitudes towards sexual offenders field. This is not the first review of this area of research, but rarely is a comprehensive overview of the measurement, formation, and implications of attitudes towards sexual offenders presented within the literature. For example, Brown’s (2009)

book chapter on public opinion about sexual offenders represents one review of this area. However, her main focus was public opinion around sentencing policy, and as such this review did not examine different approaches to measuring attitudes, factors influencing attitudes, or the potential utility of considering attitudes in relation to clinical practice and reintegration processes. Similarly, Willis et al. (2010) presented a conceptual paper that sought to highlight the relevance of attitudes towards sexual offenders when considering desistance from sexual offending. However, covering the psychological factors underpinning such attitudes was not within the scope of their article. As such, the review presented in this chapter represents an overdue summary of what we currently know about attitudes towards sexual offenders. Information will be presented in relation to four key areas:

1. The measurement of attitudes towards sexual offenders;
2. The factors that are currently known to underpin attitudes towards sexual offenders;
3. The malleability of attitudes towards sexual offenders;
4. The importance of attitudes towards sexual offenders in relation to clinical practice and societal reintegration.

1.1.1. Discriminating ‘Attitudes’ from ‘Perceptions’

An attitude is defined as “psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or unfavour” (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 1). They are conceptualised as being made up of three components (e.g., Breckler, 1984): (1) *cognition* - which is related to the types of beliefs (i.e., stereotypes) that a person holds about a particular concept or entity; (2) *affect* - which refers to the visceral emotional response that people have towards a particular topic or entity; and (3) *behaviour* - referring to the ways in which people act within the physical world with reference to the concept or entity under consideration. These three components of attitudes are all important, but it has been suggested that many researchers do not comprehensively consider all of these components when studying attitudes towards sexual offenders (Hogue, 2015).

What many studies do examine, however, are ‘perceptions’ about sexual offenders. Conceptually, perceptions are more akin to stereotypical views and, thus, are primarily

comprised of knowledge-based attributions about a topic or entity (Jussim, 2012). Thus, unlike attitudes, they do not represent emotional evaluations of a topic or entity. In this sense, only examining perceptions is a much narrower approach than examining attitudes. By examining attitudes (in a manner consistent with Breckler's (1984) conceptualization), it is possible to look deeper at the processes underpinning perceptions (through evaluations of affective responses), and further to investigate the potential implications of perceptions (through evaluations of behavioural responses). Throughout this chapter, the primary focus is on research into *attitudes* towards sexual offenders.

1.2. Measuring Attitudes towards Sexual Offenders

In order to accurately discuss the attitudes towards sexual offenders literature, it is first appropriate to outline the methods that are currently used by researchers to measure these constructs. In this section, a critical overview of current tools used to measure attitudes towards sexual offenders is presented.

1.2.1. The Attitudes to Sexual Offenders (ATS) Scale

The Attitudes to Sexual Offenders (ATS) scale (Hogue; 1993) was developed as a 36-item self-report measure, designed to capture respondents' affective and evaluative judgements about sexual offenders. The ATS was adapted from the Attitudes to Prisoners scale (ATP; Melvin, Gramling, & Gardner, 1985), with Hogue (1993) modifying the ATP by substituting the word 'prisoners' for the phrase 'sex offenders'.

ATS items are framed as attitudinal statements (e.g., "Sex offenders are no better or worse than other people"), with respondents rating their level of agreement with each statement using a five-point Likert scale (scored from 0 'Strongly Disagree' to 4 'Strongly Agree'; 19 of which are reverse scored). Thus, the ATS has a potential scoring range of 0-144, and higher scores indicate more positive attitudes towards sexual offenders. The ATS has repeatedly been shown to have excellent internal consistency (α 's > 0.85) across a range of different samples (Craig, 2005; Higgins & Ireland, 2009; Kjelsberg & Loos, 2008; Kleban & Jeglic, 2012; Proeve & Howells, 2006).

Hogue and Harper (in prep) have developed a shortened version of the ATS (the ‘ATS-21’; Appendix B). Drawing on data from three large European community samples, this revised scale consists of 21 of the original ATS items, of which 11 are reverse-scored. These items load equally on to three seven-item factors, labelled ‘Trust’, ‘Intent’, and ‘Social Distance’. The ATS-21 has a potential scoring range of 0-84, with higher scores again indicating more positive attitudes towards sexual offenders. The ATS-21 also correlates extremely highly with the original 36-item ATS ($r = .98, p < .001$), and demonstrates excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.94$).

The ATS-21 (and by extension, the original form of the ATS) can be said to provide a comprehensive examination of all three components of attitudes. The ‘Trust’ factor represents affect-based judgements about sexual offenders (e.g., “I would like associating with some sex offenders”), the ‘Intent’ factor examines cognitive (i.e., stereotype-related) evaluations of sexual offenders (e.g., “Sex offenders only think about themselves”; reverse-scored), and the “Social Distance” factor acts as a behaviour-related measure of views about sexual offenders (e.g., “If sex offenders do well in prison/hospital, they should be let out on parole”).

Despite its status as a measure of stable attitudes (Hogue, 2015), several authors have used the ATS scale as an outcome measure. That is, researchers have manipulated ATS items in order to examine respondents’ attitudes towards specific ‘types’ of sexual offenders. Examples of such work include analyses of attitudes towards female sexual offenders (e.g., Gakhal & Brown, 2011), and juvenile sexual offenders (e.g., Harper, 2012). Given the conceptually stable nature of attitudes (Hogue, 2015), this approach to ATS research may present problems for researchers trying to understand and interpret the attitudes towards sexual offenders literature as a complete corpus. Fuller information about the differences in these studies are provided in subsequent appropriate sections of this chapter.

1.2.2. The Community Attitudes towards Sex Offenders (CATSO) Scale

The Community Attitudes towards Sex Offenders (CATSO) scale (Church, Wakeman, Miller, Clements, & Sun, 2008; Appendix C) is an 18-item self-report questionnaire measure. It was developed as an alternative to other measures that, according to Church

et al. (2008), had either: (a) not been adequately validated, or (b) been developed based on measures designed to examine attitudes towards other (i.e., general offender) populations.

Like the ATS, CATSO items are composed as statements about sexual offenders (e.g., “Most sex offenders are unmarried men”). Respondents indicate their level of agreement with each statement using a six-point Likert scale (scored from 1 ‘Strongly Disagree’ to 6 ‘Strongly Agree’). Scores for each of the items are summed to provide a composite CATSO score that can range from 18–108 (higher scores indicate more negative views about sexual offenders). In a range of studies, the CATSO has demonstrated good levels of internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.74$; Church et al., 2008; Conley, Hill, Church, Stoeckel, & Allen, 2011; Jones, 2013; Malinen, Willis, & Johnston, 2014; Shackley, Weiner, Day, & Willis, 2014; Shelton, Stone, & Winder, 2013).

Church et al.’s (2008) initial analyses of the CATSO data identified an underlying four-factor structure, with these being labelled ‘Social Isolation’, ‘Capacity to Change’, ‘Dangerousness’, and ‘Deviancy’. Each of these factors (with the exception of ‘Deviancy’) demonstrated acceptable levels of internal consistency (all α 's > 0.70). A number of studies have sought to validate the CATSO with new factor analyses (e.g., Conley et al., 2011; Shackley et al., 2014; Shelton et al., 2013; Tewksbury & Mustaine, 2013). However, none of these studies (with the exception of Tewksbury & Mustaine, 2013) have reported the same underlying factor structure as Church et al. (2008). Some studies have found the CATSO to be comprised of two factors (e.g., ‘Social Isolation’ and ‘Capacity for Change’; Conley et al., 2011), while others have identified a different four factor structure than that reported in Church et al.’s (2008) original development paper (e.g., ‘Social Tendencies’, ‘Treatment and Punishment’, ‘Crime Characteristics’, and ‘Sexual Behaviour’; Shackley et al., 2014). Interpreting this last structure, there is a case to be made that the CATSO actually examines knowledge-based attributions about sexual offenders (and thus is a measure of ‘perceptions’, rather than ‘attitudes’). This lack of structural consistency has led to some authors calling for partial or complete overhauls of the CATSO (Conley et al., 2011; Shackley et al., 2014; Shelton et al., 2013).

With regard to research conducted using the CATSO, this measure has primarily been used in order to examine the attitudes of different demographic or professional groups towards sexual offenders (e.g., Shackley et al., 2014; Tewksbury & Mustaine, 2013). The

results of these studies will be discussed in more detail in subsequent sections of this chapter.

1.2.3. Non-Standardized Measures of Perceptions of Sexual Offenders

In addition to the more established ATS and CATSO measures, a range of authors have used other self-report approaches to examine attitudes and perceptions of sexual offenders. Wnuck, Chapman, and Jeglic (2006) developed the Attitudes towards the Treatment of Sex Offenders scale (ATTSO). This is a 15-item self-report questionnaire with three underlying factors ('Incapacitation', 'Treatment Ineffectiveness', and 'Mandatory Treatment'), and examines the degree to which respondents support or object to the treatment of sexual offenders, or believe in treatment efficacy. Despite original claims that the ATTSO could be used as a scoping tool for identifying sites for sexual offender treatment facilities, the measure has not been validated or utilized comprehensively enough since its inception to warrant this, and so few insights can be drawn from it.

A number of studies have developed their own measures for assessing what they refer to as 'attitudes' towards sexual offenders. These studies, however, typically use policy positions as stimuli, and use participants' self-reported endorsement of these propositions as a proxy for attitudes. Levenson et al. (2007), for example, examined public perceptions of sexual offender registration and community notification laws (see also Kernsmith, Craun, & Foster, 2009). Higher levels of support of these kinds of procedures are taken to be indicative of a punitive stance, and as such are interpreted as being indicative of negative attitudes towards sexual offenders. Further, authors such as Brown (1999) have examined attitudes towards the treatment of sexual offenders. In these studies, support for sexual offender treatment is potentially consistent with the view that these individuals can change (which in turn has been associated with more positive attitudes towards sexual offenders; e.g., Blagden, Winder, & Hames, 2016). The findings from these approaches offer interesting insights into politically-relevant responses to sexual crime. However, in terms of construct validity, they are not strictly a direct reflection of one's 'attitude' towards sexual offenders, despite often being labelled as such.

1.2.4. Indirect Assessment of Attitudes towards Sexual Offenders

In comparison to self-report (e.g., questionnaire) measures, there is a growing trend within social psychology to make use of indirect measurement procedures when assessing attitudes (Gawronski & De Houwer, 2014). Self-report measures (e.g., questionnaires) assess consciously accessible (explicit) attitudes by asking participants to directly respond to individual statements. As such, attitudinal questionnaires can be influenced by situational factors, such as mood or externally-presented stimuli (Visser & Cooper, 2003), as well as by socially desirable responding. This is especially the case if the attitude being measured is of a sensitive nature (Banse & Imhoff, 2013). In contrast, indirect measures require participants to perform a task (e.g., categorising specific stimuli as fast as possible), the outcome of which (e.g., response-latencies) can be used to infer an attitudinal stance. For example, the Implicit Association Test (IAT; Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998) is commonly used as an indirect measure of attitudes. In brief, it compares how fast participants categorise stimuli into one paired category (e.g., 'sex offenders-bad') relative to an opposing paired category (e.g., 'sex offenders-good'). In this example, an individual who produced faster response-latencies for the former category would be presumed to hold a stronger association between 'sex offenders' and 'bad' in their memory, relative to an association between 'sex offenders' and 'good'. As such, it can be inferred that they hold a negative attitude towards sexual offenders.

Indirect methods are often used to examine implicit attitudes (that is, immediate evaluative reactions resulting from associative processes, which are typically outside an individual's conscious control or awareness; Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006). However, due to the indirect nature of their procedure, indirect measures also allow for sensitive or contentious attitudes to be more effectively measured without the influence of social desirability. As such, there may be benefits in using such indirect procedures in the assessment of attitudes towards sexual offenders, given the socially-contentious nature of the topic.

In the only published study using an indirect assessment of attitudes towards sexual offenders, Malinen et al. (2014) made use of a Single-Target Implicit Association Test (ST-IAT; Wigboldus, Holland, & van Knippenberg, 2006). Specifically, their participants were asked to associate words related to 'sexual offenders' (e.g., 'rapist', 'molester') with positive words (e.g., 'happy', 'pleasure') in one block, and with negative words (e.g.,

‘hate’, ‘evil’) in another block. The differences in average response-latencies in these blocks were then used to compute an index of implicit attitudes towards sexual offenders (such that faster response times in, for example, the negative block were indicative of more negative implicit attitudes towards sexual offenders). Malinen et al. (2014) reported a positive correlation ($r = .41$) between implicit attitudes and CATSO scores. While this suggests a reliable relationship between outcomes on these different measurement approaches, there is still a substantial amount of variance unaccounted for. Malinen et al. (2014) did not fully elaborate on this particular aspect of their results. However, a brief examination of the theoretical literature would suggest that socially-desirable responding, as well as study-specific demand characteristics in explicit responding, may be relevant and important factors for consideration (Banse & Imhoff, 2013). It is also possible that the two measures (i.e., the CATSO and the ST-IAT) were tapping distinct, but related, constructs.

1.2.5. Section Summary

Breckler’s (1984) tripartite structure of attitudes (i.e., cognition, affect, and behaviour) appears to be differentially reflected in existing attitudinal measures about sexual offenders. The revised ATS-21 (Hogue & Harper, in prep) is arguably the most comprehensive measure of all three attitudinal domains that is currently available in this area of research, with underlying factors of ‘Trust’ (an affective attitudinal domain), ‘Intent’ (a cognitive attitudinal domain), and ‘Social Distance’ (a behaviour-based attitudinal domain). In contrast, the much-used CATSO measure has repeatedly been shown to have variable levels of internal consistency, as well as an inconsistent underlying factor structure. Further, the cognitions measured using the CATSO may be limited to those that are more akin to ‘perceptions’ rather than the broader topic of ‘attitudes’. Away from self-report questionnaires, indirect measurement procedures (e.g., the ST-IAT used by Malinen et al., 2014), are a scarcity within this research area. This is in spite of the potential utility in using such approaches to overcome the shortcomings of more explicitly-oriented measures.

1.3. Factors Underpinning Attitudes towards Sexual Offenders

The current literature on attitudes towards sexual offenders is largely descriptive in nature. That is, researchers have predominantly made use of one of the measures described previously (typically either the ATS or the CATSO), and administered these scales among different populations in order to identify potential between-groups differences. This section is arranged in three parts. First, perceivers' characteristics influencing the attitudes of different groups are explored. Issues considered under this heading include the age, gender, education, political orientation, sexual victimisation status, newspaper readership, and personality. Second, the role of offence- and offender-related factors in moderating attitudes and perceptions about sexual offenders is explored. Concepts that are considered here include offender demographics, and issues about their levels of intent or culpability. Third, the literature on professional/occupational influences on attitude towards sexual offenders is examined.

1.3.1. The Influence of Perceivers' Characteristics on Attitudes towards Sexual Offenders

Only two published studies (both conducted in Australia/New Zealand) have sought to explicitly examine the general influence of demographic factors on attitudes and perceptions about sexual offenders (Shackley et al., 2014; Willis, Malinen, & Johnston, 2013). In both of these studies, the CATSO was used as the outcome measure of attitudes. The only demographic factor that was found to be influential in moderating attitudes towards sexual offenders in both of these studies was educational attainment, with people holding higher-level qualifications expressing more positive (or, rather, less negative) attitudes than those with lesser qualifications.

These findings support the inconsistent nature of work into demographic influences on attitudes towards sexual offenders. The majority of studies report no such demographic differences (Hogue & Peebles, 1997; Kjelsberg & Loos, 2008; Katz-Schiavone, Levenson, & Ackerman, 2008). Some studies (conducted in a range of contexts, including the U.K., Australia/New Zealand, and Norway) have indicated differences in attitudes based on gender (Ferguson & Ireland, 2006; Higgins & Ireland, 2009; Radley, 2011; Willis et al., 2013), and age (Brown, 1999; Craig, 2005; Kjelsberg & Loos, 2008), although the direction of these differences is inconsistent between studies. In relation to

parenthood, most studies find no differences between parents and non-parents in relation to global attitudes towards sexual offenders (e.g., Craun & Theriot, 2009). However, findings reported by Levenson et al. (2007) found that, compared to non-parents, parents in the U.S. were more likely to express fear when asked about this group of offenders, and reject locally-based rehabilitation facilities¹. Further, Brown (1999) reported that parents in a British sample were less likely to support the local establishment of a sexual offender treatment centre than participants without children.

Numerous international authors (from the U.K., U.S., and Australia/New Zealand) have theoretically linked newspaper readership with negative attitudes about sexual offenders through the creation of homogeneous stereotypical images (e.g., Corabian & Hogan, 2012; Galeste, Fradella, & Fogel, 2012; Harper & Hogue, 2015; Harris & Socia, 2014; McCartan, 2010, McCartan, Kemshall, & Tabachnick, 2015; Quinn, Forsyth, & Muller-Quinn, 2004; Thakker, 2012). Only Brown (1999) has published statistical evidence of readership group-based differences in attitudes towards sexual offenders, but this was indirect through an analysis of readership habits among members of different socio-economic groupings. Extrapolating from her other findings, Brown (1999) suggested that tabloid readers in her British study expressed more negative attitudes towards sexual offenders than those who read broadsheet publications. Seeking to understand why such differences might exist, Harper & Hogue (2015) undertook a content analysis of sexual crime stories printed in the national British press. They found no evidence of linguistic differences (operationalised as the proportion of stories pertaining to different emotional groupings; e.g., 'negativity', 'positivity', and 'anger) between tabloids and broadsheets. However, they did find substantial differences in the labels used by these publications to describe sexual offenders within story headlines, with tabloids being more overtly hostile and disparaging than broadsheets.

Olver and Barlow (2010) published the only study to explicitly examine attitudes and perceptions about sexual offenders in relation to personality factors. Although few differences emerged in their analyses, the personality factor of 'Openness to Experience' (defined as having an active imagination and high levels of intellectual curiosity; McCrae & John, 1992) was significantly associated with a more rehabilitative stance to sexual offender sentencing. Although this personality factor has been theoretically and

¹ While this is not necessarily an attitudinal outcome, this finding does suggest that the behavioural manifestations of attitudes may change as a function of some demographic factors.

empirically linked to political liberalism (e.g., Roets, Cornelis, & van Hiel, 2014), there were no noticeable differences in Olver and Barlow's (2010) study between American political 'Liberals' and 'Conservatives' in relation to their perceptions about sexual offender sentencing and risk.

Several studies have examined the role of both direct (being a victim) and indirect (knowing a victim) sexual victimisation on attitudes towards sexual offenders. The majority of these studies have found no attitudinal differences between people who did or did not know a victim of a sexual offence (Katz-Schiavone et al., 2008, Sahlstrom & Jeglic, 2008; Willis et al., 2013). In the two studies that have found differences between these two groups (Ferguson & Ireland, 2006; Nelson, Herlihy, & Oescher, 2002), more positive attitudes were reported by participants who did know somebody who had been sexually victimised. This may be reflective of the typicality of sexual offending being perpetrated by somebody who is known by the victim (Radford et al., 2011). That is, by being victimised by somebody known to them, victims did not necessarily subscribe to inaccurate stereotypes about sexual offenders.

1.3.2. Offence-Related Influences on Attitudes towards Sexual Offenders

As King and Roberts (2015) argue, "when asked about 'sex offenders' many are inclined to envision the media-proliferated stereotypical image of a violent, predatory male pedophile" (p. 2). In line with the ideas advanced by Salerno et al. (2010), this could mean that judgements made about 'sexual offenders' (in general) may be more punitive than those made about specific cases. Offender- and offence-specific information has been found to have a substantial impact on attitudes and perceptions about sexual offenders. Examples of such information includes the age of the offender (older perpetrators are judged more negatively; e.g., Harper, 2012; Sahlstrom & Jeglic, 2008), and the gender of the offender (male perpetrators are judged more negatively than females; e.g., Gakhal & Brown, 2011).

Information about the personality of sexual offenders has also been found to be influential in moderating attitudes towards them. Cohn, Dupuis, and Brown (2009), for example, reported that students judged a male perpetrator of rape as being more responsible for the act when he was portrayed as having a bad reputation (operationalised as pursuing casual

sex with multiple partners), as opposed to when he was portrayed as having a more ‘gentlemanly’ reputation. A finding such as this further serves to highlight the importance of social stereotyping in judgements of guilt.

Hogue and Peebles (1997) found that criminal justice professionals provided more punitive sentencing recommendations when a rapist was depicted as explicitly having an intention of having sex with a woman regardless of her (lack of) consent. However, there were no significant differences in sentencing recommendations in relation to the presence (or absence) of remorse after the rape had been committed. These results corroborated Kleinke, Wallis, and Stadler’s (1992) findings from a student sample. Similarly, Burriss and Rempel (2012) reported a significant softening of judgements about a rapist when he was unable to achieve an erection due to a lack of victim consent (indicative of a lack of rape intention). In contrast, no differences in attribute evaluations were found when the offender’s sexual dysfunction was as a result of an attack of conscience (indicative of remorse for his behaviour). These findings have potentially substantial implications within the courtroom, with a defendant’s level of belief in the consent of a potential victim being of high importance for jurors when reaching their verdicts.

1.3.3. Professional Influences on Attitudes towards Sexual Offenders

The most commonly reported direct influence on attitudinal outcomes is experience of working with sexual offenders. In his original ATS paper, Hogue (1993) reported a stepwise pattern of attitudinal differences between different groups of professionals. Police officers expressed the most negative attitudes, followed in turn by prison officers not involved in offender treatment, prison officers involved in offender treatment, probation officers, and prison psychologists. Subsequent research has consistently supported the link between exposure to sexual offenders within an occupational environment (particularly on involving treatment-based work) and more positive attitudes towards sexual offenders (measured using the ATS; Blagden et al., 2016; Gakhal & Brown, 2011; Hogue & Peebles, 1997; Johnson, Hughes, & Ireland, 2007; Radley, 2011). One interpretation of these results is that people who hold less negative attitudes towards sexual offenders are drawn to jobs that involve working in a therapeutic or supportive role with this population. However, Simon and Arnaut (2011) found that undergoing more than 30 hours of training to work therapeutically with sexual offenders improves attitudes,

relative to less or no training. As such, an equally plausible explanation for such group differences is that working in a supportive or therapeutic manner with sexual offenders improves one's attitudes towards them. The precise psychological processes underpinning these attitudinal changes have not been robustly examined, although some authors have suggested that dispelling of societal stereotypes about sexual offenders may play a role (e.g., Sanghara & Wilson, 2006).

1.3.4. Section Summary

A range of demographic and personality-related concepts have been found to be inconsistently related to both more positive and more negative attitudes towards sexual offenders. As such, no clear conclusions can be drawn about the influence of these factors on such viewpoints. The single factor that has consistently been found to potentially have a positive impact on attitudes is exposure to sexual offenders, either in a professional or personal capacity. Despite the apparent lack of demographic-based differences in attitudes towards sexual offenders, those that do exist provide researchers with a useful framework for discussing issues related to sexual crime in different areas. For example, the differences between tabloid and broadsheet newspaper readers may indicate that different approaches are required by academics communicating through these different media channels. This conclusion indicates that our current 'one-size-fits-all' approach to improving societal attitudes about sexual offenders may require some level of revision.

The process underlying this improvement in attitudes appears to be the breaking down of myths and stereotypes about sexual offenders, which may be informed through skewed and emotional media reports. Considering this, addressing societal stereotypes about sexual offenders, either directly through education, or indirectly through incidental exposure to counter-stereotypical exemplars, may be a potential route to positive attitude change.

1.4. The Malleability of Attitudes towards Sexual Offenders

The implicit aim of much of the research into attitudes towards sexual offenders appears to have been to identify potential between-groups differences in attitudes towards sexual offenders, and to begin to formulate strategies for influencing these views. In this section,

a number of intervention studies that have sought to specifically improve attitudes towards sexual offenders are examined.

1.4.1. Professional Training Programmes

Hogue (1994) measured attitudes towards sexual offenders both before and after a three-week training programme that was delivered to sexual offender treatment facilitators within the British prison system. This programme was comprised of modules related to theories of sexual offending, the goals of sexual offender treatment, and the practical skills needed to work effectively with this client group (Hogue, 1991). At the end of the programme, participants expressed significantly more positive attitudes towards sexual offenders (as measured using the ATS) than at the beginning. A six-month follow-up survey found that participants felt significantly more confident and competent in their job role, and a majority suggested that their treatment groups were more successful as a result of the training programme. However, ATS scores were not examined at this follow-up stage. Further, there was no control group used by Hogue (1994), making it difficult to directly attribute the improvements in attitude scores to the training programme (as opposed to work-based exposure to sexual offenders, as discussed previously).

Similarly, Craig (2005) examined the impact of an intensive two-day training programme in a sample of probation workers involved with sexual offender treatment. This programme was comprised of modules about theories of sexual offending, working constructively with sexual offenders, assessing risk, and challenging common myths about this population. Consistent with Hogue's (1994) results, Craig (2005) reported an increase in participants' confidence in relation to working with sexual offenders. However, no changes in attitudes (as measured by the ATS) were found as a result of the training. Kjelsberg and Loos (2008) also failed to find any significant changes in ATS scores following a compulsory two-day training workshop delivered to staff working within the Norwegian prison service.

Harper (2012) surveyed undergraduates taking psychology and non-psychology courses in British universities. No significant differences were found in the ATS scores of psychology and non-psychology students, nor between subgroups of psychology students. Harper (2012) suggested that undergraduate education in forensic psychology may be insufficient at challenging societal-level stereotypes about sexual offenders.

The discrepancy between Hogue's (1994) findings and those reported by Craig (2005), Kjelsberg and Loos (2008), and Harper (2012) can be explained by data provided by Simon and Arnaut (2011). They found differences in ATS scores after different lengths of training programmes. Although no specific training package was examined, Simon and Arnaut (2011) found that licensed forensic professionals who had engaged in more than 30 hours of training in working with sexual offenders expressed significantly more positive attitudes towards sexual offenders than participants who had received less or no training. These results indicate the potential effectiveness of extended and intensive training programmes, with a specific focus on working with sexual offenders, in improving attitudes among professionals.

1.4.2. Social Education Programmes

Kleban and Jeglic (2012) investigated the utility of various psychoeducational options for improving attitudes towards sexual offenders. Methods that were evaluated in their study included 'reading' (i.e., participants read a short informative piece about sexual offenders), 'presentation' (i.e., participants read a short informative piece about sexual offenders, and then attended a presentation), and 'discussion' (i.e., participants read a short informative piece about sexual offenders, attended a presentation, and then discussed the presentation with others). Kleban and Jeglic (2012) reported that their interventions had been a success, and suggested that significant stepwise improvements in attitudes meant that deeper consideration of the issue contributed to this result. However, Kleban and Jeglic (2012) interpreted high ATS scores as being indicative of negative attitudes. As stipulated by Hogue (1993), higher scores on the ATS reflect more positive attitudes (see Section 1.2.1). Thus, it was unclear as to whether the ATS data were scored according to established guidelines. If there was indeed an interpretative error, then deeper consideration of sexual offenders actually led to significantly more negative attitudes in Kleban and Jeglic's (2012) study.

More recently, Malinen et al. (2014) examined the malleability of public attitudes towards sexual offenders using manipulations of mock news stories. They reported that participants presented with an 'informative' mock news story (where facts about an offender's risk assessments and prison history was presented) expressed significantly more positive attitudes (as measured by the CATSO) than participants in a control

condition (no mock story presented). There was no difference in the attitudes between participants presented with the ‘informative’ or ‘typical’ (fear-laden) mock news story. Further, no significant group differences were reported in relation to implicit attitudes towards sexual offenders (that is, response-latencies of participants classifying ‘sexual offender’ words with to ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ evaluation words in an ST-IAT were unchanged as a function of these experimental stimuli). Malinen et al. (2014) concluded that, while there is potential to influence public attitudes towards sexual offenders through media presentations, repeated exposure to information targeted at emotional responses to sexual crime may be needed to achieve reliable and long-lasting attitude change.

1.4.3. The Influence of Labels on Attitudes towards Sexual Offenders

Not only do media reports potentially influence generalized attitudes towards sexual offenders (see Section 1.3.4), but they also have the ability to focus public attention on certain kinds of sexual crime, and the characteristics of those who perpetrate these types of offences. Harper and Hogue (2015) reported that lay observations about the differences in attitudes towards sexual offenders among newspaper readership groups may be attributable to the emotionally-laden descriptors attributed to the perpetrators of sexual crime in particular types of publications. These descriptors are thus conceptualized as labels for stereotypical images held by readers, which are then used to form and express their attitudes and judgements about sexual offenders. Examining this effect of the ‘sexual offender’ label more directly, Harris and Socia (2014) presented American participants with a series of policy positions. They reported that participants expressed more punitive responses to sexual crime (e.g., support for social network bans, registration procedures, and residency restrictions) when people were described as “sex offenders” than when they were described as “people who have committed crimes of a sexual nature”. Harris and Socia’s (2014) findings are thus supportive of King and Roberts’ (2015) assertion that there is something inherent in the ‘sexual offender’ label that leads to more visceral punitive responses.

Several authors note a similar trend in the ways in which society discusses the issue of child sexual abuse, with the perpetrators of these types of offences typically being labelled as ‘paedophiles’ (e.g., Feelgood & Hoyer, 2008; Harrison, Manning, & McCartan, 2010). Recent research has shown that the impact of the ‘paedophile’ label on judgements (e.g.,

about sentencing) can be profound. For example, Imhoff (2015) recently found that people were judged to be more responsible for their urges when described using the ‘paedophile’ label, than when described as “people with a sexual interest in [prepubescent] children”. Participants also advocated harsh punishments for those described as “paedophiles”, even in the absence of an offence being committed.

Similarly, Jahnke, Imhoff, and Hoyer (2015) surveyed community members across two studies in Germany and the U.S. in order to examine levels of stigmatisation towards ‘paedophiles’. They reported that a majority of participants associated the ‘paedophile’ label with the concepts of fear and danger. Paedophiles were also the subjects of more punitive judgements about social distance (i.e., befriending behaviour) and criminal sentencing. In relation to punishment judgements, Jahnke et al. (2015) reported that approximately half of participants believed paedophiles should be incarcerated, and 14-27% advocated the view that they would be better off dead, despite being explicitly informed that the person in question had never been convicted of a criminal offence.

1.4.4. Section Summary

Building on the review of factors that underpin attitudes and perceptions (Section 1.3), the research literature around the malleability and manipulation of attitudes towards sexual offenders indicates that addressing stereotypes is an important practice. In the published work about influencing the attitudes of professionals working with sexual offenders, the length of training programmes appears to be a key consideration (Simon & Arnaut, 2011). This issue is mirrored within the work on changing social attitudes, with a number of studies having failed to bring about substantial attitudinal changes based upon single exposures to experimental stimuli (Kleban & Jeglic, 2012; Malinen et al., 2014).

The activation of emotionally-charged stereotypes, particularly around the sexual abuse of children (‘paedophilia’, within the popular lexicon), emerges in the recent literature as an important process in guiding societal and personal responses to sexual crime (Imhoff, 2015; Jahnke et al., 2015). The proliferation of such stereotypes within the mainstream media may contribute to the development of deeply-held implicit theories about who ‘sexual offenders’ typically are (Harper & Hogue, 2015; King & Roberts, 2015). As suggested by Malinen et al. (2014), this may mean that a cultural shift in the ways in

which sexual crime is discussed within the media may be needed in order to address these societally-held stereotypes.

1.5. Why are Attitudes towards Sexual Offenders Important?

As highlighted in the introduction to this chapter, attitudes towards sexual offenders have been implicated as influencing a number of areas related to the successful reintegration of sexual offenders into the community (e.g., Willis et al., 2010). In this section, relevant literature around the role of attitudes in promoting desistance from sexual offending (both from a clinical and social perspective) is reviewed.

1.5.1. Attitudes towards Sexual Offenders in Clinical Practice

Within the clinical psychology literature, and emerging in the area of offender rehabilitation, the modality of treatment provision (i.e., cognitive-behavioural therapy vs. psychotherapy vs. person-centred approaches, etc.) is argued to be of less importance than the therapeutic alliance between clients and practitioners (Blow, Sprenkle, & Davis, 2007; Ward & Brown, 2004). With this in mind, it may be the case that treatment providers' attitudes and perceptions about sexual offenders have an important impact on their clinical work.

Blagden et al. (2016) used Dweck's (2000) 'entity' and 'incremental' implicit theory dichotomy to assess whether forensic professionals believed offending behaviour to be fixed or changeable, respectively. Blagden et al. (2016) reported a positive association ($r = .50$) between ATS scores and incremental implicit theories, indicating that positive attitudes towards sexual offenders were associated with the belief that offenders do have the potential to eventually desist from crime. Highlighting the importance of attitudes towards sexual offenders further, Blagden et al. (2016) also found that offenders within groups led by facilitators with incremental implicit theories felt more comfortable within their groups, and were more likely to be engaged in the treatment process.

Hogue (2015) reported findings from a recent study that examined the relationship between attitudes towards sexual offenders and risk judgements within a sample of licensed forensic professionals. A significant negative correlation ($r = -.32$) was found

between ATS-21 scores and risk judgements. That is, as attitudes towards sexual offenders became more negative, perceptions of risk increased. Similar correlation coefficients were also reported in relation to the 'Intent' and 'Social Distance' factors of the ATS-21 measure. Interpreting these relationships, higher perceptions of sexual offender risk can be said to be associated with the belief that sexual offending occurs due to high levels of offender intent. Further, an increased perception of risk is associated with a greater desire to be socially distant from sexual offenders.

Beech and Hamilton-Giachritsis (2005) examined the therapeutic climate within twelve sexual offender treatment groups in the U.K., and found that belief among group members that their treatment facilitator was supportive encouraged greater levels of interpersonal communication. In turn, this communication within the group was associated with increased ratings of group cohesiveness, which was subsequently associated with treatment effectiveness (as measured through significant reductions in offence-supportive cognitions). These findings are suggestive of the idea that the very nature of a supportive therapist undertaking work with sexual offenders can have an indirect positive effect on treatment outcomes, highlighting the importance of staff attitudes within the clinical context.

1.5.2. Attitudes towards Sexual Offenders and Social Reintegration

Willis et al. (2010) highlighted the need to understand and address negative public attitudes towards sexual offenders within the context of reintegration and desistance. They drew upon criminological literature around desistance from crime (Carlsson, 2011; LeBel et al., 2008; Maruna, 2001; Sampson & Laub, 2003) to suggest that societal negativity subsequently acts as a facilitator of punitive policy support, and (indirectly) a hindrance to successful community reintegration.

Referring to similar literature, Göbbels et al. (2012) formulated the *Integrated Theory of Desistance from Sexual Offending* (ITDSO). This is a four-stage theory describing the processes by which sexual offenders transition from incarceration to living a crime-free life. Phase one is labelled 'decisive momentum' and refers to the stage at which a former sexual offender makes a conscious decision that their offending behaviour is problematic and needs to stop, through processes of self-realization, or as a result of some external catalyst (e.g., a new relationship, or changes in life circumstances). In phase two

(‘rehabilitation’), the tenets of the Good Lives Model of offender rehabilitation (GLM; Ward & Mann, 2004), strengths-based approaches (Ward & Mann, 2004), and general desistance-strengthening principles are brought together in order to form a coherent view of sexual offender rehabilitation that focuses on the successful “reconstruction of the self” (Göbbels et al., 2012, p. 457). The focus here is on providing support for people who want to change their sexual offending behaviour by helping them develop the skills needed to do so through positive identity restructuring. Phase three (‘re-entry’) highlights the importance of an external rehabilitation-reinforcing environment, within which people with convictions for sexual offences can begin to rebuild and maintain their new identities as non-offenders. Finally, in phase four (‘normalcy’), these individuals fully adopt this new identity, and view themselves as non-offenders.

The first two phases of the ITDSO focus on clinically-relevant issues, such as readiness to change and individualized rehabilitation plans. Phases three and four, however, adopt a more social perspective, and describe the desistance-strengthening (or desistance-impeding) influences of the external social environment. Göbbels et al. (2012) identified the importance of a rehabilitation-reinforcing social environment, such as the maintenance of positive social relationships and a strong non-offender identity. However, they also point out the difficulties associated with achieving these social conditions with a history of sexual offending, through the processes of stigmatization, labelling, and strict probation restrictions (see also Jahnke & Hoyer, 2013). As such, stigmatization can lead to the internalization of a sexual offender identity (the ‘condemnation script’; Maruna, 2001). If the final two stages of the ITDSO are not successfully managed, then there is a risk that sexual offenders may struggle to accept and maintain the identity of a “non-offending member of society” (Farrell & Calverley, 2006, p. 124), leading to an inflated risk for sexual recidivism. Thus, social conditions (and, specifically, public attitudes) are an important component in the process of desisting from sexual offending.

Elaborating on the tenets of the ITDSO, it could be argued that negative attitudes towards sexual offenders act as a blockage to achieving what Ward and Stewart (2003) termed ‘primary human goods’ within the GLM. As a result, the development of what Göbbels et al. (2012) called a rehabilitation-reinforcing environment is impeded. Primary human goods form the basis of the GLM and are broadly defined as intrinsic life goals that, if pursued and acquired, lead to the “actualization of potentialities that are distinctively human” (Ward & Gannon, 2006, p. 83). From a cursory examination of the GLM's

primary human goods (e.g., Purvis, 2010), it is clear that addressing the public's negative attitudes and reforming the ways in which sexual offenders are managed within the community after serving their criminal sentences are important topics to consider when promoting re-entry and normalcy. Lifelong registration procedures (and their associated restrictions), for example, limit the opportunities for former sexual offenders to achieve the goods of 'excellence in play', 'excellence in work', or 'excellence in agency', as they are not free to exercise autonomy in relation to where they live, socialize, or work. Achieving close ties (and thus the achievement of the primary goods of 'relatedness' and 'community') are also hampered through the effects of the lifelong 'sexual offender' label (Mingus & Burchfield, 2012), as discussed in Section 1.4.3. Naturally, these experiences further limit the opportunities to achieve goods such as 'inner peace' and 'pleasure', and have been found in several studies to lead to feelings of hopelessness, self-stigma, and, in turn, an increased propensity for sexual re-offending.

1.5.3. Section Summary

The literature pertaining to the effect of attitudes on decision-making suggests that the endorsement of negative attitudes towards sexual offenders has profound implications for clinical and social judgements. Combining the results of Blagden et al. (2016), and Beech and Hamilton-Giachritsis (2005), professionals' attitudes towards sexual offenders may influence (and be reflected in) the therapeutic climate of treatment groups, which may in turn have an impact on treatment outcomes. The relationships between attitudes and risk judgements reported by Hogue (2015) are perhaps more worrying from a human rights perspective, as these judgements have implications for sentencing and parole recommendations.

At the societal level, public attitudes towards sexual offenders may have profound effects at a number of levels. As highlighted in previous sections of this review, media outlets both inform and enhance public attitudes, leading to a self-fulfilling cycle of hostility and negativity. This cycle is related to several issues, including legislative discussions (Levenson et al., 2007), support for punitive and restrictive policy positions (Koon-Magnin, 2015), and the stigmatization of sexual offenders (Willis et al., 2010).

The overarching implication of attitudes towards sexual offenders in relation to clinical and social decision-making is that such attitudes can have a profound impact on the

treatment and reintegration of people with sexual convictions, which aligns with the assumptions of the ITDSO (Göbbels et al., 2012). By not addressing such negativity effectively, there is a danger of impeding sexual offenders' reintegration prospects, and thus indirectly increasing their risk of recidivism.

1.6. Chapter Summary

Attitudes towards sexual offenders play an important role in the development of social practices around the treatment and management of sexual offenders, as well as having substantial implications within clinical contexts. The existing literature in this area suggests that attitudes and perceptions about sexual offenders may be, at least in part, driven by media-proliferated and socially-constructed stereotypes about the types of people that sexual offenders are. This assertion is supported by studies reporting more punitive views being expressed by participants when asked to make judgements about sexual offenders (in a general sense) than in relation to specific counter-stereotypical cases (King & Roberts, 2015; Salerno et al., 2010), as well as improved attitudes among participants with practical working experience with sexual offenders, or those endorsing fewer stereotypes (Gakhal & Brown, 2011; Hogue, 1993; Sanghara & Wilson, 2006).

The review of the literature presented in this chapter highlights the ever-developing nature of this field of study. However, there are some issues that require urgent attention. The most pertinent of these issues are around the measurement of attitudes, and the atheoretical nature of this area of research. Methods used to assess attitudes towards sexual offenders are predominantly rooted in explicit procedures, such as self-report questionnaires. While these are useful points for beginning to understand people's views about sexual offenders, they may fail to capture deeper opinions, or be subject to socially-desirable responding. Further, one of the most widely-used questionnaires (the CATSO) has repeatedly been shown to possess poor psychometric properties, and an inconsistent underlying factor structure. In addition to measurement issues, the current state of the research in this area is descriptive in nature. That is, researchers have administered such self-report questionnaires to different groups, and reported differences in responses within each of these populations. While these findings are interesting, they do not tell us anything about the factors underpinning attitudes towards sexual offenders. As such, there appears to be a need to develop novel ways of assessing attitudes towards sexual

offenders, as well as formulating a coherent theoretical framework within which to examine them.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH ORIENTATION

2.1. Problem Statement

The review presented in Chapter 1 highlights several areas of research that require further empirical examination. First, few factors have been clearly identified as being associated with a propensity for expressing negative (or positive) attitudes towards sexual offenders. As such, investigating the processes that underpin such attitudes may help us to understand why, and how, people come to hold such views. As highlighted by Brown (2009), there is currently a dearth of knowledge in this area, despite these views potentially having major implications for clinical, social, and political decision-making, and for facilitating successful rehabilitation (e.g., Göbbels et al., 2012). By understanding the underlying psychological processes that people use to form and express opinions about sexual offenders, it may be possible to develop ways in which to influence such attitudes.

Second, only explicit (self-report) changes in attitudes have been reported in the empirical literature thus far (with the sole exception of Malinen et al., 2014), and even these changes have not been examined longitudinally. As such, these explicit attitude changes may be propositional in nature. That is, they may be attributable to study-specific demand characteristics rather than be reflective of actual changes in attitudes towards sexual offenders. Changes in implicit attitudes may be more indicative of true changes in associative evaluations of sexual offenders, with these changes being theoretically linked to actual changes in behavioural outcomes (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006).

This thesis seeks to fill some of these gaps in the literature by examining some of the factors that potentially underpin attitudes towards sexual offenders. This includes the use of novel and emerging indirect methods to assess implicit cognitive structures and processes, as well as grounding research into attitudes towards sexual offenders within empirically robust experimental paradigms.

2.2. Theoretical Approach

This section is designed to introduce some of the key theoretical concepts and models that will be used as a foundation for the research that follows in the rest of the thesis. It begins with an introduction to dual-process cognition, and the key concepts associated with this approach in relation to information processing and decision-making. Next, the social-cognitive theory of attitudes (Fiske & Taylor, 1991) is presented, along with its links to dual-process cognition. The section concludes by linking these models of cognition to the issue of sexual crime, with a focus on one particular model of attitude change that may be used in the study of attitudes towards sexual offenders.

2.2.1. Introducing Dual-Process Cognition

The empirical work in this thesis sets out to understand responses to sexual crime from a socio-cognitive psychological perspective. In recent times, decision-making has become understood as a modularised activity, with a range of dual-process models of cognition being developed and elaborated upon in an attempt to understand how we process information and form judgements. In this regard, we might consider decision-making to be comprised of a number of different psychological processes.

Broadly speaking, all dual-process models of cognition assume that people use two ‘systems’ for processing information. One of these systems is automatic and non-conscious in nature, enabling people to form rapid judgements with little cognitive effort. The second system is more elaborative, and involves people using conscious reasoning, and the evaluation of available information, before making a decision (for a popular review, see Kahneman, 2011).

Sigmund Freud and the Primary and Secondary Processes

Freud (1923) first introduced a distinction between conscious and non-conscious cognitive processes to the psychological literature, suggesting that human information processing (which he referred to as *psychic activity*) occurred first at a non-conscious level (the ‘primary process’; System 1), and later at the conscious level of awareness (the ‘secondary process’; System 2).

The primary process is overly concerned with wish fulfilment, and is described as stemming from the activity of the *id* in Freud's tripartite theory of personality. Information processing occurs at an unconscious level in the *id*, and is selfish in nature. To this end, the *id* attempts to meet the desires of the individual using the instincts of 'life' (conceptualised as sexual, pleasure-seeking, and creative instincts), and 'death' (conceptualised as aggressive instincts).

In contrast, the secondary process is more rational, and involves the evaluation of the merits and pitfalls of enacting particular behaviours before doing so. This corresponds to Freud's conceptualisation of the *ego*, which operates according to the reality principle. In this sense, the *ego* rationalises the wants of the *id* in order to produce long-term benefits (and reduce long-term injury) for the individual. To do this, the *ego* utilises non-conscious defence mechanisms and conscious rationalisations of the behaviour of the self and others. According to Freud, non-conscious information processing impedes the attempts of individuals to think rationally, and the only hope for them doing so would be to bring non-conscious thought into the conscious domain. This is the aim of psychodynamic psychotherapy.

Contemporary Approaches to Dual-Process Cognition

Building on Freud's conceptualisation of the primary and secondary process, numerous scholars have sought to introduce more cognitively-grounded dual-process models of information processing into the psychological literature. Examples of these models include Cognitive-Experiential Self-Theory (Epstein, 1994, 2003), the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), the Heuristic-Systematic Model (Chaiken, 1980), and System 1/System 2 Theory (Kahneman, 2011).

As outlined previously, each of these dual-process models start from the assumption that we make decisions using two distinct mental systems. First, we have a quick, non-conscious system, which uses previous experience to formulate a range of heuristics in long-term memory. Heuristics act as mental shortcuts that facilitate rapid decision-making when we are presented with a stimulus. By using heuristics, we can non-consciously evaluate the stimulus against what we have experienced before, and act accordingly with minimal cognitive effort being used. As such, these heuristics act as a cognitive framework around which we base our understanding, information processing,

and decision-making in the real world. The most common heuristics (and those which will be used as a basis for the analysis contained within this thesis) include:

The Availability Heuristic

Tversky and Kahneman (1974) asserted that the ease at which a person can recall examples of particular categories determines how prevalent or important those categories are perceived as being. For example, Schwarz et al. (1991) found that participants rated themselves as less assertive if they recalled 12 occasions in which they had demonstrated this characteristic than participants who recalled only six. It was concluded that this result was obtained as the latter task required less cognitive effort, and so all examples came to mind easier than the 12 examples recalled by members of the first group.

Media agenda-setting is one applied area that operates using the principle of availability. McCombs and Shaw (1974), for instance, reported a strong correlation between issues that their participants believed were politically important, and the rate at which these issues were reporting in the news. Kuran and Sunstein (1999) described how public perceptions of the nature and importance of a topic can be manipulated by ‘availability entrepreneurs’ (p. 687). These are stakeholders (e.g., news organisations or pressure groups) with a vested interest in a given topic, and an ability to change the direction of social discourse. In their ‘availability cascade’ model, Kuran and Sunstein (1999) argued that availability entrepreneurs set the tone about particular topics, and increase media coverage of them. This increased coverage then amplifies societal views, causing the cascade to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. As such, the extent to which an issue is discussed at a societal level appears to have a link to how prevalent or important society views it.

The Representativeness Heuristic

We make decisions about the likely category membership of objects, people, or events, based on how similar (‘representative’) they are to typical members of that category. In their seminal work, Tversky and Kahneman (1974) provided participants with a description of a man who was depicted as quiet, conscientious, and solitary, before asking participants to provide likely occupations for this person. Overwhelmingly, participants were more likely to suggest that this man was, for example, a librarian rather than an airline pilot or salesperson. In a separate study, the extent to which a student’s personality was said to match the typical characteristics of someone studying particular subjects was

highly correlated with judgements about the likelihood that he was actually studying those subjects. This was the case even when judgements of similarity and likelihood of study were made by two independent samples. These outcomes were obtained because we each hold in mind a mental stereotype, whether conscious or unconscious, about the types of people who are likely to engage in different types of careers.

The representativeness heuristic is not limited to judgements about occupations or education. Medical professionals make use of the heuristic in order to make diagnoses on the basis on the symptoms present within their patients (Groopman, 2008). This allows patients to visit their GPs and to quickly receive effective medication for minor acute ailments. However, Klein (2005) brought attention to the dangers of the representativeness in this context, and highlighted how widespread use of this heuristic could lead to incorrect diagnoses by professionals paying greater levels of attention to situational antecedents of symptoms than other potentially physical ones (e.g., Brannon & Carson, 2003; Triplet, 1992). These findings demonstrate the pervasiveness of heuristic-based decision-making in both public and professional samples.

The Affect Heuristic

People also form judgements about issues and entities using emotion as a guide (Slovic & Peters, 2006). Kahneman (2011) outlined how we do not typically purchase products or deal in the stock market based upon the relative qualities of particular products or investments. Rather, we judge our decisions with regard to the extent to which we like or dislike particular products, brands, and companies (see also Zajonc, 1980).

We also take this affect-based approach when making decisions about social and political phenomena. In perhaps one of the clearest examples of the affect heuristic, Finucane, Alhakami, Slovic, and Johnson (2000) manipulated passages about various energy technologies with regard to their emphasis on the risks and benefits associated with each of the various options. They found that participants presented with 'high risk' information reported lower post-manipulation perceptions of the benefits associated with these technologies, and vice-versa, despite information about the opposite evaluation not being presented. In conclusion, Finucane et al. (2000) suggested that judgements of risk and benefit are implicitly linked, and that affect may be a driving force in social and political decision-making.

In addition to heuristic-based style of information processing, we also have a second system characterised by slower, more elaborative thinking. Here, information processing is deliberative and requires conscious consideration by the individual attempting to reach a decision or respond to a particular stimulus.

The role of this more deliberative system is to keep in check the decisions and judgements that are initiated by heuristic processes. Haidt (2012) uses two analogies for the distinction between these cognitive systems. First, he describes their relationship as one akin to an elephant and a rider. While the rider may think he is in control of the elephant, the elephant's sheer mass and power dictates the direction of travel. In this analogy, the elephant is synonymous with non-conscious and heuristic-based decision-making, and the rider is synonymous with deliberative information processing. In this sense, the content of deliberative processes is dictated by the non-conscious processes occurring during heuristic-based decision-making. The outcome of this leads Haidt (2012) to use his second analogy: the press secretary. While a press secretary has no power to actually create policy, he is liable to explain and justify it publicly. This is an analogy for deliberative cognition. Whilst this style of thinking can override heuristic processes, this is cognitively effortful, and often it is easier to form justifications for decisions made at an automatic and non-conscious level.

Cognitive-Experiential Self-Theory

For consistency, this thesis uses one particular dual-process model as a basis for understanding how people process and act upon information pertaining to sexual crime and its perpetrators: Cognitive-Experiential Self-Theory (CEST; Epstein, 1994, 2003). CEST was designed to integrate findings from cognitive science with the ideas espoused in relation to the Freudian conceptualisation of the unconscious. Epstein (1994) cited fundamental issues with Freud's (1923) idea of the unconscious, such as its maladaptive nature in hindering rational thought, and subsequent questions about how the primary process developed from an evolutionary perspective in developing CEST. Instead, Epstein (1994) provided an account of an adaptive and cognitively-oriented unconscious that allows people to process information quickly and effortlessly. In CEST, the two systems described previously are called the 'rational' and 'experiential' systems (Table 2.01).

Table 2.01: The ‘rational’ and ‘experiential’ systems in CEST

Rational System (‘analytic-rational’ cognition)	Experiential System (‘intuitive-experiential’ cognition)
Deliberate processing	Associative processing
Slow processing	Fast processing
Decisions are amenable to rapid change	Decisions not amenable to rapid change
Cross-modal processing	Information is rigidly organised
Behaviour guided by available evidence	Behaviour guided by previous experience
Facts guide decision making	Affect guides decision making
Explicit deliberation in cognition	Heuristic-based cognition

The rational system is characterised by the conscious and systematic appraisal of information presented to the individual (so-called ‘analytic-rational cognition’), which frequently changes as thought develops. It is logical and integrated, allowing for cross-modal and interdisciplinary connections to be made in an attempt to understand a given stimulus. The result of this type of processing is delayed action, as the elaborative evaluation of information impedes fast information processing (Epstein, 2003).

Contrastingly, the experiential system is fast, relying on affect and intuition to make decisions, with these being typically linked via associations and comparisons that are based on previous experience. Information is not encoded logically as serially organised pieces of evidence for consideration, but rather as images, metaphors, and narratives. Judgements that are made through the utilisation of the experiential system do not require conscious justification, as “experiencing is believing” (Epstein, 1994, p. 711). This is in direct contrast to judgements made using the rational system, with these needing to be rationalised through logical analysis and reason.

Epstein (1994) suggested that preferences for rational or experiential processing styles have different personal effects. In order to examine this empirically, Pacini and Epstein (1999) developed the 40-item Rational-Experiential Inventory (REI). The REI is a self-report questionnaire comprised of two subscales, and measures preferences for analytic-rational and intuitive-experiential cognitive styles. It has been consistently found to be highly reliable in measuring these constructs (α 's > 0.80; e.g., Björklund & Bäckström,

2008; Pacini & Epstein, 1999). The two subscales are not related to each other, suggesting an orthogonal relationship between these constructs (e.g., Akinici & Sadler-Smith, 2013).

There are several psychological correlates associated with those scoring high or low in relation to each system. For instance, those scoring high on rationality are more likely to be open to new experiences, and score higher on measures of self-esteem and ego-strength (Pacini & Epstein, 1999) than those scoring low. In contrast, high experientiality scorers are more likely to be emotionally expressive (Björklund & Bäckström, 2008), and to endorse positive attitudes about interpersonal relationships (Pacini & Epstein, 1999). Further, and potentially important in this thesis, highly experiential individuals have been found to extrapolate large-scale trends from individual cases. For example, the presentation of an individual campus theft case was said to be more symptomatic (and fear-evoking) of a widespread problem at the University of California among high experientials than low experientials (Berger, 2007). This finding suggests that intuitive-experiential thinking styles may be associated with a tendency to over-generalise individual case examples. A subsequent effect could be linked to availability and representativeness processes, with these generalised cases becoming a blueprint against which to judge future experiences.

Given the apparent importance of media coverage about sexual crime in guiding social and political discourses about this topic, CEST was also selected as an appropriate theoretical model due to its focus on the importance of encoding information in the form of a narrative. This approach to media reporting about sexual crime has been highlighted by several authors (e.g., Johnson-Cartee, 2005; Wardle, 2007), and so there presents an opportunity to examine these effects more directly.

2.2.2. The Social-Cognitive Theory of Attitudes

Theoretical and empirical developments in the area of dual-process cognition have cast doubt over the validity of traditional explicit self-report measures of attitudes – particularly in relation to socially contentious issues (e.g., Banse & Imhoff, 2013). In response to these, the social-cognitive theory of attitudes proposes a tripartite approach, in which attitudes are comprised of *cognitive structures*, *cognitive processing*, and *cognitive products* (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Gannon, 2009).

A ‘cognitive structure’ is a set of core beliefs that are held by an individual about a particular issue. These beliefs are based on information that is directly or indirectly learned through experience, and are subsequently stored in long-term memory. They offer the individual an implicit (non-conscious) guide for understanding the social world (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). These structures, which can also be defined as *categorical schemas* (Armstrong & Nelson, 2005; Augoustinos, Walker, & Donaghue, 2013), enable the rapid processing of incoming stimuli. The implicit nature of the beliefs means that they can offer a quick and cognitively efficient (i.e., heuristic-based) way of understanding the social world.

The ways in which social information is processed is one of the most discussed issues in social cognitive theory, and has led to the development of a range of analogies. An early example of this analogous theorising about the social mind was that of ‘people as naïve scientists’ (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). According to this model, people actively consider their own feelings and beliefs about social issues and categories before making decisions about them. However, it is now acknowledged that this deliberative processing only takes place when people have the need, time, and available cognitive resources to engage in it (Evans, 2008). Acknowledging that most social information processing does not adopt this type of conscious deliberation, Fiske and Taylor (1991) developed the ‘cognitive miser’ theory of social cognitive processing, through which they argued that social information processing tends to adopt a heuristic-based style in the majority of cases, owing to limited cognitive resources, and the strength of implicit cognitive structures. Later, Fiske (2004) argued that the ‘naïve scientist’ and ‘cognitive miser’ approaches advocated polarised views about how people make sense of, and interact with, the social world. As such, she argued that people act as ‘motivated tacticians’, in which familiar stimuli is processed heuristically (as outlined in the ‘cognitive miser’ approach), and novel or more complicated stimuli are processed more consciously and deliberately (as set out in the ‘naïve scientist’ view). This approach is consistent with traditional dual-process models of cognition. Thus, it is proposed that people typically make use of non-conscious heuristics when forming and expressing attitudes, unless the context of a decision-making process requires more effortful thinking (e.g., to process stimuli that do not conform to the contents of one’s cognitive structures).

Cognitive products are the outputs associated with the processing of social information (Gannon, 2009). These outputs are traditionally obtained through the use of self-report

methods, such as quantitative questionnaires or qualitative interviews and focus groups. These methods have historically been the 'gold-standard' for discovering the content of people's attitudes in social psychological research. However, it is widely acknowledged that these cognitive products, particularly in relation to socially contentious topics, are susceptible to inaccuracies through socially-desirable responding, and people's variable introspective abilities (Gannon & Polaschek, 2006; Gannon & Wood, 2007). To mitigate against this shortcoming, there has been a movement in recent years to adopt more indirect methodologies in this area of research (see Section 1.2.4).

Linking Dual-Process Cognition to the Social-Cognitive Theory of Attitudes

The 'motivated tactician' analogy achieves a synergy between theoretical dual-process models of the mind, and social cognition. In this regard, the social-cognitive theory of attitudes provides a useful theoretical framework for beginning to examine the role of heuristics and dual-process cognition in relation to judgements about sexual crime and its perpetrators.

Speaking in the language of CEST, when forming judgements experientially, we are said to rely on heuristic-based information processing, with these processes being driven by their core beliefs, which are in turn founded on the basis of mental associations. This approach supposes a direct link between cognitive structures in memory and social judgements. However, rational decision-making, which asserts that conscious appraisal of information is the foundation of the judgement formation, relies on people being aware of their own views about particular issues (thus, being aware of their personal cognitive products) when making decisions. As such, the increased amount of time taking to process information rationally can be attributable to the cognitive processing that is needed to make sense of novel or unusual stimuli.

2.2.3. The Associative-Propositional Model of Evaluation

Building on the literature around dual-process cognition, and related to the social-cognitive theory of attitudes, Gawronski and Bodenhausen (2006) developed their Associative-Propositional Evaluation (APE) model. Applying these ideas to the area of attitude change, however, Gawronski and Bodenhausen (2006) argue that understanding

the cognitive processes that underpin implicit and explicit attitudes is important when trying to influence views about particular entities.

The Basis of Implicit Attitudes

Implicit attitudes are such views that reside outside of the conscious control of the person expressing them. According to the APE model, implicit attitudes are based upon “automatic affective reactions resulting from the particular associations that are activated automatically when once encounters a relevant stimulus” (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006, p. 693). The roots of these automatic reactions may be numerous, although one of the most commonly-cited explanations within the literature is that they are attributable to extensive socialisation (e.g., Petty, Tormala, Briñol, & Jarvis, 2006; Wilson, Lindsey, & Schooler, 2000). Thus, using the definition provided by Gawronski and Bodenhausen (2006), implicit attitudes are reflective of *associative processes* in long-term memory that are activated by the presence of an attitude object. In this sense, implicit attitudes may be considered synonymous with ‘cognitive structures’, as outlined in the social-cognitive theory of attitudes.

The Basis of Explicit Attitudes

In contrast to implicit attitudes, explicit attitudes are said to be those ideas and views that are within the conscious control of the person expressing them. As such, Gawronski and Bodenhausen (2006) suggest that explicit attitudes are the outcomes of *propositional processes* that are actively undertaken by the person expressing or endorsing a particular point of view (or ‘proposition’).

Explicit attitudes can be correlated differentially with implicit attitudes, with the APE model asserting that truth values and cognitive consistency are important concepts in understanding why this may be the case. For example, if the propositional evaluation arising from an associative process is perceived as true, and consistent with the perceiver’s wider ideological orientation, then implicit and explicit attitudes in that particular domain are likely to be highly correlated. However, if the propositional evaluation arising from an associative process is inconsistent with a person’s broader ideological values, then this is likely to lead to cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). The outcome of this dissonance is often a rationalisation of the implicit attitude, leading

to the expression of an explicit attitude that strikes a balance between the automatic affective reaction felt in relation to the object of the attitude, and the ideological orientation of individual.

2.2.4. Summary of Theoretical Approach

This section outlined a variety of concepts related to the idea of an implicit/explicit distinction in attitude research. This distinction will form the basis of the empirical work that follows in the rest of the thesis.

As a starting point, implicit attitudes towards sexual offenders may be said to arise from rapid expression of mental associations between the concept of ‘sexual offenders’ and evaluations of favour or disfavour (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993), which are stored in long-term memory. It is argued, based upon the previously outlined theoretical literature, that these associations are the result of repeated engagement in heuristic-based information processing about the issue of sexual crime. For example, being exposed to emotional media presentations about ‘predatory paedophiles’ and ‘sexual monsters’ leads to a negative affective association in relation to the concept of ‘sexual offenders’. Further, this type of predatory offender becomes the prototypical (or, in the language of heuristic cognition, ‘representative’) case. The linking of automatic negative responses to such representative cases already offers some theoretical explanation for the results of the Harris and Socia (2014) and Imhoff (2015) studies that were described in Section 1.4.3. As such, this approach may prove to be fruitful as further empirical studies on the heuristic nature of attitudes towards sexual offenders are described later in the thesis.

Given the pervasive nature of societal hostility and negativity about sexual crime, the endorsement of negative implicit attitudes towards sexual offenders is likely to be commonplace across the population. A problem arises, however, when this negative evaluation occurs within a person who endorses an ideological orientation that is, in all other contexts, politically liberal. The combination of negative implicit attitudes towards sexual offenders and a generally liberal ideology has the potential to create some level of cognitive dissonance, due to the liberal mentality of not oppressing those with lower societal statuses (e.g., Haidt, 2012), and a general impulse to try to rehabilitate offenders, rather than to punish them (e.g., Maruna & King, 2009).

This dissonance requires resolution and, in line with Gawronski and Bodenhausen's (2006) APE model, means that additional propositions (explicit judgements) will be required before a definitive explicit attitude can be expressed. Consistent with the theoretical underpinnings of dual-process models like CEST, this is likely to lead to delayed decision-making response times among people who experience such dissonance. Figure 2.01 provides a schematic of the proposed route from automatic implicit evaluations, through a mechanism of cognitive processing, to the expression of an explicit attitude.

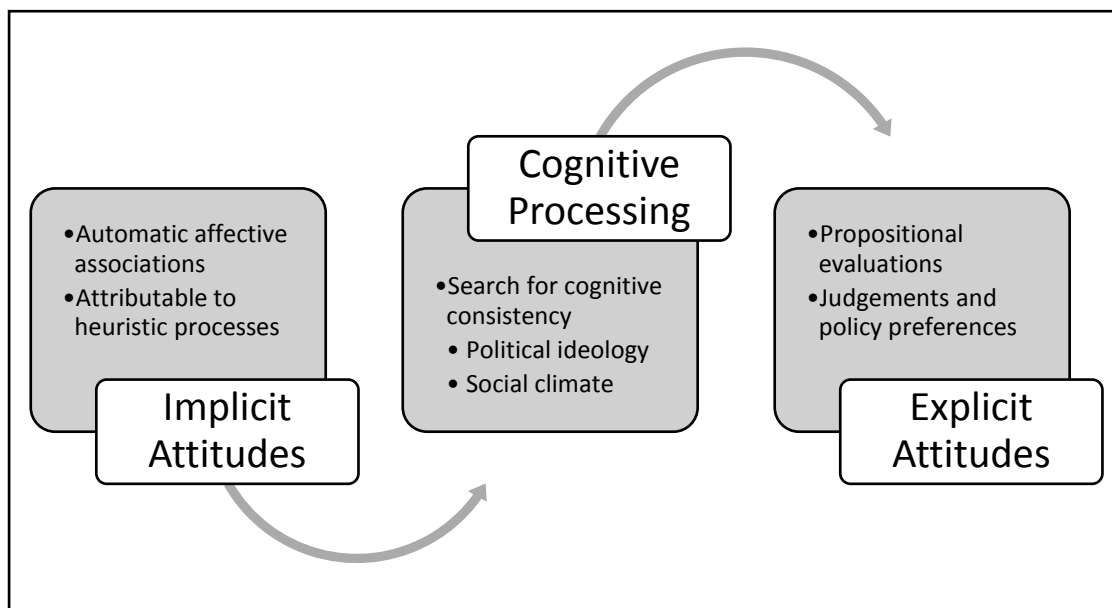


Figure 2.01: Schematic representation of the proposed path from implicit evaluation to explicit judgements about sexual offenders

From this viewpoint, it is clear that the underlying assumptions of dual-process cognition, the social-cognitive theory of attitudes, and the APE model of evaluation all have a role to play in understanding how people come to make judgements about sexual crime and its perpetrators. As such, each of these models will be drawn upon throughout the work described later in the thesis.

2.3. Research Questions

Taking the above reviews into account, a rigorous examination of the role of heuristics in social discourse about sexual crime is warranted. In order to address this, the thesis aims to answer the following research questions:

- Does news coverage of sexual crime promote heuristic-based social discourses about the issue of sexual crime?

CEST suggests that people have a tendency to prefer encoding information in the form of narratives, images, and metaphors. This type of information processing enables the easy retrieval of information at a later time through the use of heuristics within the message. It is hypothesised that a number of heuristics will be identifiable within news articles published about sexual crime. The heuristics that will be examined in detail relate to ‘availability’, ‘representativeness’, and ‘affect’ (see Section 2.2.1).

- To what extent are attitudes and perceptions about sexual offenders linked to engagement with the news media?

Previous unpublished work conducted by Hogue and Smith (2008) using a student sample reported that exclusive readers of tabloid newspapers endorsed significantly more negative explicit attitudes towards sexual offenders than did those who read either: (1) exclusively broadsheet newspapers, or (2) a combination of both tabloid and broadsheet publications. It is expected that a large-scale public survey will replicate this finding, with tabloid readers expressing significantly more negative attitudes towards sexual offenders than those who also (or exclusively) read some broadsheet newspapers. It is also predicted that these views will be attributable to specific differences in reporting styles between these types of publication.

- What are the psychological processes involved in the relationship between news media and attitudes and perceptions about sexual offenders?

With the previous two questions in mind, there are a myriad of potential explanations for the hypothesised relationship between engaging with various forms of news media and the formation and expression of attitudes and perceptions about sexual offenders. The empirical work presented later in the thesis seeks to examine some of these explanations using established cognitive and social psychological paradigms. It is hypothesised that several processes will be theoretically linked to the interactions between news media and attitudes and perceptions about sexual offenders, such as how people process affect-based information, and the ease in which ‘representative’ cases can be processed.

- Can the psychological processes involved in the interactions between news media and attitudes and perceptions about sexual offenders be used in order to develop a more progressive social discourse about sexual crime?

It is anticipated that a rigorous investigation of the first three research questions will provide a broad understanding about the various ways in which news media content is related to public attitudes and perceptions of sexual crime. Thus, it is envisaged that a range of methods can be developed to investigate whether the mechanisms underpinning this relationship could be useful for promoting more progressive, evidenced-based social discourse about sexual crime. For example, it could be that the tenets of CEST, the social-cognitive theory of attitudes, and the APE model of evaluation can be invoked in order to produce a strategy for effectively communicating information about sexual crime and the people at risk of perpetrating these kinds of offences. Adopting such an approach could contribute to the continued efforts of several researchers in this area who seek to improve general attitudes towards sexual offenders, and to promote a more progressive approach to sexual crime policy.

2.4. Chapter Summary

This chapter identified the most pertinent gaps in our current knowledge about attitudes and perceptions about sexual offenders, based upon the review of the literature presented in Chapter 1. A key issue that has received little empirical attention is the role of heuristic-based implicit cognition, and it is this area that will form the basis of the research outlined in Part 2 of this thesis.

Theoretical concepts and paradigms from the areas of cognitive and social psychology were outlined, with these focusing on both implicit and explicit attitudes. This theoretical orientation will be used as a framework for beginning to understand the roots of attitudes towards sexual offenders, and the associated policy responses to these types of crimes, throughout this thesis. Specific research questions that arise from these analyses include those around the role of the news media in shaping public and political discourses about what sexual crime is, who perpetrates these kinds of offences, and how we may best respond as a society, in addition to how we might use such insights to improve people's

attitudes in this area. Specifically, three key heuristics are identified for examination: (1) availability, (2) representativeness, and (3) affect.

The rest of this thesis critically and systematically examines the roles of these three heuristic constructs in guiding public and political discourses and judgements about sexual crime and its perpetrators.

PART 2: EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Part 2 represents the empirical component of the research carried out within the PhD studentship period. This section is comprised of four chapters, each of which describes a distinct study (or group of studies) related to attitudes towards sexual offenders.

Chapter 3 builds upon previous criticisms of the CATSO scale in order to develop a knowledge- and policy-based outcome measure for examining perceptions about sexual crime and its perpetrators. This chapter evaluates the CATSO within the context of the attitude/perception distinction that was set out at the beginning of Chapter 1, before revising it through principal components and confirmatory factor analyses. The resultant *Perceptions of Sex Offenders Scale* is identified as an outcome measure for examining social judgements about sexual offenders.

Chapter 4 begins the main empirical work into the theoretical underpinnings of attitudes towards sexual offenders. Three studies are presented in this chapter, each of which examine the role of the availability heuristic in these judgements. The first study extends work conducted previously in part-fulfilment of an MSc in Forensic Psychology (Harper & Hogue, 2015) into media representations of sexual crime prevalence. Second, high-profile cases of sexual crime are considered alongside recent legislative changes in relation to sexual crime sentencing, leading to the development of a hypothesised *Prototype-Willingness Model of Sexual Crime Decision-Making*. The final study in Chapter 4 provides an empirical test of this model using an experimental public survey.

Owing to observations made by other researchers in this area, it is thought that people hold in mind a stereotypical image of a predatory adult male sexual offender when making judgements (Harris & Socia, 2014; King & Roberts, 2015; Salerno et al., 2010). Thus, asking questions about ‘sexual crime’ (in a general sense) may mask variations in judgements towards different ‘types’ of sexual offences. As such, the rest of the studies in the thesis specifically address attitudes, perceptions, and responses to child abuse. This decision was made after a consideration of the aforementioned literature, as well as prevailing social discourses and controversies that focus on the sexual victimisation of children.

Chapter 5 represents a move to incorporate this new focus. Two studies are described that examine the influence of the representativeness heuristic in judgements of, and engagement with, stereotype-consistent and stereotype-inconsistent cases of child abuse. Using public survey and laboratory-based experimental methods, the combined results of these studies were consistent with the view that attitudes and judgements are related to core beliefs about who “sexual offenders” are. Further, experimentally reducing the cognitive resources available to participants led to a reliance on these core beliefs when engaging with, and making judgements about, different cases of child abuse – both at an explicit and implicit level. Combined, these data were consistent with the view that the representativeness of an offender can act as a guide for decision-making about child abuse.

Chapter 6 examines attitudes and judgements about sexual offenders from the perspective of the affect heuristic. This chapter presents four studies. First, the linguistic composition of articles written about sexual crime in the national British press was examined. Results suggest a relatively homogeneous tone in the coverage of sexual crime across the British press, but differential trends were observed between different publication types (e.g., tabloids vs. broadsheets) in the ways in which they described sexual offenders in story headlines. In the second study, these headline trends were linked to differential attitudes and judgements about sexual offenders (in a general sense). In the third study, these differences were interpreted within the context of moral disengagement theory. The extent to which perpetrators of child abuse are dehumanised was important in influencing responses to sexual offenders among tabloid readers, but not those of other publication types. In the final study, the focus was on using these findings to promote progressive social discourse about the primary prevention of child abuse. Here, narrative humanisation (comparative to a fact-based presentation) of paedophiles was found to be an effective technique for improving attitudes towards this group, both at the explicit and the implicit level.

Unless otherwise stated, data for each study met all of the assumptions and criteria for parametric testing. For online survey studies, while total independence cannot be guaranteed, every attempt was made to use different outlets for advertising the studies in order to achieve different samples. Each study received ethical approval from the University of Lincoln’s School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee (SOPREC) prior to data collection, and were completed between September 2013 and January 2016.

CHAPTER 3

MEASURING PERCEPTIONS OF SEXUAL OFFENDERS

As outlined in Chapter 2, existing attitudinal measures pertaining to views about sexual offenders are plenty, with two scales – the Attitudes to Sexual Offenders scale (ATS; Hogue, 1993; Hogue & Harper, in prep), and the Community Attitudes Towards Sex Offenders scale (CATSO; Church et al., 2008) – being the most widely used tools within this field. This chapter examines one of these measures (the CATSO) in an attempt to resolve some of the criticisms levelled at it by previous authors (see Section 1.2.2). The ultimate aim of the present analysis was to develop a revised tool for the measurement of outcome perceptions about the perpetrators of sexual crime, which can be used complementarily with the more psychometrically-sound ATS measure.

3.1. The Need for a New Measure

The criticisms of the CATSO scale made by previous authors are numerous, but particularly refer to its factor structure. As described in Chapter 1, the CATSO was initially comprised of four factors of varying levels of internal consistency, with the dominant view being that the measure is formed of two strong (α 's > .70) and two weak (α 's < .70) factors. Advancing the suggestions made by previous authors (e.g., Shelton et al., 2013), it was considered an appropriate course of action to re-examine its underlying factor structure, and ultimately to reconceptualise how this measure may be used.

According to Church et al. (2008), the CATSO “was designed specifically to address perceptions and stereotypes of sex offenders” (p. 258). While this is a valuable area of investigation, it is contended that the CATSO is not, therefore, a suitable replacement for existing attitude measures. Specifically, several items on the CATSO appear to refer to stereotypical (and thus knowledge-based) *perceptions* about sexual offenders (e.g., “Most sex offenders are unmarried men”, and “People who commit sex offences want to have sex more than the average person”). As outlined in Chapter 1, the expression of these stereotypes may well provide some insight as to the respondents’ perceptions (knowledge judgements) about the perpetrators of sexual crime, but researchers examining these

stereotypical judgements may struggle to reliably infer information about *attitudes* from them.

The aim of this chapter is to present a revised CATSO measure. It will further argue in favour of the scale's continued use as a *perception*-based outcome measure, but *not* as a tool for measuring *attitudes*. Specifically, the key objectives here were to establish the CATSO's underlying factor structure, demonstrate that a revision of the CATSO could possess sufficient internal consistency, and begin to evidence the external validity of such a revised tool.

3.2. Methodology

3.2.1. Participants

Participants for this study were 400 adult UK community members (112 males, 248 females, 40 declined to provide gender information; $M_{\text{age}} = 33.24$ years, $SD = 11.66$ years). These individuals were sampled using online advertisements, disseminated via email invitations and social media announcements (placed on the websites Facebook.com and Twitter.com). In these announcements, brief study details were provided, along with a link to the online survey. These details read that the study was designed to assess public attitudes and responses to sexual offenders. This approach was taken such as to not prime potential respondents into a particular response style, but to still warn them about the potentially contentious and upsetting topic of the survey. Receivers of these announcements were encouraged to take part in the study, and to disseminate the link wider among their own networks, through 'Likes', 'Shares', and 'Retweets' (dependent upon the location and medium of the announcement). Thus, participants were self-selecting, and obtained via opportunistic and snowball sampling techniques. Table 3.01 presents an overview of the demographic information provided by the sample. These figures are not necessarily representative of the makeup of British society, with the sample being more educated, on average, than the U.K. as a whole. This may be due to the sampling methods used, with personal Twitter and Facebook feeds typically being followed by those within a similar (i.e., academic) social circle. However, this is not thought to necessarily impact upon the integrity of the data, given that this study is related to scale development, rather than to assessing broad attitudes towards sexual offenders.

These 400 participants were systematically assigned to one of two analysis samples. This assignment was conducted by placing every 2nd participant (chronologically, as they appeared within the dataset) into each respective group. In the first group, participants' responses were subject to a principal components analysis of a new CATSO structure ($n = 200$; 47 males, 135 females, 18 declined to provide gender information; $M_{\text{age}} = 34.07$ years, $SD = 12.68$ years). In the second group, responses were subject to a confirmatory factor analysis, seeking to ratify the underlying structure of the new CATSO structure ($n = 200$; 65 males, 113 females, 22 declined to provide gender information; $M_{\text{age}} = 32.41$ years, $SD = 10.42$ years). A sample size of 200 for each of these groups far exceeds Costello and Osborne's (2005) recommendation of five observations per scale item in development studies. Prior to data analysis, no substantial differences were observed in relation to the demographic compositions of these two created groups.

3.2.2. Materials

An online survey was used to collect data for this study, and was comprised of a number of established questionnaires:

Demographic Questionnaire

A brief demographic questionnaire was developed for the purposes of this study. Information was collected in relation to age, gender, educational attainment, newspaper readership, and experience or personal knowledge of either a victim or perpetrator of sexual crime.

Attitudes to Sexual Offenders Scale

The shortened ATS-21 measure (Hogue & Harper, in prep) was used within this study. Scoring instructions and indicative item content was provided in Section 1.2.1. The ATS-21 demonstrated excellent internal consistency in this study, both as a holistic measure of attitudes towards sexual offenders ($\alpha = 0.94$), and as individual subscales ('Trust' $\alpha = 0.85$; 'Intent' $\alpha = 0.87$; 'Social Distance' $\alpha = 0.83$).

Rational-Experiential Inventory

Drawing on the tenets of CEST (Epstein, 2003; see Section 2.2.1), Pacini and Epstein (1999) created the Rational-Experiential Inventory (REI). The REI is a 40-item self-report

Table 3.01: Demographic composition of the study sample

	N	% of sample
Gender		
Male	112	28
Female	248	62
Information not disclosed	40	10
Age		
18-27 years	143	35.8
28-46 years	160	40
47+ years	57	14.5
Information not disclosed	39	9.7
Highest qualification		
Lower than bachelor's degree	116	29
Bachelor's degree	149	37.3
Higher than bachelor's degree	134	33.5
Information not disclosed	1	.2
Newspaper preference		
Tabloids only	41	10.3
Tabloids and broadsheets	78	19.5
Broadsheets only	138	34.5
No newspapers	142	35.5
Information not disclosed	1	.2
Knows a sexual crime victim		
Yes	258	64.5
No	132	33
Information not disclosed	10	2.5
Knows a sexual crime perpetrator		
Yes	168	42
No	226	56.5
Information not disclosed	6	1.5

questionnaire, which measures the respondent's preferences for 'analytic-rational' (20 items; e.g., "I have a logical mind") and 'intuitive-experiential' (20 items; e.g., "I often go by my instincts when deciding on a course of action") cognition. Each REI item is comprised of a statement, to which the respondent rate their level of agreement using a

5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ('Definitely not True of Me') to 5 ('Definitely True of Me'). The 40-item scale consists of two subscales (one for each type of cognition), and composite scores for each subscale are calculated by averaging responses from the each of the items. The REI demonstrated excellent levels of internal consistency in this study ('analytic-rational' $\alpha = 0.86$; 'intuitive-experiential' $\alpha = 0.92$).

General Punitiveness Scale

The General Punitiveness Scale (GPS; Maruna & King, 2009) is a short eight-item self-report measure of punitive attitudes towards those who break the law. Each item is drawn from popular discourse about crime and punishment (e.g., "My general view towards offenders is that they should be treated harshly") in order to assess respondents views about the extent and severity to which criminal offenders should be punished. Respondents reply to each statement using a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ('Strongly Disagree') to 6 ('Strongly Agree'). Four GPS items are reverse-scored, with an average of the scores across the scale being taken as a composite score of punitive attitudes. Higher scores are indicative of greater levels of punitiveness. The GPS demonstrated an excellent level of internal consistency in this study ($\alpha = 0.90$).

Community Attitudes Towards Sex Offenders Scale

The CATSO (Church et al., 2008) was administered in its original 18-item form. In addition, the original CATSO items were checked for face validity, in order to examine their content, tone, and any missing areas of cover. Based on the face validity analysis of the items contained within the CATSO, three factors were hypothesised as potentially underpinning the scale (Table 3.02). Owing to the number of items being attributed to each of these factors, eight additional items appended at the end of the CATSO (e.g., 'Sex offenders should have all of their details announced to local communities') to cover these areas more comprehensively.

Table 3.02: Face validity analysis of CATSO items

Proposed factor label	# items	Sample item
Punitiveness	4	Convicted sex offenders should never be released from prison
Stereotype endorsement	7	Sex offenders have difficulty making friends even if they try real hard
Risk perception	3	“With support and therapy, someone who committed a sexual offence can learn to change their behaviour”

Note: Number of items does not equal 18 (as in the original version of the CATSO) due to the removal of items 4, 5, 15, and 17 (in line with previous criticisms)

The following analyses examine the reliability and factor structure of the CATSO in its original 18-item form, along with a revised 22-item version of the scale. This 22-item scale was comprised of all the items presented, with the exception of items 4, 5, 15 and 17 of the original CATSO scale. These items were removed due to issues previously raised about their utility and relevance (e.g., Conley et al., 2011; Shelton et al., 2013). Each of these four excluded items referred to ‘sexual offences’, rather than sexual offenders (e.g., “A sex offence committed against someone the perpetrator knows is less serious than a sex offence committed against a stranger”). As such, it could be suggested that responses to these statements are not necessarily reflective of respondents’ views about the perpetrators of sexual crime, but rather of the sexually offensive behaviour in a more general sense.

In order to standardise scoring across related measures (e.g., the ATS-21), a score of 1 was subtracted from each CATSO item score. This left a scoring range of 0-5 for each item. Higher scores on the CATSO are indicative of greater levels of negativity about sexual offenders.

3.2.3. Procedure

Advertisements were disseminated through the channels described previously, including email distribution lists, and social media websites. When responding to these advertisements, potential participants clicked on a link taking them to the survey webpage, where further details about the study were provided. This more detailed

information gave instructions as to what would be expected of participants with regards to the types of tasks they would be asked to complete. If participants were happy to continue, clicking the 'Next' button presented the first page of the study survey.

Each participant completed the study questionnaires in the same order. This survey flow was put in place to ensure that all participants' performance was directly comparable to others', with each person engaging in an identical procedure. The questionnaire flow was as follows:

- 1) Demographic Questionnaire
- 2) Rational-Experiential Inventory (REI)
- 3) General Punitiveness Scale (GPS)
- 4) Attitudes to Sexual Offenders Scale (ATS-21)
- 5) Community Attitudes Towards Sex Offenders Scale (CATSO)

Once each participant had completed the study, they were provided with a comprehensive debrief, which included information about the aims of the project, and each of the scales. Participants were also given the opportunity to enter a 'memorable word' at this point in order to make their data identifiable should they wish to withdraw from the study after submitting the survey for analysis. In line with the guidance from the University of Lincoln's School of Psychology Ethics Committee, participants could withdraw their data within two weeks of completing the survey, although none chose to do so. Due to the potentially sensitive nature of the study topic, participants were also signposted to University-provided counselling services, as well as external organisations (e.g., the Samaritans) for further support.

3.3. Results

This results section is divided into three sections. Firstly, the factor structure of the original form of the CATSO measure is examined in order to test the assumption (and previous findings) that a reconceptualisation of this measure is required. Second, a revised 22-item version of the CATSO is examined in relation to its underlying factor structure and internal consistency. Third, the structure of the revised CATSO scale is interrogated

through confirmatory factor analysis. This systematic approach to analysis ensures that any resultant scale is grounded in a methodologically rigorous developmental process.

3.3.1. Original CATSO Structure

The original 18-item CATSO, as designed by Church et al. (2008), demonstrated good levels of internal consistency within the full sample of 400 ($\alpha = 0.83$). This alpha coefficient was higher than those reported in recent CATSO studies (e.g., Malinen et al., 2014; Shelton et al., 2013). Following this reliability analysis, the original 18 items of the CATSO were subjected to principal components analysis, with data from all 400 participants being included.

The analysis was conducted with oblique (Direct Oblimin) rotation, such as to allow for correlation between the factors underlying the CATSO measure (Field, 2009). The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was calculated as 0.86, while Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(153) = 3007.60, p < .001$). Factors with eigenvalues of >1 were extracted, and items with factor loadings of less than 0.50 were suppressed, in line with Field's (2009) recommendations. Consistent with the original development study (Church et al., 2008), a four-factor structure was found to underpin the CATSO. However, the items loading on to each of these factors did not support Church et al.'s (2008) structure. The 'Social Isolation' factor did remain fully intact ($\alpha = 0.85$), but each of the other three factors contained items that deviated from Church et al.'s (2008) original factor composition. The remaining three factors were labelled 'Punishment and Risk' (seven items; e.g., "Sex offenders should wear tracking devices so their location can be pinpointed at any time"; $\alpha = 0.87$), 'Perceptions of Sexual Crime' (three items; e.g., "A sex offence committed against someone the perpetrator knows is less serious than a sex offence committed against a stranger"; $\alpha = 0.59$), and 'Sexual Activity' (three items; e.g., "Sex offenders have high rates of sexual activity"; $\alpha = 0.68$).

This four-factor structure generally concurs with previous attempts to confirm the underlying foundations of the CATSO measure, with the analysis uncovering two strong factors, and two weak factors (in relation to their Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients). This finding, consistent with other research, calls into question the suitability of using the CATSO in its original form, and doing so could potentially weaken the integrity of studies incorporating this measure. Further, questions around the content

of the CATSO are raised through the factor structure reported here, with a distinct factor being comprised of items relating to respondents views of sexual *crime*, rather than sexual *offenders* (again, this is consistent with the findings of previous authors; e.g., Conley et al., 2011). Finally, this factor structure suggests that the face validity analysis conducted above (Table 3.02) may have some merit, with items pertaining to ‘Punishment and Risk’ comprising one CATSO factor, and two others relating to sexual offenders’ levels of ‘Social Isolation’ and ‘Sexual Activity’ (with these arguably measuring stereotypes of sexual offenders).

3.3.2. *Principal Components Analysis of the Revised CATSO*

In line with the arguments made above, a 22-item version of the CATSO was next subjected to a principal components analysis (with oblique rotation) using the first subgroup of the sample. These 22 items consisted of 14 original CATSO items and the eight new items appended to the CATSO for the purposes of this study. The four items that were removed from the original form of the CATSO were items 4, 5, 14, and 17, each of which referred to ‘sexual offences’ rather than ‘sexual offenders’ (see above).

The revised 22-item CATSO produced a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.92, indicating an excellent level of internal consistency. The Keiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was calculated as 0.90, while Bartlett’s test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(231) = 2619.47, p < .001$). As with the previous analysis, factors with eigenvalues of greater than 1 were extracted, and items with factor loadings of less than 0.50 were suppressed.

The principal components analysis suggested that a four factors were also underpinning this revised CATSO (Table 3.03). However, on examining the data more closely, it appeared that a three factor solution may be a more appropriate fit to the data. The rationale for this was fourfold: (1) the small number of items ($n = 2$) loading onto ‘Factor 3’, (2) a low (borderline acceptable) eigenvalue in relation to ‘Factor 3’, (3) strong conceptual links between the items loading onto ‘Factor 2’ and ‘Factor 3’, and (4) a strong Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of the combined factor.

A three-factor structure for the 22-item scale was therefore proposed. These factors were labelled ‘Sentencing and Management’ (ten items; $\alpha = 0.93$; scoring range of 0–50

with high scores indicating that sexual offenders should be harshly punished), ‘Stereotype Endorsement’ (seven items; $\alpha = 0.84$; scoring range of 0–35 with high scores indicating high levels of stereotypical judgements about sexual offenders), and ‘Risk Perception’ (five items; $\alpha = 0.80$; scoring range of 0–25 with high scores indicating that the respondent views sexual offenders as a risky group with regards to re-offending).

3.3.3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Revised CATSO

Confirmatory factor analysis is a type of structural equation modelling that is used in scale development in order to examine the ‘fit’ of an assumed model to a given dataset (Brown & Moore, 2015). This technique is now commonplace in scale development studies, with Church et al. (2008) using this method of analysis in their original development of the CATSO. Given the focus on reanalysing the CATSO structure, it was appropriate to undertake a confirmatory analysis of the revised model.

A confirmatory factor analysis of the revised CATSO was conducted using *IBM SPSS Amos (version 22)* with the previously described three-factor structure as the assumed model. Data that were included in this analysis came from the Goodness of fit data that were used were the Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI; lower threshold for acceptability = 0.90), the Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI; lower threshold for acceptability = 0.90), and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA; upper threshold for acceptability = 0.06). An initial confirmatory factor analysis found that the assumed model was not found to be an acceptable fit for the data. This was due to poor loadings for two items on the ‘Stereotype Endorsement’ factor. These were items 3 and 10 from the original CATSO, which were both related to participants’ perceptions about sexual offenders’ rates of sexual activity. These items also formed a distinct factor in the original principal components analysis (Table 3.03). Due to their poor fit, these items were removed from the scale at this point.

Table 3.03: Structure matrix of the revised 22-item CATSO ($n = 200$)

Item	<u>Rotated loadings</u>			
	F1	F2	F3	F4
22 (n) People who commit sex offences should be subject to harsh restrictions on their liberty for the rest of their lives	.895			
18 Convicted sex offenders should never be released from prison	.846			
11 Trying to rehabilitate a sex offender is a waste of time	.799			
2 People who commit sex offences should lose their civil rights (e.g., voting and privacy)	.795			
25 (n) It's not IF a sex offender commits another crime, it's WHEN	.762			
21 (n) The death penalty should be reintroduced for sex offenders	.760			
1* With support and therapy, someone who committed a sexual offence can learn to change their behaviour	.749			
26 (n) Sex offenders should have all their details announced to local communities	.714			
19 (n) Sex offenders will almost always commit further offences	.712			
12 Sex offenders should wear tracking devices so their location can be pinpointed at any time	.646			
7 Most sex offenders do not have close friends		.903		
8 Sex offenders have difficulty making friends even if they try real hard		.887		
16 Most sex offenders keep to themselves		.793		
6 Sex offenders prefer to stay home alone rather than be around lots of people		.774		
14 Most sex offenders are unmarried men		.583		

10	Sex offenders have high rates of sexual activity										-0.905
3	People who commit sex offences want to have sex more often than the average person										-0.870
23* (n)	People are far too on edge about the risks posed by sex offenders										.801
13*	Only a few sex offenders are dangerous										.788
24* (n)	More sex offenders should be given sentences in the community										.742
9*	The prison sentences sex offenders receive are much too long when compared to the sentence lengths for other crimes										.697
20* (n)	Some sex offenders should be allowed to work in schools										.629
Eigenvalue		8.38	3.32	1.01	1.25						
		0-50	0-25	0-10	0-25						
Scoring range		Combined									
		0-35									
		26.21	12.46	5.32	21.08						
Mean score		Combined									
		17.78									
		0.93	0.85	0.80	0.80						
Cronbach's α		Combined									
		0.84									

Note: * denotes item is reverse-scored (n) denotes new item 22-item scale; scoring range = 0-110; $M = 65.06$, $SD = 17.29$; $\alpha = 0.92$

A second confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on the resultant 20-item scale (Figure 3.01), again with the initial three factor structure as the assumed model. This analysis demonstrated acceptable levels of model fit (GFI = 0.87; AGFI = 0.84; RMSEA = 0.06). These model fit statistics are comparable to those reported by Church et al. (2008). However, the superior reliability coefficients of the 20-item scale indicate that this revised CATSO may be a stronger measure of perceptions about sexual offenders.

Across all 400 participants, the 20-item revised CATSO produced a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.92, indicating excellent internal consistency. Each of the three factors also demonstrated excellent levels of reliability: 'Sentencing and Management' ($\alpha = 0.93$), 'Stereotype Endorsement' ($\alpha = 0.85$), and 'Risk Perception' ($\alpha = 0.81$).

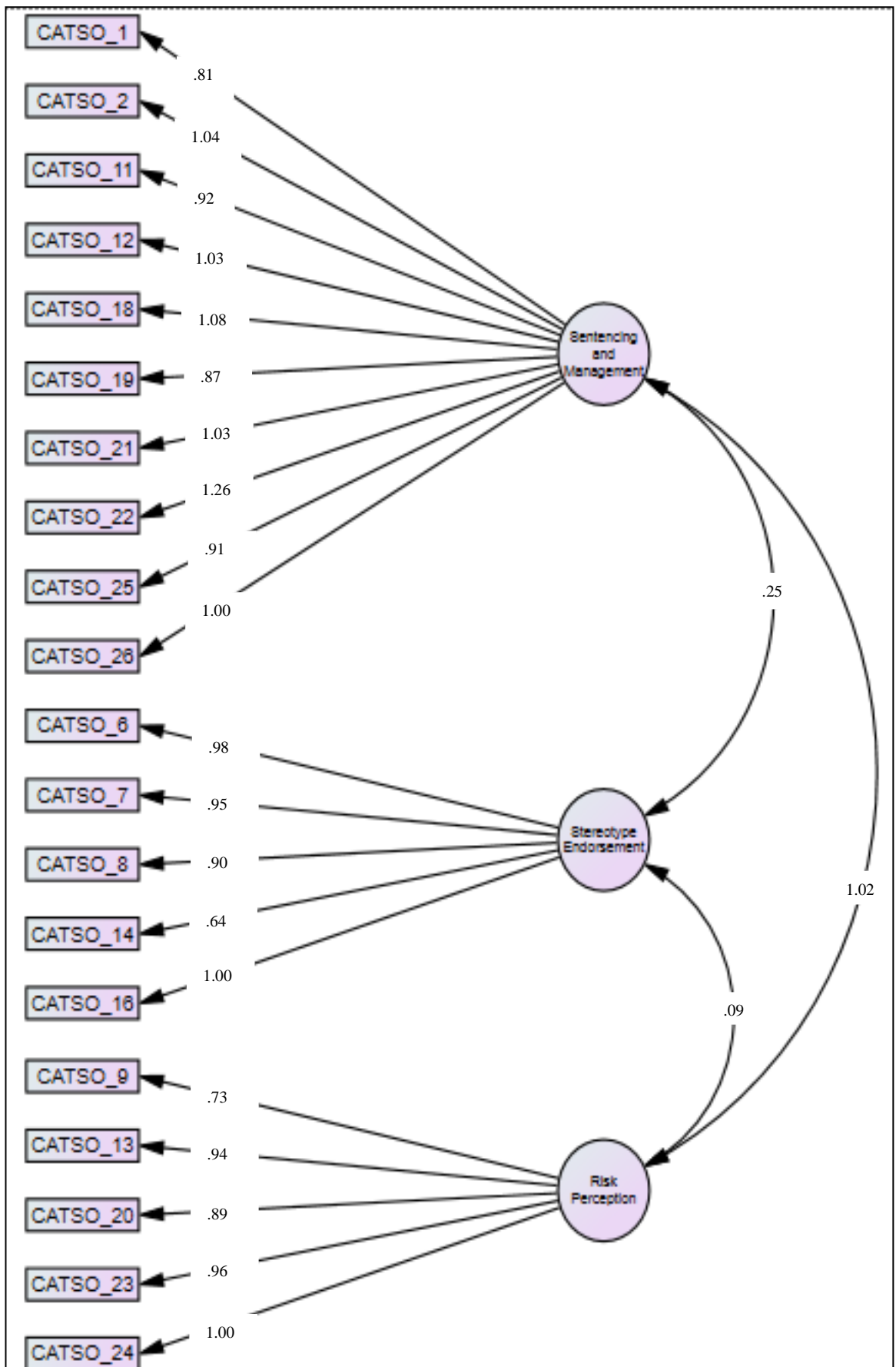


Figure 3.01: Confirmatory factor analysis of the final 20-item revised CATSO

3.3.4. Validity of the Revised CATSO Measure

Participants' total scores on the 20-item revised CATSO correlated highly with their scores on each of the three subscales ($p \leq .001$). Each of the factors, in turn, correlated highly with each other ($p < .001$; Table 3.04). The only exception to this trend of significant correlations was the relationship between 'Stereotype Endorsement' and 'Risk Perception' ($r = .09, p = .076$).

Table 3.04: Zero-order correlations between the revised CATSO and its subscales

	Sentencing and management	Stereotype endorsement	Risk perception
Full scale	.95*	.46*	.80*
Sentencing and management		.26*	.70*
Stereotype endorsement			.09

* $p \leq .001$

The revised CATSO and its underlying factors correlated significantly with most of the other scales (and their underlying factors) that were administered (Table 3.05). These correlations indicate that more negative attitudes toward sexual offenders are linked to increased perceptions of sexual offender risk, the endorsement of stereotypes about who sexual offenders are, and support for punitive sentencing and management proposals in relation to sexual crime. These findings broadly support the underlying assumptions that the revised scale could be used as an outcome measure in relation to respondents' perceptions of sexual offenders and issues related to their sentencing and post-conviction management. Such high correlation coefficients are also indicative of strong construct validity for the revised CATSO and its proposed factor structure.

Specifically in relation to this thesis more broadly, the significant correlations reported in relation to the revised CATSO and the subscales of the REI appear to be indicative of a trend that higher levels of experientiality (and lower levels of rationality, using the terminology of CEST) is associated with higher perceptions of sexual offender risk, and preferences for more punitive sentencing and management strategies. These results are broadly in line with previous research, which has found that people make risk-based decisions using experiential methods (e.g., Berger, 2007; Finucane et al., 2001).

Table 3.05: Zero-order correlations between the revised CATSO and other study scales

	<u>Revised CATSO factors</u>			
	Revised CATSO	Sentencing and Management	Stereotype Endorsement	Risk Perception
Original CATSO	.88**	.81**	.66**	.58**
Social isolation	.44**	.26**	1.00**	.09
Capacity to change	.93**	.96**	.27**	.68**
Dangerousness	.64**	.57**	.21**	.65**
Deviancy	.27**	.23**	.41**	.06
ATS-21	-.84**	-.83**	-.18**	-.78**
Trust	-.77**	-.74**	-.13*	-.79**
Intent	-.78**	-.78**	-.26**	-.62**
Social distance	-.77**	-.77**	-.11*	-.74**
GPS	.77**	.78**	.23**	.61**
REI				
Rationality	-.18**	-.18**	-.05	-.14*
Experientiality	.19**	.17*	.01	.22**

* $p < .01$ ** $p < .001$

3.3.5. Normative Data for the Revised CATSO Measure

Females scored significantly higher (therefore expressing more negative views about sexual offenders) on the revised CATSO (as a full scale) than males ($M = 38.69$ vs. 33.04 ; $t(358) = 2.69$, $p = .004$, $d = 0.34$). This pattern was also found in relation to each of the revised scale's factors: 'Sentencing and Management' ($t(358) = 2.92$, $p = .025$, $d = 0.26$), 'Stereotype Endorsement' ($t(358) = 0.36$, $p = .718$, $d = 0.04$), and 'Risk Perception' ($t(358) = 4.26$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.48$). Personally knowing either a victim or perpetrator of sexual crime did not significantly influence scores on the revised CATSO. However, participants who knew a sexual offender did score lower on the revised CATSO (i.e., expressed more positive views about sexual offenders) than did participants who did not know a sexual offender. This difference approached, but did not reach, statistical significance ($M = 34.86$ vs. 38.18 ; $t(392) = 1.92$, $p = .055$, $d = 0.20$).

Table 3.06: Normative data for the revised CATSO

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
Age						
18-27 years	39.97 ^a	16.09	3.36	2, 357	.036	0.02
28-46 years	35.18 ^a	18.44				
47+ years	35.26	15.61				
Highest qualification						
Lower than bachelor's degree	44.41 ^{bc}	21.12	19.89	2, 395	< .001	0.09
Bachelor's degree	35.37 ^b	14.85				
Higher than bachelor's degree	31.78 ^c	12.26				
Newspaper preference						
Tabloids only	45.83 ^{de}	18.07	7.51	2, 395	< .001	0.05
Tabloids and broadsheets	36.37 ^e	15.49				
Broadsheets only	32.64 ^{df}	16.23				
No newspapers	38.44 ^f	16.81				

Note: Mean values that share a superscript differ significantly ($p < .05$)

A series of one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted on the remaining demographic variables (Table 3.06). Younger participants, those whose highest qualification was lower than an undergraduate degree, and those who read either tabloid newspapers or no newspapers at all scored lower than participants who did not share these characteristics. Full-scale scores on the revised CATSO were generally reflective of scores for the 'Sentencing and Management' (with the exception of the age variable, in relation to which no statistically significant were found) and 'Risk Perception' factors. However no significant statistical differences were found in relation to the 'Stereotype Endorsement' factor across any demographic variable. In Table 3.06, the 'age' variable is broken down into three categories, based upon the average age of new parents in the UK, allowing for the effect of a proxy measure of 'parental status' (not asked in this study) to be calculated. This is consistent with previous work examining demographic differences on the original CATSO measure (e.g., Malinen et al., 2014).

3.4. Discussion

Data collected from 400 British community members corroborated previous CATSO studies, indicating that two strong ('reliable') factors, and two weak ('unreliable') factors underlie the established measure put forward by Church et al. (2008). The addition of eight new items and the removal of four redundant CATSO items led to a revised 22-item scale with excellent internal consistency. Principal components analysis suggested four underlying factors to this scale, but upon observing the factors and conducting further reliability analyses, a three-factor structure was put forward and subjected to a confirmatory factor analysis. This three-factor structure was broadly supported, with each factor being found to be internally consistent.

Two items were removed from the scale due to their poor performance in an initial confirmatory factor analysis. This left a final model consisting of 20 items reflecting three different aspects of community perceptions about sexual offenders: 'Sentencing and Management', 'Stereotype Endorsement', and 'Risk Perception'. These subscales correlated strongly with other independent measures, including Pacini and Epstein's (1999) REI (with preferences for intuitive-experiential thinking being associated with higher ratings of the reoffending risk posed by sexual offenders), and Maruna and King's (2009) GPS (with generalised punitiveness being associated with increased support for sexual offenders to be treated harshly by the courts, and upon their re-entry into the community). This model is generally supportive of the one proposed at the outset following face validity analysis of the original CATSO items.

A Note on Correlations

The overarching aim of this chapter was to develop an outcome measure that could be used in order to detect changes in policy- and risk-level changes in judgements about sexual offenders in light of exposure to new information. This aim was achieved through the development of a revised CATSO with improved internal consistency and a clearer factor structure being put forward. A potential obstacle to this new scale being adopted widely is the strong relationship between it and another existing measure specifically related to attitudes towards sexual offenders - the ATS-21 (Hogue & Harper, in prep).

When taken at face value, the correlation between the total scale scores ($r = -.84$) would indicate that these two scales are examining the same constructs. However, when considered within the context of the social-cognitive theory, as well as the conceptual distinction between ‘attitudes’ and ‘perceptions’ that was set out in Section 1.1.1, it is argued that these two scales are examining different facets of social cognition in relation to views about sexual offenders. For example, the ATS-21 examines attitudes towards sexual offenders, and as such can be conceptualised as a measure of affective, cognitive, and behavioural reactions to this group. Contrastingly, the revised version of the CATSO examines knowledge-based judgements about sexual offenders. There clearly is some level of overlap between these constructs. However, it is logical to assume that attitudes (as measured by the ATS-21) may have a bearing on judgements (as measured by the revised CATSO), but not necessarily vice-versa.

This is not to downplay the relationship between the ATS-21 and the revised CATSO scale. It is clear that affective responses to sexual crime and its perpetrators may have a profound impact on sentencing and risk judgements. However, the argument being made here is that they measure conceptually different aspects of responses to sexual crime.

3.4.1. The Perceptions of Sex Offenders Scale

As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, there is doubt as to whether the CATSO, in its original form, is a valid and reliable measure of attitudes towards sexual offenders. The conceptual distinction between ‘attitudes’ and ‘perceptions’ (Section 1.1.1) leads to the conclusion that the majority of the items on the CATSO (and, by extension, the revised 20-item scale) measure knowledge-based attributions about sexual offenders, as opposed to respondents’ affective judgements about them. With this attitude-perception distinction in mind, Shelton et al.’s (2013) tentative suggestion of changing the name of the CATSO is also supported here. Instead, it is proposed that the new 20-item scale be named the ‘Perceptions of Sex Offenders Scale’ (from here ‘[the] PSO’). This title avoids the ambiguity brought about by referring to the measure as an attitude scale, and more accurately reflects the types of inferences that can be made by researchers using this tool. A full list of PSO items can be found in Appendix D.

Potential Utility of the PSO

The PSO constitutes a reconceptualisation of the CATSO scale, in that it seeks to change the original use as an attitude measure to one as an outcome scale measuring sentencing and risk judgements of sexual offenders. In this sense, the PSO may be able to detect changes in knowledge- and policy-based judgements about sexual offenders based upon educational interventions. This is not something that would be expected when using attitude measures, with affective judgements being longer-lasting and less malleable (at least in the shorter-term through experiential methods; e.g., Craig, 2005; Hogue, 1995). Indeed, small-scale projects using the PSO have already begun to demonstrate that these kinds of changes can be detected using educational mock news stories (e.g., Jones, 2015). The three subscales that form the foundation of the PSO refer to distinct aspects of the wider societal discourse about sexual offenders and their management. For this reason, each of the factors can be seen to represent a way of understanding respondents': (a) understanding of who sexual offenders are, and (b) perceptions about how sexual offenders should be sentenced and/or managed post-conviction. As such, these can be seen as targets for researchers looking to improve responses to sexual offenders.

The criminological literature around desistance from crime also places an emphasis on social capital and the environment within which reintegration and social rehabilitation takes place (Göbbels et al., 2012; LeBel et al., 2008; Maruna, 2001; Willis et al., 2010). While the precise nature of this literature may be beyond the scope of this thesis, the PSO has great potential for use as a tool for scoping sites for sexual offender treatment facilities. For example, communities with lower perceived risk of sexual offender reoffending may be more accepting of plans to open a treatment facility in their area, thus improving the likelihood of its success through less pronounced expressions of the 'Not-In-My-Backyard' phenomenon (e.g., Brown, 1999; Cook & Hogue, 2013). Following a recent professional conference ("Let's Talk About Sex", hosted at the University of Lincoln in May 2015), research collaborations have been also suggested with the aim being to use the PSO to examine the therapeutic climate of one particular area where sexual offender treatment is provided.

Refinement and Future Directions

Criticising definitions of 'punitiveness' that conceptualise it as an instrumental pursuit of some penal outcome, Maruna and King (2009) defined punitiveness as a general tendency to support harsher criminal justice policies. This claim is supported by the PSO data

through the size of the ‘Sentencing and Management’ factor’s correlation with the GPS measure. General levels of societal punitiveness are said to be a key driver of the political discourse around crime and punishment (Bosworth, 2011; Frost, 2010), thus understanding this punitiveness at a deeper level should be a priority for researchers seeking to facilitate more constructive evidence-based communication between law enforcement agencies, the judiciary, and the general public.

Community perceptions about the risks posed by convicted sexual offenders have important implications for the reintegration of people with sexual convictions and support for political policies aimed at managing offenders in the community. This claim is supported by the high correlation between the PSO’s ‘Sentencing and Management’ and ‘Risk Perception’ factors. Risk perceptions (and social judgements) can potentially be skewed by misrepresentative media reporting about the issue of sexual crime (Harper & Hogue, 2015; Imhoff, 2015). For instance, the UK national newspaper News of the World (now defunct following a scandal about its involvement in hacking the phone messages of senior politicians, celebrities, and victims of crime) responded to the abduction, sexual assault and murder of schoolgirl Sarah Payne in 2000 by launching a ‘name and shame’ campaign against people with sexual convictions involving children. Its front page carried the warning:

“There are 110,000 child sex offenders in Britain.. one for every square mile. The murder of Sarah Payne has proved police monitoring of these perverts is not enough. So we are revealing WHO they are and WHERE they are.. starting today”
(News of the World, 23rd July 2000, p. 1).

This presentation implied that sexual offenders against children are a risk to everybody in their community, in spite of official statistics suggesting that this group of offenders has a comparatively low base rate of reoffending – 9% compared with more than 35% for offenders in general (Ministry of Justice, 2013). Additionally, this approach adds popular credence to the view that stranger-perpetrated sexual offending against children is commonplace, when in fact more than 80% of this type of criminal behaviour is perpetrated by somebody with a pre-existing relationship with the victim (Lieb, Quinsey & Berliner, 1998; Radford et al., 2011). The impact of this style of media presentation is an increased perception of the risks associated with an unknown number of apparently anonymous potential offenders in local communities. This, in turn, contributes to public

thinking about the best ways to manage sexual offenders (Thakker, 2012), with people tending to favour punitive, restrictive, and risk-averse policies to those that may be viewed as ‘softer’, or erring more towards rehabilitation. Future studies using the PSO could examine whether different forms of psychoeducation with regards the true nature of sexual crime have the potential to reduce perceptions of risk associated with sexual offenders. These kinds of studies would also be utilising the PSO in the intended outcome-orientated way.

3.5. Chapter Summary

This chapter has drawn up and addressed some of the conceptual and practical shortcomings of the CATSO measure that have been raised within the existing literature into attitudes and perceptions of sexual offenders. Following face validity, principal components, and confirmatory factor analyses, a revised version of the CATSO (the ‘Perceptions of Sex Offenders (PSO) scale’) is put forward as a potential tool for examining the policy-related outcomes related to perceptions about sexual offenders.

The PSO is argued to be a knowledge-based measure of respondents’ perceptions about the perpetrators of sexual crime, and should be used in conjunction with affect-based attitudinal measures (e.g., the ATS; Hogue, 1993; Hogue & Harper, in prep). Previously, the ATS and CATSO measures have both been marketed as attitude measures, and rarely used together in the same study. Thus, the PSO acts as a new tool for examining the social and political discourse around sexual crime and its perpetrators, and has potential utility in both academic and practical work in this area.

The chapters that follow in this thesis seek to build on the development of the PSO, and use this new scale as an outcome measure for examining the effect of different manipulations on perceptions of sexual offenders.

CHAPTER 4

THE AVAILABILITY HEURISTIC IN SEXUAL CRIME JUDGEMENTS

Research previously completed at MSc level (Harper & Hogue, 2015) found that, when compared to the frequency of reporting about other crime types, sexual crime is markedly over-represented within news reports, and is comprised of significantly more negative language. This work was conducted in late 2012, with news articles being sourced being August and November of that year. During this data collection period, there was a re-emergence of allegations of sexual offending made against the deceased television presenter, Jimmy Savile.

The Savile case prompted much social debate about the status of historical sexual offences, and how sexual crime investigations should operate within the modern criminal justice system. The impact of this single case on social discourse appeared to complement the view that processes pertaining to the *availability heuristic* (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). This chapter examines the role of the availability heuristic within the context of attitudes towards, and judgements about, sexual offenders. In doing so, three empirical analyses are presented:

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| Study 1 | An analysis of post-Savile British newspaper coverage of sexual crime |
| Study 2 | An examination of the availability heuristic in recent changes to sexual crime sentencing guidelines |
| Study 3 | A study of the availability heuristic in individuals' decision-making about sexual crime |

4.1. Study 1: Availability in Press Reports about Sexual Crime

In the past five years, sexual crime has been among the most-discussed topics in the national British press. This is predominantly due to the re-emergence of allegations of historical sexual offending, and particularly around the high-profile nature of the allegations made against a host of celebrity names (including Jimmy Savile).

The UK television documentary, *Exposed: The Other Side of Jimmy Savile* aired in October 2012, alleged that Savile had undertaken an almost 30-year long campaign of sexual abuse. Savile, who died earlier that year, had faced questions about his sexual conduct during his lifetime. He had always maintained his innocence, while indicating that nobody other than him knew about his sexual activities or desires. The documentary was aired at primetime, and systematically described how Savile allegedly used his celebrity status to gain access to and subsequently abuse children through his television shows, and vulnerable people through his charitable activities in hospitals and children's homes. Alleged victims appeared on the programme anonymously, and gave a consistent narrative about Savile's methods of grooming and sexual offending. The evidence appeared overwhelming, and sparked a national debate about how this former 'national treasure' was able to evade justice for so long, despite several alleged victims coming forward during Savile's lifetime.

The documentary led to the development of Operation Yewtree (Gray & Watt, 2012). This is a police operation designed to investigate three strands of inquiry related to historical sexual abuse:

1. Sexual offences committed by Jimmy Savile
2. Sexual offences by Jimmy Savile 'and others'
3. Sexual offences not related to Jimmy Savile.

Various police investigations have been established as a result of Operation Yewtree. The highest profile of these is Operation Hydrant, which is a national police operation that seeks to investigate historical allegations of sexual abuse. At the time of writing (June 2016), there are over 2,000 potential offenders under investigation, along with more than 500 institutions.

The sections that follow seek to examine the changes in press coverage of sexual crime in the wake of the Jimmy Savile scandal. In doing this, previous data (Harper & Hogue, 2015) are drawn upon and extended, and new data are described in order to make inferences about the impact of high-profile ('available') sexual crime cases on attitudes and responses to sexual offending.

4.1.1. Data Sources and Article Sampling

In Study 1, the UK's 10 most popular national newspapers (by print circulation at the beginning of the 2012 data collection cycle; Press Gazette, 2012) were chosen for analysis, such as to allow findings to be generalised as widely as possible within a national context. The list of target publications included: *The Sun*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Star*, *Daily Telegraph*, *The Times*, *Financial Times*, the *i*, and *The Guardian*.

Articles were initially sourced through the LexisLibrary online database between 1st August 2012 and 30th November 2012 (Harper & Hogue, 2015). In order to create a naturalistic experiment and compare levels of press coverage directly, a post-Savile dataset was collected between the same dates in 2013. The LexisLibrary database provides comprehensive access to British newspapers, with the ability to search for stories using a range of parameters, such as key words or specific dates, in order to locate articles about any given subject. *The i* and *The Financial Times* are not archived in the library, and thus these publications were excluded from the analyses that follow.

The key phrases used to restrict the number of articles resulting from searches, as well as eligible criminal offences, are presented in Table 4.01. The use of the asterisk following phrases such as "molest*" ensured that potentially relevant articles containing words with these stems were captured (e.g., 'molestation', 'molested' and 'molester'). Articles with 'high similarity' (as determined by the LexisLibrary search software) were condensed into one result, reducing the likelihood of duplicating results. This approach follows previous studies into press reporting styles in relation to contentious social issues (e.g., Allen & Blinder, 2013). Articles about violent and acquisitive crimes were collected alongside articles about sexual crime in order to examine the prevalence of sexual crime coverage within the wider context of general crime reporting.

Articles were eligible for inclusion in Study 1 if they were based on cases whereby an individual (or a group of individuals) had been convicted of one of the pre-defined criminal offences within the UK (Table 4.01). Thus, cases of 'trial-by-media', whereby newspapers printed stories about people accused of crimes prior to conviction, were eliminated. This resulted in the exclusion of articles specifically written in relation to cases involving the Jimmy Savile, given that he was deceased when the fresh allegations

against him were made. However, this criterion enabled an analysis of the effect of the Jimmy Savile case on press reporting of sexual crime without including articles written specifically about his alleged offending.

Table 4.01: Search terms and eligible offences during data collection

	Search terms	Eligible offences
Sexual crime	“guilty” OR “convicted” AND “rape” OR “molest*” OR “sexual assault”	rape; sexual assault; child molestation
Violent crime	“guilty” OR “convicted” AND “murder*” OR “kill*” OR “attack*”	murder; manslaughter; actual bodily harm (ABH); grievous bodily harm (GBH)
Acquisitive crime	“guilty” OR “convicted” AND “burgl*” OR “theft” OR “robb*”	theft; burglary; robbery

A final sample of 1,014 articles ($M = 126.75$ articles per publication) were eligible for analysis, broken down as 431 from the 2012 sample, and 583 from the 2013 sample. A full breakdown of the number of articles contributed by each newspaper is presented in Table 4.02.

4.1.2. Analysing Representations of Sexual Crime Prevalence

Representations of crime rates within the national press were calculated by establishing the proportions of sample articles that were written about each offence type, with these statistics then being compared to official crime rates for 2013 (Office for National Statistics, 2014). An overview of these findings, along with hypothetical crime figures based on press representations, is provided in Table 4.03.

Results indicated that sexual crime was subject to a ten-times over-representation within the 2012 press article sample (actual prevalence = 2% of crime; sample prevalence = 20%), rising to a twenty-two-and-a-half-times over-representation in the year 2013 (actual prevalence = 2% of crime; sample prevalence = 45%). Violent crime was over-represented by almost two-and-a-half-times in 2012 (actual prevalence = 27% of crime; sample prevalence = 65%), but only by around one-and-a-half-times one year later (actual

prevalence = 21% of crime; sample prevalence = 44%). Acquisitive crime was under-represented by four-and-a-half-times in the 2012 sample (actual prevalence = 72% of crime; sample prevalence = 15%), increasing to a seven-times under-representation in 2013 (actual prevalence = 77% of crime; sample prevalence = 11%).

The increase in press coverage of sexual crime cannot be attributed to similar increases in convicted cases being seen in the courts. For example, there was approximately a 17% increase in the number of sexual crime convictions between the two data collection periods, but the increase in coverage was almost 300%.

An online calculator (http://stats.areppim.com/calc/calc_poisson.php) was used in order to establish the likelihood that these under-/over-representations of crime prevalence occurred by chance, using the Poisson Probability method. This technique takes an observed value (the actual number of news articles about sexual crime in the press), and compares it to an expected value (a hypothetical number of expected news articles about sexual crime, compared to the expected level of coverage when based around reported crime figures). In this analysis, the expected value was entered as the actual prevalence rate (as a percentage) for each type of offence, with the observed prevalence rate being compared to the Poisson-determined threshold for significance. For sexual crime, the over-representations in reporting for both 2012 and 2013 were found to have a very low probability of occurring by chance (p 's < .001). This was also the case for the over-representations of violent crime, and under-representations of acquisitive crime, in both 2012 and 2013.

These findings converge to suggest that the varying representations of sexual, violent, and acquisitive crime are not a result of random chance reporting, and may be symptomatic of selective editorial decisions. This is perhaps unsurprising. Jewkes (2004) refers to various *news values* when discussing the news media's coverage of criminality. News values guide journalistic activity in determining what a 'newsworthy' story is. Sexual crime stories, especially those involving celebrity offenders and multiple child victims, fulfil many news values (e.g., sex, celebrity, simplification, and individualisation). Using this framework, it is possible to explain why such selective reporting takes place.

Table 4.02: Number of articles sourced from each newspaper, by dataset

	Print circulation	Market share (%)	<u>Sexual crime</u>		<u>Violent crime</u>		<u>Acquisitive crime</u>	
			2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013
The Sun	2,583,552	30.2	26	82	83	67	14	20
Daily Mail	1,939,635	22.6	5	24	17	19	9	6
Daily Mirror	1,081,330	12.6	22	66	66	47	7	11
Daily Express	602,482	7.0	2	13	27	21	7	7
Daily Star	602,296	7.0	4	11	21	18	6	3
Daily Telegraph	574,674	6.7	9	33	39	40	16	9
The Times	400,120	4.7	8	21	23	29	4	10
Financial Times	297,225	3.5	NOT SOURCED DUE TO NO ARCHIVING IN THE STUDY DATABASE					
The <i>i</i>	272,597	3.2						
The Guardian	211,511	2.5	3	13	11	16	2	1
Total	8,565,422	100	89	262	282	255	60	66

Table 4.03: Press representations of crime prevalence pre and post the re-emergence of the Jimmy Savile allegations, by offence type

	Sexual crime	Violent crime	Acquisitive crime
Study N			
2012	89	282	60
2013	262	255	66
Study %			
2012	20	65	15
2013	45	44	11
Actual N			
2012	52,178	747,448	2,013,241
2013	60,894	614,464	2,308,877
Actual %			
2012	2	26	72
2013	2	21	77
Projected N			
2012	562,573	1,828,364	421,930
2013	1,342,905	1,313,064	328,266

Note: 'Projected N' represents crime figures based upon press representation of crime prevalence

4.1.3. Implications of Prevalence Over-Representations

The implications of such a marked increase in the frequency of sexual crime articles in the national British press are potentially numerous. In line with agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), it would be expected that this proliferation in sexual crime news in the wake of the Jimmy Savile scandal has led to increases in the perceptions of the general public in relation to both the prevalence of sexual crime, and the importance of sexual crime as a political issue. While these claims cannot be tested through the data presented in this study, they can be posed as hypotheses in further analyses. Longitudinal designs are essential for analysing long-term trends in perceptions of sexual crime prevalence in response to high-profile cases over time, and so an examination of this hypothesis is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, the study that follows directly analyses the impact of high-profile cases of sexual crime within the press on social and political discussions.

4.2. Study 2: A Prototype-Willingness Model of Sexual Crime Discourse

Examining the influence of availability-related processes in decision-making, Gibbons and Gerrard (1995) and Gerrard et al. (2008) formulated and refined a dual-process model of risk-taking behaviour, based primarily upon the theory of reasoned action (TRA; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). TRA proposes that behaviour is driven by a person's conscious consideration of their personal attitudes towards an issue, the general view of society towards that issue, and the person's motivation to comply with society's views about the issue. For example, negative personal attitudes towards smoking behaviour, when accompanied by negative social reactions to smoking and a strong compulsion to comply with social norms on the part of the individual, lead to a low 'behavioural intention' to smoke, which is then likely to result in the individual not smoking. However, if social attitudes were more positive, this may lead to smoking behaviour through the mechanism of peer pressure (Gibbons & Gerrard, 1995).

Building on these ideas, Gerrard et al. (2008) argued that people engage in risk-taking behaviour in a way that is more reactive than planned, and that evaluations of potentially risky behaviours are based on the heuristic processing of image-based information. Gerrard et al. (2008) suggested that these images were prototypes of the kinds of people that are thought to engage in particular behaviours, and that the heuristic processing of these prototypes dictates whether an individual is likely to engage in any given behaviour. Their resultant model was named the 'Prototype-Willingness Model' (PWM).

In addition to Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) 'behavioural intention' factor as a precursor to actual behaviour, Gerrard et al. (2008) outlined a second antecedent: 'behavioural willingness'. They defined this as an openness to risk opportunity, which is brought about by specific social situations, such as the activation or consideration of a prototype image. Behavioural willingness has been shown to be a greater predictor of actual behaviour than behavioural intention in relation to issues such as adolescent substance misuse (e.g., Pomery & Brackett, 2010), which adds further credence to the claim that much of human behaviour is based on non-planned and affectively-driven heuristic-based cognition.

This prototype-driven approach has clear links to the availability heuristic, with openness to risky decision-making being based upon the availability of positive (vs. negative)

prototype images. Thus, Study 2 sought to examine the extent to which a PWM-like approach could be applied to the study of the social and political discourse about sexual crime and its perpetrators. Specifically, it asked whether the availability of ‘sexual crime prototypes’ can be linked to increases in public and political willingness to engage in punitive policymaking. It was hypothesised that a small number of unrepresentative sexual crime prototypes would receive exaggerated levels of press coverage, and that these cases would set the press and political agenda around the sentencing and post-conviction management of sexual offenders.

4.2.1. Article Sample

Press articles about sexual crime collected as part of the 2013 wave of Study 1 were included in this analysis. Thus, information about data sourcing and eligibility criteria can be found in being outlined in Section 4.1.1. In addition to the inclusion criteria outlined previously, this sample was further limited to only those cases convicted within the legal jurisdiction of England and Wales. This decision was taken in order to purely examine coverage of cases that were tried within the legal code of England and Wales, as opposed to confounding the analyses with the inclusion of cases tried within the devolved judicial systems of Scotland and Northern Ireland. This approach allowed for a better analysis of the link between press-induced sexual crime prototypes, and social and political discussions to be conducted within a single legal system. The addition of this further inclusion criteria reduced the original 262 articles to 148 articles ($M = 18.50$ articles per publication).

4.2.2. Examining the Sample for Prototypes

Of the 148 articles comprising the sample, 62 distinct cases were represented ($M = 2.39$ articles per case). This figure of 2.39 articles was used as the expected value within a Poisson Probability analysis (see above). The resultant upper value for a significant deviation from this mean value was 4.60, meaning that any case represented in five or more articles was significantly over-represented within the collected sample of articles.

Of the identified 62 cases within the sample, six were significantly over-represented (i.e., were mentioned in five or more articles). These six cases (9.68% of the total case sample) were represented in 44 articles (29.73% of the total article sample), and portrayed three

immigrant sexual offenders, a female teacher, and two celebrities. Three of the cases involved child victims, with the remaining three involving adult victims. The focus of the three immigrant offender articles was around immigration policy and the UK's continued membership of the European Union. As these articles were not specifically focused on the sexual offending aspects of these cases, these cases were excluded from subsequent analyses. The remaining three cases all involved child victims, and pertained to the most-discussed cases within the article sample.

These most-represented cases were as follows:

- Ian Watkins (mentioned in 13 articles; musician; child victims)
- [Jimmy Savile (mentioned in 11 articles; entertainer; mixed victims)]
- Stuart Hall (mentioned in 10 articles; broadcaster; child victims)
- Rachel Speed (mentioned in 6 articles; teacher; child victim)

Despite no articles being specifically written about him, references to Jimmy Savile also appeared in 11 of the 148 articles (7.43% of all articles; hence his inclusion in the above list). This level of coverage made Savile the second most-discussed 'sexual offender' within the article sample, in spite of inclusion criteria that specifically sought to exclude non-convicted cases. The fact that the Savile case also met the threshold for being classified as significantly over-represented in terms of coverage levels further indicates the pervasiveness of this case within recent media discourse around sexual offending. This finding also provides further weight to the analyses presented previously, which highlighted the potential impact of the Jimmy Savile case on press representations of sexual offending prevalence.

4.2.3. *Towards a Prototype-Willingness Model of Sexual Crime Discourse*

The broad hypothesis that a small number of unrepresentative sexual crime cases would be particularly salient within the national British press was supported by the data in this analysis. Of particular note was the inclusion of Jimmy Savile as one of the most mentioned 'offenders' within a sample of articles about convicted cases of sexual crime, despite his death approximately 18 months prior to the re-emergence of allegations about his sexual offending. With theoretical support from Gerrard et al.'s (2008) PWM of

adolescent risk taking behaviour, it is therefore contended that these over-represented sexual crime cases act as ‘sexual crime prototypes’. In this context, it could be suggested that a modified version of the PWM could be applied to help us to understand how people come to make judgements about sexual offending. Figure 4.01 provides a schematic of how this hypothesised model may look.

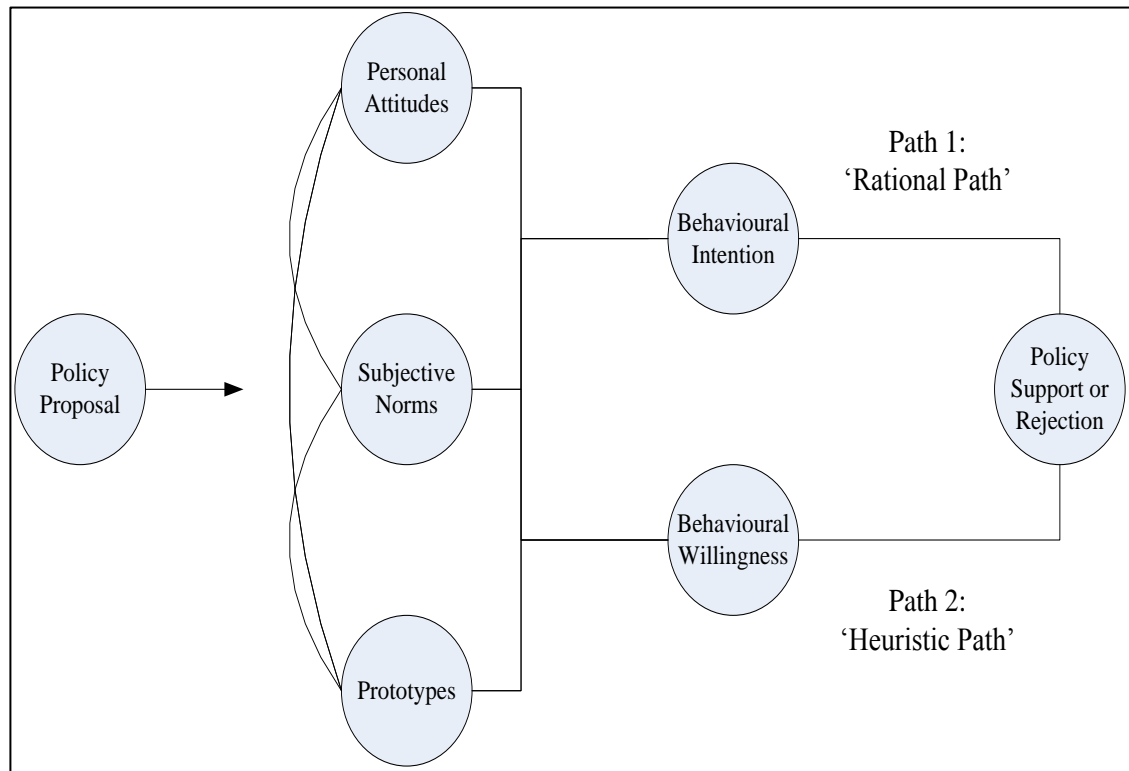


Figure 4.01: The hypothesised PWM of sexual crime decision-making

Explaining the Hypothesised PWM of Sexual Crime Decision-Making

It is argued that Gerrard et al.’s (2008) PWM of risk-taking behaviour can be adapted to produce a hypothesised model of the social and political discourse about sexual crime in England and Wales. That is, it is proposed that the activation of sexual crime prototypes reduces public aversion to punitive policy proposals (therefore increasing their behavioural willingness to support such propositions), which in turn contributes to an increasingly punitive and reactionary response to sexual crime from political actors.

Path 1: ‘The Rational Path’

Path 1 of the hypothesised PWM of sexual crime decision-making, like Gerrard et al.’s (2008) original conceptualisation of the PWM, corresponds to a theory of reasoned action

approach (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The rational path relies on the perceiver's conscious appraisal of: (1) their own attitudes towards sexual offenders and their treatment, (2) societal attitudes towards sexual offenders, and (3) their motivation to comply with social norms. These evaluations come together to form a conclusion (or 'behavioural intention'), which corresponds to a conscious plan to support punitive (or lenient) policies. Therefore using the rational path of the hypothesised PWM, an individual with negative attitudes toward sexual offenders and high levels of motivation to comply with societal subjective norms will be more likely to have the intention to vote for punitive policies. Consistent with the theory of reasoned action the formed behavioural intention should act as a strong predictor of actual policy support (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Guo & Feng, 2012; Tejaswini & Rao, 2009).

This first path towards making judgements about sexual crime, within the context of Epstein's (2003) CEST (Section 2.2.1), takes the form of an analytic-rational style of information processing. With this in mind, it would be expected that people scoring high on the 'rationality' subscale of Pacini and Epstein's (1999) REI measure would process information about sexual crime in this way. These individuals would also be expected to be less likely to make sweeping judgements in response to individual examples of sexual offending being presented to them (i.e., individual cases of sexual crime would have low levels of probative value for these individuals; Berger, 2007).

Path 2: The 'Heuristic Path'

The second path in the hypothesised PWM of sexual crime decision-making asserts that the activation of particular sexual crime prototypes leads to an increased willingness to support policy proposals that are punitive in nature. This willingness is proposed as being brought about by the heuristic processing of such sexual crime prototypes, such as the three (or four, if Jimmy Savile is included) cases highlighted above.

Sexual crime prototypes are disseminated within the context of over-representations of sexual crime within the news media, as was reported in Study 1. These reports are also significantly more likely to be comprised of negative emotion than articles about other marginalised and stigmatised groups, such as other offending populations and immigrant groups (Harper & Hogue, 2015).

The activation of sexual crime prototypes and their influence over public attitudes can be examined using cognitive dissonance theory. That is, sexual crime prototypes could have a mediating effect on conflicting cognitions of, for example, general support for offender rehabilitation, but objections to the local rehousing of convicted sexual offenders. For example, communities must balance Government rhetoric around the ‘rehabilitation revolution’ (Ministry of Justice, 2013), and generally supportive views about sexual offender treatment (Brown, 1999; Rogers, Hirst, & Davies, 2011), with subjective fears about convicted sexual offenders being re-housed in their local communities. This ‘not in my backyard’ style of thinking has been reported in a range of empirical studies looking at responses to sexual offenders (Brown, 1999; Cook & Hogue 2013). Looking at this phenomenon in more detail, Cook and Hogue (2013) reported that participants who held the sexual crime prototypes of ‘rapists’ or ‘paedophiles’ (i.e., the most common sexual offender labels used within UK press reports; Harper & Hogue, 2015) expressed the highest levels of objection to the local rehousing of sexual offenders. This response can be explained through the emotionally-charged activation of sexual crime prototypes, with local people asking ‘why should we accept people like X into our community?’. This argument provides further support for the hypothesis that sexual crime prototypes influence policy preferences.

From the perspective of CEST (Epstein, 2003), ‘available’ sexual crime prototypes are processed experientially. In turn, it is proposed that this experientiality activates an emotional risk-based response, leading to favourable appraisals of punitive policy proposals which would prevent people with sexual convictions from being (re-)placed in the community. A further hypothesis would therefore be that people scoring higher on the experientiality scale of Pacini and Epstein’s (1999) REI will rely more heavily on this heuristic path than those scoring lower, and that these individuals would find more probative value in single cases that match a particular prototype that they may hold.

Applying the Hypothesised PWM to Contemporary Social Debates

Several sexual crime prototypes have been particularly salient in social and political discourse over the past two decades, many of which have had a profound impact on press and political agendas around the sentencing and post-conviction management of sexual offenders. In this section, three specific prototype cases are outlined, with an analysis of

how a prototype-based approach for sexual offender legislation may have shaped policy discussions and legislative changes.

Case 1: The Murder of Sarah Payne, and Community Notification Schemes

In 2000, the abduction and murder of schoolgirl Sarah Payne by a man who had previously been convicted for sexual offences against children led to a high-profile media campaign. Alongside the *News of the World* newspaper (now defunct following the 2011-2012 press hacking scandal which led to the Leveson Inquiry into press ethics), the Payne family launched a national initiative in an attempt to force law enforcement officials to release information about where sexual offenders live. The stated rationale of this initiative was that a scheme such as this would enable parents to protect their children from people they called ‘sexual predators’. The Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme (CSODS) is now fully established nationwide in the UK, and allows concerned members of the public to apply to the police for information about the offending histories of individuals that they suspect of being a danger to local children. The police then have the option of disclosing any offence-related information about the suspected individual to a person best placed to protect local children.

CSODS has not been viewed as favourably, or used as widely, as it was expected to be by newspapers and senior political figures (McCartan, 2014). However, public support for community notification schemes remains high (Levenson et al., 2007; McCartan, 2014), and as such there may be something more specific to the CSODS procedure (as opposed to community notification as a general practice) that is unpopular. McCartan (2014) commented that the CSODS scheme is somewhat different to the original ‘Sarah’s Law’ concept that was proposed by the Payne family, in that community members are required to take an active role in seeking out information. This is at-odds with the initial proposal that sexual offenders’ details should be openly accessible to local communities, (as in the U.S.).

Of particular concern is the lack of clear evidence that schemes like CSODS are effective in reducing reoffending rates among sexual offenders against children. To the contrary, several studies have indicated that community notification schemes often have a negative effect on sexual offenders’ efforts to reintegrate and desist from crime (Edwards & Hensley, 2001; Levenson et al., 2007; Levenson & Cotter, 2005; Willis et al., 2010; Prescott & Rockoff, 2008). These findings raise the concern that by allowing sexual crime

prototypes to guide legislative discussions (as hypothesised in the PWM advanced above), actions taken by politicians to reduce the public's subjective risk may have the opposite effect on increasing offenders' actual propensity to commit further offences.

Case 2: The Murder of Tia Sharp, and Internet Censorship

The murder of 12-year-old Tia Sharp by her mother's former partner in 2012 sparked a national crackdown on online pornography. Stuart Hazell, who was convicted of the murder, was alleged to have viewed indecent images of children in the weeks and months prior to the crime taking place, leading Prime Minister David Cameron to call for increased censorship of all types of online explicit material (Cameron, 2013). However, evidence of a direct and causal link between the use of child abuse material and contact sexual offending against children is mixed (e.g., Seto, Hanson, & Babchishin, 2011). Thus, this political response potentially represents another example of reactionary, and possibly ineffective, policy-making in response to a sexual crime prototype. Indeed, Ferguson and Hartley (2009) even found an inverse relationship between pornography use and sexually-assaultive behaviour. Using population-level data, they found that countries with the higher rates of pornography use also had lower rates of sexual assault, and concluded that "it is time to discard the hypothesis that pornography contributes to increased sexual assault behavior" (p. 323).

Specifically in relation to offences against children, Merdian et al. (2013) distinguished what they term 'child sexual exploitation material (CSEM)' users on three dimensions: (1) the function of CSEM use (fantasy-driven vs. contact-driven); (2) the underlying motivations of CSEM use (paedophilic sexual interest vs. general sexual deviancy vs. financial motivations vs. other motivations, and (3) the sociality of CSEM use (social use vs. lone use). While a detailed explanation of this approach is beyond the scope of this thesis, models such as these indicate the heterogeneous nature of CSEM users, and question the wisdom of advocating an automatic and blanket ban on all forms of explicit online material as an appropriate policy response to this issue.

Case 3: The Rise of the Celebrity Sexual Offender

The hypothesis of sexual crime prototypes influencing political decision-making about sexual crime policy gains further support from coverage of historic sexual offences perpetrated by celebrities. In response, the issue of sexual offending by celebrities and senior public figures has been the focus of sexual crime policy discussions in the UK

since the re-emergence of the Jimmy Savile allegations and the formation of Operation Yewtree in late 2012. Allegations of serious oversights were levelled at Jimmy Savile's former employers, which included public bodies such as the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the National Health Service (NHS), and may have contributed to the widespread coverage of these allegations. Gray and Watt (2013) published an early report into the alleged offending of Jimmy Savile, which found that hundreds of people may have been victimised by him. However, many of these alleged victims had not come forward prior to his death as they did not believe that their claims would be taken seriously.

This pattern of the abuse of celebrity status is further illustrated in the case of Ian Watkins (former frontman of the now defunct rock band, *Lostprophets*) who was convicted in December 2013 on several counts of sexual offences involving very young children. Watkins was said to have abused his celebrity status in order to 'groom' the mothers of young children before gaining access to abuse them.

In response to these more recent cases, the public discourse and political debates about sexual crime have become increasingly victim-focused, and more punitive punishments are being recommended for sexual offenders who abuse their power and social status in the course of their offending behaviour (e.g., UK Sentencing Council 2014). As outlined by Peter Wanless (Chief Executive of the NSPCC) in December 2013, this official change in British sentencing guidelines was brought about by a need to reflect "the severe damage caused by highly manipulative and devious sex offenders, who may use positions of trust or celebrity status to target children". However, the emphasis on this style of offending (e.g., those offences that are committed by celebrities and well-known public figures) potentially distracts from the overwhelming reality of sexual offending – particularly against children – where up to 90% of perpetrators have a pre-existing relationship with their victims (Radford et al., 2011).

Sexual Crime Prototypes and their Influence on Legislation and Policy Support

In light of the data and analyses presented so far in this chapter, it is argued that sexual crime prototypes, along with the emotionality of sexual crime reports in the national press (Harper & Hogue, 2015), are at least in part responsible for recent developments in public and political discussions about sexual offending.

The increasingly reactionary nature of modern British politics (e.g., Harper & Treadwell, 2013) requires those who hold political power to be responsive to public concerns. The above cases provide three recent examples of sexual offending that have led to significant legislative change in the UK, despite a lack of research evidence showing that such changes can, will, or have led to reductions in the prevalence of sexual offending (e.g., Wilson, 2011). These trends are also consistent with what would be expected when examining sexual crime media coverage and political discourses within the context of Kuran and Sunstein's (1999) availability cascade framework of societal and political discussions about contentious social issues.

4.3. Study 3: Availability in Individual-Level Processing of Sexual Crime

The analyses presented above are indicative of availability-based processes being in operation at the societal and political level in relation to discussions about sexual crime. However, no work has yet been conducted into whether these mechanisms influence how people think about individual cases of sexual crime, or the extent to which people actually extrapolate judgements from a single case to wider questions about sexual crime policy.

Thus, Study 3 used an online public survey to examine whether presenting such 'prototypical' sexual crime cases has an impact on people's willingness to support punitive policy proposals in relation to sexual offending. In line with the hypothesised PWM of sexual crime decision-making, it was hypothesised that participants presented with a prototypical case would express a greater willingness to support punitive sexual crime policies, as well as higher rates of stereotypical thinking, and exaggerated perceptions of sexual offenders' risk levels.

4.3.1. Methods

Participants

Participants for this study were 174 British community members (52 males, 120 females, 2 participants declined to provide information about their gender; $M_{\text{age}} = 34.82$ years, $SD = 14.65$ years). These participants were recruited via the internet, using invitations disseminated through email distribution lists (institutional and personal), and social media

advertisements (e.g., personal Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn feeds). Invitations provided a concise overview of the study, the link to an online survey, and contact details of the researcher. Advertisements also included an appeal to share and disseminate the survey link via social media ‘Share’ and ‘Retweet’ functions, such as to reach as large a potential sample as possible. All participants were thus self-selecting, and obtained through opportunistic and snowball sampling techniques. No incentives were offered for participation, and those who took part were naïve to the research hypotheses prior to taking part.

Materials

A small battery of materials was administered to participants. The order of presentation was consistent with the sequence described below across all participants.

Demographic Questionnaire

A short demographic questionnaire was developed for this study, and asked participants to provide information about their gender, age, highest obtained qualification, preferred newspaper type, and experience of sexual crime.

Rational-Experiential Inventory

The REI (Pacini & Epstein, 1999) was used to examine participants’ preferences for, and self-perceived abilities in, analytic-rational and intuitive-experiential information processing (Epstein, 2003). Details about the REI’s content and scoring procedures can be found in Section 3.2.2. The REI demonstrated strong internal consistency on both subscales (rationality $\alpha = 0.86$; experiential $\alpha = 0.91$), with the expected orthogonal relationship between the two domains being found ($r = -.08, p = .32$). This is consistent with previous work using the REI (e.g., Berger, 2007).

Attitudes to Sexual Offenders Scale

The ATS-21 (Hogue & Harper, in prep) was used in order to obtain information about participants’ general attitudes about sexual offenders. The ATS-21 was outlined in Chapter 1 (see Section 1.2.1 for information about its development, content, and scoring), and demonstrated excellent levels of internal consistency in Study 3. This reliability was present when treating the measure as one holistic scale ($\alpha = 0.95$), as well as when

considering its three distinct subscales of ‘Trust’ ($\alpha = 0.89$), ‘Intent’ ($\alpha = 0.88$), and ‘Social Distance’ ($\alpha = 0.84$).

Experimental Vignettes

Seven short vignettes (Appendix E) were written specifically for use in this study. These were divided into three pairs of vignettes, with each pair depicting a ‘prototypical’ and ‘non-prototypical’ sexual offence. These pairs of vignettes depicted the following crimes:

- Sexual assault: male (prototypical) vs. female offender (non-prototypical)
- Child molestation: adult (prototypical) vs. juvenile offender (non-prototypical)
- Rape: stranger (prototypical) vs. known offender (non-prototypical)

Prototypicality was decided based upon observations of sexual crime stories reported in the national British press (Harper & Hogue, 2015; Soothill & Walby, 1991), and so do not represent truly what a ‘typical’ offence looks like in reality.² Each of these vignettes were approximately 100 words in length, with only prototype-salient information being changed in each pair.

The seventh vignette took the form of a mock news item about the Jimmy Savile allegations. Each of the vignettes was accompanied by a question which asked about the representativeness of the case described: “How representative of this type of crime do you think this case is?”. Participants responded to this question using an 11-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (*not representative*) to 10 (*very representative*). This rating also acted as a manipulation check, examining whether participants actually viewed the ‘prototypical’ cases as being more common than the ‘non-prototypical’ case examples.

Perceptions of Sex Offenders Scale

The PSO was used as an outcome measure in order to examine whether the priming of particular offender or offence characteristics demographics (rather than just thinking about views about ‘sexual offenders’ generally) could impact upon perceptions of sexual crime sentencing, the endorsement of stereotypes about sexual offenders, and risk

² In reality, recent estimates suggest that around 80% of all sexual offences are committed by males (Cortoni, Babchishin, & Rat, 2016), while those aged under 18 years old make up approximately 35% of all cases of child abuse (Finkelhor, Ormrod, & Chaffin, 2009). Further, up to 80% of all sexual offenders are known to their victims (Lieb et al., 1998).

judgements about the perpetrators of sexual offences. Information about the development and structure of the PSO can be found in Chapter 3. The PSO demonstrated levels of excellent internal consistency in Study 3, both as a complete scale ($\alpha = 0.90$), and in relation to its underlying factors of ‘Sentencing and Management’ ($\alpha = 0.93$), ‘Stereotype Endorsement’ ($\alpha = 0.84$), and ‘Risk Perception’ ($\alpha = 0.87$).

Procedure

Participants responded to email- and social media-driven invitations to take part by clicking on an internet link to the survey, which was hosted by the *Qualtrics Research Suite* system. Each advertisement, which were disseminated through email mailing lists and social media networks, included a short overview of the study, a link to the online survey, and contact details of the researcher. Upon starting the survey, participants were provided with a more detailed overview of the study and, if happy to continue, completed the questionnaires in a standardised order.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: a ‘rational path’ condition, or a ‘heuristic path’ condition. This randomisation was intended to act as a direct test of the PWM of sexual crime decision-making that was introduced in Section 4.2.3. In the rational path, participants ($n = 23$) proceeded directly from the baseline ATS-21 measure to completing the PSO, without viewing any vignette. In the heuristic path, the *Qualtrics* survey software randomly allocated participants to be presented with one of the vignettes described above, with data from all participants viewing either a ‘prototypical case’ ($n = 68$), a ‘non-prototypical’ case ($n = 61$), or the mock news story about the Jimmy Savile allegations ($n = 22$) being pooled in order to produce these distinct groups of participants. After reading this vignette, participants in the heuristic path completed the representativeness question, and then the PSO. At the end of data collection, participants were fully debriefed about the nature, aims and hypotheses of the study, and thanked for their participation.

4.3.2. Results

Baseline Scores and Manipulation Check

Prior to the presentation of the experimental vignettes, average scores on the ATS-21 measure were calculated for participants presented with a ‘prototypical’ vignette ($M = 51.18$, $SD = 14.37$), a ‘non-prototypical’ vignette ($M = 48.70$, $SD = 16.18$), the mock Jimmy Savile news story ($M = 45.05$, $SD = 17.31$), or no vignette ($M = 44.52$, $SD = 16.62$). A one-way ANOVA found there to be no significant differences in the baseline ATS-21 scores of these groups ($F(3, 170) = 1.51$, $p = .215$). This finding indicates that participants did not differ across groups in relation to their baseline attitudes towards sexual offenders. As such, it is unlikely that any between-groups differences in PSO outcomes can be attributed to baseline differences in attitudes towards sexual offenders.

As a manipulation check to examine whether the cases that were classified as ‘prototypical’ (vs. ‘non-prototypical’) were viewed as such by participants, a separate one-way ANOVA was conducted on post-vignette representativeness scores. A significant effect of Vignette on representativeness scores was found ($F(2, 148) = 3.49$, $p = .033$, $\eta^2 = 0.05$). This effect was attributable to a significant differences in representativeness scores in participants presented with a ‘prototypical’ vignette ($M = 5.92$, $SD = 2.49$) and either a ‘non-prototypical’ vignette ($M = 4.89$, $SD = 2.71$; $t(127) = 2.24$, $p = .029$, $d = 0.39$), or the mock Jimmy Savile news story ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 3.64$; $t(88) = 2.19$, $p = .028$, $d = 0.48$). There was no significant difference between the representativeness scores provided by participants in relation to the ‘non-prototypical’ vignettes or the mock Jimmy Savile news story ($t(81) = 0.65$, $p = .518$). Descriptive data for each specific vignette is presented in Table 4.04.

These data are supportive of the notion that press coverage of particular types of sexual offences (e.g., adult-perpetrated sexual molestation, stranger-perpetrated rape, and male-perpetrated sexual assault) translates into the belief that these types of offences characteristics are more representative of sexual crime as a whole than offences with contrasting offender-victim relationships.

Table 4.04: Representativeness ratings, by individual vignette

Vignette	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Prototypical		
<i>Male-perpetrated sexual assault (n = 22)</i>	6.47	2.29
<i>Adult-perpetrated child molestation (n = 19)</i>	6.15	2.23
<i>Stranger-perpetrated rape (n = 21)</i>	5.34	2.60
Non-Prototypical		
<i>Female-perpetrated sexual assault (n = 20)</i>	4.20	2.46
<i>Juvenile-perpetrated child molestation (n = 21)</i>	4.04	2.11
<i>Known offender-perpetrated rape (n = 17)</i>	7.02	2.36
Jimmy Savile		
<i>News story (n = 22)</i>	4.41	3.64

Post-Manipulation PSO Scores

A one-way ANOVA on total scores on the PSO found no significant effect of Vignette ($F(3, 170) = 0.75, p = .523$). This result means that the presentation (or lack thereof) of the experimental vignettes had no significant effect on PSO scores (Table 4.05).

In order to examine the potential moderating effects of preferences for analytic-rational or intuitive-experiential cognitive styles, separate 4 (Vignette: Prototypical vs. Non-Prototypical vs. Jimmy Savile vs. None) x 2 (Rationality/Experientiality: High vs. Low) ANOVAs were conducted in relation to each cognitive style. ‘High’ and ‘Low’ groups for analytic-rational and intuitive-experiential cognitive style preferences were created using a median split of possible scale scores.

Table 4.05: Mean PSO scores, by Vignette condition

Vignette	<u>PSO Score</u>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Prototypical (<i>n</i> = 68)	33.62	15.84
Non-prototypical (<i>n</i> = 58)	34.80	15.44
Jimmy Savile (<i>n</i> = 22)	37.86	15.89
No vignette (<i>n</i> = 23)	38.35	16.72

In relation to both types of cognitive style, there was no interaction with the Vignette presented to participants (analytic-rational: $F(2, 110) = 0.72, p = .488$; intuitive-experiential: $F(2, 110) = 1.27, p = .292$). These results further indicate that the experimental vignettes alone had no impact on PSO outcomes.

Ancillary Analyses

In order to fully understand what these data may mean, ancillary analyses were conducted with regard to participants' judgements of the representativeness of the experimental vignettes. Owing to the theoretical importance of baseline attitudes towards sexual offenders in outcome judgements (Hogue, 2015), a 3 (Vignette: Prototypical vs. Non-Prototypical vs. Jimmy Savile) x 2 (ATS-21 Group: Negative vs. Positive) was conducted on vignette representativeness judgements. ATS-21 groupings were determined using a median split on possible scale scores.

A significant interaction between Vignette and ATS-21 Group was observed ($F(2, 150) = 4.72, p = .010, \eta^2 = 0.06$). Analyses of simple main effects (with Bonferroni correction) found this interaction to be attributable to a significant difference in representativeness scores in relation to the Jimmy Savile mock news story between those scoring negatively vs. positively on the ATS-21 ($p < .001, d = 5.18$). No differences between the ATS-21 groupings were found in relation to the 'prototypical' ($p = .322$) or 'non-prototypical' vignette groups ($p = .839$). A visual depiction of this interaction is presented in Figure 4.02.

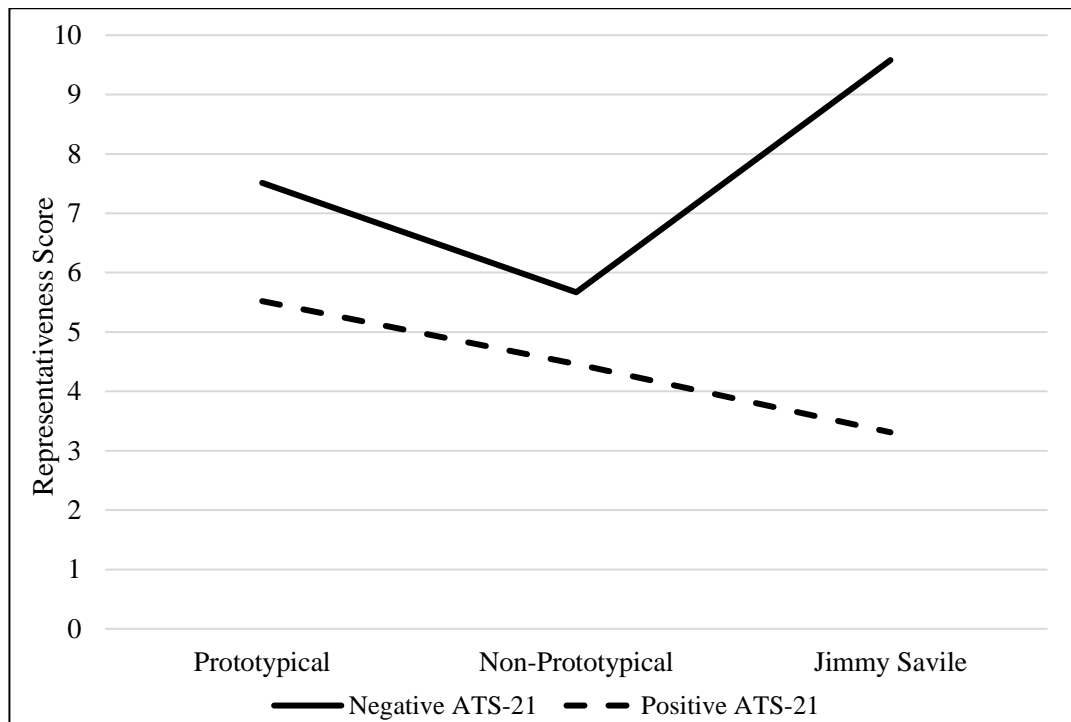


Figure 4.02: Differences in vignette representativeness scores, by ATS-21 grouping (Sample sizes for ‘Negative ATS-21’: ‘Prototypical’ = 16; ‘Non-Prototypical’ = 21; ‘Jimmy Savile’ = 8. Sample sizes for ‘Positive ATS-21’: ‘Prototypical’ = 52; ‘Non-Prototypical’ = 40; ‘Jimmy Savile’ = 14.)

A final analysis was conducted in order to examine the net effect of representativeness (irrespective of Vignette) had a significant mediating effect on the relationship between ATS-21 and PSO scores. This analysis was conducted because of the strong relationship that was identified between the ATS-21 and PSO scales in Chapter 3. The mediation was conducted using the PROCESS plugin for SPSS (version 2.15; Hayes, 2015). 95% confidence intervals were obtained using 1,000 bootstrapped re-samples (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The mediation model is presented in Figure 4.03.

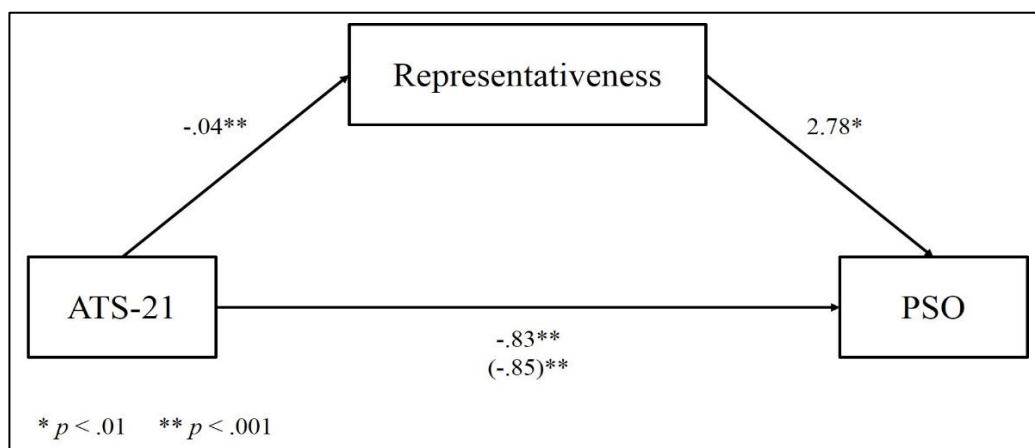


Figure 4.03: Mediating effect of vignette representativeness on the ATS-PSO relationship

ATS-21 scores were negatively related to both PSO scores ($\beta = -0.85$; $t(177) = 19.56$, $p < .001$), and representativeness ratings ($\beta = -0.04$; $t(177) = 2.71$, $p = .007$). Further, representativeness ratings were positively related to PSO scores ($\beta = 0.51$; $t(176) = 2.11$, $p = .036$). Finally, representativeness ratings were found to significant mediate the effect the relationship between ATS-21 and PSO scores ($\beta = -0.02$; 95% CI = -0.05 to -0.01). This indicates that as generalised attitudes towards sexual offenders became more negative in this sample, sentencing and risk judgements become more punitive, with this effect being heightened among those who viewed their presented vignette as being representative of a 'sexual offender'.

4.3.3. Discussion

The results from Study 3 are indicative of the notion that the presentation of prototypical, non-prototypical, or high-profile cases of sexual crime have little or no impact on support for punitive sexual crime policies at the level of the individual. This is an unexpected finding, and contradicts the assumptions made within the hypothesised PWM of sexual crime decision-making that was presented earlier in Chapter 4.

There may be several reasons for this, of which two will be discussed here. Firstly, the study may have lack the methodological rigour in order to explicitly examine the impact of the presentation of certain sexual crime prototypes on support for punitive sexual crime policies. For instance, it is unlikely that participants in the sample had not encountered information about the allegations made against Jimmy Savile prior to taking part. With this in mind, it could be suggested that the lack of significant differences within the sample are perhaps attributable to the fact that the information presented within the mock Jimmy Savile news story was not new, and had already formed a part of these participants' responses to the baseline measures of attitudes.

However, a more likely explanation for the lack of differences between the vignette groups on the PSO is the overwhelming impact of pre-existing attitudes, and the ways in which they may be informed by representative images about who sexual offenders are. This was perhaps best exemplified through the significant mediating effect of representativeness over the relationship between ATS-21 and PSO scores in the ancillary analyses presented above. In this case, it may be that the availability heuristic sets the political agenda (as outlined in Studies 1 and 2), but individuals' judgements about sexual

offenders are tied more to comparing the extent to which a given case corresponds to the implicit category of 'sexual offender'. This claim is consistent with previous work that suggests that the 'sexual offender' label may be laden with some representative image about who these offenders may be (e.g., Harris & Socia, 2014; King & Roberts, 2015).

4.4. Chapter Summary

This chapter set out to examine the role of the availability heuristic in contemporary sexual crime discussions and decision-making in the UK following the re-emergence of high-profile allegations made against the deceased television presenter, Jimmy Savile, in October 2013. The results of various analyses appear to suggest that the availability heuristic is important at the social and political level of decision-making about sexual crime, but less so at the level of the individual. In this sense, the availability heuristic, through substantial press over-representations of sexual crime that are exaggeratedly emotional in their tone, allows availability entrepreneurs (e.g., news outlets, politicians, and victims groups) to base campaigns for punitive and reactionary policy making around particular cases. This is consistent with Kuran and Sunstein's (1999) availability cascade model of political action.

However, when making judgements about specific offenders and cases, participants in an online survey did not appear rely on these high-profile cases at all. Instead, the data from Study 3 suggests that individuals' responses to sexual offending may be based on generalised attitudes towards sexual offenders, which in turn may be informed by a representative image about who such offenders are. The chapters that follow examine these attitudes further, both in terms of the issues that underlie them, and interactions between them and the processing of case-specific sexual crime information.

CHAPTER 5

THE REPRESENTATIVENESS HEURISTIC IN SEXUAL CRIME JUDGEMENTS

In light of the results outlined in Chapter 4, there remain unanswered questions in relation to the foundations of attitudes and perceptions about sexual offenders. According to previous research, it would have been expected that the priming of a high-profile (or ‘available’) case would lead to a greater propensity to support punitive policies. However, presenting the recent ‘available’ Jimmy Savile case had no impact on these kinds of judgements. The one factor that did have a substantial impact, though, were pre-existing attitudes towards sexual offenders (as measured by the ATS-21). That is, participants who expressed the most negative attitudes towards sexual offenders also endorsed the most risk-averse and punitive responses to sexual crime, as measured by the PSO. Further, there was a significant mediating effect of ratings of representativeness on the relationship between baseline ATS-21 scores and PSO outcomes in Study 3.

With this in mind, it may be suggested that affective evaluations of sexual offenders may be informed by an implicitly-held stereotype about who ‘sexual offenders’ are. That is, the extent to which a perpetrator conforms to a person’s preconceived idea about who ‘sexual offenders’ are may be pivotal in dictating the response attributed to them. This prediction corresponds to the notion that the *representativeness heuristic* (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974) plays an important role in mediating responses to individual cases of sexual crime.

This chapter presents a direct examination of the representativeness heuristic within the context of judgements of sexual offenders. It contains analyses from two empirical studies:

- Study 4** An exploration of the roles of implicit theories and offender representativeness in judgements of sexual offenders
- Study 5** Exploring the behavioural implications of representativeness heuristic in judgements of sexual offenders.

5.1. Study 4: Representativeness and Implicit Theories about Sexual Offenders

Study 4 set out to examine whether people's core beliefs about sexual offenders are driven, at least in part, by stereotypes about who or what a 'sexual offender' *should* look like. This assertion is borne out from the results of Study 3, and a review of the attitudes towards sexual offenders literature (Chapter 1). The argument here is that the example of an adult male offender against a child acts as a 'representative' example of a sexual offender, while other 'types' of sexual offenders do not (King & Roberts, 2015; Salerno et al., 2010).

In line with this assumption, it should be observable that people who hold fixed beliefs about sexual offenders endorse this representative image to a greater extent than those who do not. Thus, Study 4 investigated the role of *implicit theories* (ITs; Dweck, Chui, & Hong, 1995; Dweck, 2000) in the formation and expression of attitudes towards sexual offenders. ITs, according to Dweck et al.'s (1995) conceptualisation, can be described as either fixed ('entity' ITs) or malleable ('incremental' ITs). The following hypotheses were made:

H1: Participants who hold entity ITs about sexual offenders will express more negative attitudes towards sexual offenders than those holding incremental ITs.

H2: Tabloid readers will be more likely to hold entity ITs about sexual offenders than broadsheet readers.

H3: Participants who hold entity ITs about sexual offenders will judge a representative (i.e., adult male) perpetrator as being less moral than a non-representative (i.e., adult female, or juvenile) perpetrator than those holding incremental ITs.

H4: Participants who hold entity ITs about sexual offenders will recommend a more punitive sentence for a representative case of child abuse than a non-representative case.

H5: Participants who hold entity ITs about sexual offenders will provide dispositional (internal) explanations for why a sexual offence was committed, whereas those with incremental ITs will provide more situational (external) explanations.

5.1.1. Methods

Participants

The sample for this Study 4 was comprised of 252 community-based participants (73 males, 177 females, 2 did not disclose their gender; $M_{\text{age}} = 41.28$ years, $SD = 15.25$). These participants were recruited online using social media advertisements (i.e., via posts on personal Facebook and Twitter feeds), and email-driven invitations. Email invitations were administered through institutional and professional mailing lists. Study advertisements provided some information about what was involved in the study, and encouraged readers to share the study link among their social networks using ‘Share’ and ‘Retweet’ functions online. As such, opportunity and snowball sampling techniques were employed, and all participants were self-selecting. The only inclusion criterion in place was a lower age limit of 18, owing to the sensitive nature of the topic area.

Materials

Demographics

Participants were asked to provide information about their gender, age, educational attainment level, newspaper readership group, and whether they knew a victim or perpetrator of a sexual crime. Additionally, participants provided information about their political orientation using an 11-point dichotomised continuous scale, which ranged from -5 (*conservative*) to +5 (*liberal*).

Implicit Theory Measures

Two short three-item measures to examine implicit theories were employed. The first measure examined participants’ implicit beliefs about human nature ($\alpha = 0.88$), whilst the second related to views about the changeability of sexual offenders ($\alpha = 0.74$). The three items making up these measures were based around the ideas published by Dweck et al. (1995). The exact wording of these measures was as follows:

Implicit Theories about Human Nature (IT-HN):

1. The kind of person someone is, is something very basic about them and it can't be changed very much.
2. People can do things differently, but the important parts of who they are can't really be changed.
3. Everyone is a certain kind of person and there is not much that can be done to really change that.

Implicit Theories about Sexual Offenders (IT-SO):

1. Whether somebody commits a sexual crime is very much related to who they are as a person.
2. Somebody who has committed a sexual offence is likely to do so again in the future.
3. Sexual offenders cannot be successfully rehabilitated.

Participants rated their level of agreement with the statements on each of these IT measures using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ('Strongly Disagree') to 6 ('Strongly Agree'). Scores on each of the items were averaged in order to produce a composite score for their IT orientation on that particular domain.

Attitudes to Sexual Offenders Scale

The ATS-21 (Hogue & Harper, in prep) was used in order to examine participants' baseline evaluations of sexual offenders. A review of the ATS-21's development, content, and scoring is provided in Section 1.2.1. The measure demonstrated excellent levels of internal consistency in this study as a complete measure ($\alpha = 0.95$), and in relation to each of its three subscales ('Trust' $\alpha = 0.89$; 'Intent' $\alpha = 0.88$; and 'Social Distance' $\alpha = 0.84$).

Experimental Vignettes

Three sexual crime vignettes acted as the experimental manipulation in this study. These vignettes were each approximately 200 words in length, and described a sexual offence being committed against a child within the context of a summer barbeque. In one, the offender was an adult male, in the second, the offender was an adult female, and in the third, the offender was a male teenager (aged 14 years). The exact wording of these vignettes is provided in Appendix F.

Alongside these vignettes, participants used Likert scales in order to indicate: (1) their judgements about the extent to which the offence was indicative of the moral character of the perpetrator (anchored from 0 = *not at all indicative*, to 10 = *very indicative*), and (2) the type of sentence that the perpetrator should receive (anchored from 0 = *punishment*, to 10 = *rehabilitation*). Participants also provided a qualitative explanation for why they felt the offence took place. In addition to these vignettes, a fourth condition ('no vignette') was included in this study in order to examine the impact of implicit beliefs on outcomes without the influence of a primed vignette.

Perceptions of Sex Offenders Scale

The PSO (see Chapter 3) was used in order to examine the interaction between IT orientations and offender representativeness in perceptions of sexual crime sentencing, the endorsement of stereotypes about sexual offenders, and risk judgements about the perpetrators of sexual offences. The full scale version of the PSO demonstrated levels of excellent internal consistency in this study ($\alpha = 0.92$), as did each of its subscales ('Sentencing and Management' $\alpha = 0.95$; 'Stereotype Endorsement' $\alpha = 0.85$; and 'Risk Perception' $\alpha = 0.80$).

Procedure

Study advertisements provided basic information about the content of the study and a web link to the study survey, which was hosted by the *Qualtrics Research Suite* software. Those interested in taking part clicked on the link, and were taken to the first page of the survey, which provided more detailed information about the kinds of questions that participants would be asked. If they were happy to continue, participants clicked on a button that took them to the demographic questionnaire.

From here, participants entered the relevant demographic information and completed the ATS-21 and IT measures, before being randomly allocated to one of the four experimental conditions. After reading their vignette and answering the associated questions (if applicable), participants completed the PSO. At the end of the survey, participants were fully debriefed about the nature and hypotheses of the study and thanked for their time.

5.1.2. Results

Hypothesis 1: IT Influences on Attitudes towards Sexual Offenders

Scoring for each IT measure followed Dweck et al.'s (1995) recommendations. That is, participants with average scores of 1-3 were classified as 'incrementalists' (i.e., holding the view that general human nature/sexual offending is changeable over time), while those with average scores of 4-6 were classified as 'entitists' (i.e., holding the view that human nature/sexual offending is relatively stable and unchangeable). Participants whose IT scores on each measure fell between the discrete values of 3 and 4 were excluded from the analyses (IT-HN: $n = 35$; IT-SO: $n = 59$). On the IT-HN measure, 107 participants were classified as incrementalists and 110 as entitists. Contrastingly on the IT-SO measure, 66 participants were classified as incrementalists and 127 as entitists.

Differences in ATS-21 scores were calculated separately on the basis of IT-HN and IT-SO group membership. Independent samples t -tests found that entitists held significantly more negative attitudes towards sexual offenders than incrementalists on both measures (IT-HN: $t(215) = 6.60, p < .001, d = 0.90$; IT-SO: $t(191) = 12.75, p < .001, d = 1.95$). Descriptive statistics for ATS-21 scores in each of these groups are presented in Tables 5.01a and 5.01b.

Table 5.01a: Descriptive and inferential statistics for ATS-21 scores, by IT-HN group

ATS-21 factor	<u>IT-HN Group</u>		t	p	d
	Entitist	Incrementalist			
Trust	7.90 (5.21)	12.81 (5.87)	6.52	< .001	0.88
Intent	15.47 (5.60)	19.71 (4.30)	6.19	< .001	0.85
Social Distance	12.45 (4.69)	16.04 (5.05)	5.45	< .001	0.74

Note: Standard deviations are presented in parentheses

As demonstrated in Tables 5.01a and 5.01b, it appears that IT-SO scores have a substantially greater effect on attitudes towards sexual offenders than more general ITs about human nature. As a result of this apparent domain-specificity, only differences between IT-SO groups will be reported from this point.

Table 5.01b: Descriptive and inferential statistics for ATS-21 scores, by IT-SO group

ATS-21 factor	IT-SO Group		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	Entitist	Incrementalist			
Trust	6.87 (4.47)	16.59 (5.01)	13.75	< .001	2.04
Intent	14.62 (4.99)	21.97 (3.78)	11.43	< .001	1.66
Social Distance	11.42 (4.54)	18.27 (4.37)	10.08	< .001	1.55

Note: Standard deviations are presented in parentheses

Hypothesis 2: ‘Entity’ and ‘Incremental’ Theories and Newspaper Readership

Previous work conducted at MSc level (Harper & Hogue, 2015) found that tabloid newspapers are substantially more likely to use disparaging and hostile headline descriptors about sexual offenders than broadsheet publications. Following from this, it may then be the case that tabloid presentations contribute to the formation of entity ITs about sexual offenders. In order to examine the relationship between newspaper readership and IT-SO orientation, participants who reported not reading any newspapers ($n = 72$) were excluded from this analysis.

Using a chi-square test, a significant association between newspaper readership and IT-SO group membership was found ($\chi^2(3) = 10.93, p = .012, \phi = 0.24$). Exclusive tabloid readers were more likely to express entity ITs about sexual offenders ($n = 39$) than incremental ITs ($n = 10$). However, there were no differences in the frequency of entity and incremental ITs about sexual offenders among participants who exclusively read broadsheets ($n = 20$ vs. 21), or those who reported reading a combination of both publication types ($n = 17$ vs. 13).

Hypothesis 3: IT-SO Orientations and Offender Morality Judgements

A 2 (IT-SO Group: Entity vs. Incremental) x 3 (Vignette: Adult Male vs. Adult Female vs. Juvenile) between-groups ANOVA found significant main effects of Vignette ($F(2, 135) = 20.04, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.03$), and IT-SO Group ($F(1, 135) = 21.99, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.02$), on judgements about the moral character of the perpetrators depicted in the vignettes. A significant interaction between these factors was also observed ($F(2, 135) = 3.41, p = .036, \eta^2 = 0.01$; Figure 5.01).

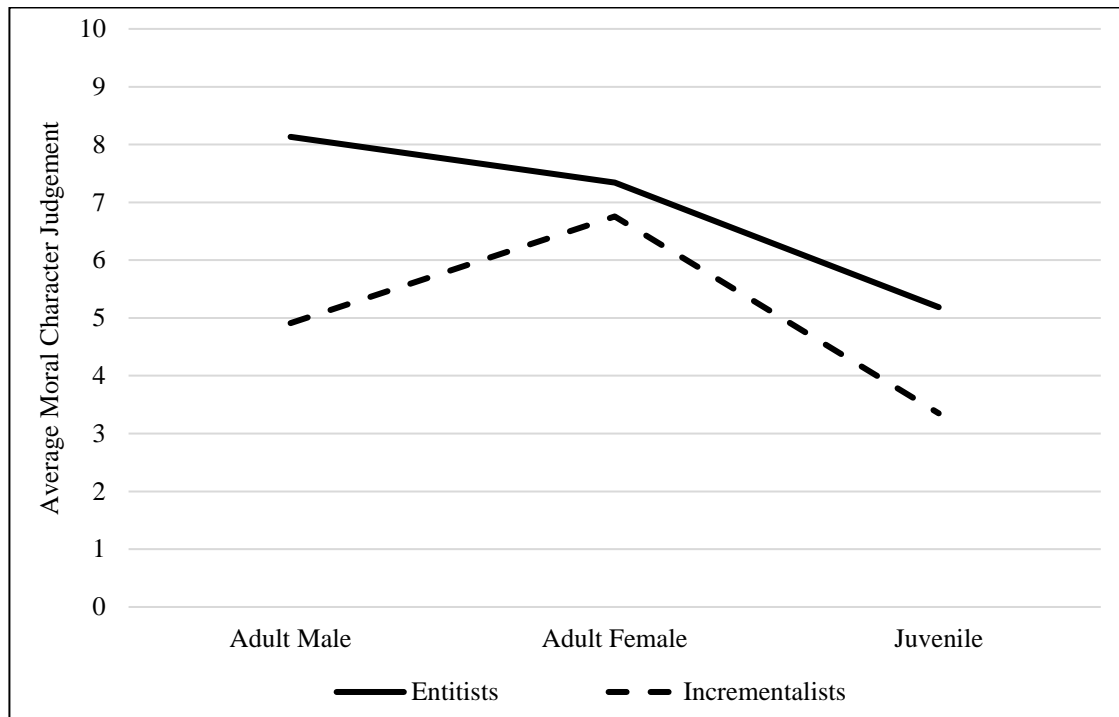


Figure 5.01: Interaction between IT-SO Group and Vignette in relation to judgements of perpetrators’ moral character

(Sample sizes for ‘Entitists’: ‘Adult Male’ = 37; ‘Adult Female’ = 29; ‘Juvenile’ = 29. Sample sizes for ‘Incrementalists’: ‘Adult Male’ = 10; ‘Adult Female’ = 18; ‘Juvenile’ = 18.)

Simple main effects analyses (with Bonferroni correction) found that IT-SO entitists provided significantly lower ratings of the offending behaviour being indicative of the moral character of the perpetrator when presented with a juvenile than when the perpetrator was an adult male ($p < .001$, $d = 1.28$) or an adult female ($p = .001$, $d = 0.93$). There was no difference in moral character judgements made by entitists between either of the adult-perpetrator vignettes ($p = .433$). IT-SO incrementalists, however, provided significantly higher moral character judgements about the adult female perpetrator than the juvenile perpetrator ($p < .001$, $d = 1.64$). There were no differences in moral character judgements made by IT-SO incrementalists between the adult male and either the adult female ($p = .099$), or the juvenile perpetrator ($p = .212$). Table 5.02 provides the means and standard deviations for these group differences.

Table 5.02: Differences in moral character judgements as a function of IT-SO grouping

Vignette	IT-SO Group		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	Entitist	Incrementalist			
Adult Male	8.13 (1.95) ^a	4.91 (2.50)	4.37	< .001	1.44
Adult Female	7.34 (2.00) ^b	6.76 (2.08) ^a	0.96	.341	0.33
Juvenile	5.19 (2.60) ^{ab}	3.35 (2.02) ^a	2.55	.014	0.44

Note: Standard deviations are presented in parentheses. Higher moral character scores indicate that offending is perceived as indicative of one's moral character. Data in columns that share a superscript differ significantly ($p \leq .001$).

Hypothesis 4: IT-SO Orientations and Punitive Judgements

Punitive judgements were examined using two outcome variables in this study. First, participants who were presented with a vignette were asked to recommend a sentence severity (from punishment to rehabilitation) for that specific case. Second, all participants completed the PSO, which has indices of punitive judgements inbuilt. As such, this hypothesis was examined using these outcomes separately.

Vignette-Specific Punitive Judgements

A 2 (IT-SO Group: Entity vs. Incremental) x 3 (Vignette: Adult Male vs. Adult Female vs. Juvenile) between-groups ANOVA found significant main effects of Vignette ($F(2, 135) = 6.00, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.02$), and IT-SO Group ($F(1, 135) = 26.41, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.04$), with regards to sexual crime sentencing preferences. However, the interaction between these two independent variables was not statistically significant ($F(2, 135) = 1.96, p = .150, \eta^2 = 0.01$; Figure 5.02).

Although no significant interaction between IT-SO grouping and offender type was found in relation to sentencing judgements, the differential trends in these judgements within each of the IT-SO groups (Table 5.03) warranted further analysis. With this being the case, two separate ancillary one-way between groups ANOVAs were conducted for each IT-SO group in order to examine the differences in sentencing judgements between each of the vignettes.

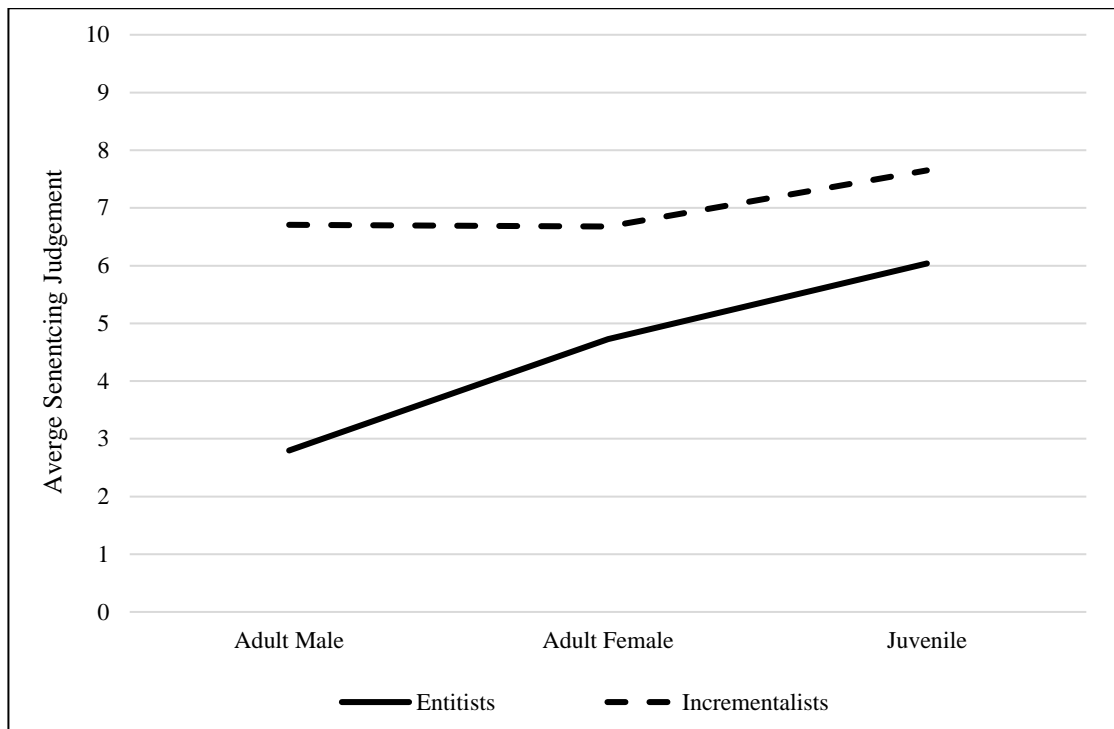


Figure 5.02: Interaction between IT-SO Group and Vignette in relation to preferred sentencing judgements

(Sample sizes for ‘Entitists’: ‘Adult Male’ = 37; ‘Adult Female’ = 29; ‘Juvenile’ = 29.
 Sample sizes for ‘Incrementalists’: ‘Adult Male’ = 10; ‘Adult Female’ = 18; ‘Juvenile’ = 18.)

In the sample of IT-SO entitists, a main effect of Vignette was found in relation to sentencing judgements ($F(2, 92) = 11.54, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.07$). Pairwise comparisons (with Bonferroni correction) found that this effect was due to large differences in sentencing judgements between participants presented with the adult male vignette, and those presented with the adult female ($p = .018, d = 0.71$) and juvenile ($p < .001, d = 1.17$) vignettes. However, there was no significant difference between the sentencing judgements made about the adult female and juvenile vignettes ($p = .222$). Within the sample of IT-SO incrementalists, however, no significant main effect of Vignette was observed ($F(2, 43) = .95, p = .395$). This indicates that manipulating perpetrator demographics had no impact on sentencing judgements among these participants.

Table 5.03: Differences in sentencing judgements as a function of IT-SO Group and Vignette

Vignette	<u>IT-SO Group</u>		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	Entitist	Incrementalist			
Adult Male	2.80 (2.60) ^{ab}	6.71 (2.49)	4.26	< .001	1.54
Adult Female	4.73 (2.80) ^a	6.68 (2.46)	2.43	.019	0.74
Juvenile	6.04 (2.92) ^b	7.65 (2.04)	2.05	.046	0.64

Note: Standard deviations are presented in parentheses. Higher sentencing judgement scores indicate a preference for rehabilitation over punishment. Data in columns that share a superscript differ significantly (^a $p < .001$; ^b $p < .05$)

PSO Outcome Data

A one-way ANCOVA was conducted in order to establish the effect of Condition (independent variable with four levels) on PSO scores. Due to highly significant correlations between pre-existing attitudes and the PSO (see Chapter 3), ATS-21 scores were included in this analysis as a covariate ($F(1, 247) = 841.64, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.76$). There was no significant main effect of Condition ($F(3, 247) = 2.26, p = .082, \eta^2 = 0.006$), meaning that, after controlling for pre-existing attitudes towards sexual offenders, the vignette manipulation had no effect on PSO scores (Table 5.04).

Table 5.04: PSO scores as a function of IT-SO Group and Vignette

Vignette	<u>IT-SO Group</u>		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	Entitist	Incrementalist			
Adult Male	58.06 (14.21)	22.86 (12.87)	6.04	< .001	2.60
Adult Female	53.09 (14.68)	29.56 (12.14)	5.24	< .001	1.75
Juvenile	54.00 (16.36)	28.94 (10.50)	5.44	< .001	1.82
No Vignette	56.18 (14.86)	32.35 (13.53)	5.39	< .001	1.68

Note: Standard deviations are presented in parentheses

Owing to the significant effects of IT-SO scores on moral character and sentencing judgements of the specific offenders depicted in the vignettes, it was considered necessary to examine the potential mediating effect of IT-SO scores on the relationship between ATS-21 scores and PSO outcomes. Separate mediation analyses were conducted for each of the experimental conditions using the PROCESS plugin for SPSS (version 2.15; Hayes, 2015). 95% confidence intervals were obtained using 1,000 bootstrapped re-samples

(Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Each of the mediation effects are depicted graphically in Figure 5.03.

In the ‘no vignette’ condition, ATS-21 scores were negatively related to PSO scores ($\beta = -0.78$; $t(65) = 10.41$, $p < .001$), and IT-SO scores ($\beta = -0.05$; $t(65) = 7.80$, $p < .001$). Further, IT-SO scores were positively related to PSO scores ($\beta = 2.78$; $t(65) = 2.68$, $p = .009$). Finally, IT-SO scores were found to have a significant mediating effect over the relationship between ATS-21 and PSO scores ($\beta = -0.14$; CI = -0.27 to -0.02).

Among those in the ‘adult male’ condition, ATS-21 scores were again negatively related to both PSO scores ($\beta = -0.92$; $t(59) = 8.49$, $p < .001$), and IT-SO scores ($\beta = -0.06$; $t(59) = 9.17$, $p < .001$). IT-SO scores were positively related to PSO scores ($\beta = 3.32$; $t(59) = 2.24$, $p = .029$), and were found to have a significant mediating effect over the relationship between ATS-21 and PSO scores ($\beta = -0.19$; CI = -0.38 to -0.04).

In the ‘adult female’ condition, scores on the ATS-21 were negatively related to both PSO scores ($\beta = -0.73$; $t(62) = 6.64$, $p < .001$), and IT-SO scores ($\beta = -0.06$; $t(62) = 8.39$, $p < .001$). However, IT-SO scores were not significantly related to PSO scores ($\beta = 2.83$; $t(62) = 1.93$, $p = .059$). Thus, there was no mediating effect of ITs about sexual offenders on the relationship between ATS-21 and PSO scores ($\beta = -0.16$; CI = -0.37 to 0.02).

Among those presented with the juvenile vignette, ATS-21 scores were again negatively related to both PSO ($\beta = -0.83$; $t(58) = 8.54$, $p < .001$) and IT-SO scores ($\beta = -0.06$; $t(58) = 9.90$, $p < .001$). However, IT-SO scores were not significantly related to PSO scores ($\beta = 2.38$; $t(58) = 1.71$, $p = .092$), meaning that they did not mediate the relationship between ATS-21 and PSO scores ($\beta = -0.13$; CI = -0.29 to 0.02).

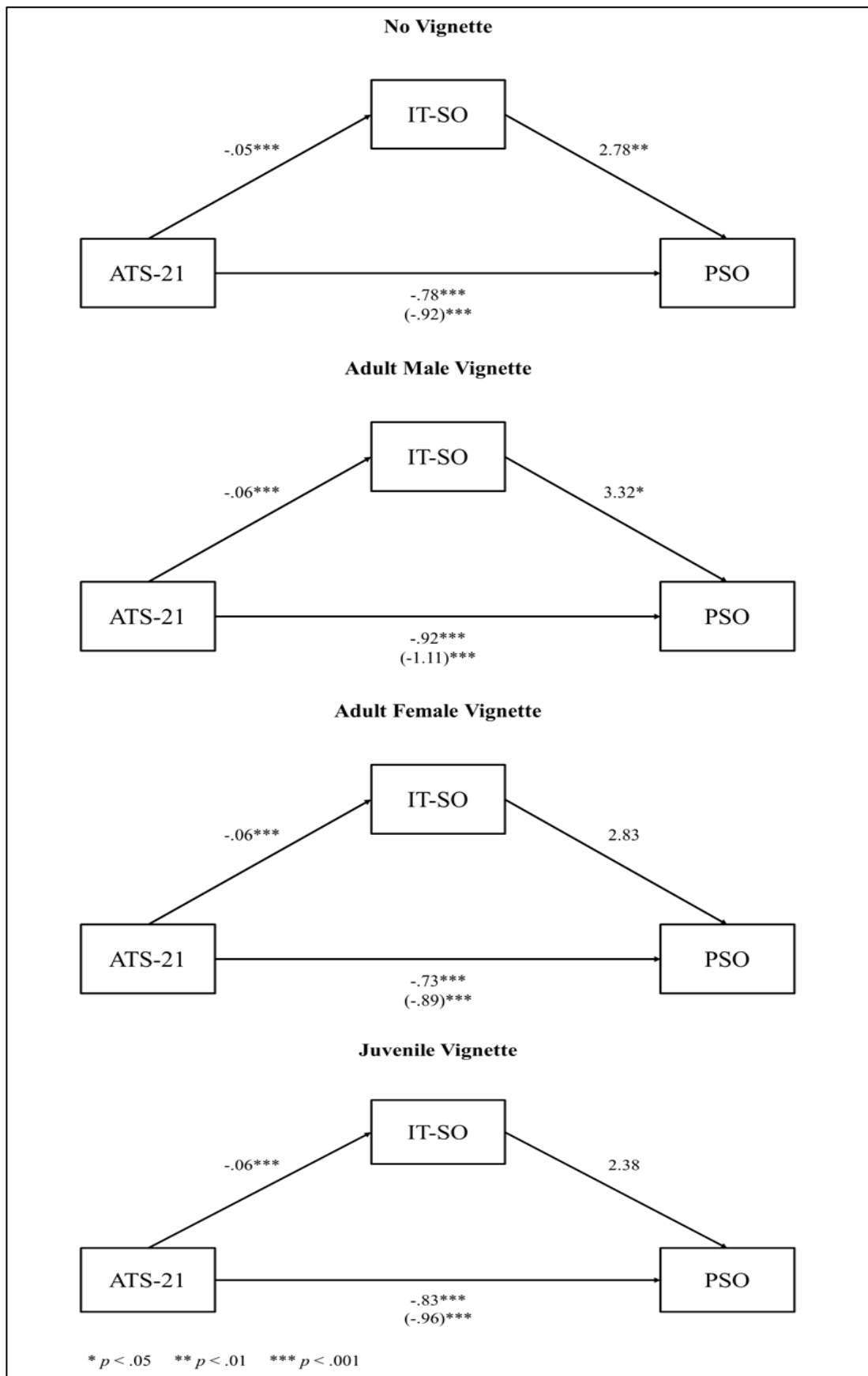


Figure 5.03: Mediation effect of IT-SO scores on the relationship between ATS-21 and PSO scores, by Vignette

Hypothesis 5: IT-SO Orientations and Explanations for Sexual Offending Behaviour

Consistent with previous research (Hong, 1994), the qualitative explanations for the offending behaviour depicted in the vignettes were classified as either: (1) 'dispositional' (i.e., due to factors internal to the offender), (2) 'situational' (i.e., due to external factors specific to the offending context), or (3) 'N/A' (whereby a clear dichotomous classification could not be made. These explanations were also separately coded by a second researcher (Dr. Ross Bartels). Initial inter-rater agreement was high ($\kappa = 0.87$). Through thorough discussion, classifications were agreed for those explanations that were initially coded differently. In the following analyses, uncoded (i.e., 'N/A') explanations were excluded.

Using a chi-square test, a significant effect of IT-SO orientation was found in relation to the explanations for the offending behaviour depicted in the vignettes ($\chi^2(4) = 14.01, p = .007, \phi = 0.30$). Entitists were more likely to provide dispositional ($n = 45$) than situational explanations ($n = 27$), whilst incrementalists were more likely to offer situational ($n = 25$) than dispositional explanations ($n = 8$).

A further series of chi-square tests were conducted to examine the differences in explanation style between the IT-SO groups for each vignette. In relation to the adult male offender, a significant effect of IT-SO orientation on explanatory style was found ($\chi^2(2) = 12.64, p = .002, \phi = 0.56$). Understanding this effect, entitists offered predominantly dispositional explanations ($n = 28$ vs. 2), whilst incrementalists were split between dispositional and situational explanations ($n = 2$ vs. 4).

The two groups did not differ, however, in relation to explanations of the offending behaviour perpetrated by the adult female ($\chi^2(2) = 5.12, p = .077, \phi = 0.37$), or the juvenile ($\chi^2(2) = 6.36, p = .042, \phi = 0.39$). The results showed that both groups were evenly divided between dispositional and situational explanations for the adult female's offending behaviour (entitists: $n = 13$ vs. 8; incrementalists: $n = 6$ vs. 5). In the case of the juvenile offender, all incrementalists advocated situational explanations ($n = 16$), with only a small number of entitists providing a dispositional explanation ($n = 4$ vs. 17).

5.1.3. Discussion

Implicit Theories about Sexual Offenders as Domain-Specific

Supporting hypothesis one, participants with an entity IT endorsed more negative attitudes towards sexual offenders than incrementalists across both ‘human nature’ and ‘sexual offender IT domains. When comparing entitists and incrementalists on each ATS-21 subscale, the greatest difference was found on the ‘Trust’ subscale. This suggests that as people view others as being more fixed in their ways, they become more wary and untrusting of them.

The magnitude of the difference between entitists and incrementalists on the ATS-21 (both as a complete measure, and on the subscales) was substantially larger when this division was made using the IT-SO measure than when using the IT-HN measure. Further, while the division of participants into ‘entity’ and ‘incremental’ groupings was approximately even in relation to IT-HN scores, substantially more participants were classified as entitists than incrementalists on the IT-SO measure. This is an important observation, as previous research has suggested that entity and incremental ITs are endorsed equally in most domains (e.g., Burnette, O’Boyle, VanEpps, Pollack, & Finkel, 2013).

Collectively, these findings suggest that the ITs that people hold about sexual offenders are independent of the ITs they hold about people more generally. This conclusion is consistent with the idea that people with particularly negative attitudes towards sexual offenders may do so because of a specific idea about who a typical (i.e., *representative*) ‘sexual offender’ is.

Representativeness and Judgements of Vignette Perpetrators

The basis of representative images of sexual offenders may be traceable back to particular styles of media reporting. This idea is supported by some of the findings from Study 4. For example, tabloid readers were significantly more likely to express entity ITs about sexual offenders than incremental ones. However, those with some exposure to broadsheet publications (either exclusively, or as part of a wider media consumption

pattern) were found to be evenly divided into ‘entitist’ and ‘incrementalist’ groups. These results are supportive of hypothesis two.

Compared to IT-SO incrementalists, participants with an entity view of sexual offenders judged sexual offending to be: (1) more indicative of the offender’s moral character, and (2) more deserving of a punitive sentence. However, these differences in judgements were moderated by the ‘type’ of offender that was being considered.

IT-SO entitists viewed the offending behaviour of both of the adult offenders as being significantly more indicative of their moral character than that of the juvenile offender. However, IT-SO incrementalists viewed the behaviour of the adult female perpetrator as being more indicative of her moral character compared to the adult male or a juvenile offender (between which there was no difference in moral character judgements). The reason for this difference among incrementalists may be higher levels of political liberalism among these participants, and the phenomenon of *double deviance* (i.e., female sexual offenders may not only be deviant because of their offending behaviour, but also because they contravene social norms about caregiving; Heidensohn, 1985). These data are consistent with hypothesis three.

As expected, IT-SO entitists also advocated more punishment-oriented sentences for each offender compared to the incrementalists. However, entitists supported significantly more punitive sentencing for the adult male offender than both the female and juvenile offenders. In contrast, IT-SO incrementalists consistently demonstrated a desire to see more rehabilitative sentences, with no differences in sentencing judgements between any of the three vignettes. Again, these findings are consistent with the idea that those expressing entity-based ITs about sexual offenders do so with a particular representative image in mind. Responses to these vignettes thus indicate that entity ITs about sexual offenders may be based on the representativeness heuristic (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974), whereas judgements made by those with incremental ITs may be based on other, perhaps more general, ideological factors.

The lack of effect of Condition on PSO scores was contrary to initial expectations. However, the findings of subsequent analyses found significant mediating effects of IT-SO scores on the relationship between ATS-21 and PSO scores in the ‘no vignette’ and ‘adult male vignette’ conditions. However, no such mediation occurred in the ‘adult

female vignette’ or ‘juvenile vignette’ conditions. This moderated mediation effect suggests that, generally speaking, ITs about sexual offenders have a mediating effect on the impact of attitudes towards sexual offenders in decision-making about sentencing and risk. That is, as a person becomes more entity-based in their thinking about sexual offenders, the more punitive they become in relation to sentencing and risk judgements. This is consistent with previous research using this IT paradigm (e.g., Skitka, Mullen, Griffin, Hutchinson, & Chamberlin, 2002). The significant mediating effect of IT-SO scores within the adult male vignette condition can be explained as being indicative of the vignette re-affirming an implicitly-held representative image of who ‘sexual offenders’ are among entitists. As such, it could be argued that this vignette does not necessarily manipulate participants’ views (compared to those at baseline) at all. However, the presentation of vignettes depicting adult female and juvenile perpetrators offers a challenge to entitists’ implicit stereotypes about who ‘sexual offenders’ are, meaning that all participants (both entitists and incrementalists) are guided primarily by their affect-based responses (as reflected in their ATS-21 scores) when making judgements about sentencing and risk in these cases. As such, these results are partially supportive of hypothesis four.

Finally, IT-SO entitists generally provided more dispositional than situational explanations for the offending behaviour depicted in the vignettes, while the opposite trend was true for incrementalists. When examining the explanations provided for offending behaviour in each of the vignettes, no substantial IT-based group differences were found in relation to the adult female or juvenile offenders. However, entitists were significantly more likely to offer dispositional explanations for the offending behaviour of the adult male, relative to incrementalists. This finding is consistent with hypothesis five, and suggests that not only are personal and legal judgements based upon an interaction between IT-SO orientations and the representativeness heuristic, but so is an understanding of how and why an offence comes to take place.

5.2. Study 5: Examining the Behavioural Implications of Representativeness

Owing to the findings of these analyses, an examination of what these representativeness issues mean in practice is warranted. For example, it may be that people ‘jump to conclusions’ when presented with representative examples of sexual offenders. This

notion is consistent with Kahneman's (2011) assertion that people use heuristics to make faster and less effortful decisions when cognitive resources are limited, or when they have little motivation to engage in elaborative cognition. These issues become important within the context of decision-making about sexual crime, given that people's engagement with this topic area is laden with emotion, both in terms of media coverage (Harper & Hogue, 2015; Wardle, 2007), and automatic responses to this type of offending (e.g., Bastian, Denson, & Haslam, 2013; Vess, 2009).

In line with these ideas, the second study in this chapter examines the behavioural implications of holding representative images about who sexual offenders are. Using a cognitive load paradigm (whereby cognitive resources are purposefully reduced by having participants complete tasks simultaneously within the context of an experiment; e.g., Schützwohl, 2008), the role of the representativeness heuristic in guiding the processing of sexual crime vignettes was investigated. Further, the role of cognitive load in moderating judgements about representative and non-representative offenders was also examined at both the explicit and implicit levels. The following hypotheses were made:

H1: Participants under conditions of cognitive load (experimental condition) would take significantly less time to read a vignette depicting a 'representative' (adult male perpetrator) case of sexual crime than a 'non-representative' (juvenile perpetrator) case. However, no such difference would be observed between the reading times for these vignettes among participants not under conditions of cognitive load (control condition)

H2: There would be no impact of the representativeness of a presented sexual crime vignette on explicit judgements around sexual offender sentencing and risk among participants under conditions of cognitive load. However, participants in the control condition would express more punitive judgements when presented with a representative case than a non-representative alternative

H3: There would be no impact of the representativeness of a presented vignette on the automatic implicit biases (e.g., for positive or negative responding about sexual offenders) of participants under conditions of cognitive load. However, participants in the control condition would express a greater positive implicit bias when presented with a non-representative case than a representative case.

These hypotheses may, at face value, be read as being contrary to what would be to the conceptual ideas put forward at the beginning of this study. That is, by predicting no difference in judgements of sexual offenders as a function of the presented vignette within cognitive load condition, the notion that the representativeness heuristic takes hold when cognitive resources are limited is not upheld. However, the above hypotheses do make sense when considering the findings of previous studies. For example, King and Roberts (2015) found evidence for people holding a representative image or stereotype about ‘sexual offenders’, and making judgements accordingly. Similarly, and perhaps most relevant to the predictions set out above, Harris and Socia (2014) suggested that people make judgements about “sexual offenders” using the representativeness heuristic, with the label itself triggering the activation of the aforementioned stereotype. With this in mind, the hypotheses set out for Study 5 are framed in this latter way. That is, limiting cognitive resources is predicted to lead to a reliance on a representative image of a ‘sex offender’ (as is the label used in the outcome measures of this study), while those in the control condition will be able to moderate their responses to these outcome measures by taking in the nuanced individuating characteristics of the experimental vignettes.

5.2.1. Methods

Participants

Participants in Study 5 were 114 students (31 males, 83 females; $M_{\text{age}} = 20.78$ years, $SD = 3.84$) from the University of Lincoln. These participants were recruited either online using the School of Psychology’s Research Participation Scheme, or by directly approaching potential participants in public areas (e.g., the library, bars, and café areas) of the city centre campus. Psychology undergraduates were eligible to receive course credit points for taking part. All other participants were volunteers. All participants were naïve to the study aims and hypotheses at the time of testing.

Measures

Demographics

Participants provided the same demographic questionnaire as that reported in Study 4 (e.g., gender, age, educational attainment level, newspaper readership group, and knowledge of victims/perpetrators of sexual crime). The only change to this questionnaire

was the framing of the ‘political orientation’ question. In this study, high scores were indicative of conservative attitudes, such as to better reflect (on a visual level) the traditional ‘left/right’ continuum.

Attitudes to Sexual Offenders Scale

The ATS-21 (Hogue & Harper, in prep) was used in order to obtain information about participants’ baseline attitudes sexual offenders. Details about the ATS-21’s development, content, and scoring is provided in Section 1.2.1. The scale demonstrated excellent internal consistency in this study ($\alpha = 0.92$).

Go/No-Go Association Task

A response-latency-based Go/No-Go Association Task (GNAT; Nosek & Banaji, 2001) was used in order to examine participants’ baseline implicit attitudes towards sexual offenders. The GNAT is a computer-based indirect measure of mental associations between a particular target object (e.g., ‘sexual offenders’), and attributional orientations (e.g., ‘positive’/‘negative’). This task is related to the Implicit Association Test (IAT; Greenwald, McGhee & Schwarz, 1998), in that it measures how quickly participants respond when target concepts (i.e., ‘sexual offender’) are paired with different evaluative terms (e.g., positive or negative words). However, unlike the IAT (which requires contrasting targets; e.g., ‘men’ vs. ‘women’), the GNAT is capable of examining the strengths of evaluative associations in relation to a single target object. This makes it a useful procedure for measuring implicit attitudes towards groups like sexual offenders, where a contrasting target is not readily available.

When completing a GNAT, participants are required to identify whether a stimulus word (presented in the centre of the computer screen) belongs to one of two categories (displayed in the top left and right corners of the computer screen) as quickly and as accurately as they can. If the stimulus word belongs to one of the categories, participants are required to initiate a ‘Go’ response, typically by pressing the /SPACE/ bar on a computer keyboard. If the presented stimulus word does not belong to one of the categories, then participants should not respond (i.e., a ‘No-Go’ response).

Stimuli for the GNAT were 15 ‘sexual offender’ words, 15 ‘distractor’ words, 15 ‘positive’ words, and 15 ‘negative’ words (a full list of these stimuli is provided in Appendix G). The words pertaining to the categories of ‘sexual offender’, ‘positive’, and

‘negative’ were based on those used by Malinen et al. (2014) in their examination of implicit attitudes towards sexual offenders using a Single-Target IAT. The 15 ‘distractor’ words were produced in such a way as to compare to the ‘sexual offender’ words as closely as possible, with at least the first letter and approximate number of syllables per word being matched.

The GNAT was completed in two blocks. In one block, participants were required to initiate a ‘Go’ response when ‘sexual offender’ and ‘positive’ words were presented on the screen. In the other block, a ‘Go’ response was required when ‘sexual offender’ and ‘negative’ words were presented. The order in which the blocks were completed was counterbalanced between participants. In line with previous studies using the GNAT in this way (e.g., Teachman, 2007), each block consisted of 16 practice trials and 60 experimental trials. Thus, each word was randomly presented once in each block. GNAT files were created and run using ePrime (version 2.0).

GNAT data were handled according to the procedure outlined by Teachman (2007). Trials with a response latency of <300ms were excluded, as this response speed is said to be out of the conscious control of the participant (Bargh & Chartrand, 2000). Next, all non-critical (i.e., ‘No-Go’) trial data was excluded. This meant that average response times for critical (i.e., ‘Go’) trials could be computed for each block. Following this, an index of implicit attitudes towards sexual offenders was computed by subtracting the average response time for the ‘Sexual Offender + Positive’ block from that of the ‘Sexual Offender + Negative’ block. As such, a negative GNAT index indicated a strong association between ‘sexual offenders’ and negative evaluations.

Cognitive Load Induction

A task designed to induce cognitive load was presented to half of the participants. This task involved the presentation of a string of seven random letters and numbers (e.g., y9fg3w5) on a sheet of paper. This approach to inducing cognitive load has been used effectively in several areas of psychology (e.g., Hauge, Brekke, Johansson, Johansson-Stenman, & Svedsäter, 2014). Participants were given 15 seconds to view this string, and were told that it was important that they memorised it, as they would be asked to recall it at the end of the testing session. All participants who were given this induction were able to recall at least five of the characters in the correct order, which is consistent with

Miller's (1956) insight that people can hold seven (+/- two) pieces of information in working memory.

Experimental Vignettes

Two vignettes were used in this study, each representing either a 'representative' or 'non-representative' sexual offender. The results from the first study in this chapter revealed significant differences in how adult male and juvenile sexual offenders are viewed, with other factors potentially influencing judgements about adult female offenders. As such, the adult male and juvenile offender vignettes were re-used in this study. The only adjustment made to these vignettes was the use of the name "Adam" in both vignettes, such as to control for all details except for the age of the offender.

As a manipulation check, participants were asked to provide moral character and sentencing ratings for the offender depicted in the vignette (as in the previous study), and to respond to the statement "Adam is a sex offender" using an 11-point scale, anchored from 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 10 (*strongly agree*).

Mousetracking Task

Mousetracking is an emerging research methodology that aims to investigate the real-time cognitive processes underlying the classification of stimuli when competing response options are available (Freeman & Ambady, 2010; Freeman, Dale, & Farmer, 2011). Existing indirect measures (e.g., IATs and GNATs) use average response times as proxy measures of the varying strengths of the associations between target objects and relevant evaluations of them. However, these techniques may not be sensitive enough to examine implicit processing as it is occurring. Using a mousetracking paradigm enables the analysis of a person's real-time cognitive processing of stimuli as they make an evaluation.

Until recently, this methodology was difficult to administer, as no standardised programme was available to run such a study. However, Freeman and Ambady (2010) have developed MouseTracker, which is a freely available software package (downloadable from the creator's website at <http://www.mousetracker.org>) that allows researchers to design, run, and analyse data from mousetracking studies. Experiments are designed using formatted .csv files (compatible with Microsoft Excel), and then administered in the software's 'Runner' programme. Data can then be imported into the

‘Analyzer’ programme, where hypothesis testing can be conducted at trial, participant, and whole-group levels. MouseTracker has been used in a number of areas, such as language comprehension (Barca & Pezzulo, 2015; Blazej & Cohen-Goldberg, 2015; Incera, Markis, & McLennan, 2013), race perception (Freeman, Paulker, Apfelbaum, & Ambady, 2010; Freeman, Penner, Saperstein, Scheutz, & Ambady, 2011), sexual interest (Bartels, 2015), and decision-making about contentious social issues (Schneider et al., 2015).

For this task, a list of 60 stimulus words was developed. These were divided into the several categories, including evaluative words (i.e., words with ‘positive’/‘negative’ connotations), and words corresponding to the subscales of the ATS-21 (i.e., ‘Trust’, ‘Intent’, and ‘Social Distance’) and the PSO (i.e., ‘Sentencing’, and ‘Risk’). Half of these words were positively-valenced, with the remaining half being negatively-valenced (a full list is provided in Appendix H).

The task was administered using the MouseTracker software (Freeman & Ambady, 2010). The procedure (Figure 5.04) involved participants using a computer mouse to click on a /START/ button (bottom centre of the screen). Clicking /START/ initiated the presentation of a stimulus word (centre of the screen). Participants were then required to quickly and accurately categorise the stimulus word in relation to one of two competing labels (‘SEX OFFENDER’, and ‘NOT A SEX OFFENDER’), which were located in the top left and right corners of the screen. This categorisation was conducted using a computer mouse. MouseTracker collected data about the *x*- and *y*- co-ordinate locations of the mouse cursor on the screen as it moved from the starting position to the selected response, as well as data about response times, and mouse movement velocity.

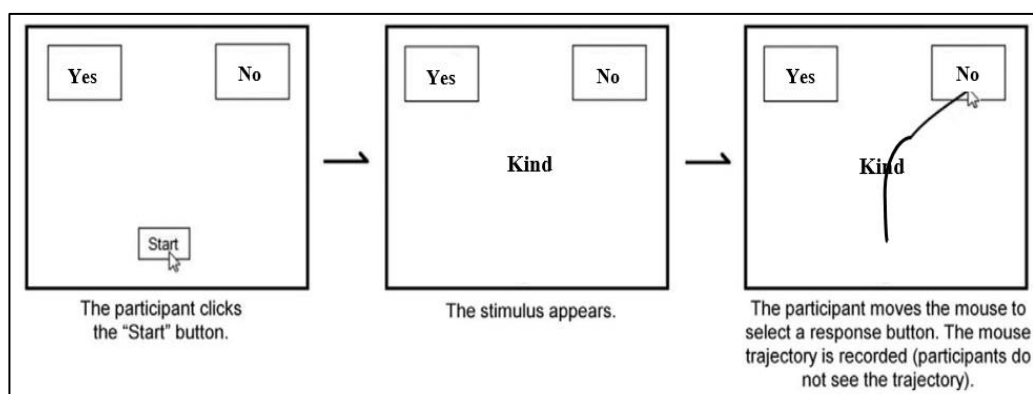


Figure 5.04: Example set-up of a MouseTracker trial
(adapted from Hehman, Stolier, & Freeman, 2015)

This task was completed in two blocks. In one block, participants were instructed to respond in such a way that indicated a positive view about sexual offenders. In the other block, participants were instructed to respond in such a way that indicated a negative view about sexual offenders. Completing the task in this blocked way (as opposed to allowing participants some level of freedom in their responses) allowed for the examination of interfering cognitions when participants were required to select a response option that may be incongruent with their actual point of view. The order of the presentation of these blocks (as well as the left/right locations of the two response options) was counterbalanced between participants. Each block was comprised of 10 practice trials and 60 critical trials.

Mousetracking data were handled according to previously-reported studies (e.g., Incera et al., 2013). This involved excluding trials where the initiation of the mouse movement (i.e., when the mouse left the /START/ box) was more than 500ms after the stimulus word was presented. This is because slower initiation speeds indicate conscious control of the initial mouse trajectory (i.e., non-real time responding). For the same reason, trials with a total response time of greater than 3000ms were excluded from analysis. Due to variations in response times, each trial was divided into 101 time-steps in order for trials and conditions to be directly compared.

In line with previous studies using MouseTracker, output data included the maximum deviation (MD), area-under-the-curve (AUC), and response time (RT) for each trial. MDs and AUCs (comparable to an idealised straight line from the /START/ button to the appropriate response option) represent the extent to which participants' mouse trajectories are attracted towards an incorrect response. As such, larger MDs and AUCs were taken as being indicative of a greater attraction to, for example, a positive response when instructed to respond negatively (or vice versa) about sexual offenders. Slower RTs were taken to be indicative of greater levels of interference between implicit attitudes and the selection of the correct response.

Perceptions of Sex Offenders Scale

The PSO (see Chapter 3) was used in order to examine post-manipulation views about sexual offender sentencing, the endorsement of stereotypes about sexual offenders, and perceptions of sexual offenders' risk on an explicit level. The PSO demonstrated very good levels of internal consistency in this study as a full scale ($\alpha = 0.84$), as did the

‘Sentencing and Management’ ($\alpha = 0.90$) and ‘Stereotype Endorsement’ ($\alpha = 0.86$) subscales. However, the third subscale of ‘Risk Perception’ demonstrated poor internal consistency in this study ($\alpha = 0.49$). This may be indicative of inconsistent responding to risk-based questions among those participants under conditions of cognitive load.

Procedure

Potential participants either responded to online advertisements (administered via email, and through the University of Lincoln’s Psychology Research Participation System), or were approached directly on campus. Once provided with a general overview of the study, those who were interested in taking part were signed up to a specific timeslot for testing to take place under controlled conditions in a quiet location (typically, this was either a laboratory within the School of Psychology, or a booked room within the University Library).

Upon arriving at the testing session, participants were provided with a full briefing about what would be expected of them. If happy to continue, participants completed the initial baseline tasks. The demographic and ATS-21 scales were administered via an online *Qualtrics*-based survey, and the GNAT was administered via eRun (an add-on application of ePrime, specifically designed to run experiments) on a Windows laptop. Next, those who were randomised to receive the cognitive load induction were presented with instructions about this task, and were given 15 seconds to memorise the random string of seven letters and numbers. A new code was generated daily using an online tool (www.random.org). Next, the *Qualtrics* survey randomly presented participants with one of the experimental vignettes, and timed how long they read it for. Reading time was calculated as the time between the presentation of the vignette, and the participant clicking the button to move on to the next page of the survey. The manipulation check questions were presented immediately after the vignette (i.e., on the next page of the survey). Participants then completed the mousetracking task, and finally the PSO. At the end of the testing session, those who received the cognitive load induction were asked to recall the string that they were shown, before all participants were fully debriefed and thanked for their time.

5.2.2. Results

Before conducting the main analyses, any outliers and participants who failed to complete any of the experimental tasks correctly were removed from the dataset. Two participants were removed because of reading times that were more than three standard deviations above the mean in their respective conditions. Further, one participant was removed from the study because of high error rates on the GNAT (i.e., no responses to ‘sexual offender’ stimulus words in the second block of the task). Finally, seven participants were removed as a result of their mousetracking data. Of these, two were removed because of experimenter errors (i.e., data files were lost at the time of testing). The remaining five were excluded as their data on at least one block of the mousetracking task led to no analysable data being produced due to software errors. Thus, each of the analyses that follow are based on this reduced sample ($n = 104$).

Baseline Differences and Manipulation Checks

No significant ATS-21 differences were observed at baseline between those participants provided with an adult male or juvenile vignette in either of the conditions (cognitive load condition: $t(52) = 1.06, p = .293$; control condition: $t(48) = 1.33, p = .190$). This lack of difference was mirrored in the GNAT data (cognitive load: $t(52) = 0.69, p = .495$; control: $t(48) = 1.19, p = .241$). Descriptive statistics for these data are presented in Table 5.05. Further, there was no difference in GNAT attitude indices as a function of the order in which the GNAT blocks were presented (cognitive load: $t(52) = 0.64, p = .526$; control: $t(48) = 0.14, p = .989$).

Responses to the three manipulation check questions were averaged in order to produce a composite measure ($\alpha = 0.79$) of judgements about that particular offender. In both experimental conditions, participants who were presented with the adult male vignette judged the offender more punitively (and as being more representative of a sexual offender) than those presented with the juvenile vignette (cognitive load: $t(52) = 4.68, p < .001, d = 1.28$; control: $t(48) = 4.94, p < .001, d = 1.40$). The large size of the effect was consistent between conditions. These data suggest that participants did view the vignettes as qualitatively different, in line with the intentions of the study.

Table 5.05: Baseline attitudinal scores and manipulation check outcomes, by Condition and Vignette

Variable	<u>Cognitive load condition</u>		<u>Control condition</u>	
	Adult Male	Juvenile	Adult Male	Juvenile
ATS-21	49.35 (9.80)	44.14 (12.12)	36.64 (11.95)	41.36 (13.11)
GNAT	-35.78 (49.44)	-45.42 (53.52)	-61.44 (45.31)	-44.97 (50.76)
Manipulation check	7.81 ^a (1.39)	5.89 ^a (1.61)	7.88 ^b (1.53)	5.24 ^b (2.19)

Note: Manipulation check data are based on a composite score of the three supplementary questions accompanying each vignette, with higher scores indicating more punitive judgements, and higher perceptions of representativeness. Standard deviations are presented in parentheses. Data in rows that share a superscript differ significantly ($p < .001$)

Hypothesis 1: Representativeness, Cognitive Load, and Vignette Reading Time

A 2 (Condition: Cognitive Load vs. Control) x 2 (Vignette: Adult Male vs. Juvenile) ANOVA was conducted, with vignette reading time (in seconds) as the dependent variable. The data suggested no significant main effect of Condition ($F(1, 103) = 2.86, p = .094$) or Vignette ($F(1, 103) = 1.81, p = .182$). Similarly, the anticipated two-way interaction between Condition and Vignette was not observed ($F(1, 103) = 1.92, p = .169$). Descriptive data for these effects are presented in Table 5.06.

Table 5.06: Vignette reading time outcomes, by Condition and Vignette

Condition	<u>Adult male vignette</u>		<u>Juvenile vignette</u>		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Cognitive load	47.07	10.49	55.64	13.31	2.61	.012	0.72
Control	56.74	19.47	56.61	19.35	0.02	.981	0.01

Note: Data refer to reading time for each of the experimental vignettes (in seconds)

As with Study 4, potential differences in the reading times of the vignettes *within* each of the experimental conditions were observed. As such, separate ancillary *t*-tests were conducted in order to examine these further. Within the cognitive load condition, a medium-to-large-sized effect of the experimental vignette on reading time was found,

with those presented with the adult male vignette taking significantly less time to read this than those presented with the juvenile vignette ($t(52) = 2.61, p = .012, d = 0.72$). However, there was no difference in the time taken to read the adult male and juvenile vignettes within the control condition ($t(48) = 0.02, p = .981$). These ancillary tests suggest that the sample size may not have been large enough to detect a significant Condition*Vignette interaction in the omnibus ANOVA.

Hypothesis 2: Representativeness, Cognitive Load, and PSO Scores

A 2 (Condition: Cognitive Load vs. Control) x 2 (Vignette: Adult Male vs. Juvenile) ANCOVA was conducted, with total PSO score as the dependent variable. ATS-21 scores were included as a covariate in this analysis owing to their high correlation with the PSO (Chapter 3; $F(1, 103) = 132.10, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.51$). The results indicated no significant main effects of Condition ($F(1, 103) = 0.02, p = .885$) or Vignette ($F(1, 103) = 0.43, p = .515$) on PSO scores. However, there was a significant two-way interaction between these variables ($F(1, 103) = 4.63, p = .034, \eta^2 = 0.02$).

Simple main effects analyses (with Bonferroni correction) found that this interaction was attributable to higher (more punitive) PSO scores among those presented with the adult male vignette (compared to the juvenile vignette) within the control condition. This difference was marginally significant ($p = .054, d = 0.72$). Comparatively, there was no difference in PSO scores as a function of the presented vignette among participants in the cognitive load condition ($p = .275$). Full descriptive data for these analyses are provided in Table 5.07.

To examine this interaction still further, a 2 (Condition: Cognitive Load vs. Control) x 2 (Vignette: Adult Male vs. Juvenile) MANCOVA was conducted. In this analysis, the subscales of the PSO (i.e., ‘Sentencing and Management’, ‘Stereotype Endorsement’, and ‘Risk Perception’) acted as dependent variables, while ATS-21 scores were again included as a covariate ($p < .001$). Baseline attitudes were found to have a significant effect on the ‘Sentencing and Management’ and ‘Risk Perception’ subscales of the PSO ($p < .001$), but not on the ‘Stereotype Endorsement’ subscale ($p = .339$). There was no significant main effect of either Condition or Vignette on any of the three PSO subscales.

Table 5.07: PSO outcome data, by Condition and Vignette

Condition	<u>Adult male vignette</u>				<u>Juvenile vignette</u>			
	<i>F</i>	<i>SM</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>RP</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>SM</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>RP</i>
Cognitive load	43.36 (1.45)	17.87 (1.10)	9.23 (0.90)	16.23 (0.57)	45.54 (1.37)	19.58 (1.04)	9.85 (0.85)	16.11 (0.54)
Control	46.25 ^a (1.49)	20.14 (1.34)	9.91 (0.92)	16.20 (0.58)	42.22 ^a (1.45)	17.26 (1.10)	9.88 (0.90)	15.07 (0.57)

Note: Labels refer to the PSO as a full scale (*F*), and the subscales of ‘Sentencing and Management’ (*SM*), ‘Stereotype Endorsement’ (*SE*), and ‘Risk Perception’ (*RP*). Data represent estimate marginal means, which are corrected for baseline ATS-21 scores. Standard error data are presented in parentheses. ^a $p < .05$

There was a significant two-way interaction between Condition and Vignette in relation to ‘Sentencing and Management’ scores ($F(1, 103) = 4.37, p = .039, \eta^2 = 0.02$). Simple main effects analyses (with Bonferroni correction) found that this interaction was attributable to higher (more punitive) scores among those presented with the adult male vignette (comparative to the juvenile vignette) within the control condition, with this difference approaching statistical significance ($p = .071, d = 0.66$). No other significant interactions were found.

Hypothesis 3: Representativeness, Cognitive Load, and Implicit Decision-Making

Mousetracking data were examined in order to establish whether representativeness effects could be detected at an automatic or implicit level. Before this analysis took place, data were calculated in relation to ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ responding patterns. For example, when positive words were linked with the response label of ‘SEX OFFENDER’, and negative words were linked to the response label of ‘NOT A SEX OFFENDER’, these data were grouped into a single ‘positive responding’ variable. Similarly, when negative words were linked with the response label of ‘SEX OFFENDER’ and positive words were linked to the response label ‘NOT A SEX OFFENDER’, these data were grouped into a single ‘negative responding’ variable.

In line with previous work (e.g., Schneider et al., 2015), correlational analyses were conducted between MD and AUC data within each responding style (i.e., ‘positive responding’ and ‘negative responding’). Consistent with previous research using the mousetracking paradigm, large significant correlations were found between these two

outcome variables in relation to both responding styles ($r_{\text{positive}} = 0.91, p < .001$; $r_{\text{negative}} = 0.87, p < .001$). As such, only MD and RT findings will be discussed, such as to avoid repetition of results.

Trajectory (MD) Data

A 2 (Condition: Cognitive Load vs. Control; between-groups) x 2 (Vignette: Adult Male vs. Juvenile; between-groups) x 2 (Response Type: Positive vs. Negative; within-groups) mixed ANCOVA was conducted, within differences between MD outcomes for positive and negative responding as the dependent variables. Owing to the indirect nature of the mousetracking paradigm, the GNAT indices of implicit attitudes towards sexual offenders was included as a covariate in this analysis. However, these baseline implicit attitudes were not found to have a significant effect on the outcome variables in this analysis ($F(1, 99) = 1.46, p = .229$). Nonetheless, they were retained in the model because of their potential theoretical importance.

All analyses conducted using this initial model were found to be statistically non-significant:

- Two-way interaction between positive- and negative-responding MD data and Condition: $F(1, 99) = 0.76, p = .385$
- Two-way interaction between positive- and negative-responding MD data and Vignette: $F(1, 99) = 2.00, p = .161$
- Three-way interaction between positive- and negative- responding MD data, Condition, and Vignette: $F(1, 99) = 0.52, p = .474$

Despite the lack of significant interactions, the graphical depictions of these data suggested potential differences in positive and negative responding patterns as a function of the presented vignettes within each of the experimental conditions (Figure 5.05).

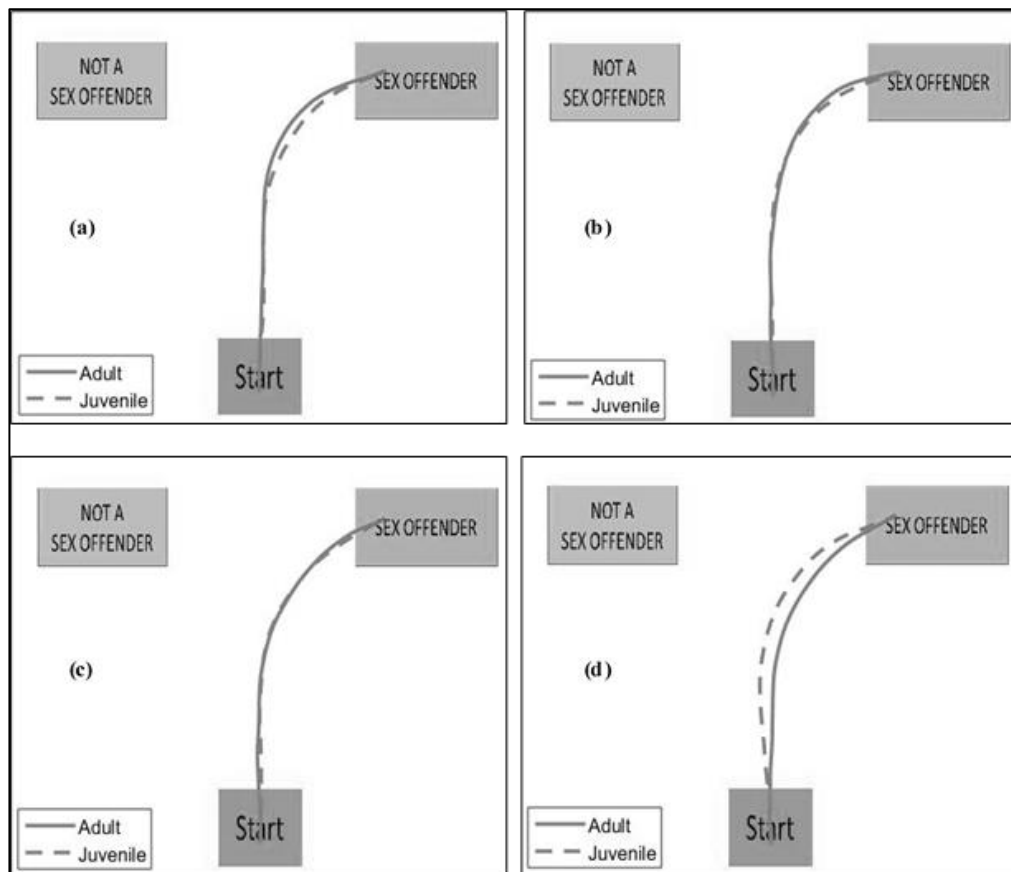


Figure 5.05: Mousetracking response trajectories as a function of the presented experimental vignette for: (a) positive responding in the cognitive load condition, (b) negative responding in the cognitive load condition, (c) positive responding in the control condition, and (d) negative responding in the control condition

Owing to these observable differences, separate ancillary *t*-tests were conducted within each condition in order to examine the differences in positive and negative response trajectories between the two vignettes. Within the cognitive load condition, there were no differences in MD outcomes between the two vignette groups when participants were instructed to respond positively ($t(52) = 0.63, p = .529$) or negatively about sexual offenders ($t(52) = 0.13, p = .899$). Similarly, in the control condition, those assigned to the adult male vignette did not differ from those who read the juvenile vignette in relation to their mousetracking trajectories when responding positively ($t(48) = 0.04, p = .966$). However, there was a medium-sized effect between the two vignette groups in the control condition when responding negatively about sexual offenders, with this difference approaching statistical significance ($t(48) = 1.81, p = .076, d = 0.52$). Examining the descriptive data in relation to MD scores (Table 5.08), this difference indicates a greater bias for positive responding when participants read the juvenile vignette, comparative to those who read the adult male vignette, but only in the control condition. That is, when

asked to classify negative words after reading the juvenile offender vignette, participants in the control condition were automatically drawn (via their mouse trajectories) towards the ‘NOT A SEX OFFENDER’ response option.

Table 5.08: Mousetracking maximum deviation outcomes, by Condition, Vignette, and Response Type

Response	<u>Adult male vignette</u>		<u>Juvenile vignette</u>		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Cognitive load							
Positive	0.33	0.14	0.31	0.15	0.63	.529	0.14
Negative	0.38	0.14	0.38	0.17	0.13	.899	0.00
Control							
Positive	0.33	0.13	0.33	0.17	0.04	.966	0.00
Negative	0.32	0.13	0.39	0.18	1.81	.076	0.52

Note: Higher MDs for positive responding represent a negative bias, while higher MDs for negative responding represent a positive bias

Reaction Time Data

The same approach to statistical analysis as applied to MD data was applied to RT data. As such, a 2 (Condition: Cognitive Load vs. Control; between-groups) x 2 (Vignette: Adult Male vs. Juvenile; between-groups) x 2 (Response Type: Positive vs. Negative; within-groups) mixed ANCOVA (with GNAT indices as a non-significant covariate; $p = .605$) was conducted with differences in RTs between positive and negative responding as dependent variables. All effects were not statistically significant:

- Two-way interaction between Response Type and Condition: $F(1, 99) = 1.42, p = .236$
- Two-way interaction between Response Type and Vignette: $F(1, 99) = 1.62, p = .206$
- Three-way interaction between Response Type, Condition, and Vignette: $F(1, 99) = 0.76, p = .385$

Planned simple main effects analyses (with Bonferroni correction) were conducted at the same time as the full-model ANCOVA in case of any potential interactions. No significant differences were found in RTs with regard to positive and negative responding

about sexual offenders (all $p > .350$). As such, it can be inferred that the time taken to respond to trials in the mousetracking task did not differ as a function of the task instructions, the experimental condition, or the presented vignette. Descriptive data for RTs are presented in Table 5.09.

Table 5.09: Mousetracking reaction time outcomes, by Condition, Vignette, and Response Type

Response	<u>Adult male vignette</u>		<u>Juvenile vignette</u>		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Cognitive load							
Positive	1176.11	227.44	1126.93	159.33	0.93	.359	0.25
Negative	1192.62	181.16	1161.00	171.70	0.66	.513	0.18
Control							
Positive	1291.69	267.60	1239.98	186.47	0.79	.432	0.22
Negative	1231.26	175.71	1261.27	231.16	0.52	.608	0.15

Note: Data represents average reaction times for positive and negative responding about sexual offenders (in milliseconds)

5.2.3. Discussion

‘Jumping to Conclusions’ about Representative Sexual Crime Cases

On the whole, participants took significantly less time to read the vignette describing an adult male perpetrator than the vignette with a juvenile perpetrator of child abuse. While there was no significant interaction between cognitive load and the presentation of these vignettes in relation to reading time, ancillary analyses found that the adult male perpetrator vignette was read significantly quicker than the juvenile perpetrator vignette within the cognitive load condition, but not within the control (no cognitive load) condition.

These findings offer support for hypothesis one, and suggest that a reduction of available cognitive resources leads to a reliance of implicit stereotypes, indicated by a shortened reading time of a stereotype-consistent case vignette. This result suggests that people may ‘jump to conclusions’ when confronted with a representative case that matches a

stereotype, and thus pay less attention to these cases before feeling confident about making decisions about them.

Representativeness and Punitive Judgements

Within the cognitive load condition, no differences were found between those presented with the adult male or juvenile vignettes with regards to their outcome data on the PSO. Contrastingly, those in the control condition expressed significantly higher scores on the PSO if they were presented with the adult male vignette (comparative to those presented with the juvenile vignette). This difference was attributable to differences on the ‘Sentencing and Management’ subscale, with no differences found in relation to the endorsement of sexual offender stereotypes or perceptions of risk as a function of the presented vignette. These data are supportive of hypothesis two, and suggest that case-specific information was discounted when making decisions about “sexual offenders” (as is the referent group used in the PSO) when cognitive resources were limited. However, when cognitive resources were not limited, participants judged the juvenile perpetrator less punitively than the adult male perpetrator because, arguably, they were better able to take in case-specific information into account.

Again, this finding is consistent with a representativeness view of sexual crime judgements. That is, a reduction in cognitive resources leads to a reliance on an implicit stereotype of who and/or what a ‘sexual offender’ is, meaning that case-specific nuances are not processed. Contrastingly, when people are motivated to attend to case-specific issues, and cognitive resources are not limited, these nuances can play a role in moderating judgements about sexual offenders.

The Role of Representativeness in Implicit Processing

The use of a mousetracking paradigm in this study enabled the analysis of the dynamic differences in the decision-making processes of people in each of the four experimental groups. Traditional indirect measurement procedures (e.g., GNATs and IATs) use only reaction time data in order to infer information processing differences at the implicit level. Exclusively using reaction time data in this study would have led to the conclusion that the experimental manipulations that were made had no impact on implicit cognition in

relation to making judgements about sexual offenders. However, it appears that this conclusion would have been incorrect.

There were no differences in mousetracking trajectories as a function of the presented experimental vignette when participants were asked to make judgements about sexual offenders under conditions of cognitive load. However, when cognitive resources were not limited, participants who read a vignette depicting a juvenile perpetrator of child abuse expressed a greater automatic positive bias towards sexual offenders than those who read a vignette that involved an adult male offender. These results are consistent with hypothesis three, and suggest that people rely on implicitly-held stereotypes of who or what a sexual offender is when cognitive resources are limited, but attend more to case-specific information when they are more readily available.

5.3. Chapter Summary

The results from Studies 4 and 5 (as well as the ancillary analyses from Study 3 at the end of Chapter 4) converge to support the view that the extent to which a sexual offender corresponds to an implicitly-held stereotype can have a profound impact on: (1) engagement with sexual crime stories, (2), affective evaluations of different ‘types’ of sexual offenders, (3) morality-based evaluations of a perpetrator of a sexual offence, and (4) punitive sentencing judgements.

In Study 4, those who held entity-based implicit theories about sexual offending (indicative of the view that such behaviour is a result of a fixed and unchangeable personal disposition) expressed significantly more negative attitudes towards sexual offenders than those who held more incremental beliefs (conceptualised as the view that people who have committed a sexual offence can change). Entitists also viewed sexual offending against children as being significantly more indicative of the moral character of a perpetrator than incrementalists. However, this difference was moderated by the presentation of vignettes depicting different ‘types’ of child abusers.

Among entitists, sexual offending by adult perpetrators (of both genders) was viewed as more indicative of the perpetrator’s moral character relative to a juvenile perpetrator. However, a significantly more punitive sentence was recommended for the adult male

perpetrator compared to those recommended for adult female or juvenile perpetrators. Among incrementalists, no such perpetrator-based differences were observed.

These findings suggest that those who hold particularly negative attitudes towards sexual offenders do so with reference to a narrow implicit stereotype as to who or what a 'sexual offender' is. The behavioural implications of holding such stereotypes were demonstrated through the experimental reduction of cognitive resources in Study 5. As a result of this manipulation, significant differences were observed in relation to engagement with, and judgements of, representative and non-representative cases of child sexual abuse.

When simultaneously completing another cognitive task (i.e., holding a random string of letters and number in working memory), participants took less time to read a vignette depicting a case of adult male-perpetrated child sexual abuse than an alternative depicting a juvenile perpetrator. When cognitive resources were not limited, however, there was no difference in reading times for these vignettes. Further, no between-vignette differences were observed in sentencing and evaluative judgements of 'sexual offenders' under cognitive load. However, those whose cognitive resources were not limited made less punitive judgements (on the explicit PSO measure) and demonstrated a greater bias for positive responding (via an indirect mousetracking task) when presented with a juvenile perpetrator than an adult male perpetrator of child abuse.

These effects are in accordance with Kahneman's (2011) notion that people 'jump to conclusions' when presented with information that matches an implicit stereotype. That is, people use this sense of familiarity to engage less with the information, and 'fill in the gaps' with stereotype-consistent content. Thus, these findings support the view that the representative heuristic plays a key role in judgements about specific cases of sexual offending.

CHAPTER 6

THE AFFECT HEURISTIC IN SEXUAL CRIME JUDGEMENTS

Previous studies in this thesis suggest that generalised attitudes towards sexual offenders may be the biggest contributor to policy and related judgements (e.g., Chapter 3; Study 3). Therefore, understanding the processes by which people come to form and express such attitudes is of high importance. Previous work, completed for an earlier qualification, found that British press articles about sexual crime were significantly more emotional than those written about other types of crime (Harper & Hogue, 2015). Also, in Study 5, it was observed that the reduction of cognitive resources (via cognitive load) can lead to a reliance on non-conscious stereotypes when engaging with stories of sexual crime and making decisions about them. As emotional processing has been linked to cognitive load in previous work (e.g., Fraser et al., 2012), press-induced emotional responses to sexual offenders may be an important issue to consider.

With this in mind, this chapter presents data from four studies:

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| Study 6 | An examination of changes in the emotionality of British press articles as a function of the 2012 Jimmy Savile scandal |
| Study 7 | An investigation into the links between newspaper readership and attitudes and perceptions about sexual offenders |
| Study 8 | An analysis of the role of emotional processes and moral disengagement in influencing attitudes towards sexual offenders |
| Study 9 | An exploration of the use of humanising messages to change explicit and implicit attitudes in this area of research. |

6.1. Study 6: The Linguistics of Sexual Crime in the National British Press

The re-emergence of the Jimmy Savile allegations in late 2012 allowed for a naturalistic experiment to be devised. That is, the previously described MSc study (Harper & Hogue, 2015) could be replicated in order to examine whether a high-profile case of sexual offending influenced the emotionality of newspaper reporting of sexual crime. This was the aim of Study 6. The only hypothesis was that news articles would be comprised of

greater levels of negativity and hostility in a sample of news articles collected 12-months after the initial Harper and Hogue (2015) dataset.

6.1.1. Methods

Data Sources

The sample of newspaper articles used for Study 6 were the same as those used in the analyses presented in Study 2 (Chapter 4). As such, data sourcing information for Study 6 can be found in Section 4.1.1.

Data Analysis

Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count Analysis

Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count software (LIWC; Pennebaker, Chung, Ireland, Gonzalez, & Booth, 2007) was used to examine the linguistic characteristics of the main body text of sourced newspaper articles. LIWC analyses digitised text-based documents in relation to 68 distinct variables (e.g., word counts and emotionality indices), and produces an SPSS-readable data file containing percentage scores for each of these variables. For example, if a LIWC data file listed a figure of 6.5 for the variable of family, this means that 6.5% of the words in the document that has been analysed belong to the ‘family’ category of the pre-loaded LIWC dictionary (e.g. ‘father’, ‘son’, ‘mother’, ‘daughter’). The internal consistency of each category is excellent ($M_\alpha = .83$; Pennebaker et al., 2007), and the software has been used in a range of contexts, such as mental health assessments, lie detection, and the study of political orientations (Newman, Pennebaker, Berry, & Richards, 2003; Pennebaker & Francis, 1996; Pennebaker, Mayne, & Francis, 1997; Wojcik, Hovasapian, Graham, Motyl, & Ditto, 2015).

With popular punitiveness (defined as the general tendency for the general public to prefer more, longer, and harsher punishments for offending behaviour; Maruna & King, 2009) being identified as an important variable relating to societal responses to crime, four LIWC indices were identified for in-depth analysis. These were ‘negative emotion’, ‘positive emotion’, ‘anger’, and ‘anxiety’. Negative emotion and anger within press articles were postulated as providing an affective basis for punitive responses to crime, with positive emotion potentially acting as a mediator of these. There is a vast body of

academic work on the role of moral panics (Cohen, 1972/2002) in driving responses to offending behaviour. This was the rationale for also including anxiety-related words in these analyses.

Headline Descriptor Analyses

Word cloud software (www.wordle.net) was utilised in order to examine the frequency of words or phrases used to describe sexual offenders in newspaper headlines. Word clouds are visual displays that depict textual information according to the frequency with which the information appears within a dataset. For example, a word that is five-times more prevalent than another within a dataset will be presented as being five-times larger within the word cloud.

According to McNaught and Lam (2010), word clouds can be used in order to infer the main themes or concepts that comprise a text. These authors used this method of analysis in preliminary analyses of focus group transcripts within an educational setting. They also used it to validate and explain questionnaire findings about educational practices. Though not widely adopted in academic research thus far, word clouds have been used extensively in a variety of contexts. For example, advertising companies use them to examine search engine data when helping organisations to design their websites (e.g., al Nasser, Tucker, & de Cesare, 2014).

Word clouds were created separately for tabloid and broadsheet headline descriptors of sexual offenders. Descriptors within the word clouds were weighted by the print circulation of the newspaper that they come from, thus ensuring that phrases were appropriately sized in relation to the general exposure they have within the collective print circulation of British newspapers.

6.1.2. Results

To ensure clarity in this results section, descriptive output data from the LIWC analyses are presented in Table 6.01. LIWC data were not normally distributed. As such, non-parametric significance testing was conducted.

Whole Sample LIWC Analyses

In relation to press articles about sexual crime, there were statistically significant year-on-year reductions in the use of words relating to negative emotion ($U = 8,557, p = .017, r = 0.13$) and anger ($U = 8,736.50, p = .032, r = 0.12$) between 2012 and 2013. However, no changes were observed in relation to the use of positive language ($U = 10,331, p = .940$) or words related to anxiety ($U = 9,552, p = .276$).

For violent crime, statistically significant reductions were observed in relation to the use of words relating to negative emotion ($U = 31,189.50, p = .002, r = 0.13$), positive emotion ($U = 32,498, p = .016, r = 0.10$), and anger ($U = 28,630, p < .001, r = 0.19$). However, there was no change in the use of anxiety-related words in stories published about violent crime ($U = 34,575.50, p = .207$).

With regards to acquisitive crime, there were no significant changes in relation to the use of any of the target linguistic variables: negative emotion ($U = 2,033, p = .945$); positive emotion ($U = 1,900.50, p = .482$); anger ($U = 1,989, p = .776$); anxiety ($U = 1,942, p = .614$).

LIWC Analyses of Sexual Crime Articles

The aim of Study 6 was to establish whether the high-profile re-emergence of sexual offending allegations made against Jimmy Savile had any effect on the emotionality of press reporting about sexual crime between 2012 and 2013. Within tabloid articles about sexual crime, there were marginally significant year-on-year reductions in the use of words relating to negative emotion ($U = 4,934, p = .088$), and anger ($U = 4,857.50, p = .063$). However, no differences were observed in the pre- and post-Savile datasets in relation to tabloids' use of positive emotion ($U = 5,559, p = .651$), or anxiety-related words ($U = 5,362, p = .396$).

In broadsheet articles, there was a significant year-on-year reduction in the use of negative emotion words in stories about sexual crime ($U = 468.00, p = .042, r = 0.22$). No differences were observed in relation to the other target linguistic variables: positive emotion ($U = 562.50, p = .278$); anger ($U = 566.50, p = .296$); anxiety ($U = 599.00, p = .472$).

Table 6.01: Descriptive data for LIWC analyses of the emotionality of crime articles

Article type	<u>Negative</u>		<u>Positive</u>		<u>Anger</u>		<u>Anxiety</u>	
	<u>emotion</u>		<u>emotion</u>					
	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013
Whole sample								
Sexual crime	6.15	5.50*	1.05	1.07	5.50	3.82*	1.07	0.80
Violent crime	5.66	5.22*	1.27	1.06*	3.80	3.27*	0.74	0.86
Acquisitive crime	2.94	2.93	1.41	1.56	0.83	0.82	0.73	0.80
Sexual crime only								
Tabloid	6.30	5.57	0.95	1.04	4.48	3.99	0.88	0.83
Broadsheets	5.70	4.71*	1.34	1.13	3.91	3.31	0.76	0.71

Note: Data represent the percentage of articles that were comprised of each of the linguistic variables. Figures with an asterisk indicate a statistically significant year-on-year change ($p < .05$)

Differences between tabloids and broadsheets on all target variables were not significant in 2012 (all p 's $> .05$) when examining stories written about sexual crime. In the 2013 dataset, however, broadsheet articles about sexual crime were comprised of a significantly lower proportion of words related to negative emotion ($U = 4,887.00$, $p = .002$, $r = 0.19$) and anger ($U = 5,506.50$, $p = .049$, $r = 0.07$). No differences were observed between tabloids and broadsheets in relation to their use of positive emotion ($U = 6,109.50$, $p = .393$) or anxiety-related words ($U = 5,915.00$, $p = .224$) when reporting on cases of sexual crime.

Headline Descriptor Analyses

Within the 2012 sample of articles about sexual crime, headline descriptors of sexual offenders were the main difference between tabloids and broadsheets in terms of their coverage of this topic (top left and right word clouds; Figure 6.01). Tabloids were observably more hostile and disparaging about sexual offenders than broadsheets, using phrases such as 'beast', 'paedo', and 'monster' to describe these individuals. This trend

was also found in the 2013 headline descriptor data (bottom left and right word clouds; Figure 6.01).



Figure 6.01: Word clouds depicting tabloid and broadsheet headline descriptors of sexual offenders in 2012 (pre-Savile) and 2013 (post-Savile)

6.1.3. Discussion

Study 6 used linguistic analyses to examine the emotional composition of newspaper articles written about sexual crime in the aftermath of the re-emergence of sexual offending allegations against Jimmy Savile. Few significant differences were found in relation to changes in the linguistic composition of articles about sexual crime as a function of this case. No year-on-year linguistic differences in tabloid coverage were

observed, with broadsheets using significantly fewer words loaded with negative emotion within their articles (as specified by the dictionary built into the LIWC analysis software). However, when tabloid and broadsheet articles about sexual crime were analysed together as a single corpus, the net result was a significant reduction in words pertaining to negative emotion and anger between the data collection periods in 2012 and 2013. That all being said, the effect sizes associated with these differences were both negligible (r 's = 0.13 and 0.12, respectively). These small coefficients may be indicative of a statistically significant result that represents a Type I error as a result of a large sample size. If this conclusion is accepted, then it can be argued that there have been no real changes in the emotionality of sexual crime articles in the British press as a function of the Jimmy Savile scandal. As such, the conclusions of the Harper and Hogue (2015) study still apply here, with sexual crime articles being comprised of significantly more negative and hostile language than stories about other types of offending behaviour, and tabloids and broadsheets describing sexual crime in similar ways.

Headline descriptors of sexual offenders constituted the most striking difference between tabloid and broadsheet reporting styles in relation to stories about sexual crime. Tabloid headline descriptors were more overtly offensive (e.g., 'beast', and 'monster') than those used by broadsheets (e.g., 'rapist', and 'abuser'). This difference was consistent across both datasets (i.e., in the headlines of articles collected in both 2012 and 2013).

6.2. Study 7: Newspaper Readership and Attitudes towards Sexual Offenders

The findings from Study 6 indicated that, contrary to popular lay beliefs, tabloid and broadsheet newspapers actually appear to speak about the issue of sexual crime in similar emotional tones. However, they did differ in the ways that they described sexual offenders in their article headlines. Recently, several authors have commented that judgements about 'sexual offenders' (in a general sense) are more punitive than those made about more specific groups (e.g., particular offender types), or indeed when a more sanitised label (e.g., "People who have committed crimes of a sexual nature") is used (e.g., Harris & Socia, 2014; King & Roberts, 2015). The mechanisms underlying such differences have not been well studied. However, within the context of the data reported in Study 6, it may be that the 'sexual offender' label is itself laden with attributions that lead to automatic negative emotional responses. In turn, these responses are perhaps translated

into generalised negative attitudes towards sexual offenders, and subsequently linked to explicitly-expressed punitive policy preferences.

Thus, Study 7 examined the explicit attitudes and perceptions of different newspaper readership groups about sexual offenders. The following hypotheses were made:

H1: Tabloid readers would express more negative attitudes towards sexual offenders than broadsheet readers, as measured by the ATS-21, with participants who read a combination of both publication types scoring between the two ‘exclusive’ readership groups

H2: Tabloid readers would express more punitive judgements about sexual offenders than broadsheet readers, as measured by the PSO, with participants who read a combination of both publication types scoring between the two ‘exclusive’ readership groups

6.2.1. Methods

Participants

The sample for Study 7 was comprised of 528 community members (139 males, 347 females, 42 declined to provide gender; $M_{\text{age}} = 32.17$ years, $SD = 12.06$ years). These participants were recruited via internet-mediated invitations, disseminated through email distribution lists and social media advertisements (e.g., posts on personal Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn feeds). These invitations provided a brief overview of the study, a link to the survey, and contact details of the researcher. All participants were self-selecting, and obtained through opportunity and snowball sampling techniques. No incentives were offered for participation, and participants were naïve to the study hypotheses of the study prior to taking part. The only inclusion criteria in place were that participants must be aged over 18 years, and living in the UK. This residence criteria was in place in order to only include participants who regularly read *British* newspapers, and thus to be able to link potential readership-based differences in attitudes and perceptions to the observed findings in Study 6.

Materials

Demographics

The demographic questionnaire used in the study described in Chapter 3 was also used here. For the purposes of this analysis, key demographic variables were gender and age (for describing the composition of the sample), and newspaper readership (for examining the effect of readership on attitudes and perceptions about sexual offenders).

Attitudes to Sexual Offenders Scale

The ATS-21 (Hogue & Harper, in prep) was used in this study to obtain information about participants' attitudinal evaluations of sexual offenders. A description of the ATS-21's development, content, and scoring procedure is provided in Section 1.2.1. The measure demonstrated excellent levels of internal consistency in this study ($\alpha = 0.94$), as did each of its subscales ('Trust' $\alpha = 0.84$, 'Intent' $\alpha = 0.87$, and 'Social Distance' $\alpha = 0.83$).

Perceptions of Sex Offenders Scale

The PSO measure developed in Chapter 3 was used to examine participants' knowledge-based attributions about sexual offenders, and views about how they should be managed following conviction. The measure demonstrated excellent internal consistency in this study ($\alpha = 0.92$), as did each of its subscales ('Sentencing and Management' $\alpha = 0.93$, 'Stereotype Endorsement' $\alpha = 0.84$, and 'Risk Perception' $\alpha = 0.80$).

Procedure

When responding to study advertisements, potential participants who clicked on the link were taken directly to the survey webpage (hosted by *Qualtrics*), where further details about the study were provided. This included instructions as to what would be expected of participants with regards to their participation in the study. Those who were willing to take part after reading this information clicked on the 'Next' icon, which presented the first page of the survey. Each participant completed the study measures in a standardised order (demographics – ATS-21 – PSO). At the end of the survey, participants were comprehensively debriefed and thanked for their time.

6.2.2. Results

Responses to the ATS-21 and PSO measures were compared separately between each of the four newspaper readership groups: (1) tabloid readers ($n = 59$), (2) broadsheet readers ($n = 156$), (3) readers of both tabloids and broadsheets ($n = 105$), and (4) those who do not read newspapers on a regular basis ($n = 201$). The combined sample size ($N = 521$) is lower than that reported previously, as seven participants did not complete the ‘newspaper readership’ question on the demographic questionnaire. A full overview of the descriptive data is provided in Table 6.02.

Hypothesis 1: ATS-21 Scores by Newspaper Readership Category

A one-way ANCOVA was conducted to examine the effect of Newspaper Readership (Tabloids vs. Broadsheets vs. Both vs. None) on ATS-21 scores. Owing to theoretical links between educational attainment and newspaper readership, Education Level was dummy-coded and included in the model as a covariate. A marginally significant main effect on Newspaper Readership was found ($F(3, 520) = 2.51, p = .058, \eta^2 = 0.01$). Planned post-hoc comparisons (with Bonferroni correction) found that this effect was due to more negative attitudes among exclusive tabloid readers than exclusive broadsheet readers. This difference was marginally significant ($p = .055$). The ‘both’ and ‘none’ readership groups did not differ significantly from (and scored between) these two exclusive readership groups.

Investigating this potential effect further, a one-way between groups MANCOVA was conducted in order to examine the effect of Newspaper Readership on scores for each of the ATS-21 subscales (‘Trust’, ‘Intent’, and ‘Social Distance’). Education Level was again included as a dummy-coded covariate.

There was a marginally significant main effect of Newspaper Readership on the ‘Trust’ subscale of the ATS-21 ($F(3, 520) = 2.51, p = .058$). This was attributable to more negative attitudes among tabloid readers compared to broadsheet readers, which was approaching statistical significance ($p = .086$). In relation to judgements of sexual offenders’ levels of ‘Intent’, there was no effect of Newspaper Readership ($F(3, 520) = 1.10, p = .350$). There was, however, a significant effect of Newspaper Readership in relation to ‘Social Distance’ judgements ($F(3, 520) = 3.37, p = .018, \eta^2 = 0.02$). Planned

post-hoc comparisons (with Bonferroni correction) found this difference was again attributable to more negative attitudes being expressed by tabloid readers compared to broadsheet readers ($p = .021$). In relation to each ATS-21 subscale, those in the ‘both’ and ‘none’ readership groups did not differ from (and scored between) the two exclusive readership groups.

Table 6.02: ATS-21 and PSO scores, by Newspaper Readership

Readership	<u>ATS-21</u>				<u>PSO</u>			
	Total	T	I	SD	Total	SM	SE	RP
Tabloid	41.02 (1.89)	16.93 (0.73)	24.88 (0.69)	20.21 ^a (0.65)	48.41 ^b (1.17)	17.96 ^c (0.84)	8.45 (0.52)	16.00 (0.44)
Broadsheet	46.92 (1.16)	19.08 (0.45)	26.36 (0.42)	22.48 ^a (0.40)	37.78 ^b (0.71)	15.08 ^c (0.51)	7.37 (0.32)	15.33 (0.27)
Both	43.99 (1.39)	17.78 (0.54)	25.89 (0.51)	21.32 (0.48)	40.40 (0.86)	16.57 (0.62)	7.40 (0.39)	16.43 (0.33)
None	44.99 (1.01)	17.97 (0.39)	26.01 (0.37)	21.96 (0.35)	40.21 (0.63)	16.21 (0.45)	8.23 (0.28)	15.77 (0.24)

Note: ATS-21 abbreviations: T = ‘Trust’, I = ‘Intent’, and SD = ‘Social Distance’. PSO abbreviations: SM = ‘Sentencing & Management’, SE = ‘Stereotype Endorsement’, and RP = ‘Risk Perception’. For the ATS-21, data represent estimated marginally means corrected for educational attainment. For the PSO, data represent estimated marginal means corrected for ATS-21 scores. Standard errors are presented in parentheses

^{a, b, c} $p < .05$

Hypothesis 2: PSO Scores by Newspaper Readership Category

A one-way ANCOVA was conducted to examine the effect of Newspaper Readership on PSO scores. Owing to the large correlation between ATS-21 and PSO scores (Chapter 3), ATS-21 scores were included in the model as a covariate ($p < .001$). A significant effect of Newspaper Readership on PSO scores was found ($F(4, 515) = 4.58, p = .004, \eta^2 = 0.03$). Planned post-hoc comparisons (with Bonferroni correction) found that this effect was attributable to a significantly higher scores (i.e., more punitive judgements) among exclusive tabloid readers than exclusive broadsheet readers ($p = .005$). Those in the ‘both’ and ‘none’ readership groups did not differ from (and scored between) the two exclusive groups.

To investigate this effect further, a one-way (Newspaper Readership: Tabloids vs. Broadsheets vs. Both vs. None) MANCOVA (with ATS-21 as covariate; all p 's < .001) was conducted for each of the PSO subscales.

For the 'Sentencing and Management' subscale, a significant main effect of Newspaper Readership was found ($F(3, 515) = 3.13, p = .021, \eta^2 = 0.02$). Planned post-hoc comparisons (with Bonferroni correction) found that this effect was again attributable to a significant difference between exclusive tabloid and broadsheet readers ($p = .023$). There were also marginally significant effects of Newspaper readership in relation to the 'Stereotype Endorsement' ($F(3, 515) = 2.20, p = .088$) and 'Risk Perception' subscales ($F(3, 515) = 2.35, p = .072$). Further, the trends in the data for these latter subscales were similar to those found in relation to 'Sentencing and Management' (see Table 6.02).

6.2.3. Discussion

The data from Study 7 indicate that newspaper readership is an important variable to consider when examining attitudes and perceptions about sexual offenders. Consistent with hypothesis one, exclusive tabloid readers expressed more negative attitudes towards sexual offenders than those who exclusively read broadsheets, both on the global measure of attitudes (i.e., the ATS-21 as full scale), and on specific attitude-related domains (i.e., the ATS-21 subscales of 'Trust', 'Intent', and 'Social Distance'). Those who read either a combination of both tabloids and broadsheets, or no newspapers at all, scored between these 'exclusive' groups.

These attitudinal trends were also observed in relation to PSO scores, with exclusive tabloid readers expressing more punitive views about sexual offender sentencing. This effect held even when controlling for underlying attitudes, meaning that these sentencing judgements are not merely reflections of the same kinds of cognitions that are measured by the ATS-21. There was a weaker effect of Newspaper Readership on participants' views in relation to the PSO subscales of Stereotype Endorsement or Risk Perception. These findings are supportive of hypothesis two.

Linking the data from Study 6 and Study 7, it can be argued that tabloid presentations of sexual offenders contribute to the development of negative attitudes and punitive responses to sexual offenders through the use of hostile headline descriptors. This claim

is strengthened by the difference in attitudes between participants who exclusively read tabloids and those who read no newspapers at all. Those who do not read any newspapers would perhaps be expected to endorse particularly negative attitudes towards sexual offenders, given the prevailing social climate. However, readership of tabloid newspapers appears to compound this negativity still further – particularly in relation to a desire for greater social distance from sexual offenders. In contrast, being exposed to more neutral descriptors (such as those used by broadsheets) can be suggested to mitigate these effects. The argument that headline descriptors may play an important role in moderating attitudes and responses to sexual offenders gains further support by the observation that few linguistic differences appear to exist *within* news articles about sexual crime in tabloids and broadsheet publications.

Phrases such as “beast” and “monster”, which are typically-used descriptors of sexual offenders in tabloid publications (see Figure 6.01) can be said to encourage readers to engage in dehumanisation. That is, by suggesting that sexual offenders possess demonic or animalistic traits, readers of such headlines may begin associate sexual offenders with such non-human qualities, with these associations forming the basis of judgements about sexual crime. The studies that follow begin to unpack this idea further.

6.3. Study 8: Moral Disengagement in Sexual Crime Discourse

According to Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, and Pastorelli (1996), dehumanisation is one of the factors associated with *moral disengagement*. Moral disengagement theory (MDT) operates as a framework for understanding the processes by which people come to rationalise punitive behaviour. This rationalisation is based on affect-based cognitive processes, with Bandura (1991) suggesting that people act not in accordance to what *ought* to be right, but by what *feels* to be right. On this basis, people can restructure potentially antisocial cognitions in order to support punitive actions in particular contexts. This restructuring takes place through a number of ‘mechanisms’ (Table 6.03).

Although traditionally used to explain how people make politically-contentious decisions (e.g., support for military action; Aquino et al., 2000), the mechanisms of moral disengagement may have some utility in understanding punitive responses to moral and legal transgressions. Drake and Henley (2014) discussed the creation of a so-called ‘false

dichotomy’ between the rights of ‘victims’ and ‘offenders’ in social and political discourses about crime. According to their analyses of UK parliamentary debates, the human rights of offenders are consistently placed in competition with those of their victims in order to construct this dichotomy. Drake and Henley (2014) concluded that this distinction between victims and offenders serves to promote punitive crime policies and to fulfil a populist need to increase the severity of criminal sanctions. Thus, within the context of MDT, the punitive treatment of offenders can be said to be socially- and politically-sanctioned through the mechanism of advantageous comparison.

Table 6.03: The mechanisms of moral disengagement

MDT mechanism	Description
Moral justification	Reasons are provided for punitive behaviour in order to make the actions morally necessary
Euphemistic labelling	The language used to describe punitive behaviour is sanitised
Harm minimisation	The level of harm or destruction associated with punitive behaviour is said to be low
Shared responsibility	Punitive behaviour is said to be carried out by another actor
Advantageous comparison	Punitive behaviour is justified, as not engaging in such actions would lead to more destructive events taking place
Attribution of blame	The victims of punitive actions are said to be deserving of such actions
Dehumanisation	The victims of punitive actions are attributed non-human characteristics, or are linguistically stripped of their personhood

Further, Osofsky, Bandura, and Zimbardo (2005) found that members of execution teams scored higher on moral disengagement compared to prison guards and support workers that counselled condemned offenders. This heightened level of moral disengagement in executioners can be explained in two ways. First, being morally disengaged may act as an emotional buffer, making it easier for execution staff to complete their duties. Second, those endorsing lower levels of moral disengagement may do so via the process of *rehumanisation*. That is, those who counsel offenders on death row may begin to see these

individuals as people, rather than as the demonic beings they are typically portrayed to be in news articles (see Study 6). However, important to Study 8, these stepwise differences in levels of moral disengagement do suggest the potential to influence the extent to which people endorse MDT mechanisms – even in relation to society’s most dangerous individuals.

No studies have specifically applied MDT (in a holistic sense) to judgements about sexual offenders. However, Viki, Fullerton, Raggett, Tait, and Wiltshire (2012) examined the effects of dehumanisation – one component of MDT – on such judgements. They asked participants to rate the extent to which words related to animals or humans corresponded with the label of ‘sexual offender’. A greater correspondence with animal words was taken as being indicative of greater levels of dehumanisation about sexual offenders. This measure was associated with greater support for social exclusion, rejection of rehabilitative ability, and support for harsh punishments for those convicted of sexual offences. Similarly, Bastian et al. (2013) found that child molesters were dehumanised to a greater extent than other offender groups. Further, dehumanisation was positively associated with preferences for severe prison sentences, and negatively associated with views about the suitability of rehabilitative alternatives to custody. These findings suggest that further analyses of MDT mechanisms are warranted in this area.

Study 8 examined the role of MDT mechanisms in influencing attitudes and perceptions of sexual offenders. To this end, aims included the development of a moral disengagement scale with a specific emphasis on responses to sexual offenders, and an analysis of how scores on this scale varied as a function of different media representations about sexual crime. The following hypotheses were made:

- H1:** Presenting information in a tabloid-consistent manner (e.g., talking about sexual offenders in dehumanised ways) would contribute to significantly increased levels of moral disengagement, while presenting information in a broadsheet-consistent manner would not lead to changes in levels of moral disengagement
- H2:** Differential trends in pre- and post-manipulation moral disengagement score changes would be observed within each experimental condition as a function of participants’ existing newspaper readership
- H3:** The trends described in relation to hypotheses one and two would be repeated in sentencing and risk perception (PSO) outcome data

6.3.1. Methods

Participants

The sample for Study 8 was comprised of 253 community-based participants (54 males, 199 females; $M_{\text{age}} = 28.07$ years, $SD = 13.36$ years). These participants were recruited online using invitations distributed via social media websites (e.g., personal Facebook and Twitter feeds), and professional email distribution lists. The only inclusion criterion was a lower age limit of 18 years old, and residence in the UK. Psychology students from the University of Lincoln were eligible to receive course credit, but all other participants were volunteers.

Materials

Demographics

Participants provided details about their age, gender, educational level, regular news consumption (i.e., newspaper readership), and political orientation. Information was also sought about personal knowledge of people who had been victims or perpetrators of sexual offences.

Moral Disengagement towards Sexual Offenders Scale

The MDT literature was consulted in order to identify potentially relevant factors that may be conceptually linked to people's responses to sexual crime. Five such factors were identified: (1) moral justification, (2) advantageous comparison, (3) displacement of responsibility, (4) attribution of blame, and (5) dehumanisation. These factors were converted into a number of potential scale items for the measurement of moral disengagement towards sexual offenders (e.g. "Sex offenders are monsters" - dehumanisation). In total, 15 items were produced, with these forming a draft *Moral Disengagement towards Sexual Offenders* (MDS-SO) scale. Each of these items represented a morally disengaged statement about sexual offenders and their treatment. Participants rated their level of agreement with each statement using a 6-point Likert scale scored from 0 ('Strongly Disagree') to 5 ('Strongly Agree').

Attitudes to Sexual Offenders Scale

The ATS-21 (Hogue & Harper, in prep) was used to obtain information about participants' attitudinal evaluations of sexual offenders. A description of the ATS-21's development, content, and scoring procedure is provided in Section 1.2.1. The measure demonstrated excellent levels of internal consistency in this study, both as a complete measure ($\alpha = 0.93$), and as individual subscales ('Trust' $\alpha = 0.83$; 'Intent' $\alpha = 0.86$; 'Social Distance' $\alpha = 0.83$).

Experimental Vignettes

Two mock media reports (Figure 6.02) were created for the purposes of this study, and were used as the experimental manipulation to examine the role of news reporting on levels of moral disengagement. Both reports described trends in sexual crime prevalence over the previous year. In the 'tabloid-consistent' condition, sexual crime rates were described as rising over the previous year, with these trends being accompanied by calls from fictitious charity advocates to expand punitive sentencing practices. The language of this presentation was hostile and dehumanising. However, in the 'broadsheet-consistent' condition, the vignette read that sexual crime prevalence had remained relatively stable over the previous year, and described the perpetrators of sexual crime with humanising language.

In addition to the MDT mechanism of dehumanisation, the tabloid-consistent presentation was also designed to invoke mechanisms such as 'attribution of blame' (e.g., sexual offenders deserve harsh treatment as they target vulnerable people) and advantageous comparison (e.g., punitive policies are advantageous as they protect potential victims). This meant that several mechanisms of moral disengagement were potentially activated by these vignettes, rather than just dehumanisation.

The content differences of these vignettes reflect tabloid- and broadsheet-consistent variations in the ways in which they report changes in sexual crime rates in the UK. A recent example of this came from several national publications reporting a drop in sexual crime rates in ways that stress the increasing number of people on the Sexual Offenders Register who have committed sexual crimes against children (Evening Standard, 2012; The Telegraph, 2012). These vignettes were presented in the form of an online news story from the Daily Mail - one of the most-accessed English-language newspaper websites globally (Sweney, 2014). This allowed the vignettes to be presented as viable news items.

Perceptions of Sex Offenders Scale

The PSO (see Chapter 3) was used to examine participants' views about the sentencing of sexual offenders, endorsement of stereotypes, and perceptions of sexual offenders' risk. The measure demonstrated very good levels of internal consistency in this study ($\alpha = 0.89$), as did each of its subscales ('Sentencing and Management' ($\alpha = 0.93$), 'Stereotype Endorsement' ($\alpha = 0.84$), and 'Risk Perception' ($\alpha = 0.76$)).

Procedure

Participants responded to social media and email-driven invitations to complete the study survey. This was hosted by the *Qualtrics Research Suite* system. Participants were first provided with an overview of the study and, if happy to continue, moved on to the data collection stage. Participants first completed the demographic questionnaire, the draft MDS-SO, and the ATS-21, before being randomly allocated by the *Qualtrics* software to one of the experimental conditions. They were then presented with the corresponding mock media story, before completing the MDS-SO once again. Participants lastly completed the PSO. At the end of the study, participants were fully debriefed and thanked for their participation.

6.3.2. Results

Development of a Moral Disengagement towards Sex Offenders Scale

Data from all participants were used to establish the underlying structure of the draft MDS-SO measure. This sample size corresponded to 16.87 observations per scale item, which far exceeds Costello and Osborne's (2005) recommendation of five. As such, this sample size is strong for this analysis.

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Sexual crime rates remain at a stable level

- The number of sex offences recorded by police remains steady
- Victims feel content with justice system treatment
- Calls for politicians and society to continue work on criminal justice

By DAILY MAIL REPORTER
 PUBLISHED: 09:10, 12 November 2012 | UPDATED: 14:32, 20 March 2013

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The rate at which sexual crime is being reported to and dealt with by the criminal justice system has remained stable, according to a new report released jointly by the Ministry of Justice and the NSPCC.

Steady reductions in sexual crime rates over recent years have been maintained, with only a small increase in reports of historic offences after media attention surrounding Operation Yewtree. These reductions rates have been attributed to improved relationships education in schools, and changes in prisons which now stress the importance of looking at sex offenders as people first, and criminals second, to help them turn their lives around.

One former sex offender told us: "I had big problems when I went in to prison. My confidence was low, and I abused drugs. In prison, I got the help I needed, and now I live in society just like anybody else. The new regime really helped me to change my life".

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It is hoped that, going forward, former sex offenders will not need to hide from widespread public stigmatization

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▶ Vicky Pattison suffers unfortunate makeup malfunction... as she enjoys late night kiss with Ex On The Beach hunk Liam Lewis Friday night fright 

▶ Puppy love! Newly slim James 'Arg' Argent plants a kiss on former flame Lydia Bright as the pair get cosy at TOWIE dog show Long and rocky road 

▶ Rochelle Humes showcases her slender physique in semi-sheer lace mini dress as she throws surprise 30th birthday party for husband Marvin 

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Predatory sex beasts reoffending rates on the rise

- Perverts committing more and more repeat offences
- Vulnerable victims bravely come forward to report crimes
- Calls for politicians and society to do more to punish sexual monsters

By DAILY MAIL REPORTER
 PUBLISHED: 09:10, 12 November 2012 | UPDATED: 14:32, 20 March 2013

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Predatory sexual offenders are reoffending at alarming rates, according to a recent report released jointly by the Ministry of Justice and the NSPCC.

Evil beasts, who do currently receive some level of therapy whilst in prison, are re-emerging into the community and committing further sexual crimes, putting vulnerable people – including young children – at risk of victimisation.

Campaigners at the NSPCC have responded to the report and called for the Government, and wider society, to do more to protect people from vile sexual monsters. For example, there are calls to make the Sexual Offenders Registry freely available to all, as is the case in several States in the USA. Additionally, some have called for stricter punishments in the form of whole-life prison sentences, and chemical castration for those who repeatedly prey on young children.

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Vile sexual predators are increasingly going underground to lure potential victims

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▶ Rochelle Humes showcases her slender physique in semi-sheer lace mini dress as she throws surprise 30th birthday party for husband Marvin 

Figure 6.02: Broadsheet- (top) and tabloid-consistent (bottom) stimuli

MDS-SO Factor Structure

All 15 MDS-SO items were subjected to a principal components analysis (PCA) with oblique rotation. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was calculated as 0.93, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(105) = 2878.86, p < .001$). The results of the PCA indicated that all 15 items loaded strongly onto a single factor (Figure 6.03), with this factor possessing excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.95$). Table 6.04 provides an overview of the spread of responses to each of the MDS-SO items.

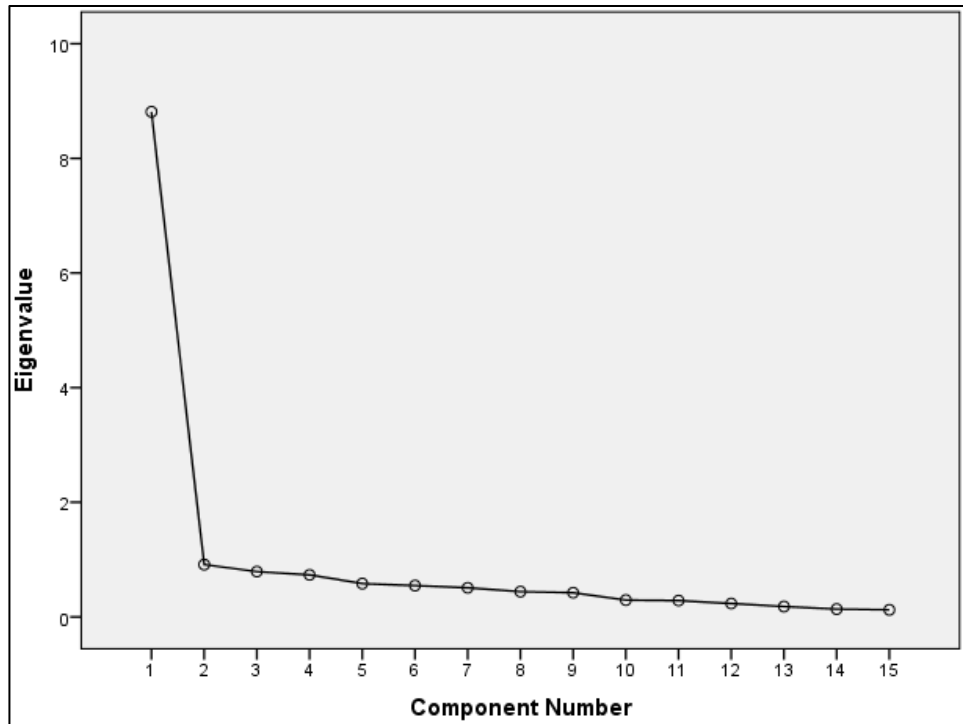


Figure 6.03: Scree plot of the 15-item MDS-SO

Thus, the 15-item *Moral Disengagement towards Sexual Offenders* (MDS-SO) scale has a potential scoring range of 0-75, with higher scores indicating greater levels of moral disengagement about sexual offenders. Full details of the MDS-SO are provided in Appendix I.

Table 6.04: Spread of responses to items on the MDS-SO

Item	Strongly		Probably	Probably		Strongly
	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Agree	Agree
1. It is appropriate to punish sex offenders harshly because of the harm they cause their victims	1	11	15	83	87	56
2. The Government should treat sex offenders harshly if that is what the public wants	13	40	49	61	51	39
3. Harsh punishment is deserved by sex offenders once they break the law	3	15	20	97	72	46
4. Many sex offenders lack the ability to feel emotion like the rest of us	25	57	77	48	32	14
5. When sex offenders don't care about their victims' human rights, they should lose their own	24	64	60	57	29	37
6. Treating sex offenders harshly helps them to change their ways	40	69	82	39	16	7
7. Sex offenders have nobody to blame for their harsh treatment but themselves	14	39	74	52	52	22
8. Most sex offenders are monsters	36	46	65	52	34	20
9. If sex offenders aren't punished harshly, they will never respect the law	22	43	76	58	32	22
10. Sex offenders deserve to be excluded from the rest of society	30	28	63	70	32	30

Item	Strongly		Probably	Probably		Strongly
	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Agree	Agree
11. Society as a whole needs to be more excluding of sex offenders	30	32	68	58	38	27
12. It is better to excessively punish some sex offenders than to allow others out to commit more crimes	32	33	65	62	37	24
13. If you don't punish sex offenders harshly, you can't complain when they continue to break the law	31	49	54	58	41	20
14. Most sex offenders should be treated like the animals they are	58	60	71	28	16	20
15. An individual citizen cannot be judged for excluding sex offenders from the community if the rest of society does the same	18	31	61	65	55	23

Note: Figures refer to the frequency of responses across the whole sample

Relationship between MDS-SO and ATS-21

Owing to the apparent influence of baseline attitudes towards sexual offenders (as measured by the ATS-21) over outcome judgements (see Chapter 3), the MDS-SO and ATS-21 measures were subjected to correlational analyses. These were also conducted in order to establish the convergent validity of the MDS-SO.

The MDS-SO and ATS-21 (as a full scale) were strongly negatively associated ($r(251) = -0.77, p < .001$). This findings indicates that as attitudes towards sexual offenders become more negative, the endorsement of moral disengagement towards them increases. This negative relationship was also found between the MDS-SO and each of the ATS-21 subscales of 'Trust' ($r(251) = -0.67, p < .001$), 'Intent' ($r(251) = -0.74, p < .001$), and 'Social Distance' ($r(251) = -0.68, p < .001$).

These correlations suggest that the MDS-SO possesses strong construct and convergent validity. Further, it can be argued that while a large proportion of the variance in MDS-SO scores can be attributed to generalised attitudes towards sexual offenders, these two measures are examining conceptually and theoretically different constructs.

Demographic Differences on the MDS-SO

A series of one-way ANCOVAs were conducted on the demographic variables of Gender (Male vs. Female), Age (Young vs. Mid vs. Old; divided based upon average parental age in the UK), Newspaper Readership (Tabloid vs. Broadsheet vs. Both vs. None), Education Level (Pre-Degree vs. Degree vs. Post-Degree), Victim Knowledge (Yes vs. No), and Offender Knowledge (Yes vs. No). In each of these analyses, ATS-21 scores were included as a covariate (all p 's $< .001$) due to the high correlation between these scores and the MDS-SO. Descriptive data for these analyses are presented in Table 6.05.

There was no effect of Gender ($F(1, 252) = 0.47, p = .496$), Age ($F(2, 243) = 0.53, p = .588$), Newspaper Readership ($F(3, 252) = 1.75, p = .158$), Victim Knowledge ($F(1, 252) = 1.30, p = .255$), or Offender Knowledge ($F(1, 252) = 1.50, p = .222$) on MDS-SO scores. However, there was a significant effect of Education Level ($F(2, 249) = 3.47, p = .033, \eta^2 = 0.01$). Planned post-hoc comparisons (with Bonferroni correction) found that this effect was attributable to a statistically significant difference between those with a postgraduate qualification and those with a first degree ($p = .033$), and a difference between those with a postgraduate qualification and those who do not hold a degree that

was approaching statistical significance ($p = .073$). In each of these cases, higher education levels were associated with lower levels of endorsement of moral disengagement towards sexual offenders. Further, a small but statistically significant negative correlation was found between self-reported political orientation and MDS-SO scores ($r(251) = -0.25, p < .001$), indicating that higher MDS-SO scores were associated with a slight propensity to self-identify as politically conservative.

Hypothesis 1: Effect of Media Presentation on Moral Disengagement Scores

In preparation for statistical analyses, MDS-SO change indices were computed for each participant by subtracting their pre-manipulation MDS-SO score from their post-manipulation MDS-SO score. As such, a negative MDS-SO change index indicates a reduction in moral disengagement as a function of the experimental manipulation.

A 2 (Condition: Tabloid- vs. Broadsheet-Consistent Presentation) x 4 (Newspaper Readership: Tabloid vs. Broadsheet vs. Both vs. None) between-groups ANCOVA was conducted, with MDS-SO change indices as the dependent variable. Owing to the high correlation between the ATS-21 and MDS-SO, ATS-21 scores were included as a covariate ($F(1, 252) = 8.70, p = .003, \eta^2 = 0.03$).

A marginally significant main effect of Condition on MDS-SO change indices was observed ($F(1, 252) = 3.63, p = .058, \eta^2 = 0.02$). Examining this effect, both the tabloid-consistent presentation ($M = -1.96, SE = 0.66; 95\% \text{ CI } [-3.26, -0.67]$) and broadsheet-consistent presentation ($M = -3.80, SE = 0.71; 95\% \text{ CI } [-5.20, -2.41]$) contributed to significant reductions in moral disengagement, although this effect was much larger within the broadsheet-consistent condition.

Table 6.05: Demographic differences in MDS-SO scores

Variable	<i>n</i>	<u>MDS-SO score</u>		<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
		<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>			
Gender						
Male	54	37.08	1.38	0.47	.496	< 0.01
Female	199	38.15	0.71			
Age						
Young	163	38.39	0.80	0.53	.588	< 0.01
Mid	50	36.70	1.44			
Old	31	37.73	1.83			
Newspaper						
Tabloid	46	38.17	1.48	1.75	.158	0.01
Broadsheet	41	34.64	1.58			
Both	62	38.70	1.28			
None	104	38.64	0.98			
Education						
Pre-degree	117	38.14	0.93	3.47	.033	0.01
Degree	92	38.81	1.04			
Post-degree	41	33.95	1.58			
Know a victim						
Yes	112	37.11	0.95	1.30	.255	< 0.01
No	141	38.56	0.85			
Know an offender						
Yes	54	36.44	1.37	1.50	.222	< 0.01
No	199	38.32	0.71			

Note: Data refer to estimated marginal means corrected for baseline attitudes towards sexual offenders (as measured by the ATS-21). Data in columns that share a superscript differ significantly ($p < .05$). *N* may not always equal 253 due to missing demographic data

Hypothesis 2: Interaction between Media Presentation and Existing Readership on Moral Disengagement Scores

The aforementioned 2x4 ANCOVA also found no two-way interaction between Condition and Newspaper Readership on MDS-SO change indices ($F(1, 252) = 0.44, p = .437$).

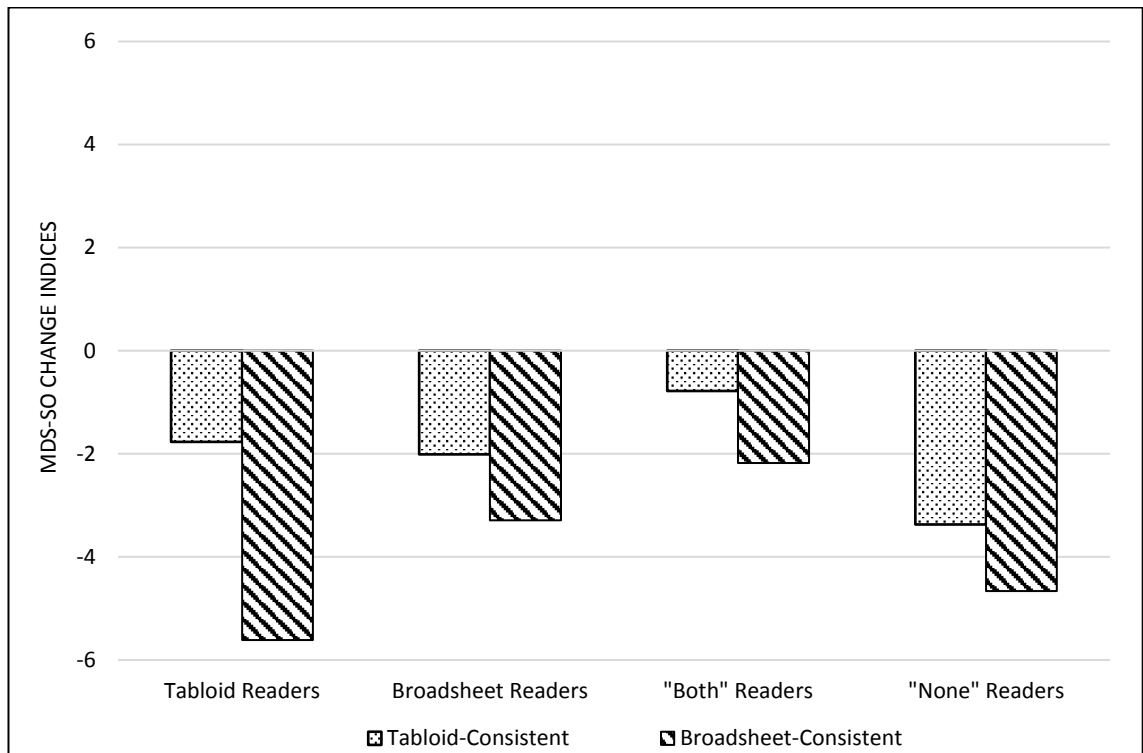


Figure 6.04: Differences in MDS-SO change indices, by Condition and Newspaper Readership

However, observing the visual differences in MDS-SO change indices (see Figure 6.04), exploratory ancillary analyses of change indices between the two experimental conditions *within* each of the newspaper groups appeared warranted. As such, a series of one-way (Condition: Tabloid- vs. Broadsheet-Consistent Presentation) ANCOVAs were conducted, with MDS-SO change indices as dependent variables, and ATS-21 scores as covariates. Baseline attitudes were only a significant covariate within the ‘both’ readership group ($p = .002$), but were retained as covariates in all analyses because previous work has highlighted their importance in outcome judgements. Descriptive data for all change indices are presented in Table 6.06. In this section, the 95% CIs are used in order to demonstrate (non-)significant changes within each Readership Group and Condition.

Among tabloid readers, there was a significant effect of Condition on MDS-SO change indices ($F(1, 45) = 6.12, p = .017, \eta^2 = 0.12$), with a significant reduction in moral disengagement within the broadsheet-consistent condition [95% CI: -8.45 to -2.46], but not the tabloid-consistent condition [95% CI: -4.47 to 1.28].

Among broadsheet readers, there was no effect of Condition on MDS-SO change indices ($F(1, 40) = 0.28, p = .597$). Further, neither the tabloid-consistent condition [95% CI: -4.57 to 1.06] nor the broadsheet-consistent condition [95% CI: -6.10 to 0.99] contributed to significant changes in moral disengagement.

Among those in the ‘both’ readership group, there was no significant effect of Condition on MDS-SO change indices ($F(1, 61) = 0.88, p = .353$). However, 95% CIs indicated a significant reduction in moral disengagement within the broadsheet-consistent condition [-4.86 to -0.03], but not the tabloid-consistent condition [-3.71 to 1.61]. The lack of significant effect was possibly due to the borderline upper CI level in relation to the broadsheet-consistent condition.

Among those in the ‘none’ readership group, there was no effect of Condition on MDS-SO change scores ($F(1, 103) = 0.62, p = .434$). However, significant reductions in moral disengagement were observed within both the tabloid-consistent condition [95% CI: -5.35 to -1.56] and the broadsheet-consistent condition [95% CI: -6.78 to -2.75].

Hypothesis 3: Moral Disengagement and PSO Scores

A 2 (Condition: Tabloid- vs. Broadsheet-Consistent Presentation) x 4 (Newspaper Readership: Tabloid vs. Broadsheet vs. Both vs. None) between-groups ANCOVA was conducted in order to examine the effect of the experimental manipulation and existing readership patterns on PSO scores. ATS-21 scores were included as covariates ($p < .001$). There was a significant effect of Condition on PSO scores ($F(1, 252) = 11.44, p = .001, \eta^2 = 0.05$). Interpreting this effect, those who read the tabloid-consistent presentation scored significantly higher (i.e., more punitively) on the PSO ($M = 47.01, SE = 0.71$) than those who read the broadsheet-consistent presentation ($M = 43.50, SE = 0.76$). The lack of a significant interaction between Condition and Newspaper Readership ($F(3, 252) = 1.07, p = .363$) indicated that this effect was not moderated by existing readership patterns.

Table 6.06: MDS-SO change indices, by Condition and Newspaper Readership

Group and Condition	<i>N</i>	MDS-SO change index	95% CI
Whole Sample			
Tabloid-consistent	132	-1.96	[-3.26, -0.67]
Broadsheet-consistent	121	-3.80	[-5.20, -2.41]
'Tabloid' Readers			
Tabloid-consistent	24	-1.79 (1.07) ^a	[-4.47, 1.28]
Broadsheet-consistent	22	-5.62 (1.12) ^a	[-8.45, -2.46]
'Broadsheet' Readers			
Tabloid-consistent	25	-2.01 (1.48)	[-4.57, 1.06]
Broadsheet-consistent	16	-3.29 (1.86)	[-6.10, 0.99]
'Both' Readers			
Tabloid-consistent	28	-0.78 (1.10)	[-3.71, 1.61]
Broadsheet-consistent	34	-2.18 (1.01)	[-4.86, -0.03]
'None' Readers			
Tabloid-consistent	55	-3.37 (1.13)	[-5.35, -1.56]
Broadsheet-consistent	49	-4.66 (1.19)	[-6.78, -2.75]

Note: Data represent estimated marginal means corrected for baseline attitudes towards sexual offenders (as measured by the ATS-21). Standard error data presented in parentheses. Data in columns that share a superscript differ significantly ($p < .05$)

In order to examine these main effects further, a 2 (Condition: Tabloid- vs. Broadsheet-Consistent Presentation) x 4 (Newspaper Readership: Tabloid vs. Broadsheet vs. Both vs. None) between-groups MANCOVA was conducted. Dependent variables were each of the PSO subscales ('Sentencing and Management', 'Stereotype Endorsement', and 'Risk Perception'), with ATS-21 scores acting as a covariate (all p 's $< .001$). Descriptive data are presented in Table 6.07.

Table 6.07: PSO outcome data, by Condition and Newspaper Readership

PSO subscale	<u>Condition (presentation)</u>		<i>p</i>	η^2_p
	Tabloid	Broadsheet		
Whole Sample				
Sentencing and Management	20.09 (0.57)	18.16 (0.62)	.082	0.01
Stereotype Endorsement	10.24 (0.39)	9.42 (0.42)	.149	0.01
Risk Perception	16.68 (0.30)	15.46 (0.32)	.006	0.03
‘Tabloid’ Readers				
Sentencing and Management	19.11 (1.27)	19.15 (1.33)	.984	0.00
Stereotype Endorsement	11.44 (0.86)	7.87 (0.89)	.004	0.03
Risk Perception	16.19 (0.66)	16.28 (0.69)	.922	0.00
‘Broadsheet’ Readers				
Sentencing and Management	20.24 (1.25)	17.82 (1.57)	.227	0.01
Stereotype Endorsement	9.54 (0.84)	8.99 (1.06)	.681	0.00
Risk Perception	16.61 (0.65)	14.63 (0.82)	.058	0.02
‘Both’ Readers				
Sentencing and Management	19.99 (1.18)	20.14 (1.07)	.924	0.00
Stereotype Endorsement	10.12 (0.79)	10.85 (0.72)	.494	0.00
Risk Perception	17.07 (0.61)	15.44 (0.56)	.050	0.02
‘None’ Readers				
Sentencing and Management	21.01 (0.84)	17.37 (0.89)	.003	0.04
Stereotype Endorsement	9.85 (0.57)	9.96 (0.60)	.901	0.00
Risk Perception	16.87 (0.44)	15.50 (0.46)	.031	0.02

Note: Data represent estimated marginal means corrected for baseline attitudes towards sexual offenders (as measured by the ATS-21). Standard error data presented in parentheses

In relation to the ‘Sentencing and Management’ subscale, there was a marginally significant main effect of Condition ($F(1, 252) = 3.04, p = .082, \eta^2 = 0.01$), but no effect of Newspaper Readership ($F(3, 252) = 0.34, p = .796$). There was also no interaction between Condition and Newspaper Readership ($F(3, 252) = 1.63, p = .183$). Examining the effect of Condition, this was attributable to higher (more punitive) scores within the tabloid-consistent condition than in the broadsheet-consistent condition.

For the ‘Stereotype Endorsement’ subscale, there were no significant effects of Condition ($F(1, 252) = 2.09, p = .149$) or Newspaper Readership ($F(3, 252) = 0.73, p = .533$). However, there was a significant two-way interaction between Condition and Newspaper Readership ($F(3, 252) = 2.67, p = .048, \eta^2 = 0.03$). Simple main effects analyses (with Bonferroni correction) found this interaction to be attributable to significantly higher levels of stereotypical thinking among tabloid readers in the tabloid-consistent condition than in the broadsheet-consistent condition.

On the ‘Risk Perception’ subscale, there was a significant main effect of Condition ($F(1, 252) = 7.78, p = .006, \eta^2 = 0.03$), but no effect of Newspaper Readership ($F(3, 252) = 0.40, p = .776$). There was also no interaction between Condition and Newspaper Readership ($F(3, 252) = 0.91, p = .439$). The main effect of Condition was attributable to increased perceptions of risk within the tabloid-consistent condition, comparative to the broadsheet-consistent condition.

Across the sample, there were positive correlations between post-manipulation MDS-SO and PSO scores. That is, higher MDS-SO scores after the experimental manipulation were strongly associated with more punitive views about the sentencing and management of sexual offenders ($r(251) = 0.84, p < .001$), moderately associated to increased perceptions of sexual offenders’ risk levels ($r(251) = 0.57, p < .001$), and marginally associated with the endorsement of stereotypical thinking about sexual offenders ($r(251) = 0.12, p = .058$).

6.3.3. Discussion

Study 8 sought to develop and validate a holistic measure of moral disengagement towards sexual offenders. A PCA of the draft 15-item MDS-SO found it to be comprised of one internally consistent factor. This was not anticipated, given that moral

disengagement has previously been proposed to be a multifaceted phenomenon (Bandura et al., 1996). It may be the case that responses to sexual crime are less nuanced than when contemplating other issues. That is, instead of considering a range of issues (e.g., justifying the effects of punitive attitudes, examining personal levels of dehumanisation of sexual offenders), global affective responses take over when making judgements about this group. As such, the mechanisms of moral disengagement may be behavioural manifestations of these responses.

Statistical analyses of potential demographic differences on the MDS-SO revealed no significant effects (although an exception to this was educational attainment). These findings are consistent with previous work on attitudes towards sexual offenders using different measures (see Section 1.3.1). Evidence of the MDS-SO's convergent validity was provided by its correlation with the ATS-21. This indicated that, while the two measures are closely related, there is sufficient variation in their scores to warrant the introduction of the MDS-SO as a distinct tool in this area of research.

Influencing the Endorsement of Moral Disengagement about Sexual Offenders

Examining the sample as a whole, both tabloid- and broadsheet-consistent stimuli were found to lead to significantly reduced levels of moral disengagement (as measured through MDS-SO change indices). However, the size of the reduction was much greater in the broadsheet-consistent condition, with only a marginally significant reduction in moral disengagement being found within the tabloid-consistent condition. These findings were broadly inconsistent with hypothesis one.

Although there was no significant interaction between the Condition and Newspaper Readership variables, the visual display of these data indicated that exploratory ancillary analyses could be warranted. Broadly, these ancillary analyses found that the largest reductions in moral disengagement could be found among those who usually have some direct engagement with tabloid newspapers, but who were presented with a broadsheet-consistent presentation of sexual crime within this study. As reported in Study 7, more than 80% of UK newspaper readership is attributable to tabloid publications (Press Gazette, 2012), and so it may be argued that tabloid-consistent stories are so pervasive in society that this stimulus did not represent a novel presentation to any of the participants. However, the broadsheet-consistent stimulus offered an alternative view of sexual crime

to those who primarily or exclusively engage with tabloid news publications. While it would be premature to make any substantive claims about the impact of existing news engagement habits on the basis of these ancillary tests, these data are consistent with hypothesis two.

Moral Disengagement in Sentencing, Stereotype-Endorsement, and Risk Outcomes

Participants presented with the tabloid-consistent stimulus responded more punitively to sexual offenders than those presented with a broadsheet-consistent alternative on the PSO. This effect was not moderated by participants' regular newspaper readership habits. However, examining differences on each of the PSO subscales found that the interaction between presentation style and existing readership patterns were more nuanced than this initial result suggested.

The marginally significant effect of Condition on Sentencing and Management outcomes, as well as the significant effect of this variable on Risk Perception outcomes, suggest that tabloid-consistent media presentations of sexual offenders may contribute to more punitive views about this group, even when controlling for the effect of pre-existing attitudes towards sexual offenders. Further, tabloid readers expressed significantly lower levels of stereotype endorsement when presented with a broadsheet-consistent media presentation about sexual offenders. This is an important result within the context of the press findings reported in Study 6. That is, by providing tabloid readers with less dehumanised presentations of sexual offenders, it was possible to reduce the extent to which these individuals endorse particular stereotypes about sexual offenders. As such, these data are partially supportive of hypothesis three.

The correlational analyses between post-manipulation MDS-SO and PSO scores are also indicative of the view that increased levels of moral disengagement contributes to more punitive sentencing preferences and inflated perceptions of sexual offenders' risk levels. Taken in conjunction with the results from the previous analyses in this thesis, these coefficients could be used to make the argument that influencing levels of moral disengagement through media presentations of sexual crime and its perpetrators could have an indirect effect on these sentencing and risk judgements.

6.4. Study 9: Narrative Humanisation as a Route to Attitude Change

The findings described in Study 7 and Study 8 suggest that dehumanisation may play a role in the formation and expression of negative attitudes towards sexual offenders. Study 9 investigates whether first-person narrative humanisation could reverse this trend, and have a positive impact on both explicit and implicit attitudes in this area. Owing to the heterogeneous nature of the ‘sexual offender’ label, one reference group – paedophiles – was chosen as a specific target.

Paedophilia is often used as an umbrella term for child sexual abuse in mainstream discourses about this style of offending (Feelgood & Hoyer, 2008). However, this view ignores evidence that some people with paedophilic sexual interests will never commit a sexual offence (so-called ‘Virtuous Paedophiles’), and other work that suggests only a minority of child sexual offenders actually express a primary or exclusive sexual preference for children (Beier et al., 2015; Schmidt, Mokros, & Banse, 2013). For this reason, reducing stigmatisation and punitive attitudes about paedophilia (as a non-offending sexual preference), rather than child sexual abuse (as a behaviour) may be a sensible first step in developing a social environment within which people with potentially harmful sexual interests can seek help *before* committing an offence.

While it is noted that paedophiles are not necessarily sexual offenders, they were chosen as a suitable reference group in Study 9 for a number of reasons. First, ‘paedo’ and ‘paedophile’ were common headline descriptors identified in Study 7 of this thesis. Second, analyses of a supplementary question on the ATS-21 questionnaire (“What ‘type’ of sexual offender were you thinking about when answering these questions?”) that was used in each of the studies described in this thesis indicated that many people are imagining a ‘paedophile’ when completing this measure. Third, recent studies suggest that people base judgements about ‘sexual offenders’ on a mental representation of a predatory paedophile (e.g., King & Roberts, 2015), with this label being associated with particularly negative evaluations (e.g., Imhoff, 2015; Jahnke, Imhoff, & Hoyer, 2015). Fourth, societal misunderstandings about the nature of paedophilia (i.e., the lack of a distinction between ‘paedophilia as a psychological orientation’ and ‘paedophilia as child sexual abuse’; Harrison et al., 2010) means that a clear educative message can be formulated on this topic. Fifth, examining how to influence attitudes and responses to

self-identifying paedophiles may have significant implications for improving the opportunities available to those at risk of committing sexual offences to access primary and secondary prevention services. That is, by reducing levels of stigmatisation of paedophilia (as a psychological orientation), it may be possible to promote progressive policies that aim to prevent child sexual abuse *before* it takes place. Thus, addressing attitudes towards paedophilia may inform theoretical ideas about how to best influence attitudes towards sexual offenders (in a general sense), and have important practical implications for producing strategies for preventing sexual abuse in the more immediate term.

As stated previously, Study 9 examines the extent to which attitudes towards paedophiles may be influenced through first-person narrative-based humanisation techniques, both at the explicit and the implicit level. Although this idea has not extensively examined in relation to sexual crime, there is some promising research in other areas that suggests presenting information about stigmatised people in this way can have a profound impact on attitudes. Walkington and Ashton-Wigman (2015), for instance, found that presenting a fictional narrative of a drug-addicted offender led to more empathic responses to them than a standard news report on the same individual. Specifically in relation to paedophilia, narrative depictions have been found to improve explicit attitudes among a group of trainee psychotherapists working with paedophiles (Jahnke, Philipp, & Hoyer, 2015). These effects were still present in follow-up tests between one week and two months later.

While these findings offer important insights into the potential efficacy of first-person narrative humanisation in promoting attitude change, these studies have used depictions of stigmatised groups, with the focus being on changes in explicit attitudes. Thus, Study 9 examined whether real-world first-person narrative presentations can influence both explicit and implicit attitudes towards paedophiles. The following hypotheses were made:

H1: Both narrative-based and informative presentations about paedophilia would lead to a reduction in stigmatisation and punitive attitudes about paedophiles at the explicit level

H2: Narrative presentations about paedophilia would lead to more positive responses to these individuals at the implicit level, but informative presentations would not

6.4.1. Methods

Participants

The sample for Study 9 was comprised of 100 students (19 males, 81 females; $M_{\text{age}} = 22.53$ years, $SD = 6.48$ years) from the University of Lincoln. These participants were recruited in the same manner as those that comprised the sample for Study 5. Psychology students received course credit in exchange for their participation, with all other participants volunteered for no reward. All participants were naïve to the aims and hypotheses of the study at the time of participation.

Materials

Demographics

Participants provided the same demographic questionnaire as used elsewhere in this thesis (e.g., gender, age, educational attainment level, newspaper readership group, and knowledge of victims/perpetrators of sexual crime, and political orientation).

Attitudes to Sexual Offenders Scale

The ATS-21 (Hogue & Harper, in prep) was used to obtain information about participants' baseline attitudes sexual offenders. Despite the ATS-21's focus on attitudes towards 'sexual offenders', this measure was chosen as being appropriate owing to claims in the literature that people instinctively imagine a predatory paedophile when considering issues related to "sexual offenders" (e.g., King & Roberts, 2015). Details about the ATS-21's development, content, and scoring are provided in Section 1.2.1. The scale demonstrated excellent internal consistency in this study ($\alpha = 0.96$). As the ATS-21 was only used as a covariate in Study 9, only whole-scale data are reported here.

Moral Disengagement towards Sexual Offenders Scale

The MDS-SO (Study 8) was used in order to examine the influence of the experimental manipulation on the expression of moral disengagement towards paedophiles. In order to achieve this aim, the MDS-SO measure was slightly adapted, such that each item referred to 'paedophiles' rather than 'sex offenders'. This adapted scale maintained the same scoring procedures as the original form of MDS-SO, and demonstrated excellent levels of internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.97$).

Stigma and Punitive Attitudes towards Paedophiles

The Stigma and Punitive Attitudes towards Paedophiles Scale (SPS; Imhoff, 2015) was used to examine explicit stigmatisation and punitive attitudes towards paedophiles. This scale is a 30-item measure that examines respondents' views about paedophiles' level of 'Dangerousness' (five items; e.g., "Paedophiles are dangerous for children"; $\alpha = 0.78$), 'Intentionality' (six items; e.g., "Paedophilia is something that you choose for yourself"; $\alpha = 0.83$), and 'Deviance' (six items; e.g., "Paedophilia is a mental disorder, just like schizophrenia"; $\alpha = 0.49$), as well as the endorsement of punitive attitudes towards paedophiles (13 items; e.g., "Paedophiles should be pre-emptively taken into custody"; $\alpha = 0.89$). Responses to each item are rated using a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ('Strongly Disagree') to 7 ('Strongly Agree'). Average item scores for each subscale were calculated in accordance with Imhoff's (2015) scoring procedure.

Go/No-Go Association Task (GNAT)

The same response-latency-based GNAT that was used in Study 5 was also used in Study 9 in order to obtain information about participants' baseline implicit attitudes towards sexual offenders. As in Study 5, an index was calculated for each participant, such that a negative index indicated more negative implicit attitudes towards sexual offenders. Information about the stimuli used for the GNAT in Study 5 (Appendix G) also applies in Study 9.

Experimental Stimuli

Four presentations about paedophilia were used in this study, with the source of the information and method of delivery being manipulated and counterbalanced between participants. Each of these presentations discussed the clinical basis of paedophilia, and identified the condition as a sexual preference disorder (as opposed to a descriptive term for child sexual abuse). The four conditions were labelled 'narrative video' ($n = 23$), 'informative video' ($n = 22$), 'narrative written' ($n = 28$), and 'informative written' ($n = 27$). The narrative video was a five minute clip taken from the documentary '*The Paedophile Next Door*', which first aired on Channel 4 in the UK in November 2014. This documentary presented the story of a self-identifying non-offending paedophile ('Eddie') as he spoke about the roots and consequences of his sexual interests in children from a first-person perspective. The informative video took the form of a five minute clip taken from YouTube.com, in which Dr. James Cantor discussed his research findings into the neural basis of paedophilic sexual interests ('*Mysteries of the Mind: The Pedophile's*

Brain (HD)). At the end of each video, the presenter argued that early intervention prior to the commission of sexual offences would be a progressive way of helping paedophiles with their sexual interests, as well as simultaneously tackling the issue of child sexual abuse. The written stimuli were transcripts of these videos. These different stimulus formats were included to examine whether changing the method of stimulus delivery would impact upon the effect of the manipulation (Z. Walkington, personal communication, July 2, 2015).

Absorption Scale

An 11-item measure of absorption was developed by adapting that used by Green and Brock (2000). This scale was included in order to examine participants' level of engagement with the stimulus and the immediate impact they believed it had on their views about paedophilia. These items (e.g., "The content of the piece has changed my views about paedophilia") were responded to using a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ('Strongly Disagree') to 7 ('Strongly Agree'). Four items were reverse-scored, and an average item score was calculated as a measure of absorption. This scale demonstrated good levels of internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.75$).

Mousetracking Task

The same mousetracking task included in Study 5 was used in Study 9 to examine the influence of the experimental manipulations on implicit cognitive processes in judgements about paedophiles. The only change from the previous use of this task was that response options were 'PAEDOPHILE' and 'NOT A PAEDOPHILE'. As such, information about stimuli (Appendix H) and data preparation for the mousetracking task in Study 5 also applies here.

Perceptions of Sex Offenders Scale

The PSO (see Chapter 3) was used to examine post-manipulation views about sexual offender sentencing, stereotype endorsement, and risk perceptions. The PSO demonstrated good-to-excellent levels of internal consistency as a full scale ($\alpha = 0.83$), and as individual subscales examining views about 'Sentencing and Management' ($\alpha = 0.92$), 'Stereotype Endorsement' ($\alpha = 0.83$), and 'Risk Perception' ($\alpha = 0.65$).

Procedure

Potential participants either responded to online advertisements (administered via email, and through the University of Lincoln's Psychology Research Participation System), or were approached directly on campus by an experimenter. Those who were interested in taking part signed up to a specific timeslot for testing to take place under controlled conditions.

Upon arriving at the testing session, participants were provided with a brief about what would be expected of them. If happy to continue, participants completed the initial baseline tasks. The demographic questionnaire and ATS-21, MDS-SO, and SPS scales were administered via an online *Qualtrics* survey, and the GNAT was administered via e-Run on a Windows laptop. Next, participants were randomly allocated to one of the experimental conditions, and the appropriate stimulus was presented to them using the laptop. After reading or watching their stimulus, participants completed the absorption scale, as well as providing post-manipulation responses to the MDS-SO and SPS scales. Participants then completed the mousetracking task, and finally the PSO. At the end of the testing session, all participants were fully debriefed and thanked for their time.

6.4.2. Results

Before the main analyses, potential differences as a function of the format of the stimulus presentation were investigated. A 2 (Condition: Narrative vs. Informative) x 2 (Format: Video vs. Written) between-groups MANCOVA was conducted. Dependent variables were average change scores for the MDS-SO and SPS scales. ATS-21 scores were included as covariates in order to control for pre-existing attitudes (all p 's $\leq .001$).

In relation to most of the dependent variables, there was no interaction between condition and presentation modality, meaning that the format of the paedophilia-related stimulus information had no significant impact on the outcome variables. The only exception to this was in relation to the average change score on the SPS 'Intent' subscale ($F(1, 99) = 4.38$, $p = .039$, $\eta^2 = 0.03$). Using simple main effects analyses (with Bonferroni correction), this interaction was attributable to significantly higher perceptions of paedophiles' intent when those in the narrative condition were presented with a video

stimulus than a written stimulus ($p = .029$). Descriptive data for these effects are presented in Table 6.08.

Owing to this solitary interaction between Condition and Modality, all subsequent analyses were conducted by combining participants into ‘narrative’ ($n = 51$) and ‘informative’ ($n = 49$) condition groups.

Table 6.08: Effect of stimulus format on explicit outcome change scores

Condition and Measure	<u>Written</u>		<u>Video</u>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>
Narrative				
MDS-SO	-20.24	2.11	-22.16	2.15
SPS dangerousness	-1.38	0.21	-1.35	0.21
SPS intentionality	-0.73 ^a	0.18	-0.16 ^a	0.18
SPS deviance	-0.27	0.11	-0.46	0.12
SPS punitive attitudes	-0.98	0.12	-0.87	0.13
Informative				
MDS-SO	-8.22	2.07	-14.49	2.22
SPS dangerousness	-0.55	0.20	-0.68	0.22
SPS intentionality	-0.28	0.17	-0.47	0.19
SPS deviance	-0.05	0.11	-0.04	0.12
SPS punitive attitudes	-0.42	0.12	-0.46	0.13

Note: Data represent estimated marginal means (and standard error) corrected for baseline attitudes towards sexual offenders (as measured by the ATS-21). Data in rows that share a superscript differ significantly ($p < .05$)

Hypothesis 1: Explicit Responses as a Function of Narrative and Informative Presentations of Paedophilia

MDS-SO Changes

A 2 (Condition: Narrative vs. Informative) x 2 (Time: Pre- vs. Post-Manipulation MDS-SO scores) mixed ANCOVA was conducted, with Condition as the between-groups factor and Time as the within-subjects factor. ATS-21 scores were included as a covariate ($p < .001$).

A significant interaction was observed between Condition and Time ($F(1, 97) = 19.91, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.06$; Figure 6.05). Analyses of simple main effects (with Bonferroni correction) revealed a significant reduction in moral disengagement scores in both the narrative ($p < .001$) and informative conditions ($p < .001$). The size of the effect, however, was much greater in the narrative condition ($\eta^2_p = 0.66$ vs. 0.34). Descriptive data are presented in Table 6.09.

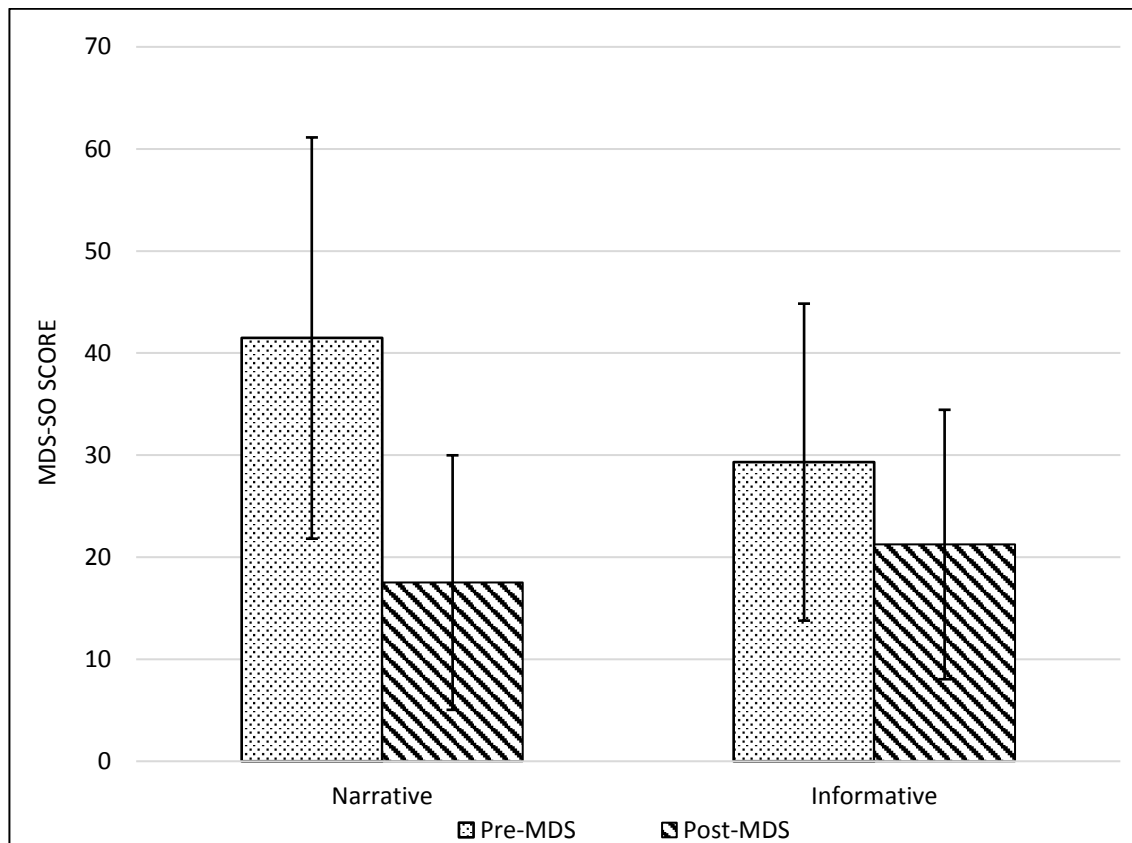


Figure 6.05: Average pre- and post-manipulation MDS-SO scores, by Condition

SPS Changes

A series of 2 (Condition: Narrative vs. Informative; between-subjects factor) x 2 (Time: Pre- vs. Post-Manipulation; within-subjects factor) mixed ANCOVAs were conducted in relation to scores of each of the SPS subscales. ATS-21 scores were included as covariates. In relation to each of the dependent variable (except ‘deviance’; $p = .622$), ATS-21 scores interacted significantly with pre-/post-manipulation SPS subscale scores (all p 's $< .001$). Descriptive data are presented in Table 6.09, while graphical depictions of the impact of the experimental manipulation on SPS scores are provided in Figure 6.06.

Table 6.09: Descriptive and inferential data for pre- and post-manipulation scores on the MDS-SO and SPS scales

Condition and Measure	Pre	Post	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2_p
Narrative					
MDS-SO	35.56 (1.29)	14.46 (1.47)	13.85	< .001	0.66
SPS dangerousness	4.16 (0.11)	3.25 (0.15)	9.41	< .001	0.48
SPS intentionality	3.17 (0.14)	2.73 (0.14)	3.50	.001	0.11
SPS deviance	5.00 (0.10)	4.64 (0.09)	4.50	< .001	0.17
SPS punitive attitudes	3.71 (0.08)	2.78 (0.09)	10.50	< .001	0.53
Informative					
MDS-SO	35.46 (1.32)	24.42 (1.50)	7.09	< .001	0.34
SPS dangerousness	4.75 (0.11)	4.14 (0.15)	4.12	< .001	0.15
SPS intentionality	3.52 (0.14)	3.13 (0.13)	2.95	.004	0.08
SPS deviance	4.62 (0.11)	4.59 (0.10)	0.45	.655	0.00
SPS punitive attitudes	3.77 (0.08)	3.33 (0.09)	4.91	< .001	0.20

Note: Data represent estimated marginal means (and standard errors) corrected for baseline attitudes towards sexual offenders (as measured by the ATS-21)

In relation to perceptions of paedophiles' dangerousness, a significant interaction was observed between Condition and Time ($F(1, 97) = 12.42, p = .001, \eta^2 = 0.04$). Simple main effects analyses (with Bonferroni correction) found that perceptions of paedophiles' dangerousness reduced as a function of both the narrative condition ($p < .001$) and the informative condition ($p < .001$). However, the size of the effect of the manipulation was much larger in the narrative condition ($\eta^2_p = 0.48$ vs. 0.15).

There was no interaction between Condition and Time in relation to perceptions of paedophiles' intentionality (conceptualized as control over their sexual preferences; $F(1, 97) = .104, p = .748$), meaning that pre-/post-manipulation differences in these perceptions were not contingent on the experimental manipulation.

A significant interaction between Condition and Time in relation to perceptions of deviance levels among paedophiles ($F(1, 97) = 7.46, p = .008, \eta^2 = 0.01$). Simple main effects analyses (with Bonferroni correction) revealed that deviance ratings were significantly reduced as a function of the narrative presentation ($p < .001, \eta^2_p = 0.17$), but not the informative presentation ($p = .655$).

There was a significant interaction between Condition and Time in relation to punitive attitudes towards paedophiles ($F(1, 97) = 13.77, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.04$). Simple main effects analyses (with Bonferroni correction) found that significant reductions in punitive attitudes occurred as a function of both the narrative condition ($p < .001$) and the informative condition ($p < .001$). Again, the size of the effect of the manipulation was much larger in the narrative condition ($\eta^2_p = 0.53$ vs. 0.20).

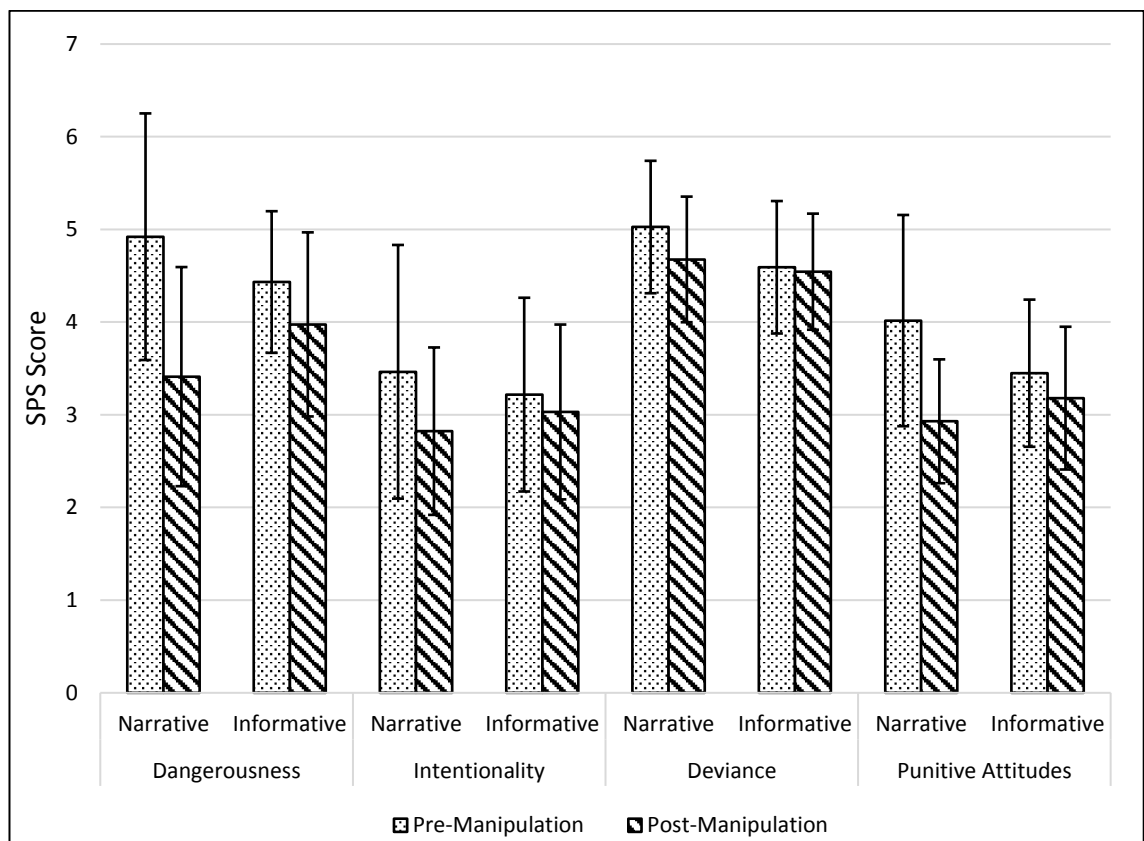


Figure 6.06: Average pre- and post-manipulation SPS scores, by Condition

PSO Outcomes

A one-way (Condition: Narrative vs. Informative) MANCOVA was conducted, with each of the PSO factors (‘Sentencing and Management’, ‘Stereotype Endorsement’, and ‘Risk Perception’) as dependent variables. ATS-21 scores were again included in the model as covariates. Baseline attitudes had a significant effect on ‘Sentencing and Management’ ($p < .001$) and ‘Risk Perception’ ($p = .001$) subscale scores, but not in relation to ‘Stereotype Endorsement’ ($p = .124$).

A significant effect of Condition was observed in relation to the Sentencing and Management subscale ($F(1, 97) = 12.07, p = .001, \eta^2 = 0.08$). This effect was attributable

to less punitive sentencing judgments being made by participants in the narrative condition ($M = 9.52, SE = 0.98$) than those in the informative condition ($M = 14.55, SE = 0.99$). There was no significant difference in Stereotype Endorsement scores ($F(1, 97) = 2.55, p = .114$) of participants in the narrative condition ($M = 12.42, SE = 0.64$) or informative condition ($M = 10.93, SE = 0.65$). There was a marginally significant effect of Condition on the Risk Perception subscale ($F(1, 97) = 3.05, p = .084$), with scores being lower in the narrative condition ($M = 13.88, SE = 0.53$) than in the informative condition ($M = 15.25, SE = 0.54$).

Hypothesis 2: Implicit Responses as a Function of Narrative and Informative Presentations of Paedophilia

As in Study 5, mousetracking data were calculated in relation to ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ responding about paedophiles. Consistent with previous research using a mousetracking paradigm (Schneider et al., 2015), correlational analyses were conducted between MD and AUC output data. These two outcomes were highly correlated for both positive and negative responding (positive: $r(98) = 0.94, p < .001$; negative: $r(98) = 0.74, p < .001$). As such, only AUC outcome data are discussed for reasons of brevity.

A one-way (Condition: Narrative vs. Informative) MANCOVA was conducted, with AUC and RT data for ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ mousetracking responding as separate dependent variables. On the basis that the mousetracking paradigm was used to assess differences in implicit information processing after the experimental manipulation, the GNAT index (as a measure of pre-existing implicit attitudes towards sexual offenders) was included in these analyses as a covariate. Although these indices were non-significant in relation to each outcome variable (all p 's $> .05$), they were retained in the analyses owing to their theoretical relevance. Descriptive data are presented in Table 6.10, and average mouse trajectories within each condition are depicted graphically in Figure 6.07.

Table 6.10: Descriptive data for mousetracking outcomes, by Condition

Outcome	<u>Narrative condition</u>		<u>Informative condition</u>	
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
AUC	0.84 ^a (0.04)	1.00 ^a (0.05)	0.56 (0.04)	0.59 (0.05)
RT	1241.62 ^b (22.52)	1310.82 ^b (25.91)	1191.14 (22.99)	1225.84 (26.49)

Note: Data represent estimated marginal means (and standard errors) corrected for baseline implicit attitudes towards sexual offenders (as measured by the GNAT). RT data are provided in milliseconds. Data in rows that share a superscript differ significantly ($p < .05$)

In relation to positive responding data, there was a significant effect of Condition on AUC data ($F(1, 95) = 20.62, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.18$). Planned post-hoc comparisons attributed this effect to a significantly greater AUC in the narrative condition than in the informative condition. These data indicate a greater pull towards the negative responding option on trials where participants were instructed to respond positively about paedophiles in the narrative condition, comparative to the informative condition. However, there was no effect of Condition on RTs ($F(1, 95) = 2.46, p = .120$) when participants were instructed to respond positively about paedophiles.

In relation to negative responding data, there was also a significant effect of Condition on AUC data ($F(1, 95) = 31.13, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.25$). This effect was again attributed to a significantly greater AUC in the narrative condition than in the informative condition. These data indicate a greater pull towards the positive responding option on trials when participants were instructed to respond negatively about paedophiles in the narrative condition, comparative to the informative condition. There was also a significant effect of Condition on RTs when participants were instructed to respond negatively about paedophiles ($F(1, 95) = 5.26, p = .024, \eta^2 = 0.05$), with participants in the informative condition responding faster on these trials.

A further series of 2 (Condition: Narrative vs. Informative; between-groups) x 2 (Response Type: Positive vs. Negative; within-groups) mixed MANCOVAs were conducted in order to examine the differences between positive and negative response trajectories within each of the conditions. This analysis was important in order to examine the relative levels of competition between positive and negative responding as a function of the experimental manipulation. The GNAT indices were again non-significant covariates ($p > .05$), but retained in the model because of their theoretical relevance.

AUCs and RTs for each response type were dependent variables. There was a marginally significant interaction between Condition and Response Type in relation to AUC data ($F(1, 95) = 3.51, p = .064, \eta^2_p = 0.04$), but no significant interaction for RT data ($F(1, 95) = 1.37, p = .244$).

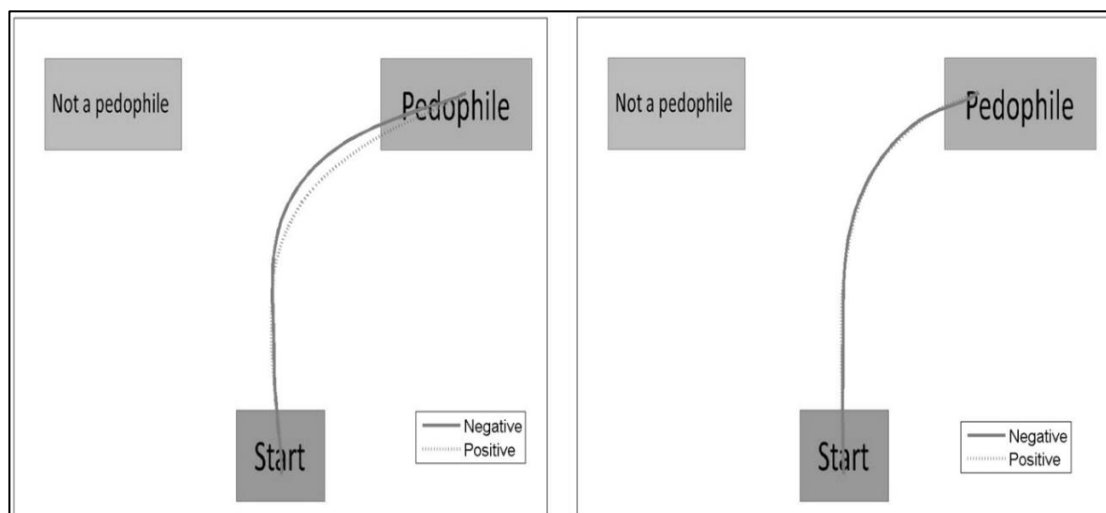


Figure 6.07: Mousetracking trajectories for ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ responding within the narrative (left) and informative (right) conditions

In light of the marginally significant interaction for AUC data, separate one-way repeated measures ANCOVAs (with GNAT indices as non-significant covariates) were used to examine the effect of Response Type within each condition. The results revealed a significant effect of Response Type within the narrative condition ($F(1, 48) = 7.81, p = .007, \eta^2_p = 0.14$), such that there was a significantly greater ‘pull’ towards positive responding than negative responding. However, there was no effect of Response Type within the informative condition ($F(1, 46) = 0.81, p = .373$). These results are reflected in the mousetracking trajectory plots (Figure 6.07). That is, there is no observable difference between positive and negative mouse trajectories within the informative condition (exemplified by the trajectories overlapping), while there is a visual difference between positive and negative response trajectories within the narrative condition.

6.4.3. Discussion

Study 9 sought to examine the potential effectiveness of narrative-based humanisation in reducing levels of stigmatisation, moral disengagement, and punitive attitudes about paedophiles. At the explicit (self-report) level, significant reductions in these constructs

were observed in both the narrative and informative conditions. However, the size of the effect was substantially greater in the narrative condition, suggesting that a narrative presentation may be more effective in improving self-reported attitudes towards paedophiles. These findings support hypothesis one.

At the implicit level, participants in the narrative condition were more likely to express both a positive and a negative bias in their mousetracking responses than participants in the informative condition. This is potentially due to the narrative presentation having a greater overall emotional effect on implicit cognition than the informative alternative. However, when comparing response trends within each of the conditions, participants in the narrative condition expressed a significantly greater bias towards positive responding than negative responding. There were no such differences in the mouse trajectories for the two responding types within the informative condition. These results are consistent with hypothesis two.

Humanisation, Affect, and Attitude Change

The findings from the self-report data are consistent with similar research in this area, in which informative stimuli have been found to improve explicit attitudes (e.g., Malinen et al., 2014). Further, these results provide further support for the idea that using content delivered by paedophiles themselves can have a profound effect on reducing stigma (Jahnke, Philipp, & Hoyer, 2015). However, Study 9 is novel in that information presented in a first-person narrative form also had positive effects on implicit attitudes towards paedophiles. These differences in implicit cognitive processes may be more akin to true attitude change than responses collected via explicit (self-report) measures.

It is difficult to directly describe the underlying processes by which explicit and implicit attitude change occurred in Study 9 by purely examining the results of the experimental manipulation. However, the findings from prior studies, both already published within the wider literature and described earlier in this thesis, suggest that affective responses (particularly those related to dehumanisation processes) may be important to consider. This assertion is based on the differences observed in implicit decision-making processes as a function of the experimental manipulation. The mousetracking task that was used in this study examined affect-based (i.e., ‘positive’ and ‘negative’) evaluations of paedophiles, with a significant effect being observed in the narrative condition.

It is argued that this difference was due to the presentation of a counter-stereotypical image (i.e., a non-predatory and, crucially, non-offending paedophile), with this image being humanised through the use of a real-life narrative. Imhoff (2015) suggested that negative and emotional media presentations of sexual offenders and paedophiles may lead to increased rates of stigmatisation (see also Harris & Socia, 2014). By presenting information about paedophiles in the form of a narrative, it is argued that automatic negative evaluations (e.g., reactions akin to moral outrage; Bastian et al., 2013) were lessened, and that competition between these automatic reactions and a more (perhaps empathic) positive response was introduced. This explanation is consistent with theoretical ideas advanced by Walkington and Ashton-Wigman (2015) in relation to the role of narratives in reducing stigmatisation and punitive attitudes towards non-sexual offenders.

6.5. Chapter Summary

This chapter sought to investigate the role of the affect heuristic in guiding judgements about sexual offenders. That is, it was asserted that the emotional responses that people experience in relation to sexual offending acts as a pivotal factor when people come to make decisions about the perpetrators of such crimes.

In Study 6, it was found that the emotional tone of British news reports about sexual crime remained stable in the year following the high-profile re-emergence of sexual offending allegations made against Jimmy Savile. This lack of difference was observed in spite of a marked increase in levels of coverage of this issue (Study 1). There were statistically significant linguistic differences between tabloids and broadsheets, with broadsheets being less negative in their reporting. However, an examination of the effect sizes for these differences call into question the practical and social significance of these results. An analysis of the respective descriptors used by tabloids and broadsheets in their headlines about sexual offenders highlighted a key distinction between the two publication types. That is, tabloids are substantially more hostile, overtly disparaging, and dehumanising about sexual offenders than broadsheets.

These publication-specific differences were linked with attitudinal and response differences between respective readership groups (Study 7). Here, tabloid readers were more negative than broadsheet readers on global attitudinal measures, and in relation to specific response indices (e.g., sentencing and management preferences, and risk perceptions). Participants who reported reading either a combination of the two publication types, or no newspapers at all, tended to score between the two ‘exclusive’ readership groups. These results indicated the potential mediating role of reading a broad range of news publications, or perhaps the intensifying effect of having narrower readership patterns. These readership differences were linked to variations in headline descriptors using Bandura et al.’s (1996) moral disengagement theory as a conceptual framework.

Given that moral disengagement has not been extensively drawn upon in this area of research, Study 8 set out to systematically apply this framework to the examination of attitudes towards sexual offenders. A self-report measure of moral disengagement about sexual offenders (MDS-SO) was developed, with the effects of different mock media presentations on MDS-SO scores being examined using an experimental online survey. Despite moral disengagement being traditionally described as a multifaceted concept, the MDS-SO measure was found to be comprised of a single internally-consistent factor that was significantly correlated (but not completely overlapping) with the ATS-21. This provided further evidence that, in relation to judgements about sexual offenders, global automatic affective responses may be important drivers of social responses. However, those who read a broadsheet-consistent mock media presentation about sexual crime expressed a greater reduction in MDS-SO scores than those who received a tabloid-consistent stimulus. Further, this between-conditions difference was largest among exclusive tabloid readers (Figure 6.04). This effect demonstrates not only the importance of media framing in influencing responses to sexual offenders, but also the potential moderating effects of previous experience (including regular media engagement patterns). That is, by presenting information in a way that was contrary to that used by tabloids, it was possible to have a more profound positive impact on their MDS-SO scores.

Study 9 was designed to examine whether dehumanisation of a particularly stigmatized group in this area (paedophiles) could be reversed through the presentation of narrative-based information. Here, participants were presented with an experimental stimulus

providing information about paedophilia, with this information being provided by either an individual with a sexual interest in children, or by an expert. Results indicated that both presentations led to reductions in self-reported negativity, although the size of this effect was much greater when the information was presented by a paedophile than an expert. However, using an indirect assessment procedure (computer mousetracking), only the narrative presentation led to less negative responses at the implicit level. This finding indicates that dehumanisation (and, by extension, *rehumanisation*) may have its roots in affect-based implicit cognition.

Collectively, the findings from the four studies in Chapter 6 are consistent with the view that there may be a path from media reporting of sexual crime to the implicit dehumanisation of sexual offenders. The findings from the final mousetracking task suggest that these dehumanisation processes may be grounded in non-conscious emotional processes that are consistent with the affect heuristic.

PART 3: GENERAL DISCUSSION

The final part of the thesis sets out to bring together the introductory work within Part 1 with the empirical work presented in Part 2, with the aim being to integrate these two bodies of work into a coherent argument for the presence of heuristic-based decision-making in relation to sexual crime.

Part 3 is comprised of a single chapter. In Chapter 7, a comprehensive discussion of the research findings presented in Part 2 is presented, before a heuristic-based model of attitudes towards sexual offenders (and, by extension, sexual crime decision-making) is formulated. Next, some of the potential theoretical, practical, and methodological implications of the research findings presented in Part 2 are outlined. Following from this, there is a discussion of the theoretical and methodological originality of this thesis, before some suggestions for future research are set out. The thesis then concludes with some closing remarks about the state of the attitudes towards sexual offenders field.

CHAPTER 7

GENERAL DISCUSSION

As stated throughout this thesis, the descriptive nature of current research in the area of attitudes towards sexual offenders fails to inform the development of theoretical models aimed at conceptualising how we might understand and influence such views. Recent empirical work has asserted that non-conscious mental processes may play a role in the formation and expression of attitudes towards sexual offenders (Harris & Socia, 2014; King & Roberts, 2015). As such, Chapter 2 outlined the theoretical perspective of this thesis, which included the use of dual-process cognitive models as a potential framework for understanding attitudes and decision-making in this area.

The foundation of dual-process theory is the notion that people predominantly make use of non-conscious heuristics when forming attitudes and making decisions (Epstein, 1994; Kahneman, 2011). Heuristics are mental shortcuts that use implicit processes (e.g., non-conscious knowledge structures and associations that are held in long-term memory; Fiske & Taylor, 1991) to facilitate rapid and effortless decision-making. Chapter 2 identified three key heuristics that may be relevant to attitudes towards sexual offenders:

1. The *availability heuristic* asserts that the ease at which specific cases or examples of topics come to mind guides judgements about the importance, prevalence, or relevance of that issue
2. The *representativeness heuristic* asserts that the extent to which a given case or example of a topic corresponds to a stereotypical or prototypical image of that topic guides judgements of the given case or example
3. The *affect heuristic* asserts that general positive or negative emotional responses to a given case or example of a topic guide judgements about the given case or example

Throughout nine studies in this thesis, there appears to be a pervasive impact of heuristic-based cognition on the formation and expression of (particularly negative) attitudes towards sexual offenders. In this concluding chapter, the results of each of these studies are brought together in order to explore these effects in a more holistic way. Further, the

theoretical, practical, and methodological implications of the work are set out, as are some avenues for further research.

7.1. Overview of Key Findings

The first set of empirical results related to the core aims of this thesis examined the role of the *availability heuristic* in social discussions about sexual offending (Chapter 4). In Study 1, sexual crime was found to be substantially over-represented in media reports about crime when compared to other types of offending behaviour, while Study 2 found that a small number of selected cases were significantly over-represented within the subset of newspaper articles about sexual crime. These findings suggest that a small number of high-profile cases may be driving a large proportion of all sexual crime coverage within the British press. Within the context of recent sentencing changes (e.g., UK Sentencing Council, 2014), and through an analysis of other trends in legislative practices (e.g., the enactment of the Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme in 2010), these high-profile cases can be implicated as having a profound effect on political responses to sexual offending. In Study 3, however, there was no evidence that priming participants with one of these recent high-profile cases (i.e., the Jimmy Savile scandal) had any effect on their willingness to engage in punitive policy support.

Ancillary analysis of other data collected within Study 3, however, found that the extent to which a case was view as being *representative* of a sexual offence had a significant mediating effect on judgements. That is, the more an offence was deemed as being representative of a sexual crime, the more punitively participants judged the offender. Further evidence for representativeness effects was reported in Chapter 5. In Study 4, participants who expressed an entity-based view of sexual offending (i.e., that this behaviour is indicative of some personal flaw within an offender, and is largely unchangeable) viewed a representative case more punitively than non-representative cases. However, those who held more incrementally-based implicit theories about sexual offending (i.e., that this behaviour may be changeable over time) tended not to differ in their judgements of these different vignettes. These findings suggest that those who hold particularly negative views about sexual offenders (entity-based implicit theories were associated with negative attitudes, as measured by the ATS-21) may do so on the basis of a relatively narrow understanding of who or what a ‘sexual offender’ actually is. In Study

5, more direct evidence for the implicit nature of representativeness processes in judgements of sexual offenders was reported. Here, participants who were randomly assigned to receive a cognitive load induction (such as to limit their cognitive resources while completing the experimental tasks) engaged less (operationalised as vignette reading time) with a representative case of sexual crime, but did not distinguish between a representative and non-representative case when responding to evaluative outcome measures (of both self-report and indirect natures) relating to “sexual offenders”. However, those whose cognitive resources were not limited through a cognitive load induction read both a representative and a non-representative case vignette for an equal amount of time, and were able to use cues within each of these cases to make different outcome judgements. These data suggest that people do hold an implicit stereotype about the types of people who are (or indeed, are not) likely to be sexual offenders, and that this stereotype guides responses to offending behaviour. Under cognitive load, this stereotype was quickly activated upon the presentation of a representative case vignette, with participants in this condition feeling more able to skim over the detail of this case before moving on to the rest of the experimental tasks. However, when it came to making judgements about “sexual offenders” (using a measure such as the PSO; Chapter 3), this label activated the implicitly-held stereotype, and thus participants were unable to draw upon the nuance within each of the experimental vignettes. On the other hand, those not under conditions of cognitive load were able to read each vignette at their normal reading speed, and adjust their responses to the outcome measures accordingly.

Finally, Chapter 6 examined the role of *affect* in driving judgements about sexual offending. In addition to the prevalence data reported in Study 1, newspaper articles about sexual crime were also found to be comprised of greater levels of negative emotion than articles published about other types of offending (Study 6). Consistent with previous research (Harper & Hogue, 2015), the key difference between tabloid and broadsheet newspaper coverage of sexual offending was in the headlines of articles, with tabloids being substantially more hostile and overtly offensive in their descriptions of sexual offenders (e.g., “perv”, and “monster”) than broadsheets. These findings were linked to differences in attitudinal orientations between tabloid and broadsheet readers (Study 7), with tabloid readers expressing significantly more negative attitudes towards sexual offenders than broadsheet readers. These attitudes were also translated into sentencing and risk judgements, with tabloid readers being more punitive than broadsheet readers. In order to understand these differences, moral disengagement theory (MDT; Bandura et

al., 1996) was used. MDT asserts that a range of linguistic mechanisms enable us to overcome the negative emotional responses that we instinctively might have to punitive actions, and thus make us able to sanction such behaviours. In Study 8, a self-report measure of moral disengagement towards sexual offenders (MDS-SO) was created, with convergent validity being provided through its strong correlation with the ATS-21. In an experimental public survey, MDS-SO scores were more influenced (in a positive direction) by a broadsheet-consistent mock media presentation about sexual offending than a tabloid-consistent alternative. There was also some emerging evidence that this effect may also be moderated to some degree by existing newspaper readership habits, with the greatest reductions in moral disengagement occurring within tabloid readers who received a broadsheet-consistent stimulus. Post-manipulation MDS-SO scores were positively correlated with PSO scores, such that higher levels of moral disengagement were linked to more punitive sentencing and risk judgements about sexual offenders. Finally, Study 9 found that presenting information in a first-person narrative form had a profound impact of both self-reported and implicit emotional responses towards paedophiles. That is, by presenting information about the nature and personal effects of paedophilia from the perspective of a man with a sexual interest in children, it was possible to positively impact emotional evaluations to a greater degree than when fact-based information was presented by an expert. This finding may have substantial implications for how we communicate about the topic of paedophilia (and, with further evidence, issues relating sexual offending more generally). For instance, a number of first-person narrative-based documentaries have been produced in different countries (e.g., “*Outing*” in Austria, “*The Paedophile Next Door*” in the UK, and “*I, Pedophile*” Canada), and the results from Study 9 suggest that these may have a positive impact in facilitating an environment that is more receptive to primary and secondary prevention service (e.g., the Dunkelfeld Project; Beier et al., 2009) than has previously been the case.

7.2. Implications and Originality of this Research

The work contained within this thesis offers some original and significant theoretical and methodological contributions to the existing literature in this area of research. In the sections that follow, these contributions are elaborated on more clearly, with links to wider theoretical developments being made pertinent. In relation to the methodological

contributions of the thesis, further details about the validity and future use of the methods developed in this research programme are set out.

7.2.1. Theoretical Implications and Originality

Fundamentally, the research contained within this thesis is theoretically original as it takes the existing descriptive data in this area and begins to examine it within conceptually-validated theoretical frameworks, and using robust experimental methods. The results from the various studies described within this thesis point towards the notion of sexual crime being a dual-level dual-process phenomenon (Figure 7.01). That is, different heuristics may be important at macro and micro levels of discussions about sexual crime. For instance, media and political discussions appear to be led by the availability heuristic, but these are less important than how *representative* a given case is when individuals are making judgements about specific examples of sexual offending. These processes all take place within a context that appears to be driven by affect and emotionally-based automatic responses to sexual offending.

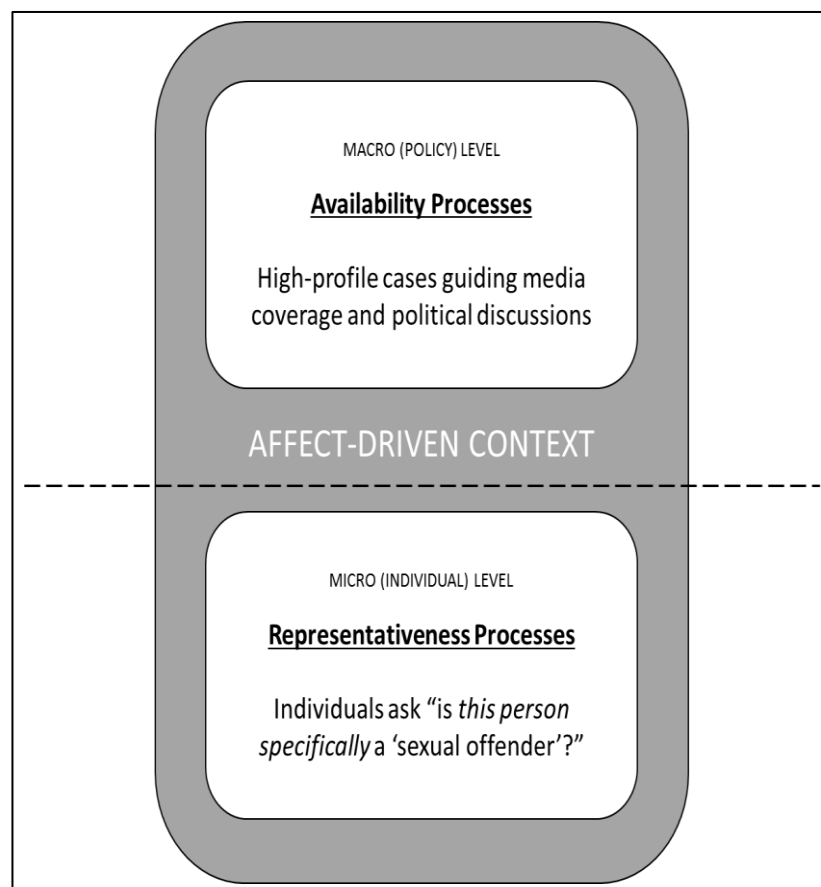


Figure 7.01: A schematic depicting the dual-level dual-process nature of responses to sexual crime

Macro-Level Responses to Sexual Crime

The results from Chapter 4 indicated that high-profile cases of alleged sexual offending, such as those involving Jimmy Savile and Operation Yewtree, have a profound impact on media coverage of sexual crime, as well as on legislative discussions about how to sentence and manage such offenders upon conviction. While clearly there are wider issues around the specific coverage of the Jimmy Savile case (e.g., cases involving celebrities inevitably attract higher levels of press attention, given that they contain more ‘value’ to media outlets; Jewkes, 2004), there was a substantial increase in the prevalence of sexual crime media coverage in the wake of this individual case. This increase was observed in spite of criteria in the sourcing of such articles that specifically excluded ‘offenders’ such as Savile, owing to the non-convicted nature of these cases.

Further, this increase was accompanied by the exaggerated coverage of non-typical cases of sexual crime. That is, among the 2013 sample of sexual crime articles that were analysed in Study 2, a small number ($n = 4$) of cases were significantly over-represented, with each of these portraying a non-familial offender in positions of authority and trust (either through their occupation or social status) abusing children. Despite this ‘profile’ of offender not being typical of those who are most likely to commit sexual offences (e.g., Radford et al., 2011), these cases (along with Jimmy Savile, who was never convicted during his lifetime) were invoked in political and media discussions about making judicial responses to sexual offending more ‘victim-focused’ (UK Sentencing Council, 2014). While this move towards the improved treatment of witnesses and alleged victims of sexual crime is not in itself a bad thing, there may be a risk in using these kinds of cases as a basis for legislation (e.g., through the implementation of policies or initiatives that show that the Government is doing *something*, even if that something is not necessarily effective, or is even counter-productive). As such, legislative responses to sexual offending, while having the explicit aim of reducing rates of sexual offending, may ultimately be more concerned with reacting to high-profile cases and general public opinion than engaging with empirically-based (and perhaps politically toxic) policymaking.

Micro-Level Responses to Sexual Crime

Despite legislative responses to sexual crime seemingly being based on the availability heuristic, there was no effect of priming high-profile cases on sentencing and risk judgements made by individual participants in Study 3. Instead, micro-level responses to sexual offending were more closely related to how ‘representative’ a given example was to who or what a ‘sexual offender’ typically is. This is the fundamental difference between macro and micro level responses to sexual offending.

It appears that people have an implicit notion of what a ‘sexual offender’ is, with this stereotypical image guiding levels of engagement with news stories about different ‘types’ of sexual offenders, and associated sentencing and risk judgements (Study 5). The findings from Study 4 also suggest that a more limited view about who can be classified as a ‘sexual offender’ is linked to an increased propensity to endorse entity-based beliefs about sexual offending (thus indicating the view that it is in some way inherent within the individual, and is not amenable to change via treatment). These findings are consistent with the representativeness heuristic, and indicate that negative attitudes towards sexual offenders may be based on a narrow view about who such offenders are. Based upon the analyses of newspaper coverage of sexual crime in this thesis (Studies 1, 2, and 6), there is an argument to be made that such representative images of who sexual offenders are may be based on selective and sensationalised examples of such crimes that appear within the news media. This is a plausible hypothesis to make, although further research is required in order to provide empirical support for this media influence argument.

The Affective Context of Responses to Sexual Crime

A number of studies from different disciplinary areas (e.g., social, forensic, and moral psychology) have found that sexual offending evokes a strong emotional response from people across the ideological and political spectrum (e.g., Bastian et al., 2013; Gray & Keeney, 2015; Vess, 2009). As suggested by Harris and Socia (2014):

“Prompts such as “What percentage of sex offenders do you think commit new sexual crimes after their release from prison?” or “Do you think that the names and addresses of convicted sex offenders should be made available to the public?” implicitly force respondents to make general inferences and statements about a

knowingly diverse population. Ultimately, it may be that the resulting research tells us more about respondents' visceral reactions to the "sex offender" label than it does about rational assessments regarding adults or youth who have perpetrated sexual offenses" (p. 2).

The findings from Study 5 support this view, with participants being less able to consider the nuance within different offender vignettes when making sentencing and risk judgements about "sex offenders" (as described in the PSO scale) under conditions of cognitive load. This result is indicative of the conclusion that the 'sexual offender' label is associated with an implicit (negative) emotional response. Again, these emotional responses could be hypothesised to be linked to the inflated levels of negative emotion that are present within newspaper articles about sexual crime than in articles about other types of offending behaviour (Study 6). An alternative explanation for these automatic emotional responses lies in our innate moral foundations (e.g., Haidt & Joseph, 2004; Haidt & Graham, 2007), which are argued to guide our responses to a range of contentious social and political issues. While these issues have not been explored to any great extent in the current thesis, some initial thoughts about how such a framework might be applied in this area have recently been formulated (Harper & Harris, 2016). In this review, we identified a number of testable hypotheses for further exploration. Confirming these initial predictions have the potential to help researchers understand how more fundamental elements of our psychological composition may precede some of the heuristic processes outlined in this thesis. If this view is correct, then media representations of sexual crime may serve to exacerbate these innate and automatic emotional responses, and to subsequently produce outcomes similar to those reported in the nine studies of this thesis.

7.2.2. Practical Implications

The findings from the studies reported in Part 2 of this thesis potentially have wide-reaching implications for the ways in which we discuss issues relating to sexual offenders at a societal level (Studies 8 and 9), as well as casting doubt over the appearance of objective 'justice' in relation to sexual crime. Additionally, extrapolating the findings from this research further could highlight some potential implications of heuristic-based cognition among clinicians working in sexual offender treatment roles.

Implications for Communication

The findings from Study 8 highlighted how changing the tone of media reports about sexual offenders (such that they conformed to stereotypical ‘tabloid-’ or ‘broadsheet-consistent’ representations) can have an impact on the extent to which people respond in morally disengaged ways to the issue of sexual offending. That is, by using dehumanised descriptions of sexual offenders, and by pitting such offenders against victims in discussions about policy, it appears to be possible to bring about, for example, the attribution of increased amounts of blame to sexual offenders for the negative societal responses with which they are met. This type of morally disengaged thinking was correlated with punitive sentencing preferences and increased perceptions of risk, potentially suggesting the role of moral disengagement in the formation of stereotypes about sexual offenders.

Of particular importance here was the potential moderating effect of existing media engagement patterns in relation to these outcome data. While the statistical interaction between usual newspaper readership and the type of media presentation that participants received in Study 8 was not statistically significant, the most marked reductions in morally disengaged viewpoints were observed among tabloid readers who were presented with broadsheet-consistent experimental stimuli. This finding has implications for researchers who engage with the media about their work on the nature, prevalence, and treatment of sexual offending. For example, when disseminating work within tabloid publications, it may be appropriate to use a style that speaks more to readers’ emotional responses (e.g., by humanising the perpetrators of sexual offending) rather than presenting vast arrays of scientific data and reconviction statistics. This is consistent with an intuitive-experiential approach to communicating about risk, and may be hypothesised to reduce risk perceptions via the affect heuristic (e.g., Finucane et al., 2000) among such readers. In contrast, broadsheet readers may be more inclined to engage rationally with scientific presentations of research findings. The indirect approach to attitude change via offender humanisation is also supported in the findings of Study 9. As such, communicating about sexual crime may require a more nuanced approach than has previously been advocated (e.g., by Malinen et al., 2014).

Implications for Judicial Practices

The seemingly heuristic-based nature of decision-making about sexual crime calls into question the objectivity of judicial responses to this type of offending. For example, there is a case to be made that particular ‘types’ of sexual offenders (i.e., those who conform to the ‘stereotypical’ image of a sexual offender) may not receive the same level of consideration and treatment as others. Perhaps the best example of how this may manifest comes from the findings in Study 5, where conditions of cognitive load were found to lead to less engagement with a stereotypical case of sexual offending than with a counter-stereotypical case. Given that members of the public who sit on criminal juries are reporting to feel high levels of stress (e.g., Kaplan & Winget, 1992), there is a risk of ‘stereotypical’ sexual offenders being pre-judged before a comprehensive consideration of the evidence of their guilt (or otherwise) has been conducted. An effect similar to this was reported by Ruva and Guenther (2015), who found that being exposed to negative pre-trial publicity about a defendant was related to lower perceptions of defendant credibility, an increased propensity for interpreting ambiguous evidence in a pro-prosecution manner, and higher incidents of guilty verdicts. These findings converge to present the view that some jurors, when under stress or cognitive load, may ‘jump to conclusions’ (Kahneman, 2011) about stereotypical offenders, and not attend fully to the evidence presented within the courtroom.

Further, the increased use of victim impact statements in courtrooms before the sentencing of sexual offenders has the potential to invoke the affect heuristic in judges’ decision-making processes. That is, by highlighting the emotional impact that victimisation has on those subjected to sexual abuse, natural negative emotional responses to sexual offending may be exaggerated still further, and thus there is potential for more punitive sentencing decisions being made in cases using such statements.

Implications in Clinical Practice

Although professionals’ attitudes towards sexual offenders have been a key focus of descriptive work in this area, relatively little attention has been paid to the role of such attitudes in clinical judgements and decision-making. As stated previously, there appears to be a risk of jumping to conclusions about stereotypical case examples – particularly when under cognitive load. In light of recent budget cuts to public services (e.g., in secure

NHS hospitals and prison establishments), professionals working directly with offenders are likely to be under increased levels of stress (e.g., Kinman, Clements, & Hart, 2014). There is, therefore, the potential for less attention to be paid when completing assessments about ‘stereotypical’ offenders, with such reports being based on particular key issues surrounding that specific case, and supplementary information from professionals’ implicit stereotypes about sexual offenders. Some early evidence of the impact of professionals’ attitudes towards sexual offenders impacting upon their decision-making was recently provided by Hogue (2015), who reported a significant correlation ($r = -.32$) between scores on the ATS-21 measure and risk perception scores (such that negative attitudes towards sexual offenders were associated with increased perceptions of re-offending risk, regardless of the information presented within a case vignette) among a sample of qualified forensic psychologists. This finding suggests that attitudes do indeed have some level of influence over professional judgements, and further research (including studies using methods similar to those used in this thesis) are required in order to explicate exactly what this relationship may be based upon. Once these links have been tested empirically, the findings could then be used to inform changes to training programmes for those working with sexual offenders within secure settings.

7.2.3. Methodological Implications and Originality

Prior to this thesis, the literature on attitudes towards sexual offenders was largely descriptive in nature. That is, there had been a range of studies that administered standardised attitudinal measures to different groups. The result of this kind of approach has been a series of interesting (yet inconsistent) findings about demographic differences in attitudes towards sexual offenders, but little knowledge about the factors that underpin these constructs (Brown, 2009).

Throughout this thesis, a supplementary aim has been to develop new ways of examining attitudes towards sexual offenders, and to adopt these methods within established theoretical frameworks using rigorous experimental paradigms. This approach led to the development of a number of novel methodological approaches to examine these phenomena. Two new explicit (self-report) measures have been developed through this research programme, and the research has also made use of indirect measurement procedures (e.g., the mousetracking paradigm) to examine implicit attitudes towards sexual offenders.

The Perceptions of Sex Offenders Scale

The work described in Chapter 3 led to the development of the *Perceptions of Sex Offenders* (PSO) scale. This measure, which is a self-report questionnaire comprised of 20 items spanning the areas of ‘Sentencing and Management’, ‘Stereotype Endorsement’, and ‘Risk Perception’, was borne out of the critique of the Community Attitudes Towards Sex Offenders (CATSO) scale (Church et al., 2008) presented in Chapter 1. The CATSO has come to be seen as the gold-standard in the assessment of attitudes towards sexual offenders in recent years, with its creators arguing that it was a more specific measure than alternatives (e.g., the ATS; Hogue, 1993) whose items were adapted from other scales. However, the factor structure of the CATSO has been a constant source of academic debate since its development. Several authors have called for modifications to be made to the CATSO (e.g., Conley et al., 2011), or for its use to be discontinued altogether in particular contexts (e.g., Shelton et al., 2013).

As opposed to removing items from the CATSO and running new factor analyses, the decision was taken to reconceptualise what it was the CATSO actually examined. After a face validity analysis, which was undertaken within Breckler’s (1984) tripartite (affect, behaviour, and cognition) view of attitudes, it was apparent that it was not a comprehensive examination of ‘attitudes’. Instead, the CATSO was argued to investigate respondents’ perceptions and judgements of sexual offenders, specifically in relation to views about sentencing, risk, and stereotype endorsement. This broad three-factor structure was supported in data from principal components and confirmatory factor analyses.

Throughout this thesis, the PSO was used as an outcome measure in order to examine the effects of the various experimental manipulations on such outcome judgements. This approach is consistent with the experimental paradigm that proposed in Hogue and Harper (in prep). In this approach, we suggest that the ATS-21 should be used to measure baseline attitudes towards sexual offenders, followed by some experimental manipulation, and finally the PSO in order to examine the effect of the manipulation on policy and risk-based outcomes. This approach allows researchers to control for baseline attitudes when examining the role of a manipulation (e.g., vignettes involving different case scenarios or offender/victims demographics) in influencing outcome judgements about sexual offenders.

The PSO consistently demonstrated good levels of internal consistency in this thesis. The only exceptions to this were low Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the 'Risk Perception' subscale in Study 5 ($\alpha = 0.49$) and Study 9 ($\alpha = 0.65$). Reasons for these low coefficients could include competition between 'risky' and 'non-risky' views about the 'non-representative' (Study 5) and 'narrative-based' (Study 9) experimental stimuli in these studies leading to questionable consistency in responses to these items. Further research may help to refine the PSO still further, and reduce this lack of internal consistency moving forward.

Significant differences in PSO scores were observed in a number of studies in this thesis, both in relation to the measure as a whole, and on its subscales. However, there were generally few differences found in relation to 'Stereotype Endorsement', and scores on this subscale were consistently low. These results mean that, although the 'Stereotype Endorsement' items hold together as a coherent subscale (exemplified by its strong internal consistency), the items may not necessarily reflect the stereotypes that are actually held by people in relation to who sexual offenders are. This is an area that requires further research in order to empirically establish what kinds of stereotypes people actually hold about sexual offenders. These views could then be merged into the existing PSO scale, such as to produce a more conceptually valid measure of perceptions of sexual offenders. Although this PSO limitation exists, there is still an argument to be made that this iteration of the scale represents a conceptual advance in the measurement of perceptions of sexual offenders, and builds on the weaknesses of an existing and widely-used self-report measure of attitudes in this area of research.

The PSO is beginning to be used in a number of areas as a method of examining perceptions of different offender types, as well as in examining the effects of different communication styles on sentencing and risk judgements. For example, MSc students Darragh McCashin and Megan Kay (supervised by Prof. Jo Clarke, University of York) are using the PSO to examine differences in perceptions about online and offline (i.e., contact) sexual offenders among students and volunteers working in Circles of Support and Accountability. Further, Matt Sessions (supervised by Dr. Caoilte Ó Ciardha, University of Kent) is examining the influence of positively- and negatively-valenced information about sexual offenders and the confirmation bias in affecting PSO judgements. A number of undergraduate students at the University of Lincoln (supervised

by Prof. Todd Hogue) have also used the PSO to examine the role of varying media reports and stereotypical views on PSO outcomes. These studies indicate that the PSO is beginning to gain an increased profile within the academic community, and represents a worthwhile addition to the literature in this area.

Moral Disengagement towards Sexual Offenders Scale

Study 8 developed the *Moral Disengagement towards Sexual Offenders* (MDS-SO) scale. This self-report measure was developed owing to the lack of empirical inquiry into the theory of moral disengagement (as a holistic framework) in the area of attitudes towards sexual offenders.

Moral disengagement theory (MDT; Bandura et al., 1996) is theoretically conceptualised as a multifaceted framework. That is, there are several ‘mechanisms’ of moral disengagement (Table 6.03), with these including concepts such as advantageous comparison, dehumanisation, and the distortion of consequences associated with punitive actions. However, the principal components analysis of the MDS-SO suggested that this scale was comprised of a single internally consistent factor. While this result was unexpected, it is not inconsistent with previous attempts to apply MDT to specific issues. For example, when Boardley and Kavussanu (2007) examined moral disengagement among sportspeople, they found that their measure of moral disengagement was comprised of five factors (moral justification and euphemistic labelling items formed a single factor), with these factors all being highly correlated with each other. In addition, other studies examining moral disengagement effects have treated this construct as a single broad issue, and have used a small number of items that only capture a small proportion of the multifaceted conceptualisation of MDT (e.g., Shu, Gino, & Bazerman, 2011). As such, there is some evidence that, at the explicit (self-report) level, exploratory analyses may support a broader view of moral disengagement than the model originally proposed by Bandura et al. (1996) in their conceptual development of this theory.

In order to understand this apparent convergence in the mechanisms of moral disengagement in relation to how people view sexual offenders, it may be necessary to again invoke the tenets of dual-process cognition. Consistent with the discussion presented above, it may be that immediate and automatic emotional responses to sexual offenders act as a guide for self-reported judgements these types of offending behaviour.

If this is the case, then we might argue that the mechanisms of moral justification are behavioural manifestations of these immediate responses. That is, the self-report responses on the MDS-SO may merely be reflections of global affective evaluations of sexual offenders.

At their core, each of the mechanisms of moral disengagement are linguistic in nature. That is, they rely on individuals' use of language to dehumanise outgroup members, and to sanitise and justify punitive behaviour. Relational frame theory (RFT; Hayes, Barnes-Holmes, & Roche, 2001) provides a behaviour-analytic account of language and cognition. RFT researchers thus assert that implicit cognition is based upon linguistic relationships between concepts (as opposed to researchers using more established indirect methods (e.g., the IAT), who assert that implicit cognition is more associative in nature). By this, RFT puts forward the argument that the strength of linguistic associations between different concepts will vary depending upon the context in which they are activated. As such, if we are to conceptualise the mechanisms of moral disengagement as linguistic mechanisms in implicit cognition, the Implicit Relational Assessment Procedure (IRAP; Barnes-Holmes et al., 2006; which was specifically designed for use within a framework consistent with RFT) may be a more useful tool for examining these constructs than self-report approaches. This represents another potentially fruitful area of further research.

Indirect Assessment of Attitudes towards Sexual Offenders

The use of indirect measurement procedures in this thesis enabled the analysis of the dynamic differences in decision-making processes in response to different sexual offending vignettes (Studies 5 and 9), and in different cognitive states (Study 5). As an outcome measurement, these studies used a mousetracking paradigm (Freeman & Ambady, 2010) in order to examine the implicit processing of individuals whilst they were making decisions about their emotional (i.e., positive vs. negative) evaluations of sexual offenders (and paedophiles). This is the first time that such a dynamic indirect procedure has been used in this area of attitude research, with the two studies using this approach in this thesis also being the first to find differences in implicit attitudes as a result of an experimental manipulation about sexual offending.

In comparison to established reaction-time-based indirect measures of social cognition, mousetracking enables the analysis of real-time dynamic cognitive processing of these stimuli when participants are making such classifications. Exclusively using reaction time data in these studies would have led to the (incorrect) conclusion that the experimental manipulations that were made had no impact on implicit evaluations of sexual offenders. By using the mousetracking paradigm, however, it was possible to examine both the level and direction of the emotionality of the stimuli that were presented. While the dynamic differences that were found in mousetracking trajectories may not reflect definitive changes to the associations between ‘sexual offenders’ (or ‘paedophiles’) and positive or negative evaluations, they do suggest that implicit competition between positive and negative responding was induced as a function of the experimental manipulations that were made. Further research is needed to understand the psychometric properties of such a task, such as to be able to more accurately and confidently infer what these trajectory differences actually represent.

Work is currently underway (conducted with Dr. Ross Bartels and two undergraduate research assistants) to develop a free-response version of the mousetracking task used in Study 5. In this thesis, the task adopted a blocked design, meaning that participants were forced respond positively or negatively in specific blocks. While this is consistent with traditional indirect measurement procedures, there is a risk that participants were merely responding to the words that were displayed using simple rules (e.g., ‘In this block, positive words go to the right’), as opposed to making the link between the evaluative stimulus words and the concepts of ‘SEX OFFENDER’ or ‘NOT A SEX OFFENDER’. By adopting a free-response design, it may be possible to examine the true competition between positive and negative evaluations of sexual offenders as participants make those classifications in real-time.

With stimulus words for these mousetracking tasks being derived from the items and themes contained within the ATS-21 (Hogue & Harper, in prep) and PSO (Chapter 3), a free-response version of the mousetracking task will be comparable to self-report measures (to examine its reliability and convergent validity). Similarly, if participants are responding specifically to the labels (as opposed to their position on the screen) when making evaluative decisions, it may be possible to empirically examine the order of dual-process-based decisions. That is, immediate deviations towards (or away from) particular labels may be more indicative of immediate emotional responses, and subsequent

response corrections in order to express socially desirable views, while lower levels of deviation (examined via MD and AUC mousetracking data) may be indicative of constant competition between positive and negative evaluations throughout the decision-making process. By adopting a free-response mousetracking design, then, we may be able to discern how and why people come to make particular decisions about sexual offenders in a far more nuanced and empirical way than current methods allow.

7.3. Limitations and Future Directions

7.3.1. General Theoretical and Methodological Issues

There are two broad methodological issues related to the work contained within this thesis that require some level of evaluation: (1) the use of online surveys, and (2) the use of student participants.

A number of the studies described within this thesis made use of large online surveys as a method for collecting data. While there has been some concern over the quality of data collected using these methods, a recent study offered promising data about the reliability and quality of research findings published as a result of online questionnaires. Ramsey, Thompson, McKenzie, and Rosenbaum (2016) reported that both students and community members were accurate in identifying duplicate items in online surveys that mirrored each other. This means that, even when not told about a planned recall task, online participants paid enough attention to the item content of an online survey to be able to identify repeated questions from an earlier study. This finding is encouraging, and suggests that those who are completing online surveys are engaged with the content of such studies.

Despite this promising result, there are clearly some unavoidable limitations of using such methodological approaches as online surveys. The most obvious of these limitations is that only those who are sufficiently computer-literate to both find the links to these surveys on social media and email mailing lists, and further to complete the survey to a satisfactory level, can take part. Participants in online surveys are also typically self-selecting, and motivated to complete such studies because of personal interests or experiences relating to the topic under investigation (Vehovar & Lozar Manfreda, 2008).

While this is a challenge for online research, this issue is arguably a problem in offline research, too – particularly in relation to forensic issues that may evoke feelings of interest/curiosity and outrage/offence in equal measures.

The use of student samples in the laboratory-based experimental work in this thesis poses a problem for the generalisability of these findings to wider contexts. This argument gains more credibility when considering the findings of demographic examinations in relation to attitudes towards sexual offenders (Chapter 1), as well as Gakhal and Brown's (2011) finding that students (perhaps via increased education levels) express more positive self-reported attitudes towards sexual offenders than non-student members of the public. However, the experimental work described in Studies 5 and 9 was exploratory in nature, and sought to establish the theoretical and conceptual relevance of issues such as representativeness and humanisation in guiding responses to sexual crime. The use of student samples to test the underlying validity of theoretical assumptions is commonplace within psychological research, with research funders desiring some evidence of the potential utility of theoretical constructs before providing additional money for larger-scale (and perhaps more valid) studies. As such, this approach is both necessary in order to provide early evidence of the relevance of heuristics in this area of research, and also consistent with standard approaches to developing new research streams in psychological research.

As suggested earlier, there are also some broader and more fundamental theoretical issues that may be relevant in a pursuit to understand the psychological processes (e.g., innate moral foundations) that underpin attitudes and responses to sexual offenders and their crimes. Constructs relating to our core moral foundations may be hypothesised as issues that have a role in the formation on implicit knowledge structures, and thus are activated before some of the heuristic mechanisms outlined in this thesis. This prediction would be consistent with Gawronski and Bodenhausen's (2006) APE conceptualisation of implicit and explicit attitudes (see Section 2.2.3), with moral impulses forming the basis of our automatic emotional responses to sexual offending. This is potentially very fruitful area that is worthy of further investigation.

Examining the Potential for Long-Term Attitude Change

A common criticism levelled at attitude change research projects is that changes in attitudes and responses to particular topics within a testing session may not be truly reflective of lasting modifications to how participants feel about the topic under investigation. In previous research into attitudes towards sexual offenders, for instance, Malinen et al. (2014) reported that informative presentations about sexual offenders (comparative to hostile and emotional alternatives) led to significantly more positive self-reported attitudes towards sexual offenders, but no differences were observed in implicit attitudes of participants. Interpreting this finding, it may be suggested that changes in self-reported attitudes were manifestations of a demand characteristic of the study, and that the effect of the experimental manipulation was less than these questionnaire-based outcome data suggested. As such, the longevity of such attitudinal differences (between participants in the two experimental groups) is questionable.

This issue is specifically relevant to the findings of Study 8 and Study 9 in this thesis, which sought to investigate the extent to which varying the presentation of information about sexual offenders (Study 8) and paedophiles (Study 9) could contribute to attitude change. While encouraging results were found in both of these studies, the long-term effects of such experimental manipulations were not investigated. The results of Study 9 were consistent with previous work that has suggested that presenting narrative-based information about paedophiles can contribute to improved explicit (self-report) attitudes towards people with sexual interests in children (Jahnke, Philipp, & Hoyer, 2015). This previous work also found that attitudinal differences were still present when participants were followed-up after a period of up to two months. While this is encouraging within the context of the implicit (mousetracking) data presented in Study 9, it is still not possible to say whether these deeper effects are long-lasting, or merely an immediate response to the experimental manipulation used in the study. As such, future research projects should adopt longitudinal designs, and include follow-up testing, in order to examine of the stability of post-manipulation changes in responses to sexual offenders and paedophiles. This approach to research in this area may be able to yield results that are more indicative of real attitude change at a societal level than studies reporting immediate attitudinal changes as a result of a single exposure to a single experimental stimulus.

Measuring Behavioural Attitudes towards Sexual Offenders

A key limitation of the studies included in this thesis (with the exception of Study 5) is that only cognitive and affect-based changes in attitudes and responses to sexual offenders (and paedophiles) were measured. That is, outcome measures such as the PSO examine participants' views about sentencing and management, as well as stereotype endorsement and risk perceptions. Missing from these outcome data are more behaviourally-based attitudes, which should also be examined in order to produce a fuller overview of responses to these kinds of socially-contentious issues.

Examining the effects of experimental manipulations on behavioural responses to sexual crime is arguably a more important topic of study than investigating the effect of such manipulations on the explicit endorsement of particular stereotypes or policy positions. This is because it is behavioural attitudes that matter in relation to the treatment of, and provision of services to, sexual offenders as we (as a society) attempt to tackle the issue of sexual offending. As such, future research studies should strive to include such behaviourally-based outcome measures. By way of an example, research could adopt approaches that are consistent with those used in charitable giving studies. Here, researchers inform participants about a pot of research funds (either real or imagined), and ask participants to divide these funds between a selection of charitable organizations (e.g., victim groups, law enforcement groups, and organizations involved in preventative treatment or rehabilitation schemes). Positive effects of an experimental manipulation, then, may be manifested in the form of larger proportions of such funds being directed towards prevention and rehabilitation schemes. Not only do these outcomes correspond with a more holistic conceptualisation of 'attitudes' (e.g., Breckler, 1984), but they also have real-world implications for helping legislators to feel more comfortable when thinking about directing real funds towards enacting more progressive policies.

7.3.2. Construct-Specific Issues

In addition to the issues raised in relation to general theoretical and methodological limitations of the work contained within this thesis, there are specific questions about the constructs described in this work that require further attention. These questions are related to the content of implicit knowledge structures, as well as non-conscious decision-making about issues related to sexual crime through heuristic-based processes. In this section,

opportunities for further research into the three key heuristics examined in this thesis are set out.

Future Research into the Availability Heuristic

In the discussion of Chapter 4, the argument is made that inflated coverage of sexual crime (comparative to other types of crime) within the national British press could be linked to increases in public perceptions of the prevalence of this type of offending behaviour. However, from the data at hand, this hypothesis cannot be empirically supported. With this in mind, further survey research should be conducted in order to specifically examine this argument.

One potential issue in this future research is that conventional cross-sectional designs may not be sensitive enough (and thus are not methodologically appropriate) to detect the effects of temporal changes in coverage levels on perceptions of sexual crime prevalence. As such, one way forward in this area would be to begin tracking public opinion in this area, potentially on a yearly basis. This approach would enable researchers in this area to examine current public perceptions about the prevalence of sexual offending, and also to track these perceptions in line with developments within public discussions and debates on this issue.

In relation to the headline descriptor data reported in Study 6, it may be hypothesised that readers of tabloid publications would endorse the view that the terms ‘paedophilia’ and ‘child abuse’ are synonymous to each other, whereas a greater degree of distinction may be found in the views of broadsheet readers. Conducting analyses of the relative understandings of different terms among distinct readership groups may provide important insights to researchers and policymakers who communicate with the wider public in mainstream media outlets. There are also links here to the tentative discussion of readership-specific patterns in attitudinal and judgement outcomes reported in Study 7 and Study 8.

Future Research into the Representativeness Heuristic

In Chapter 5, the assumption was made that an adult male sexual offender would act as a representative case for most participants. While the data appeared to support this view,

this assumption was based upon cursory analyses of media coverage and popular discussions about sexual crime. This leaves the work open to the criticism that this may not actually represent the implicit representations of who ‘sexual offenders’ are to most people. As such, further research should be conducted to empirically establish how ‘sexual offenders’ are viewed by wider society. This issue is also linked to some of the psychometric problems associated with the ‘Stereotype Endorsement’ subscale of the PSO (Chapter 3). Studies in this endeavour could make use of a range of methods, including content analyses of existing measurement tools (e.g., the ATS-21, CATSO, and PSO), as well as qualitative interviews with members of the public. This approach would be consistent with other work in the area of attitudes related to sexual offending (e.g., Polaschek & Gannon, 2004; Polaschek & Ward, 2002). By conducting these analyses, it may be possible to formulate empirically-grounded ‘profiles’ of the types of people that the public believe ‘sexual offenders’ are. These studies could also reduce the likelihood of researchers drawing on more subjective methods (e.g., readings of media reports or interpretations of social discussions) when designing experimental stimuli.

The discussion presented in relation to Study 5 described how people may ‘jump to conclusions’ when confronted with representative cases of sexual crime. The behavioural data with regards to the attention paid to a representative case (comparative to a non-representative case) under conditions of cognitive load supported this view. However, alternative approaches may highlight the importance of this idea in more applied contexts. One such context is among jurors in the courtroom. In criminal cases, there is a burden on prosecution lawyers to prove ‘beyond a reasonable doubt’ that a defendant is guilty of crime with which they have been charged. As such, defence teams are charged with the task of introducing some level of doubt over the defendant’s guilt. This may lead to the introduction of potential ambiguous evidence being introduced in court. In a recent study, Bartels and Gentry (2015) found that men processed unclear or ambiguous information within a dating context in a manner that was consistent with their level of rape myth acceptance. A similar experimental paradigm could be used in order to investigate the potential interpretation of ambiguous courtroom in an attitude-consistent way. Mock juror studies could be used, with a cognitive load induction being used (as in Study 5) in order to replicate the stressful conditions of the courtroom. After this, ambiguous information could be presented, followed by a recall task. It would be hypothesised that those with particularly negative attitudes will be more likely to remember ambiguous information in a manner that would lead to a guilty verdict, particularly when this information is

presented in relation to a representative defendant. This type of study would highlight the pervasiveness of people's attitudes in this area, even in a context that is ostensibly rooted in a pursuit of objective truths.

The work around the representative heuristic in this thesis has focused on the extent to which people rely on the characteristics of an offender in order to make decisions. However, there equally may be cues in the characteristics of proven and alleged victims of sexual offending that may also guide such decision-making processes. Criminological work has referred to 'memorial laws' (e.g., Valier, 2005), which are based around high-profile (typically child) victims of sexual crime being enacted in a number of jurisdictions. While these laws technically relate more closely to the societal propensity to base legislation on the availability heuristic, the coverage given to these cases (in news media and political discussions) has the potential to shape perceptions about the types of people who are, and crucially who are not, victims of such offences. The starkest example of this recently has been in a number of media stories about sexual relationships between students and teachers. In perhaps the most high-profile of these cases in the past five years, schoolteacher Jeremy Forrest was convicted of grooming, abducting, and sexually assaulting a 15 year-old female schoolgirl after engaging in an allegedly 'consensual' relationship with the girl. Public response to this case was one of abhorrence, with widespread arguments that Forrest's five year prison sentence was not long enough. In contrast, a series female-perpetrated sexual offences against male students have been met with less punitive responses, with a number of (typically male) commenters on social media bemoaning the 'good fortune' of the victims in these cases. While there are undeniably confounding variables in mediating these kinds of responses, such as differences in perceptions of young males' and females' sexualities (e.g., Lai & Hynie, 2011), there may also be a case to be made that the representativeness heuristic plays a role in moderating such judgements. As such, this is another potentially fruitful area of research.

Future Research into the Affect Heuristic

Previous work on the affect heuristic has focused on the framing of arguments, with a particular emphasis on examining how people perceive information about the relative risks and benefits of various courses of action. For example, Finucane et al. (2000) found that presenting information about the increased risks associated with a range of energy

technologies led to reductions in their participants' perceived benefits of them. Finucane et al. (2000) inferred that this reduction in perceived benefits occurred as a function of increased risk perceptions via the affect heuristic. Future research could adopt a similar design in order to establish whether risk- and benefit-based communication about sexual offending has the same impact on judgements. More practically, this approach would be interesting to examine within the context of, for example, the impact of pre-sentence report framing styles on sentencing outcomes, as well as the influence of risk assessment framing on decisions about granting parole.

Study 9 offered some early evidence that presenting information in the form of a first-person narrative may contribute to implicit improvements in affect-based responses to paedophiles. While this is an interesting finding, the mechanisms by which these improvements were achieved are still empirically unclear. Previous research in this area claim that such effects may be attributable to increased levels of empathy being felt towards the target group (e.g., Walkington & Ashton-Wigman, 2015). Further research is required in order to examine this potential mediating effect of empathy more closely.

Further, additional questions may arise in relation to the affect heuristic that interact with previous claims about how people 'jump to conclusions' when confronted by a representative example of a sexual offender. Future research might seek to understand this potential heuristic-based interaction by inducing negative or neutral affective states in participants and examining the amount of attention directed at a range of representative and non-representative cases. This type of research may have reaching implications within the courtroom environment, particularly in relation to how jurors under emotional stress approach and engage with the evidence presented in cases with 'representative' offenders as defendants.

As intimated in earlier sections, the work contained within this thesis has not examined how perceptions of sexual crime victims impact upon judgements of this type of offending. It has been observed that mainstream (particularly tabloid) news media outlets frame their coverage of sexual crime from the perspective of victims, and have even begun to hire high-profile victims as commentators in relation to this topic (e.g., Harper & Treadwell, 2013). The effects of these types of reporting strategies have not been examined in any empirical sense. As such, future research might seek to address this gap in order to look at the implications of framing these issues in such victim-centric ways.

7.4. Concluding Remarks

The over-arching aim of this thesis was to begin to move the literature on attitudes towards sexual offenders in a more empirical direction, using theoretically-validated conceptual frameworks and robust methodological techniques to examine such constructs. A review of the existing literature highlighted that much of the current work in this area was descriptive in nature, with this not informing researchers to any great extent about the factors or psychological mechanisms that underpin attitudes towards sexual offenders. As such, this thesis sought to apply dual-process models of cognition to understanding these issues, and set out to use empirically sound measurement procedures to examine the psychological foundations of these attitudes.

The results from nine empirical studies converge around the idea that attitudes and responses to sexual offenders may be linked to non-conscious mental processes. At the macro (societal) level, both the content and scale of media coverage of sexual crime, as well as legislative discussions, appear to be linked to high-profile cases that capture the public's attention. These issues are conceptually linked to the availability heuristic. In contrast, micro (individual) level responses to sexual offending are linked more closely to automatic emotional responses (i.e., the affect heuristic) to the 'sexual offender' label (in a general sense), with judgements of specific cases being related to the extent to which these cases correspond to an implicit stereotype of who a 'sexual offender' might be (i.e., the representativeness heuristic). As such, attitudes and responses to sexual offenders appear to be less reliant on details about the offending behaviour per se, but more related to a number of instinctive impulses that are held at both societal and individual levels.

These findings have a range of implications for the ways in which we (as a society, as well as researchers) discuss issues relating to sexual offending, as well as for judicial and professional practices in relation to the sentencing and treatment of sexual offenders. While this thesis provides evidence of the potential dual-level dual-process nature of responses to sexual crime, further research is required to build upon these results and develop effective methods to reduce the effects of such constructs on political, social, and practical responses to sexual offenders.

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APPENDICES

This final section provides supplementary information about the empirical work that is contained within the thesis. The following documents are provided:

- Appendix A** PhD Research Dissemination
- Appendix B** Attitudes to Sex Offenders Scale (ATS-21)
- Appendix C** Community Attitudes towards Sex Offenders Scale (CATSO)
- Appendix D** Perceptions of Sexual Offenders Scale (PSO)
- Appendix E** Vignettes used in Study 3
- Appendix F** Vignettes used in Study 4
- Appendix G** GNAT Stimuli List
- Appendix H** Mousetracking Stimuli List
- Appendix I** Moral Disengagement towards Sexual Offenders Scale (MDS-SO)

APPENDIX A

PhD RESEARCH DISSEMINATION

The following 'in press' and published papers, chapters, and conference proceedings have been obtained/given during the PhD studentship period (2013-2016), and indicate original contributions to scholarship in line with the criteria for receiving the award of PhD.

(* denotes publication or conference proceeding not directly linked to thesis content).

Journal Papers

Harper, C. A., & Hogue, T. E. (2016). Press coverage as a heuristic guide for social decision-making about sexual offenders. *Psychology, Crime & Law*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1080/1068316X.2016.1227816.

***Harper, C. A., & Harris, A. J.** (2016). Applying moral foundations theory to understanding public views of sexual offending. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1080/13552600.2016.1217086.

Harper, C. A., & Bartels, R. M. (2016). Implicit theories and offender representativeness in judgments of sexual crime. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1177/1079063216658019.

Harper, C. A., & Hogue, T. E. (2015). The emotional representation of sexual crime in the national British press. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 34*, 3–24. doi: 10.1177/0261927X14544474.

Harper, C. A., & Hogue, T. E. (2015). Measuring public perceptions of sex offenders: reimagining the Community Attitudes Toward Sex Offenders scale (CATSO). *Psychology, Crime & Law, 21*, 452–470. doi: 10.1080/1068316X.2014.989170.

Harper, C. A., & Hogue, T. E. (2014). A prototype-willingness model of sexual crime discourse in England and Wales. *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice, 53*, 511–524. doi: 10.1111/hojo.12095.

***Harper, C. A.** (2013). Transforming Rehabilitation and the creeping marketisation of British public services. *British Journal of Community Justice, 11*, 37–41.

Book Chapters

- *Orritt, R., & **Harper, C.** (2015). Similarities Between the Representation of “Aggressive Dogs” and “Sex Offenders” in the British News Media. In C. Blanco & B. Deering (Eds.), *Who’s talking now? Multispecies relations from human and animals’ points of view*. Oxford, UK: Inter-Disciplinary Press.
- ***Harper, C.** (2014). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders. In P. Taylor, K Corteen, & S. Morley (Eds.), *A companion to criminal justice, mental health and risk* (pp. 84–85). Bristol, UK: The Policy Press.

Conference Proceedings 1 - Talks

- Harper, C. A.**, Hogue, T. E., & Bartels, R. M. (2016, June). *Challenging stereotypes and punitive attitudes about sexual offenders and paedophiles*. Paper presented at the BPS Division of Forensic Psychology Annual Conference. Brighton Hilton Metropole Hotel, Brighton, UK.
- Harper, C. A.** (2015, October). *Moral disengagement in UK public discourse around sexual offending*. Paper presented at the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (ATSA) 34th Annual Conference. Le Centre Sheraton Hotel, Montréal, Canada.
- ***Harper, C. A.** (2015, July). *Ontological insecurity and its link to social and political attitudes*. Paper presented at the PsyPAG Annual Conference. University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK. [Invited Presentation].
- Harper, C. A.**, & Hogue, T. E. (2015, July). *Sexual crime prototypes and their link to public and political discourse*. Paper presented at the BPS Division of Forensic Psychology Annual Conference. Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, UK.
- Harper, C. A.** (2015, July). *The Perceptions of Sex Offenders scale: Development and validation of a new measure*. Paper presented at the BPS Division of Forensic Psychology Annual Conference. Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, UK.
- Harper, C.**, & Hogue, T. (2014, September). *The role of sexual crime prototypes in guiding social and political discourse around sexual crime legislation*. Paper presented at the 13th IATSO Conference. University of Porto, Porto, Portugal.

Harper, C. (2014, July). *Prototypes in press reporting of sexual crime*. Paper presented at the PsyPAG Annual Conference. Cardiff Metropolitan University, Cardiff, UK.

*Orritt, R., & **Harper, C.** (2014, July). *Similarities between the representation of “aggressive dogs” and “sex offenders” in the British news media*. Paper presented at the ‘Probing the Boundaries’ Global Conference: The Animal and Human Bond. Mansfield College, Oxford University, Oxford, UK.

Harper, C. A., & Hogue, T. E. (2014, May). *Representations of sexual crime in the British national press*. Paper presented at the British Psychological Society Annual Conference. International Convention Centre (ICC), Birmingham, UK.

Conference Proceedings 2 - Posters

Harper, C., & Hogue, T. (2014, September). *Reimagining the Community Attitudes Towards Sex Offenders scale (CATSO)*. Poster presented at the 13th IATSO Conference. University of Porto, Porto, Portugal.

Harper, C. A. (2013, October). *Representing crime: The media and public criminology in the post-Leveson era*. Poster presented at the Howard League for Penal Reform “What is Justice” International Conference. Keble College, Oxford University, Oxford, UK.

Public Engagement

Throughout the PhD studentship period, I have been involved in public engagement, with my work being published in the following places:

- The Lincolnite (local news outlet; Role: Columnist)

Awards Won

- PsyPAG Rising Researcher Award (July 2015)
- University of Lincoln Prize for Forensic Psychology (January 2014)

APPENDIX B

ATTITUDES TO SEX OFFENDERS SCALE (ATS-21)

Please respond to each of the following statements by indicating the extent to which you agree with it. To answer, please place the appropriate number next to the question, in the space provided.

0	1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

- ____1. Sex offenders are different from other people.
- ____2. Most sex offenders are victims of circumstance and deserve help.
- ____3. Sex offenders have feelings like the rest of us.
- ____4. It is not wise to trust a sex offender too far.
- ____5. I think I would like a lot of sex offenders.
- ____6. Give a sex offender an inch and they take a mile.
- ____7. Sex offenders need affection and praise just like anybody else.
- ____8. Trying to rehabilitate a sex offender is a waste of time and money.
- ____9. Sex offenders are no better or worse than other people.
- ____10. You have to be constantly on your guard with sex offenders.
- ____11. If you give a sex offender your respect, he'll give you the same.
- ____12. Sex offenders only think about themselves.

- _____13. There are some sex offenders I would trust with my life.
- _____14. Most sex offenders are too lazy to earn an honest living.
- _____15. I wouldn't mind living next door to a treated sex offender.
- _____16. Sex offenders are just plain mean at heart.
- _____17. Sex offenders are always trying to get something out of somebody.
- _____18. Sex offenders are immoral.
- _____19. I would like associating with some sex offenders.
- _____20. Sex offenders only respect brute force.
- _____21. If sex offenders do well in prison/hospital, they should be let out on parole.

APPENDIX C

COMMUNITY ATTITUDES TOWARDS SEX OFFENDERS SCALE (CATSO)

Please respond to each of the following statements by indicating the extent to which you agree with it. To answer, please place the appropriate number next to the question, in the space provided.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

- ____1. With support and therapy, someone who committed a sexual offence can learn to change their behaviour.
- ____2. People who commit sex offences should lose their civil rights (e.g. voting and privacy).
- ____3. People who commit sex offences want to have sex more often than the average person.
- ____4. Male sex offenders should be punished more severely than female sex offenders.
- ____5. Sexual fondling (inappropriate unwarranted touch) is not as bad as rape.
- ____6. Sex offenders prefer to stay home alone rather than be around lots of people.
- ____7. Most sex offenders do not have close friends.
- ____8. Sex offenders have difficulty making friends, even if they try real hard.
- ____9. The prison sentences sex offenders receive are much too long when compared to the sentence lengths for other crimes.

- _____ 10. Sex offenders have high rates of sexual activity.
- _____ 11. Trying to rehabilitate a sex offender is a waste of time.
- _____ 12. Sex offenders should wear tracking devices so their location can be pinpointed at any time.
- _____ 13. Only a few sex offenders are dangerous.
- _____ 14. Most sex offenders are unmarried men.
- _____ 15. Someone who uses emotional control when committing a sex offence is not as bad as someone who uses physical control when committing a sex offence.
- _____ 16. Most sex offenders keep to themselves.
- _____ 17. A sex offence committed against someone the perpetrator knows is less serious than a sex offence committed against a stranger.
- _____ 18. Convicted sex offenders should never be released from prison.

APPENDIX D

PERCEPTIONS OF SEX OFFENDERS SCALE (PSO)

Please respond to each of the following statements by indicating the extent to which you agree with it. To answer, please place the appropriate number next to the question, in the space provided.

0	1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

- ____1. With support and therapy, someone who committed a sexual offence can learn to change their behaviour.
- ____2. People who commit sex offences should lose their civil rights (e.g. voting, privacy).
- ____3. The death penalty should be reintroduced for sex offenders.
- ____4. People are far too on edge about the risks posed by sex offenders.
- ____5. More sex offenders should be given sentences in the community.
- ____6. Sex offenders prefer to stay home alone rather than be around lots of people.
- ____7. Most sex offenders do not have close friends.
- ____8. Sex offenders have difficulty making friends, even if they try real hard.
- ____9. The prison sentences sex offenders receive are much too long when compared to the sentence lengths of other crimes.
- ____10. People who commit sex offences should be subject to harsh restrictions on their liberty for the rest of their lives.

- _____11. Trying to rehabilitate a sex offender is a waste of time.
- _____12. Sex offenders should wear tracking devices so their location can be pinpointed at any time.
- _____13. Only a few sex offenders are dangerous.
- _____14. Most sex offenders are unmarried men.
- _____15. It's not if a sex offender commits another crime, it's when.
- _____16. Most sex offenders keep to themselves.
- _____17. Sex offenders should have all their details announced to local communities.
- _____18. Convicted sex offenders should never be released from prison.
- _____19. Sex offenders will almost always commit further offences.
- _____20. Some sex offenders should be allowed to work in schools.

What type of sex offender was you thinking of? _____

APPENDIX E

VIGNETTES USED IN STUDY 3

Prototypical Vignettes

Michael is a 28 year-old man from Greater Manchester. In July last year, he was accused of groping a female work colleague, first over her blouse, and later by forcing his hand underneath her skirt after he ensured they were both alone in the printing room. After an internal disciplinary review, Michael's employers decided to report the incident to the police. Following a short investigation, he was charged with sexual assault and, at court, found guilty.

David is a 32 year-old man from Birmingham. In August last year, he was accused of molesting an 8 year-old boy in the child's bedroom, after being invited to a summer barbeque by the child's father. It is alleged that David sexually touched the child, and forced his victim to do the same to him. The victim reported the incident to his parents the following day, who further raised alarm to the police. David was convicted of sexually assaulting the child after a trial in November.

Andrew is a 25 year-old man from Surrey. On a night out with friends last May, he met a female in a club. The two started talking and Andrew proceeded to buy her some drinks. After dancing until 2am, the pair left the club together, suggesting that they would share a taxi back to their apartments. After walking a short distance towards the taxi rank, Andrew tried to kiss the girl, who resisted. Andrew then proceeded to continue kissing her and, eventually, forced himself on her and raped her in a nearby alley. The girl reported the incident to a rape crisis centre a few hours later, and the police were informed. After a week-long trial in October, Andrew was convicted of rape.

Non-Prototypical Vignettes

Michelle is a 28 year-old woman from Greater Manchester. In July last year, she was accused of groping a male work colleague, first over his shirt, and later by forcing her hand underneath his trousers after she ensured they were both alone in the printing room. After an internal disciplinary review, Michelle's employers decided to report the incident to the police. Following a short investigation, she was charged with sexual assault and, at court, found guilty.

David is a 12 year-old boy from Birmingham. In August last year, he was accused of molesting an 8 year-old boy in the victim's bedroom, after being taken to a summer barbeque with his father. It is alleged that David sexually touched the child, and forced his victim to do the same to him. The victim reported the incident to his parents the following day, who further raised alarm to the police. David was convicted of sexually assaulting the child after a trial in November.

Andrew is a 25 year-old man from Surrey. After a night out with friends last May, he met up with his then-girlfriend, who had also been out with work colleagues. The two started talking about their nights and left to share a taxi back to their apartment. Upon arriving home, Andrew started to kiss the girl, who at first returned the kiss, but then resisted. Andrew then proceeded to continue kissing her and, eventually, forced himself on her and raped her in their living room. The girl reported the incident to a rape crisis centre the next day, and the police were informed. After a week-long trial in October, Andrew was convicted of rape.

A MONSTER ALWAYS HUNTING HIS NEXT VICTIM

Predatory child sex abuser, Jimmy Savile, may have abused thousands of youngsters as young as 10 years old, new reports have suggested. Claims made by victims organisations have reported a huge increase in reporting rates for alleged sexual offences since the Jimmy Savile story broke in late 2012. One source, who has asked to remain anonymous, told us how hundreds of new victims have recently come forward, retelling their stories and revealing the abuse that they suffered at the hands of Savile, who is now one of the country's most notorious criminals.

Savile, who died in 2011, was the topic of a high-profile ITV documentary in October 2012, in which various claims were made about alleged sexual crimes. Following the programme, several hundred reports were made by victims across the country. It now appears that Savile may be the UK's most prolific sex attacker in history, and will never fully face justice for his offending.

The psychological harm caused by Savile to his victims cannot be measured. Offences that have been recorded in relation to Savile include multiple rapes, sexual assaults, engaging in sexual activity with a child, and common assault. His youngest victim was just 5 years old at the time of her abuse.

Victims of Savile have recently been approved to seek compensation for their abuse. However, one victim told us that isn't enough. She said, "the police didn't believe us during Savile's lifetime, and allowed this evil and predatory paedophile get away with committing these crimes against innocent and vulnerable children. No amount of compensation can make up for the years of disbelief, abuse, and harm that we victims have suffered. There will never be true justice".

APPENDIX F

VIGNETTES USED IN STUDY 4

Adult Male Vignette

Alan is a 35-year-old man. Last May he was invited to a work colleague's barbeque, which he attended with his wife. A few hours into the event, Alan went inside to use the bathroom, located on the first floor his colleague's home. On his way to the bathroom he passed the bedroom of his colleague's 8-year-old daughter, Sarah, whom he had met on several occasions and knew well. Alan entered the room to find Sarah playing with some toys. Alan sat talking to Sarah for a few minutes, asking her about the toys that she was playing with and what else she had been doing that day. During the interaction, Alan touched Sarah's genitals, telling her that it was a game that adults play. When he stopped, Alan stayed with Sarah for several more minutes, before returning to the barbeque for the remainder of the evening.

The following day, Sarah told her parents about what Alan did, and the police were informed. Alan was arrested and charged with a sexual offence. His trial begins in next month.

Adult Female Vignette

Amanda is a 35-year-old woman. Last May she was invited to a work colleague's barbeque, which she attended with her husband. A few hours into the event, Amanda went inside to use the bathroom, located on the first floor his colleague's home. On his way to the bathroom she passed the bedroom of her colleague's 8-year-old son, Thomas, whom she had met on several occasions and knew well. Amanda entered the room to find Thomas playing with some toys. Amanda sat talking to Thomas for a few minutes, asking him about the toys that he was playing with and what else he had been doing that day. During the interaction, Amanda touched Thomas's genitals, telling him that it was a game that adults play. When she stopped, Amanda stayed with Thomas for several more minutes, before returning to the barbeque for the remainder of the evening.

The following day, Thomas told his parents about what Amanda did, and the police were informed. Amanda was arrested and charged with a sexual offence. Her trial begins in next month.

Juvenile Vignette

Adam is a 14-year-old boy. Last May he was attended a barbeque with his parents. A few hours into the event, Adam went inside to use the bathroom, located on the first floor of the property. On his way to the bathroom he passed the bedroom of his father's colleague's 8-year-old daughter, Sarah, whom he had met on several occasions and knew relatively well. Adam entered the room to find Sarah playing with some toys. Adam sat talking to Sarah for a few minutes, asking her about the toys that she was playing with and what else he had been doing that day. During the interaction, Adam touched Sarah's genitals, telling her that it was a game that he had heard about, that adults play. When he stopped, Adam stayed with Sarah for several more minutes, before returning to the barbeque for the remainder of the evening.

The following day, Sarah told her parents about what Adam did, and the police were informed. Alan was arrested and charged with a sexual offence. His trial begins in next month.

APPENDIX G

GNAT STIMULI LIST

'Sexual offender'	'Distractor'	'Positive'	'Negative'
Sex offender	Salamander	Happy	Brutal
Child molester	Chimney sweep	Great	Dirty
Rapist	Rapper	Fabulous	Revolting
Sexual abuser	Secular	Pleasure	Hate
Pedophile	Paella	Joyful	Angry
Sexual predator	Semester	Loving	Sickening
Child abuser	Chichester	Cheerful	Horrible
Sexual sadist	Seismic	Beautiful	Evil
Flasher	Florida	Splendid	Terrible
Incest offender	Information	Marvellous	Rotten
Molester	Moleskin	Super	Bad
Abuser	Abider	Fantastic	Awful
Pervert	Petrude	Merry	Dreadful
Sexual deviant	Sedimentary	Good	Sick
Sex attacker	Scatter	Excellent	Nasty

APPENDIX H

MOUSETRACKING STIMULI

'Positive'	'Negative'	'Trust'	'Intent'	'Distance'	'Sentence' and 'Risk'
Friendly	Horrible	Trustworthy	Selfish	Associate	Punish
Nice	Egotistical	Honest	Immoral	Approach	Kill
Smart	Arrogant	Responsible	Manipulative	Welcome	Jail
Charming	Horrid	Dependable	Scheming	Accept	Detain
Pleasant	Unpleasant	Reliable	Devious	Include	Attack
Good	Bas	Truthful	Controlling	Integrate	Dangerous
Lovely	Disgusting	Genuine	Calculating	Reintegrate	Deviant
Normal	Vile	Sincere	Narcissistic	Befriend	Risky
Caring	Unkind	Open	Nasty	Support	Unsafe
Kind	Mean	Trustable	Evil	Embrace	Threatening

APPENDIX I

MORAL DISENGAGEMENT TOWARDS SEXUAL OFFENDERS SCALE (MDS-SO)

Please respond to each of the following statements by indicating the extent to which you agree with it. To answer, please place the appropriate number next to the question, in the space provided.

0	1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

- ____1. It is appropriate to punish sex offenders harshly because of the harm they cause their victims.
- ____2. The government should treat sex offenders harshly if that is what the public wants.
- ____3. Harsh punishment is deserved by sex offenders once they break the law.
- ____4. Many sex offenders lack the ability to feel emotions like the rest of us.
- ____5. When sex offenders don't care about their victims' human rights, they should lose their own.
- ____6. Treating sex offenders harshly helps them to change their ways.
- ____7. Sex offenders have nobody to blame for their harsh treatment but themselves.
- ____8. Most sex offenders are monsters.
- ____9. If sex offenders aren't punished harshly, they will never respect the law.

- ____ 10. Sex offenders deserve to be excluded from the rest of society.
- ____ 11. Society as a whole needs to be more excluding of sex offenders.
- ____ 12. It is better to excessively punish some sex offenders than to allow others out to commit more crimes.
- ____ 13. If you don't punish sex offenders harshly, you can't complain when they continue to break the law.
- ____ 14. Most sex offenders should be treated like the animals they are.
- ____ 15. An individual citizen cannot be judged for excluding sex offenders from the community if the rest of society does the same.