Male and female perceptions of male and female individuals who have committed a sexual offence
Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own independent investigation under the supervision of my tutor. The various sources to which I am indebted are clearly indicated. This dissertation has not been accepted in substance for any other degree, and is not being submitted concurrently for any other degree.

Your name, Candidate,
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Leanne Freeman and Nick Perham for their continuous support throughout this project.

I would also like to thank all of the individuals who participated within my study.

_________________________________________________________

“The only limit to the height of your achievements is the reach of your dreams and your willingness to work hard for them”

- Michelle Obama

“Success isn’t always about greatness. It’s about consistency. Consistent hard work leads to success. Greatness will come”

- Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson

“I am not a product of my circumstances. I am a product of my decisions.”

- Stephen Covey
Abstract

Previous research has identified sex discrepancies within male and female individual’s perceptions of individuals who have committed a sexual offence (Daly & Bortd, 1995; Ferguson & Ireland, 2006; Brown, Deakin & Spender, 2008). Male perceptions of individuals who have a committed sexual offence have been highlighted as being increasingly more negative than female perceptions (Ferguson & Ireland, 2006). The current study aimed to identify if further sex discrepancies were present within male and female perceptions of male and female individuals who have committed a sexual offence. The study consisted of a mixed design, with participants (N= 36, Male=15, Female=21) being requested to complete two questionnaires based upon the Perception of Sex Offenders Scale (3 subscales; sentencing management, stereotype endorsement and risk perception) (Harper & Hogue, 2015). The hypothesis that female individuals who have committed a sexual offence would be the most negatively perceived overall was supported by findings however, findings did not match the hypothesis entirely. The prediction that male perceptions of male and female individuals who have committed a sexual offence would be increasingly negative compared with female individuals perspectives, which were predicted to maintain more neutral were not supported by the results produced.
Table of Contents

Declaration v
Acknowledgements v
Abstract v
Table of Contents v
List of figures

Figure 1: 11
Figure 2: 11

Chapter 1
Introduction 1

Chapter 2
Method 8
- Participants 8
- Design 8
- Materials 8
- Procedure 9
- Ethical consideration 9
- Method of analyses 10

Chapter 3
Results 11
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 4</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference list</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declaration of word count</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

The perceptions of individuals who commit sexual offences have always been believed to be negative (Greer & Jewkes, 2005), however research has highlighted diverse perceptions within individuals (Brown, 1999; Jahnke, Imhoff & Hoyer, 2015; Gakhal & Brown, 2011; Levenson, Brannon, Fortney & Baker, 2007). Within these findings sex discrepancies have been identified, and are indicative of males maintaining increasingly negative perceptions in comparison to females (Brown, Deakin & Spender, 2008; Levenson, Brannon, Fortney & Baker, 2007). However, no research has been completed focusing directly upon male and female perceptions of male and female individuals who have committed sexual offences, leaving a gap within the literature. Therefore the current study aims to identify if any sex discrepancies are present within male and female individuals perceptions of male and female individuals who have committed a sexual offence.

The perceptions of others are greatly influenced by the use of stereotypes and biases, which are present within society and are responsible for forming quick and often unchangeable perceptions of others (Contreras, Banaji & Mitchell, 2011). A stereotype is information which individuals associate with specific groups of people, for example, facial features can activate stereotypes based upon age (Arendt, 2013), gender (Contreras, Banaji & Mitchell, 2011) and race (Gilmour, 2015). The Stereotype Validity model suggests that stereotypes are best matched when behaviour is in line with pre-existing stereotypes (Arendt, 2013). However, this process can conversely lead to fallacious generalisation; suggesting that if one stereotypical behaviour is matched, they will match all others (Arendt, 2013; Gilmour, 2015). Additionally, as stereotypes form and develop they become more durable and less uncompromising over time, thus strengthening both positive and negative beliefs and biases about others (Gilmour, 2015).

Individual’s sex and gender has been identified as being the first stereotypical judgement of others (Arendt, 2013) and as a cultural frame for the classification of behaviours and relationships within society (Ridgeway, 2009). Stereotypes based upon individual’s sex are evident, with research presenting the ideology that sex “does” rather than “is” (West & Zimmerman, 1987; Ridgeway, 2009). Males are
frequently stereotyped as career driven and dominant (Prentice & Carranza, 2002; McKelley & Whittaker, 2010), whereas females are portrayed as family orientated and soft (Prentice & Carranza, 2002; Rochlen, McKelley & Whittaker, 2010; Wall & Arnold, 2007). Further research suggests that 84% of stay at home parents are female whereas 16% are male (Lee & Lee, 2018), highlighting conformity to stereotypical hegemonic masculinity and feminine care giving roles for families within society (Lee & Lee, 2018). Stereotypes such as these are often derived and maintained from sources such as the media (Ducat, Thomas & Blood, 2009) however, the representations of all areas within the media are not always reflected accurately (Greer & Jewkes, 2005).

The formation of unrealistic stereotypes and incorrect perceptions of criminal behaviour has been linked to the inversed reporting styles used within the media (Easteal, Bartels, Nelson & Holland, 2015; Greer & Jewkes, 2005). Media outlets such as newspapers have been identified to sensationalise and report the worst crimes, rather than focusing upon real statistical findings of crimes committed (Greer & Jewkes, 2005; Peelo, Francis, Soothill, Pearson, & Ackerley, 2004; Easteal, Bartels, Nelson & Holland, 2015). This phenomena has been referred to as the law of opposites (Sorenson, Manz & Berk, 1998; Chermak, 1998). For example, research has identified that sexual offences committed by individuals within minority groups are dramatically lower than portrayed within the media (Le Pelley et al, 2010), causing the formation of unrealistic stereotypes of individuals and their relation to this type of criminal behaviour (Greer & Jewkes, 2005; Peelo, Francis, Soothill, Pearson, & Ackerley, 2004; Ducat, Thomas & Blood, 2009).

The media’s use of sensationalist reporting styles similarly leads to incorrect and unequal reporting’s about individual’s sex and criminal behaviour (Kraybill, 2009). Females who commit violent crimes such as murder are not judged solely by the crime committed as males typically are (Daly & Bortd, 1995), but by all areas of their life (Kraybill, 2009). These females often cause a media frenzy, with increased focus upon aspects of their personal life such as promiscuity and physical appearance (Kraybill, 2009). Furthermore, the physical appearance of women has been identified to influence individual’s perceptions of how dangerous they are (Johnson & King, 2017). This often leads individuals to perceive women as less of a threat than males,
(Rogers, Hirst & Davies, 2011) further warping the public's judgements (Keitner, 2002; Johnson & King, 2017). Research has also identified that women who are viewed as being less attractive are subjected to harsher public judgements (Keitner, 2002; Johnson & King, 2017), whereas those rated more attractive are believed to be less likely to commit violent and or sexual crimes (Zebrowitz, 1996; Johnson & King, 2017). In addition, females who have committed violent and or sexual crimes are habitually regarded as unwomanly (Kraybill, 2009) whereas men are simply judged as unhuman rather than unmanly (Keitner, 2002). The perceived lack of a nurturing nature within violent female offenders is likewise greatly focused upon, while males are not subjected to the scrutiny of family ideals, signifying the influence of pre-existing stereotypical values (Keitner, 2002; Kraybill, 2009).

With both inaccurate and sensationalised information published by the media about individuals who commit sexual offences (Le Pelley et al., 2010), individuals perceptions are suspected to be predominantly negative (Greer & Jewkes). However, the public's perception of individuals who have committed a sexual offence has been identified to vary (Brown, 1999; Jahnke, Imhoff & Hoyer, 2015; Payne, Tewksbury & Mustaine, 2010). Brown’s (1999) research highlighted that individuals held relatively positive attitudes towards individuals who had committed a sexual offence, whereas Jahnke, Imhoff and Hoyer (2015) research challenged Brown (1999). Both studies have a long period between publishing where information became more readily available for the public (Le Pelley et al., 2010) and sensationalised by the media (Le Pelley et al., 2010). This prolonged period between publishing’s and the over sensationalised media coverage however could have influenced the publics perceptions of individuals who have committed a sexual offence. Furthermore, Jahnke, Imhoff and Hoyer's (2015) research focused upon a specific type of sexual offence, whereas Brown (1999) focused upon sexual offences as a homogeneous group. This may have also influenced the public perceptions, as individuals who are convicted of sexual offences upon children have been identified as being viewed with the most negativity (Walker, 2017; Cowburn & Dominelli, 2001). This being the type of sexual offence Jahnke, Imhoff and Hoyer's (2015) research focused upon may account for the predominantly negative perceptions. Nonetheless, current research continues to indicate varied perceptions related to
individuals who have committed sexual offences (Walker, 2017; Harris & Socia, 2016; Anderson, Sample & Cain, 2015).

Within these perceptions, factors such as individuals sex has been identified as being significantly influential (Ferguson & Ireland, 2006). Findings suggest that male individuals maintain increasingly negative perceptions towards individuals who have committed a sexual offence (Ferguson & Ireland, 2006), whereas conflicting research from Harnett (1997) has identified males as being more supportive of individuals who have committed a sexual offence. Additionally, females have been reported to perceive individuals who have committed a sexual offence as more dangerous than males (Harnett, 1997). However the methodology used within Harnett’s (1997) study can be critiqued, as the participants worked closely alongside individuals who had previously committed a sexual offence. The contact theory suggests that those who have more interaction with individuals who have committed a sexual offence hold less negative and bias perceptions (Rade, Desmarais & Mitchell, 2016). This theory has been supported by findings stating professionals working within forensic settings such as psychologists and support workers, view individuals who have committed a sexual offence more positively and are more confident that rehabilitation is possible compared to student populations who have less or no contact (Gakhal & Brown, 2011; Ferguson & Ireland, 2006). Additional research supporting the contact theory highlighted that professionals who have less contact with individuals who have committed a sexual offence such as police officers, hold amplified negative and stereotypical perceptions compared to those who have increased contact such as probation officers and forensic psychologists (Hogue, 1993; Lea, Auburn & Kibblewhite, 1999).

These sex discrepancies highlighted within both the media and individual’s perceptions are also present within sentences given for male and female individuals (Gelb, 2016). The sex discrepancies during sentencing that have been acknowledged are believed to be due to females having increased focus upon their personal and situational factors (Daly & Bordt, 1995). This heightened focus has been identified to cause juries to become more sympathetic (Deering & Mellor, 2009), thus reducing female’s sentences whilst male’s sentences remain unaffected by their personal or situational factors (Deering & Mellor, 2009; Daly & Bordt, 1995).
The chivalry hypothesis provides further support for the lessened sentencing of females (Embry & Lyons Jr, 2012). This theory suggests that due to male dominance within the jury system, females are frequently perceived as weaker and victims rather than perpetrators (Fernando Rodriguez, Curry & Lee, 2006). Furthermore, their crimes are often regarded as naive mistakes (Fernando Rodriguez, Curry & Lee, 2006) and not held to the same criminal standards as males, subsequently decreasing their sentences (Embry & Lyons Jr, 2012; Fernando Rodriguez, Curry & Lee, 2006). The chivalry hypothesis further states that sentences are frequently given with a degree of sex and gender bias (Jeffries, Fletcher & Newbold, 2003) which is supported by Embry & Lyons Jr (2012). Their research states that criminal history in itself is gendered, as the crime rates for males are much higher than females (Embry & Lyons Jr, 2012). This increased rate of male criminal records is suspected to further decrease female sentences as they are not judged as harshly based upon the likely absence of their criminal history (Embry & Lyons Jr, 2012; Jeffries, Fletcher & Newbold, 2003). In conjunction with the chivalry hypothesis, the blameworthy attribution theory proposes that females are less blameworthy than males due to their stereotypical roles within society and families, consequently receiving reduced sentences (Ulmer & Kramer, 1996). Contradictory research however has recognised the evil woman hypothesis, which suggests that females may be sentenced more harshly due to sexual offending being so far from stereotypical norms (Embry & Lyons, 2012). However, no significant differences have been identified during the sentencing of females who have previously complied with stereotypical gender roles, and those who have defied them (Griffin & Wooldredge, 2006). Irrespective of the evil woman hypothesis, previous research has predominantly favoured females receiving more lenient sentences and increased sympathy during the sentencing process (Deering & Mellor, 2009).

Once individuals receive sentences for committing a sexual offence, the current process of management and treatment is initiated. Research has identified that treatment specifically for individuals who have committed a sexual offence can reduce recidivism by up to 40% (Lösel & Schmucker, 2005), however this process conversely obtains mixed perceptions from the public (Harris & Socia, 2016). A large proportion of research supports the ideology that most perceptions are negative (Jahnke, Imhoff & Hoyer, 2015; Sample & Bray, 2006) and disbelieving that change
is possible (Jahnke, Imhoff & Hoyer, 2015; Sample & Bray, 2006; Payne, Tewksbury & Mustaine, 2010). Sample and Bray (2006) determined that over half of participants believed individuals who have committed sexual offences could not be rehabilitated and a further 1 in 10 stated they were unsure. Contradictory findings suggest that 71% of the public believe treatment received in prison is beneficial and reduces overall reoffending rates (Levenson, Brannon, Fortney & Baker, 2007), with a further 65% believing treatment received within the community is effective for decreasing recidivism (Levenson, Brannon, Fortney & Baker, 2007). Furthermore, the public stated they believe treatment should be in conjunction with a punishment that reflects the severity of the crime, (Rogers, Hirst & Davies, 2011) providing support for the Deserts theory (Carlsmith, Darley & Robinson, 2002) which states punishment equal to the offence committed is necessary to deter individuals from recommitting the crime (Carlsmith, Darley & Robinson, 2002; Rogers, Hirst & Davies, 2011). No research has previously been conducted to assess if individual’s perceptions towards the treatments for individuals who have committed a sexual offence obtains any sex discrepancies. However, further research focusing upon recidivism and sex discrepancies has been completed (Höing, Petrina, Hare Duke, Völlm & Vogelvang, 2016).

The recidivism rates among male and female individuals who have committed a sexual offence has identified sex discrepancies, and additionally highlighted that the perceptions of recidivism rates within individuals who have committed a sexual offence is incorrect and over exaggerated (Höing, Petrina, Hare Duke, Völlm & Vogelvang, 2016). Brown, Deakin and Spender (2008) identified that 60% of males and 75% of females believed that minimally, 25% of individuals who had been convicted for committing a sexual offence would reoffend within a year. Moreover, research has additionally identified that up to 75% of the public believed at least half of individuals convicted of committing a sexual offence would reoffend within the future (CSOM, 2010) however, the reality of recidivism rates are much lower (Brown, Deakin & Spender, 2008; Helmus, Hanson, Thornton, Babchishin, & Harris, 2012). Recidivism rates for sexual offences have been identified as not exceeding 15% (Helmus, Hanson, Thornton, Babchishin, & Harris, 2012), with female recidivism rates being as low as 3% after 6.5 years from their original conviction (Cortoni, Hanson & Coache, 2010), supporting the notion that individuals within the
community maintain false impressions about recidivism rates (Schiavone & Jeglic, 2009; Brown, Deakin & Spender, 2008; Helmus, Hanson, Thornton, Babchishin, & Harris, 2012). Once more the incorrect and over exaggerated perceptions are believed to be linked to the media’s use of sensationalist reporting styles (Easteal, Bartels, Nelson & Holland, 2015; Levenson, Brannon, Fortney & Baker, 2007).

Currently there is no research identifying if male and female individuals view male and female individuals who have committed a sexual offence differently, thus forming the rational for the current study. The participants were requested to complete two questionnaires containing 20 questions based upon 3 subscales; sentencing and management, stereotype endorsement and risk perception. Each questionnaire will be focusing upon their perceptions of male and female individuals who have committed a sexual offence. The first questionnaire is focusing upon their perceptions of male individuals who have committed a sexual offence, and the second upon their perceptions of female individuals who have committed a sexual offence. Based on previous research, the hypothesis for the current study is that sex discrepancies will be evident, with male individual’s perceptions of male and female individuals who have committed a sexual offence being increasingly negativity compared with females. Female individuals are predicted to uphold more neutral perspectives for both male and female individuals who have committed a sexual offence. Female individuals who have committed a sexual offence are predicted to be the most negatively perceived overall by both male and female individuals.
Method

Participants
The recruitment of participants was completed in two ways, firstly through Qualtrics and secondly via the social media website Facebook. Qualtrics is an online device where students receive credits for participating in ongoing research in a university within South Wales, and Facebook was used as an opportunity sample. The sample size was 36 individuals, comprising of 15 males and 21 females, all aged 18 and above. All of the participants were provided with full anonymity due to the questionnaires being completed online and with no sign-up process required. Furthermore, all of the data was stored on a password protected PC with accessibility only to myself and my supervisor. The participants were to complete both of the questionnaires independently, allowing no influence or biases from others. Exclusion criteria included any individuals who may have previously experienced sexual assault.

Design
The study used a mixed design to measure male and female perceptions of male and female individuals who had committed a sexual offence. A mixed design was used due to the sex of the participant being a between variable, the sex of the sexual offender relating to the questionnaires being a within variable and the subscale within the questionnaires also being a within variable. The Dependent Variable (DV) was the questionnaires - Perception of Sex Offenders Scale (Harper & Hogue, 2015), the 3 Independent Variables (IVs) were the sex of the participant (2 levels – male and female), the sex of the sexual offender relating to the questionnaires (2 levels – male and female) and the questionnaires subscales (3 levels – sentencing and management, stereotype endorsement and risk perception).

Materials
The materials used for this study included a questionnaire assessing male and female participant’s perceptions of male and female individuals who have committed a sexual offence. The questionnaire used was the Perception of Sex Offenders Scale (Harper & Hogue, 2015), which was amended by requesting participants to think about male or female offenders upon completion of the questionnaires. The
questionnaires contained 20 questions, with 3 subscales assessing sentencing and management, stereotype endorsement and risk perception. The questionnaires assessed male and female individual's perceptions of male and female individuals who have committed a sexual offences via these 3 subscales. The questionnaires were available via Qualtrics and Facebook. SPSS was used to analyse the data collected and a password-protected computer was used to store the data collected and run the analysis on SPSS.

Procedure

The procedure consisted of all the participants logging onto either their Qualtrics or Facebook accounts and reading an information sheet presented to them, allowing them to understand the nature of the study they were to participate in. Participants were made aware that taking part in the study and submitting the questionnaires were an indication of their consent being given. The information sheet also covered the inability to withdraw their data once submitted due to the anonymity of the collection process. It also included information about relevant support services. Once this was complete, participants began completing the two questionnaires. The first questionnaire focused upon participant's perceptions of male individuals who had committed a sexual offence, and the second focusing upon the participant's perceptions of female individuals who had committed a sexual offence. The questionnaires were to be completed individually ensuring no bias answers were produced. Once the questionnaires were completed, the participants were provided with debrief information that again signposted them to relevant support agencies if the questionnaires raised any issues or concerns for them.

Ethical consideration

Ethical approval was necessary prior to the collection of data. Ethical approval was granted by Cardiff Metropolitan Ethics Committee on 07/03/18 (reference number 10056). Once ethical approval was granted, participants were able to complete both of the questionnaires. The information sheet before completion of the questionnaires ensured all individuals were aware of the anonymity and inability to retract data, and that their data would be stored on a password protected computer. Both the
information sheet prior to completion of the questionnaires and the debrief form once the questionnaires were completed provided contact details of supporting organisations, to support individuals who potentially felt emotionally distressed due to the sensitive nature of the questions being asked within the questionnaires.

Method of analysis
Once data was collected the method of analysis used was a 2x2x3 mixed ANOVA. This method of analysis was used to measure male and female individual’s perceptions about male and female individuals who have committed a sexual offence in order to identify if any sex discrepancies or biases were present. The 2x2x3 mixed ANOVA was used due to ratio and parametric data being used. Further, this analysis was used due to the dependent variable being the questionnaires used; Perception of Sex Offenders Scale (Harper & Hogue, 2015), the independent variable of the sex of participant being a between variable (including 2 levels- male and female), the second independent variable the sex of sexual offender related to the questionnaires being a within variable (including 2 levels- male and female) and the third independent variable of the 3 subscales within the questionnaires being a within variable (sentencing and management, stereotype endorsement and risk perception). Furthermore, this particular analysis was used due to the presence of more than 1 independent variable, and the inclusion of the 3 subscales within the dependent variables questionnaires.
Results

The figures below display the mean perceptions of male and female participants about male and female individuals who have committed a sexual offence in terms of subscales.

Male Participant perceptions

*Figure 1. Mean score for male perceptions upon 3 subcategories within questionnaires*

Female Participant perceptions

*Figure 2. Mean score for female perceptions upon 3 subcategories within questionnaires*
A 2x2x3 mixed ANOVA was conducted to identify if any gender discrepancies were present within male and female individuals perceptions of male and female individuals who have committed a sexual offence. Both scores for the subscales stereotype endorsement and risk perception were doubled due to sentencing and managements overall score being double their original scores.

There was a significant effect of subscale on scores within the questionnaires
$$F(1,57)= 10.46, \text{ MSE } = 1075.63, p < .000, = \eta^2 .23.$$ There was also a significant effect of sex of the sex offender on subscale scores within the questionnaires
$$F(1,00)= 18.5, \text{ MSE } = 331.89, p < .000, = \eta^2 .35$$

There was a significant interaction between sex of the sex of offender and subscales on scores $$F(1,57, 1.00)= 3.72, \text{ MSE } = 85.36, p < .04, = \eta^2 .09$$, indicating that perceptions of the sex of sexual offender is affected by each subscale within the questionnaires.

Pairwise comparisons showed that perceptions about female individuals who have committed a sexual offence were significantly greater than the perceptions about male individuals who have committed sexual a offence in all subscales within the questionnaires; sentencing and management $$p < .008$$, stereotype endorsement $$p < .008$$ and risk perception $$p < .000$$. No other significant differences were observed.

The score for the subscale stereotype endorsement was significantly greater for the perceptions of female individuals who have committed sexual offences $$p < .004$$, likewise, the subscale risk perception was significantly higher towards the perceptions of female individuals who have committed sexual offences $$p < .005$$. No other significant differences were observed.
Discussion

The current study aimed to identify if any sex discrepancies were present within male and female individuals perceptions of male and female individuals who have committed a sexual offence. The hypothesis made was that gender discrepancies would be present, with male perceptions of male and female individuals who have committed a sexual offence being increasingly negativity compared with female perceptions. Female individuals were further expected to maintain more neutral perspectives of both male and female individuals who have committed a sexual offence, and female individuals who had committed a sexual offence were predicted to be the most negatively perceived overall by both male and female individuals. The results did not match the predicted hypothesis precisely.

The results have identified a two-way interaction between the sex of individual who has committed a sexual offence, and the effect of subscale score on the questionnaires, thus identifying sex discrepancies within individual's perceptions. The perceptions towards female individuals who had committed a sexual offence were significantly greater than perceptions towards male individuals who had committed a sexual offence, demonstrating that both male and female individuals perceived female individuals who have committed a sexual offence with increased negativity. These results supported the predicted hypothesis that female individuals who have committed a sexual offence would be the most negatively perceived overall. There was no three-way interaction between sex of participant, sex of individual who had committed a sexual offence and the questionnaires subscales; which was hypothesised to identify male individual’s maintaining the greatest negative perceptions towards both male and female individuals who had committed a sexual offence. However, if more individuals were to participate within the current study, this result is predicted to be have been a significant interaction; current p value p > . 060.

A multitude of research suggested that female individuals are subjected to harsher stereotypical endorsements and judgments than male individuals (Johnson & King, 2017; Rogers, Hirst & Davies, 2011; Kraybill, 2009; Keitner, 2002; Daly & Bordt, 1995). The results from the current study corroborate with previous findings, as
female individuals who have committed a sexual offence were identified as being perceived with the highest negativity within the subscale stereotype endorsement. Contreras, Banaji and Mitchell’s (2011) research identified that perceptions are greatly influenced by stereotypes, with additional research stating that female individuals are not judged exclusively by their crimes, but by all elements of their personal lives (Kraybill, 2009), which is further scrutinised by how parallel their lifestyle is with stereotypical female behaviour (Embry & Lyons, 2012). The present findings provide support for this previous research as it has identified that female individuals who have committed a sexual offence are increasingly perceived based upon pre-existing stereotypes, more so than male individuals who have committed a sexual offence (Johnson & King, 2017; Embry & Lyons, 2012; Rogers, Hirst & Davies, 2011; Daly & Bordt, 1995).

Additional research identified that female individuals who have commit a sexual offence receive more lenient sentences as juries become more sympathetic (Deering & Mellor, 2009). Daly and Bord (1995) theorised that this is due to female individuals having increased focused upon their personal and situational factors. Conversely, the findings from the current study contradict the previous research as female individuals who had committed a sexual offence were perceived with the highest negativity, suggesting harsh sentences are desired for female individuals who have committed sexual offences. These results however can provide support for the evil woman hypothesis (Embry & Lyons, 2012), which states that women who commit crimes far from their stereotypical norms receive harsher sentences. This could potentially be due to the outrage of the behaviour opposing stereotypical norms so intensely, however, further research must be completed to test this theory. The present findings can also challenge the way criminal history is believed to be gendered, as prior research suggests it is based on the higher rates of male criminal behaviour which allows female individuals to receive lower sentences as they are perceived as a lower criminal risks (Embry & Lyons Jr, 2012).

Furthermore, research highlighted that the general perceptions towards the treatment and management for individuals who have committed a sexual offence is predominantly negative (Jahnke, Imhoff & Hoyer, 2015; Sample & Bray, 2006) and disbelieving that change is possible (Payne, Tewksbury & Mustaine, 2010). This has
again been supported by the present findings, however, additional sex discrepancies have been identified. Female individuals who have committed sexual offences were perceived with the greatest negativity within the sentencing and management subscale, which has supported and added additional knowledge to this area as previous research had not yet explored sex discrepancies within individual’s perceptions of the management for male and female individuals who have committed a sexual offence. Furthermore, these findings can challenge previous research from Levenson, Brannon, Fortney and Baker (2007) which stated that a high percentage of individuals upheld positive perceptions about the management of individuals who have committed a sexual offence.

Finally, the perceptions of risk and recidivism rates related to individuals who have committed a sexual offence have been previously identified as being negative and extremely high within the public (CSOM, 2010; Brown, Deakin & Spender, 2008). Females have been identified as maintaining the strongest perceptions that individuals who commit a sexual offence are a high risk to the public and would reoffend within the future (Brown, Deakin & Spender, 2008). The current study partially corroborates these findings (Brown, Deakin & Spender, 2008) and somewhat supports the original hypothesis, as female individuals who have committed a sexual offence were perceived with significantly higher negativity than male individuals who have committed a sexual offence. Overall, both male and female individuals who have committed a sexual offence were perceived as high risk, supporting the ideology that incorrect and over exaggerated perceptions about the risk of recidivism rates in individuals who have committed a sexual offence are present within society (Schiavone & Jeglic, 2009; Brown, Deakin & Spender, 2008; Helmus, Hanson, Thornton, Babchishin, & Harris, 2012). These findings highlight the necessity for future research, to explore the highly possible link between the media’s use of sensationalised reporting styles towards sexual offence rates, and the false perceptions about individuals who commit sexual offences (Easteal, Bartels, Nelson & Holland, 2015; Levenson, Brannon, Fortney & Baker, 2007).

For the purpose of future research clear categories of sexual offences could be utilised, rather than categorising them as a homogenous group as the current study has done. This limitation could have influenced individual’s perceptions to differ, as
the type of sexual offence that was being perceived may have fluctuated between participants, as no clear instructions were given as to a specific type of sexual offence. Furthermore, future research could assess the predicted interaction between the media’s use of over exaggerated and sensationalised reporting styles, and individual’s perceptions towards individuals who have committed a sexual offence, as both current and previous research are indicative to an interaction between the media and the subscales stereotype endorsement and risk perception. The absence of research exploring sex discrepancies within individual's perceptions of treatment for individuals who have committed a sexual offence should be modified, particularly now sex discrepancies have been identified within individual’s perceptions of the sentencing and management of individuals who have committed a sexual offence. Lastly, future research could incorporate more participants as the three way interaction between the sex of participant, the sex of individual who had committed a sexual offence and the questionnaires subscales was not significant. However, this interaction is predicted to be significant with increased participants.

In conclusion, the present study identified a significant interaction between sex of sex of offender and subscales on scores within the questionnaires. The sex of individual who has committed a sexual offence has been identified to be affected by subscales within the questionnaire. The negative perceptions towards female individuals who have committed a sexual offence were significantly higher than individual’s perceptions towards male individuals who had committed a sexual offence within all subscales in the questionnaires. This interaction identified sex discrepancies within individual’s perceptions of male and female individuals who have committed a sexual offence. Furthermore, the potential for a three way interaction between the sex of participant, the sex of individual who had committed a sexual offence and the questionnaires subscales should not be overlooked, due to its high probability of being significant with an increase of participants. Replication of this study could confirm this interaction.
Reference list


Prentice, D. A., & Carranza, E. (2002). What women and men should be, shouldn't be, are allowed to be, and don't have to be: The contents of prescriptive gender stereotypes. *Psychology of women quarterly, 26*(4), 269-281.


sex offenders, sex offender treatment, and sex offender rehabilitation. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation, 50*(8), 511-530.


### Word count declaration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>2465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>1393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5050</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Signed: [Signature]

Dated: 20/04/2018