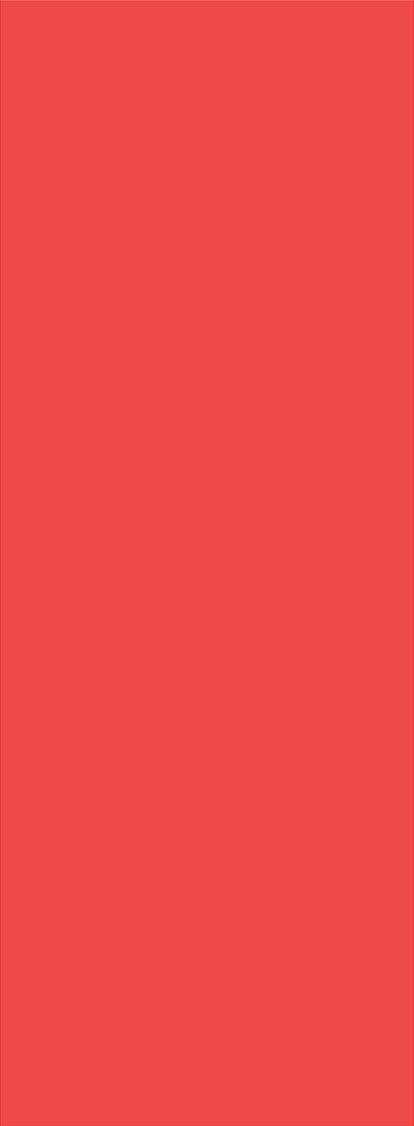


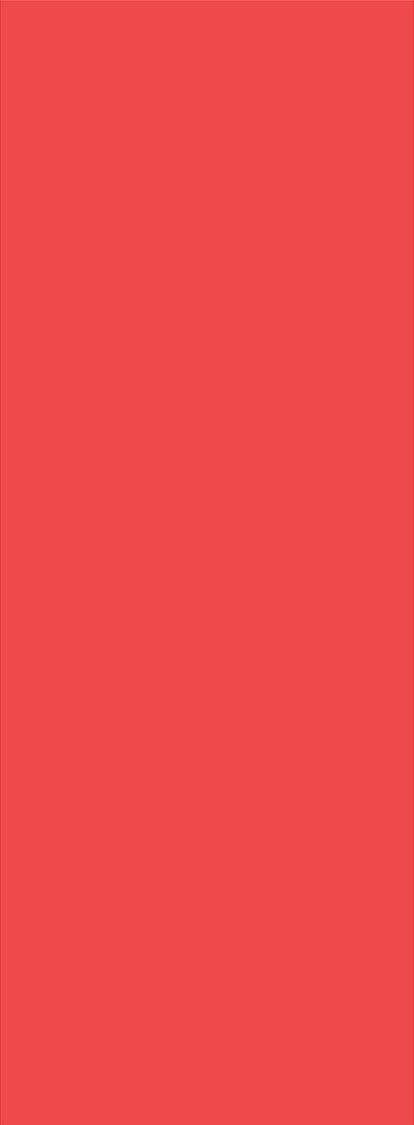
Issues in Measuring Morality Beliefs for Predicting Attitudes Towards Sex Offenders

Shannon Muir and Lynne Roberts
Curtin University



Attitudes Towards Sex Offenders

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Implicit Theories of Morality

Implicit Theories

are basic beliefs individuals hold that contribute to their worldview and guide behaviour

Developed

via personal experiences, individual differences, situational exposure, etc.

Different Domains

i.e., person attributes, intelligence, and morality

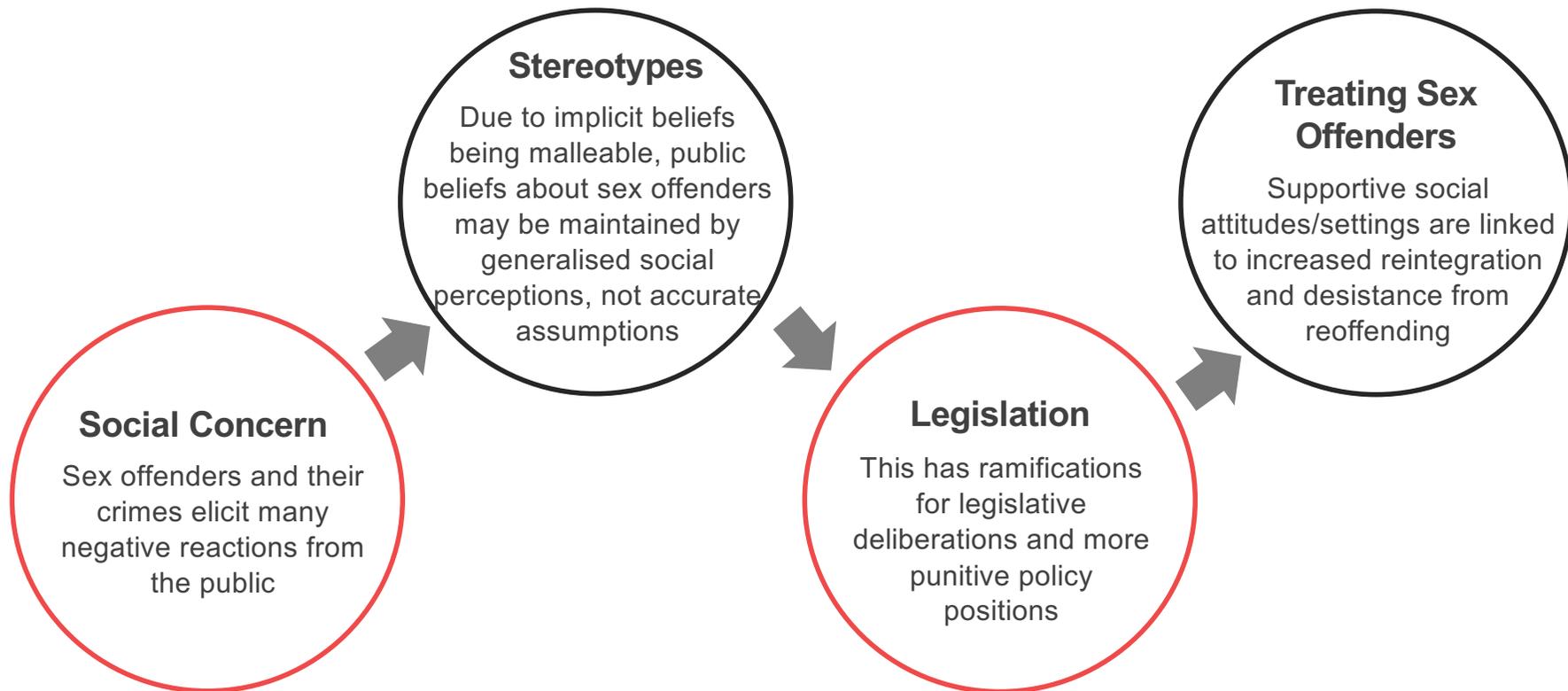
Individuals said to hold either

entity (fixed) or incremental (malleable) implicit theories

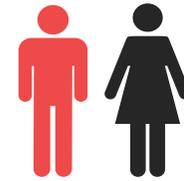
However,

whether the fixed/malleable dichotomisation should actually be made is questionable

Significance of this Research Area



The Present Research



Hypothesis One

- Continuous measures of morality beliefs will account for more variance than categorical counterparts in predicting attitudes towards sex offenders

Variables

Predictor

Morality beliefs

Criterion

Attitudes towards sex offenders

Moderator

Gender

Hypothesis Two

- Gender will moderate malleable beliefs and attitudes towards sex offenders
 - Females significantly stronger negative relationship than males
-

The Present Research



**Cross-sectional,
correlational
study**



**Online self-
report
questionnaire**



855 participants



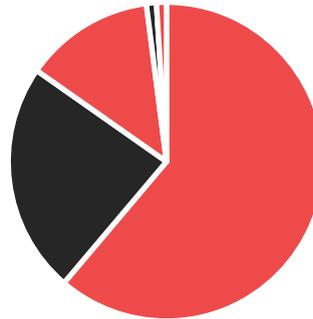
**Aged 18 above
and globally**

Participants



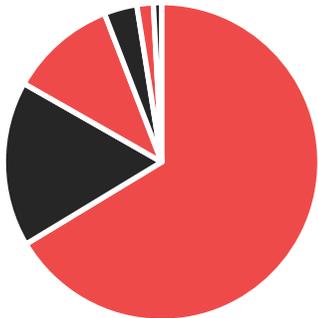
Locations

47% America
40% Australia
10% Europe
2% Other
<1% Asia
<1% Africa



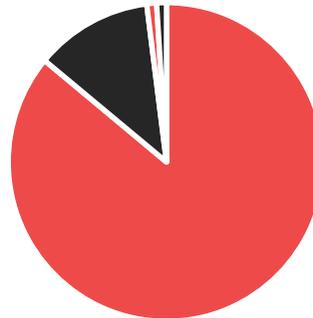
Education

60% Degree
23% Completed secondary school
13% Other post-secondary
1% Current tertiary student
<1% Unspecified



Occupation

79% Employed
20% Student
13% Carer
4% Unemployed
2% Retired



Gender

86% Female
12% Male
<1% Other
<1% Unspecified

Questionnaire Measures

Morality Beliefs

- 8-item self-report measure by Hughes (2015)
Comprising fixed (entity; $\alpha = .87$) and malleable (incremental; $\alpha = .91$) items

Attitudes Towards Sex Offenders

- 21-item self-report measure by Hogue and Harper (2019)
Trust, intent, social distance subscales ($\alpha = .93$)

Demographics

- Single-item questions concerning age, gender, country of residence, education, and occupation

Example Question Items

Morality Beliefs

Fixed (entity) item:

“A person’s moral character is something very basic about them and it can’t be changed much”

Malleable (incremental) item:

“No matter what kind of moral character a person has, they can always change it very much”

Attitudes Towards Sex Offenders

Trust subscale:

“You have to be constantly on your guard with sex offenders”

Intent subscale:

“Sex offenders are just plain mean at heart”

Social Distance subscale:

“If sex offenders do well in prison/hospital, they should be let out on parole”

Results

● Hypothesis One

● Two standard multiple regression analyses to compare the variance in attitudes towards sex offenders accounted for by a) categorical morality beliefs and b) continuous morality beliefs

● Categorical morality beliefs significantly accounted for 14% of the variance in attitudes towards sex offenders (medium effect size of $f^2 = .16$)

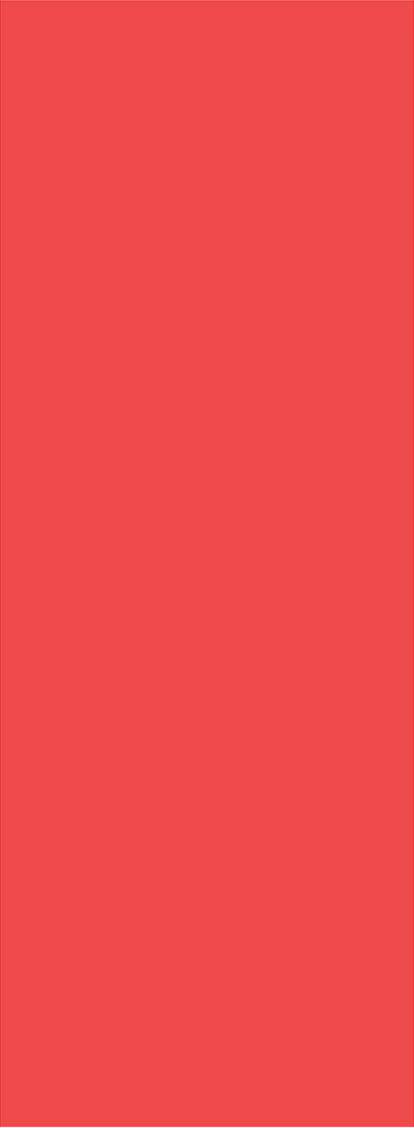
● Continuous morality beliefs significantly accounted for 22% of the variance in attitudes towards sex offenders (medium effect size of $f^2 = .28$)

● Indicates that the continuous measures significantly accounted for more variance, supporting hypothesis one

Results

● Hypothesis Two

- Gender did not significantly moderate malleable (incremental) morality beliefs and attitudes towards sex offenders, and therefore the null hypothesis could not be rejected
 - Exploratory analyses indicated that gender did not significantly moderate fixed (entity) morality beliefs and attitudes towards sex offenders either
-



Discussion

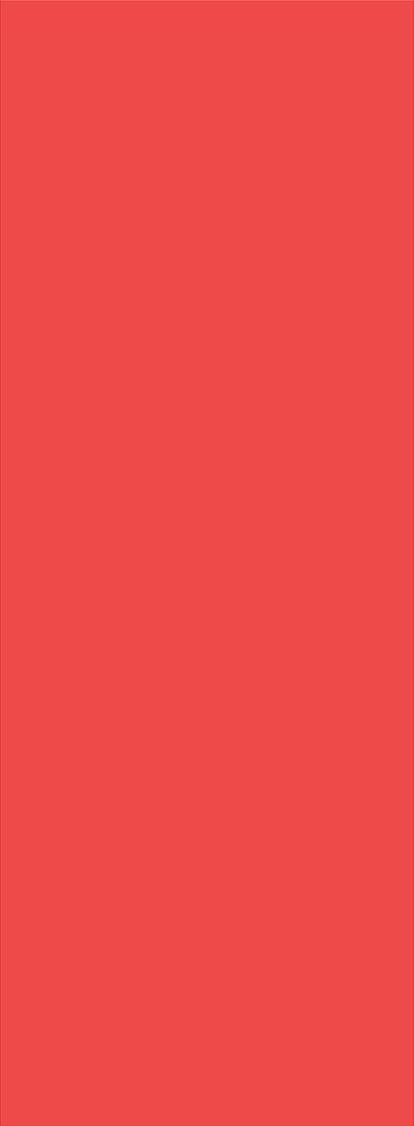
Measuring Implicit Theories

Morality domain is a worthwhile predictor in this area

Continuous morality items accounted for more variance than the categorical items

Effect sizes substantiates previous claims that dichotomising continuous variables impedes effect size and statistical power

Results in previous implicit theory research are likely understated/inaccurate



Discussion

Measuring Implicit Theories and Gender

Correlation showed males having slightly more malleable beliefs, but gender did not significantly correlate with attitudes towards sex offenders, nor did it moderate malleable or fixed beliefs and attitudes towards sex offenders

Perhaps no moderation exists, or if it does it may be trivial

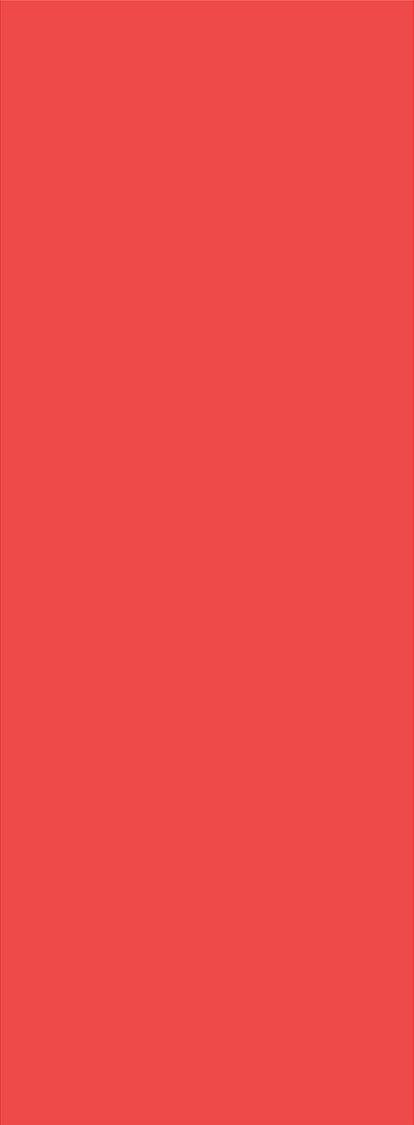
Coincides with some prior research, but not all

Sample was considered sufficient for a small effect with >100 males, but having 86% females may have attenuated statistical power

Implications and Concluding Remarks

- Morality beliefs are a useful predictor of attitudes towards sex offenders
 - Continuous implicit theory measures should be employed in future
 - Caution is warranted when evaluating previous works derived from categorical measures
 - Attitudes towards sex offenders may be improved by encouraging the belief that sex offenders can change
 - This may assist successful reintegration and a subsequent decline sexual reoffending rates
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Thank you for listening 😊



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