

University of Alberta

Collateral Effects of the Media on Sex Offender Reintegration:
Perceptions of Sex Offenders, Professionals, and the Lay Public

by

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Abstract

Sexual offending results in devastating consequences for victims and is of great concern to the public; prevention of re-offending is therefore an important endeavour. No formal reintegration system is in place for sex offenders and often the media sensationalizes stories about these offenders, which can indirectly affect their opportunities for reintegration into the community and thereby impact factors related to recidivism. Because the media has a remarkable influence on public views and frequently draws attention to sex offenders, it is important to study the role it plays in offender reintegration. The proposed study surveyed sex offenders, professionals who work with them, and university students on their perceptions of how the media portrays sex offenders and the effects of these portrayals on sex offender reintegration. Results and implications of the findings are discussed.

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Introduction

Awareness of the numerous and negative consequences of sexual assault on victims, their families, and society as a whole has made the prevention of sexual offending a national priority. A key component of this effort is the reduction of re-offending by those who have committed a sexual offence.

Sexual offences can have life-long effects on victims, leaving them with long-term psychological and emotional damage (Finkelhor, Hotaling, Lewis, & Smith, 1990; Lutfey, Link, Litman, Rosen, & McKinlay, 2008). Post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, low self-esteem, anxiety, and fear are just some of the negative consequences victims of sexual offences face (Resick, 1993). Between 2007-2008 the Canadian government spent \$178.7 million providing services to victims of crime (Correctional Service Canada, 2010). Almost 70% of recipients were victims of crimes against the person and over 30% were victims of sexual assault (Correctional Service Canada, 2010). Sexual offences are typically the most feared, perceived as the most serious of offences, and prompt the strongest negative reactions from the public (Public Safety Canada, 2007). Even among offenders in prisons, sex offenders face the greatest animosity, hold a low status (Sapp & Vaughn, 1990), and are seen as outcasts by other inmates (Åkerström, 1986).

Perpetrators of sexual offences are more likely to serve time in jail than other violent offenders (Kong, Johnson, Beattie, & Cardillo, 2003), and upon their release they may be at risk to re-offend both sexually and generally. A five-year follow up study of male sex offenders found that 14% of offenders re-offended

sexually, 25% committed some violent crime, and almost 40% committed a new crime (Hanson & Bussière, 1998; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2004).

Legislations have been enacted throughout the U.S. and Canada in order to try and protect the public from sex offenders who have been released from prison (Murphy, Fedoroff, & Martineau, 2009). In the U.S., these legislations (which include for example community notification laws) have been found to have unintended consequences on offenders and a negative impact on their reintegration (Tewksbury, 2005). In Canada, there are no studies that have investigated the impact of said legislations on sex offenders and in contrast to the U.S., registry information is not public (Murphy et al., 2009). Sex offenders receive a lot of attention from news media, and often these legislations are influenced by the media's impact (Petrunik & Deutschmann, 2008).

Harsh, negative, and most often inaccurate claims about sexual offenders are presented in the media and serve to influence the opinions of members of the public as well as professionals who work with sex offenders (Berlin & Malin, 1991). The media, which includes outlets such as the Internet, newspapers, television, and radio (Tewksbury, Miller, & DeMichele, 2006), can influence public attitudes, and thereby impact the reintegration of sex offenders into the community. Factors associated with re-offending among sex offenders include poor social supports, antisocial lifestyles, poor self-management strategies, and difficulties cooperating with community supervision (Hanson & Bussière, 1998; Hanson & Harris, 1998). No formal reintegration system is in place for sex offenders (Vandiver, Dial, & Worley, 2008), and often the media sensationalizes

stories about these offenders, which can indirectly affect their opportunities for reintegration into the community. The portrayal of sex offenders in the media can impact how well an offender is able to gain and maintain employment and live a pro-social lifestyle upon release from jail (Schiavone & Jeglic, 2009), due to the influence of the media on the attitudes of members of the community.

Understanding factors that influence a convicted sex offender's ability to successfully reintegrate into the community is an important aspect of preventing further criminal behaviour. Because the media has a remarkable influence on public views and frequently draws attention to sex offenders, it is important to study the role it plays in offender reintegration. The proposed study sought to investigate the perceptions of sex offenders, professionals who work with them, and a control group of university students on how the media portrays sex offenders and the media's effect on sex offender reintegration in Canada. Ultimately, the goal of this research is to gain a better understanding of the impact of the media's portrayal of sex offenders and its effects on offender reintegration. Results may help to guide efforts to improve sex offender reintegration and thereby reduce re-offending.

The following review will start by summarizing the effects of sexual crimes, recidivism rates of sex offenders, and risk factors associated with repeated sexual offending. Next will follow a review of legislative policy associated with sexual offending both in the U.S. and in Canada, and finally a discussion of the media's influence on policy formation and public opinion.

Literature Review

Sexual Offending Effects

Sexual crimes cause a great deal of turmoil for many members of the public and result in numerous damaging consequences for victims and their families. Victimization studies indicate that sexual assault is one of the most underreported crimes in Canada (Brennan & Dauvergne, 2011). In 2004, only 8% of sexual offences were reported to the police (Gannon & Mihorean, 2005) and according to the most recent General Social Survey conducted in 2009, 9 out of 10 sexual assaults were never reported to the authorities (Perreault & Brennan, 2010). In 2009, victimization rates (which include both police reported and unreported criminal acts) for violent offences (including sexual assault) were the highest in Western provinces and sexual assault was the second most commonly reported form of violent victimization (Perreault & Brennan, 2010). Brennan and Dauvergne (2011) indicated that there was a 5% increase in the rate of sexual assault reported by the police across Canada. Regardless of the rate of reporting, even the small numbers of reported sexual crimes are a cause for concern due to the nature of consequences to victims. Victims of sexual crimes, such as sexual exploitation or indecent acts (Interpol, 2010; Kong et al., 2003), suffer from a host of physical and psychological scars. These can range from physical pain and injuries to a plethora of psychological problems, such as depression, anxiety, panic attacks, loss of self esteem, relationship issues, shock, restricted affect, suicidal ideations, and social withdrawal (National Center for Victims of Crime, 2008). Victims suffer effects that may interfere with many aspects of their lives as

a result of trying to cope with a very irregular occurrence that has caused incredible stress and anxiety (VWSAC, 2009). Many times, these issues infiltrate the victims' social relationships and perpetuate the damaging effects of such crimes in society. The families of victims experience secondary effects similar to what the victims themselves are experiencing: trauma, disorientation, and a disruption in their social relationships (Edwards, Higgins, & Zmijewski, 2007). Due to these permeating negative effects, focusing on the reduction of sex offender re-offending is clearly an important undertaking.

Sex Offenders and Recidivism Rates

The vast majority of offenders convicted of sexual crimes are male (Corabian, Ospina, & Harstall, 2010) with an estimated 1-2% of males convicted of a sexual assault in their lifetime (Hanson & Bussière, 1998; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005). In reported cases of sexual assault in 2002, 97% of offenders were male (Kong et al., 2003). When discussing rates of sex offender recidivism, it is imperative to point out that much variation exists within the literature (Hepburn & Griffin, 2004a). Due to the drastic rate of underreporting of sexual crimes, we can anticipate that, in fact, actual recidivism rates are higher than reported rates (Vess & Skelton, 2010). It has been found that recidivism rates of sexual offenders vary based on the type of sex offender (e.g., rapist vs. child molester), the definition of recidivism operationalized for each research study (e.g., reconviction vs. being charged with a new sexual offence), and judicial practices such as plea bargaining which may blur the rate of true sexual re-offending (Vess & Skelton, 2010). Meta-analyses of over 80 studies of recidivism

rates for sexual offending in North America and Europe found that rates were 14% over a period of 4 to 6 years (Hanson & Bussière, 1998; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005). A longitudinal study of sexual offenders over a period of 15 years found that 24% of offenders were charged or convicted of another sexual crime (Harris & Hanson, 2004). Several studies have reported that rapists re-offend at a much higher rate than other sexual offenders, such as interfamilial offenders or child molesters (Marshall & Barbaree, 1990; Meloy, 2005; Quinsey, Rice, & Harris, 1995). In a study by Rice, Harris and Quinsey (1991), after a 4-year follow up, almost 30% of offenders had been reconvicted of a sexual offence and over 40% had been convicted of a violent offence. Rates of exhibitionistic re-offending (inappropriately exposing oneself in public) have been reported to be between 40 to 70% (Bartosh, Garby, Lewis, & Gray, 2003).

Recidivism Factors

Desistance is the process of “cessation from criminal behavior” (Kruttschnitt, Uggen, & Shelton, 2000, p. 62) and becoming a productive member of society (Laws & Ward, 2010). In order to support offenders in ceasing from further criminal activity, research has been conducted to identify factors that are associated with recidivism. Research into factors that predict risk of general recidivism has identified two main categories: static (or unchangeable factors) such as age and criminal record, and dynamic (or changeable) risk factors such as attitudes about crime and justice (Bonta, Law, & Hanson, 1998; Hanson & Harris, 1998). Factors associated with general risk of re-offending are: younger age, pro-criminal attitudes, substance abuse, having criminal associates, and an unstable

employment history (Gendreau, Little, & Goggin, 1996). It has been argued, however, that factors associated with general criminal recidivism cannot necessarily be applied to sexual offenders because they are different from other offender types (Hanson & Bussière, 1998).

Although sexual offenders tend to have more varied criminal careers and commit a range of different offences (Corabian et al., 2010), other types of offenders rarely commit sexual offences according to Hanson and Bussière (1998). This supports the contention that different factors influence sex offender recidivism. The factors unique to sex offenders are mainly static ones, such as victim characteristics, and are particular to certain offences, such as child molestation (CSOM, 2001). One study focusing on child molesters identified that static factors, such as the number of previous victims, use of force in their offence, and score on a deviant sexual interest index, were found to be associated with offenders who recidivated (Barbaree & Marshall, 1988). Hanson and Bussière (1998) conducted a meta-analysis of 61 different studies and found that static factors associated with sexual recidivists include sexual offence history (recidivists had more and diverse previous sexual offences, having male victims, begun offending earlier in life), increased sexual deviancy, and criminal lifestyles. Failure to complete treatment was moderately associated with recidivism (Hanson & Bussière, 1998). A meta-analytic review found that in comparison to static factors, dynamic factors of risk were found to be equal or better at predicting risk of re-offending (Gendreau et al., 1996). Because static factors are unchangeable, treatment providers and researchers have begun to focus on identifying and

targeting dynamic factors associated with sexual recidivism (Mann, Hanson, & Thornton, 2010).

A study comparing non-recidivating sexual offenders with recidivists on dynamic factors found that the social environment of non-recidivists included more positive influences than that of recidivists (Hanson & Harris, 1998). Hanson and Harris (1998) also found that sexual recidivists had more anti-social attitudes, engaged in more risky behaviour, were more likely to be unemployed, had more substance abuse problems, and overall lead more disordered and antisocial lifestyles compared with non-recidivists. Offenders, once released from prison or who are assigned community sentences, are faced with the potential to either re-offend or desist from criminal activity.

Desistance theory states that all offenders are foremost, human beings, and once they have completed their time in jail, or are being successfully supervised in the community, they have the right to live their lives just as all other citizens (Willis, Levenson, & Ward, 2010). Previous research suggests that if offenders who are released are provided with the opportunity to find stable housing, employment, positive relationships, and other supports, they are more likely to desist from sexual offending (Hanson & Harris, 2000; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005; Hepburn & Griffin, 2004b; Willis & Grace, 2009; Willis et al., 2010); these are the challenges to reintegration that offenders face once they are residing out in the community. As previously mentioned, the completion of a treatment program has been shown to impact recidivism, but the success of such in-prison treatment rests on how able the offender is to reintegrate into the

community and successfully apply what they have learned (Harper & Chitty, 2005). Given that 60% of convicted sex offenders are being supervised in the community (Greenfeld, 1997), it is important to look at dynamic factors that impact offenders' ability to successfully desist in the community. One of the many factors influencing offenders' desistance when reentering the community are formal controls established by law.

Formation of Sex Offender Policies

Formal controls of sex offenders, beyond incarceration, include legal/criminal sanctions, such as probation, sex offender registries (SORs), community notification, and residence restrictions (Kruttschnitt et al., 2000; Willis et al., 2010). Research regarding sex offender recidivism has consistently found that sexual offending has one of the lowest base rates of all criminal offences (Ducat, Thomas, & Blood, 2009), yet it arouses the most panic in and prompts the greatest precautions taken by the community.

Tewksbury and Mustaine (2009) indicate that due to the drastically low social ranking and negative associations with sex offenders in society, punishments for sex offenders have become increasingly more punitive and lengthy. In looking at the origin of protective legislation including sex offender registries, community notification laws, and housing restrictions, these acts were instituted as a result of public outcry and panic in response to media coverage of the release of sex offenders (Sample & Kadleck, 2008; Willis et al., 2010).

U.S. policies. In the United States, there are a variety of policies in place to manage sex offenders out in the community (Petrunik, 2002; Tewksbury &

Mustaine, 2009). Although several states, including Washington in 1990 and Minnesota in 1991, had already established sex offender registries, the Jacob Wetterling Crimes Against Children and Sexually Violent Offender Registration Act of 1994 was the federal statute that led to the development of sex offender registries across the U.S. (Tewksbury & Lees, 2006). The Jacob Wetterling Act was implemented following the abduction of a young boy named Jacob from his hometown in Minnesota by a suspected violent pedophile; Jacob's body along with his attacker were never found (Petrunik, 2002). These sex offender registries include offenders' demographic information, their current address, and a description of their offence. Registrants are required to remain on the listing a minimum of 10 years and depending on the severity of their offence, may require lifetime registration (Tewksbury & Lees, 2007).

In 1996, the implementation of Megan's Law was responsible for making information contained in sex offender registry databases available to the public. Megan's Law was passed following the murder of a 7-year-old girl, by a previously convicted and unmonitored sex offender living in her community (Tewksbury & Lees, 2007). This community notification law is federally mandated but was state administered until the implementation of the Adam Walsh Act in 2006 which created standardized mandates for the process of registration and notification across the U.S. (Brannon, Levenson, Fortney, & Baker, 2007). These laws are intended to heighten public awareness of sex offenders (Pawson, 2002) and, in combination with sex offender registries (which contain offenders' demographic information, current place of residence, etc.), are intended to provide

information that people from the general public can use to protect themselves (Tewksbury & Lees, 2006).

Often these policies are named after victims of horrific sexual crimes (commonly children), for example Megan's Law, another reflection of the ever-increasing media influence on the creation of such legislation (Petrunik, 2002). In fact, Sample and Kadleck (2008) found that for U.S. politicians, the media was their primary source of information regarding sex crimes, and this information significantly impacted their legislative proposals.

Canadian policies. In Canada, there are two sex offender registries: the Ontario Sex Offender Registry (OSOR) and the National Sex Offender Registry (NSOR); both were established within the last ten years (Murphy et al., 2009; Petrunik, 2002). Ontario was the first province to establish a sex offender registry, as a result of a Coroner's Inquest into the sexual assault and murder of a young boy named Christopher Stephenson by a sex offender who was on parole. The OSOR, or "Christopher's Law", as it is commonly known, came into effect in 2001 (Murphy et al., 2009). Following Ontario's lead, other provinces began to establish their own registries, until 2004 when the NSOR was implemented (Petrunik, 2002). The NSOR is maintained and administered by the RCMP and the intended purpose of this registry is to assist police with the investigations of sexual crimes and provide them with up-to-date information on convicted sex offenders across Canada (Murphy et al., 2009).

Information contained in Canadian registries, in contrast to American legislation, is not available to the public. Currently, there are no published studies

regarding these Canadian registries and how offenders perceive them, and there are no studies to indicate the effectiveness of registries in reducing recidivism (Murphy et al., 2009). There is separate legislation particular to each province's freedom of information act that allows disclosure of information to the public regarding high-risk violent or sexual offenders who are released upon completion of their incarceration term (Murphy et al., 2009). This disclosure is similar to American community notification policies, whereby the public is provided with offender information upon release, via the media.

Section 32 of Alberta's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP Act) is a mandatory disclosure law intended to protect the public (Service Alberta, 2009). This section allows the police to notify the public about offenders believed to pose a significant risk of harm to the public who will be released into the community. This information is often provided by way of a press release, and in most cases, information about the offender, including a photograph, is also posted on the Solicitor General and Public Security High Risk Offender website. Offender information remains on this website for a minimum period of one year (Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security, 2012). It has yet to be demonstrated that these efforts to alert the public work to reduce re-offending (Levenson, D'Amora, & Hern, 2007); however, these policies do result in diverse consequences for offenders.

Effects of Sex Offender Policies

Researchers investigating the perceptions of U.S. sex offender registries (SORs) and policies, such as public disclosure and residential restrictions, have

found that sex offenders are more likely to regard regulations as unfair and ineffective as compared to the public (Brannon et al., 2007; Craun, 2010; Levenson, Brannon, Fortney, & Baker, 2007; Levenson & Cotter, 2005; Schiavone & Jeglic, 2009; Tewksbury & Lees, 2006, 2007).

Research indicates that sex offenders suffer serious social and economic consequences as a result of being on SORs (Levenson, D'Amora, et al., 2007). Some studies point out that registration and notification policies may actually serve to increase recidivism because they isolate, stigmatize, and alienate offenders in the community (Schiavone & Jeglic, 2009; Tewksbury & Lees, 2006). In one study, over half of surveyed sex offenders reported vigilantism as a result of the policies (Levenson, Brannon, et al., 2007) and other studies indicate that offenders reported many negative social consequences, such as financial stressors, loss of family and friend support, and difficulties finding housing and employment, as a result of the public's awareness of their offences (Levenson, D'Amora, et al., 2007; Tewksbury, 2005; Tewksbury & Mustaine, 2009). Tewksbury and Mustaine (2009) found that residential restrictions laws have produced communities throughout the U.S. that have effectively created no available housing for registered sex offenders. Offenders are thereby forced to relocate and may be separated from positive social supports, including family and friends, which are factors that reduce their risk of re-offending.

Levenson, Brannon and colleagues (2007) found that members of the public were largely unaware of notification policies yet still claimed such policies were successful in reducing sexual abuse, despite sufficient evidence to rebut this

conclusion. These authors also found that over 75% of the public surveyed believed that sex offenders should be subject to public identification, regardless of their risk level (Levenson, Brannon, et al., 2007). In one study, members of the public were supportive of treatment for offenders in the community but not willing to actively support sexual offenders residing in their neighborhoods; almost 95% of those surveyed indicated they would not rent housing to a sex offender and 70% indicated they would not hire sex offenders in their business (Brown, 1999). These negative attitudes can obviously create major barriers for sex offenders in terms of reintegrating and trying to follow a path of desistance (Willis et al., 2010).

SORs result in negative labeling and stigmatizing of sexual offenders, which can hinder an offender's willingness to adapt a pro-social lifestyle and pursue desistance successfully (Tewksbury & Mustaine, 2009). Formal controls, therefore, appear to do more harm than good in protecting the public from sex offenders given their detrimental impact on reintegration of sex offenders. In fact, the process of enacting such legislation, for example the Conservative government's recent *Safe Streets and Community Act*, relies very little on research evidence (Barbaree et al., 2012). Given the media's role in motivating these legislations through its influence on public opinion and how difficult it is to make change through lobbying reforms (Hunter & Keyes, 2005), perhaps targeting the media's impact on public perceptions of sex offenders could be more efficacious.

The Media's Influence on Public Perceptions

The relationship between the media, as a source of information and public opinions, and behaviours has been well-established. The media has been shown to influence political involvement and general local participation into community concerns (Scheufele, Shanahan, & Sei-Hill, 2002). One study, involving members of the public and using altered vignettes and a follow-up questionnaire, found that the sensationalism of crimes involving mentally ill people in the newspaper negatively impact the public's attitudes about this subgroup (Thornton & Wahl, 1996). These negative public attitudes, which can result in social rejection, can influence how mentally ill offenders find support in the community (Page, 1983). The same effect has been found with sex offenders. A recent U.S. National Public Opinion poll regarding sex offenders revealed that 74% of respondents reported that the media was their main source of knowledge and information about sex offenders (CSOM, 2010). In the absence of contact and interaction with sex offenders, public attitudes regarding sex offenders are more likely influenced by depictions of sex offenders by the media (Kjelsberg & Loose, 2008).

Studies of the public's perceptions about sex offenders have shown that they are highly inaccurate (Craun & Theriot, 2009). One survey study (Harris & Hanson, 2004) reported that the public overestimated recidivism rates of sex offenders by almost 3 times the reported rate (of 24% over a 15 year follow up), believed most of these offenders were molested as children, and perceived sex offenders as the most likely type of offender to re-offend (Brannon et al., 2007). Often these studies do not account for the heterogeneous population of sex

offenders but survey for attitudes about a homogeneous sex offender population—one that does not truly exist (Willis et al., 2010). The media is the main source of this information for many people (Proctor, Badzinski, & Johnson, 2002; Sample & Kadleck, 2006). Brown, Deakin, and Spencer (2008) found that most people think that the majority of sex offenders will re-offend and that treatment is not effective in reducing risk. This same study found that half of respondents believe the media's portrayal of sex offenders was either accurate or underreported the risk of re-offending (Brown et al., 2008). In another study, Craun and Theriot (2009) found that awareness of a sex offender in the local area was associated with an increase in misconceptions regarding sexual offending; people were more inclined to be suspicious of and associate higher risk with strangers (as potential offenders), even though most sexual offences are not committed by strangers (Levenson, Brannon, et al., 2007).

Overall, those who have more experience with sex offenders, such as professionals who work with them, have more positive attitudes and more accurate information regarding these offenders (Church, Wakeman, Miller, Clements, & Sun, 2008; Craig, 2005; Willis et al., 2010). Professional opinions vary depending on the populations worked with (victims vs. offenders) and the authors explained their results by citing theories of prejudice and stereotypes. Those working with offenders display more tolerance and less confidence in policy effectiveness, while those working with victims have more negative feelings towards sex offenders and are more supportive of sex offender policies. A study asking professionals their opinions found that the majority felt that

community notification was not effective in reducing re-offending but half of the sample felt that offenders should be subject to the disclosure (Levenson et al., 2009). This study highlights how there is still some uncertainty on the part of professionals regarding these policies even though they believe that the policies are ineffective. Malesky and Keim (2001) found that 60% of professionals surveyed believed that offenders who are subject to community notification will become targets of vigilantism in their communities, and over 80% of professionals surveyed did not believe that public registries would affect the rate of re-offending.

Willis and colleagues (2010) state that, “effective treatment, re-entry, and reintegration of sex offenders partially hinges on the way they are regarded by mental health professionals and members of the public” (p. 547). They suggest that positive relationships, educational opportunities, and stable jobs will not become a reality for sex offenders until there are accepting attitudes towards them in the community (Willis et al., 2010). Given that no formal reintegration system is in place for sex offenders (Vandiver et al., 2008), and often their crimes are sensationalized via media coverage, it can become very challenging for them to succeed in the community. Important to the process of reintegration are both the community’s willingness to accept the offender, which can be affected by the media, and the offender’s perceptions of the community’s attitudes towards him.

There is minimal Canadian research in this area, and it would be helpful to investigate the media’s effects because, unlike the American population, Canadians do not have access to sex offender registration information. Thus, it is

likely the media is an even more influential source of the information for the public about these offenders.

Current Study

Due to the pervasive nature of the media in the lives of the public, its capacity to influence attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours (Wimmer & Dominick, 2005), and the potential for misinformation and negative portrayals of sex offenders via the media, the current study aims to survey the perceptions of sex offenders, professionals, and a control group of university students on the news media's effects on sex offender reintegration. The survey is the most common way to gather information in the social science field (Walonick, 1998) and it can be used to measure the perceptions of respondents, which corresponded with the purposes of the present study. Surveys are straightforward to administer, familiar to participants, cost effective especially with larger groups, and are less intrusive (De Vaus, 2003; Walonick, 1998) than other methods. The survey, which does not require an extended time commitment, was an appropriate instrument for the current study and has been the instrument of choice in previous studies in this area (Levenson & Cotter, 2005; Tewksbury, 2006). A new survey was created for the current study.

It was considered important to ask sex offenders their opinions directly because the study is in regards to the effects of the media on them specifically. Their opinions on the matter can help to focus attention on the areas of concern regarding impeding factors of their successful reintegration.

In order to balance the potential bias that may result from only offenders responding to the questionnaire (it may be skewed towards an overly-negative perspective), professionals were also included in the study sample. Professionals can provide a different perspective on the issue since the survey does not directly ask questions about them as a group. It is important to investigate professional opinions regarding this issue as their attitudes may impact their work and interaction with sex offenders (Lea & Auburn, 1999). As well, they are knowledgeable about what sex offenders face and what issues/factors are related to succeeding in the community and not re-offending. Professionals are also able to assist in the dissemination of the research after it has been completed and can help to integrate new policies or programs if the results suggest that the media is perceived to have a negative impact on offender reintegration. Professionals included in the study were those who had worked directly with sex offenders for more than a 3 month period. This level of experience is regarded as sufficient to gain a familiarity with this population and is a typical length of a probationary period for new employees in the field (Loh, 1994).

In order to compare the opinions of sex offenders and professionals and identify any differences between these groups regarding perceptions of the media's impact on offender reintegration, their opinions were compared to that of a control group of university students. University students were used in this study to represent a sampling of the opinions of the lay public. This group is not expected to have an in-depth awareness of the factors that affect sex offender

reintegration, in contrast to the other two groups, which may provide an alternative response pattern.

The media's portrayal of sex offenders, which may serve to perpetuate stereotypes about this group, may also result in negative attitudes towards sex offenders. All participants were also asked to complete a previously developed measure of attitudes towards sex offenders, the Community Attitudes Towards Sex Offenders scale (CATSO; Church et al., 2008). Their responses to this scale were compared with the answer on the survey created for the study in order to identify if any relationship between the two measures existed and to begin establishing construct validity for the created measure.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The current study addressed the following research questions:

1. Do professionals, sex offenders, and the lay public view the media as presenting sex offenders in an overly negative way? Are there any differences between the groups?
2. Do professionals, sex offenders, and the lay public view the media as having an influence over public perceptions and a negative influence over the public's opinions of sex offenders? Are there any differences between the groups?
3. Do professionals, sex offenders, and the lay public view the media as having a negative impact on particular aspects of sex offender reintegration? Are there any differences between the groups?

4. Are negative attitudes towards sex offenders related to one's view that (a) the media portrays sex offenders in an overly negative way, (b) the media influences public perceptions of sex offenders, and (c) the media negatively impacts particular aspects of sex offender reintegration?

Because professionals selected for the study were those who work closely with sex offenders, they will likely have more positive feelings towards sex offenders and this will impact their perceptions of the media's effects, as seen in previous studies (Levenson et al., 2009; Willis et al., 2010). It is hypothesized that professionals will regard the media as being overly punitive towards sex offenders and their opinions will differ significantly from those of university student controls. Offender responses are hypothesized to be similar to those of professionals, in that they believe formal controls, such as community notifications, have a negative impact on their lives (Tewksbury, 2005) and that the media has a negative effect on their reintegration. In contrast, university students are hypothesized to have more negative opinions toward sex offenders and to view the media as having a less negative influence on sex offender reintegration, compared to the other two groups.

Both instruments included in the current study measure attitudes related to sex offenders; thus, it is expected that results would be related with one another, and this association would provide support that the current scale measures certain attitudes related to sex offenders.

The specific hypotheses tested in this study are as follows:

1. Both professionals and sexual offenders will be more likely to believe that the media portrays sex offenders inaccurately and overly negatively, in comparison with university students.
2. There will be no difference between the three groups on beliefs about the media having an influence on public perceptions in general and on public opinions of sex offenders in particular.
3. Both offenders and professionals will be more likely to believe that media portrayals have a negative impact on specific aspects of sex offender reintegration, such as effects on finding social supports, housing, and a job, in comparison to university student controls.
4. More negative attitudes towards sex offenders will be inversely related to perceptions of the media's negative impact on sex offender reintegration. That is, someone who holds negative attitudes towards sex offenders will be more likely to report that they dislike sex offenders and that offenders experience negative consequences in the community because they are perceived as bad people, not because the media has inaccurately portrayed these offenders and impacted their lives unfairly.

Method

The current study surveyed the perceptions of sex offenders, professionals, and a control group of university students on the media's effect on sex offender reintegration.

Participants

The participants were male sex offenders (18 and over), professionals who work with sex offenders, and undergraduate university students enrolled in introductory psychology classes. An *a priori* power analysis was performed with Minitab 15 using a power of .80 and a maximum difference of 0.60. A total sample size of approximately 165 participants (55 per group) was estimated as necessary to detect a medium effect size of $f=0.25$. Between the dates of September 2011 and February 2012, data was collected from various sites throughout Edmonton and surrounding areas. The study sample was composed of 170 participants.

Sex offenders. Sexual offenders included in the study were men who had been convicted of at least one sexual offence. A sexual offence was defined as “an official recorded sexual misbehaviour or criminal behaviour with sexual intent” (Harris, Phenix, Hanson, & Thorton, 2003, p. 13) as defined in the Criminal Code of Canada part V (Department of Justice Canada, 2010), or other criminal offences included in the Criminal Code that are of a sexual nature or intent. Offences considered eligible included (but were not exclusive to) contact sexual offences, such as sexual assault, manufacturing child pornography with an identifiable victim, invitation to sexual touching, sexual exploitation, solicitation of a prostitute, and incest, and non contact offences such as: indecent behaviour, exhibitionism, and possession of child pornography (Corabian et al., 2010; Harris et al., 2003; Kong et al., 2003)

Offenders were recruited from several sites in the Edmonton and surrounding area including: the Phoenix Program (unit 3-3) of Alberta Hospital Edmonton (AHE), sex offender treatment groups from Forensic Assessment and Community Services (FACS), and probation offices throughout the city of Edmonton and the province of Alberta. The Phoenix program is an in-patient program that provides assessment and treatment of adult male sex offenders who have been convicted of a serious sexual offence (Studer, Reddon, Roper, & Estrada, 1996). Patients attend the program voluntarily near the end of their sentence and undergo an intensive group therapy treatment for up to one year. FACS is a service that provides assessment and treatment for persons dealing with mental health and/or behavioural problems that are in conflict with the law (Jung & Gulayets, 2011). At FACS, offenders attending either an incest offender group, a sex offender relapse prevention group, or the Phoenix Program's follow-up group were asked to participate.

Due to the heterogeneous style of data collection, only approximate response rates could be calculated for the offender sample. Approximately 110 sex offenders were solicited from AHE, FACS, and probation offices, in order to participate in the study. This includes 56 surveys provided to probation officers throughout Edmonton and area to distribute to their eligible clients. It is not certain how many offenders were offered but declined to participate in the current study. In total, 64 offenders participated in the study (17 inpatient offenders from AHE Phoenix Program and 47 offenders currently living in the community). Two

offender participants were removed from the study because they did not complete 2 of the 5 pages in the survey package.

Professionals. Professionals included were those who had recently or were currently actively involved in the assessment and treatment of sexual offenders. Those making up the current sample included psychologists, psychometrists, psychiatrists, registered nurses, registered psychiatric nurses, social workers, probation officers, mental health therapists, psychiatric aides, and occupational therapists. Professionals included in the study were recruited from AHE, FACS, and probation offices in the Edmonton area and other parts of Alberta (including Westlock, Fort McMurray, and Grand Prairie probation offices). As well they were recruited from the Community Geographic Team (CGT), a team of professionals providing treatment to offenders throughout Northern Alberta probation offices. Additional professionals who fit the study criteria were recruited with the help of participating professionals from these programs.

Due to the heterogeneous style of data collection, only approximate response rates could be calculated for the professional sample. Approximately 93 professionals were solicited to participate in the study. These included 45 professionals working at AHE and FACS (including the CGT team), and 48 probation officers working throughout Edmonton and other parts of Alberta. In total, 58 professionals participated in the study and six were excluded. Of the six professionals excluded from the study, three did not report having worked with

sex offenders for more than 3 months and three either did not complete any demographic information or had not completed a full page of the survey package.

Students. University students enrolled in 100 level Psychology courses at the University of Alberta were solicited to participate. Students filled 57 of 60 available student participation spots. Of the 57 student participants, one was removed because a full page of the survey package was not completed.

Instruments

Participants completed a 3-section survey titled Media and Sex Offenders survey (created for the current study), the CATSO scale, and a demographic questionnaire that included a measure of news media usage. Beyond all inquiries about media use, demographic information forms were different for each group. Demographic information collected from sexual offenders included age, race, sexual offence history, general criminal history, and education level. Demographic information collected from professionals included sex, age, education level, length of time working with sexual offenders, and length of time working in their current position. Demographic information collected from students included sex, age, and education level.

Media and sex offenders survey. This survey was created in order to ask participants about their perceptions of how the media portrays sex offenders, the media's influence on the public, and the media's influence on aspects of sex offender reintegration. Survey directions asked respondents to rate their agreement with the statements provided and participants were asked to choose the answer that best represents their beliefs from the forced choice options. Questions

were answered using a Likert Scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”, with 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. Likert scaling is a method of rating typically used to measure attitudes of individuals (O’Sullivan & Rassel, 1990), and has been used in similar studies in this area (Levenson & Cotter, 2005). Media was defined as information designed to reach many people simultaneously (Wimmer & Dominick, 2005), such as radio, TV, newspaper, magazines, and Internet sites. The current study asked participants about the effect of media that has previously relayed information regarding sex offenders.

The survey included 48 closed-ended statements divided into 3 sections (A, B, and C) with each corresponding to a particular research question. Section A consists of 14 items developed to measure perceptions of the media’s negative portrayal of sex offenders. Sample items include: “News Media describes sex offenders as offenders with a high risk to re-offend” and “Overall, the media’s portrayal of sex offenders is overly negative”. Section B includes 18 items developed to measure general perceptions of the media and perceptions of how the media affects the public’s opinion about sex offenders. Sample items include: “The media’s stories influence the opinions of the general public” and “Because of how news media talks about sex offenders the public believes sex offenders are not treatable”. Section C includes 16 items developed to measure perceptions of the media’s negative influence over factors related to sex offender reintegration. Sample items include: “Because of how the media portrays sexual offenders, sex offenders in the community have less access to employment opportunities” and

“Because of how the media portrays sexual offenders, sex offenders have less access to supportive family and/or friends”. All items in Section C were worded in the first person for the sex offender participants and in third person for the professional and student participants (see Appendix C for a complete version of the survey for all three groups and the offender version of Section C). Aside from this difference and the separate demographic forms provided to each group, all other survey sections were identical for participants.

The survey incorporated considerations from previous research that has investigated the effects of community notification policies on the lives of sex offenders, negative beliefs about sex offenders, and factors relevant to successful offender community reintegration. Some items included were adapted, with permission, from survey items used in previous studies. Items 16, 24, and 28 from Levenson and Cotter’s (2005) study survey titled *Megan’s Law Survey* were revised to inquire about the effects of the media, instead of the effects of community notification law, in the lives of sex offenders. These items correspond with items 44, 45, and 46 in the current survey. As an example, the item “Megan’s law makes my recovery more difficult by causing more stress in my life” was changed to, “How news media talks about sex offenders makes my recovery more difficult by causing added stress to my life” in the current survey. Question 28 from Brannon, Levenson, Fortney and Baker’s (2007) survey study asking the public about their views on community notification, was a multi-part question that contained several items which related to the potential effects of community notification law on sex offenders. Several items from this question

(specifically items 1, 4, 5, 6 and 8), were revised and used in part C of the current study's survey to inquire about the effects of news media on sex offenders. These items from question 28 correspond with items 33/39, 37, 41, 38, and 34, respectively, in the current survey (see Appendix C). For example, item 1 from question 28 of Brannon et al.'s survey was expanded from "I personally know a sex offender who has experienced the following due to community notification: loss of a job" to create the following two items: "The way news media talks about sex offenders has hurt sex offenders ability to: find a job" and "Because of the way news media talks about sex offenders, this has resulted in: having less access to employment opportunities."

To derive the scores for each section, participants' ratings of items in each section were added together. Higher scores in Section A corresponded with the perception that the media portrays sex offenders in an overly negative way. Section B was divided into two factors. Higher scores in factor 1 corresponded with the perception that the media's portrayal of sex offenders affects the public's views of sex offenders negatively. Higher scores in factor 2 corresponded with generally positive views about the media and perceptions that it can impact public opinion. Higher scores in Section C corresponded with the belief that the media has a negative impact on many aspects of sex offender reintegration.

Not all items were included in the total scores for each section. Each section of the survey included 2 items (specifically items 13, 14, 31, 32, 47, 48), asking respondents to rate their "overall" opinion summarizing the contents of that respective section. For example item 13 in Section A, "Overall, I think news

media's description of sex offenders is overly positive", and item 48 in Section C, "Overall news media's description of sex offenders does not influence sex offenders' lives in the community". Given that individual items in each section were added to create a total score intended to summarize one's overall opinion about each research question, these 'overall' items were excluded from the total score of each section and from the analysis.

Some items in the survey were reverse scored. Specifically, eleven items (items 4, 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 20, 21, 45, 47, 48) that included four 'overall' items, were written in the positive direction (to imply the media's influence was helpful) and were subsequently reversed scored prior to being included in the total scores and the analysis. Five validity items were created and included in the survey (items 1, 5, 11, 19 and 27) to control for random or careless responding. For example item 11, "News media never talks about sexual crimes." These validity items were not included in any of the score calculations and were experimental items that had not been previously validated. Hence, due to the experimental nature of these items they were not examined in the current study. The researchers did not feel that these items would have accurately identified random responding because their effectiveness at detecting a certain response pattern and their placement within the survey were not thoroughly investigated prior to the survey development. As well, researchers felt confident that participants were responding accurately to survey questions. Further study is required to develop appropriate validity items. A more comprehensive explanation of the items included in the total score for each section will follow in the Results section.

The Community Attitudes Towards Sex Offenders (CATSO) scale. The CATSO scale was developed in 2008 by Church and colleagues in order to examine attitudes, perceptions and stereotypes concerning sex offenders (Church et al., 2008). This survey consists of 18 statements regarding sex offenders that are rated by participants using a 6-point Likert with the following options: strongly disagree, disagree, probably disagree, probably agree, agree, and strongly agree. There are four factors addressed: capacity to change, level of social isolation/ inclusion in a community, blame attributions, and sexual deviance, which are added together to create a total score (See Appendix B for a complete list of all survey questions). Higher scores represent more negative attitudes toward sex offenders. This tool was initially developed and validated with approximately 350 undergraduate students from a southern U.S. university. The authors intended that the scale be used in numerous settings with various populations. Recently in Montana, the CATSO was used to measure the attitudes of professional correctional workers (Balow & Conley, 2008).

Procedure

The lead researcher approached each site program manager/lead probation officer, outlined the purpose of the study, and set up a time to meet with staff and offenders (when appropriate) to recruit them as participants in person. For FACS and AHE data collection, the researcher met with potential participants (when possible), explained the study, provided information sheets (see Appendix A) to each person, and then provided the survey package (including the CATSO, Media and Sex Offenders survey, and demographic sheet) to willing respondents (see

Appendix B, C, and D respectively). All surveys were completed in paper/pencil format. Upon completion of the survey package, each participant was provided with a debrief form (see Appendix E).

All offender participants at AHE and FACS were asked to complete the survey in person and returned it to the lead researcher the same day. Professionals from these sites were informed about the survey in person or via email (if given permission). Willing participants were provided with the survey at different time periods. They were asked to place their completed surveys in an envelope that was collected at a later date and were also offered the option of completing the survey at their leisure and mailing the completed survey to the primary researcher. For probation offices, the lead researcher provided all forms to a lead officer who distributed them to staff working with sex offenders and their clients (male sex offenders on probation); completed surveys from both professional and offenders were returned to the researcher after several weeks. Data at all sites were collected periodically over a six-month period (September 2011 through February 2012).

Undergraduate student participants were recruited via their first year psychology courses. Willing participants signed up to complete the survey at a predetermined time with the primary researcher present. Students, like offenders and professionals, were informed about the study and provided with an information sheet, then they were given the survey package, and upon completion, a debrief form. All students were given course credit for their voluntary participation in the study or provided with an alternate assignment (for equivalent credit) if they chose not to participate.

Ethical Considerations

In accordance with the requirements of the University of Alberta and the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2010), the study was approved by the Educational, Extension, Augustana, and Campus Saint-Jean Research Ethics Board (EEASJ REB) before commencing research. After this study was approved, additional ethical approval was obtained from Northern Alberta Clinical Trials and Research Centre (NACTRC), and Alberta Solicitor General in order to obtain access to offender and professional subjects within Alberta Health Services (including AHE and FACS) and probation offices throughout Alberta, respectively.

The current study posed minimal risk for participants both psychologically and physically. The main ethical consideration in the current study was that the sample involved sex offenders, who are considered a vulnerable population as a result of being stigmatized (Blagden & Pemberton, 2010). Extra precautions were put in place with regards to obtaining offenders' valid consent to participate. The items contained in the survey do not ask respondents to recount any particular experiences but ask them to explore their attitudes regarding the media; thus, the items are less personal and less likely to bring up negative experiences and emotions. The survey was anonymous and did not ask for identifying information from participants in order to ensure each participant's identity was kept secure. All participants were told that their participation is voluntary and they may

withdraw at any time without any penalty. Additional emphasis was placed on the voluntary nature of participation for offenders. All offenders were told that their participation was in no way related to their legal status or orders and ensured that their decision to participate or not would in no way influence their treatment or legal duties. In addition, for offenders recruited at AHE and FACS, staff members who were present when the researcher solicited participation from offenders subsequently left the room when offenders were asked for their decision to participate in order to avoid influencing offenders.

Results

Overview of Analysis

All data analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS version 20 published in 2011. The data were screened for potential problems with missing values. Missing data among participants was minimal, and there was no indication that the data was missing in a non-random fashion. Data was analyzed with missing cases (pairwise comparison). As mentioned previously, participants missing a full page or more of the survey package were excluded from the analyses.

First, because the survey used in this study had not been previously validated, further examination of the items that created each section total was completed. Each section of the survey was examined in order to ensure that items included to create the total scores, were statistically related. Internal consistency ratings for each section of the survey were calculated. After examining each section and the degree of internal consistency, exploratory factor analysis using principal component analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996) was completed for all

three sections of the survey by pooling the sample groups together. Factor analysis was conducted in order to statistically establish that a relationship was present between items grouped together in each section in order to answer each research question.

In order to look at the differences between each group's responses in each section, a one-way between subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted for each section of the survey; four ANOVAs were completed in total (after completing the factor analysis, Section B was split into two separate factors run independently of one another). Given that the statistical purpose of this study was to find significant differences among each group in terms of their perceptions on each research question, and there were 4 dependent variables (4 sections) and one independent variable (participant groups) the one-way ANOVA was the most appropriate test (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Significant main effects were examined by a *post hoc* analysis using the Bonferroni procedure and Cohen's *d* was used to calculate effect size, *r*, for each significant difference found. Further analyses using descriptive statistics to calculate the rate of agreement on each item was conducted on Section C of the survey.

Finally, in order to examine the relationship between the CATSO and the Media and Sex Offenders survey, a series of two-tailed bivariate correlations were conducted between the total CATSO score and the total scores of the 4 sections of the media survey. In order to control for Type I errors the significance criterion was set at an alpha level of .01.

Table 1 below shows the demographic characteristics of the sample by group. As shown in the table the mean age of offenders and professionals in the sample was 40.21($SD = 13.75$) and 39.60 ($SD = 10.42$) years, respectively. In contrast, the age of the student sample group ($M = 19.18$, $SD = 3.25$) was significantly lower $F(2, 165) = 76.19$, $p = .000$, than the offender sample, Cohen's $d = -2.10$, and professional group, Cohen's $d = -2.65$. On average, professionals in our sample had over 10 years of experience working with sex offenders and nearly half of the sample was made up of probation officers.

Table 1*Demographic information of the sample by group*

Groups/Descriptors	Frequency	Percent	<i>M (SD)</i>
<i>Sex Offenders (n = 62)</i>			
Age			40.21 (13.75)
Race			
Caucasian	53	85.5%	
African American	2	3.2%	
Aboriginal	5	8.1%	
Other	2	3.2%	
Education Level ¹ (n = 60)			
Less than grade 9	3	4.8%	
Grade 9 and some high school	20	32.3%	
GED	4	6.5%	
High school graduate	9	14.5%	
Some college/university	15	24.2%	
College/university graduate	9	14.5%	
Most Recent Sexual Conviction ²			
Molestation of Minors	22	35.5%	
Sexual Assault Adult	6	9.7%	
Peeping/vouyering	3	4.8%	
Exposing	9	14.5%	
Computer related sex crime	18	29.0%	
Other	9	14.5%	
Has prior sexual offence(s)	14	22.6%	
Has contact offence(s) against children	32	51.6%	
Has prior criminal offence(s)	20	32.3%	
<i>Professionals (n = 52)</i>			
Age			39.60 (10.42)
Gender			
Male	18	34.6%	
Female	34	65.4%	

Table 1 (continued)

Groups/Descriptor	Frequency	Percent	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Education Level			
High school diploma	0	0.0%	
Bachelor/professional degree	36	69.2%	
Masters degree	8	15.4%	
Doctoral/Medial degree	8	15.4%	
Other	0	0.0%	
Work Discipline			
Psychiatry	5	9.6%	
Psychology	7	13.5%	
Correctional Worker/Parole Officer	24	46.2%	
Occupational Therapy	1	1.9%	
Social Work	7	13.5%	
Nursing	4	7.7%	
Other	4	7.7%	
Time (years) working in current position			8.01 (8.02)
Time (years) working with sex offenders			10.43 (8.03)
<i>Students (n = 56)</i>			19.18 (3.25)
Age			
Gender	20	35.7%	
Male	36	64.3%	
Female			
Education Level ¹ (<i>N</i> = 55)	36	64.3%	
1 st year undergraduate	12	21.4%	
2 nd year undergraduate	5	8.9%	
3 rd year undergraduate	2	3.6%	
4 th year undergraduate	0	0.0%	
5 th year +			

¹ Denotes that percentages do not equal 100 due to missing data

² Denotes that percentages equal more than 100 due to the option of endorsing multiple categories

Preliminary Examination of the Media and Sex Offenders Survey

Section A: Media's portrayal of sex offenders. The total score for Section A was initially made up of the individual ratings of 9 items (items 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12); this section had a modest internal consistency with an alpha of .63. An exploratory factor analysis using the principal components method initially revealed a 3-factor solution that explained 59.3% of the variance. 30.4% of the variance was explained by factor 1 with an eigenvalue of 2.74. The items in this section attempted to capture the media's negative portrayals of sex offenders and all items, except item 8, loaded onto factor 1 above the .40 level. Conceptually speaking, Section A items were better left grouped together than separated into multiple factors so only factor 1 was retained. Item 8, "news media exaggerates how badly the victim of a sexual crime was hurt" had a -.05 loading on factor 1. Given this negative relationship, and because this item looked at characteristics of a victim rather than an offender, this item was removed from Section A. As a result, the internal consistency rose to an alpha of .69 for this section. Table 2 displays the item factor loadings for Section A.

Table 2*Factor loadings of items in Section A: media portrayals of sex offenders*

Item	Factor Loading
A2 Media presents SO as to be feared	.70
A3 Media presents SO as high risk	.59
A4 Media presents SO as less dangerous than other offenders*	.50
A6 Media presents SO as not treatable	.63
A7 Media does not exaggerate how bad SO are*	.44
A9 Media presents does not exaggerate how bad sex offences are*	.42
A10 Media presents SO as having no friends	.57
A12 Media presents SO as people not to be trusted	.75
Cronbach's alpha = .69 (8 items)	

*Denotes items that were reverse scored.

Section B: Media's influence over public opinions. The internal consistency rating of this section, which initially included 14 items, was modest with an alpha of .69. Although grouped together, this section included items that conceptually measured two areas: (a) one's general view of the media and its influence over the public and (b) one's view on how the media negatively influences the public's view of sex offenders. An exploratory factor analysis using the principal components method was conducted to investigate if indeed these two factors were present. The factor analysis yielded a 3 factor solution that accounted for 52.87% of the overall variance. All items except item 20, loaded at above the .40 level for the first 2 factors in the solution and given that these factors contained items which were conceptually related, only these two factors were

retained. All items that loaded onto factor 1 were related to the media's influence on the public's opinions of sex offenders. This factor explained 31.73% of the overall variance, with an eigenvalue of 4.44, and had an excellent internal consistency with an alpha of .84 with 8 items. Factor 2 included items related to general views about the influence of the media and explained 11.44% of the overall variance with an eigenvalue of 1.60. This factor had a low internal consistency with an alpha of .41 with 5 items. Factor 3 explained 9.70% of the variance and only item 20, "Most people get information about sex offenders from news media over other sources of information" loaded significantly onto this factor. Item 20 was unrelated to both factor 1 and 2; it had a -.14 loading on factor 1 and .18 loading on factor 2. Given that this item did not appear to relate statistically to either factor in this section, despite conceptually relating to items in factor 1, it was removed from the analysis along with factor 3. Section B was therefore split into 2 factors, which were analyzed separately in order to answer the second research question. Table 3 contains the individual items included in each section B factor.

Table 3

Factor scales derived from the principle component factor analysis Section B

Factor 1: Media's influence on beliefs about sex offenders	Factor 2: General media beliefs
B21 Media has not shaped views of SO* (.51)	B15 Most people get info from Media (.62)
B23 Media influences public fear of SO (.78)	B16 Media gets facts straight (.57)
B24 Media influence public to view SO as not treatable (.73)	B17 Media influences public opinion (.44)
B25 Media influence public to view SO as high risk (.71)	B18 Media is fair and unbiased (.42)
B26 Media influence public to become more angry at SO (.73)	B22 Opinions can affect one's behaviour (.58)
B28 Media influence public to view SO as having no friends (.58)	
B29 Media influence public to be more mistrusting of SO (.79)	
B30 Media influence public to view SO as more dangerous (.61)	
Cronbach's alpha =.84 (8 items)	Cronbach's alpha =.41 (5 items)

*Denotes items that were reverse scored. Values in parentheses indicate factor loadings.

Section C: Media's impact on reintegration factors. The internal consistency rating of this section, which included 14 items (items 33-46), was excellent with an alpha of .80. An exploratory factor analysis using the principal components method initially revealed a 3-factor solution that explained 56.21% of the variance. 32.91% of the variance was explained by Factor 1, with an eigenvalue of 4.61. This scale included items pertaining to the media's influence on particular reintegration factors related to sex offenders, and all items except items 37, 45, and 46 loaded onto factor 1 above the .40 level. Conceptually

speaking, Section C items were better left grouped together than separated into multiple factors. Thus, this scale was retained in its original format for analysis.

Perceptions of the Media's Portrayal of and Impact on Sex Offenders

Table 4 reports the mean scores for each group on each section of the Media and Sex Offenders survey and the results of the four one-way ANOVAs conducted to identify differences between groups.

Table 4

Section scores for the Media and Sex Offender Survey by group

Sections	Group			<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
	Sex offenders <i>M (SD)</i>	Professionals <i>M (SD)</i>	Students <i>M (SD)</i>			
A: Media portrayals of SO	30.19 (5.83)	29.33 (4.57)	27.09 (4.12)	5.95	2, 162	.003
B F1: Media's influence on beliefs about SO	32.64 (6.13)	29.23 (6.12)	29.66 (5.42)	5.74	2, 166	.004
B F2: General media beliefs	16.42 (2.70)	16.51 (1.57)	17.93 (2.21)	7.95	2, 162	.001
C: Media's impact on reintegration factors	45.95 (10.04)	46.58 (8.03)	45.89 (10.04)	.09	2, 164	.917

Media's Portrayal of Sex Offenders. Results of a one-way ANOVA revealed significant differences in the way each group perceived the media's presentation of sex offenders, $F(2, 162) = 5.95, p = .003$. Sex offenders viewed the media as presenting sex offenders in the most negative way followed by professionals, and then students. Post hoc contrasts revealed that sex offenders endorsed significantly more items indicating they perceived the media to present

sex offenders in a negative unjust way ($M = 30.19, SD = 5.83$), compared to university student controls ($M = 27.09, SD = 4.16$), Cohen's $d = .61$. No significant differences were found between the opinions of sex offenders (see above) and professionals ($M = 29.33, SD = 4.57$), or between the opinions of professionals and students.

Perceptions of Media's Influence on Public Perceptions of Sex

Offenders. The results of a one-way ANOVA revealed significant differences in the way each group perceived the media to influence public opinions about sex offenders, $F(2, 166) = 5.74, p = .004$, as seen on Table 4. Post hoc comparisons revealed that when compared to professionals ($M = 29.23, SD = 6.12$), and university student controls ($M = 29.66, SD = 5.42$), sex offenders ($M = 32.64, SD = 6.13$), perceived the media to have a significantly greater influence over the public's opinions of sex offenders, (Cohen's $d = .56$ and $.52$ respectively). No significant differences in perceptions were found between the opinions of professional and student subjects.

General Views About the Media and Its Influence. Results from a one-way ANOVA revealed significant differences in the way each group generally perceived the media and its influence, $F(2, 162) = 7.95, p = .001$. Post hoc analysis revealed that students had significantly more elevated scores ($M = 17.93, SD = 2.21$), compared with those of professionals ($M = 16.51, SD = 1.57$), Cohen's $d = .74$, and then sex offenders ($M = 16.42, SD = 2.70$), Cohen's $d = .61$. No significant differences in views were found between the sex offender and professional samples.

Media's Influence on Factors Related to Sex Offender Reintegration.

Results from a one-way ANOVA did not reveal any significant differences between groups in their perceptions of the media's negative impact on particular aspects of offender reintegration, $F(2, 164) = .09, p = .917$. All groups had similar total scores on this section indicating that the media negatively affects certain factors involved in sex offender reintegration.

In order to further investigate the specific areas in functioning that were perceived as being negatively impacted by the media's portrayal, descriptive statistics were used to calculate the proportion of responses in both the 'agree' and 'strongly agree' categories (which were added together) for each item in this scale, for each group. Table 5 includes the percentage of agreement by each group and the overall sample for each item contained in this scale.

Table 5
Section C: Media's Impact on Reintegration Factors, Item Percentage Agreement

Analysis

Items	% of Participants that Agree/Strongly Agree			
	Sex Offenders	Professionals	Student	Overall Sample
Media's portrayal of SO leads to:				
C33 Difficulties in finding a job	69.4	69.2	87.5	75.3
C34 Difficulties in finding a place to live	62.9	76.9	80.4	72.9
C35 Difficulties making positive relationships	69.3	73.1	83.9	75.3
C36 Difficulties with financial stability	62.9	59.6	69.7	64.1
C37 Physical threats	33.9	59.6	50.0	61.8
C38 Verbal threats	42.0	67.3	73.2	60.0
C39 Less access to employment opportunities	77.4	71.2	89.2	79.4
C40 Less access to social/MH treatment	14.6	13.4	16.1	14.7
C41 Less access to supportive family/friends	38.7	32.7	66.1	45.9
C42 Increased feelings of isolation	56.5	71.1	73.2	66.5
C43 Negative undeserved consequences	48.4	59.7	17.9	30.0
C44 More stress	62.9	55.8	75.0	64.7
C45 Increased motivation to stop offending*	9.7	57.6	28.6	30.6
C46 People more supportive of SO recovery*	29.1	63.5	39.3	42.9

*Denotes items that were reverse scored.

More than half of participants in each group agreed that the media's portrayal of sex offenders leads to: difficulties in finding a job and/or have access to employment opportunities, difficulties in finding a place to live, difficulties in developing positive relationships, difficulties in maintain financial stability, an increased level of stress, and increased feelings of isolation for sex offenders. Less than one fourth of participants in each group agreed that the media's portrayal of sex offenders leads to less access to social services and/or mental health treatment.

While less than half of sex offenders agreed that the media's portrayals leads to physical and/or verbal threats to them in public, over half of professionals and students agreed with these statements. Compared with more than half of the professional participants, less than half of both offender and student participants agreed that the media's portrayal of offenders leads others to become more supportive in their recovery. Over half of professionals surveyed, compared with less than half of offenders and students surveyed, agreed that as a result of the media's portrayals, sex offenders are more motivated to prevent re-offending to prove to others they are not bad people.

Less than one quarter of students in our sample agreed that the media's portrayals of sex offenders leads to negative undeserved consequences for sex offenders. In contrast, almost half (48.4%) of sex offenders and over half of professionals (59.7%) surveyed agreed that the media's portrayals of sex offenders leads to negative undeserved consequences for these offenders.

Relationship Between Attitudes Towards Sex Offenders and Perceptions of Media's Impact on Sex Offenders

Results from the bivariate correlational analysis between the CATSO scale total scores and each section of the Media and Sex Offenders survey are presented in Table 6 below. No significant relationship was found between CATSO total scores and Section A (-.123), Section B Factor 1 (-.047), and Section C (-.039) total scores of the Media and Sex Offenders survey; however, a negative trend emerged. There was a significant positive association between overall attitudes towards sex offenders and attitudes towards the media (Section B factor 2), $r = .22, p < .01$, indicating that more negative attitudes towards sex offenders are associated with beliefs that in general the media is an unbiased source of information that has an influence over the public.

Table 6

Pearson r correlations between CATSO total scores and factor scores for overall sample (N=164)

	A	B F1	B F2	C	CATSO
A: Media portrayals of SO	(.694)	.646*	-.018	.591*	-.123
B F1: Media's influence on beliefs about SO		(.838)	-.012	.459*	-.047
B F2: General media beliefs			(.411)	-.026	.218*
C: Media's impact on reintegration factors				(.799)	-.039
CATSO					(.717)

Note: internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) level on diagonal in parentheses

* Denotes that correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Post Hoc Analyses

Although no predictions were made about this prior to conducting this research, a post hoc analysis was conducted to investigate if any differences existed in overall CATSO scores between the three groups. Results from a one-way ANOVA revealed significant differences between all three groups with respect to their negative attitudes towards sex offenders, $F(2, 161) = 42.92, p = .000$. Students ($M = 65.61, SD = 8.09$) had significantly more negative attitudes than professionals ($M = 56.86, SD = 6.71$), Cohen's $d = 1.18$, and sex offenders ($M = 53.00, SD = 7.30$), Cohen's $d = 1.64$. Professionals (see above) also had significantly more negative attitudes towards sex offenders than did sex offenders themselves (see above), Cohen's $d = .55$.

Discussion

Overview

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of sex offenders, professionals, and a control group of university students, on the effects of the media on sex offender reintegration. To begin to explore perceptions of news media's effects on sex offender reintegration, the current study examined the following four research questions: (a) Do professionals, sex offenders and the lay public view the media as presenting sex offenders in an overly negative way? Are there any differences between the 3 groups? (b) Do professionals, sex offenders, and the lay public believe that the media has an influence over public opinion and specifically opinions of sex offenders? Are there any differences between the 3 groups? (c) Do professionals, sex offenders, and the lay public believe that the

media has an impact on particular aspects of sex offender reintegration? Are there any differences between the 3 groups? (d) Is there a relationship between negative attitudes towards sex offenders and perceptions of the media's influence on sex offender reintegration (as is it relevant to the three questions above)? In order to examine these questions, a survey was created. The following section will discuss the findings of this research.

Perceptions of Media's Portrayal of Sex Offenders

It was hypothesized that both sex offenders and professionals would perceive the media as presenting sex offenders in an overly negative way, when compared to university students. The results showed support for the predicted hypothesis that sex offenders themselves are more likely than students to perceive the media as depicting sex offenders in a disproportionately negative light. Sex offenders perceived the media as misrepresenting sex offenders in an overly negative way, followed by professionals, and finally students. The opinions of professionals and students were not significantly different from one another.

These results are consistent with the conclusions drawn by other researchers that the media portrays sex offenders negatively and perpetuates erroneous stereotypes about these offenders (Kjelsberg & Loos, 2008), although perceptions of professionals and students did not differ significantly. The findings are not consistent with previous research that has found differences in how professionals view sex offenders compared to lay persons (Fuselier, Durhamn & Wurtele, 2002; Jung, Jamieson, Buro, & Decesare, 2012). Fuselier and colleagues (2002) found that professionals endorsed fewer stereotypes about child molesters

compared with college students. Research conducted by Jung and colleagues (2012) found that laypersons viewed intoxicated offenders as less accountable for their actions and admission of offending a risk factor for reoffending, compared with professionals. Similarly, the findings among the student control group conforms with the results of a study conducted in the UK by Brown and colleagues (2008) that found over 50% of community members surveyed believed the media's portrayal of sex offenders to be unbiased/objective.

Canadian sex offender policies do not include public access to databases (Murphy et al., 2009), therefore any release of information about dangerous offenders (namely, via Section 32) is necessarily disseminated by the media (Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security, 2012). As a result, it is very possible that many negative consequences arise as a result of the media's portrayal of sex offenders. Thus it was not surprising that sex offenders, over the other two groups, have the most negative rating of the media's portrayal of sex offenders.

Media's Influence on Public Opinions

After further analysis, items included in this section were broken into two factors that were investigated independently, B Factor 1-media's influence on beliefs about sex offenders, and B Factor 2- general beliefs about the media. In regards to Factor 1, it was hypothesized that the three groups would not differ on their views that the media has impacted the perceptions of the public about sex offenders. Contrary to what was expected, sex offenders believed the media has a significantly greater influence over the public's opinions about sex offenders than

did the other two groups. In this case, offenders believed the media to have a very strong influence over the creation of negative public opinions toward sex offenders compared with professionals, and students – the latter group having the lowest scores. Offenders reported that because of how the news media represents sex offenders, the public now perceives offenders in a more negative, unjust way. This result is congruent with the first hypothesis, indicating that this group also believes the media to represent sex offenders in an unjust negative manner, relative to professionals and students. With respect to the professional and student responses, these results do not correspond with previous research that indicates that most people receive their information about sex offenders from the media (CSOM, 2010) and that the public has many negative beliefs about sex offenders (Levenson, Brannon, et al., 2007).

A potential explanation for these different viewpoints is that sex offenders are directly and personally impacted by public perceptions of them, often in the form of contempt and derision. As a result, offenders have stronger opinions on the matter, and are thus more willing to blame the media for perpetuating these negative attitudes about themselves. Previous research comparing the attitudes of sex offenders and the public on the impacts of community notification also found that sex offenders had more negative views towards the fairness, effectiveness, and resulting consequences of community notification laws in comparison to the public (Brannon et al., 2007). In contrast, professionals may consider other characteristics, such as personality, which may have an impact on the public's view of sex offenders, rather than placing full responsibility on the media. Olver

and Barlow (2010) found evidence supporting the notion that personality traits, such as openness, agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness, and neuroticism, can influence important social attitudes such as those towards sex offenders.

In light of the development of two factors from the items in Section B, a separate analysis was conducted on Factor 2, general beliefs about the media. Contrary to the hypothesis, compared to the other two groups, students had significantly more elevated scores, indicating that they believed the media to be fair in reporting and able to influence the opinions of the public. The items measuring views about the media were very general statements and this scale lacked an acceptable level of internal consistency. Thus, it is difficult to infer to what extent the items in this scale are a true measure of general attitudes about the media, and these results should be interpreted with some degree of caution.

If students believe that the media is fair and unbiased, it may also help explain why students did not report that the media negatively influences public opinion toward sex offenders, in comparison to the sex offender group. This result is also congruent with the finding that students did not believe the media to portray sex offenders in a biased, negative manner, compared with sex offenders. Two of the five items in this scale focused on perceived accuracy in media reporting. Given that both professionals and offenders indicated that they believed the media to be portraying sex offenders in an overly negative way (Section A), thus implying the media is biased, it follows that these groups would not agree with the contention that the media is generally fair and unbiased in its reporting.

These results, which indicate that the public does not view the media as biased in reporting relative to the other two groups, although the overall scores of the three groups are fairly high. These results are not completely consistent with previous research looking at public perceptions of news media credibility, which found more negative opinions of news media accuracy (CRMC, 2011; Pew Research Centre, 2011). A 2011 survey conducted in the U.S. found that 66% of those surveyed reported new media stories as being often inaccurate; however, when asked about the accuracy in reporting of news media sources they used most frequently, only 30% of respondents reported inaccuracy in reporting (Pew Research Centre, 2011). Despite an overall negative view of the media and its biases, it was found that news media organizations were more trusted sources of information than other institutions including businesses, government, and politicians (Pew Research Centre, 2011). According to a 2008 survey conducted by the Canadian Media Research Consortium (CMRC), only 52% of over 2000 Canadians surveyed thought news media stories were accurate, which was a 7% decline from a similar survey conducted in 2003 (CMRC, 2011). Interestingly, this study also found that when compared to American and British audiences, Canadian audiences were still the most positive about the accuracy of their news media stories (CMRC, 2011). Previous research has found that university students rely heavily on Internet-based sources of information and consider these sources to be more credible, compared to a sample of people from the general population (Metzger, Flanagin, & Zwarun, 2003). In contrast, other researchers have found that college students rated the Internet as the least credible source of information,

yet it was the most frequently used news source among this group (Waid-Lindberg et al., 2011). It is possible therefore, that our results are particular to the university students, rather than the general public, given the difference in perceived credibility of news sources. Further investigation regarding what sources of media the public is using to gain information about sex offenders and their perceived credibility of these sources would be informative.

Media's Impact on Reintegration Factors

The third hypothesis, that sex offenders and professionals were more likely to perceive that the media negatively impacts specific factors related to offender reintegration than university students, was not supported by the results. No significant difference in the total scores was found, suggesting that all three groups perceive the media to have a similar impact on particular aspects of sex offender reintegration. This result was surprising given that sex offenders perceived the media's portrayal of sex offenders to be negative, and in turn as having a negative influence on the public's perceptions of sex offenders. Likewise, it would have been expected that they also report there would be a negative impact on reintegration as a result of the media (more so than the two other groups). This result is not consistent with previous research focusing on the impact of U.S. community notification legislations, which found that offenders report many negative consequences as a result of these policies, compared with community members (Brannon et al., 2007). Brannon and colleagues reported that significant differences were found between sex offenders and the public in accounts of particular negative consequences that result from community

notification laws. Namely, they found that offenders reported experiencing instances of vigilantism and negative personal consequences more so than what the public was aware, including: physical harm, verbal and any threats, damage to home, job loss, ridicule, relationship loss, and moving plans interrupted.

The lack of significant findings may be a result of the composition of the sample groups, in particular the sex offender sample. Although sex offenders were most likely to believe that the media portrays them more negatively and has a negative influence over the public's opinion of them, surprisingly they did not differ from the other groups in their views that the media negatively impacts particular aspects of their reintegration. It is possible that they really do not view the media as negatively impacting these aspects of their lives, or perhaps they have not yet faced these issues because they are still incarcerated. Approximately 27% of sex offenders in the sample were those from AHE Phoenix program who were currently serving the rest of their sentence in hospital. It may be that this subgroup of offenders was unable to accurately comment on the media's effects on their reintegration given that they were still serving jail time. Hence, it is possible that they did not experience a negative impact of the media at the time of completing the survey. Their relatively lower ratings on items in this section may have brought down the average of the overall offender group. It would be helpful to further investigate with a larger sample group, if there are differences between the perceptions of incarcerated offenders and those already back into the community. This was not investigated in the current study due to the small sample size and the disproportionate amount of incarcerated compared with released

offenders (roughly 30% to 70% of our sample respectively) in our sample group, which would have invalidated the comparison.

The majority of members in each group agreed that the media had a negative impact on many of the listed factors. In particular, the majority of all three groups surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that the media's portrayal of sex offenders negatively impacts their ability to find a job, have access to employment opportunities, find a place to live, make new positive relationships, and be financially stable, and also may increase feelings of isolation, loneliness, and the amount of stress. These findings outlining the negative impact on the more general areas of employment, relationships, and housing are congruent with previous research reporting the effects of community notification and residential restriction policies in the U.S. (Levenson 2005; Levenson, Brannon et al., 2007; Tewksbury, 2005; Tewksbury & Mustaine, 2009). Despite the fact that Canadian legislation, unlike their U.S. counterpart, does not allow for public access to offender information, the media has a similar negative impact on the re-integration of sex offenders and it should be further investigated because of the potential harm that can result from re-offending. By negatively impacting these dynamic factors associated with risk (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2004), the media's influence may serve to make offenders' reintegration into society more difficult and inadvertently raise risk for recidivism.

Although the majority of students agreed that many factors were negatively impacted by the media's influence, only 18% of them agreed that the media's portrayals resulted in many negative undeserved consequences. This

result may reflect the underlying negative attitudes of students towards sex offenders (compared with the other groups). Although students agreed that the media has a negative impact in many areas that affect offender reintegration, their lack of agreement with that item may indicate they do not feel these are problematic results. This suggests a lack of understanding and a bias in the attitudes of students towards sex offenders, and is consistent with previous research (Brannon et al., 2007; Craun & Theriot, 2009; Kjelsberg & Loos, 2008). It would be important to look at the source of these biases. For example, previous research regarding public perceptions and media coverage of healthcare has stated that the media plays a significant role in helping the public form opinions about healthcare related policies (Soroka, 2011). This may also be the case regarding sex offenders. Thus, if the media presents sex offenders in a negative and stereotypical way, the public will likely form certain negative impressions of these offenders. As previously mentioned, students are more likely to use the Internet as a media source, which may vary significantly in terms of content and credibility (Waid-Lindberg et al., 2011), thus an important endeavour would be to help students (and the lay public), become better consumers of news and information in order to prevent becoming misinformed. This may begin with the teaching of critical appraisal skills, which involve among other things, evaluating the credibility, currency, and accuracy of information one has (Hogan & Varnhagen, 2012). It is possible then if the public learns how to accurately appraise information regarding sex offenders, they may form different opinions of this group and be less biased toward them.

These misperceptions of sex offenders by the public may have significant impact on how offenders are treated in the community and these social biases may also have legal implications. For instance, Jung and colleagues (2012) indicated that potential jurors might make misinformed decisions based on erroneous beliefs regarding sex offender risk and the effects of alcohol and denial on future recidivism. This result suggests the need for further investigation into the public's attitudes about sex offenders, and the need for more accurate information to be presented in order to help alter public attitudes towards offenders and the impact of these attitudes on sex offender reintegration as a result.

Very recently Lilienfeld (2012) suggested that in order to help reduce misconceptions and bias about psychology as discipline, psychologists must play a more active and public role in educating the public about their field and its reliance upon science and research. This recommendation of increased education and focus on scientific research can also be applied in the case of debunking misconceptions about sex offenders and psychologists have a crucial role to play. Psychologists conduct much of the research in this field and are a potential resource for educating the public and providing accurate information about sex offenders. Zimmerman (1983) indicates that there are many opportunities for psychologists to influence the media and ethical and social responsibilities of members of this profession encourage and underscore a more active public advocate role. Berliner (2003) suggested the use of offender specialists as resources for communities. These persons can offer expertise in treatment and assessment of sex offenders and collaborate with advocates (and in our case, the

media), to help create effective policies and facilitate public safety while encouraging offender rehabilitation (Berliner, 2003).

Perceptions of the Media's Impact on Sex Offenders and Negative Attitudes Towards Sex Offenders

The hypothesis that more negative attitudes towards sex offenders would be inversely related to believing that the media has a negative view of sex offenders, that the media affects the perceptions of the public about sex offenders, and that the media negatively impacts particular aspects of offender reintegration was not supported; no significant inverse relationship emerged between the CATSO and these three survey sections. A single positive association was found between general positive attitudes towards the media and its influence, and negative attitudes towards sex offenders.

The lack of relationship between negative attitudes towards sex offenders and belief in the media's influence over sex offender reintegration may be due to the fact that the CATSO is measuring personal negative attitudes rather than asking participants to infer from the media what the negative impact may be on these offenders. These results indicate that the majority of sections on the measure created for the current study regarding the media's negative impacts on sex offenders are not related to one's negative attitudes towards sex offenders.

It is interesting that general positive attitudes concerning the media and its influence were significantly and positively related to negative attitudes towards sex offenders. This result suggests that the more negative attitude one has towards sex offenders, the stronger one believes the media to present the unbiased truth

and to have an effect on the public. Past research has also suggested that the more directly one experiences an issue the less influence the media has on his/her experience and attitude about the issue; therefore, without direct contact, the media has a much larger impact on the opinion formation of the public (Soroka, 2011).

In the current study, students indeed had the most negative attitudes towards sex offenders of the three groups and sex offenders had the least unfavourable attitudes. This result is in line with previous research suggesting that those with less knowledge about and experience interacting and/or working with sex offenders have less positive attitudes towards them (Church et al., 2008; Craig, 2005; Willis et al., 2010). Compared with students, professionals had significantly less negative attitudes towards sex offenders. This result is also congruent with previous research comparing professional and public groups' opinions of child molesters which found that professionals endorsed less stereotypical traits of these offenders compared with the public (Fuselier et al., 2002). Interestingly in the current study it was found that professionals had a significantly more negative attitude towards sex offenders compared with sex offenders themselves. Further investigation would be important in this case in order to understand better the difference between the attitudes of offenders themselves and of professionals. This result stresses the importance of continuing education opportunities for professionals who work with sex offenders in order to help them remain at minimum neutral, if not positive, in their work with their clients.

A relevant example outlining the challenges of remaining neutral with particular clients is Lally and Freeman's (2005) case study discussing the treatment of a man with pedophilia. These authors discuss the difficulties of remaining objective in a case that involves the ethical principles of civil safety and beneficence, along with the pressures commonly experienced in the workforce (e.g. expediency and financial strains). In this case, remaining neutral about what course of action to suggest for the patient was outweighed by one's guilt and anxiety regarding the possible future harm caused by the patient being a pedophile (despite the fact that no crime was committed or reported and no authorities were involved). The professionals involved encouraged the patient to contact authorities, which resulted in significant negative and undeserved consequences for him. Lally and Freeman (2005) highlight the importance of open communication and dialogue among professionals in order to work in an ethical manner and maintain neutrality in patient care, which can include the treatment of sex offenders. Ware, Hart and Fragaki (2010) suggest that effectiveness of treatment of sex offenders is likely able to evolve when staff are sufficiently and successfully trained in interacting positively with sex offenders.

Limitations

The present study did have some limitations. Given the challenges inherent in accessing sex offender and professional populations, participants were not recruited randomly. As a result of using a convenience sample, selection bias was potentially increased. All offenders recruited for the study were still involved with the legal system in some form. As well, a significant portion of the offender

sample was made up of offenders who did not reside in the community, but were still incarcerated and serving their sentence in a hospital setting. The voluntary nature of the study may have also led to a self-selection bias of those who had more negative attitudes towards the media and its impact on reintegration and wanted to vent their frustrations. These factors may have skewed the results provided by this group and thus make it difficult to generalize to the entire sex offender population across Canada.

The use of university students as a control group to represent the general public is another limitation. Due to the high degree of accessibility for graduate researchers, this group is often used in research to serve as a representation of the general public; however it may not be necessarily easy to generalize from this group to the entire population. Given that the mean age of the student sample was 19.18 years old and 64% of those surveyed were in their first year of university, it is clear the sample is rather homogenous and is not representative of the greater Canadian public. It is therefore challenging to extrapolate from the responses of our control group of students to the general public. It would be important to further investigate this issue with larger and more representative sample groups of offenders, professionals, and lay people in order to ensure that results may generalize to the Canadian population.

The current study made use of a newly-created measure of attitudes, the Media and Sex Offenders survey, which had not been previously validated. The survey was problematic in several ways. For example, it included items that were unclear (e.g. “The media is in favor of sexual offending” and “People’s opinions

can affect their behaviours”) and several items overlapped one another. Also, Section B contained items that pertained to two distinct concepts rather than one. Although exploratory factor analysis was conducted and steps were taken to ensure the items that made up each section’s total score was consistent with one other, the study’s sample size was below that typically necessary to conduct a thorough analysis. Tabachnick and Fidell (1996) suggest that as a general rule, a sample size of at least 300 cases is necessary to conduct factor analysis and the current sample size fell well below this value. As well, the internal consistency for the general views of the media factor (Section B factor 2) was quite low. Thus, it is unlikely that this factor did indeed capture one’s general opinion of the media and its influence. In addition, it is important to note that the difference of opinions among the three groups for each survey section, although statistically significant, may not reflect substantial disagreement on this topic in reality, given that the total scores were only a few points different from one another and from a score derived if one had only responded in a *neutral* fashion. In future studies it would be important to re-develop and validate the survey if it was to be used for similar purposes.

Despite these limitations, the current study contributes to the current lack of literature in Canada and in the field regarding the perception of the media’s impact on sex offender reintegration. The findings suggest that sex offenders are more concerned than professionals and the public, regarding the media’s portrayal of sex offenders and the media’s influence on the public’s perception of sex offenders. These results are helpful in understanding more about the impact of the

media on offenders, and imply that more research is required in order to further investigate this relationship.

Dissemination Strategies

Dissemination of the outcomes of the current study is an important consideration. Given that the study found that sex offenders were concerned about the media's negative portrayal and influence over the public's opinion of sex offenders, steps should be taken to further explore and rectify this concern. An important consideration was to include professionals in the study in order to gain an educated perspective on the issue. Professionals are often featured in the media to discuss and inform about particular topics of interest. The results of the study will be presented to professionals at FACS and AHE and a report will be provided to Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security Unit, and their feedback will be important in considering the next step. Professionals, with this research in hand, may then feel more equipped to step forward and take action; the researcher along with professionals may then approach the media in order to present them with the results and develop alternative forms of action in order to encourage sex offender desistance.

Ultimately, the goal of this research is to assist with the reintegration of sexual offenders and to assist with current efforts implemented in order to reduce rates of re-offending. It is intended that these findings not only be presented to professionals involved in the treatment and assessment of offenders, but also to law/policy makers and the media. It is hoped that the research may influence members of the media and serve to convince the media to accurately depict sex

offenders and ultimately play a helpful part in the successful reintegration of sex offenders. Venues such as the annual conference of the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (ATSA) Conference and others such as the annual conference of the International Treatment for Sexual Abusers (IATSO), or the International Association of Forensic Mental Health Services (IAFMHS), which bring together a diverse group of professionals working with sex offenders from around the world, would be appropriate audiences for whom to present the study's findings.

Future Directions

The results provide some preliminary information about the views of sex offenders, professionals, and students regarding the media's effects on sex offender reintegration. However, considering the exploratory nature of the current study there are many other areas where this research could expand and these potentially include future directions in both research and practice.

Future areas of research would include exploring the perceived effects of the media with a larger and more representative sample of offenders, professionals, and the general public throughout Canada. Given that the results are similar in several ways to previous research conducted in the U.S. regarding sex offender legislation and the debilitating effect of various policies on reintegration strategies, it is important to focus on ways to target the media. Petrunik and Deutschmann (2008) indicate that despite not directly creating or enforcing these legislations in the U.S. the media itself serves to amplify the impact of these policies on offenders, and this study has shown that it is perceived

to have a negative impact on sex offenders in Canada as well. The results suggest that sex offenders perceive the media to have a strong negative impact on the public's perception of them and they credit the media's portrayals for various negative effects on their lives. More information may be gathered in a qualitative fashion to get a more detailed perspective regarding the media's effects on sexual offenders. Future studies could include more open-ended questions to allow for more descriptive responses and to facilitate the further development of construct validity for the survey. Levenson and colleagues (2009) indicated that "attitudes can affect treatment, teaching, research, public education, advocacy, and policy decisions" (p. 166); therefore continued research of the views of the public, professionals, and sex offenders is an important endeavour. Moreover, additional work could be done to ensure proper validation of the scales used to measure perceptions about the media and other instruments could also be included in order to help develop convergent validity for the scales.

An important future consideration would be to examine news media more closely and help identify and target the particular stereotypes perpetuated by the media, as well as get a sense of the public's general attitude towards the media in order to identify if this has any effect on what people believe to be true. Research has found that attitude change on important social issues can occur with the dissemination of accurate information (Cochran & Chamlin, 2005), which is evidence that if the media changes their portrayal of sex offenders, public attitudes towards sex offenders may change and this change may assist in the successful reintegration of offenders; this successful reintegration may serve to

lower the risk of re-offending. Content analysis of media coverage would be useful in order to discover what information is erroneously presented or what information about sex offenders is lacking and would be helpful to disseminate. For example, Thakker and Durrant (2006) having reviewed over 370 articles related to sexual offending from 3 New Zealand newspapers, found that very little media attention was directed at sex offender rehabilitation and to education and prevention, compared with coverage of offence and offender details and court proceedings.

The results of this study indicated that both sex offenders and professionals view the media as presenting sex offenders more negatively than students, and sex offenders perceived the media to negatively impact public attitudes towards them; thus it would be important to focus on how to change the way in which media portrays these offenders. This may in turn help to change how the public thinks about and behaves towards them. Some practical suggestions made by previous researchers has been for law enforcement agencies and media organizations to have more direct communication and collaboration in order to help reduce misinformation and sensationalism of stories about sex offenders, which can lead to public overreaction and extremist attitudes (Zevtiz & Farkas, 2000). Others have suggested that it is the responsibility of both the media and researchers to establish more effective opportunities to communicate with one another in order to provide the public with accurate information (Thakker & Durrant, 2006). Thakker and Durrant (2006) suggest that academics should be come more engaged in media advocacy efforts in order to help create a more

balanced view of sexual offending in the media. Lilienfeld (2012) suggests that in order to help educate others about the scientific side of psychology, psychologists must become more active in reaching out to the public. In this context, it would be important for psychologists to become more active and experienced in the dissemination of research about sex offenders to a public audience rather than just to those working in the field.

A primary objective of media advocacy is to influence public policy in particular directions, such as was the case with tobacco control campaigns, which were effective in reducing tobacco use (Thakker & Durrant, 2006). Thus increased advocacy can lead to changes in or implementations of more effective sex offender policies. McAlinden (2006) suggests, “the need for a rigorous government-sponsored media-based, public education and awareness program designed to provide accurate information and dispel popular misconceptions about sexual offending” (p. 210). The media can thus be used as a vehicle to make positive change. Future research may also focus on the effects of exposure to and dissemination of accurate information about sex offenders on the public’s opinion about them, and in turn on the experiences of sex offenders themselves in the community.

It is hoped that the current research endeavour could lead to further discussion and the potential to implement more programs, such as Community Reintegration Projects in Edmonton and the surrounding areas. Recently, restorative justice approaches of the Mennonite Church in Ontario, Canada, have spurred the creation of Community Reintegration Projects, also known as circles

of support and accountability, the first of which was informally set up in 1994 (Petrunik, 2002). These circles consist of about 5 trained volunteers (usually from the church) who are willing to help sex offenders in establishing themselves in the community and avoiding risky situations; they provide a community of support and accountability for the offender. Offenders must agree to the terms of the circle and are often those who are high profile, at high risk, and recently released on warrant expiry (Heise et al., 2000). These circles have been shown to be effective in helping to prevent sexual re-offending and have slowly begun to start up in other Canadian cities (Petrunik, 2002). Petrunik (2002) indicates that these circles open up the possibility of both individual and community involvement in increasing desistance where the offender, with the help of the community, has the opportunity to instill positive change while individual community members also assist by providing offenders with acceptance and help.

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Appendix A1

INFORMATION SHEET SEX OFFENDERS

INFORMATION SHEET

Collateral Effects of the Media on Sex Offender Reintegration: Perceptions of Sex Offenders, Mental Health Professionals, and the Lay Public

You have been invited to participate in a research study investigating the effects of the media on sex offender reintegration into the community. The study is a Master's thesis project lead by Gabriela Corabian from the Education Psychology Department at the University of Alberta, under the supervision of Dr. Sandy Jung and Dr. Derek Truscott.

A. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the current study is to get an idea of any potential effects the media may have on sex offender integration into the community. Results will help to inform the research on sex offender risk factors and may serve to influence actions taken to help ensure long term positive reintegration of sex offenders in the community.

B. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to complete a pen and paper survey. The survey includes short statements and you will be asked to rate your agreement with them on a scale. The survey will require between 10-20 minutes of your time to complete.

C. CONDITIONS and PARTICIPATION RIGHTS

- Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you have the right to decide at any time if you do not want to continue participating. You have the right to skip any questions you do not wish to answer and move on to the next question. Your decision to not participate will in no way affect your treatment, programming, or any parole/probation conditions.
- All of your responses will be kept anonymous and confidential. That is no one will know what your answers are and your name will not be associated with them since your name will not be included on any of the surveys you complete. Data will be kept in a locked cabinet and five years after the project has ended your responses will be destroyed.

D. CONTACT INFORMATION

If at any time you have questions about this research, please contact the researchers:

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This study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines. It was approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension, Augustana and Campus Saint Jean Research Ethics Board (EEASJ REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEASJ REB c/o (780) 492-261.

Appendix A2

INFORMATION SHEET PROFESSIONALS

INFORMATION SHEET

Collateral Effects of the Media on Sex Offender Reintegration: Perceptions of Sex Offenders, Mental Health Professionals, and the Lay Public

You have been invited to participate in a research study investigating the effects of the media on sex offender reintegration into the community. The study is a Master's thesis project lead by Gabriela Corabian from the Education Psychology Department at the University of Alberta, under the supervision of Dr. Sandy Jung and Dr. Derek Truscott.

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The purpose of the current study is to get an idea of any potential effects the media may have on sex offender integration into the community. Results will help to inform the research on sex offender risk factors and may serve to influence actions taken to help ensure long term positive reintegration of sex offenders in the community.

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Appendix A3

INFORMATION SHEET STUDENTS

INFORMATION SHEET

Collateral Effects of the Media on Sex Offender Reintegration: Perceptions of Sex Offenders, Mental Health Professionals, and the Lay Public

You have been invited to participate in a research study investigating the effects of the media on sex offender reintegration into the community. The study is a Master's thesis project lead by Gabriela Corabian from the Education Psychology Department at the University of Alberta, under the supervision of Dr. Sandy Jung and Dr. Derek Truscott.

A. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the current study is to get an idea of any potential effects the media may have on sex offender integration into the community. Results will help to inform the research on sex offender risk factors and may serve to influence actions taken to help ensure long term positive reintegration of sex offenders in the community.

B. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to complete a pen and paper survey. The survey includes short statements and you will be asked to rate your agreement with them on a scale. The survey will require between 10-20 minutes of your time to complete.

C. CONDITIONS and PARTICIPATION RIGHTS

- Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you have the right to decide at any time if you do not want to continue participating. Your decision to not participate will in no way affect your class grade and if you choose not to participate you will be given an alternate assignment to complete in order to receive your credit.
- All of your responses will be kept anonymous and confidential. That is no one will know what your answers are and your name will not be associated with them since your name will not be included on any of the surveys you complete. Data will be kept in a locked cabinet and five years after the project has ended your responses will be destroyed.

D. CONTACT INFORMATION

If at any time you have questions about this research, please contact the researchers:

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This study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines. It was approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension, Augustana and Campus Saint Jean Research Ethics Board (EEASJ REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEASJ REB c/o (780) 492-261.

Appendix B

CATSO

Directions: Below are 18 statements about sex offenders and sex offenses. Please select the corresponding number from the rating scale given below for the answer that best describes the way you feel or what you believe. **Please write your number in the blank beside each item number.** Most of the statements below are difficult to prove or verify in an absolute sense, and many are specifically about your opinion based on what you may have heard, read, or learned; thus, we are less interested in the “right” or “wrong” answers, and more interested in your beliefs and opinions regarding sex offenders. Even if you have no general knowledge about the issue, please provide an answer to each question.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Probably Disagree	Probably Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

- _____ 1. With support and therapy, someone who committed a sexual offense can learn to change their behavior.
- _____ 2. People who commit sex offenses should lose their civil rights (e.g. voting and privacy).
- _____ 3. People who commit sex offenses want to have sex more often than the average person.
- _____ 4. Male sex offenders should be punished more severely than female sex offenders.
- _____ 5. A lot of sex offenders use their victims to create pornography.
- _____ 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 offense is not as bad as someone who uses physical control when committing a sex offense.
- _____ 16. Most sex offenders keep to themselves.
- _____ 17. A sex offense committed against someone the perpetrator knows is less serious than a sex offense committed against a stranger.
- _____ 18. Convicted sex offenders should never be released from prison.

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Appendix C1

MEDIA AND SEX OFFENDERS SURVEY SECTIONS A, B, C

This survey asks your opinions about how the media describes sex offenders. The focus is on your view of how the media's descriptions may influence sex offender integration into the community. **Please read carefully and answer all questions.** All information is completely anonymous and confidential.

Your participation is greatly appreciated!

A. Please rate your agreement with the following questions on how the news media (including: Internet sites, TV, radio, newspapers, magazines) describes sexual offenders. (Circle your answer)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I don't know
1. Sex offenders get a lot of attention in the news media.	5	4	3	2	1	0
2. News media present sex offenders as people who should be feared.	5	4	3	2	1	0
3. News media describes sex offenders as offenders with a high risk to re-offend.	5	4	3	2	1	0
4. News media describes sex offenders as less dangerous than other offenders (ex. Violent offenders).	5	4	3	2	1	0
5. News media usually focuses on male sex offenders (more so than female sex offenders).	5	4	3	2	1	0
6. News media describes sex offenders as offenders that are generally not treatable (cannot change for the better).	5	4	3	2	1	0
7. News media does not exaggerate how bad sex offenders are.	5	4	3	2	1	0
8. News media exaggerates how badly the victim of a sexual crime was hurt.	5	4	3	2	1	0
9. News media does not exaggerate how serious a sexual offence is.	5	4	3	2	1	0
10. News media talk about sex offenders as people who do not have friends.	5	4	3	2	1	0
11. News media never talks about sexual crimes.	5	4	3	2	1	0
12. News media describe sex offenders as people who are not to be trusted.	5	4	3	2	1	0
13. Overall, I think news media's description of sex offenders is overly positive.	5	4	3	2	1	0
14. Overall, I think news media's description of sex offenders is neutral/fair/unbiased/accurate.	5	4	3	2	1	0

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B. Please answer the following questions regarding the influence of the news media. (Circle your answer)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I don't know
15. Most people get their information about diverse topics (ex. gardening, politics, crime, sports) from news media.	5	4	3	2	1	0
16. News media gets the facts straight.	5	4	3	2	1	0
17. News media can influence the opinions of the public.	5	4	3	2	1	0
18. News media is fair and unbiased in their reporting.	5	4	3	2	1	0
19. News media is in favor of sexual offending.	5	4	3	2	1	0
20. Most people get information about sex offenders from news media over other sources of information (ex. books, encyclopedias, published research articles).	5	4	3	2	1	0
21. News media has not shaped/influenced the public's views of sex offenders.	5	4	3	2	1	0
22. People's opinions can affect their behaviors.	5	4	3	2	1	0
23. Because of how news media talks about sex offenders, the public has become more fearful of them (ex. the public views sex offenders as more dangerous/worse because of the media).	5	4	3	2	1	0
24. Because of how news media talks about sex offenders, the public believes sex offenders are not treatable (cannot change for the better).	5	4	3	2	1	0
25. Because of how news media talks about sex offenders, the public believes sex offenders are a high risk to re-offend.	5	4	3	2	1	0
26. Because of how news media talks about sex offenders, the public is even more angry with sex offenders.	5	4	3	2	1	0
27. The news media never talks about sex offenders.	5	4	3	2	1	0
28. Because of how news media talks about sex offenders, the public believes they do not have many friends.	5	4	3	2	1	0
29. Because of how news media talks about sex offenders, the public is even more mistrusting of sex offenders.	5	4	3	2	1	0
30. Because of how news media talks about sex offenders, the public believes they are more dangerous than other offenders.	5	4	3	2	1	0
31. Overall, because of how news media talks about sex offenders, the public thinks more negatively about them.	5	4	3	2	1	0
32. Overall, I think that how the news media talks about of sex offenders makes no difference in how the public treats sex offenders.	5	4	3	2	1	0

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C. Please rate your agreement with the following questions regarding sex offender re-integration into the community. (Circle your answer)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I don't know
The way news media talks about sex offenders has hurt sex offenders ability to...						
33. find a job.	5	4	3	2	1	0
34. find a place to live.	5	4	3	2	1	0
35. make new positive relationships in their lives.	5	4	3	2	1	0
36. be financially stable.	5	4	3	2	1	0
Because of the way news media talks about sex offenders, this has resulted in...						
37. physical threats to sex offenders in public.	5	4	3	2	1	0
38. verbal threats to sex offenders in public.	5	4	3	2	1	0
39. sex offenders having less access employment opportunities.	5	4	3	2	1	0
40. sex offenders having less access to social services and/or mental health treatment.	5	4	3	2	1	0
41. sex offenders having less access to supportive family and/or friends.	5	4	3	2	1	0
42. sex offenders feeling more alone and isolated.	5	4	3	2	1	0
43. sex offenders experiencing many negative consequences that are undeserved.	5	4	3	2	1	0
44. How news media talks about sex offenders makes their recovery more difficult by causing added stress to their lives.	5	4	3	2	1	0
45. Because of how news media talks about sex offenders, sex offenders are more motivated to prevent re-offending to prove to others that they are not a bad people.	5	4	3	2	1	0
46. Because of how news media talks about sex offenders, most people who know a sex offender are supportive in their recovery.	5	4	3	2	1	0
47. Overall, news media's description of sex offenders has a positive influence on sex offenders' lives in the community.	5	4	3	2	1	0
48. Overall, news media's description of sex offenders does not influence sex offenders' lives in the community.	5	4	3	2	1	0

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Appendix C2
MEDIA AND SEX OFFENDERS SURVEY SECTION C
(OFFENDER VERSION)

C. Please rate your agreement with the following questions regarding your re-integration into the community. (Circle your answer)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I don't know
The way news media talks about sex offenders has hurt my ability to...						
33. find a job.	5	4	3	2	1	0
34. find a place to live.	5	4	3	2	1	0
35. make new positive relationships in my life.	5	4	3	2	1	0
36. be financially stable.	5	4	3	2	1	0
Because of the way news media talks about sex offenders, this has resulted in...						
37. physical threats to me in public.	5	4	3	2	1	0
38. verbal threats to me in public.	5	4	3	2	1	0
39. me having less access employment opportunities.	5	4	3	2	1	0
40. me having less access to social services and/or mental health treatment.	5	4	3	2	1	0
41. me having less access to supportive family and/or friends.	5	4	3	2	1	0
42. me feeling more alone and isolated.	5	4	3	2	1	0
43. me experiencing many negative consequences that are undeserved.	5	4	3	2	1	0
44. How news media talks about of sex offenders makes my recovery more difficult by causing added stress to my life.	5	4	3	2	1	0
45. Because of how news media talks about sex offenders, I am more motivated to prevent re-offending to prove to others that I'm not a bad person.	5	4	3	2	1	0
46. Because of how news media talks about sex offenders, I find that most people who know that I am a sex offender are supportive in my recovery.	5	4	3	2	1	0
47. Overall, news media's description of sex offenders has a positive influence on my life in the community.	5	4	3	2	1	0
48. Overall, news media's description of sex offenders does not influence my life in the community.	5	4	3	2	1	0

For Research Purposes Only

Appendix D1

SEX OFFENDERS DEMOGRAPHIC SHEET

GENERAL INFORMATION

For each item, please give the answer that best describes your situation. Please answer each question.

All answers will remain anonymous and confidential.

PLEASE DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ANYWHERE ON THIS PACKET.

Please answer the following questions regarding your media use and the influence of the media. (Please circle your answer)	Daily	Few times a week	About once a week	Less often	Never	I don't know
How often do you....						
• Watch TV news?	5	4	3	2	1	0
• Listen to news on the radio?	5	4	3	2	1	0
• Read the newspaper?	5	4	3	2	1	0
• Go on the Internet for news?	5	4	3	2	1	0
Overall, how often do you get information from news media?	5	4	3	2	1	0
Overall, how interested are you with keeping up with the news?	Very	Some what	Not very	Not at all	Don't know	

1. What is your age? (in years) _____

2. What is your highest level of education? (Please circle)

- Less than grade 9..... 1
- Grade 9 and some high school.... 2
- GED..... 3
- High school graduate..... 4
- Some College/University..... 5
- College/University Graduate..... 6

3. Which of the following do you most identify with? (Please circle)

- White/Caucasian 1
- Black/African American.....2
- Aboriginal..... 3
- Other..... 4

4. Please describe your most recent sexual convictions (check ALL that apply):

- Molestation of minors
- Sexual assault of adult
- Peeping or voyeuring
- Exposing
- Computer-related sex crime
- Other: please specify: _____

5. Do you have any prior sexual arrest/conviction(s)? (Please circle). Yes No

6. Do you have any contact offences against children? (Please circle). Yes No

7. Do you have any prior criminal arrest/conviction(s)? (Please circle). Yes No

Appendix D2

PROFESSIONALS DEMOGRAPHIC SHEET

GENERAL INFORMATION

For each item, please give the answer that best describes your situation. Please answer each question.

All answers will remain anonymous and confidential.

PLEASE DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ANYWHERE ON THIS PACKET.

Please answer the following questions regarding your media use and the influence of the media. (Please circle your answer)	Daily	Few times a week	About once a week	Less often	Never	I don't know
How often do you....						
• Watch TV news?	5	4	3	2	1	0
• Listen to news on the radio?	5	4	3	2	1	0
• Read the newspaper?	5	4	3	2	1	0
• Go on the Internet for news?	5	4	3	2	1	0
Overall, how often do you get information from news media?	5	4	3	2	1	0
Overall, how interested are you with keeping up with the news?	Very	Some what	Not very	Not at all	Don't know	

1. What is your age? (in years) _____

2. Your sex: _____female _____male

3. What is your highest level of completed education?
(Please circle)

High School Diploma

Bachelor Degree or Professional
Degree/Diploma/Certificate

Masters Degree

Doctoral or Medical Degree

Other (please specify): _____

4. What is your discipline? (Please circle)

Psychiatry

Psychology

Correctional Worker/Parole Officer

OT

Social Work

Nursing

Other (please specify): _____

5. How long have you been working in your
current position? (in years) _____

6. How long have you been working with sex offenders? _____

Appendix D3

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC SHEET

GENERAL INFORMATION

For each item, please give the answer that best describes your situation. Please answer each question.

All answers will remain anonymous and confidential.

PLEASE DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ANYWHERE ON THIS PACKET.

Please answer the following questions regarding your media use and the influence of the media. (Please circle your answer)	Daily	Few times a week	About once a week	Less often	Never	I don't know
How often do you....						
• Watch TV news?	5	4	3	2	1	0
• Listen to news on the radio?	5	4	3	2	1	0
• Read the newspaper?	5	4	3	2	1	0
• Go on the Internet for news?	5	4	3	2	1	0
Overall, how often do you get information from news media?	5	4	3	2	1	0
Overall, how interested are you with keeping up with the news?	Very	Some what	Not very	Not at all	Don't know	

1. What is your age (in years)? _____

2. Your sex: ____female ____male

3. What is your current level of education? (Please circle)

1st year undergraduate

2nd year undergraduate

3rd year undergraduate

4th year undergraduate

5th + year

Appendix E

DEBRIEF SHEET

Collateral Effects of the Media on Sex Offender Reintegration: Perceptions of Sex Offenders and Mental Health Professionals and the Lay Public

The purpose of this research is to identify the attitudes of sexual offenders and mental health professionals who work with them, and the public regarding how the media (in the form of TV, radio, Internet) depicts sex offenders and if this affects sex offender integration into the community. Sex offenders face many challenges when they enter the community following a conviction.

In this study we presented you with a questionnaire designed to examine a) how you feel sex offenders are portrayed by the media b) what you think about the media's influence over the public c) what factors you think may be impacted by the media's portrayal of sex offenders.

Results of this study will be used to help inform professionals and policy makers on how the media impacts offender reintegration and can help to guide future research regarding what factors affect sex offender reintegration and how these can be targeted.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension, Augustana and Campus Saint Jean Research Ethics Board (EEASJ REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEASJ REB c/o (780) 492-2614.

If you have any concerns or questions about this research, or would like a copy of results upon completion, please feel free to contact any of the principal researchers: *Gabriela Corabian, Educational Psychology department, University of Alberta, at corabian@ualberta.ca*, Dr. Derek Truscott, *Educational Psychology Department, University of Alberta at derek.truscott@ualberta.ca*, or *Dr. Sandy Jung, Psychology Department, Grant MacEwan University at jungs0@macewan.ca*.

Finally, thank you again for helping us with this research!

Sincerely,

Gabriela Corabian

Dr. Sandy Jung

Dr. Derek Truscott

University of Alberta