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University Students' Knowledge of and Attitudes toward Sex Offenders and Treatment of Sex Offenders in New Zealand and China

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Abstract

Topics related to sexual offending and sex offenders can provoke a great deal of fear and anxiety in society. Sex offenders are a group of people who are considered to be especially unpleasant and harmful compared to other types of offenders. Over the past two decades, academic researchers and clinical professionals have developed a variety of assessment methods and treatment programmes to reduce recidivism rates of sex offenders. Public attitudes toward sex offenders are proposed to play an important role in the effectiveness of treatment for sex offenders. Thus, general community members' attitudes have been widely studied in western countries. However, there is little cross-cultural research exploring Asian people's attitudes toward sex offenders. The three keys purposes of this study were to examine university students' knowledge of and attitudes toward sex offenders, explore how their knowledge and attitudes were formed, and compare the similarities and differences between New Zealand and Chinese university students. A total of 62 participants were included in this study; 29 from New Zealand and 33 from China. It was hypothesized that New Zealand university students would be more knowledgeable of and positive toward sex offenders, treatment of sex offenders and released sex offenders than Chinese university students. The results supported hypotheses that New Zealand students had greater knowledge of and positive attitudes toward sex offenders and treatment of sex offenders. However, no difference was found in people's attitudes toward released sex offenders between two groups of students. The results also indicated that the news media was the most common source of information on sexual offending and sex offenders in both countries. However, there is a great difference in people's attitudes toward veracity of information provided by the media between New Zealand and

Chinese students. The results are considered in light of current research. Implications and future research directions are briefly discussed.

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Introduction

Although treatment of sex offenders has developed and become increasingly important in the last two decades, there are significant differences in treatment programmes for sex offenders between Western developed countries and Asian developing countries. That is, most Asian counties have been slow to use systematic and integrative treatment programmes to respond to the problem of sex offending (Jing, 2002; Lung, Chou, Lu, Wen, Yen, & Kao 2007). Theoretically there is a seamless relationship between treatments of sex offenders in prison (which target reduction of risk factors) and the rehabilitation of released sex offenders that focuses on providing ongoing support in society. However, insufficient knowledge, biased stereotypes, and generally negative attitudes toward sex offenders in the community may greatly hinder the process and effectiveness of overall treatment of sex offenders. Therefore, people's attitudes toward sex offenders have been largely studied in many Western societies (e.g., Brown, 1999; Willis, Levenson, & Ward, 2010; Thakker, 2012; Willis, Malinen, & Johnston, 2012). However, there are a few studies that have explored Asian people's attitudes toward sex offenders.

This research project had two major goals: to explore university students' knowledge of and attitudes toward sex offenders and treatment of sex offenders; and compare the similarities and differences between New Zealand and Chinese university students. More specifically, this paper will discuss the importance of people's attitudes toward sex offenders; briefly describe definitions, assessment and treatment of sex offenders; compare the differences in treatment of sex offenders between New Zealand and China; examine available literature related to people's attitudes toward sex offenders and treatment of sex offenders; describe the methodology in this research; explore university students' knowledge and attitudes

toward sex offenders and treatment of sex offenders; compare the similarities and differences between New Zealand and China; discuss the results; and conclude with a discussion of the limitations of the project.

Literature review

Recidivism rates of sex offenders

Evidence indicates that recidivism rates of sexual offences are much lower than other types of general crimes (Thakker, 2012). For example, Wormith, Olver, Stevenson, and Girard (2007) studied recidivism rates of 60 released prisoners during a period of 6.4 to 12.7 years. The results found high recidivism rates with 86.7 per cent for a new conviction, 80 per cent for a new non-violent conviction, 55 per cent for a new violent conviction, and only 8.3 per cent for a new sexual conviction.

Generally accepted recidivism rate of sex offenders is under 20 per cent in the first 10 years (following a previous offence) (Thakker, 2012), and around 24 per cent over 15 years (Willis et al., 2010). Hanson and Bussiere (1998) conducted a meta-analysis of 61 studies. The results reported that the recidivism rate of sexual offending was approximately 13.4 per cent ($N = 23,94$) on average, which included 18.9 per cent ($N = 1,839$) for rapists and 12.7 per cent ($N = 9,603$) for child sex offenders. Similarly, Harris and Hanson (2004) conducted a review of 10 follow-up studies which included 4,724 sexual offenders after their first 15 years release from prison. The results reported that the overall re-offending rates were 14 per cent after five years, 20 per cent after 10 years and up to 24 per cent after 15 years for all offenders. In terms of rapists, recidivism rates were 14 per cent after five years, 21 per cent after 10 years and 24 per cent after 15 years. For child sex offenders, recidivism rates of child molesters were 13 per cent, 18 per cent and 23 per cent after 5, 10 and 15 years

respectively. However, Prentky, Austin, Knight and Cerce (1997) indicated a higher recidivism rate for sex offenders over a longer period of time. Specifically, they reported that re-offending rates were 39 per cent for rapists and 52 per cent for child sexual offenders by the end of a 25-year period. In addition, it is also important to recognize that the actual life-time re-offending rate of sex offenders is significantly higher than the figures officially reported when undetected sexual offences are counted. For example, Langevin, Curnoe, Fedoroff, Bennett, Langevin, Peever, Pettica and Sandhu (2004) reported that there was up to approximately 88 per cent recidivism rate of combined detected and undetected sexual re-offending of their 351 samples after a long period of 25 years.

It has also been suggested that recidivism rates of sexual offending could be different in terms of different risk levels of sex offenders (Willis et al., 2010). That is, sex offenders who have higher levels of assessed risk of re-offending are more likely to re-offend. For instance, Helmus, Hanson and Thornton (2009) found that sex offenders who achieved higher scores on the Statics-99 (a risk measure instrument of recidivism for sex offenders) had higher recidivism rates than the individuals with low scores on the Statics-99. The results reported an approximately 54 per cent recidivism rate for sex offenders who scored 9 on the Static-99 for a 10-year period. Similarly, Harris and Hanson (2004) found that sex offenders with prior sexual convictions (a risk factor) had significantly higher recidivism rates of sexual re-offending (37 after 15 years) than the offenders without previous sexual convictions. Furthermore, recidivism rates of sex offenders have been found to be much higher when recidivism includes all types of offences. For instance, Hanson and Bussiere (1998) reported that recidivism rates were 36.3 per cent ($N=19,374$) overall, 36.9 per cent ($N = 3,363$) for the child sex offenders, and 46.2 per cent ($N= 4,017$) for rapists.

Why study attitudes?

People's public attitudes to and beliefs about sex offenders are important because they have significant influence on detection, prosecution and conviction of sex offenders (Takker, 2012). For example, the use of stereotypes of sex offenders may result in an increased likelihood that child molesters avoid detection (Shangara & Wilson, 2006). Parents are more likely to warn their children to be careful of strangers. However, a considerably large percentage of child sex offenders are individuals who are familiar with the family, such as family members, neighbours, or parents' friends. Research indicates that family members and acquaintances constitute the majority of the group of child sex offenders, whereas strangers only make up a small percentage ranging from seven per cent up to 25 per cent based on several different studies (e.g., Wilson & Davies, 1999; Douglas & Finkelhor, 2005). In addition, the use of the stereotype of sex offenders in law enforcement agencies, such as the Police and the courts, may also influence decisions in regard to arrest, prosecution, conviction and sentencing. For example, an eccentric older male which is one of the stereotypes of sex offenders (Bolen, 2001) is more likely to be prosecuted for abusing children than non-stereotypical people (Shangara & Wilson, 2006).

People's public attitudes to and beliefs about sex offenders are crucial for the occurrence of sexual offending and maintenance of sexual re-offending, because the public's attitudes to and beliefs about sex offenders have a direct influence on the personal and social environment in which sex offenders live. There are various theories proposed that negative personal and society environments result in both the onset of sex offending (e.g., Marshall & Barbaree, 1990; Ward & Beech, 2006) and maintenance of sexual re-offending (e.g., Thakker & Ward, 2012). For example, Marshall and Barbaree (1990) proposed that people who grow up in an adverse social

and physical environments are more likely to develop antisocial attitudes and distorted working models of relationships, especially with respect to sex and aggression. They further suggested that the occurrence of sexual offending is based on the interaction between people's degrees of vulnerability and the environment they live in. A negative social and physical environment produces more stressors such as social discrimination, rejection and isolation. Therefore, people with a higher vulnerability to committing sexual offences require less intense stressors in their environments for a sexual offence to occur.

Ward and Beech (2006) proposed that an individual's social and personal environment plays an important role in sexual offending. The term *ecological niche* has been used to refer to a set of potentially adverse social environment, personal situations and physical circumstances. The interaction between biological inheritance and social learning from an ecological niche has a significant impact on people's neuropsychological systems which may further result in occurrence of clinical symptoms of sexual offending, such as emotional problems, social difficulties, deviant sexual arousal and cognitive distortion. Clinical symptoms of sex offending then gradually develop into sexual offending behaviours. Ward and Beech also emphasize the importance of negative factors in the ecological niche, because in some cases of sexual offending, ecological niche factors may play a particularly important role in sexual offending.

Thakker and Ward (2012) extended the integrative model of sexual offending to sexual re-offending. In the adapted integrated theory, the ecological niche is a crucial factor for maintaining and escalating sexual re-offending behaviour. They proposed that sex offenders are more likely to continue sexual offending if certain clinical symptoms are present: general anti-sociality, deviant sexual arousal, pro-

offending attitudes and self-regulation problems. These clinical symptoms may result in a more adverse ecological niche, which in turn, may lead to deterioration of neuropsychological functioning. Therefore, sexual offending itself strengthens the factors which encourage further re-offending behaviour. For example, released sex offenders may have difficulties in finding employment, renting houses and establishing and maintaining relationships because they are often harshly judged in public. Thus, a negative environment may have a dramatic impact on people's psychological functioning, and result in the occurrence of clinical symptoms which encourage sexual re-offending behaviour.

People's public attitudes to and beliefs about sex offenders are essentially important for the effectiveness of treatment for ex-offenders. This suggests that correctional staff have responsibilities to provide the public with sufficient and accurate knowledge of sexual offending and sex offenders, because released sex offenders need an accepting and supportive social and physical environment which could provide them with opportunities to re-enter and reintegrate into the community and ultimately desist from sexual offending behaviour.

Available theories and literature of treatment of sex offenders have addressed the significance of a supportive environment in reducing recidivism of sex offending (e.g., Thakker & Ward, 2012; Willis et al., 2010; Willis et al., 2012). For example, according to Ward and Maruna's (2007), human beings are goal-directed organisms who are naturally predisposed to seek and achieve a range of human goods. Offenders commit crimes because they lack the capacity to realize and achieve their valued goals in socially acceptable and personal fulfilling ways. Therefore, released sex offenders are less likely to re-offend in a social and physical environment which provides them with the resources such as employment, stable housing, intimate

relationships and pro-social networks. Under these sorts of circumstances, released sex offenders have a greater chance of desisting from sexual and general offending behaviour and becoming a pro-social and productive member of society (Willis et al., 2010). In contrast, released sex offenders are more likely to re-offend if they are discriminated against, rejected or isolated in the community as a result of negative stereotypes of sex offenders portrayed and permeated throughout the public sphere. Under such negative circumstances, released sex offenders have to acquire their human goods in a socially unacceptable way (offending) because they do not have opportunities to access resources which help them achieve their personal goals and live normal lives. For example, research has indicated that unstable employment and housing, lack of pro-social relationships and networks, and poor prison release plans are associated with greater risk of recidivism for sex offenders (Hanson & Harris, 2000; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005; Willis & Grace, 2009).

It is evident that the public's attitudes to and beliefs about sex offenders are important for the effectiveness of treatment for sex offenders. On the other hand, the attitudes of the professionals and inmates who have great involvement in treatment of sex offenders, such as psychologists, probation officers, and even sex offenders themselves, are also important in treatment of sex offenders, because positive attitudes harboured by those professional people may largely encourage a healthy therapeutic relationship between sex offenders and correctional staff during the processes of treatment (Willis et al., 2010). It is assumed that positive attitudes would see sex offenders as individuals who are capable of positive change in their offending behaviour, while negative attitudes would view sex offenders as incurable and unable to change offending behaviour. Therefore, it is very important that both correctional

staff and sex offenders themselves have positive attitudes and beliefs toward sex offenders.

A number of studies have indicated that positive attitudes which prison staff hold are critical in facilitating the positive change of offenders (Kjelsberg, Skoglund, & Rustad, 2007). Correctional staff work in a special situation where they have the power to promote or undermine the positive change of offenders in their day-to-day interactions with them. Sex offenders' attitudes toward his or herself are also important, because his or her attitudes are associated with self-esteem, self-acceptance and motivation for change. These factors have a direct influence on the way which offenders respond and cooperate with rehabilitation programs. Therefore, the overall effectiveness of treatment is significantly dependent on the attitudes of both correctional professionals and sex offenders themselves (Melvin, Gramling, & Gardner, 1985). For example, Hogue (1993) found that offenders are more likely to engage in rehabilitation and demonstrate a positive change in their behaviour if prison staff hold a generally positive attitude toward them.

For the purpose of comparing differences in people's attitudes toward sex offenders and treatment of sex offenders between New Zealand and Chinese university students, it is necessary to have a basic understanding of academic and practical backgrounds of sexual offending and treatment of sex offenders in both countries. Definitions, assessment, treatment, public protection policies and differences in treatment of sex offenders between New Zealand and China are briefly described.

Definitions

Although several certain types of sexual offences, such as rape and child molestation, are universally regarded as illegal and extremely harmful to both the victims and to society in general, definitions of sexual offending vary in terms of cultures and legal jurisdictions. Generally speaking, sexual crimes can be divided into two categories: crimes of a sexual nature and crimes in a sex category. The majority of convicted sex offenders in western societies have convictions for crimes of a sexual nature, such as rape, child molestation, and sexual assault, while some sex offenders may be convicted for crimes in a sex category, such as prostitution and indecent exposure in public. For example, prostitution is crime in a sex category in some jurisdictions. Prostitution is legal in many western societies, but it remains illegal in most Asian countries, especially in mainland China where prostitutes and the clients are punished with huge fines and up to years of incarceration (Law time, 2005).

Rape and child molestation are considered to be two of the most severe sexual offences in most countries. They frequently spark intense condemnation of offenders by the public. These two types of sexual crimes may result in long-lasting and devastating physical and/or psychological damage to the victims, and also have a significant negative social influence in the community (Kendall-Tackett, Williams, & Finkelhor, 1993; Resick, 1993). Victims can be severely traumatized and may develop to a range of psychological problems, such as post-traumatic disorder, depression and anxiety. In general, rape is defined as a type of sexual assault initiated by at least one person against another person without that person's consent. It is often associated with physical force, threats or a person who is incapable of giving valid consent. Child molestation is a form of child abuse in which a child is used for sexual gratification, regardless of whether consent has been given or not. Child molestation

can be carried out in various forms: physical contact, exposure of private parts to a child or use of a child to produce child pornography.

Assessment

Risk assessment of offenders is a common practice in many countries. Certain sexual offending behaviours are regarded as deviant and harmful to the public. Once people have engaged in such sexual behaviours, it is necessary to identify and assess their risk of repeating these behaviours. Although risk assessment of sex offenders has a long history, it has developed significantly only over the last two decades. Generally speaking, prediction and prevention are two fundamental purposes in risk assessment. Most of the earlier risk assessment instruments were designed for the purpose of prediction in which clinicians were expected to “accurately” predict the re-offending potential of a sex offender. However, there was much criticism of the accuracy of prediction, as well as its utility in the reduction of recidivism in society (Rettenberger & Hucker, 2011). Therefore, the second purpose of prevention has been proposed and then applied in the assessment of sex offenders.

There are four key approaches in the history of risk assessment: unstructured professional judgement (UPJ); evidence-based static instruments (EBSI); evidence-based dynamic instruments (EBDI); and, the most developed, systematic professional judgement instrument (SPJI). UPJ is the first generation of risk assessment in which clinicians’ decisions and judgement about sex offenders were typically based on their intuitive experience. In the first half of the twentieth century, risk assessments of sex offenders were left in the hands of clinical experts (e.g., psychologists and clinicians) and correctional staff (e.g., prison staff, probation officers and police). These people made judgements concerning offenders’ risk levels which were mainly guided by

their professional training and experience. Therefore, experience, knowledge and intuition were normally the most essential components of decision-making progress in UPJ. UPJ is regarded as the least useful method in predicting recidivism, so it is inappropriate to use in risk assessment of sex offenders. Reasons for this include its potential bias in reaching decisions and lack of structure, transparency and empirical validation (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2009).

EBSI is the second generation of risk assessment, developed between the 1970s and 1980. It has highly structured risk scales combined with empirically determined static predictor variables. EBSI focuses on an individual offender's static (unchangeable) variables which may include criminal history, types of victim, antisocial attitudes and having criminal associates. Some common examples of EBSI include the STATIC-99, the Risk Matrix 2000-Sexual/Violence, the Rapid Risk Assessment for Sexual Offense Recidivism and the Sex Offender Risk Appraisal Guide (Rettenberger & Hucker, 2011). However, EBSI have attracted criticism on the basis that they require no input of any professional knowledge or clinical experience because they simply translates offenders' information into numbers, and then use the total scores to calculate their reoffending risk levels. In addition, EBSI overly emphasize static or unchangeable variables which have little effect on either understanding the aetiologies of sexual offences or reducing recidivism rates of sex offenders (Andrew & Bonta, 2010).

EBDI are also called risk-need instruments. They contain both unchangeable (static) factors and changeable (dynamic) factors such as current family relationships, present employment status, and recent criminal friends. EBDI are able to provide information about an offender's risk factors which is important in treatment. They can also be used to monitor the effectiveness of treatment programmes and supervision

strategies. Some examples of EBDI are the ACUTE-2007, the STABLE-2007, and Dynamic Risk Appraisal Scales (Rettenberger & Hucker, 2011).

SPJI are the latest and most widely used type of risk assessment instrument. They are also referred to as structured clinical guidelines or guided clinical judgement in the research literature on risk assessment. Offenders' factors related to recidivism are divided into four categories in SPJI: dispositional factors, such as antisocial attitudes and value; historical factors, such as criminal history; contextual antecedents to sexual violence, such as deviant social networks; and clinical factors, such as substance abuse or psychological disorders. Sex offenders are also labelled with a low, moderate or high risk level of recidivism in terms of their scores on risk assessment instruments. The scoring system in SPJI is not simply a mathematical summation; rather it depends on evaluators' clinical experience and professional knowledge about which risk and/or protective factors apply best to each individual case. Therefore, clinicians need to consider not only each sex offender's risk level of recidivism, but also specific interventional strategies which can most effectively reduce risk factors and increase protective factors of sex offenders. Two commonly used systematic professional judgement approaches are the Sexual Violence Risk-20 and the Risk for Sexual Violence Protocol. Due to the methodological and legal advantages, SPJI have gradually become important in the fields of psychiatry and forensic psychology.

Phallometric assessment is another type of risk assessment instrument. Although its predictive validity has been criticized, it has still been widely used in assessment of deviant sexual preferences of sex offenders (Quinsey, 1998). Phallometric assessment is also called penile plethysmography (PPG) which has been used to determine the level of sexual arousal by measuring the circumference and

volume of the penis with a electromechanical strain gauge when sex offenders are exposed to sexually suggestive content, such as images, sounds or movies. Hanson and Bussiere (1998) conducted a meta-analysis of 61 studies on predictor factors related to recidivism of sex offenders. Researchers suggested that phallometric assessment of deviant sexual preference for children was the most accurate predictor for recidivism of sex offenders compared to other types of assessment instruments.

Most risk assessment instruments described above have only been applied in developed western countries, such as United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. However, the validity and reliability of these risk assessment instruments are minimized when they are applied to countries with non-Western cultures because of insufficient replications and evaluations in literature (Langstrom, 2004; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2009). There are only a few cross-cultural studies about risk assessment instruments in countries with non-western cultures and most of those results were unrepresentative. For example, in Hanson and Morton-Bourgon's (2009) study of the Static-99, results reported roughly moderate predictive accuracy of recidivism rates of sex offenders in Japan. However, Japanese samples in this research were unusual (rapist of female children less than 13 years old) and it was the only replication of the Static-99 in Asian counties. Similar results were also found in Langstrom's study (2004) which indicated that the Static-99 was unrelated to recidivism among sex offenders who are from non-European countries.

Treatment

Treatment of sex offenders in western societies has a long history compared to other cultures in the world; however, only a few studies on treatment of sex offenders could withstand the careful and rigorous evaluation until 1980, because most of the

studies before that period of time were based on individual case studies which did not provide any useful information about treatment approaches. Even fewer studies before that time used a quantitative research method with adequate samples to study the change of deviant sexual behaviours of sex offenders over time (Grant, 2000). There are various theories in development for treatment for sex offenders. Three of the most influential theories are relapse prevention, risk-need-responsivity model and the good lives model.

Relapse prevention is a cognitive behavioural approach. It was originally developed for treatment of drug addictions, but has since been modified for treatment of sex offenders (Laws, Hudson, & Ward, 2000). This approach is most well known as the Alcoholics Anonymous programme. Despite there being very few studies supporting its empirical validation in treatment of sex offenders (Marques, Wiederanders, Day, Nelson, & Van-Ommeren, 2005), relapse prevention was the most popular cognitive behavioural approach in treatment of sex offenders in the 1980s. Over 90 per cent of treatment programmes of sex offenders were based on this approach in North America (Wormith & Hanson, 1992).

According to the relapse prevention approach, sex offenders' deviant offending behaviour is regarded as a maladaptive coping response to a triggering event which can be either internal or external. An internal trigger may include feeling bored or having negative thoughts or feelings. An external triggering event may include, for example, getting drunk or watching arousal pronographic movie. In terms of experiencing the trigger, sex offenders are very likely to engage in a series of thoughts and actions which may ultimately lead them to sexual reoffending. These thoughts and actions gradually become a series of patterns which will repeat themselves every time a triggering event occurs in the absence of intervention.

Programmes of relapse prevention aim at not only helping sex offenders to discover and understand their personal pattern of sexual aggressive arousal and behaviour which may lead to their reoffending, but also developing effective coping strategies and skills to help sex offenders overcome their triggers and break the pattern of deviant sexual behaviour in the future.

Relapse prevention also addresses the importance of the abstinence violation effect. The abstinence violation effect refers to a sex offender's affective and cognitive responses to a violation of self-imposed rules, such as having a deviant sexual fantasy. More specifically, when a single violation of self-imposed rules occurs, sex offenders who feel hopelessness, shame, and attribute the violation to internal, uncontrollable factors are more likely to sexually reoffend. In contrast, sex offenders who feel that they have not completely failed, and view causes for the violation as controlled and preventable in the future, are less likely to reoffend.

The risk-need-responsivity (RNR) model was originally developed in the 1980s in Canada, and then formalized in 1990. It is still one of the most influential approaches for risk assessment and treatment for sex offenders. The RNR model was described as a fresh wind that swept around the world, because it emerged during the time of the “nothing works” pessimism toward treatment of sex offenders (Ward & Maruna, 2007). The RNR model has significantly underlined a number of influential risk-need assessment instruments for sex offenders, such as the STATIC-99. It is also the only theoretical model which has been widely used to interpret the treatment for sex offenders in literature. Thereby, the RNR model has been regarded as the premiere model for guiding assessment and treatment for sex offenders in most western countries (Andrew, Bonta & Wormith, 2011).

Risk, need and responsivity are three essential principles in the RNR model. Firstly, the risk principle states that the intensity of treatment programmes should be matched to risk levels of sex offenders. In other words, intensive treatment should be applied to sex offenders with a high level of risk, whereas a minimum level of intervention should be conducted for low risk sex offenders. Risk factors also include static and dynamic factors which can also be categorised into four broad domains: dispositional factors (e.g., antisocial personality); historical factors (e.g., prior criminal history); contextual factors (e.g., lack of positive social support); and clinical factors (e.g., substance abuse). Secondly, the concept of need refers mainly to conditions which are essential for sex offenders' psychological well-being and fulfilment of life. In the RNR model, the need principle targets personal deficits or shortcomings which are directly related to offending behaviour. Needs include two types: criminogenic and non-criminogenic. Criminogenic needs are personal factors which have a direct impact on recidivism rates, such as antisocial personality, pro-offending attitudes and criminal associates. Non-criminogenic needs are factors which are not directly related to recidivism such as low self-esteem and psychological disorders. Lastly, the concept of responsivity emphasizes the relationship between individual and environment. It concerns how an individual interacts with treatment and his or her environment. In the RNR model, the responsivity principle states that the styles and models of treatment should be in accordance with the offenders' personal circumstances such as level of motivation to change, learning style and abilities and interpersonal skills. Responsivity can be divided into internal responsivity and external responsivity. Internal responsivity focuses on offenders' internal factors. It requires clinicians to match the content, pace and intensity of treatment to offenders' specific characteristics, such as personality and cognitive

maturity. External responsivity emphasizes external factors of treatment, such as treatment methods, offenders' personal life experience and cultural background.

The good lives model (GLM) is a strengths-based approach in positive psychology which was originally developed for treatment of all types of criminal behaviours, and has since been widely and effectively used in treatment of sex offenders (Ward & Maruna, 2007). The GLM proposes that people commit crimes because they lack capacities to realize and achieve their valued goals in socially acceptable and personal fulfilling ways. Consequently, a meaningful, pro-social and constructive life can help offenders desist from criminal behaviour and then become symptom-free in the future. Therefore, instead of emphasizing offenders' psychological deficits, the GLM approach aims at equipping offenders with the knowledge, abilities, skills and opportunities to fulfil their needs, pursue their goals, and then live a constructive, meaningful and ultimately happy life.

The fundamental assumption of the GLM is that all human beings are goal-directed organisms who are naturally predisposed to seek and achieve a range of personal human goods. High levels of physical and psychological well-being will be achieved if human goods are accomplished. Human goods fall into two categories: primary and secondary. Primary goods help people survive, reproduce and establish strong social networks. A range of studies have concluded ten basic primary goods: life, knowledge, excellence, agency, inner peace, friendship, community, spirituality, happiness and creativity (Ward, Mann & Gannon, 2006). Secondary goods, also called instrumental goods, provide particular means to achieve and/or secure primary goods such as certain types of work or relationships. Therefore, treatment according to the GLM aims to provide the internal and external conditions which are necessary

to enhance knowledge, skills and resources needed for offenders to achieve their personal valued human goods.

Compared with other types of approaches, the GLM has two advantages in treatment of sex offenders. Firstly, the GLM emphasizes naturalistic orientation which refers to the plasticity of human nature (such as personal beliefs, goals, behaviours, and values) in relation with environment. Earlier types of treatment of sex offenders pay little attention to human nature. Offenders were treated as objects who passively received assessments and treatment (Andrew et al., 2011). In contrast, the GLM emphasizes the importance of humanity, thereby providing flexible and individually tailored intervention approaches to sex offenders. It combines manually standardized interventional techniques with a set of individually tailored primary and secondary human goods of offenders. For example, a person who committed crimes of sexual violence may receive standard anger management training, but more significantly, work toward his overall human goods, such as building intimate relationships or having employment. The merit of individually tailored intervention in the GLM is the inherent concern for the welfare of offenders which may motivate offenders to initiate, maintain and complete their correctional treatment. Thus, the therapeutic alliance can also be more easily established under individually tailored intervention.

Community protection policies

There are different types of community protection laws and policies to enhance public safety in different countries based on different cultural backgrounds and legislation systems. Generally speaking, three commonly used community protection policies regarding sex offenders are sex offender registration, community

notification and residency restrictions. Firstly, sex offender registration is a system designed to increase the public's awareness of sex offenders and allow government and authorities to keep track of sex offenders (Leverson, Brannon, Fortney & Baker, 2007). Sex offenders need to register their personal information: full name, home address, date of birth, telephone numbers, and car registration. The register usually allows the police, probation service and prison service personnel to access this. In some countries, all the information about sex offenders in the registry is available to members of the general public through the Internet or other means. If sex offenders change any registered information, they must inform the police within several days. Sex offenders who fail to comply with this may be subject to a penalty or imprisonment.

Secondly, community notification is a further step of registration for sex offenders. It requires government authorities to make information of sex offenders available to the general public. Different countries may release different levels of information about sex offenders to the public. Early community notification strategies include flyers, door-to door warnings and press releases about sex offenders. Since counties post their sex offender registries online, the Internet has become the most common source of information about convicted sex offenders (Leverson et al., 2007). The information may include the offender's full name, address, picture, nature of crime and incarceration.

Lastly, residency restriction refers to that sex offenders are prohibited from residing within a certain distance from certain places, such as day care centres, primary and secondary schools. This policy was designed with the assumption that sex offenders actively choose their victims from the available population in the areas which they live. Therefore, increasing the distance between registered sex offenders

and their potential targets could reduce recidivism rate of sex offenders (Huebner, Bynum, Rydberg, Kras, Grommon & Pleggenkuhle, 2012).

The New Zealand context

New Zealand has the latest and most developed theories and programmes, and has led the way in many respects of treatment of sex offenders. The New Zealand Department of Corrections has developed a number of treatment programmes which focus on reducing recidivism rates of sex offenders in accordance with New Zealand's particular cultural context. Two of the most well-known treatment programmes for convicted sex offenders in New Zealand are the Kia Marama sex offender treatment programme and the Te Piriti sex offender treatment programme (New Zealand Department of Corrections, 2013).

The Kia Marama programme was the first specialized prison-based treatment programme for male child sex offenders in New Zealand in 1989. It was originally based on the Atascadero Sex Offender Treatment Programme in California in the US. The Kia Marama is a highly structured treatment programme which is conducted in a 60 bed therapeutic community for convicted child sex offenders. Offenders are required to attend nine hours of group-based intervention in a total of 33 weeks. A ratio of approximately 10 to 1 is kept between sex offenders and staff. Prison officers are assigned to each therapy group to provide support and monitor the treatment progress of sex offenders in the group. Modules in the Kia Marama programme include formal assessment, norm building, understanding offending, arousal reconditioning, victim impact and empathy, mood management, relationships skills and relapse prevention. (New Zealand Department of Corrections, 2013).

The other programme in New Zealand is the Te Piriti sex offender treatment programme which was developed in 1994 at Auckland Prison. The Maori name, Te Piriti, means “crossing” which indicates the transition from the previous criminal life to a new and better life. The Te Piriti programme was modelled on the Kia Marama treatment programme of sex offenders at Rolleston Prison in Christchurch. However, Te Piriti includes stronger Maori content with specific emphasis on enhancing a therapeutic environment within a *tikanga* Maori framework. One of the fundamental assumptions of the Te Piriti programme is that deviant sexual behaviours are determined by a number of combined factors: social, cultural, developmental and biological conditions (Larsen, Robertson, Hillman, & Hudson, 1998). Te Piriti provides group-based intervention at about nine hours per week over a nine-month period. The ratio between sex offenders and staff is 10:2. Treatment content involves understanding offending, challenging distorted beliefs about offending, encouraging the offender to take responsibility, developing empathy, sexual arousal reconditioning and developing skills and strategies for relapse prevention (Larsen et al., 1998). The Te Piriti programme has explicit cultural perspective policies which adhere to central principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, especially partnership and *tino rangatiratanga* (self-determination). For example, all correctional staff in this programme need to understand the Treaty, complete the Maori and Treaty awareness programme (Te Iho), provide a culturally supportive environment for Maori offenders, and establish and foster links with local *iwi* (Larsen, et al., 1998).

The context in China

Although the first prison-based institution for treatment of offenders was established in Shanghai in 1987 in Mainland China, treatment theories and models are

still only at the very beginning stage comparing to treatment in Western developed countries, because there are no professional and systematic treatment programmes for sex offenders in Mainland China yet (Jin, 2002). The current Chinese offense classification system is not only unable to reflect the prevalence of sexual offending, but also irrelevant to the assessment and treatment of sex offenders (Li, 1997). Therefore, treatment of offenders, especially which targets sex offenders, still remains lacking in mainland China.

There are very few relevant studies about psychological treatment of sex offenders in China. Jing (2002) identified two major reasons for the slow development in treatment of sex offenders in Mainland China. The first significant reason is the lack of highly educated and trained clinical professionals. Current correctional staff who work with offenders in China are mainly police officers, prison officers and social workers. Compared to registered clinical psychologists in the western world, Chinese correctional officers who work in treatment require relatively lower levels of education and little professional and academic knowledge in the areas of sexual offending and treatment of sex offenders. Also, current treatment approaches to sex offenders in China are rigidly copied from western countries so have no integration of any particular components of Chinese culture.

In Taiwan, since 1994, there have been policies which require that all sex offenders receive treatment in prison. However, treatment methods and models in Taiwan are also at an early stage compared to treatment of sex offenders in the western world. One of significant reasons is because of inconsistent treatment models for sex offenders among different prisons in Taiwan. Lu and his colleagues (2007) identified several difficulties regarding mandated treatment of sex offenders in prison: lack of consistent disciplines for the professionals, poor client adherence, shortage of

professional staff, and the safety concerns of the staff. To sum up, treatment of sex offenders has only a short history of development in China, especially in mainland China where knowledge of sexual offending and treatment of sex offenders is still relatively lacking. Consequently, there are no public protection policies related to sex offenders in mainland China at all.

Methodologies for assessing attitudes

A brief description of methodologies for assessment of people's attitudes to and perceptions about sex offenders is needed. There are several different methods that can be used for the measurement of people's attitudes including Attitudes Towards Prisoners (ATP; Melvin et al., 1985); Attitudes Towards Sex Offenders (ATS; Hogue, 1993), Attitudes Toward the Treatment of Sex Offenders (ATTOSO; Wnuk, Chapman, & Jeglic, 2006); and Community Attitudes Towards Sex Offenders (CATSO; Church, Wakeman, Miller, Clements, & Sun, 2008). Generally speaking, all these types of assessment instruments are based on multi-item scales which are able to reflect an overall score of people's attitudes on a continuum ranging from very negative to very positive (Hogue, 1993; Melvin et al., 1985; Wnuk et al., 2006; Church et al., 2008). These four types of instruments have been used to measure peoples' attitudes in terms of different occupational backgrounds. They are also used to assess the effectiveness of training designed for attitude change.

There are some differences among these four types of assessment instruments. The ATP is a 36 item scale originally designed to measure general attitudes towards prisoners. It is assumed that people who have lower scores on the ATP scale have more negative attitudes towards prisoners. The ATS is an adaption version of the ATP, except "prisoner" was replaced by "sex offenders". Therefore, although Hogue

purposively used the ATP to measure people's attitudes toward sex offenders, the original and underlying content of questions in the ATS is still designed to target general offenders rather than sex offenders specifically (Willis et al., 2010). The ATTSO is a scale that originally contained 35 items. In Wnuk and his colleagues' (2006) exploratory factor studies, it was found that 15 out of 35 items were statistically and theoretically functioning well in assessment of public attitudes toward sex offenders and treatment of sex offenders. The CATSO scale includes 18 items within four major factors specifically designed to study perceptions and stereotypes of sex offenders in the public. Church and his colleagues (2008) designed the CATSO so it has the potential to deeply explore and capture people's perceptions of and stereotypes about sex offenders. They further suggested that the CATSO could also be used in combination with other assessment instruments of attitudes such as ATTSO, in order to study both general and treatment-specific views of sex offenders. The ATTSO and the CATSO are two relatively recent assessment instruments of people's attitudes toward sex offenders, so that they have not yet been widely applied in many research studies (Willis, 2010).

In addition to these four major types of research methodologies, there are some other different scales and approaches to measure people's attitudes towards and perceptions of sex offenders. For example, Thakker (2012) conducted qualitative focus group interviews to study public opinion, attitudes and beliefs about sex offending and treatment of sex offenders in various centres around New Zealand. This research method can provide researchers with opportunities to analyse and discuss complex topics because it allows for dialogue between individuals (Berland, Natvig, & Gunderson, 2008). In addition, Brown (1999) investigated people's attitudes towards and stereotypes of sex offenders by using a 15 page self-reporting

questionnaire of 58 items. McCorkele (1993) measured 397 participants' attitudes toward rehabilitation and punishment of six common crimes (rape, robbery, child molestation, burglary, drug sale and drug possession) by studying the participants' answers after the presentation of crime scenarios by telephone. A series of statements related to offending were given to the participants. The participants' answers were rated from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Stereotypes of sex offenders

Available research studies have demonstrated that the public's attitudes toward sex offenders are more negative than attitudes toward general offenders (e.g., Hogue, 1993; Weekes, Pelletier, & Beaudetee, 1995; Craig, 2005; Kjelsberg et al., 2007). For example, Kjelsberg and his colleagues (2007) used the ATS scale to compare attitudes toward prisoners in four Norwegian prisons among prison officers, prison employees and college students. Results showed that prison officers, prison employees and college students had more negative attitudes toward sex offenders than toward general offenders. Compared to general offenders, sex offenders in general are often seen as violent, harmful, dangerous, aggressive, unchangeable, weak, unpredictable and irrational. Furthermore, child molesters especially, are judged as more significantly immoral and mentally ill (Weekes et al., 1995).

Shanghara and Wilson (2006) described six common stereotypes of sex offenders. The first five stereotypes have been largely examined in the literature. Firstly, sex offenders are regarded as low in intellectual functioning (Bolen, 2001). However, studies have shown that there are no differences in intelligence between child sex offenders and the general population (Elliott, Browne, & Kilcoyne, 1995). Secondly, sex offenders are often portrayed as 'dirty old men', whereas 30 per cent to

50 per cent of child sex offenders are adolescent offenders (Bolen, 2001). Thirdly, sex offenders are seen as individuals who are sexually frustrated, lack a normal healthy sexual life, and are incapable of achieving intimacy with adults (Bolen, 2001). Groth, Burgess, Birnbaum and Gary (1978) found that child molesters had an equal percentage of marriage compared with the figures in general population. In addition, they indicated that children were not substitutions for adults for sex offenders, because most sex offenders sexual encounters with children and with adults coexisted. Fourthly, the most common stereotype of sex offenders is a stranger who wears trench coat, drives a van and wanders around outside the schoolyard (Sanghara & Wilson, 2006). On the contrary, family relatives, friends or neighbours account for the majority of child sex offenders (Wilson & Davies, 1999; Douglas & Finkelhor, 2005). The fifth stereotype is that sex offenders are mentally ill and psychotic (Levenson et al., 2007), but there is no evidence supporting any differences in social functioning levels between sex offenders and the general population (Sanghara & Wilson, 2006). The sixth and last stereotype of sex offenders is that sex offenders are always sexually obsessed. Although this stereotype has not yet been examined in the literature to the extent of the other five stereotypes, there is evidence indicating that the individuals who are involved in sexual exploitation or surrounded by sexual explicit materials are more likely to commit sexual crimes than the individuals who are not (Sanghara & Wilson, 2006).

Attitudes toward sex offenders

People's attitudes toward sex offenders have been largely investigated, and both negative and less negative attitudes have been demonstrated in studies among different groups of people such as community members, police officers, psychologists

and sex offenders (Willis et al., 2010). There are big differences in people's attitudes toward sex offenders in terms of their different occupational or social backgrounds (Hogue, 1993; Hogue & Peebles, 1997; Ferguson & Ireland, 2006; Johnson, Hughes, & Ireland, 2007; Kjelsberg & Loos, 2008). Generally speaking, most of studies suggest that the individuals who have less knowledge about the treatment of sex offenders or who have less contact with sex offenders, have more negative attitudes towards sex offenders (Willis et al., 2010). Therefore, general community members have more negative attitudes toward sex offenders than the individuals who are knowledgeable and involved in treatment of sex offenders. The individuals who are less knowledgeable and involved in treatment (such as the police and prison officers) have more negative attitudes toward sex offenders than the individuals who have more knowledge and greater involvement in treatment (such as clinical psychologists, probation officers and even sex offenders themselves) (Hogue, 1993; Hogue & Peebles, 1997; Lea, Auburn, & Kibblewhite, 1999; Johnson et al., 2007; Kjelsberg & Loos, 2008).

Sanghara and Wilson (2006) studied the differences in attitudes towards and perceptions of sex offenders between inexperienced schoolteachers and experienced professionals who were involved in treatment. Seventy-one inexperienced schoolteachers and 60 experienced professionals participated in the research. The participants were given scenarios of sexual offending and details of the alleged offenders. Backgrounds of the alleged offenders were manipulated into two groups in terms of different stereotypes of sex offenders. One group was consistent with the negative stereotypes of sex offenders, such as "sexually frustrated" or "dirty old man." In the other group, sex offenders were professors at universities or had their own families. The results indicated that inexperienced teachers who were less

knowledgeable about sex offending, endorsed more negative stereotypes of sex offenders, and held more negative attitudes toward sex offenders than experienced professionals. The researchers further suggested that people with more knowledge of and sex offenders are less likely to endorse negative stereotypes of sex offenders portrayed in society. Similarly, Ferguson and Ireland (2006) compared attitudes toward sex offenders between university non-psychology undergraduates and forensic staff. The results indicated that non-psychology students at university were more likely to have negative attitudes toward sex offenders than the individuals who worked in forensic settings. Kjelsberg and his colleagues (2007) investigated the attitudes toward offenders among prison staff, offenders and university students in Norway. This study also indicated similar results that the university students held the most negative attitudes toward sex offenders, followed by prison staff and prison employees. University students' attitudes toward sex offenders were also different in terms of their study majors. For instance, students who studied business economics had more negative attitudes than students who studied nursing. In contrast, Harper (2012) compared 178 UK undergraduates' attitudes toward sex offenders between psychology students and non-psychology students. Surprisingly, the results indicated that psychology students had more punitive attitudes than non-psychology students. In terms of difference among sub-groups of psychology students, students with the major of child studies held the most negative attitudes toward sex offenders, followed by single-honours psychology students, forensic psychology students and clinical psychology students.

Influence of training on attitudes

In the light of the research studies above, it has been proposed that people who have a lack of knowledge or contact with sex offenders are more likely to harbour negative stereotypes and attitudes toward sex offenders (Kjelsberg & Loos, 2008, Willis et al., 2010). Therefore, this assumption can be further extended: if people have opportunities to receive professional knowledge of sexual offending and treatment of sex offenders, their attitudes toward sex offenders are more likely to change positively.

Several studies have examined the influence of training on people's attitudes toward sex offenders; however, the effectiveness of training is inconclusive (Hogue, 1995; Taylor, Keddle, & Lee, 2003; Craig, 2005; Johnson et al., 2007; Kjelsberg & Loos, 2008). For example, Hogue (1995) measured the effectiveness of a three week training programme for 81 multi-disciplinary staff who worked with sex offenders in the UK. The participants included prison officers, probation officers, psychologists and teachers. Their attitudes toward and knowledge of sex offenders were scored on the both ATS and ATP scales. After training, the researcher found that there were significant improvements on scores of both scales, which indicated positive changes in attitudes toward sex offenders. Participants also stated that they were more positive about treatment efficacy, and that they felt more confident and knowledgeable about working with sex offenders. Similarly, Taylor and his colleagues (2003) studied the effectiveness of a 2.5-day training program for 66 correctional staff who were either nurses or social workers. The researchers found a great increase in the participants' knowledge of and attitudes toward sex offenders after training. Therefore, the results indicated that a short but intensive training programme could improve people's attitudes toward, confidence in, and knowledge of sex offenders.

On the other hand, a few studies have indicated that training has little or no effect on people's attitudes toward sex offenders. For example, Craig (2005) studied

attitudes toward sex offenders among 85 people who were probation offenders or hostel workers in the UK. The Attitudes Towards Sex Offenders (ATS), Attitudes Towards Prisoners (ATP) and Working with Offenders Questionnaires (WOQ: see Hogue, 1995) were used to measure attitudes prior to and after the two-day training workshop. The results reported little influence of the training workshop on people's attitudes towards sex offenders. However, 86 per cent of participants stated that they felt more knowledgeable and confident to work with sex offenders. In another research study, Kjelsberg and Loos (2008) examined the effect of a two-day training programme on prison employees' attitudes toward sex offenders. The ATS was used to measure attitudes before, and a year after, the training programme. The results indicated that training had no impact on people's attitudes toward sex offenders, because there was no change in participants' scores on the ATS.

In contrast, Hughes and Ireland (2007) explored the effectiveness of an educational programme on people's attitudes toward sex offenders among probationary policy officers. The researchers found significantly more negative attitudes toward sex offenders among participants post-training compared to pre-training. Several reasons have been suggested to explain the significant differences in the effectiveness of training programmes on people's attitudes toward sex offenders: the quality of training programme, the learning ability of participants, and the suitability of measuring instruments, such as the ATS and ATP.

The influence of gender on attitudes

Research has indicated mixed results on the influence of gender on people's attitudes toward sex offenders. The majority of available research found no gender differences in people's attitudes toward sex offenders between male and female

participants (e.g., Hogue & Peebles, 1997; Brown, 1999; Rogers, Hirst, & Davies, 2011; Nelson, Herlihy, & Oescher, 2002; Johnson et al., 2007; Kjelsberg & Loos, 2008). For example, Hogue and Peebles (1997) investigated the influence of remorse, intent and attitudes towards sex offenders among 50 correctional professionals who regularly worked with sex offenders and the victims of sexual abuse. They found that there was no difference in people's attitudes toward sex offenders between male and female professionals. Nelson and his colleagues (2002) studied 437 counsellors' attitudes toward sex offenders. Similarly, they did not find any significant difference between male and female counsellors.

There are a few research studies that have demonstrated significant differences in people's attitudes toward sex offenders between male and female respondents (e.g., Craig, 2005; Ferguson & Ireland, 2006; Willis et al., 2012). For example, Ferguson and Ireland (2006) found that the female participants held less negative attitudes toward sex offenders than male participants, and this view was consistent across different types of sex offenders in their research. However, Craig (2005) measured attitudes toward sex offenders of 85 residential hostel workers and probation officers. The result indicated that female workers were more concerned about issues related to their personal safety, so that they were more likely to express negative attitudes toward and beliefs about sex offenders than male workers. Willis and his colleagues (2012) studied 401 community members' attitudes toward sex offenders. In this research, attitude was divided into three dimensions: affective, cognitive, and behavioural. Results indicated that female participants were more negative toward sex offenders than the male participants in the affective and behaviour dimensions. One possible explanation of gender differences in attitudes toward sex offenders may be women's tendency to be more empathic than men (Radley, 2001). In addition, in one

of the few studies of Asian people's attitudes toward offenders, Chui, Cheng and Wong (2012) studied 170 university students who were majoring in social work in Hong Kong. The results also indicated that female students had a significantly higher level of fear of sex offences than male students, because female students had more fear of the serious consequences of sexual offending.

The influence of age on attitudes

The influence of age on people's attitudes toward sex offenders is also inconclusive among a number of various research studies in the literature (Brown, 1999; Craig, 2005; Kjelsberg & Loos, 2008). For instance, Craig (2005) found that generational differences of attitudes toward sex offenders among the participants were obvious and significant in his research. The results reported that the participants who were over 35 years old tended to have more positive attitudes toward sex offenders than younger people. The participants who were under 35 years old tended to believe that sex offenders are unable to be rehabilitated or cured, because most sex offenders were too unmotivated to take part in rehabilitation. Kjelsberg and Loos (2008) measured attitudes of 105 prison employees and 412 college students toward sex offenders. They also found similar results that increased age is associated with more positive attitudes toward sex offenders. However, Brown (1999) reported that younger participants are more likely to endorse a more positive attitude toward sex offenders than older participants.

The influence of culture on attitudes

Only a few studies have explored the influence of culture on people's attitudes toward offenders, especially toward sex offenders. However, available research

indicates that people's attitudes toward offenders and sexual offending are different in terms of different cultural backgrounds (Chui, Cheng, & Ong, 2013; Na & Loftus, 1998, Lee, Pomeroy, Yoo, & Rheinboldt, 2005.). For example, Na and Loftus (1998) investigated people's attitudes toward law and prisoners between 194 Korean students and 164 American students. The results suggested that Korean students had more positive attitudes toward prisoners than American students. The researchers further indicated that Korean students were more lenient in their views of offenders, and were more likely than American students to attribute crimes to external reasons. Lee, Pomeroy, Yoo and Rheinboldt (2005) studied 169 participants' attitudes toward rape between Asian and Caucasian university students. The results indicated that there were more Asian than Caucasian students who expressed the idea that victims cause rape. The researchers also indicated that Asian students were more likely than Caucasian students to believe that the victims have a greater responsibility to prevent rape. This type of view is similar to the idea of victim blaming which states that the victims have a responsibility to protect themselves from sex offenders.

Attitudes toward the treatment of sex offenders

Several researchers also studied public attitudes toward treatment of sex offenders. Most available research indicates that the majority of the participants believed that sex offenders should receive treatment when they are serving their determinate sentences in prison (e.g., Brown, 1999; Craig, 2005; Roger et al., 2011, Levenson et al., 2007). However, there are significant differences in people's attitudes toward the effectiveness of treatment for sex offenders. For example, Brown (1999) examined people's attitudes and anticipated behaviours towards sex offenders among 312 community members who were randomly selected from the electoral roll. The

results reported that 95 per cent of the participants supported the idea that sex offenders need rehabilitation in prison. However, the majority of the participants did not believe in the effectiveness of treatment programmes for sex offenders. One quarter of the participants thought that rehabilitation could not reduce recidivism, because, eventually, sex offenders will re-offend. Brown (1999) further reported that only a third of the participants accepted a rehabilitation centre for sex offenders being placed in their community; almost two thirds of the participants were strongly against it. It was also interesting that the participants who accepted treatment programmes of sex offenders taking place in their community stated that they were not prepared to support it at that time. Of the participants who were against the community-based rehabilitation programmes for sex offenders, 80 per cent would sign a protest petition, and 26 per cent would start a campaign to against it. Similarly, Levenson and his colleagues (2007) examined 193 residents' perceptions about sex offenders in Florida. The results indicated that most of the participants supported the idea that sex offenders need treatment in prison. However, they were sceptical about the effectiveness and benefits of treatment programmes for sex offenders.

Thakker (2012) conducted an explorative study of 23 general community members' attitudes toward sex offenders and treatment of sex offenders. The participants were recruited from five major cities in New Zealand: Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga, Wellington and Christchurch. The results showed that although many participants stated that treatment of sex offenders is a waste of money and time, because sex offending behaviours are inherent and incurable, half of the participants in the research believed that treatment of sex offenders is important and beneficial. Over two thirds of the participants recognized that the effectiveness of treatment for sex offenders is significantly dependent on sex offenders' different personal and

offence related characteristics, such as motivation to change, self-control ability and degree of empathy.

In contrast, only one research study reported positive attitudes in the public toward the treatment of a sex offender. Rogers and his colleagues (2011) examined people's attitude toward treatment of sex offenders among 235 general community members. The results showed that the participants displayed more positive attitudes toward sex offenders who had completed their relevant treatment programmes while serving time in prison compared with individuals who did not receive any treatment. This result indicated that the participants had positive attitudes toward treatment of sex offenders in prison because they believed treatment helps offenders to become less likely to re-offend, and then in some sense, become a better or safer person for society.

Craig (2005) also indicated that the participants' age plays an important role in people's attitudes toward treatment of sex offenders. The results indicated that individuals older than 35 years old had more positive views toward treatment of sex offenders, even though they still expressed concerns regarding their interaction with sex offenders. On the other hand, those individuals younger than 35 years old did not believe in the effectiveness of treatment for sex offenders. This group of the participants tended to view treatment of sex offenders is a waste of money and time. This perception about treatment of sex offenders is accordant with a popular myth that sex offenders can never be treated or cured (Fedoroff & Moran, 1997, Katz, Levenson & Ackerman, 2008).

Attitudes toward released sex offenders

People's attitudes particularly toward released sex offenders have also been studied. General community members tended to hold negative stereotypes and attitudes toward released sex offenders (Brown, 1999; Brown, Deakin, & Spencer, 2008, Thakker, 2012). Brown (1999) examined 312 community members' attitudes and anticipated behaviour towards released sex offenders. The results indicated that the overwhelming majority of the participants (92%) would not rent a house to a released sex offender and 70 per cent of the participants would not offer an employment opportunity to a released sex offender. Brown (1999) further found that although approximately 25 per cent of the participants accepted the rehabilitation programmes taking place in their neighbourhoods, only a few participants would support released sex offenders to live back in a normal life in society.

In Thakker's (2012) explorative study, approximately 63 per cent of the participants came under the category of "support and/or supervision" which meant that the individual in this category did not have many concerns if released sex offenders were well supported and closely supervised in the community. However, within this group of people, up to 85 per cent of the participants did not want released sex offenders to be rehabilitated in their own neighbourhood. The participants stated that their biggest concern was their own safety and the safety of their families. Thakker further noted that this anxiety toward released sex offenders could be due to a lack of understanding of sexual offending and sex offenders, as well as due to a fear of the unknown.

Brown and his colleagues (2008) conducted one of the largest surveys in the UK in relation to general community members' attitudes toward the reintegration of the released sex offenders into the community after conviction. In total, 979 people responded to either online or postal questionnaires. Interestingly, they found that

people's attitudes toward sex offenders were not as punitive as it was assumed. However, significantly, feelings of insecurity were expressed among the responses. Most of the participants were also greatly concerned about how the community reintegration of sex offenders is operated and managed in society.

Attitudes toward public protection policies

Several studies also explored the public's attitudes towards and perceptions about community legislations and policies related to released sex offenders. Most research indicated that the majority of people in the public supported the enactment of community protection policies, such as community notification, sex offender registration and residency restrictions (e.g., Levenson et al., 2007; Brown et al., 2008; Shiavone & Jeglic, 2009, Kernsmith, Craun & Foster, 2009).

Schiavone and Jeglic (2009) explored 115 general community members' attitudes towards and perceptions about sex offender-related policies in the US. The results indicated that the majority of the participants supported the policy of community notification for released sex offenders. However, most participants were not confident in regard to the effectiveness of community notification policies in the reduction of recidivism rates of sex offenders. In terms of sex offenders with a low risk level of re-offending, 51 per cent and 20 per cent of the participants, respectively, believed that they also should be put on either registration or community notification boards the same as sex offenders with a high risk level of reoffending. The researchers further indicated that most of the participants did not believe that the policy of restricted residential areas for sex offenders would either effectively reduce re-offending rates or hinder employment opportunities for sex offenders.

Similarly, Levenson and his colleagues (2007) studied public perceptions of sex offenders and community protection policies. They found that the majority of the participants supported the policies of community notifications and registrations, but not the policy of residential restrictions for sex offenders in the community. When the participants were asked whether they would still support such community protection policies related to sex offenders, given the lack of evidence to support their effectiveness in reduction of recidivism rates of sex offenders, approximately 73 per cent indicated they would still support community protection policies related to sex offenders in society (Willis et al., 2010). Kernsmith and his colleagues (2009) conducted another similar study which investigated the relationship between community protection policies and people's fear of different types of sexual offenders among 733 general community members. The results also indicated that the majority of the participants believed sex offenders should be subjected to sex offender registration in society.

The role of the media

Most people in the general public have few direct personal experiences or contact with sex offenders. Therefore, the media has a significant role in influencing and shaping people's knowledge, attitudes, perceptions and behaviours toward sex offenders (Thakker & Durrant, 2006). Katz and his colleagues (2008) studied 127 people's beliefs about sex offenders and sexual assault in the US. The participants were recruited through an online research survey posted on a national community message board in 15 states. They were required to identify the sources by which they receive information and knowledge about sex offenders and sexual assault. The results reported that the media was the most popular source of information as 43 per

cent of the participants identified television, 38 per cent identified the Internet, 29 per cent mentioned newspapers, 10 per cent mentioned magazines and nine per cent identified radio. Only small percentages of the participants identified other sources which were family (7%), school (9%) and friends (10%).

Surette (1994) proposed that people's knowledge of reality through indirect experience, such as from the news media, is called symbolic reality. Symbolic reality is often created through images, spoken language, written language and music which provide people with a large amount of communicated knowledge, and help people incorporate knowledge into their own understanding of the world. However, information from indirect experience is not always accurate and reliable. For example, information from the news media can be presented in a specific way for certain purposes.

Entman (1993) indicated that the news stories in the media are not always reported as "tell it like it is"; rather they are usually framed in a specific way. Some aspects of the issue may be given more emphasis to attract the public attention, whereas other aspects of the issue may be ignored or neglected. In terms of topics related to crimes, available research indicated that information and knowledge related to crimes and offenders are often distortedly reported in the media (e.g., Soothill & Walby, 1991; Surette, 1994; Thakker & Durrant, 2006). Soothill and Walby (1991) examined the news stories about sexual offending and sex offenders published in the British Press from 1951 to 1985. The researchers indicated that the media tended to repeatedly report a few extreme cases of sexual crimes, whereas typical sexual crimes were relatively less reported in the media. Similarly, Thakker and Durrant (2006) investigated the nature and extent of 377 articles in newspapers' (*The New Zealand Herald, The Dominion and the Press*) coverage of sex offenders and sexual offending

in New Zealand in 2003. They found that most of the articles were either court reports or descriptions of specific sex offenders or sexual offences. Only 5 per cent of articles focused on either treatment or prevention of sexual offending. Topics about laws and public safety were most frequently reported in the media news. A small amount of serious sexual offending cases were over-represented. Therefore, the researchers indicated that the public did not necessarily receive accurate and balanced information and knowledge about sex offenders and sexual offending.

The role of culture

The influences of culture on people's attitudes have also been studied, usually with a distinction between individualism and collectivism (Na & Loftus, 1998). Bierbrauer, Meyer and Wolfradt (1994) suggested that people from collectivist cultures are more concerned about interpersonal relationships within the group, whereas people from individualistic cultures are more likely to place emphasis on personal achievement independent of interpersonal relationships. They further suggested that such intrinsic differences between two types of cultures may result in that people from collectivist cultures being more likely to obey cultural norms and social rules than people from individualistic cultures. However, it is important to recognize that people's different attitudes toward sex offenders cannot be simply attributed to collectivist or individualist cultural contexts. It is essential to understand specific factors immersed in such cultures.

Although there is no national religion in China, Chinese people significantly respect Chinese traditional rituals and conventions in their everyday lives. One of the most prominent examples is Confucianism. Confucianism was developed by one of the greatest Chinese philosophers in China nearly 2,000 years ago. It had, and still has,

an essential influence on not only ethical and moral rules which dictate how an Chinese individual relates to other people in society, but also forms and shapes social morality which largely defines the Chinese culture in personal, familial and social relationships (Huang & Gove, 2012).

In Confucianism, harmony and hierarchy are two fundamental values which have been highly valued in Chinese culture. Firstly, the value of harmony portrays and defines how Chinese people think and behave in their interpersonal relationships in society. For instance, acknowledging and conforming to authorities and taking personal responsibility are two essential factors to achieving social harmony in Chinese culture (Miller & Yang, 1997). Therefore, Chinese people are usually reluctant to damage their interpersonal relationships by challenging or acting against other group members, especially authorities, such as parents or the government. Filial piety is a typical example of hierarchy which describes a special relationship between children and their parents in Chinese culture. Chinese people who unquestioningly obey, respect and look after their parents are regarded as good human beings or good citizens in Chinese society. Therefore, to a certain extent, filial piety is a reflection of obedience to authorities. Rebellion or acting against authorities is unacceptable and will be punished in society. Thus, in terms of people's attitudes toward and knowledge about sex offenders and treatment of sex offenders, if sex offenders are portrayed as dangerous, vicious and incurable by parents or by the government authority, Chinese people from the general community are more likely to believe the information and knowledge they received from authorities, and then will have negative stereotypes and attitudes toward sex offenders.

Aims and hypotheses

Aims

Given the importance of people's attitudes in the treatment of sex offenders, it is important and valuable to explore people's knowledge of and attitudes toward them and their treatment in both countries. There are two purposes in this research: to explore university students' knowledge of and attitudes toward sex offenders and treatment of sex offenders, and compare the differences and similarities in knowledge and attitudes between New Zealand university students and Chinese university students. These two purposes can be further broken down into the following specific five goals:

1. To explore and compare university students' knowledge of and attitudes towards sex offenders between New Zealand and China;
2. To determine and compare the source of university students' attitudes and beliefs between New Zealand and China, especially focusing on the role the news media play in providing information;
3. To explore and compare university students' knowledge of the legislation related to sex offences between New Zealand and China;
4. To understand and compare university students' view of treatment of sex offenders between New Zealand and China;
5. To determine whether university students are concerned about released sex offenders being in the community and in New Zealand and China, if so, what these concerns are.

Each of these five sub-goals was explored in the interview questions which were used to guide the structure and processes of interviews with the participants.

Hypotheses

This research has been based on ten hypotheses.

H1. New Zealand university students have less negative attitudes toward sex offenders than Chinese university students.

This hypothesis is based on the assumption that people who have more knowledge of sexual offending and sex offenders are less likely to be influenced by negative stereotypes of sex offenders portrayed in the media, and then have fewer negative attitudes toward sex offenders (Willis et al., 2010). Given that New Zealand has abundant academic knowledge of and practical experience in treatment of sex offenders, New Zealand university students should be more knowledgeable about sexual offending and sex offenders compared with Chinese university students. Thus, New Zealand university students are expected to have fewer negative stereotypes and attitudes toward sex offenders.

H2. New Zealand university students have a better understanding of sexual offending and sex offenders than Chinese university students.

This hypothesis is based on the fact that New Zealand university students have more opportunities to access sufficient and accurate information and knowledge about sexual offending and sex offenders than Chinese university students, because New Zealand has rich and accessible professional knowledge in the area of sexual offending. Sources include online academic journals, textbooks and courses at universities in New Zealand. In contrast, there is little academic and professional knowledge in areas of sexual offending for Chinese university students in China, and

Chinese people have relatively few sources to access any information about sexual offending and sex offenders. For example, people from mainland China cannot access to many popular Internet websites, such as Google, Youtube, and Wikipedia. Any websites or information presented against Chinese authorities are constantly blocked out. Therefore, Chinese university students are expected to have less knowledge of sexual offending and sex offenders.

H3. New Zealand university students are more sceptical about information and knowledge of sex offenders presented in the media than Chinese university students.

This hypothesis is based on the assumption that Chinese university students, under the influence of Confucianism in Chinese culture, are more obedient and less questioning and challenging to authorities (Huang & Gove, 2012). In contrast to the role of the news media in Western societies, the news media in China, especially those from official sources, such as official TV channels, newspapers or websites, represent the Chinese government and authorities. Therefore, the media has a great impact on shaping and influencing Chinese people's knowledge and attitudes. Thus, compared to New Zealand university students, Chinese people are expected to be more likely to believe the news media.

H4. New Zealand university students are more aware of legislation and policies in regard to sex offenders in society in their own country than Chinese university students.

This hypothesis is based on the fact that treatment of sex offenders is more popular in New Zealand than in China. New Zealand university students also have more sources

to receive information and knowledge related to sex offenders than Chinese university students.

H5. New Zealand university students are more aware of legislation and policies related to sex offenders in other countries around the world than Chinese university students.

The reasons behind this hypothesis are similar to the reasons in H4.

H6. New Zealand university students have more knowledge of the treatment of sex offenders than Chinese university students.

This hypothesis is based on the fact that treatment of sex offenders has a comparatively long history in New Zealand. The New Zealand Department of Correction has its own integrative and culturally specific treatment programmes for sex offenders, such as Kia Marama and Te Piriti (New Zealand Department of Correction, 2013). The general information and the effectiveness of these two treatment programmes are available for the general public to access online. In contrast, knowledge of psychological therapies and clinical psychology is lacking in mainland China, as there is no registered clinical psychologist or major of clinical psychology at Chinese universities. In addition, the Chinese legislation system is unable to provide assessment and treatment for sex offenders in mainland China (Li, 1997). Thus, Chinese university students are expected to have less knowledge in treatment of sex offenders comparing with New Zealand university students.

H7. New Zealand university students have more positive attitudes toward treatment of sex offenders than Chinese university students.

This hypothesis is based on the assumption that New Zealand university students have greater knowledge of the treatment of sex offenders than Chinese university students. It is assumed that the individuals who have more knowledge of sex offenders have less negative attitudes toward sex offenders. Similarly, if people are more knowledgeable in the treatment of sex offenders and psychological therapies in clinical psychology, they are more likely to have positive attitudes toward the treatment of sex offenders.

H8. New Zealand university students are more supportive of spending money for rehabilitation of sex offenders than Chinese university students.

This hypothesis is based on the previous assumption that New Zealand students have more positive attitudes toward treatment of sex offenders than Chinese university students. The individuals who believe that treatment of sex offenders is effective and important are expected to be more supportive of the idea of spending money on the rehabilitation of sex offenders.

H9. New Zealand university students are more positive about sex offenders being released into communities than Chinese university students.

This hypothesis is also closely related to the previous two hypotheses. That is, if people are more positive towards the effectiveness of treatment of sex offenders, and if they believe spending money on treatment of sex offenders is money well spent, they should be more supportive toward sex offenders being released back into the communities.

H10. New Zealand university students have fewer concerns about living with released sex offenders in the same neighbourhood than Chinese university students.

The individuals who are positive about sex offenders being released into communities are expected to have fewer concerns in regard to released sex offenders.

Method

One-on-one structured interviews with open-ended questions

The method of one-on-one structured interviews with open-ended questions was considered to be the most appropriate method to explore university students' knowledge and attitudes toward sex offenders and treatment of sex offenders; and compare the similarities and differences between New Zealand and China. The structured interview, also named fixed format interview or standardised interview, is one in which all interview questions are prepared beforehand and put in the exactly the same order for each participant to answer. Given the sensitivity of topics related to sexual offending and sex offenders in both the western and Asian cultures, one-on-one structured interviews with open-ended questions have three major advantages compared with other types of research methods.

Firstly, the one-on-one interview may provide the researcher with more opportunities to better understand the participants' attitudes towards and beliefs about sexual offending and sex offenders by observing the participants' facial expressions and body language, or asking additional particular questions to clarify ambiguous or incomplete answers from the participants during the interviews. The one-on-one interview may also provide the participants with more power to control the progress of the interview. For instance, the participants may change the interview questions or

terminate the interview immediately when they feel uncomfortable about the questions or content of the conversation. In addition, one-on-one interviews build a private, confidential, relaxed, and less formal environment which may encourage the participants to speak more openly and give more information about their real attitudes, perceptions and beliefs in regard to sex offenders and the treatment of sex offenders. Compared with the focus group, the one-on-one interview not only gives each participant an equal opportunity to express him or herself, but also helps him or her avoid group influences. For example, some individuals may have a particularly strong experience of or emotions toward topics related to sexual offending, such that their particularly strong opinion or attitude might dominate the group discussion and influence other group members, such as individuals who are quiet or introverted within the group. However, their particular opinions or attitudes cannot represent all group members within the group (Thakker, 2012).

Another advantage of this method is that structured interviews ensure that all responses from the participants are reliably aggregated, so that it is easier for the researcher to make comparisons between New Zealand and Chinese university students' knowledge and attitudes toward sex offenders and treatment of sex offenders.

Lastly, people's attitudes and perceptions are different and complex, because they are not only associated with unique personal experience and underlying beliefs about the world, but also a reflection of political, religious and cultural orientations (Thakker, 2012). Thus, university students' attitudes towards and perceptions about sex offenders and treatment of sex offenders may be various and multifaceted in terms of different personal experiences and cultural backgrounds. Open-ended questions provide the participants with more opportunities to fully, deeply, and meaningfully

express their attitudes, beliefs and knowledge about these topics, rather than merely give yes or no answers in questionnaires with closed-ended questions. Therefore, the one-on-one interview environment, structured interview procedure and open-ended interview questions are three features of the method in this research.

Along with the advantages, the one-on-one structured interview with open-ended questions also has some disadvantages. One of the most significant disadvantages of this method is time and energy consumption, especially in data collection. That is, the researcher has to book time and interview every single participant for data collection. Another potential disadvantage is that some female participants may feel uncomfortable to discuss and express their real feelings and attitudes toward sexual offending in front of a male researcher. Nevertheless, given the two fundamental purposes of this research, one-on-one structured interviews with open-ended questions was regarded as the most appropriate method in this research. It was hoped that the researchers' knowledge, patience and skills would outweigh the effects of these two disadvantages.

Participants

A total of 129 university students participated in this research: 100 university students from China and 29 university students from New Zealand. However, given the reasons of short period of time and the imbalanced numbers of participants between New Zealand and China, the answers of only the first 33 Chinese participants were used in this research. The number of 33 was because that only first 33 response answers from Chinese participants were fully transcribed into Excel before the start of recruitment in New Zealand.

Ethical approval was given in both New Zealand and China for all of the research. The process of recruitment in this research had two stages. The first stage was conducted at the Xi'an Jiaotong University in China where 100 Chinese university students were recruited from the Language and Experiment Centre. The participants were randomly approached by the researcher and asked if they would like to participate in this research. This method of recruitment did not follow a specific scientific method, as it contains great bias in selection of the potential participants for the research. For example, the researcher may have actively looked for the individuals who appeared easy to talk to. The second stage of recruitment was conducted at the University of Waikato in New Zealand where 29 university students were recruited, mainly through posters on campus. Given the short period of time left for the research, the snowball method was also used to recruit more participants at the University of Waikato in New Zealand.

A total of 62 participants' response answers from both New Zealand and China were used for interpretation and comparison in this research. Within the 33 Chinese participants, there were 21 male students and 12 female students with an age range from 18 to 25 years old. All Chinese participants had the same major of English language at the Xi'an Jiaotong University and a Chinese cultural background. In contrast, there 29 New Zealand university students participated in this research: 10 male and 19 female participants with an age range from 18 to 38 years old. The participants from New Zealand were from different cultural backgrounds and studied different majors at the University of Waikato. Of the New Zealand participants, 19 were born in New Zealand, and the remainder were born in India, Iran, Indonesia and South Africa. Therefore, some of the New Zealand participants may speak more than one language. For those individuals whose English is their second language, their

response answers in English may not reach an expected high standard during interviews.

Interview questions

There were ten open-ended questions in each interview to explore every university student's knowledge and attitudes toward sex offenders and treatment of sex offenders in New Zealand and China. These questions (shown in Table 1) were originally from Dr. Thakker's (2012) research of "Public Attitudes to Sex Offenders in New Zealand". The only change was to Question Six. This was changed because the participants may have had multi-cultural backgrounds, especially for university students in New Zealand. For example, some students may currently study in New Zealand, but originally come from another country which has completely different cultures and legislations in regard to sex offenders. Therefore, both the Question 5 and the Question 6 aimed at exploring the participants full knowledge of the legislation related to sex offenders. The ten questions are presented in the Table 1.

These ten open-ended questions in interviews were designed to explore ten areas related to sex offenders and treatment of sex offenders. These ten areas are attitudes and stereotypes of sex offenders, knowledge of sexual offending, sources of information and knowledge about sex offenders; attitudes toward sources; knowledge of legislations related to sex offenders in respondents' own country; knowledge of legislations related to sex offenders in other countries; knowledge of treatment for sex offenders; attitudes toward treatment of sex offenders; attitudes toward released sex offenders in the community; and concerns about living with released sex offenders in the same neighbourhood. Both languages of English and Chinese were used in different stages of the research. English language was used in interviewing with the

participants recruited from the University of Waikato in New Zealand: Mandarin was used in interviewing the participants recruited from the Xi'an Jiaotong University in China. The ten interviewing questions were literally translated into Chinese written language for purposes of convenience and better understanding.

Table 1: Interview Questions

1. When you hear the words “sex offender”, what comes to mind?
2. How would you define a sex offender?
3. Most of us have an opinion on the topic of sex offender and sex offences. I am interested to hear how you have formed your opinions about sex offenders: what is your source of information?
4. Which sources of information do you trust?
5. What do you know about the legislation with regard to sex offenders in New Zealand (China)?
6. What do you know about the legislation with regard to sex offenders in other countries around the world?
7. What do you know about treatment of sex offenders?
8. Why or why not do you think that spending money on treatment of sex offenders is money well spent?
9. When sex offenders are released into communities, the communities often react strongly and protect themselves against the fact that a sex offender is released into their midst. How would you feel if such a person was to be released into your neighbourhood?
10. Can you tell me something about the concern you would have with regard to a sex offender being released back into the community?

Structured interview facilitation

The one-on-one structured interviews were facilitated by the researcher who is a masters level psychology student at the University of Waikato. The ten open-ended interview questions were asked in the same order as they are presented in Table 1. There was no time limit on each interview question. However, the researcher tried to complete each interview within 30 minutes. When the participants' answers significantly veered away from the original interview questions, the researcher would repeat the original questions either in full or briefly. When participants' answers were ambiguous, incomplete or contradictory, the researcher would ask additional questions to clarify the answers.

Date analysis

The method of content analysis was used in this research to analyse data from New Zealand and China. Content analysis is also sometimes referred to as textual analysis. It was developed over half a century ago to study recorded human communication (Babbie, 2010). It has also been used to analyse verbal and written content in a wide range of academic fields including psychology, business and sociology (Elo & Kyngas, 2007). The method of content analysis was considered appropriate in this research, because it has been used to monitor changes in public opinions (Stemler, 2001). Although there are many ways to conduct content analysis, the identification of meaning units was used to explore, categorise and compare university students' knowledge and attitudes toward sex offenders and treatment of sex offenders between New Zealand and China. Meaning units in the method of content analysis are defined as a cluster of words or statements which have the same central meaning (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). In this research, a meaning unit was

one complete statement by a participant. The same meaning units were identified and used to interpret both the New Zealand and the Chinese data.

All interviews with the participants in both New Zealand and China were audio recorded for transcription and interpretation. After the completion of the interviews with Chinese university students at the Xi'an Jiaotong University in China, all recordings were transcribed verbatim into an Excel format in Chinese. Similarly, after the completion of the interviews with New Zealand university students at the University of Waikato in New Zealand, all recordings were transcribed verbatim into an Excel format in English. Both transcripts in Chinese and English were then compared and analysed to develop a code protocol which was able to determine, identify and categorise the meaning units in this research. The number of participants who expressed the meaning units in both groups were counted and compared. This method would not only determine and assess the prominence of particular ideas and themes presented in the participants' answers, but also compare the similarities and differences between New Zealand and China.

Results

Each interview question in Table 1 is described individually. A few responses from the participants during interviews are presented in this section. Response examples which begin with "NZ" are from the New Zealand participants. Response examples which begin with "C" are from the Chinese participants. Numbers following these refer to the participant code number in the transcribed data in Excel. For example, NZ1 refers to participant 1 from the New Zealand data. Similarly, C7 refers to the Chinese participant number 7 from the Chinese data. In addition, in

response examples from Chinese participants, answers are presented in both original Chinese and English translation.

Q1. When you hear the words “sex offender” what comes to your mind?

This question explored the participants’ attitudes toward and perceptions of sex offenders. In response to this question, several major stereotypes of sex offenders were described by the participants during interviews. For example, “*violent and dangerous*” and “*mentally disordered*” were the two most prominent stereotypes of sex offenders expressed by the participants. Other stereotypes of sex offenders also included “*having relationship problems*”, “*low intelligence*”, and “*high sexual needs*”. Some negative terms, such as manipulative, creepy, nasty or opportunistic, were also largely used by the participants to describe sex offenders during interviews.

The results of Question 1 are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Stereotypes of Sex Offenders

Category	New Zealand		China		Total	
	%	N=	%	N=	%	N=
Violent and dangerous	21	6	45	15	34	21
Mentally disordered	24	7	33	11	29	18
Having relationship problems	10	3	15	5	13	8
Low intelligence	13	4	7	2	10	6
High sexual needs	15	5	3	1	10	6

The results reported that 34 per cent (N=21) of the participants described sex offenders as being “*violent and dangerous*” (which referred to the idea that sex offenders are dangerous, aggressive, coercive, violent and/or using physical force). Some example responses are:

NZ5: ...Sex offenders are dangerous and violent. Some rapists may feel powerful and strong when they use physical force to have sex with women. Some child molesters may feel young again when they are having sex with children.

C26:我第一想到的时儿童性侵犯，性虐童。 我认为性犯罪者都很恐怖。他们都是变态，都是心理不正常，且都伴有暴力。而且我的第一印象是他们可以在外表看起来和正常人无区别，但内心却非常邪恶。 (Child sexual abuse is the first thing comes to my mind. I think all sex offenders are dangerous and violent. They all have mental disorders. They may pretend to act as normally as ordinary people, but they are evil inside).

The second prominent stereotype of sex offenders was “*mentally disordered*”. The results indicated that 29 per cent (N=18) of the participants expressed the idea of “mentally disordered” to describe sex offenders. Mentally disordered referred to idea that sex offenders are mentally ill, psychologically disordered, or having mental problems. Some interesting example responses are:

NZ3: Sex offender is someone who is mental ill and unable to quite comprehend what the right and wrong is. What they believe they are doing is correct, but they just do not have the right and mentality to engage in social norms and rules.

C6: 第一想到的是强奸犯...性犯罪者应该都是心理变态，内心都曾经收到过强烈的冲击，可能心理也收到过严重的伤害。他们应该对性的需求很大，性欲很高，且无法控制，内心猥亵，寻求刺激快乐不道德，触及伦理底线。(Rapist is the first thing that comes to my mind...All sex offenders have psychological disorders. They may experience significant trauma or were deeply hurt by another person. Sex offenders must be sexually hyperactive and have high needs in sex. They are often lacking in self-control and are vicious inside. They constantly look for personal pleasures regardless of ethics and morality in society).

C33:第一想到的是强奸犯，像是新闻电影里描绘的那样...他们应该都是心里有问题，有各种各样的心理缺陷。有受家庭的影响，可能爸爸妈妈之间的感情就有问题。可能从小被性虐待，从小家里没有灌输过这方面的教育...有心理问题，亲情淡薄，比较傲孤僻。(My first thought is rape as it is portrayed in the news and movies on TV. All sex offenders must have mental problems. They have different kinds of deficits in mental health. [Their offending behaviour] could be influenced by their family. For example, their parents may have a poor relationship between each other. [Sex offenders] may be the victims of child sexual abuse when they were young. They may never receive any appropriate education in the area related to sex...Sex offenders are normally extremely introverted and lacking intimate relationships, especially within the family).

Other stereotypes of sex offenders in the participants' response answers included “*having relationship problems*” (13%, N=8), “*low intelligence*” (10%, N=6), and “*high sexual needs*” (10%, N=6). Some other perceptions of sex offenders also included crazy, creepy, manipulative, lack of self-control and opportunistic. Some examples are:

NZ28: [Sex offenders are] crazy, creepy, horrible, yuck and manipulative. They would know you very well because they are quite close to you. They know your vulnerability. They come in all shapes and sizes. Sex offenders could be anybody. They have certain manner, as they are not a type of angry person. They know how to control their emotion.

C4: ...这种人令人讨厌，令人憎恨。他们应该会很暴力，没有受过教育，人际关系差。 (...I hate sex offenders. I think that sex offenders are violent. They have low level of education and interpersonal relationship problems).

Comparison

Comparing the differences between New Zealand university students and Chinese university students, there were some obvious differences between two groups. In terms of the idea “*violent and dangerous*”, 21 per cent (N=6) of the New Zealand students were in this category. However, this figure was much lower than the percentage from the Chinese group in which around 45 per cent (N=15) of the Chinese students believed that sex offenders are dangerous, aggressive and violent. In terms of the category “*mentally disordered*”, a quarter (N=7) of New Zealand students thought that sex offenders have mental problems or are mentally ill,

compared to approximately a third (N=11) of the Chinese university students in this category. In terms of other perceptions of sex offenders during interviews, it was quite interesting that Chinese group had higher percentages of the participants in most of categories than the New Zealand group. For example, 15 per cent (N=5) of the Chinese participants expressed the idea that sex offenders have high sexual needs or are sexually obsessed, whereas only 3 per cent (N=1) of the New Zealand university students were in this category. Thirteen per cent (N=4) of the Chinese students asserted that sex offenders are low in intelligence or have intellectual problems, but only 7 per cent (N=2) of the participants from the New Zealand group. Fifteen per cent (N=5) of the Chinese participants believed that sex offenders have difficulties in building and/or maintaining interpersonal relationships and 10 per cent (N=3) of the participants in the New Zealand group. In addition, 10 per cent (N=3) and 7 per cent (N=2), respectively, of the New Zealand university students described sex offenders as manipulative and opportunistic. However, there were no Chinese university students included in these two categories.

Q2: How would you define a sex offender?

This question explored New Zealand and Chinese university students' knowledge of the terms sexual offending and sex offenders. In response to this question, two prominent ideas were presented. The first idea was "*Violation*" which referred to sexual offending as containing a violation of rules, such as wrongdoing, intruding over personal boundaries, and breaking the social rules, the law or moral codes. The second significant idea was "*spectrum*". This term captured the idea that sexual offending includes different types of offences which lie on a continuum with considerably small incidents at one end, such as sexual harassment or indecent

exposure in public, to more serious sexual offences, such as rape or child molestation at the other end. The results of Question 2 are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Knowledge of Sexual Offending

Category	New Zealand		China		Total	
	%	N=	%	N=	%	N=
Violation	70	20	85	28	77	48
Spectrum	86	25	40	13	61	38
Rape	86	25	73	24	79	49
Child sexual abuse	76	22	6	2	39	24

In terms of “*violation*”, 77 per cent (N=48) of the participants fell into this category. The participants in this group expressed the idea that sex offending is significantly against the law, social rules and moral code as it is a violation of other people’s human rights in society. The most common response in this category was that a sex offender is “someone who has sexual contact with another individual without permission or against will of that person”. Some examples in this category are:

NZ24: Sex offending is having a sexual relationship with someone who is not happy with that, or who does not understand the process.

NZ25: A sex offenders could be anyone who tries to exploit someone at any age, or of any gender for some sexual purposes.

C23: 第一想到的时侵犯他人的权利。性犯罪者道德观有问题，不重视法律。强迫他人在非自愿下和对方发生性行为”。(Violation of other people’s

right is the first thing that comes to my mind. Sex offenders are immoral and careless of the law. They force another person to have sexual contact that is against the will of that person).

In addition, there was also an understanding that sexual offending can be defined differently in terms of different cultural and social backgrounds around the world. Some types of sexual offences are prohibited and punished in certain cultures or societies, but allowed or even encouraged in other cultures or societies. For example, one response from a New Zealand participant was that “in a few countries in Middle East, people are allowed to have sex or marry with young children for a range of reasons, such as money, power, indigenous religion, cultural traditions or pressures from society or other people” (NZ4).

The other equally prominent idea from responses was “*spectrum*”. The results indicated that 61 per cent (N=38) of the participants expressed the idea that there are various types of sexual offences which may result in different degrees of harm to the victims. Therefore, sexual offending was seen as being on a continuum from the lowest level of harm to the highest level of harm to the victims. Within this group of the 38 participants, only 40 per cent (N=15) were able to name sexual offences with relatively low degrees of harm to the victims, such as sexual harassment, indecent exposure and verbal sexual abuse. In contrast, 60 per cent (N=23) of the participants focused on only the two most harmful types of sexual offending: rape and child sexual abuse. Some examples in this category are:

NZ11: [Sex offenders are] someone who commits rape or sexual assault on children. There is a lot of variation within that, especially studying law.

[Sexual offending] can be attempted rape as well... Sexual assault also includes people who are in relationships. That means you cannot do whatever you want, such as statutory rape. Studying law altered my perception.

NZ19: ...[Sex offending] could be anything. It depends on the person who feels offended.

C5: 性犯罪法律上有定义吧，应该是任何在非自愿的情形下侵犯别人的身体。 (Sexual offending is defined by the law. I think that sexual offending can be anything which is having any kinds of sexual contact without another person's consent).

Rape and child sexual abuse were the two most common types of sexual offences that appeared in the participants' response answers during interviews. The results reported that 79 per cent (N=49) of the participants mentioned "rape" or "rapist", and 39 per cent (N=24) of the participants mentioned "having sex with children", "child sexual abuse", "child molestation", or "paedophilia" in their responses to this question.

Comparison

Comparing the responses between New Zealand and Chinese university students, there were some important differences in the participants' knowledge of sexual offending and sex offenders between two groups of people. For instance, in terms of the idea of "*violation*", 70 per cent (N=20) of the New Zealand university students recognized that sexual offending is a kind of a violation of the law, social

rules, moral codes or other people's rights, compared to 85 per cent (N=28) of the Chinese university students in this category. In terms of the idea of "*spectrum*", up to 86 per cent (N=25) of the New Zealand university students described the idea that sexual offending can involve different offences and cause different levels of harm to the victim. There were 32 per cent (N=8) of these 25 participants who named sex offences with relatively lower level of harm compared to rape and child molestation. In contrast, there were less than half of the Chinese participants (40%, N=13) under the category of "*spectrum*". Based on their responses to this question, only seven Chinese students recognized low level sexual offences. There were 86 per cent (N=25) of the New Zealand university students and 73 per cent (N=24) of the Chinese university students who mentioned the term "rape" or "rapist" during the interviews. However, a big difference between two groups of students came in the category of "child sexual abuse". Up to 76 per cent (N=22) of the New Zealand participants mentioned the terms of "child sexual abuse" or "child molestation" in their responses, whereas only merely 6 per cent (N=2) of Chinese university students do so. Therefore, the results indicated that the majority of students understood rape as a serious sexual crime in both countries. However, child sexual abuse was seldom recognized among Chinese university students in China.

Q3: Most of us have an opinion on the topic of sexual offender and sexual offences. I am interested to hear how you have formed your opinions: what is the source of your information?

This question explored the sources of people's knowledge and attitudes toward sexual offending and sex offenders. In response to this question, participants' answers were classified into four categories: "*media*", "*talking to people*",

“*academics*” and “*personal experience*”. The results of Question 3 are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Sources of Information

Category	New Zealand		China		Total	
	%	N=	%	N=	%	N=
Media	94	26	90	31	92	57
Talking to people	31	9	15	5	23	14
Academics	25	7	12	4	18	11
Personal experience	14	4	12	4	13	8

The results indicated that the primary source of the participants’ knowledge about and attitudes toward sexual offending and sex offenders was the media. The results reported that approximately 92 per cent (N=57) of participants received their knowledge and information about sexual offending and sex offenders from newspapers, TV programmes, movies, magazines, radios, and many different Internet websites. Some examples are:

NZ11: Media plays a huge part in it. Its reports in news do influence people in general, and it does influence me as well. They publish that someone is a sex offender. News has tendency to over-play those contents. It is all about how media over-plays certain cases, but which is not usually the facts in reality. News I read is from Internet. Other sources include past papers...

NZ27: ...I guess the general public's opinion is more based on the general media. I read the news from the media, such as TV, newspaper, and the Internet. In TV, there is a generally negative attitude toward sex offenders. [I

have] watched videos that [show] sex offenders walking out of court, and people throw things on them and try to punch them. I also think social media makes a lot of fun or jokes about sex offenders...

C12: 主要是通过各种渠道的媒体，比方说电视，网络，报纸等等。([My information about sex offenders] is mainly from different kinds of sources in media, such as TV, the Internet and newspapers).

C15: 主要是通过电视网络上的新闻等等，偶尔我和朋友也会私底下聊一些这类的问题。 (I watch news from TV and the Internet. Sometime I may discuss this kind of topic with my friends).

The second common source was the category of “*talking to people*”. This category included talking to friends or family members. The results reported that 23 per cent (N=14) of the participants talked about and discussed issues related to sexual offending between friends or family members. Therefore, conversations between friends or family members may play an important role in forming and shaping people’s knowledge and attitudes in society. Some examples are:

NZ13: Personally I have been brought up in a quite strict family... My parents and I discuss these kinds of topics. My dad will get very angry [toward sexual offending and sex offenders], so we discuss these kinds of topics. My parents are very open. They are not trying to hide stuff. This is the way how I have formed my perception....

NZ14: ...I talk about these kinds of topics [about sex offending and sex offenders] between families, but not between friends. Especially something big in the news I will bring it to my family and ask their opinions.

C11: 从朋友还有家人的口中听到，偶尔也会谈及类似的话题。更多的是从电视网络上得到的信息。 (My information) is mainly from TV or the Internet. Sometimes I heard it [topic related to sexual offending] from my friends and family. Occasionally I discuss this kind of topic with my friends.

C19: 通过电视或者网络上的新闻。我和朋友还有家人也会谈及类似的话题。所有他们的看法和态度对我也有影响。 ([My information is] from the new media. I talk to my family members and friends about this type of topic. So their opinions and attitudes have big influence on me).

The third common source of people's attitudes and knowledge about sexual offending and sex offenders was the category of “*academics*” which included academic journals, textbooks and lectures at university. The results reported that there were 18 per cent (N=11) of participants who formed their attitudes and knowledge about sex offenders from what they have read and studied at university. Some examples are:

NZ6: ...I am also studying psychology at university. Academic journals and textbook also help me open my mind to understand what cause sex offending behaviours. It [my attitude] is not so negative as it used to be. It is not empathy, but I gradually started to understand how someone ends up in that situation.

NZ20: I believe that it [sex offending] is wrong to do. Sources could be case law in newspaper articles, such as *Time* magazine, all these kinds of magazines. [Sources also include] psychology books and other books at university, google scholar articles.

C28: 主要通过媒体网络上的新闻，还有看专业书籍后我自己的理解和感觉。 ([My information] is mainly from the news media. It is also my own understanding from academic books).

C29: 我对性犯罪的知识是通过从小接受的社会道德教育，也通过电视上的新闻介绍和法律书籍。 (My knowledge about sex offending is from education I received when I was young. My knowledge is also from news in the media and academic journals and textbook about law).

The results also indicated that some participants had either direct and/or indirect personal experience with sexual offending and/or sex offenders. This type of responses was categorised under “*personal experience*”. There were 13 per cent (N=8) of the participants in this category. For example, one response from a New Zealand student was that “I have both direct and indirect experience of sex offences, because I know someone [who is a sex offender] in my family”.

Comparison

The results indicated that there were large differences between New Zealand and Chinese university students in their sources of knowledge and attitudes toward

sexual offending and sex offenders. Firstly, in the media category, there were 94 per cent (N=26) of New Zealand university students and 90 per cent (N=31) of Chinese university students who stated that the media plays an important role in their knowledge and attitudes toward sexual offending and sex offenders. Media included the newspapers, TV programs, radio, magazine articles, movies and the Internet websites. Secondly, there was a big difference in the “*talking to people*” category between the two groups of students. Thirty one per cent (N=9) of New Zealand participants discussed topics related to sexual offending with friends, classmates or family members. However, there were only 15 per cent (N=5) of Chinese university students in this category. Thirdly, the “*academics*” category was another important difference between New Zealand and Chinese participants. Twenty five per cent (N=7) of New Zealand students used academic sources (such as academic journals, textbooks and lecturers from university) to form their knowledge and attitudes toward sex offending and sex offenders. In contrast, only 12 per cent (N=4) of Chinese students were in the academics category. Lastly, the two groups of participants had similar percentages in the “*personal experience*” category: New Zealand group (14%, N=4); Chinese group (12%, N=4).

Q4: Which sources of information do you trust?

Question 4 investigated people’ attitudes toward the reliability of sources of information which they have used to form their knowledge and attitudes toward sexual offending and sex offenders. The participants’ answers to this question were classified into five categories: “*trust in the media*”, “*trust in other people*”, “*trust in academics*”, “*trust in personal experience*”, and “*do not trust anything*”. The results of Question 4 are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Attitudes toward the Reliability of Sources of Information

Category	New Zealand		China		Total	
	%	N=	%	N=	%	N=
Trust in media	24	7	70	23	48	30
Trust in academics	41	12	12	4	26	16
Trust in personal experience	10	3	6	2	8	5
Trust in other people	7	2	3	1	5	3
Do not trust anything	28	8	12	4	19	12

The results showed that 48 per cent (N=30) of university students trusted the information and knowledge which were presented in the news media about sexual offending and sex offenders in New Zealand and China. Some common media were TV channels, newspapers, radios and the Internet websites. However, it was also found that there were different levels of trust in information presented in the news media in terms of different types of sources. For example, information from official sources was considered much more reliable than information from unofficial sources. Information on TV and newspapers was considered more reliable than information on the Internet. Some response examples are:

NZ2: I will trust in news which has two sides presented in the media. I prefer to read both sides of story.

NZ15 : I just trust the main news on TV channels, such as TV1and TV3. They are main sources [of my information about sexual offending and sex offenders]. I do not trust much in the Internet.

C5: 我相信大众流行的网站。我感觉关注和谈论的人多了真实性就高一些。(I believe in information which is from popular Internet websites. I personally think that information is more reliable and trustworthy, if they are more people focused and discussed in the public).

C9: 我相信正规权威的新闻，比方说中央电视台的新闻，或者大型的媒体网站，比方说新浪。(I trust in news from official channels, such as CCTV channels in China. I also trust news from famous Internet websites, such as www.sina.com).

The second reliable source of information about sexual offending and sex offenders was academics, which included journal articles, lectures at university and textbooks. There were 26 per cent (N=16) of participants under this category in New Zealand and China. Some examples are:

NZ3: I do not like to trust media because they exaggerate everything and are more negative towards offenders. Unfortunately, all they are doing is wrong. It is; you need to look it more holistically, through the whole story, rather than what the media portrays. Academic journals and textbooks are more trustworthy.

NZ21: I tend to trust academic research about sexual offending and rehabilitation. I do not really trust the media. They form their own opinions about the situation, and turning it into a story to sell.

C3: 我个人不怎么相信新闻上的东西，尤其是网络上的新闻呢。我更加愿意相信专业的书籍。 (Personally I do not trust the news media, especially the Internet. I think that academic books are more reliable).

C30: 我认为讲课上的内容可信度要高，应该是科学的，正确的。 (I think knowledge from lectures at university is more reliable, scientific and accurate).

The third reliable source of information was personal experience. There were 8 per cent (N=5) of the participants who only trusted their own direct and/or indirect personal experience related to sexual offending and sex offenders. Some examples are:

NZ13: I trust the primary sources, rather than secondary sources. Primary sources include direct experience, such as seen by myself. I also trust my parents' education or opinions. I do not trust much about stories on the news.

C15: 除非亲眼所见，其他任何的信息都不能完全相信，都有夸大或者是吸引眼球的可能。 (I only believe what I see. All other sources of information have possibilities to exaggerate things to attract public attention).

As illustrated in some examples above, some participants trusted information which was received from talking to other people, such as friends, colleges and parents. There were five per cent (N=3) of the participants under the category of “*trust in other people*”. Some response answers are:

NZ6: ...news can be biased, and can be negative opinion. I do not trust that so much. I trust my dad's knowledge who is a probation officer in Hamilton. People who work with sex offenders have more positive regard to sex offenders.

C11: ...家人谈话，父母的教导我更加相信。 (...[My information is from] conversations with my family members. I trust my parents' education on me).

In terms of the last category of “*do not trust anything*”, there were about 19 per cent (N=12) of the participants under this category in New Zealand and China. This group of participants was more sceptical about every source of information related to sexual offending and sex offenders. Some examples are:

NZ25: I do not really trust the media, because they can be just one sided, and try to sell the story. And again, you cannot really trust the information you get from the university, because they all try to treat people. I guess you have to take a little bit from everywhere...

C16: 不，我不完全相信任何渠道的信息。都有可能作假夸大。(I do not entirely trust any sources of information. They all exaggerate things).

Comparison

The results indicated that there were several important differences in New Zealand and Chinese participants' attitudes toward the reliability of different types of sources. Firstly, the biggest difference was under the category of “*trust in media*”.

Twenty four per cent of the New Zealand students (N=7) expressed the idea that the news media is reliable and trustworthy. However, this figure increased to 70 per cent (N=23) among Chinese university students. Secondly, there is an obvious difference in the category of “*trust in academics*” between the two groups. There were 41 per cent of the New Zealand university students who trusted knowledge which they have learnt at university. In contrast, only 12 per cent (N=4) of the Chinese university students mentioned that they believed knowledge and information from academics about sexual offending and sex offenders. Lastly, another difference between the two groups was that 28 per cent (N=8) of New Zealand university students were sceptical about all sources of information compared to 12 per cent (N=4) of Chinese university students in this category. In terms of the two categories “*trust in other people*” and “*trust in personal experience*”, New Zealand and China had similar percentages of the participants in the results. There were 7 per cent (N=2) of the New Zealand participants compared to 3 per cent (N=1) of the Chinese participants under the category of talking to people; and 10 per cent (N=3) of the New Zealand participants compared to 6 per cent (N=2) of the Chinese participants under the category of “*trust in personal experience*”.

Question 5: What do you know about the legislation with regard to sex offenders in New Zealand (China).

This question explored people’s understanding and knowledge of the legislation related to sex offenders in their own country. Specifically, New Zealand university students were asked about their knowledge of the legislation related to sex offenders in New Zealand, and Chinese university students were asked about their knowledge of the legislation related to sex offenders in China. Participants’ answers to this question

were classified into three categories: “*do not know*”, “*incorrect comment*”, and “*correct comment*”. The results of Question 5 are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Knowledge about the Legislation with regard to Sex Offenders in own Country

Category	New Zealand		China		Total	
	%	N=	%	N=	%	N=
Do not know	45	13	46	15	46	28
Incorrect comment	42	12	52	17	47	29
Correct comment	13	4	2	1	7	5

Firstly, the results showed that 46 per cent (N=28) of the participants in New Zealand and China did not know anything about the legislation related to sex offenders in their own country. The most typical response answer in this category was that “I do not know anything about it” or “I have no idea”. However, there were some interesting answers. For example:

NZ14: I know very little about the legislation regarding sex offenders in New Zealand, because there is not very much publication of legislation surrounding sex offending.

NZ15: For the most part I am not well informed. I know what is legal and what is not. I know that sex offenders are sent into jail for a couple of years. That is all I need to know.

C12: 不，我不了解任何关于性犯罪的法律。 (I do not know any legislation related to sex offending or sex offenders at all).

Secondly, the results showed 47 per cent (N =29) of the participants under the category of “incorrect comments”. Most of the participants in this category had several different comments on various types of punishment for sex offenders in their country, rather than discussing the legislation related to sex offending. It was interesting that both New Zealand and Chinese university students knew more about punishment than the legislation related to sexual offending and sex offenders. The most common answer in this category was that sex offenders are put into jail for a period of time ranging from 5 up to 20 years. Some examples are:

NZ7: ... I know this type of behaviour [offences] will break the law, and then they go to the prison, probably around 8 to 9 years.

C31: ...中国对于性犯罪者的惩罚是非常严重的，比方说组织卖淫判死刑，因为组织卖淫对社会的危害非常大，处罚更严重。对其他性犯罪者的判刑知道一些，好像 10 年左右。 (I know that punishment for sex offenders is very serious in China. For example, there are death penalties for people who are in charge of organized prostitution, because organized prostitution is significantly harmful for society. In terms of other types of sexual offenders, I think sentences are around 10 years in China).

Lastly, there were only 7 per cent (N=5) of the participants in New Zealand and China who had correct comments on the legislation related to sex offenders in their

own country. Most of the participants (N=4) under the category of “*correct comment*” accurately identified that sex offenders can be punished by longer sentences for more serious sexual crimes. That is, the length of sentence for sex offenders is significantly dependent on the seriousness of their offending. For example, one example is:

C3: 我知道一些和性犯罪相关的刑法。在中国社会会根据性犯罪所造成的伤害给予不同程度的判刑。严重的情况下会判死刑或无期徒刑,比方说如案件造成的社会影响很大。(I know a little bit regarding the legislations of sex offenders in China. In China, punishment for sex offenders, such as the length of sentence, is largely dependent on the level of harm caused to the victim and society. Sex offenders may get death penalty or life sentence in some extreme cases which have significant bad influence in society).

There was only one participant, from the Law school in New Zealand, who had good understanding of the legislation related to sex offenders in New Zealand. This is the comment from this participant:

NZ11: I know there is the Crimes Act. I know in the past rape is very tightly classified, like male raping female. I know in the last a few years that rape is classified with the more general knowledge that it is not just between male and female. They [the government] made the legislation broader, in that it encompasses a lot of things that go on. They can be imprisoned, but it depends on the content. It is not black and white. They definitely consider the mental capacity of that person, so they might be put in rehabilitation, those sorts of things, rather than put in prison, especially where there are things which

happened in their lives which lead to these things [sexual offending]. I think there should be other things available for them as well such as counselling. They [sex offenders] should not be outcast from the society. There should be something done to help them.

Comparison

The results indicated that there was no big difference in knowledge of legislation related to sex offenders between New Zealand and Chinese university students. The results showed that 45 per cent (N=13) of the New Zealand participants did not know anything about the legislation regarding sex offenders in New Zealand; 42 per cent (N=12) of the New Zealand participants came under the category of “*incorrect comment*” and 13 per cent (N=4) were in the category of “*correct comment*”. In contrast, the results of Chinese university students were 46% (N=15), 52% (N=17) and 2% (N=1) in these three categories (“*do not know*”, “*incorrect comment*”, and “*correct comment*”) respectively.

Question 6: What do you know about the legislation regarding sex offenders in other countries?

This questions explored participants’ knowledge of the legislation regarding sex offenders in other countries around the world. In response to Question 6, participants’ answers were also classified into three categories: “*do not know*”, “*incorrect comment*”, and “*correct comment*”. The results of Question 6 are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Knowledge about the Legislations with regard to Sex Offenders in other Countries

Category	New Zealand		China		Total	
	%	N=	%	N=	%	N=
Do not know	35	10	52	17	44	27
Incorrect comment	52	15	48	16	50	31
Correct comment	13	4	0	0	6	4

The results showed that 44 per cent (N=27) of the participants in New Zealand and China knew nothing about the legislation related to sex offenders in other countries. The most common response in this category was “I do not know” or “I have no idea”. There were 50 per cent (N=31) of the participants under the category of “*incorrect comments*”. Similarly, most of the participants in this group made a few comments on the punishment of sex offenders in other countries or cultures, instead of talking about the legislation related to sex offenders. Some examples are:

NZ8: I do not know much about the legislation regarding sex offenders back in my country. There will be more punishment than rehabilitation. They have social punishment which means they have no chances be back to society. They are always stigmatized. There is also official punishment which is imprisonment.

C6: 国外我不太清楚，全世界对于性犯罪的定罪和刑法应该差不多吧。(I do not now about legislations related to sex offenders in other countries. I think that conviction of sexual offending and punishment of sex offenders are the similar around the world).

Only six per cent (N=4) of the participants gave correct comments on legislation related to sex offenders in other countries. Two of the participants in this category recognized statutory rape in America; another two participants had comments on registration of sex offenders in the community. Some examples were:

NZ10: In America, sex offenders are put on a registry. This will stay with them the rest of their lives. Sorts of things are like moving homes. They try to make an announcement that find out there is a sex offender in their neighbourhood.

NZ14: ...normally they [sex offenders] are just sent in jail and put on the sex offender list in some counties. From my opinion, they should be put on the sex offender list. They did crime and they should pay for it. It is a kind of stigma that no one willing to have anything to do with them at all. I think the public should know about it.

Comparison

The results showed that there were important differences between New Zealand and Chinese university students in their knowledge of the legislation with regard to sex offenders in other countries around the world. Firstly, 35 per cent (N=10) of the New Zealand participants who did not know anything about the legislation related to sex offenders in other countries, compared to 52 per cent (N=17) of Chinese university students under this category. Secondly, in the category of “*incorrect comment*”, the figures were 52 per cent (N=15) of the New Zealand group compared to 48 per cent (N=16) of the Chinese group. Lastly, the biggest difference

came from the category of “*correct comment*”, in which 13 per cent (N=4) of the New Zealand university students had correct comments on legislation related to sex offenders in other countries. In contrast, it was quite surprising that none of Chinese students (N=0) was in this category.

Question7: What do you know about rehabilitation of sex offenders?

Question 7 explored people’s knowledge of and attitudes toward treatment of sex offenders. The participants’ responses were divided into two major parts: knowledge and attitude. In the part of people’s knowledge of treatment for sex offenders, the response answers were categorised into “*know*” and “*not know*”. In the part of people’s attitudes toward treatment of sex offenders, the response answers were classified into the categories of “*support*” or “*against*”. The results of Question 7 are presented in Table 8 and Table 9.

Table 8: Knowledge of Treatment for Sex Offenders

Category	New Zealand		China		Total	
	%	N=	%	N=	%	N=
Know	24	7	18	6	26	16
Not know	76	22	82	27	74	46

The results showed 26 per cent (N=16) of the participants under the category of “*know*” in New Zealand and China. This meant that only a quarter of the participants had knowledge of the treatment of sex offenders. However, the participants’ responses about treatment of sex offenders ranged from the minimum level, such as just heard of it to a higher level of knowledge, such as known psychological therapies. Most of the participants in this category only knew that there

are psychological therapies in treatment of sex offenders, but they did not know how they work and what procedures are involved. Only a few participants were able to name different types of psychological therapies which have been used in treatment of sex offenders, such as psychological counselling, behavioural approach, and cognitive and behaviour therapy. Even fewer participants knew that there are specialized services and treatment programmes for sex offenders in both prison and society, especially for child molesters. Some examples are:

NZ8: I know they have different approaches in different countries. In Western countries or developed countries, they have more focus on rehabilitation. They treat it as illness, whereas the country where I come from is a kind of sin that needs to be punished... sex offending is an illness, not a kind of human nature, something can be built up. I believe people can be changed once they are removed from that environment which creates those feelings and urges to commit sexual offences. If that environment is positive, then I think those people can be rehabilitated.

NZ27: I know that there are specialized rehabilitation or services in New Zealand which aim at rehabilitating sex offenders, and placing them back into the community safely. This is about reducing their risk of re-offending again. From what I understand, there is evidence that these programmes work in reducing risk of reoffending. From what I read, I think these programmes are effective. I think increasing offenders' awareness of situation and result could reduce their chance of reoffending... It is all about control and management of what it's going on...

C5: 我有听说过对性犯罪者的心理治疗。我感觉应该是心理教育或咨询吧。比方说学会人与人的交流沟通。我估计心理治疗还是有用的。(I heard about treatment of sex offenders. I think that treatment methods are psychological education or counseling, such as interpersonal skills. I think that treatment of sex offenders is effective).

C25: 我有听说过对性犯罪者进行治疗，好像是药物治疗。心理治疗也应该有，但是效果应该不怎么好... (I only heard about medical treatment for sex offenders. I think that there is psychological treatment for sex offenders too. However, I do not think psychological treatment is effective in treatment of sex offenders...)

C33: 我想在西方国家会有，中国是没有。可能是本性难移，应该不能被治疗。人犯罪应该有很多因素，不能简单的治疗就解决。(I think that there is treatment for sex offenders but only in western countries. There is no treatment of sex offender in China. I think that people cannot change their personalities. There are many factors which may result in sexual offending, so I do not believe that treatment of sex offenders is effective).

In New Zealand and China, a total of 74 per cent (N=46) of the participants came under the category of “*not know*”. This group of people never heard anything about treatment of sex offenders. Some participants were quite surprised that there are treatment programmes for sex offenders. The most typical responses in this category were that “I do not know”, “it is my first time to hear treatment of sex offenders” or “I

do not think they are effective". It was also interesting that some participants blamed the media for their lack of knowledge of treatment of sex offenders. For example, one response from a Chinese university student was that:

C33:新闻媒体更多的倾向报道关于性犯罪和性犯罪者的严重后果来吸引大家的注意力。他们从来没有报道过关于对性犯罪者的治疗。(The news media tends to report serious consequences of sexual offending and sex offenders, in order to attract public attention. They [the news media in China] have never showed anything about treatment of sex offenders).

Table 9: Attitudes toward Treatment of Sex Offenders

Category	New Zealand		China		Total	
	%	N=	%	N=	%	N=
Support	62	18	33	11	47	29
Against	38	11	67	22	53	33

In terms of attitudes, the results showed that the number of participants who held positive attitudes toward treatment of sex offenders was slightly lower than the number of the participants who had negative attitudes. There were 47 per cent (N=29) of the participants who viewed treatment of sex offenders as effective, beneficial and/or important to both sex offenders themselves and the whole society. This group of people was classified in the category of "*support*". Some examples are:

NZ3: ...I strongly believe that they [sex offenders] can be rehabilitated if they bring out the right treatment, and they look at it as a rehabilitation rather than

punishment, and then definitely they can be rehabilitated... So there must be a lot of work to be done for someone who is fully rehabilitated.

NZ29: ...I assume that they [rehabilitation programmes] would do it by telling them it is wrong and not to do it over and over again... I am not surprised because there are rehabilitations for drugs and alcohols. For this kind of rehabilitation, you cannot lock them away forever, sooner or later they are coming back to society. So they need proper treatment or help from professionals. They need certain kind of supervision and constantly reminding not to go back.

C18: 我从来没有听说过。不过如果能够对性犯罪者进行治疗当然是一件好事情...我还是相信人都能教育过来的。(I never heard anything about treatment of sex offenders. However, I think that it is a good thing if sex offenders can be treated. I still believe that most of offenders can be positively changed).

C22: 我听说过行为认识疗法。改变性犯罪者对犯罪错误的观念，接着在改变他们错误的行为。让他们对于性有正确的态度。我认为这样的方法会很有效果。(I know that there is cognitive behavioural therapy. This therapy helps sex offenders change their distorted belief and behaviour. This method also helps sex offenders build up a correct attitude toward sex. I believe that cognitive behavioural therapy is effective).

The remaining 53 per cent (N=33) of the participants came under the category of “*against*”. This group of people did not support treatment of sex offenders because they believed that either treatment of sex offenders was ineffective, or sex offenders were unable to cure or change positively. Some examples are:

NZ25: ...From what I heard, I do not think rehabilitation programmes are effective. This is just based on one lecturer who is a clinical psychologist doing assessment in general. He said, in general, sex offenders have pretty high chance of re-offending...

NZ26: ...I do not think rehabilitation of sex offenders is effective. I do not think sex offenders can change their behaviour, cognition or sexual preferences..., However, I do believe that they can find a way to self-control. It is just like people try to turn gay people straight...

C4: 我觉得心里治疗都是骗人的，成功率几乎为零。这类人根本无法治疗，有第一次就会第二次，就会有更多次。(I think that all psychological therapies are not effective at all. The successful rate of treatment of sex offenders is zero, because sex offenders can never be changed. Once they commit sexual offence, they will always reoffend again).

C13: ...我觉得他们犯罪的主要原因是自己性格所决定的，从小到大这么多年养成的性格，不是说本性难移，所以治疗一定不会有什效果。(...I think one of the major reasons of sexual offending is because of sex offenders' deviant personalities which have been developed in many years

since they were young. I do not think people's personality can be changed, so sex offenders can never be cured or rehabilitated).

There was also a common understanding that the effectiveness of treatment for sex offenders is significantly dependent on different characteristics or personalities of sex offenders. Some personal characteristics, such as being young, first-time offender, motivated to change, caring for others and feeling remorse, were commonly identified by the participants in treatment of sex offenders. For example:

NZ13: Rehabilitation is something like you trying to fix something broken. There are always exceptions... Effectiveness of rehabilitation should be dependent on the person. People do change. People can change, but some people just cannot. It depends on their morals behind their sexual offending. Someone who does not care for others, no matter how much rehabilitation they go through, they are going back to do this again.

C9: 我感觉对于性犯罪者的治疗还是有效果的，但是具体效果有多好我就知道了。应该是因人而异... (I think that treatment of sex offenders is effective. However, I do not know how effective the treatment is. The effectiveness of treatment should depends on sex offenders' different characteristics...)

Comparison

Comparing the New Zealand and Chinese university students indicated that the participants' knowledge about treatment of sex offenders were similar between two

groups of people. However, the attitudes toward treatment of sex offenders were different between New Zealand and Chinese university students. The results showed that while 24 per cent (N=7) of the New Zealand university students and 18 per cent (N=6) of the Chinese university students had knowledge about treatment of sex offenders; 76 per cent (N=22) of the New Zealand participants and 82 per cent (N=27) of the Chinese participants did not know anything about treatment of sex offenders. However, in terms of people's attitudes toward treatment of sex offenders, there were completely opposite results between two groups of students. New Zealand university students had more positive attitudes towards treatment of sex offenders than Chinese university students. The results showed that 62 per cent (N=18) of the New Zealand students viewed treatment of sex offenders as important, beneficial and effective. In contrast, there were only 33 per cent (N=11) of Chinese university students in this category. Compared to the 38 per cent (N=11) of the New Zealand participants, up to 67 per cent (N=22) of the Chinese students had negative attitudes toward rehabilitation, because they did not believe the effectiveness of treatment for sex offenders.

Question 8: Why or why not do you think that spending money on rehabilitation is money well spent?

This question explored people's attitudes toward spending money on rehabilitation of sex offenders. Participants' answers were classified into three categories: "*well spent*", "*not well spent*", and "*it depends*". The results from Question 8 are presented in Table 10.

Table 10: Attitudes toward Spending Money on Treatment of Sex Offenders

Category	New Zealand		China		Total	
	%	N=	%	N=	%	N=
Well spent	62	18	45	15	53	33
Not well spent	28	8	51	17	40	25
It depends	10	3	4	1	7	4

The results showed that there were 53 per cent (N=33) of the participants under the category of “well spent”. That is, over half of the participants believed that spending money on treatment of sex offenders is money well spent. According to the participants’ responses, there were two major reasons behind this view. One reason was that the treatment of sex offenders is a kind of protection for the society. Therefore, spending money on treatment of sex offenders will increase the safety of the general community after sex offenders are released from prison. The other reason was that all people deserve a second chance. Sex offenders are also human beings, so they need professional treatment and on-going support to help them back into a normal life. It was interesting that most of the participants expressed the idea that even though they were not aware of the effectiveness of treatment programmes for sex offenders, they still believed that treatment is an essential step for sex offenders. Some examples are:

NZ3: It is money well spent for society if you are able to firstly help a person so that they are less likely to re-offend, also preventing them from destroying their lives and able to fix their health. The government needs to spend the money to help the person, rather than put them in a prison environment which will not fix them.

C28: 当然不是浪费，主要需要数据证据来说服大众对性犯罪者的治疗到底有没有效果。即使真的没有，也可以当做学术研究的投资也不错。(I do not think that spending money on treatment of sex offenders is a waste of money. The government needs evidence to show the public that rehabilitation of sex offenders is effective. Even if it is not very effective, treatment of sex offenders is a good investment in academic research too).

The second category was “*not well spent*”. The results showed that 40 per cent (N=25) of the participants believed that spending money on rehabilitation of sex offenders is a waste of money. According to the participants’ answers, there were also two essential reasons to explain people’s negative attitudes toward spending money on treatment of sex offenders. The first was the lack of knowledge and information about treatment of sex offenders. Most of the participants in this group stated that they neither understood the methods and procedures of treatment, nor had seen any evidence supporting the effectiveness of treatment for sex offenders in society. The other reason was the negative stereotypes of sex offenders portrayed in the media. A large number of the participants in this group believed that sex offenders are either incurable or incapable of any positive changes. Sex offenders are and will be labelled for their entire life. Some examples are:

NZ26: I do think it is a waste of money, because I do not think those programmes are effective. Also, I think sexual behaviour is completely a control thing. I think people have abilities to control their sexual urges, so that we are not people paying for their rehabilitation. I personally think they [sex offenders] should be locked up, and the key should be thrown away. I do not

want to pay for sex offenders. There are great chances that they come out and re-offend again. The only prevention is locking.

C16: 我觉得是一种浪费。我并不确定心理治疗的真正效果。我感觉中国需要吧钱花在更加实际的东西，比方说基础建设。心理学在现实中实际应用我很质疑，给监狱花钱来关押性犯罪者都好过于治疗他们。(I think treatment of sex offenders is a waste of money because I do not know whether they are effective. I think the Chinese government should spend money on things which are more realistic, such as public infrastructure. I do not believe the usefulness of psychology in society. Spending money on prisons to lock up sex offenders is better than spending money on treatment of sex offender.).

The last category was “*it depends*” in which category there were seven per cent (N=4) of the participants. Participants in this group had conflicting thoughts about the spending money on treatment of sex offenders. On the one hand, they thought all people deserve a second chance, and treatment of sex offenders is important for sex offenders themselves and the whole society. On the other hand, they believed that sex offenders have high recidivism rates, and they did not know whether treatment of sex offenders is effective. Therefore the most typical answer in this category was that spending money on the treatment of sex offenders should depend on characteristics of sex offenders. That is, for some sex offenders who have certain kinds of positive personal characteristics, such as motivation for change, being young and ability of empathetic, it is worth spending money to treat them; but it is a waste of money to treat repeat sexual offenders. Some examples:

NZ10: For those people who just made a bad decision, I think it is a good idea, because they made bad decision and they regretted it. I do not mind that it is taxable dollars going toward helping those people, because they did something bad, it was a bad decision. For people who just repetitively do it, my opinion is lock them up and throw them away, things like that. There is no point to waste money on those reoffenders. I honestly think back to the fact that we do need jail law in New Zealand, because throwing money at a problem does not make it go away...

C33: ...我不知道治疗效果。可以对青少年多治疗一些，但是年龄大的惯犯就没有多大必要进行治疗了。 (I do not know whether the treatment of sex offenders is effective. However, I think that there should be more treatment for junior sex offenders. There is no necessary to treat old and repeat sex offenders).

Comparison

There were some differences between New Zealand and Chinese university students' attitude toward spending money on rehabilitation of sex offenders. The results showed that 62 per cent (N=18) of the New Zealand participants supported spending money on rehabilitation, whereas 45 per cent (N=15) of the Chinese participants were in this group. The biggest difference between the two groups of the students came from the category of "*not well spent*". Over half of the Chinese university students (51%, N=17) viewed rehabilitation of sex offenders as a waste of money. In contrast, this figure dropped to 28 per cent (N=8) among the New Zealand

participants. In terms of the category of “*it depends*”, the figures were 10 per cent (N=3) and 4 per cent (N=1) for New Zealand and China, respectively.

Question 9: When sex offenders are released into communities, the communities often react strongly and protest against the fact that a sexual offender is released into their midst. How would you feel if such a person was to be released into your neighbourhood?

This question explored people’s attitudes toward sex offenders who were released in their neighbourhood. The participants’ responses to this question were classified into three categories: “*accept if*”, “*not against but not in my neighbourhood*” (NANIMN), “*and against*”. The results of Question 9 are presented in Table 11.

Table 11: Attitudes toward Released Sex Offenders

Category	New Zealand		China		Total	
	%	N=	%	N=	%	N=
Accept if	21	6	30	10	26	16
NANIMN	26	8	33	11	31	19
Against	53	15	37	12	43	27

The results showed that 26 per cent (N=16) of participants came under the category of “*accept if*”. This means that this group of the participants would accept sex offenders were released back into their neighbourhood, only if certain conditions could be met by sex offenders. For instance, that sex offenders have been rehabilitated in prison; have not re-offended for a long period of time; or have received on-going supervision and supported in society. Therefore, if released sex offenders can meet

such conditions above, the participants would feel less concerned and accept them to live in the same neighbourhood. Some examples are:

NZ20: I will be sceptical in the first place if anybody would be. Sex offenders need to prove they have undergone rehabilitation and prove they have changed. If sex offenders are released back into society, but they are pushed away as everyone rejects them, it is easier for them to go back to the old way [re-offend]. So people need to be proactive. They [sex offenders] are still human beings, not animals. If it is their first time offending, obviously they are more acceptable. If sex offenders do not want to be rehabilitated, then they do not deserve to be there.

NZ29: It depends on rehabilitation they went through. The community needs know what rehabilitation they have been through. At least we can see they have tried, so they deserve a second chance. If they come out of a situation where there is no rehabilitation, it is hard for family to feel like their children are safe. I personally feel not a big problem because I am a single man, no wife and children. So I am not very worried about sex offenders living in my neighbourhood.

C14: 我不回排斥， 我会主动的接触被释放的性犯罪者如果他们居住在我小区。 人都会犯错， 改正了就好了。 (I am not against released sex offenders. I will actively contact released sex offenders if they are living in my neighbourhood. Everyone makes mistakes in life. I think it is fine as long as they do not re-offend).

C22: 我不反对和被释放的性犯罪者居住在个小区...但是还是应该给与他们机会和希望，尤其对于那些能够被治疗的罪犯。(I am not against to live with a released sex offender in the same neighbourhood...[The society] should give sex offenders opportunities and hope, especially to those who can be treated...).

There were 31 per cent (N=19) of the New Zealand and China university students under the category of “NANIMN”. The participants in this group were not against sex offenders being released back into society. However, they did not accept sex offenders being released into their neighbourhood. The majority of the participants in this category expressed the idea that they would have a lot of concerns if there is a released sex offender living in their neighbourhood. Some examples are:

NZ2: I feel less safe, more aware of closing windows, things like that. I will not walk at night. However, at the same time, I will not grab the opportunity of someone who wants to make restart. It is fine for me if they [sex offender] restart their life in other neighbourhood, not in my mine.

NZ14: I will not be happy. I just will not feel comfortable, especially being a female having a sex offender living in my neighbourhood. Even though they still need go somewhere, I still do not want them living around me. I do not know what the programmes are, so I do not trust those programmes. However, I do believe people [sex offenders] can be changed.

C4: 我虽然认为这一类人可以被治疗，但是内心深处还是不希望他们回归社会，还是感觉他们很危险，所以最好不要在我的小区。(Although I believe that sex offenders can be treated, I still do not want sex offenders to be released back to society, because they are potentially dangerous. So I do not want a released sex offender live in my neighbourhood).

The results showed that 43 per cent (N=27) of the participants would be against sex offenders being released back into community. This group of people was under the category of “*against*” as they had the most negative attitudes toward sex offenders. Two of the most prominent reasons behind these negative attitudes toward released sex offenders were discovered. A few of the participants in this group expressed the idea that their extremely negative attitudes toward released sex offenders were from the lack of information on treatment of sex offenders. The other reason was the fear of unknown and uncertainty which was commonly expressed among the participants. Some examples are:

NZ26: I hate that if there is a released sex offender living in my neighbourhood. I could not stand my next-door neighbour was a sex offender, especially if I have kids. It will go down very badly for my entire family and me. If it happens, I will find a way to make sure they move. It is either they move or I move. I will feel violated, unsafe. Even if I know he has been through rehabilitation, and has not re-offended for many years. I just do not want them back in society.

C19: 我也会反对，性犯罪者不应该被释放回归社会。他们对人们和社会都是非常危险的。我不认为他们能够改正，最多只是压抑。但他们不可能永远压抑，所以他们迟早肯定会再次犯罪”。 (I am against [sex offenders to be released into society]. I believe sex offenders should be never released back in society, because they are extremely dangerous to general community members and the society. I do not think sex offenders can ever be changed. They can only suppress or hide [their urge to reoffend]. However, they cannot suppress or hide their urge forever, so they definitely will reoffend sooner or later.

Comparison

There were some differences between New Zealand and Chinese university students in their attitudes towards sex offenders released back into community. The results indicated that 21 per cent (N=6) of the New Zealand participants were under the category of “*accept if*” compared to 30 per cent (N=10) of the Chinese students. There were 26 per cent (N=8) of the New Zealand students who understood that sex offenders have to come back into society. However, they would not accept released sex offenders living in their neighbourhoods. In contrast, there were 33 per cent (N=11) of Chinese participants under this category of “*NANIMN*”. In terms of the category of “*against*”, the difference between two groups of university students was obvious. The results showed that there were 53 per cent (N=15) of the New Zealand participants and 37 per cent (N=12) of the Chinese participants against sex offenders to be relapsed back into society.

Question 10: Can you tell me something about the concerns you would have with regard to a sex offender being released back into the community?

Question 10 explored people's concerns about sex offenders released back into the community. Participants' responses to this question were classified into three major categories: "*always concerns*", "*no concerns if*", and "*no concerns*". The results of Question 10 are presented in Table 12.

Table 12: Concerns about Released Sex Offenders

Category	New Zealand		China		Total	
	%	N=	%	N=	%	N=
Always concerns	94	27	91	30	92	57
No concerns if	3	1	6	12	5	3
No concerns	3	1	3	1	3	2

The results indicated that 92 per cent (N=57) of the participants in New Zealand and China expressed the idea that they would always have concerns about safety issues if there is a sex offender being released back into the community. The participants would mainly worry about the safety of their family members, such as children and female family members. These concerns were prominently expressed among the majority of female participants during interviews. Some examples are:

NZ14: I worry about safety issues. They are sex offenders. That is pretty much it. Sex offending in my opinion is the lowest offending, just disgusting. They have to carry the label of sex offenders. It is hard to get rid of it.

NZ18: I worry they may re-offend. I do not believe in rehabilitation. I prefer they can be sent to an island, and never come back.

C6: ...我会担心小区的安全，我害怕这类人会危害我得家人。总之这类人我永远不能够理解的。 (...I concern about the safety of my neighbourhood. I am afraid that they [released sex offenders] may harm my family. Anyway, I can never understand a sex offender).

C19: 我一定不会愿意，我认为他们有很大的几率再次犯罪，所以我非常担心自己和家人的人身安全。平时他们也许是正常人，但是如果受到刺激就会原形毕露。这种人是非常危险的。(I would not agree with sex offenders being released back into the community. I think sex offenders have a very high recidivism rate, so I am concerned about the safety of my family and myself. Sex offenders can behave normally, but they may re-offend under pressures or certain stimulus. Therefore, sex offenders are very dangerous).

There were five per cent (N=3) of the participants under the category of “*no concerns if*” This group of people had no concern about sex offenders being released back into the community if released sex offenders could meet certain conditions. For example, sex offenders have been rehabilitated in prison; have not re-offended for a long period of time; or have received on-going supervision and are supported in society. Some examples are:

NZ20: I am not really worried or scared, because they are human... If I know these people have been rehabilitated, and have not re-offended for a long period of time, I will not have much concern.

NZ11: My biggest concern would be re-offending, either to myself or family members... My attitude and perception will change if I know they have gone through rehabilitation, or it has been a long period of time. I will be more open to them.

C1: 我没有太多的顾虑。性犯罪者也有他们自己的权利...只要他们不要走进我得生活。(I do not have much concern [about released sex offenders]. Sex offenders have their human rights...As long as they do not walk into my life).

C25: 我可以接受。。。 只要政府好好管理，再加上自己小心就没问题。(I can accept that sex offender being released back in the community... As long as I am careful and there is a good supervision plan for released sex offenders by the government...).

The last category was “*no concerns*” with three per cent (N=2) of the participants under this category. This group of people did not have any concern about sex offenders being released into the community. Two interesting examples are:

NZ9: I do not really have much concern as those are all in the past. They are normal people. Sex offenders are not like people with mental disorder, or psychopath...I think sex offenders can be cured through rehabilitation.

C14: 我可以接受。。。我并不担心我和家人的安全。因为他们被释放或者被治疗后，肯定会好很多。政府法律或机构会保证社会的安全”。(I can and will accept released sex offenders back into the community... I am not concerned about the safety issue at all, because they have been incarcerated and/or treated. Definitely a released sex offender will become a better person after prison and/or treatment. In addition, the government and local police will protect society).

Comparison

The results indicated that the differences between New Zealand and Chinese university students are small in their concerns about sex offenders being released back into the community. Percentages of the participants in each category (“*always concerns*”, “*no concerns if*” and “*no concerns*”) were respectively 94 per cent (N=27), three per cent (N=1) and three per cent (N=1) in New Zealand, and 91 per cent (N=30), 6 per cent (N=2) and 3 per cent (N=1) in China.

Discussion

In terms of Question 1, people’s attitudes toward and perceptions of sex offenders were generally negative. According to the participants’ responses during interviews, five major stereotypes of sex offenders were identified: “*violent and dangerous*”, “*mentally disordered*”, “*having relationship problems*”, “*low*

intelligence", and "*high sexual needs*". Other negative perceptions of sex offenders which were also commonly expressed by the participants included crazy, creepy, manipulative, lack of self-control, and opportunistic. These different stereotypes and perceptions of sex offenders may reflect the participants' attitudes toward sexual offending and sex offenders. These stereotypes can also be placed on a continuum ranging from relatively less negative attitudes at one end, such as having relationship problems or high sexual needs, to more negative attitudes, such as dangerous and violent or mentally disordered at the other end.

Some of the stereotypes identified in this research were consistent with stereotypes of sex offenders which have been studied in the literature. For example, one of the most common stereotypes of sex offenders is that sex offenders normally have mental disorders or mental problems (Sanghara & Wilson, 2006; Levenson et al., 2007). In this research, nearly a third of the participants believed that sex offenders have a range of psychological disorders or mental problems. Further, a few of the participants stated that these mental problems could be for many reasons, such as a traumatic experience when sex offenders were young, parents' conflicts within the family, or lack of appropriate education on sex, and interpersonal relationships. Kafaka and Kennen (2002) indicated that there is a high prevalence of psychological disorders among sex offenders, such as mood disorders, anxiety disorders, ADHD and substance abuse disorders. However, Abel, Mittleman and Beck (1985) showed that over 60 per cent of sex offenders had no psychopathology and only less than five per cent of sex offenders presented evidence of psychosis. In addition, Sanghara and Wilson (2006) suggested that there is no difference in social functioning levels between the general population and sex offenders. In terms of the participants' comments on several reasons of sexual offending, although education on sex and

interpersonal relationships plays an important role in many treatment programmes for sex offenders, programmes such as Kia Marama and Ti Piriti in New Zealand (New Zealand Department of Corrections, 2013), there is no direct evidence showing that traumatic experiences, family conflicts or lack of appropriate education generally lead to sex offending. Rather, occurrence and maintenance of sexual offending behaviour is supposed to be a result of interactions between biological inheritance and negative ecological niche (Ward & Beech, 2006; Thakker & Ward, 2012).

Another commonly portrayed stereotype of sex offenders is low intelligence (Bolen, 2001). According to the results in this research, approximately 10 per cent of the participants expressed the idea that sex offenders are low in intelligence. In contrast, there was only one response from a New Zealand participant that suggested that sex offenders are very intelligent, because they have great self-control ability and know people's vulnerabilities. A few research studies indicated that sex offenders are low in intellectual functioning (Bolen, 2001, Guay, Ouimet & Proulx, 2005; Sanghara & Wilson, 2006), whereas other studies indicated no difference in intelligence between the general population and sex offenders (Elliott et al., 1995).

Some of the stereotypes of sex offender which were identified in this research have not yet been well examined in the literature. For example, over a third of the participants believed that sex offenders are violent and dangerous; and 10 per cent of the participants described sex offenders as having high sexual needs. However, there is little evidence supporting these two views. In terms of the stereotype of having interpersonal difficulties, around 10 per cent of the participants labelled sex offenders as having problems in interpersonal relationships. There is research indicating that sex offenders have fewer social skills (communication competence) than the general population (Emmers-Sommer et al., 2009). Seidman, Marshall, Hudson and

Bobertson (1994) also indicated that, despite the existence of heterosexual relationships, sex offenders have higher level of loneliness and a lack of intimacy.

The results of Question 1 supported the first hypothesis (H1) that New Zealand university students have fewer negative attitudes toward sex offenders than Chinese university students. As the results showed, Chinese university students had higher percentages than New Zealand university students in most of the categories which may indicate relatively more negative attitudes toward sex offenders, such as the categories of “*violent and dangerous*” and “*mentally disordered*”. For example, the percentage of the New Zealand participants was less than half of the Chinese participants who labelled sex offenders as violent, dangerous and physically aggressive. Similarly, there were fewer New Zealand university students than Chinese university students in the categories of “*mentally disordered*” and “*having relationship problems*”. In contrast, the percentages of New Zealand university students were higher than Chinese university students in categories with relatively less negative attitudes toward sex offenders, such as “*low intelligence*”, “*high sexual needs*” and manipulative and opportunistic. Therefore, generally speaking, New Zealand university students held less negative attitudes toward sex offenders than Chinese university students.

In response to Question 2, the results showed that over three quarters of the participants described the idea of “*violation*” which referred to that sex offending is a violation of the law, social rules, moral codes and other people’s right. Therefore, there was a good understanding that sexual offending behaviour crosses certain personal, social and moral boundaries among the majority of the participants. Sex offending also implies a breach of interpersonal trust. On the other hand, the results showed that nearly two thirds of the participants described the idea of a spectrum of

sex offences. Therefore, most of the participants understood well that sexual offending includes different types of sexual offences with different degrees of harm to the victims and society. Some sexual offences, such as indecent exposure or sexual harassment, are relatively minor, while some sexual offences, such as rape or child molestation, are more serious. This knowledge of sexual offences among the participants is consistent with current legislation related to sex offenders in most western countries (Thakker, 2012).

Another interesting point was that nearly 80 per cent of the participants mentioned rape or rapist in their responses during interviews. Compared with other types of sexual offending, only 39 per cent of the participants mentioned child sexual abuse or child molestation in their responses. Therefore, rape was the most common type of sexual offending mentioned in interviews. This finding could be related to the results of Question 1 in which the category of “*violent and dangerous*” was regarded as the most common stereotype of sex offenders during interviews, because rapists are regarded as one of the most dangerous offenders who may use violence, physical force, coercion or threat against another person for sexual purposes.

There was also an understanding that definitions and convictions of sexual offences can be various in terms of different cultural and social backgrounds. Some types of behaviour are regarded as sexual offending in one culture, but may be allowed in another culture. For example, child sexual abuse is considered to be one of the most serious sexual offences in most western countries, but it is seldom recognized and convicted in mainland China. In some counties in the Middle East, adults are even allowed to have sex with or marry children. Therefore, different definitions of sexual offences may result in completely different attitudes toward

sexual offending and sex offenders among people who are from different cultural backgrounds.

The results of Question 2 were consistent with the second hypothesis (H2): New Zealand university students have better understanding of sexual offending and sex offenders than Chinese university students. Both New Zealand and Chinese university students understood well that sexual offending involves a violation of the law, social rules, moral codes or other people's rights. However, a large difference came from the category of "*spectrum*" in which the majority of the New Zealand students were able to name different types of sexual offences, compared to only less than half of the Chinese university students in this category. For example, most of the New Zealand participants mentioned child sexual abuse or child molestation during interviews. In contrast, strikingly only six per cent of Chinese university students described or had knowledge of child sexual abuse in their responses. This difference could be due to topics related to child sexual abuse seldom being reported in the media in mainland China. The difference in people's knowledge of child sexual abuse could also because of different legislations related to sex offenders in New Zealand and China.

In terms of Question 3, the results indicated that the media was the most common source of information for people to form and shape their attitudes toward and knowledge of sexual offending and sex offenders. Over 90 per cent of the participants stated that their attitudes and knowledge were based on the general media which may include newspapers, TV, radio and the Internet. This finding was accordant with a number of research studies which indicated the significant role of the new media in the development of public perceptions and knowledge about offences (e.g., Thakker & Durrant, 2005).

The results indicated that talking to people was the second most common source of information; this included talking to friends, family members or other people. Most of the participants in this group expressed the idea that their parents have had a significant influence on their attitudes toward and knowledge of sexual offending and sex offenders. A few stated that they would talk and discuss these kinds of topics with friends, classmates and other people. However, the influences of friends, classmates and other people were much smaller than the influence from parents. There were nearly a quarter of the participants under the category of “*talking to people*” which was much lower than the percentage in the category of media in this research. One reason behind a low percentage of the category “*talking to people*” could be due to the sensitivity of the topic itself. Many people are reluctant to discuss topics related to sex or sexual offending with other people, which may include intimate friends or family members, in both New Zealand and China. In addition, the development of social technologies could be another reason. The Internet has had a significant impact on people’s lives; perhaps similar to the influence of the telephone in the early twentieth century and TV in the 1950s and 1960s. Kraut, Patterson, Lundmark, Kiesler, Mukopadhyay and Scherlis (1998) studied the effect of the Internet on people’s social involvement. The researchers found that with increased use of Internet, people’s communication with family members and the size of their social circles declined.

Two other main sources of information of sexual offending and sex offenders were academics and personal experience. Despite the fact that only a few participants may have had either direct and/or indirect personal experience of sexual offending or with sexual offenders, it was quite striking that less than one fifth of the participants use academic sources to form their information and knowledge, especially in this

research in which all of the participants were university students. Different majors at university could be a reason to explain a low percentage in the category of “*academics*”. Non-psychology students may have had few opportunities to access academic knowledge of sexual offending and sex offenders.

Comparing the sources of information between New Zealand and China, both groups had over 90 per cent of participants who expressed the idea that the news media provides the most basic foundation to form their attitudes, opinions and knowledge about sexual offending and sex offenders. However, one important difference between two groups of people was from the category of “*talking to people*”. It was surprising that there were twice as many New Zealand university students as Chinese university students in this category. Although it has been suggested that people who are from collectivist cultures view interpersonal relationships as more important than personal achievement in individualistic cultures (Bierbrauer, 1994), the results of Question 3 did not suggest that Chinese university students (from a collectivist culture) were more intimate with family members or friends than New Zealand university students (from a individualistic culture).

Another big difference between the two groups of participants was from the category of “*academics*”. The results showed that there were twice as many New Zealand university students as Chinese university students in this category. One essential reason for this difference could be the lack of academic knowledge of sexual offending and treatment of sex offenders at all universities in mainland China. Chinese university students have few opportunities to access professional knowledge of sexual offending and treatment of sex offender in the western world. In terms of the category of “*personal experience*”, which referred to either direct or indirect personal experience of sexual offending and with sex offenders, both groups had very

similar percentages of participants in this category. This similarity could imply that New Zealand and China had similar rates of sexual offending in society.

In response to Question 4, generally speaking, there was a high level of awareness that some sources cannot be trusted in terms of perceived reliability of information. Although the news media was regarded as the most common source of information about sexual offending and sex offenders, the results showed that less than half of the participants believed in the veracity of media reports. Over half of the participants expressed the idea that information presented in the news media needs be treated with a high level of scepticism because the news media is not always accurate and unbiased. Sometimes, the news media exaggerates things to attract public attention and influence public opinions. This belief of the news media is consistent with a number of studies which support the view that by reframing news stories in specific ways, the news media has a significant influence not only on what issues are presented to the public, but also on how issues are perceived by the public (Entman, 1993).

Three other reliable sources of information about sexual offending and sex offenders which were described in interviews were academics, personal experience, and other people's opinions. However, there were relatively small percentages of the participants in each group; 26 per cent, 8 per cent and 5 per cent respectively. Some possible explanations included fewer opportunities to access academic knowledge, fewer people having experience related to sexual offending or sex offenders, and fewer situations in which to discuss these kinds of topics with other people. In addition, it was also interesting that about one fifth of the participants expressed the idea that they did not believe any sources of information, because all sources of information can be exaggerated. This scepticism about everything may influence how

and to what extent people perceive information and knowledge from the outside world (Thakker, 2012).

The results of Question 4 were consistent with the third hypothesis (H3) that New Zealand university students were more sceptical about information and knowledge of sex offenders presented in the news media than Chinese university students. There were two important differences in people's attitudes toward the reliability of sources of information between New Zealand and Chinese university students. The first and foremost difference was from the category of "*trust in media*". The results showed that the New Zealand participants in this group were only around one third of the Chinese participants. Therefore, most of the New Zealand students were sceptical about information provided by the media. In contrast, most Chinese students expressed the idea that they believed the information reported in the media, especially if information comes from official TV channels, official newspapers, and large Internet websites. This difference in people's attitudes toward the media could be due to different cultural backgrounds between New Zealand and China. For example, under the influence of Confucianism in Chinese culture, Chinese people are taught from an early age that they should be obedient and unquestioning toward the authorities, such as parents, older family members, teachers and even the government (Huang & Gove, 2012). Therefore, Chinese people are more likely to believe information provided by official TV channels, newspapers and radios because these sources of the media represent the Chinese government.

The second difference between two groups of subjects was from the category of "*academics*". The results indicated that the number of the New Zealand participants was three times larger than the number of Chinese participants in this group. Therefore, the New Zealand university students are more likely than Chinese

university students to believe information provided by academic sources, such as academic journals, textbooks, and lectures at university. This big difference could also be explained by different academic backgrounds in sexual offending and treatment of sex offenders between New Zealand and China. Fewer Chinese university students believed academics, maybe because they were unable to access academic knowledge in this area.

Question 5 explored people's knowledge about legislation with regard to sex offenders in their own country. The results of this question were quite striking as only seven per cent of the participants were able to make correct comments on legislation related to sex offenders. Within the total of 63 participants, only one participant, who came from the Law School at the University of Waikato, had a good understanding of legislation with regard to sex offenders in New Zealand. For the remaining 93 per cent of the participants, half of the participants did not know anything about legislation. The other half of the participants made incorrect comments on legislation related to sex offenders. This result is quite similar to the results in Thakker's (2012) research which studied people's knowledge of recent changes in legislation with regard to sex offenders in New Zealand. The researcher identified five recent changes of the legislation regarding to sex offenders in New Zealand. These five changes were: the introduction of extended supervision for sexual offenders; wider use of preventive detention (to include more offences and no need for prior convictions); longer sentences, especially for serious crimes; establishing home detention as a sentence in its own right; and changes to restorative justice, in particular, giving greater recognition and legitimacy to restorative justice processes. However, the results showed that only 10 per cent of the participants made correct comments. The research further indicated that a lack of awareness of legislation related to sex

offenders among the general community members could diminish the chance that the legislation would have a deterrent effect (Thakker, 2012).

It was also interesting that most participants in the category of “*incorrect comment*” made some statements about different types of punishments for sex offenders in their own country. It seemed that the majority of the participants in this groups were more interested in how sex offenders are punished in the society. Taking a broader view to consider the punitive attitude towards sex offenders among general community members, punitive attitudes are symptoms of free-floating anxieties and insecurities resulting from social change (Maruna, Matravers & Kings, 2004). It has been suggested that people’s punitive attitudes towards sex offenders, or even other groups of people, are essentially the projection of internal conflict based on the theory of psychoanalysis. Thakker (2012) used this example to further explain the punitive attitudes toward sex offenders in psychoanalytic theory. When a person has difficulty acknowledging and/or accepting his or her particular negative thoughts about something or someone, his or her defensive mechanism suppresses these negative thoughts from self-consciousness, and/or projects his or her hostility (which was originally toward these negative thoughts) to other people, or certain kinds of people. Therefore, according to this point of view, people’s punitive attitudes toward sex offenders could be understood as a reflection or projection of their personal internal conflicts.

The result of Question 5 was consistent with the fourth hypothesis (H4) that New Zealand university students are more aware of legislation and policies in regard to sex offenders in society in their own country than Chinese university students. There was a difference in the number of the participants who made correct comments on legislation related to sex offenders between New Zealand and Chinese university

students. However, the difference was small; 13 per cent in the New Zealand group compared to two per cent in Chinese group. It was interesting that even though New Zealand has strong academic background of sexual offending and treatment of sex offenders for over 20 years, people's awareness and knowledge of legislation related to sex offenders remain at a relatively low level.

In terms of Question 6, there is different legislation related to sex offenders in terms of different cultures, societies and legal jurisdictions. As an example of sex offender registration, the lists of sex offenders can only be accessed by people with certain occupations, such as the police, probation officers, prison service personnel or employers of people who work with children. However, the lists of sex offenders are available to the public through the Internet, newspapers or community notification boards in some countries. Information on sex offenders can also be accessible in terms of different risk levels of sex offenders. For instance, information on sex offenders who have a high-risk level is available to the public in the United States.

The results of Question 6 were quite similar to those of Question 5. There were only six per cent of the participants who made correct comments on legislation related to sex offenders in other countries. The rest of the participants were either in the category of "*do not know*" or made incorrect comments. These results also indicated that only a very small percentage of university students had knowledge of legislation related to sex offenders.

The results of Question 6 was consistent with the fifth hypothesis (H5) that New Zealand university students are more aware than Chinese university students of legislation and policies related to sex offenders in other countries around the world. Both the New Zealand group and the Chinese group had similar percentages of students in categories of "*do not know*" and "*incorrect comment*". However, the

biggest difference came from the category of “*correct comment*” in which 13 per cent of New Zealand students made correct comments. In contrast, strikingly, none of the Chinese students made comments that would be placed in this category. This result also indicated a lack of knowledge on legislation with regard to sex offenders among Chinese university students in China.

Question 7 explored people’s knowledge and attitudes toward treatment of sex offenders. The results showed that only a quarter of the participants had knowledge of treatment of sex offenders. The participants’ knowledge ranged from a lower level, such as just heard of it, to a higher level, such as correctly naming different psychological therapies used in treatment of sex offenders. The results indicated that most of the participants’ knowledge in this category remained at a relatively low level as they did not know how treatment works and how effective treatment is for sex offenders. Only a small number of the participants were able to name different types of psychological therapies in treatment. Even fewer knew that there are culturally specific treatment programmes for sex offenders in New Zealand, such as Kia Marama and Te Piriti which focus on Maori culture (New Zealand Department of Corrections, 2013). Approximately three quarters of the participants did not know anything about treatment of sex offenders. Most of the participants in this group had never heard treatment of sex offenders before this research. Some of the students were very surprised that sex offenders can be treated or cured by psychological approaches.

The low level of knowledge about treatment of sex offenders among the participants could be due to imbalanced reports of news stories related to sex offenders in the media. For example, Thakker and Durrant (2006) studied 377 news articles related to sexual offending in three newspapers in New Zealand in 2003. They found that only around five per cent of the articles focused on treatment, education, or

prevention. The majority of the articles were either from the police or legal representatives, but only a small portion of the articles drew on opinions and comments from clinical professionals or academics. The researchers also indicated a disproportionate number of high profile cases covered in the news, as nine cases captured 22 per cent of the total news coverage on sexual offending among three daily newspapers.

In terms of people's attitudes toward treatment of sex offenders, half of the participants supported treatment of sex offenders, as they believed that treatment of sex offenders is essentially important for both the general public members and sex offenders themselves. This idea is consistent with most of the available research on people's attitudes toward treatment of sex offenders which suggested that sex offenders should receive treatment when they serving their sentences in prison (e.g., Brown, 1999; Craig, 2005; Roger et al., 2011, Levenson et al., 2007). Most of the participants in this group also indicated positive attitudes toward the effectiveness of treatment for sex offenders. However, there was also a common understanding among the participants that the effectiveness of treatment for sex offenders is significantly dependent on offenders' different personal characteristics, such as degrees of motivation to change, social and family background and the ability of empathy. This understanding is consistent with one of the most influential treatment approaches for sex offenders, namely the Risk Need and Responsivity (RNR) model (Andrew et al., 2011). This model suggests that treatment of sex offenders should be conducted in accordance with offenders' different risk levels and their particular characteristics, such as learning abilities, motivation for change and personal strengths.

The other half of the participants did not support treatment of sex offenders because they believed that sex offenders could never be cured or positively changed.

Therefore, most of the participants in this group expressed the idea that treatment of sex offenders is ineffective because sexual offending behaviour is inherent and incurable. According to Quinn, Forsyth and Mullen-Quinn (2004), this pessimistic attitude toward treatment of sex offenders may trace back to the early history of treatment of sex offender during the time of nothing works in the 1970s and 1980s. During that period, the effectiveness of treatment of sex offenders was significantly questioned because many studies which evaluated efficacy of treatment of sex offenders were significantly flawed. Another factor which may contribute to the pessimistic attitudes toward treatment could be negative stereotypes of sex offenders portrayed in the society, such as having high recidivism rates or mental disorders (Levenson et al., 2007). However, a few participants in this group also believed that human beings have the ability of self-control, so sex offenders are able to find a way to control and manage their offending urge and behaviour.

Although the treatment approaches for sex offenders (from relapse prevention to RNR model and then GLM) have significantly developed in the two decades, the effectiveness of treatment for sex offenders still remains controversial. For example, Camilleri and Quinsey (2008) indicated that treatment of paedophilia has either little or no effect on recidivism. Thakker, Collie, Gannon and Ward (2008) also indicated that the effectiveness of treatment for rapists remains at a high degree of uncertainty. However, on the other hand, there is no supporting evidence that sex offenders are incurable or more difficult to cure than other types of offenders (Thakker, 2012).

The results of Question 7 supported the sixth hypothesis (H6) that New Zealand university students have more knowledge of the treatment of sex offenders than Chinese university students. However, this difference between two groups of people was also very small. The results showed that 24 per cent of New Zealand

students compared to 18 per cent of Chinese students came under this category. The majority of the participants lacked basic knowledge of the treatment of sex offenders in both New Zealand and China.

The results of Question 7 were also consistent with the seventh hypothesis (H7) that New Zealand students would have more positive attitudes toward sex offenders than Chinese university students. The results indicated a large difference between New Zealand and China in people's attitudes toward treatment of sex offenders. About two thirds of the New Zealand university students believed that treatment of sex offenders is important, beneficial and effective. In contrast, only a third of the Chinese university students came into this category. This difference could imply that Chinese university students harboured more negative attitudes toward and stereotypes of sex offenders than New Zealand students. For example, the Chinese participants may tend to view sexual offending as inherent and incurable. On the other hand, this difference could also imply people's attitudes toward psychological therapies and psychological treatment. That is, the Chinese participants may be less likely to believe the effectiveness of psychological treatment in clinical psychology than the New Zealand participants. Given the reality that there is no major of clinical psychology at any of the universities and no registered clinical psychologist in mainland China, it is understandable that the Chinese university students did not have faith in psychological treatment for sex offenders.

In response to Question 8, the results showed that over half of the participants believed that spending money on treatment of sex offenders is money well spent. Despite the effectiveness of the treatment for sex offenders, there were two major reasons behind the positive attitude toward this statement. One was that all people deserve a second chance because everyone makes mistakes. Therefore, sex offenders

should be at least given a second chance to live in a normal life in society. The other reason was that treatment of sex offending in prison is regarded as a part of punishment for sex offenders, as well as a kind of protection for the general community members. It was also interesting that even though many participants in this category doubted the effectiveness of treatment for sex offenders; they still believed that treatment is an essential step for sex offenders before and after release from prison. According to Rogers, Hirst and Davies (2011), this type of positive attitude toward treatment of sex offenders can be explained by the desserts theory. For example, the public believes that sex offenders should be punished for the consequences of their offending. Therefore, completing a treatment programme could be viewed as an essential and adequate type of punishment for sex offenders. In addition to incarceration, the public also requires sex offenders to mentally relive their offences and deeply understand the harm for the victims.

Approximately 40 per cent of the participants viewed treatment of sex offenders is a waste of money and time. However, one important reason for these pessimistic attitudes was the lack of information about sex offenders and treatment for sex offenders among the general community members. It was interesting that a few participants in this group expressed the idea that if there is sufficient and accurate information about sex offenders and their treatment in society, the attitudes toward sex offenders and treatment of sex offenders may change positively. This idea has been widely examined in a number of research studies. However, the effect of training on people's attitudes toward sex offenders is inconclusive. For example, Taylor, Keddele and Lee (2003) found a positive effect of training on people's knowledge and attitudes toward sex offenders. Kjelsberg and Loos (2008) indicated that training had no impact on people's attitudes toward sex offenders. Johnson, Hughes and Ireland

(2007) found that people's attitudes toward sex offenders became even more negative after training.

The results of Question 8 were consistent with the eighth hypothesis (H8) that New Zealand university students are more supportive of spending money for rehabilitation of sex offenders than Chinese university students. The biggest difference between two groups came from the category of "*not well spent*". The results showed that the number of participants in New Zealand who were against spending money on treatment of sex offenders was only around half of the number of the participants in the Chinese group. Therefore, these figures could also imply that the Chinese participants had more negative attitudes toward either sex offenders or treatment of sex offenders.

In terms of Question 9, around a quarter of the participants expressed the idea that they would accept sex offenders being released back into society, if the sex offenders released had been treated in prisons and were still receiving on-going supervision in society. Most of available research indicated that community supervision plays an important role in reduction of recidivism. That is, sex offenders who have appropriate post-release community supervision have lower recidivism rates than offenders who are released from prison via mandatory release (Wilson, Stewart, Stirpe, Barrett, & Cripps, 2000; Schlager & Robbins, 2008). However, Kachnowski and Bhati (2005) found that post-incarceration supervision has no effect in reduction of recidivism.

It was also interesting that over a third of the participants expressed the idea that they would not be against sex offenders being released back in society. However, they were against released sex offender living in their own neighbourhood. This result is accordant with Thakker's (2012) finding that the majority of the participants did not

want released sex offenders to be treated in their own neighbourhood, even they are well supported and closely supervised in the community. It seemed that this kind of idea could be associated with fear of the unknown. Most of the participants in this group were concerned about the safety of themselves and their family members. The remaining 40 per cent of the participants harboured the most negative attitudes toward released sex offenders. They were strongly against sex offenders being released back into the community because they believed that sex offenders are dangerous and will always reoffend sooner or later.

The results of Question 9 did not support the ninth hypothesis (H9) that New Zealand university students are less against sex offenders being released into communities than Chinese university students. The results showed that over half of the New Zealand participants expressed the idea that sex offenders should never be released back into the society: only a third of the Chinese participants were in this category. A further quarter of the New Zealand students expressed the idea that they would be strongly against living with a released sex offender in the same neighbourhood. Therefore, speaking overall, the New Zealand university students had more negative attitudes toward released sex offenders than Chinese university students.

It was interesting that the result of hypothesis H9 was inconsistent with the results of hypothesis H7 and hypothesis H8. Logically, people who believe the effectiveness of treatment of sex offenders, and who support spending money on treatment of sex offenders, should be less against living with a released sex offender in the same neighbourhood. However, on one hand, two thirds of the New Zealand university students believed that spending money on treatment of sex offenders is money well spent because treatment of sex offenders was regarded as effective,

important, and beneficial for both general community members and sex offenders themselves. On the other hand, over three quarters of the New Zealand students were against living with a released sex offender in the same neighbourhood. Therefore, these results were quite ambiguous. It seemed that people's positive attitudes towards the treatment of sex offenders has little effect on people's attitude toward released sex offenders. This discrepancy could be due to the safety priority of one's own family and people's fear of the unknown.

In response to Question 10, the results indicated that the majority of the participants would have concerns about safety issues if a sex offender was living in their neighbourhood. They would worry significantly about the safety of their family, especially children and female family members. Only five per cent of the participants expressed the idea that they had no concerns if released sex offenders have been treated, under supervision or had not re-offended for a long period of time. The results of question 10 did not support the tenth hypothesis (H10) that New Zealand university students have fewer concerns about living with a released sex offender in the same neighbourhood than Chinese university students. The results indicated that there was no difference between two groups of the participants in New Zealand and China.

Conclusion

Overall, this research studied people's knowledge and attitudes towards sex offenders and treatment of sex offenders. Generally speaking, people's perceptions and attitudes toward sex offenders were quite negative in both New Zealand and China. A few common stereotypes of sex offenders were dangerous and violent, mentally disordered, high sexual needs and manipulative, creepy, nasty or opportunistic. These negative stereotypes of sex offenders could be due the negative

images of sex offenders in the media. The news media was regarded as the primary source of information which provides a basic foundation for people to form and shape their own knowledge and attitudes. Other sources of information were academics, talking to people and personal experiences. People's negative attitudes toward sex offenders could also due to their lack of knowledge in areas of sexual offending and sex offenders. Less than 10 per cent of the participants made correct comments on legislation related to sex offenders in their own country and other countries around the world.

In terms of people's knowledge and attitudes toward treatment of sex offenders, most of the participants were not knowledgeable about treatment of sex offenders at all. There were only a few participants who were able to name different psychological therapies for treatment of sex offenders. Half of the participants had positive attitudes toward treatment of sex offenders as they believed that treatment of sex offenders is important, effective and beneficial for both sex offenders themselves and the whole society. Consequently, this group of the participants believed that spending money on treatment of sex offenders is money well spent. In contrast, the other half of the participants were pessimistic about the effectiveness of treatment for sex offenders because they believed that sex offending behaviour is inherent and incurable. Consequently, they viewed spending money on treatment of sex offenders as a waste of money and time. Although half of the participants had positive attitudes toward treatment of sex offenders and supported spending money on treatment of sex offenders, only a quarter of the participants expressed the idea that they would accept having released sex offenders living in the same neighbourhood, only if the offenders had been treated in prison and were still receiving on-going support and supervision in the community. The majority of the participants were against sex offenders being

released either into their own neighbourhood, or back into the society. Their biggest concern was the safety of themselves and their family members.

There were a few differences and similarities in people's knowledge and attitudes towards sex offenders and treatment of sex offenders between New Zealand and Chinese university students. Firstly, New Zealand university students had less negative attitudes toward and stereotype of sex offenders than Chinese university students. This difference between the two groups of people can be seen in the results of Question 2 that, compared to Chinese university students, New Zealand university students are more knowledgeable about sexual offending and sex offenders. These findings were consistent with most of the available research that people who have more knowledge of sexual offending and sex offenders have less negative attitudes toward sex offenders (Willis et al., 2010).

Secondly, the results indicated that the news media plays an important role in forming and influencing people's knowledge and attitudes in both New Zealand and China. However, the New Zealand university students were more sceptical about the information provided by the news media, whereas the Chinese university students were more likely to rely on the media to form and shape their attitudes and knowledge as official sources of the media may represent authorities. This difference could be due the influence of Confucianism in Chinese culture. The results also indicated the New Zealand university students were more likely than the Chinese university students to use academic sources, such as academic journals, textbooks, and lectures, to form their attitudes toward and knowledge of sexual offending and sex offenders. This difference could be explained by a severe lack of academic knowledge of sexual offending and treatment of sex offenders at Chinese universities in mainland China.

Thirdly, both New Zealand and Chinese university students had little of knowledge of legislation related to sex offenders in their own and other countries around the world. One possible explanation for this phenomenon could be the insufficient and imbalanced reports of issues related to sexual offending and sex offenders in the media. In terms of people's knowledge and attitudes toward treatment of sex offenders, both the New Zealand and Chinese university students had little knowledge in this area. However, people's attitudes toward treatment of sex offenders were largely different between the two groups. The majority of the New Zealand participants had positive attitudes toward treatment of sex offenders compared with only around a third of the Chinese participants in this group. Consequently, there were more New Zealand students supported to spend money on treatment of sex offender. The difference in people's attitude toward treatment of sex offenders between the two groups could be due to the lack of academic knowledge in clinical psychology and applied psychological therapies in Mainland China.

Lastly, although the New Zealand university students had more positive attitudes toward treatment of sex offenders, the results indicated no difference in people's attitudes toward released sex offenders between New Zealand and China. The majority of the participants from the two groups were either against sex offenders being released back into the community, or being released into their own neighbourhood. Most of the participants in both countries expressed the idea that they might constantly worry about the safety of their family members and themselves. This finding suggested that people may have different attitudes toward sex offenders in general and released sex offenders who live with the participants in the same neighbourhood. In addition, it also seemed that people's positive attitudes toward treatment of sex offenders had little or no effect on their attitudes toward released sex

offenders. This discrepancy in people's attitudes may because of the safety priority of family members and the fear of unknown.

Limitations

One of the most significant limitations of this research was the language translation between Chinese and English. Although ten interview questions and the response answers were translated verbatim between two languages, there are inevitable discrepancies in meaning between the original terms in Chinese language and corresponding translations in English language among the participants' responses, in terms of different cultural, social and linguistic backgrounds. For example, "mentally disordered" was one of the stereotypes identified in this research. In western society, the term mental disorder is relatively neutral. It refers to a kind of illness which has been used to describe a psychological or behaviour problem, such as depression, anxiety or schizophrenia. However, given the reality that mainland China lacks academic and professional knowledge in areas of clinical psychology, the term of mental disorder has a different meaning in China, because of people's negative attitude toward psychological disorders. Chinese people are more likely to use mentally disordered to describe a person who is evil and vicious as this term is quite negative in Chinese culture. Therefore, the same term may contain completely different meanings in two different languages. The discrepancy of interpretation may result in different conclusions. Unfortunately, this problem cannot be solved in this research because two groups of data had to use the same meaning units for interpretation.

Another important limitation was the disadvantage of the method content analysis. Although one-on-one interviews in this research gave the researcher opportunities for an in-depth analysis of the participants' knowledge and attitudes

toward sex offenders and treatment of sex offenders, “a text always involves multiple meanings and there is always some degree of interpretation when approaching a text” (Graneheim & Lundman, 2006, p. 106). Therefore, the interpretation of the participants’ responses can be influenced by the researcher’s English language ability and research methods, such as interview questions and additional questions during interviews. The researcher could also be subjective in the process of interpretation and analysis of data.

The third important limitation was the way the researcher recruited participants. All of the Chinese participants were from the Language and Experiment Center with a major of English at the Xi'an Jiaotong University in China. The New Zealand participants were mainly recruited by posters in the School of Social Science at the University of Waikato in New Zealand. So it is possible that the participants either with a major of English or from the Social Science School were certain types of people who might have particular personal characteristics. For example, the participants with a major of psychology, sociology or politics may have more knowledge in areas of sexual offending or legislations related to sexual offenders.

Therefore, the results of the research cannot be generalized and do not represent all New Zealand and Chinese university students. However, this research does provide some interesting views and insights with regard to beliefs about sex offenders and treatment of sex offenders which New Zealand and Chinese students harbour. For example, rape is the most well recognized type of sexual offending in both groups of the participants. However, compared to the New Zealand students, few Chinese students mentioned child sexual abuse or child molestation in their responses. In addition, the majority of the Chinese participants trusted the information provided by the official sources of the media, because they believed the official sources of the

media represent the Chinese government and authorities. These findings may have some implications for the development of public policies. For example, the government could provide more knowledge through official sources of the media to increase Chinese people's awareness of child sexual abuse in China.

Future Research

While acknowledging the limitations, this research could be seen as a starting point for future research in the similar area of people's attitudes toward sex offenders and treatment of sex offenders. Compared to New Zealand which has over 20 years' experience in treatment, academic and practical knowledge of treatment for sex offenders, such knowledge is severely lacking in Mainland China. However, the results indicated a small difference in people's knowledge of treatment between the two groups. Both the New Zealand and Chinese university students had a low level of knowledge of treatment of sex offenders. Therefore, future research could explore reasons for the lack of knowledge in treatment of sex offenders among general public members in New Zealand. For instance, researchers could study how topics related to sexual offenders are reported in the media in New Zealand and China.

Another area for future research would be to study the relationship between people's attitudes toward the media and their attitudes toward information and knowledge provided by the media. The results indicated that New Zealand university students were more sceptical toward the media. In contrast, most of the Chinese participants believed that official sources of the media are reliable and trustworthy. Therefore, these two groups of people are likely to have completely different attitudes toward information and knowledge presented in the media. In terms of future research, it would be worthwhile to study how people's attitudes toward the media

change and influence their attitudes toward information presented in the media. That is, if people are more sceptical about the media, they may have better ability to question, challenge and filter the information and knowledge provided by the media.

The results of this research may also contribute to the development of community protection policies related to released sex offenders. For example, a few participants mentioned that they had negative attitudes toward treatment of sex offenders because they did not know anything about treatment, such as its procedure, methods and the results. Therefore, it can be assumed that if the society provides sufficient and accurate knowledge of treatment of sex offenders, the general community members may become more positive towards and confident in the effectiveness of treatment for sex offenders. Similarly, it can also assumed that if society provides sufficient and accurate knowledge about sex offenders, the general community members may have less negative attitudes toward and stereotypes of sex offenders. Therefore, less negative attitudes toward sex offenders in the general public may have a big influence on community protection policies, such as house restriction and community notification.

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Appendix A:
Interview questions in Chinese language

访谈问题

1. 当你听到性犯罪，第一想到的是什么？
2. 当你知道他（她）是性犯罪者，你有哪些感觉？
3. 你关于性犯罪者的态度和观念是依靠哪种渠道形成的？
4. 哪些渠道或种类的信息更容易相信？
5. 你知道哪些和性犯罪有关的中国的法令？
6. 你知道哪些和性犯罪有关的在其他国家的法令？
7. 你是否知道任何关于性犯罪者的处罚和治疗？
8. 你是否认为对于性犯罪者的治疗是浪费时间和金钱？
9. 你是否愿意被释放的性犯罪者在你居住的小区接受治疗？
10. 当你得知小区内住有刚被释放的性犯罪者，你是如何感受的？会有哪些顾虑或担心？

感谢您的参与和支持，有任何的问题可联系：sl98@wakinato.a

c . n z

Appendix B:
Research advertisements

This appendix contains the research advertisements used to recruit participants in New Zealand and China for the present study.

Participants Wanted for Attitude Research

Topic: University students' attitudes toward sex offenders and the treatment of sex offenders.

I am looking for students currently studying at Waikato University

What's involved?

- Ten open-ended questions
- Individual face-to-face interview
- 30 minutes of your time (max.)

- This research is for a Masters degree and has been approved from the Research & Ethics Committee in Psychology Department at the University of Waikato.
- This project is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Jo Thakker and Dr. Armon Tamatea.
- All information collected will remain **anonymous** and **confidential**.

Please note: This study is NOT about studying people's experience or history of sexual offending or sexual abuse. It is about exploring and understanding ATTITUDES.

If you are interested in participating, please contact Sen on s198@waikato.ac.nz or **021-0471462**. Thank you very much for your time.

寻找调查态度的参与者

题目：当代大学生对于性犯罪者和对于性犯罪治疗的知识和态度

要求：在校大学生

内容：

- 10个问题
- 1对1访谈
- 30分钟

- 这个课题是研究者研究生在新西兰怀卡托大学的毕业论文的题目，已经通过了学校的道德审查。
- 这个研究是在 Dr. Jo Thakker 和 Dr. Armon Tamatea. 的监督和指导下进行。
- 所有信息都会保密，不会透露任何关于您的隐私。

注意：此研究只是调查大学生对于性犯罪者和性犯罪者治疗的知识和态度，不会涉及任何关于您隐私或者经历的话题。

如果您感兴趣，请您联系 s198@waikato.ac.nz 或者 **021-0471462**. 非常感谢您的参与和支持。

Appendix C:
Information sheets

This appendix contains the information sheets used to provide the New Zealand and Chinese participants information about this research project.



The University of Waikato School of Psychology

Topic: University Students' Attitudes toward Sexual offenders and Treatment of Sexual Offenders in New Zealand and China

Information Sheet

You are invited to take part in research of studying university students' attitudes toward sexual offenders and rehabilitation of sexual offenders. Before deciding if you want to be involved in the research, please read the following information carefully so that you fully understand the nature of this research project and your rights of participation. Please keep in mind that this research is NOT about studying your personal experience or history in area of sexual offence or sexual abuse. This research is exploring your ATTITUDE only.

What is the study about?

This study will focus on exploring and comparing university students' knowledge and attitudes toward sexual offenders and rehabilitation of sexual offenders between New Zealand and China. This topic is essential in treatment of sexual offenders because the public's attitude toward sexual offenders is crucial in effectiveness of social re-integration of released sex offenders. According to many theories of sexual offences and practical research findings, social reintegration of sexual offenders is important in the chain of rehabilitation program. Positive attitudes in the public will provide released sexual offenders with supportive social environment which helps sexual offenders to decrease their recidivism rate and eventually to desist from further sexual offences. On the other hand, unsupportive social environment, such as instable employment and housing, lack of pro-social relationships and networks, and poor personal plans after prison release are associated with greater risk of sexual re-offences. The findings of this research will help people to better understand the formation and change of people's attitudes toward sexual offenders and rehabilitation of sexual offenders. The Research findings will also contribute to the development of theories and practice of rehabilitation of released sexual offenders in both New Zealand and China.

Who can take part?

To participate in this research, you need to be an existing university student at the Waikato of University. That means, you are currently studying at the Waikato University in New Zealand.

What would I have to do?

If you agree to participate, you will receive a 30 minutes individual interview with the researcher. There will be ten open-ended questions in the interview. These ten questions aim at exploring and understanding your knowledge and attitude towards sexual offenders and rehabilitation of sexual offenders. The interview will be sound recorded to ensure the information is being captured.

Will my information remain confidential?

Yes. All your information will remain confidential at all times as part of standard procedures within the School of Psychology.

- Research data will only be accessed by the researcher and two supervisors of the research.
- The reports will not contain material which could identify you
- All data will be kept locked
- Files will be stored in a separate location from the identifying information

Your rights as a participant:

If you choose to take part in the research, you have the right to:

- Withdraw from the study at any time
- Decline to take part in this study, knowing this will not have any impact on you
- Decline to answer any particular question
- Ask any question about the study at any time during participation
- Be given a summary of the findings of the study once it has been completed if you request it
- Ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview

Questions and/or support:

If at any time you have questions or concerns about this study, you are welcome to contact myself Sen Liu sl98@waikato.ac.nz / 0210471462; or Dr Jo Thakker jthakker@waikato.ac.nz / 07-8562889, extension 6809; or Dr Armon Tamatea tamatea@waikato.ac.nz / 07-8585157.

If you have any questions about any issues pertaining to Maori in this study, regardless of your own ethnicity, you are welcome to contact Dr Armon Tamatea tamatea@waikato.ac.nz / 07-8585157.

You are also welcome to contact the Student Counselling Service at the University of Waikato if you experience any kinds of emotional or psychological disturbance during or after interview with the researcher. Contact details of Student Counselling Service are Phone: 07 - 838 4037 / student_services@waikato.ac.nz.

What happens from here:

You will have the opportunity to ask any questions before you agree to take part and begin your interview.

This study has received ethical approval from the School of Psychology at the Waikato University.

Thank you very much for reading this information sheet.



新西兰坏卡托大学

题目：新西兰和中国大学生对于性犯罪者和性犯罪者治疗的知识和态度。

研究信息单

您被邀请参加这个研究实验。此研究实验是调查当代中国和新西兰大学生对于性犯罪者和性犯罪者治疗的知识和态度。在您决定是否加入之前，请仔细阅读这个研究内容信息单，来了解研究的目的过程和方法，以及您在参与过程中所拥有的权利。再次声明，此研究不会涉及任何关于您个人的隐私或是经历，仅仅是调查您的知识和态度。谢谢。

What is the study about?

此研究是探索和比较新西兰和中国大学生对于性犯罪者和性犯罪者治疗的知识和态度。这个研究的题目非常的重要，因为人们对于性犯罪者的态度已经对于他们治疗的态度是性犯罪者能否被治疗好很重要的一个环节。如果性犯罪者在刑满释放后，能够在社会上得到人们更加宽容的帮助和不是特别负面的评价和歧视，被释放的性犯罪者有很大的几率可以重新回归社会，重新走上正常的生活。相反的，如果被释放后的性犯罪者在社会上没有任何的帮助和资源，没有能够维持自己生活的梦想的途径，他们会更加容易重新走上犯罪的道路。所以此研究就是调查人们对于性犯罪者的态度，对于被释放的性犯罪者的态度。能否给他们提供更得帮助，比方说住宿，工作或是友谊等等。

谁能够参加？

在校大学生均可以参加，因为此研究目的就是调查当大大学的知识和态度。

我需要做什么？

如果您同意参加这个研究，此研究大约会进行 30 分钟。其中研究者会向您询问 10 个问题。这 10 个问题主要是研究您对于性犯罪者和性犯罪者治疗的知识和态度。您的答案会被全程录音。

我得信息会保密吗？

是的，您的信息和研究的答案会百分之百的保密。

- 研究的数据只会有研究者本人阅读和接触，没有其他人可以接触到.
- 研究报告会保持匿名，不会涉及到您
- 所有数据均会保存好
- 数据文档会保存在不同的地方

您作为参与者的权利

您在参与此研究的过程中，您有以下的权利：

- 您可以随时退出研究
- 您可以拒绝参加这个研究
- 您可以拒绝回答任何问题
- 您有权利询问任何和研究相关的问题
- 您可以随时要求停止录音

问题和帮助：

如果您有任何关于研究的问题，欢迎您随时联系我 s198@waikato.ac.nz / 0064210471462; 或者 Dr Jo Thakker jthakker@waikato.ac.nz / 00647-8562889, extension 6809; 或者 Dr Armon Tamatea tamatea@waikato.ac.nz / 00647-8585157.

如果您对这个研究有任何和毛利文化相关的问题，请您联系 Dr Armon Tamatea tamatea@waikato.ac.nz / 07-8585157.

下一步要做：

感谢您的参与，我会尽快的和您取得联系，并且预约访谈时间