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AN ATTRIBUTIONAL APPROACH TO EXPLAINING PERCEPTIONS
OF FEMALE OFFENDING: IMPLICATIONS FOR TREATMENT

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ABSTRACT

Attribution theory is used to provide a conceptual analysis of how personal responsibility and blame are differentially ascribed to fictional male and female offenders. Thirty drug and alcohol counsellors participated; half read a description of a crime committed by a female and the other half read a description of a crime committed by a male. The counsellors rated the offence in terms of the attributional domains of internality, control and stability and then listed potential treatment targets. Offender sex influenced the attribution of blame with counsellors tending to attribute less blame to an offender of the same gender. This effect was particularly pronounced in the case of the female counsellor. Treatment targets were similar for both the male and female offender, with one exception; punishment of some kind was more likely to be considered a necessary outcome when the offender was male.

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INTRODUCTION

Offender gender is one of the most salient and dramatic features of recorded crime. In New Zealand in 2001, women constituted just over half of the population, and yet made up only 20 percent of all recorded arrests, 17 percent of convictions and 4 percent of those sentenced to custodial sentence (Statistics New Zealand, 2005). Extrapolating from these figures means that the equivalent male statistics are 80 percent, 83 percent and 96 percent, respectively. Thus women not only constitute a disproportionately low number in terms of arrest, but they are also less likely to be convicted and less likely to serve a custodial sentence. It is notable that women constitute a smaller part of the statistical offender community at each stage in the judicial process, while male offenders constitute a larger part of the same community at each stage. Throughout history, and worldwide, women represent only a small minority of those both charged and convicted (Newman, 1999). Why this should be so has been an issue of some contention. It may be that this “criminality gap” is the result of inherent differences in the lives of women and men. Alternatively it could be that female offenders are perceived differently, and as a result are treated differently by those systems charged with the enforcement of the law.

Research on the whole supports the suggestion that women are preferentially treated in the judicial process. Steffensmeier, Kramer and Streifel’s (1993) review of studies states “most report that adult female defendants are treated more leniently than adult male defendants” (p. 413) and Daly and Bordt’s (1995) analysis found that close to 60% report

outcomes favouring the female defendant. The lesser sentencing of the female offender seems to be largely accepted, as increasingly sophisticated methods and controls continue to provide evidence of discrepancy. The contentious issue now appears to be “why do such discrepancies exist”?

Some suggest this lesser sentencing is both justified and justifiable in light of actual differences between male and female offenders. Daly (1994), for example, suggests that the reason for differential treatment lies not in the biased perception of women, but in the reality of their responsibilities for others. Offenders with strong family ties tend to receive less severe sentences, and such offenders are more likely to be women. Thus the apparent bias is actually a mirage, a reflection of difference only in the extent to which males and females are solely responsible for the care of children. Others have theorized about the oppression and victimization of women, suggesting that a gender-neutral judicial approach would further victimize those already occupying a subordinate social position (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004; Cook, 1987; Edwards, 1987). In both cases, the female offender is different, and is treated differently, because her social circumstances are different. Such theories hold that there are basic differences between male and female offenders that society recognizes and acts upon.

Others argue that female offenders are treated differently only because they are perceived differently and that leniency is the result of a bias based on stereotypical representations of men and women. Jeffries' (2001) examination of statistical data relating to judicial decisions in Christchurch courts found that sentencing and remand

outcomes were consistently harsher for males *regardless* of either personal circumstance or social ties. A traumatic personal history in the case of a female defendant was deemed to be a mitigating factor, whereas the same historic factors were either dismissed as irrelevant or deemed to have permanently shaped the male offender into a criminal. Jeffries' also found that responsibility for the care of children was considered differently depending on the defendant's gender. Incarceration of the female offender was perceived to be harmful to her children, while incarceration of the male offender was seen as the effective removal of antisocial influence and the means by which a family could be returned to normality. Male offenders were portrayed as destructive to family harmony, and their removal deemed to be in the best interests of the children. Where family disharmony was portrayed as destructive to women, the same disharmony was considered to be caused by men. Pre-sentence reports and judicial statements were found to reflect images of the female offender as dependent, emotional and victimized. While male offenders were held fully responsible for their acts and denied mitigation, the social circumstances of women were seen as mitigating and allowed judges to hold them less responsible for criminal activity. Jeffries analysis of the data therefore suggests that it is the *perception* of difference creating differential outcomes, rather than actual differences between the male and female offender.

The leniency extended to the female offender has put feminist discourse into something of a bind as there are several important implications. If a bias exists, it is clearly beneficial to the adult female in that it results in lenient judicial treatment. However, if the exoneration of female criminality is based on stereotypic evaluations of the offending

behaviour, such stereotypes reinforce sexism in that they deny active responsibility and agency by repositioning the female offender as a “passive, ineffectual, unstable and irresponsible” character (Allen, 1987, p.91). Thus this apparent protection offered to the female offender is at some cost to women in general.

Whilst there is no doubt that women have in the past occupied a subordinate societal position, these continued notions of the global oppression of women seem to be outdated, at least in many Western nations. Global and stereotypical assumptions about the nature of women as a social class may influence the judgment of individual offenders in such a way as to perpetuate a kind of inequality. If one is more inclined to accept the notion of a “victimized” or “oppressed” offender when considering the actions of the female, the victimization and/or marginalization of the male offender may be discounted, resulting in differential outcomes. Differential outcomes may also occur when the fully intentioned and reasoned criminality of an individual female offender is excused on the basis of a perceived victimization that does not exist (Pearson, 1997).

While gender inequalities as they relate to judicial outcomes have been the focus of much previous work, and such inequalities are clearly important, this thesis intends to examine the perception of criminality by counsellors responsible for the rehabilitation of drug addicted offenders. If stereotypes guide the perception of female offenders, there are implications for the effectiveness of treatment in addressing recidivism, as inappropriate treatment targets may be selected.

In many ways this research intends to complement that of Jeffries' (2001) examination of court proceedings. Where her analysis sought to examine "real" differences between male and female offenders that might explain the lesser sentencing of women, this study will examine differences only in perception. As discussed earlier, Jeffries' research suggests that the leniency extended to female defendants cannot be explained by actual differences between men and women, and that therefore the lesser sentencing of females must be the result of a bias that exonerates female criminality. The intention of this study therefore is to examine the perception of one crime, and whether it differs if committed by a male or a female. If perceptual differences arise that seem to absolve the female offender of personal responsibility, this would support Jeffries' contention that the leniency extended to women is the result of bias.

The perception and assignation of personal responsibility for any action can be considered within the framework of Attribution Theory. When one perceives and evaluates the actions of another, there is an implicit assessment of cause, and the nature of the cause relates to the extent to which an individual is deemed personally responsible. Thus in regard to the above discussion, if the cause of a crime is believed to lie in societal inequality, the individual is less likely to be held personally accountable for a specific criminal action. Ewart and Pennington (1987) demonstrated that sentencing decisions can be explained in an attributional manner, such that sentence severity can be correlated with the extent to which causes are perceived to be internal, stable and controllable. These three components of attribution theory are thus used to operationalize the concept of personal responsibility. The present study sets out to examine the applicability and utility

of Attribution Theory as a means to both investigate and explain the treatment provider's perception of male and female offenders.

This thesis begins with a discussion of the literature as it relates to the judicial outcomes of male versus female offenders. This is followed by an overview of current explanations for the judicial leniency that appears to be extended to the female offender. The assignation of personal responsibility as it relates to judicial outcomes will be discussed and Attribution Theory presented as an alternative means by which to consider differences in the perception of male and female offenders.

CHAPTER ONE

JUDICIAL OUTCOMES OF MALE AND FEMALE OFFENDERS

In the past fifteen years, compelling statistical evidence has become available suggesting that female offenders are treated differently. Prior to 1995, there had been a number of isolated studies, each with their own shortcomings, but “almost all reporting that adult female defendants are treated more leniently than adult male defendants” (Steffensmeier et al., 1993, p. 413). Daly and Bordt’s (1995) analysis of statistical literature spanning the decades between the 1970s and 1990 found that over half of the data sets examining the effect of gender on judicial outcome produced evidence of a bias favouring women. None of these fifty data sets suggested outcomes favouring male offenders. Differences in the increased likelihood of male incarceration ranged from between 8–25% and the average male defendant was found to spend twelve months longer in prison than a female defendant in similar circumstances (except in the case of homicide where Zingraff and Thomson (1984) reported a 12 year sentencing gap!). While in some cases the actual effect is small, it is consistent and, as Daly and Bordt noted, the cumulative evidence of a gender effect in sentencing is now more persuasive than that of a race effect.

An earlier review by Steffensmeier et al. (1993) found similar statistical differences over fifteen studies. While seriously flawed studies were omitted from this review, the authors noted that all of the studies continued to demonstrate a variety of statistical shortcomings, usually related to the inadequacy of controls aimed at reducing confounding differences between the male and female offending groups. Daly and Bordt’s (1995) review aimed to

overcome criticism of individual studies included in their analysis of fifty studies by establishing a quality score and separately analyzing fifteen high quality studies. Of these fifteen high quality studies, only one found no sex effect (though four reported mixed findings). Thus the increasing sophistication of the statistical analysis did not result in the anticipated elimination of the gender effect. Indeed the opposite occurred; the more sophisticated the study, the more likely that the gender effect would be found.

These studies, however, report data only for women who actually appear in court. As mentioned earlier, the percentage of women involved in each stage of the judicial process actually drops, with women constituting 20% of arrests, 17% of convictions and only 4% of those in custody. It is possible that responses favouring female offenders also arise in earlier stages of the judicial process. Thus there may be an aggregating bias, with each stage in the judicial process compounding the preferential treatment of women in previous stages. There is evidence to support this notion of an aggregate effect, suggesting that it is not only judicial process, but the societal response to female offending that is qualitatively different; that at many different stages women are protected from the consequences of their crime. Pollack (1950), for example, suggested that victims choose not to report crimes committed women, and Hindelang's (1974) shoplifting research provided evidence that this may be the case. Discretionary law enforcement policies may result in police choosing not to arrest an identified female offender (Johnson, Petersen & Wells, 1977) and where the offender is unknown, female suspects may be overlooked (Silvio, McCloskey & Ramos-Grenier, 2006). Finally, on those

occasions where a woman is arrested, she is more likely to be released without formal charges being laid (Saulters-Tubbs, 1993).

It is possible that leniency at the point of a judicial decision is only the final link in an entire chain of events in which exonerating responses are evoked. This would to some extent explain the dwindling of figures, with women constituting a smaller part of the statistical offender community at each stage in the judicial process. It appears that when a female offends, there is a different societal response, suggesting that a bias exists in both law enforcement and society in general.

Lashley (2002), with tongue in cheek suggests that “women are smarter than men, planning their offences better and not getting caught as often” (p.90). Indeed, self-report data of criminal activity suggests that the criminal gender gap is not as large as that indicated in official statistics (Canter, 1982). Although this self-report data confirms that males commit the majority of violent crimes, it appears that women are equally involved in other forms of criminal behaviour, and yet judicial records fail to reflect this. Thus the gap between the self-reported occurrence of criminal behaviour and official statistics is also suggestive of a bias in the reporting and processing of female crime, with official records perhaps detailing the response of social control agencies more than actual deviance (Smith & Visher, 1980).

It is also possible that where gender effects exist, they do so within limited realms, such as when the female offender is white or has committed a violent crime. Research suggests

particularly discrepant outcomes in homicide decisions (Zingraff & Thomson, 1984), and with white female offenders. Steffensmeier et al. (1993), for example, found that black female defendants were, on average, sentenced to about three months longer than white female defendants, and Crawford (2000), in a study of the application of the habitual offender statute in Florida, stated that while “there does not seem to be a systemic discriminatory application” of said statute, there was a “notable and disturbing exception based on offender race and drug related crimes” (p. 277). If race and crime seriousness are parsed out, certain areas in which judicial outcomes are particularly discrepant may be found, for example in cases where the female offender is white, engaged in a traditional female role of wife and mother and charged with a violent crime (Jeffries, 2001; Steffensmeier et al., 1993; Allen, 1987; Eaton, 1986) . If this is the case, those studies reporting very small or no effect may actually be reporting an anomaly of statistical collapse, with true differences being subsumed into averages.

While the statistical analysis of quantitative data seems to weigh in favour of a positive discrimination that leads to lenient outcomes for female offenders, qualitative analysis of the same data sets has led many to suggest that this apparent leniency is in fact a warranted reflection of true difference between offenders. Steffensmeier et al. (1993), having stated that males were 12% more likely to be incarcerated, go on to note that “the lesser jailing of female defendants is based on legally relevant considerations” or on extralegal factors that were “justified” in light of a subjective assessment of blameworthiness and the threat to society posed by the offender (p. 435).

Similarly, Daly (1994) cites statistical data suggestive of a bias in favour of the female offender, but states that such data may be misleading. Her qualitative review of forty matched offender pairs found only three of forty cases where leniency appeared to be extended to the female offender. Two of these three apparently disparate cases were subsequently explained by the individual's role in the offence, their age or cognitive competency. Thus only one pair emerged in which the sentencing disparity could not be "satisfactorily" explained (p. 137). Given the evidence suggesting a racial bias operating in favour of white offenders in the judicial system (Crawford, 2000; Steffensmeier et al., 1993), a gender bias cannot be established even in this one apparently unresolved case. As the female defendant was white and the male defendant black it seems possible that the discrepant sentencing reflects a racial bias, either instead of or in addition to a gender effect.

Thus, there seemed to be a level of agreement that females are indeed treated leniently in terms of a statistical analysis of intra-legal considerations, but that such analyses lack an explanatory context (Steffensmeier et al., 1993). That perhaps such leniency is justified in light of extra-legal and societal considerations. Having noted that the statistical analyses seemed to have reached an impasse, Jeffries (2001) engaged both quantitative and qualitative methods in her research. First, she set out to confirm whether a statistically discrepant result occurred when male and female offenders were compared. Using multiple regression analysis, she controlled for plea, characteristics of the crime and criminal history. This confirmed that, even when all other legal factors were held constant, gender influenced the judicial outcome. Jeffries then undertook a case-by-case

analysis of the most similar offenders - examining extralegal factors, such as personal circumstance, history and mental health.

Jeffries (2001) examined matched pairs of offenders where plea, history, ethnicity, age *and social conditions* were held constant in pairs of very similar male and female offenders. She found that “with women, judges look for an explanation and an excuse for their offending” (Newth, 2001, p. C3). Males on the whole were found to be held fully responsible and mitigation of any kind was denied. Even when plea, a negative social history, the offence role and family ties were considered women still received significantly more lenient sentences. Controlling for socio-demographic factors left the statistical gap between male and female outcomes unaffected. Her findings suggest that sentencing outcomes were harsher for males and that different factors were considered when determining male and female sentences. Female offenders, for example, were more likely to have their status as single parents considered, to assume a victimized position and have this accepted as a mitigating factor, and to have their mental health assessed. Thus Jeffries reported not only a statistical inequality in sentencing, but an inequality that she considered to be entirely unjustifiable.

But can male and female offenders be truly “matched”? Eaton (1986) suggests that men and women are treated equally when circumstances are similar, but that the circumstances of male and female crime are rarely if ever the same. This sentiment was echoed by New Zealand lawyer Judith Ablett-Kerr who, in response to Jeffries findings said: “In my 30 years of practice, I have yet to find two offenders who are actually

identical in all the matters relevant to a sentencing judge” (Newth, 2001, p.C3). Eaton noted that the consideration of mitigating circumstances appeared to be unaffected by the gender of the offender, and family obligations were held to be equally important in the case of both male and female offenders.

Again this raises the problematic issue of whether “true difference” or “perceived difference” between genders exists. Eaton (1986), Steffensmeier (1993), Daly (1994) and Ablett-Kerr (2001) argue that true differences, differences that cannot be statistically measured or analyzed, belie differential male and female offender outcomes, and that the apparently lenient sentencing of the female offender is both just and right. Jeffries (2001), on the other hand, argues that all conceivably relevant information has been matched and that the outcome differentials remain. Going beyond the standard legal factors, she sought to address those societal issues previously thought to justify the leniency extended to women and found that such issues arise also in the case of male offenders, but that they do not affect judicial outcomes. That males and females are treated differently regardless of similarities in their personal and social lives. If her cases are truly matched, then it is only the perception of difference that drives the outcome discrepancies, that these discrepancies do not reflect true differences in the lives or crimes of the individual male and female offender. Basing judicial decisions on alleged global gender differences was considered by Jeffries to be neither just nor right. In her view, the judiciary has failed to accept that some women are active perpetrators of crime and that some men are victims of society.

CHAPTER TWO

CURRENT EXPLANATIONS FOR JUDICIAL LENIENCY IN THE PROCESSING OF FEMALE OFFENDERS

Explanations regarding the lenient treatment of the female offender have been developed around two polarized positions. The first, based on themes of chivalry, paternalism, refeminization and naiveté, reflect the idea that leniency is the result of stereotypical thinking on the part of the judge and jury: that is, the perception of the female offender is filtered through a typical female schema. Pearson (1997) takes this a step further, suggesting that the stereotype has been formalized into psychiatric diagnostic categories that serve to exonerate the female criminal. The second explanatory positions focus on social control, marginalization and victimization of the female offender. They attempt to establish that the reality of female life is different from that of males and that these actual differences explain differential treatment in the criminal justice arena. They suggest that the social, situational and personal realities of womanhood both explain and justify judicial leniency. This chapter will briefly review these two kinds of explanations, and consider their explanatory value in regard to the leniency extended to women.

2.1 The Stereotyped Female Offender

The notion of “chivalrous” treatment of the female offender was broached as early as 1950, with Pollak (1950) stating that “men hate to accuse women...police officers dislike having to arrest them, district attorneys to prosecute them, and judges and juries to find them guilty” (p. 151). Chivalry reflects an attitude whereby women are placed on a

pedestal of femininity. Antisocial attitudes or behaviours are antithetical to those placed upon this pedestal and women are thus perceived as incapable of behaviour such as greed, lust, jealousy or other misanthropic emotions and drives.

Another similar explanation is that of naiveté. The naiveté explanation suggests that judges compare female defendants with their female loved ones and cannot imagine a woman behaving in such a manner as that attributed to the defendant (Parisi, 1982). This theory seems to rest on the notion that men view women as a highly homogenous group, all imbued with similarly loving and caring natures.

While the judicial outcome is the same, paternalism is somewhat different in that it reflects a power differential whereby males are afforded the opportunity to exert an influence over the female offender (Saulters-Tubbs, 1993). The paternalistic attitude toward the female offender is seen to be part of a pervasive societal norm that perceives women to be inherently submissive and in need of male protection. For a man to place a woman in the dangerous and punitive prison environment, removing her from the protection of her father or husband, is to endanger her and this endangerment is perceived to be unacceptable.

Jeffries (2001) discusses judicial and defence attempts at “refeminization”: the desire to construct the female defendant as a caring, nurturing and stereotypically “womanly” woman. In the case of the defence attorney, this could be seen simply as a strategy, a means by which the stereotype is utilized in order to influence judgment and secure a

favourable outcome. Pearson (1997) has also suggested that the female stereotype is being employed by women and their attorneys in a calculated attempt to manipulate the judiciary.

Pearson (1997) suggests that there has been a proliferation of excuses, both biological and psychological, that are applicable (or applied) only to female offenders, and that these are used to exonerate women by implying an “inability to make moral and rational choices” (p. 97). Where a male offender charged with injuring or killing his children would be labelled abusive, psychopathic or controlling, and deemed evil, the female offender is held up as a victim, be it of hormones, men, genetic vulnerabilities or society, and overtly gender-specific defences have been written into law, and reflected in precedent, that reflect this. The New Zealand Crimes Act 1961, for example, offers such a defence to women who have not “fully recovered from the effect of giving birth” or from the “effect of lactation” that caps the imprisonment term at 3 years. This defence can be used where any woman causes the death of her own child if said child is under the age of ten years. The law appears to suggest that a woman is so unbalanced by childbirth, or by breastfeeding, that she may be driven to kill for anywhere up to ten years. What remains unclear is why this lack of a balanced mind does not exonerate such a woman from killing someone else’s children. Disorders such as battered women’s syndrome, Munchausen syndrome by proxy or pre-menstrual syndrome are routinely suggested defences for female offending (Ablett-Kerr, McDonald & Young, 1997), despite ongoing controversy over whether or not such illnesses exist (Sadock & Sadock, 2003).

While both Pearson (1997) and Jeffries (2001) acknowledge the utilization of the stereotype as part of a defence strategy, the paternalism, chivalry, naïveté and refeminization (as it relates to judicial statement) explanations all seem reliant on the stereotyped images of women as held by men. They focus exclusively on the perception and treatment of females offenders by men in positions of authority. If paternalism, chivalry and refeminization represent an attempt to idealise the traditional woman, or to control women and maintain a paternalistic societal status quo, it seems that such theories have explanatory value only when the decision-makers are men. The theory of “naïveté” surely can only apply to men. Women after all, have greater access into the female psyche and a larger domain of information regarding the female experience. This domain should serve to reduce the perception of homogeneity and make it less likely that a naïve stereotype forms the basis of judgment. If research is conducted without consideration of the gender of decision-makers as well as offenders it fails to consider the implications of an increasingly female judiciary and corrections staff.

In recent years, the number of women in the judiciary has increased rapidly. Women currently comprise 13% of New Zealand’s judges, and in May of 1999, for the first time in NZ history a female Chief Justice, Dame Sian Elias, was sworn into office (www.decisionmaker.co.nz/guide/2003/hlw/holdingbalance.html). Research suggests that women are less likely to make gender distinctions when assessing criminality (Heatherton & Beardsall, 1988) and that they are less willing to accept “excusing conditions” relating to female biology (Worrall, 1987, p. 121). If this is so, we could expect that, with increasing female participation in the judicial system (other than as

offenders), evidence of leniency will disappear and these gender-based explanations will become obsolete. If leniency persists, it would indicate that they have insufficient explanatory power.

2.2 The Truly Different Female Offender

Explanations have also developed that explain the statistical discrepancies in terms of fundamental, but unmeasured, differences between male and female offenders. They suggest that differential judicial outcomes are warranted in that they reflect real differences between male and female involvement in crime.

Eaton (1986) suggests that women brought before the court are afforded what may appear to be lenient sanctions within an analysis of sentencing differential, that actually reflect the extent to which the court recognizes the “degree of control exerted upon a woman within her traditional role” (p. 31). Eaton’s own research supports the idea of social control as an alternative to judicial control in that married women and stay-at-home mothers are extended leniency where working mothers, unwed mothers and professional women are not. She suggests that where a woman is part of a conventional family unit, the sentence reflects the degree to which the traditional gender role unofficially, but effectively, controls her behaviour. In this way the court process can be used to perpetuate social inequalities by punishing women who fail to conform within traditional gender roles. While Eaton suggests that this lenient treatment of the conforming female offender supports the social control theory, that women engaged in a traditional female

role are controlled by the demands of family life, it seems equally likely that her findings reflect the degree to which married mothers conform to the female stereotype. Lenient sentencing would therefore reflect, not an understanding of societal control as it is exerted on the conforming female, but the difficulty of reconciling criminality with a role that is viewed as fundamentally caring, nurturing and self-sacrificing.

Female offending has also been viewed as the understandable outcome of victimisation and sexism in a society where women represent a weak underclass (Baskin & Sommers, 1993) or as a necessary attempt to cope with marginalization and poverty (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004). To punish such criminals in a manner equal to the male offender therefore, would be to perpetuate inequality. Gender-blind sentencing would be punitive in the extreme given the assumed cause of offending, with existing inequalities creating situations where equal treatment under the law, would not truly meet the criteria of either justice or equality (Eaton, 1986).

One arena in which women are clearly different from males is biology. While social differences could be argued in light of changing societal norms and the emancipation of women, the biology that separates males and females is consistent. The notion of biological forces driving female criminality is not new, though there have been different emphases placed on the manner in which they influence offending. Pollack (1950) for example believed that females are socially trained to be deceitful through encouragement to conceal menstruation and fake orgasm. Thus the driving force was not the biological force itself, but the societal management of biological difference. Others have focused on

the hormonal changes that accompany female menstruation and menopause, believing them to lower inhibitions against criminality. Moir and Jessel (1997) suggested that female aggression fluctuates with the menstrual cycle, increasing the likelihood of aggressive and antisocial acts during the paramenstruum period. While premenstrual symptoms have been successfully argued to be a mitigating factor in the defence of female offenders it seems that testosterone, also linked to increased aggression, has not achieved the same status with regard to the mitigation of male criminality.

It is of interest to consider that early theories of male criminality reflected similar themes as those discussed above relating to female criminality. For example, according to Anomie Theory, criminal behaviour reflects feelings of alienation, isolation, powerlessness and personal distress (Merton, 1938). It was held that being a member of the “underclass” means that one has fewer legitimate avenues to success, and so crime becomes an alternate means by which to obtain socially valued goals, such as wealth. This seems to be the same position taken by those researchers who seek to justify the judicial leniency extended to female offenders, that social realities limit the options available to women.

However, research suggests that one’s social position has, at best, a weak and distal link to criminality (Andrews & Bonta, 2003). With regard to personal distress, research suggests that while anger is associated with increased criminality, other negative emotion states such as low self-esteem, worry and depression are negatively correlated with criminal behaviour (Broidy, 2001). Neither poverty nor personal distress has been found

to explain individual criminality, and yet both are regularly proposed to mitigate against the punishment of women.

In conclusion, societal changes and the impact of a rising population of female decision-makers can only lead to the decreasing utility of gendered theories. Judicial leniency, within any of these explanatory paradigms, is based on a social inequity that is becoming an historic relic. Where judicial leniency is viewed as the reflection of real social inequalities, such inequalities must exist. Where it is viewed as the reflection of a stereotype, it is no longer tenable as the leniency is perceived, within such paradigms, to be a tainted gift, given to women by men and potentially perpetuating a stereotype within which women are held to be less responsible for their actions. The biological explanations pose a similar dilemma for women. If one accepts that female crime may be explained by biological functions and symptoms inherent to menstruation, menopause and pregnancy, and that such symptoms may lead to diminished personal responsibility, such acceptance may result in an assessment of all women as incapable of reasoned decision-making while in any of these biological phases. Given that most women experience these phases for much of their adult life, the implication is that for much of adulthood a woman's personal capacity is diminished.

In the following section, the gender-free theory of attribution theory will be examined as an alternative means by which to examine and explain the perception of offending behaviour.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ATTRIBUTIONAL MODEL

3.1 Attribution Theory

The attributional approach assumes that we seek to explain our own behaviour and the behaviour of others in terms of causation, that we attribute cause to our own actions and the actions of others (Heider, 1958). Such causes may be dispositional, representative of individual traits, or situational, representative of an environmental effect. This search for causation is assumed to be the result of a basic desire to understand and predict events.

Weiner (1974) proposed that this attribution of causality can be described in terms of three independent dimensions: locus, stability, and controllability. Thus we seek to explain behaviour in terms of the attributed causal location on each of these dimensions. When forming ideas about our own behaviour and that of others, we classify the behaviour with regard to whether we believe the causes to be internal or external, stable or variable over time, and the extent to which it is either volitional or beyond one's control.

Despite our attempts to explain behaviour in an accurate manner, as practitioners of a "naïve psychology" we are prone to error (Heider, 1958, p.5). In our attempts to maintain cognitive consistency and avoid incongruent information, we may bias our causal attributions in such a way as to confirm existing beliefs about individuals and groups. By engaging in confirmatory information-seeking, we selectively attend to information that

supports our existing beliefs or stereotypes. This chapter will consider those influences that affect the perception of others, specifically of offenders, and in turn the attributions that are likely to be made for their behaviour.

3.2 Stereotypes and the Attribution of Blame

Stereotypes can be understood as a shorthand approach to social understanding, a means by which we can quickly categorize others, and organize and process the vast amounts of information to which we are exposed every day. While stereotyping is not inherently bad, stereotypes are, by nature, oversimplified images that enable us to quickly evaluate social information at the expense of accuracy (McKnight & Sutton, 1994).

Shaver noted that “judgments of personal responsibility for wrongdoing are heavily influenced by ideology” (1985, p.1). If the prevailing ideology is one in which females are stereotyped in terms of nurturing tendencies and males perceived to be aggressive and more likely to commit criminal acts, this may impact on the attribution of blame.

It has been suggested that experience can moderate stereotypical thinking, in that greater experience results in less biased impression formation (Lowery & Higgins, 1979). This may reflect the development of more sophisticated or reality-based schemas. Specific causes attributed to specific acts cannot be isolated from our own fundamental understanding of the world and so are embedded within schematic formulations that are based on our existing understanding of similar situations. Consider the case of the battered wife who kills her abusive husband. Those with experience of such offenders

and victims are likely to have developed more comprehensive schematic representations than the layperson, whose schemas are likely to be less developed and based primarily on media sources (Lurigio, Carroll, & Stalans, 1994).

As our understanding of stereotypes has developed, research has begun to focus on how we maintain stereotypes in the face of inconsistent information. Given that stereotypes are an important tool, allowing us to organize and simplify the world in such a way that it feels controllable and predictable, it makes some sense that we are reluctant to relinquish them. If one holds a stereotyped image of women that is incongruent with female criminality, this stereotype may be challenged by the female offender. Information that is incongruent with one's implicit understanding of the world is threatening in that it renders that world unpredictable and negates our attempts to categorize and control (Forster, Higgins, & Strack, 2000). This sense of unease, generated when one is faced with information that is incongruent with one's beliefs, is known as cognitive dissonance. Dissonance occurs when one attempts to hold and reconcile two conflicting pieces of information; it must be resolved in some way so as to restore a sense of predictability and control. How one chooses to resolve this dissonance has implications for the attributions made regarding behaviour that is in conflict with the stereotype. The contradictory information must either be explained away somehow, or the stereotype itself must evolve to accommodate it.

3.3 Selective Attention

Research suggests that when given the chance, people will actively seek out information that is consistent with their existing beliefs. This is the basic premise of selective attention; that we attend to confirmatory data and ignore disconfirming information. Carroll and Payne (1976, cited Carroll, 1979) found support for the role of selective attention in the assessment of causation as it relates to offending behaviour by studying the information sought to explain criminality. Individuals with an existing tendency to explain events in terms of internal traits sought information relating to criminal history whereas those with a tendency to explain events in terms of the environment actively sought information about the offender's environment in forming judgments about parole release. Thus the particular individual bias influenced the search in that information sought conformed to previously held notions of causality. Such biased information seeking reduces dissonance by producing confirmatory information.

But what happens when we are confronted with unavoidable information that is inconsistent with our basic understanding of the world? Festinger's (1964) revised theory of cognitive dissonance suggests that we selectively attend to consistent information when given a choice, and create strategies by which inconsistent information can be disregarded when it becomes unavoidable.

It seems that when inconsistent information is present and unavoidable, people will not simply ignore it, indeed the attention paid to inconsistent information appears to be greater than that paid to information consistent with existing beliefs and expectations

(Sherman et al., 2005; Forster et al., 2000). As mentioned above, this may be the result of such information being perceived as a personal threat, negating one's beliefs about the world and producing cognitive dissonance and subsequent negative affect. As a threat it requires increased attention and vigilance. This increased attention results in better memory for inconsistent information. As an inconsistent piece of information it results in an increased cognitive effort to resolve dissonance. However, this increased cognitive effort may not be directed toward the integration of new information into the existing schema, rather it may represent an attempt to explain it away or discount it.

Sherman et al. (2005), in a series of experiments, found that individuals highly invested in the maintenance of existing stereotypes exhibited better memory for inconsistent information and better encoding of inconsistent over consistent information. However, inconsistencies were attributed to external causes, and did not influence subsequent judgments. Thus by employing a strategy of attributional discounting, dissonance and negative effect can be eliminated. Not by altering the stereotype, but by changing the meaning of the inconsistent information so that it is no longer perceived to be at odds with the existing stereotype and allowing the individual to disregard it. Participants continued to rely on pre-existing stereotypes as the basis for the development of an individual impression, having rendered the inconsistent information irrelevant. Such findings suggest that the judgment of a female offender may be influenced by the search for external causation so that the female stereotype remains unchallenged.

3.4 Intergroup bias

An extension of attribution theory suggests that in-groups operate in such a way as to create favouritism where similarity exists. This theory of intergroup bias suggests that women are likely to favour other women, to perceive their crimes as caused by external factors and to treat them leniently based on this attribution distortion. However, it's also possible that professional women (and indeed, all women) are less likely to perceive women in terms of a stereotype, and to credit them with the agency required to commit a crime.

Hetherington and Beardsall (1988) found that when presented with hypothetical scenarios involving a male vs a female child sex offender, female social workers considered prosecution appropriate when the alleged offender was female, while male social workers perceived the female sex offender to be less dangerous and deemed prosecution less appropriate. While this investigation found an overall bias in favour of women, on a number of decisions, including registration as a sex offender, imprisonment and prosecution, female social workers viewed prosecution of the female offender as both appropriate and necessary.

This is consistent with Kalichman, Craig and Follingstad (1990) finding that professionals judge their own gender more harshly, and Worrall's (1987) analysis of female magistrates' unwillingness to accept "excusing conditions" (p. 121) notes that:

while the male magistrates...were relatively content to attribute female crime to domestic strains and responsibilities, the women magistrates tended to expect women either to accept their lot and make the best of it or to be more rational and discriminating in the remedies they sought (p.121).

Hetherington and Beardsall (1988) also noted that female police officers had dealt with more female offenders, and perhaps had developed a more realistic sense of the dangerousness of these women, and the effects of their crimes. As a woman, one has access to a larger domain of information with regard to the female experience, not only via the interactions with other women, but also as a result of being a woman. This additional knowledge serves to reduce the perception of homogeneity and the likelihood of resorting to stereotypes to process information (Linville, Salovey & Fischer, 1986). As a result, it may be that women are less willing to accept a view that stereotypically constructs women as victims, and are therefore more likely to feel that women are responsible for their own actions.

This paradoxical manifestation of the gender-based intergroup bias has been investigated in terms of subgroup membership by Eckes, Trautner & Behrendt (2005). They found that while adolescent gender groups were subject to in-group favouritism, with females favouring females especially, once subgroups were identified within the in-group a more complicated picture of out-group derogation emerged. Own-gender out-groups were actually judged more harshly than other-gender out-groups. Females identifying themselves as "female athletes" were less favourable in their evaluation of "prissy-girls" than of "macho" males. Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (Brewer, 1991) provides a

means for explaining this apparent paradox in terms of balancing the need for assimilation and differentiation. The individual identifies as a female or male and this gender identity is a distinctive characteristic, one clearly visible (in most cases) to the world at large. However, when an individual identifies him or herself as “an athlete” this subgroup identity is not as apparent. Thus a distinction must be made between the own-gender in-group and the own-gender out-group in an explicit manner so that the boundary between “us” and “them” is clearly defined.

Subgroups can be identified in terms of clusters within the in-group. For example within the female in-group, women may identify with housewives, mothers, or career women. It is possible that pro-social and well-adjusted females perceive the antisocial or criminal female to be an own-gender subgroup that must be derogated and clearly defined as “other”.

Attribution theory does not confine itself to judgments of women imposed by men, and with its applicability to assignments of personal responsibility, it seems entirely suited to the exploration and explanation of third-party assessments of criminality. As it is equally valid for the assessment of both male and female offenders it provides not only a measurement standard, but also the possibility of pinpointing any perceived differences leading to judicial discrepancy.

3.5 Perceptions of offending within an attributional framework

Carroll and Payne (1977) tested Weiner's (1974) attributional model as it relates to the evaluation of offending behaviour. By presenting a written description of a criminal act to students and parole board experts, and manipulating the background information to suggest different attributional causes, they were able to demonstrate the applicability of this model to the assignation of responsibility. Where the background information suggested an internal cause the offender was liked less and was more likely to receive severe sanctions.

Ewart and Pennington (1987) demonstrated that sentence severity correlated with the extent to which causes were seen to be internal, stable and controllable. While they did not manipulate the internal cause, those offences deemed to be caused by internal, stable and controllable factors were more likely to result in a custodial sentence than those offences deemed to be caused by internal, unstable and uncontrollable causes.

If cognitive dissonance is produced by the female offender, external causes may be sought to explain the criminal behaviour and maintain the stereotype. This alone would impact on the severity of sanctions. If the behaviour of such offenders is also deemed to be the result of unstable and/or uncontrollable forces, reduced sanctions become increasingly likely.

The examination of offending behaviour, as perceived by others, can utilize attribution theory. Discrepancies between male and female offenders may then be targeted in terms

of internality, stability and controllability and more concise and pragmatic explanatory theories developed.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PRESENT STUDY

Statistical analyses of sentencing decisions suggest that women are treated leniently by the judicial system, but cannot explain why this might be so. Perhaps women's offences are simply so different, and the circumstances around crime so variable that statistical categories fail to capture explanatory variables. Statistical investigations of judicial leniency have been criticized for failing to control effectively for every variable that might justifiably influence sentencing (Daly, 1994; Steffensmeier et al., 1993). Daly suggested that certain of these variables could not possibly be reduced to numbers. Following Daly's lead, Jeffries (2001) used both quantitative and qualitative methods in an attempt to address those issues identified in the statistical research. Having located apparently similar male and female offenders with different judicial outcomes she examined the case files in order to identify any previously uncontrolled variables that might explain the discrepant sentencing. Her case by case comparisons suggest that these judicial discrepancies cannot be justified; that there is a tendency to view female offenders as less responsible for their criminal behaviour and to treat them differently as a result.

Lawyer, Judith Ablett-Kerr, in response to the Jeffries matched pairs research states "In 30 years of practice, I have yet to find two offenders who are actually identical in all the matters relevant to a sentencing judge" (Newth, 2001, pC3). There are so many variables that influence sentencing that even very careful matching of crime, plea and personal history, as detailed in the case file, may not capture every possible influence. The

assessment of remorse for example is subjective, did the defendant smile sweetly at the judge and weep remorseful tears? Was the offender particularly attractive (Esses & Webster, 1988)? Or did one offender simply appear more believable than another? Whether or not an offender is believed may be based on preconceptions about how such crimes, and such criminals usually present. For example in the case of domestic violence, the notion that such violence is usually perpetrated by males, may exonerate female participants when the violence is mutual (Pearson, 1997).

In vivo research investigating the treatment of actual offenders continues to be problematic in this way. Both statistical evidence and the qualitative analysis of discrepant male and female offender pairs have been criticized for oversimplifying the myriad of details that impact on the judicial decision. A written analogue design was chosen for the present study in order to address such criticism. While analogue cases are brief and limit available detail, they have the advantage of ensuring that the only salient difference between the two cases is that variable that is being experimentally manipulated, in this case, gender. Rather than attempting to control all possible variables, the cases are simplified to the point that other variables don't exist. Jeffries (2001) research has indicated that the discrepant sentencing of male and female offenders is based on a biased assessment of personal responsibility; that it is the perception of women, and the perception alone that results in judicial leniency. This research approaches the same problem from the point of perception rather than from the point of reality. By examining the perceptual differences, and eliminating the innumerable variables associated with actual offenders, the analogue method can provide information

that either supports or negates the possibility of bias. Any differences in participant response to the two analogues can only be explained by a differential reaction based on gender.

The aim of this research is to identify the perceptions of causality that may influence the differential treatment of male and female offenders. The attributional approach guides the research and provides a means for understanding the treatment provider's evaluation of offending causation. This research is exploratory as the attributional method has not previously been used in order to investigate perceptual differences in the assignment of responsibility to male and female offenders.

Hypotheses:

1. That differences will emerge in the perception of male and female offending such that
 - a. different causes will be identified for male and female offending
 - b. the assignment of personal responsibility will be different for male and female offenders
2. That differences will emerge in the attributions made by male and female counsellors regarding female offenders
3. That nominated treatment goals and priorities will differ for male and female offenders.

CHAPTER FIVE

METHODOLOGY

5.1 Setting

Five non-government (NGOs) drug and alcohol rehabilitation facilities were chosen to participate in the study. All facilities regularly take referrals from the judicial system and are familiar with the treatment of offending behaviours associated with addiction issues.

These facilities shared certain features, both philosophical and practical, that are not evident in government sponsored rehabilitation. This homogeneity was preferred for the purposes of this study as it reduced the possibility that variables other than those being manipulated would influence the results.

Two practical features of the facilities involved are the utilisation of treatment methods that involve activities in addition to weekly individual sessions and the provision of treatment to both male and female offenders. The nature of the services was such that counsellors have a rather more personal relationship with their clients, in that many clients reside on site. Thus counsellors will often eat with clients, attend community functions with them, engage in leisure activities and be involved in other activities of daily living. As a result it was believed that counsellors would have an understanding of both male and female offenders that was based on personal experience.

5.2 Participants

Drug and alcohol counsellors were chosen as the sample group as they provide a diverse demographic in terms of both professional affiliation and training. They are also involved in an ongoing capacity with both male and female offenders who have been referred via judicial process.

Five drug and alcohol facilities in the Auckland region were approached, where a total of 31 staff met the selection criteria. That is, they were involved in therapeutic relationships with court-referred clients and in attendance at the weekly staff meeting. Of the total population pool, 30 counsellors chose to participate (a response rate of 96.7 %).

Of the thirty participants, 21 were female, 6 were male and 3 participants failed to identify gender. The level of experience was highly variable with the least experienced participant having working in the field for only 2 months and the most experienced for 144 months ($M= 49.28, SD=40.97$).

5.3 Measures

Vignettes (See Appendix A)

Two analogue cases were developed, one male, one female, relating to a robbery involving the threat of harm and subsequent credit card fraud. The analogues were based on Carroll and Payne's (1977) analogue study of judicial attribution. The analogue was non-violent so as to eliminate any potentially discrepant assessment of victim impact

based on disparities between male and female offender's physical strength and also to mitigate against the possibility of traumatizing participants. A prior conviction record was attached with personal details of the offender (sex, ethnicity, education, IQ, employment and family circumstances) and these were distributed as evenly as possible among both male and female therapists. In this way a 2x2 quasi-experimental design was arranged such that both male and female therapists participated in either the male or female offender condition.

Questionnaire (see Appendix B)

Parts A and B

A questionnaire based on Russell's (1982) Causal Dimension Scale was developed in which treatment providers described the primary causes for a fictional offence. These responses were examined via a chi-square analysis to determine any differences between responses to the female and male offender analogues. Statements were coded into categorical groups and then re-coded by an independent coder, with inter-rater reliability established at 93.4%. Participants then completed a bi-polar 9 point Likert scale designed to assess the assignment of personal responsibility. This gives the participant the opportunity to describe how he or she attributes causation in terms of the locus of control, controllability and stability (Russell, 1982). Russell's questionnaire was adapted for the purposes of this study in order to allow responses to reflect the perception of another's actions rather than one's own. Initially a nine-item scale, an additional two questions were included as part of the subscale measurement of the locus of cause in order to more finely discriminate those characteristics of "externality" hypothesized to influence the

assessment of female offenders (personal history and association with criminal others). Five of the eleven questions were reversed scored in order to avoid a response set.

Each of these three dimensions represents a conceptually meaningful and potentially useful subscale of the measure of personal responsibility, in that it may reveal crucial differences in the broader construct. Previous research suggests that the assignment of personal responsibility can be measured in such a manner that low internality, low controllability and low stability equate with the assignment of less personal responsibility for a given action (Ewart & Pennington, 1987). The assignment of less personal responsibility in turn results in less punitive judicial outcomes (Ewart & Pennington, 1987; Carroll & Payne, 1977).

Individuals whose questionnaires yield total scores of personal responsibility that are exactly the same, may reflect fundamentally different responses; a response may include high internality and low stability or low internality, high stability and end up with the same score. Factor analysis carried out by Russell (1982) supports the three dimensional structure of the original scale but could not be repeated for validation of the modified scale used in this research as the ratio of subjects to items was insufficient (Pallant, 2002).

As the three dimensions of the scale are conceptually different, and the number of subscale items is less than ten, internal consistency was evaluated via the assessment of inter-item correlation rather than Cronbach's alpha (Pallant, 2002). This provides

information regarding the validity of the various subscales in addition to providing a measure of reliability that is not a function of the scale length. The full-scale mean inter-item correlation was found to be .185, a little lower than the recommended .2-.4 (Briggs & Cheek, 1986). The mean inter-item correlations within the subscales were: locus of causality .202, control .339 and stability .134. The causality and control subscales are optimal, in that there is a relationship between subscale items that is indicative of homogeneity but not so high as to suggest redundancy. The stability subscale however, was deemed to be slightly problematic and further evaluation suggested that a lack of variance in the responses for one particular item was affecting the consistency of this particular scale. The removal of item 11 – “the cause of this crime is changeable” – increased the full-scale mean inter-item correlation to .230 and the stability subscale correlation to .304.

Part C

A subsequent section of the questionnaire was developed to assess the impact of selective attention to information that supports the causal hypothesis. Carole and Payne (1976, cited Payne 1979) developed a similar design in order to assess the information that subjects sought about a case in order to make parole release decisions. They found that the attributional bias of the individual participant served to produce a confirmatory set whereby the information sought indicated a desire to confirm the hypothesized cause of the offence.

Part D

Finally, participants were asked to develop a prioritized treatment plan for the fictional offender. The development of such plans is an integral part of the treatment of those offenders with whom the participants work and as such represented a task with which the participants were familiar. It was hypothesized that this plan would reflect the perceived causal antecedents in that treatment would be targeted to the attributed cause and that any gender bias found with regard to causality would be replicated in treatment. Treatment priorities were first coded into categorical groups and then re-coded by an independent coder, with inter-rater reliability established at 93.3%.

The questionnaire took between 20-30 minutes to complete.

5.4 Procedure

Ethics approval was sought and the proposed research accepted by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee. The Chief Executive Officers and research development teams of each of the facilities were contacted and a request made for their participation in the research. The full written ethics application and a description of the proposed research and procedure were forwarded, along with the information sheets (Appendix C) that were to be made available to staff if the research application was accepted. While full disclosure of the intent and purposes of the research was made, it was requested that this disclosure not be accessible to the intended participants. This deception was deemed necessary in order to preclude the possibility that participants would anticipate a bias in their perception of male and female offenders and adjust their responses accordingly.

All facilities agreed to participate and arrangements were made for the researcher to attend scheduled staff meetings. Information sheets detailing the proposed research, while withholding the intended gender-based analysis, were issued in advance to team leaders at each of the treatment sites. The researcher subsequently attended staff meetings at each of these private alcohol and drug treatment centres and explained the nature of the study to be “an investigation of the perception of offending behaviour by treatment professionals”. This explanation was again deceptive in that it did not fully disclose the intention or purpose of the research. The use of two differing analogues was concealed and participants were not initially advised of the intended gender analysis

Those interested in participating were asked to remain behind when the meeting was concluded and to read the vignette and complete the questionnaire. Once all questionnaires were complete, a debriefing session was conducted in which it was explained that two different offence analogues had been distributed in order to determine whether or not gender-based differences arose. At this point the researcher invited participants to submit their questionnaire into a locked box. Any who remained uncomfortable with the purpose of the study, and the search for a gender effect, were invited to discuss their concerns with the researcher, or to simply withhold their response. The researcher left the room at this point in order to ensure that there was not undue pressure on the respondents to participate.

In order to maintain confidentiality, and ensure that neither individual responses, nor the facility from which they were obtained, could be identified, the “lockbox” remained unopened until all responses were collected.

CHAPTER SIX

RESULTS

Hypothesis 1: That differences will emerge in the perception of male and female offending.

Part A – different causes will be identified for male and female offending

Table 1 suggests that gender-based differences exist in the perception of offending causation in two major areas. The alpha level was adjusted to .15 in order to compensate for the small sample size and the increased possibility of a Type 2 error – incorrectly finding in favour of the null hypothesis of no difference. At this less stringent level, significant differences were found in the scores of males ($N=16$) and females ($N=14$) in two areas. Participants ($N=30$) were more likely to deem a lack of educational and vocation opportunities a causal influence in the case of the male (56.3%) as opposed to the female offender (14.3%, $p=.02$). Antisocial attitudes were also more likely to be viewed as a cause in the case of the male offender (68.8%) than in the case of the female offender (42.9%, $p=.15$).

Table 1.

Perceived causal antecedents of criminal offending

Attributed Cause	Male offender	Female offender	Chi-square value
Personal distress/ psychopathy	75%	78.6%	.82
Lack of educational/ vocational opportunities	56.3%	14.3%	.02
Socio-economic pressures	68.8%	57.1%	.51
Family of origin	31.3%	35.7%	.79
Antisocial attitudes	68.8%	42.9%	.15
Antisocial peers	81.3%	78.6%	.85

Part B –the assignation of personal responsibility will be different for male and female offenders

A priori independent-samples t-tests were conducted to compare the total perceived responsibility scores of male ($N=16$) and female offenders ($N=13$), and to identify any differences on each of the sub-scale scores. One questionnaire was omitted from this analysis as it had been completed incorrectly. The alpha level was adjusted to .15 in order to compensate for the small sample size and the increased possibility of non-significant results due to insufficient power (Pallant, 2002). At this level a significant difference was found in scores for males ($M=4.40$, $SD=1.06$) and females ($M=3.59$, $SD=1.19$; $t(27)=1.93$, $p=.06$) in the stability subscale only. The magnitude of the differences in the means was moderate-large (eta squared = .12). There were no significant differences in the scores for the full-scale measure of responsibility between males ($M=15.32$, $SD=2.62$) and females ($M=14.25$, $SD=2.98$; $t(27)=1.03$, $p=.31$) or scales of internality (male $M=4.79$, $SD=1.34$, female $M=4.54$, $SD=1.30$; $t(27)=.51$, $p=.61$) and control (male $M=6.13$, $SD=1.48$, female $M=6.12$, $SD=1.73$; $t(27)=.02$, $p=.00$). The relevant means, standard deviations and the magnitude of difference between means are given in Table 2.

Table 2.

A comparison of the perceived responsibility scores of male and female offenders

	<u>Mean</u>		<u>Std. Dev.</u>		<u>p.value</u>	<u>Effect size</u>
	Male	Female	Male	Female		
Responsibility	15.32	14.25	2.62	2.98	.31	.04
Internality	4.79	4.54	1.34	1.30	.61	.01
Controllability	6.13	6.12	1.48	1.73	.99	.00
Stability	4.40	3.59	1.06	1.19	.06*	.12

*Significant at $p < .15$

The level of total personal responsibility attributed to the female offender is lower than that attributed to the male offender. This small-moderate (Pallant, 2004; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007) effect (.04) is contributed to unevenly over the various subscales of the responsibility construct, with no difference found within the controllability construct, a small internality effect and a moderate to large effect located within the stability factor. Given these effect sizes it becomes apparent that, while there was insufficient power to generate a statistically significant result in a sample of this size, there is the suggestion of a gender-based difference in the attribution of personal responsibility. Increasingly research is turning to the use of effect sizes as reliance on the statistical significance test gives way to meta-analysis (Schmidt, 1996). This means that low power research may contribute to cumulative knowledge rather than being arbitrarily rejected as having found “no effect” despite the emergence of regularities or patterns of information (Cohen, 1994). Thus, while the only statistically significant difference (at the $p < .15$ level) was located in the stability subscale, this does not preclude the possibility that other differences exist. It does mean, however, that at the level of 85% confidence, the intervals include 0 and the possibility that there is no difference between the groups.

These differences can be schematically “profiled”, as in Figure 1, using the attribution subscales in such a way as to indicate where the perceived differences lie. Mean scores across all three constructs were smaller for females, resulting in less attributed responsibility.

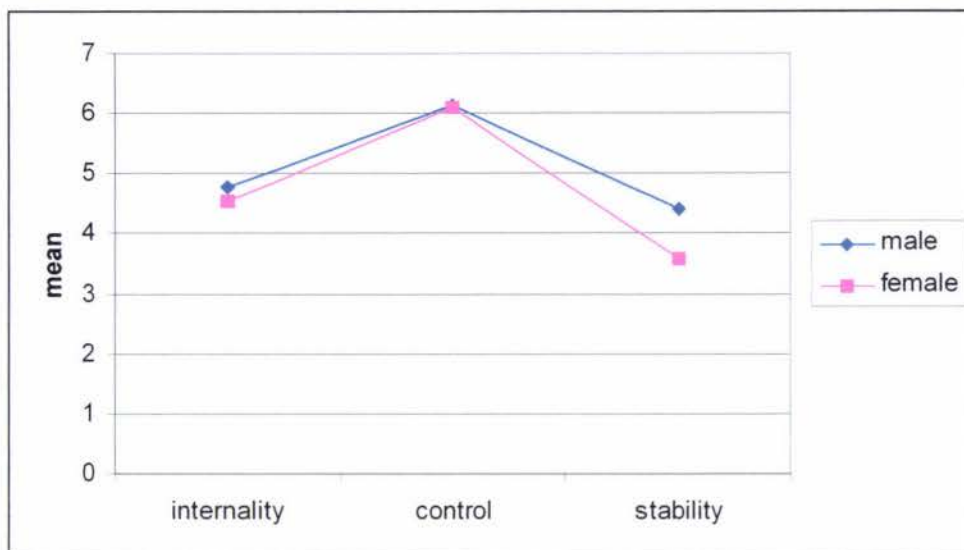


Figure 1. Profile of mean differences in attributed causation of offending.

Hypothesis 2: That differences will emerge in the attributions made by male and female counsellors regarding female offenders.

The second hypothesis raised the possibility that male and female therapists perceived female offenders differently. Two antagonistic theories were postulated; the first being that inter-group bias would lead males and females to judge members of their own group less harshly. The second, and that most commonly supported in the research, is that male therapists would judge the female offender in a paternalistic or chivalrous manner and deem her less responsible than their female counterparts would. As the very low number of male participants precludes a formal inferential analysis, the following results are

primarily descriptive in nature. The sample size, once divided along therapist gender lines, mitigates against drawing anything more than the most tentative of conclusions, particularly with regard to the attributions of male therapists.

Both male ($N=6$) and female ($N=20$) participants tended to perceive offenders of their own gender in a more sympathetic manner, supporting the notion of an inter-group bias (Table 3. and Figure 2.) There was very little difference found between the male counsellor's judgment of male ($M=13.39$, $SD=3.06$) and female ($M=14.28$, $SD=0.88$) offending behaviour. The full-scale responsibility score attributed to male offenders by female therapists, however, was surprisingly discrepant and suggests that female therapists are particularly blaming of the male offender. A post-hoc independent samples t-test was statistically significant at the alpha .15 level with the responsibility score attributed to male offenders ($M= 16.15$, $SD= 2.25$) higher than that attributed to female offenders ($M= 13.78$, $SD= 3.21$, $t(18)=1.94$, $p=.07$). When the counsellor is female, 17% of the variance in responsibility attribution is explained by the gender of the offender. While such post-hoc analyses are clearly an example of "data snooping" (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001, p.634) and this particular test was not indicated by the hypothesis, the unanticipated result seemed worthy of further exploration.

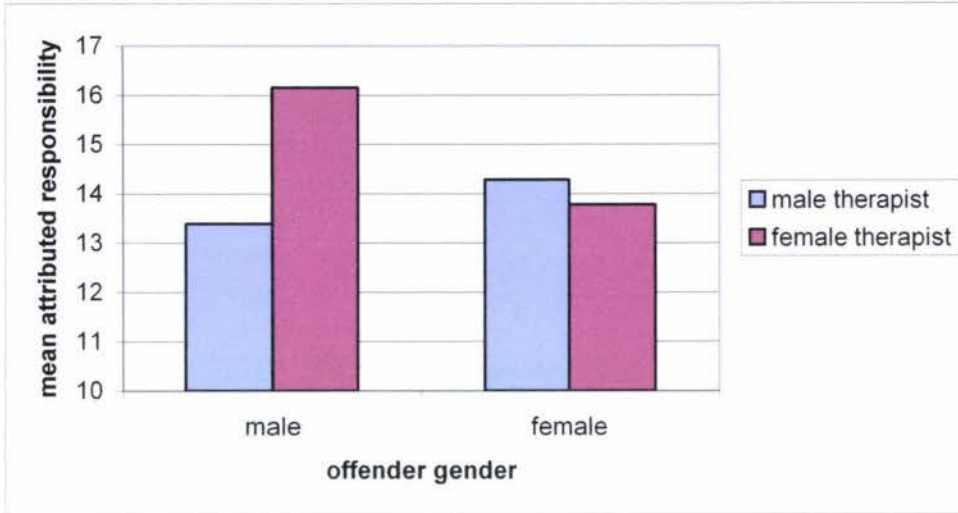


Figure 2. Responsibility attributed to same gender and other gender offenders.

Table 3.

Perceived responsibility mean scores of same gender/other gender offenders

	Male Offender	Female Offender
Male therapist	13.39	14.28
Female therapist	16.15	13.78

Once again the total responsibility outcomes can be broken down into attributional subscales as in Table 4. so that the contribution of each factor to the total score can be considered

Table 4.

Causal attribution mean scores of same gender/other gender offenders

	Internality	Control	Stability
<u>Male therapist</u>			
Male offender	4.52	5.13	3.75
Female offender	4.40	6.25	3.63
<u>Female therapist</u>			
Male offender	5.05	6.41	4.68
Female offender	2.58	5.83	3.61

The attributional profiles given in Figure 3, while similar, suggest variation in terms of the contribution of each factor to the total personal responsibility score. Female therapists, for example, perceived the female offender to be more influenced by external factors and male therapists perceived the male offender to be less in control.

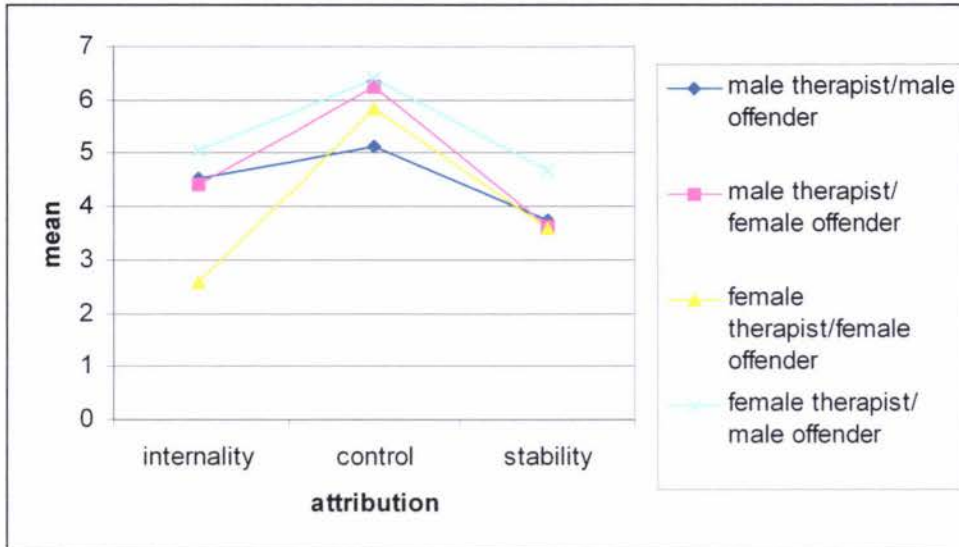


Figure 3. Profile of same gender/ other gender attribution of offending causation.

Hypothesis 3: nominated treatment goals and priorities will differ for male and female offenders.

This third hypothesis predicted that counsellor nominated treatment priorities would differ on the basis of offender gender. Based on the analysis of perceived causation (see hypothesis one), it was speculated that gender-based differences would arise in treatment categories related to educational/ vocational opportunities and antisocial attitudes. Where gender-based differences in perceived causation arose, these same differences would hypothetically be replicated in the treatment plan.

Once again unstructured free responses were examined via a chi-square analysis to determine any differences between the female offender analogue ($N=14$) and that of the male offender ($N=16$). Statistically significant differences between the groups arose

(Table 5) only in regard to the desire for imposing some form of reparation or restitution with males (25%) more likely to be punished in this way than females (0%, $p=.04$)

The gender-based differences found previously regards the causative influence of low educational and vocation achievement is not replicated in the nominated treatment protocols. While the percentage of female offenders referred for such treatment is lower (35.7% vs 56.3%) this difference is marginal and, given the small sample, percentages may be somewhat misleading.

Table 5.

Differences between nominated treatment protocols for a male and a female offender

Nominated treatment	Male	Female	Chi-square value
Treatment of distress/ psychopathy	81.3%	85.7%	.74
Restitution	25%	0%	.04
Establish prosocial attitudes	43.8%	35.7%	.65
Parenting skills	50%	64.3%	.43
Educational/vocational training	56.3%	35.7%	.26
Developing positive supports	25%	14.3%	.46

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION

Hypothesis 1: that differences will emerge in the perception of male and female offending

Unstructured free-responses regarding the causal influences of crime suggest that gender-based differences exist in two areas. When the offender is male, a lack of educational and vocational opportunities is more likely to be deemed causal, as is the existence of antisocial traits. Differences in the assignation of personal responsibility were also found, as indicated by a lower mean full-scale score for the female offender analogue. This suggests that female offenders may be considered less personally responsible for their actions. This difference was not statistically significant, though the small to moderate effect size suggests that the present research had insufficient power to generate a significant result. An analysis of subscale differences found that this effect in the total responsibility score was almost entirely the result of differences in the stability subscale.

That criminality in the male is deemed to be more stable than the criminality of the female suggests one of two possible conclusions regarding the perceived responsibility of the female offender. The first is that the female offender is believed to be more responsive to rehabilitation efforts, and that future crime is therefore unlikely. Perhaps the participants felt that the women with whom they work are more receptive to

treatment. Research supports this notion as female offenders are statistically less likely to commit further crimes following incarceration (Andrews & Bonta, 2003), though research also suggests that statistics fail to capture the criminal behaviours of women.

Alternatively it may be that female crime is perceived to be in response to transient environmental factors rather than to an inherent criminality; that future criminality is less likely as the causes are temporary. However if this is the case, one would expect the internality scores for female offenders to be low also as environmental factors are inherently external. One possible explanation is that the female offence was seen as the result of pathology created by stressful circumstances; that the internal emotion response was caused by an external force. For example it might be seen that transient life stressors associated with parenting and social isolation resulted in depression and addiction that then culminates in criminal activity.

The flip side of the relatively low stability score for the female offence analogue is that criminality was deemed to be more stable in the male offender. An analysis of the unstructured responses suggested antisocial attitudes or traits were more often considered causal in the case of the male offender. These dispositional traits are internal, and therefore blameworthy. Such traits are also considered to be essentially stable (Wortman & Loftus, 1992). Thus the perception of offenders differed in such a way that the males were more often perceived to be acting on the basis of stable antisocial tendencies.

There are important implications for both judicial decision-making and treatment in this finding. Stability relates to recidivism risk, in that if causes are stable they will persist and cause, or contribute to, future offending. As recidivism risk is a key component of the judicial decision-making process, the perception of male crime as the result of a stable cause is likely to impact on judicial outcomes. With regard to rehabilitation counsellors may be less inclined to fully engage the male offender if he is perceived to be inherently criminal. There is also the possibility of a “pygmalion effect” where the perception of the male offender as less responsive to treatment results in a self-fulfilling prophecy (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992).

That such a difference arose in the stability subscale was somewhat surprising given the counsellor’s vested interest in asserting that people can change. After all, their work relies on this possibility. It was earlier mentioned that the lack of variability in response to one particular question caused the mean inter-item correlation of the stability subscale to drop below an acceptable level. This scale question was “the cause of this crime is changeable” or “not changeable” and, consistent with the requirements of the work in which they are employed, the answer was always heavily weighted toward the “changeable” end of the scale. This invariable response seems to be idiosyncratic to these participants as the pilot sample variability and correlation with other stability items was satisfactory. As the pilot group consisted of a random sample of adults, from a range of occupations, there may not have been the same inclination toward asserting the offender’s ability to change.

That a lack of educational and vocational opportunities was considered causal in the development of male criminality, and less so in the female offender, may relate to societal gender role expectations. The crime analogues included information related to the offender's status as an unemployed solo parent, and this status may have been evaluated differently based on the gender of the offender. It's possible that the educational and vocational options were considered irrelevant in the case of the female offender as an alternative and legitimate role as a full-time mother was available. Perhaps this role is not validated in the same way for the male offender. Jeffries (2001) suggested that single-parenting mitigated against incarceration with female offenders, but was not considered when the offender was male. Perhaps it is not as acceptable to choose to be a full-time father if it means being reliant on a benefit.

Hypothesis 2: that differences will emerge in the attributions made by male and female counsellors regarding female offenders

The full-scale responsibility scores attributed to offenders indicated that there are differences in the way in which they are perceived by male and female counsellors. There was a tendency for counsellors to attribute less personal responsibility to offenders of the same gender. While these differences were fairly small, an analysis of the subscale contributions to the total score suggests that very different profiles of internality, control and stability have resulted in similar full-scale scores. Thus the apparent similarities in terms of total responsibility scores do not reflect true similarity, but very different perceptions of causality that are averaged out in the total. The attributional method may

therefore have explanatory value in that it can identify differences in the underlying constructs of judgment that are obscured when only outcome measurements are considered.

While the small and gender-imbalanced sample precludes formal conclusions regarding the male counsellor, some interesting and unexpected patterns emerged with regard to their female colleagues. Female counsellors were particularly favourable toward the female offender with scores on all three subscales lower than those attributed to the male offender. There was a marked difference in the internality subscale, with the male offence perceived to be driven more by internal factors than that of the female. It seems that female judgments of male criminality have fallen prey to the ultimate attribution error (Pettigrew, 1979); attributing the antisocial behaviour of an out-group member to dispositional traits and exonerating the behaviour of an in-group member by attributing it to external constraints.

Why this same error of misattribution does not seem to have affected male perceptions of female criminality is open to debate. Though the ultimate attribution error is, at heart, an error of stereotyping, and perhaps this works in favour of the female criminal as the female stereotype is less consistent with crime. Eagly and Mladinic (1989) for example, found that there is a tendency for more favourable traits to be ascribed to women, with women perceived to be “more helpful, warm, kind and understanding” (p.553). Perhaps the stereotype operates in such a way as to balance out the in-group favouritism of the male counsellor. If so, the female stereotype would be additive in the assessment of the

female counsellor as confirms the drive to favour the in-group. This additive effect is consistent with the results of the present research, and of others where the “women are wonderful” effect has been found to be particularly strong in female subjects (Eckes et al. 2005, p.88).

That females evaluated male criminals negatively may be reflective not only of a “women are wonderful” effect, but also a “boys are bad” bias (Eckes et al., 2005, p.104). It may be that women perceive men as inherently dangerous and more likely to engage in criminal behaviour as the result of an innate aggression. Furthermore, it has been suggested that females are more fearful of crime, and that this fear is born of sexual and/or physical vulnerability (Schafer, Huebner & Bynum, 2006; Ferraro, 1996). Sexual offence may serve as a “master offence” that influences the assessment of risk for other forms of victimization (Ferraro, 1996, p.667). Thus it may be that the female therapist assesses the male offender’s dangerousness in terms of the ability, or inclination, to rape.

In the same way that stereotyping may mitigate against the perception of the female as inherently criminal, it may work to condemn the male offender. If the stereotypical male is imbued with negative traits that are easily reconciled with a criminal disposition, the concept of a dispositional criminality is both more accessible and more convincing (Duncan, 1976). That such traits are generally assumed to be stable may also have influenced the assessment of “stability” in relation to the male offender, as the male offenders criminality was deemed more stable than that of the female offender. Once

again this difference was marginal in the case of male therapists, but more apparent in the female therapists' perception of the male offender.

Assumptions regarding the occurrence of antisocial traits in the male offender may reflect knowledge of the increased base rate occurrence of antisocial personality disorder in the male population. While reference to said base rates is important when assessing the probability of one disorder over another, allowing base rate information to influence one's perception of the individual offender may lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy. Aware that this disorder occurs less often in the female, counsellors may fail to see it when it occurs (Flanagan & Blashfield, 2005) and thus contribute to the diagnostic database in such a way that the status quo is maintained. Holding a preconceived notion about the probability of encountering antisocial attitudes may lead counsellors to overlook evidence of such traits in female offenders in order to maintain cognitive consistency.

Hypothesis 3: that nominated treatment goals and priorities will differ for male and female offenders.

Only in one of the six treatment categories was there a significant difference between those goals and priorities recommended for the male and female offender. Twenty-five percent of the male analogue responses deemed reparation or restitution to be a priority. In not one case was punishment of any kind deemed necessary for the rehabilitation of the female offender. This particular response was somewhat unexpected, and not easily connected to the aforementioned causes, though it fits with the lower reported

incarceration rate for female offenders, and with the attributions made for male crime that are described in this research. If males are imbued with internal and stable characteristics associated with crime, punishment is more likely. As discussed earlier, research has indicated that the attribution of crime to internal and stable characteristics results in more punitive outcomes (Carroll & Payne, 1977).

Differential causation identified with regard to the impact of educational/vocational deficits did not result in a differential response in regard to these modalities, as the referral of both male and female offenders to vocational training was similar. However, it is possible that the simplistic nature of this referral conceals different emphases. Genders and Player (1987) note that despite female offenders often being the sole breadwinners, the rehabilitative focus is often on domestic and budgeting skills, at the expense of training in skills relevant to the job market, even when such an “educational” goal is established.

7.1 Limitations of the Present Study

As with any analogue study, it is questionable whether therapists respond to written vignettes in the same way they respond to actual people. No written piece of information can adequately convey the unique and variable characteristics of a real offender. However, the analogue methodology was used in this case specifically to determine whether similar indications of a gender effect were visible when the people *weren't* real, and gender the only differential. This differential effect had already been established in vivo (Jeffries, 2001; Daly & Bordt 1995; Kramer & Striefel, 1993; Steffensmier et al.,

1993), but there continued the possibility that differences reflected factors other than gender. The simplistic nature of the analogue was used as a counterbalance to the complications inherent in the assessment of responsibility with actual offenders.

The small sample size precluded the use of more sophisticated statistical techniques and resulted in largely speculative and descriptive data. Initial forays into the rehabilitation sites suggested a larger sample was possible, but the selection criteria and restraints on both the researcher and the facilities resulted in a lower than anticipated sample group. The sample size for analyses involving the Causal Attribution Scale was further reduced as one of the questionnaires was completed improperly and had to be discarded. The high response rate suggest that, though small, this sample was highly representative of the population of therapists treating addicted offenders in non-government organizations in the Auckland area.

Despite attempts to equalize the number of males and females completing each of the two questionnaires, the final data reflects the anomaly in numbers between male and female therapists available. The very small number of males in said population ruled against more persuasive measures of difference between male and female therapists. The sample size for these particular analyses was further reduced as three participants failed to identify gender.

While the comparisons undertaken in this research were planned and based on specific hypotheses (with one exception previously described), each test increased the possibility

of a chance result and the risk of a Type 1 error. Some consideration was given to the application of a Bonferroni adjustment but the small sample size meant that reducing the alpha level was out of the question.

7.2 Summary and Conclusion

The data suggests that gender may influence the perceived causal antecedents of criminal behaviour, the ensuing attribution of personal responsibility and decisions regarding the appropriate targets of treatment. Most of the analyses, however, are of insufficient power to establish this gender effect conclusively.

Strong evidence of gender-based differences emerged in only a few areas. The first of these was the perceived influence of educational and vocational opportunities as a causal factor only in the criminality of males. The second was the different level of responsibility attributed to male and female offenders by female therapists and the third, possibly related difference, the perceived need for punishment in the case of male offenders only.

It seems that the participants perceived both the causes of female criminality, and the appropriate treatment targets to be different from those of the male offender. Such beliefs regarding the appropriate nature of female-specific rehabilitation seem rooted in the belief that those factors influencing female criminality are inherently different from those influencing male crime. The research that exists, however, suggests that male and female criminality is more alike than it is different, and that the targeting of traditional male

criminogenic needs is more effective in the reduction of criminality than is the targeting of personal distress issues (Dowden & Andrews, 1999).

Despite the limitations, the methodology used suggests that attribution theory provides a useful mechanism by which to investigate and explain the manner in which personal responsibility is attributed to the offender. The use of an attributional framework may allow for the identification of actual processes in the judgment of cause and responsibility, enabling the observer to consider the applicability of each element in each individual judgment. To systematically evaluate the contribution of environment, personality, mental illness and social factors, and to do so in such a manner as to ensure that judgments evolve systematically and with due consideration of all contributing factors, thus minimizing the impact of stereotypes and biases.

7.3 Future research

At present, no direct causal link has been established between the individual therapist's assessment of cause, attribution of responsibility and subsequent treatment choice. Future researchers may consider providing the analogue and then allowing the therapist to interview the "client", tracking lines of questioning and the extent to which the causal focus differs with client gender and then leads to a particular outcome. Thus it would be possible to ascertain the extent to which therapist's beliefs about causal antecedents influence the nature of investigation and assessment, and the subsequent recommendations.

The questionnaire itself has not been formally validated, and reliability could be further established using test-retest or split half analyses. Though the questionnaires utility as an exploratory tool has been demonstrated, further research is required to demonstrate its validity, particularly the predictive validity as measured by the actual outcomes of both male and female offenders.

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Appendix A - Vignettes

Name: Pennie Winn : Education: Form Six
DOB: 02/07/1975 Employment: None
Sex: Female Marital status: Single
Ethnicity: European IQ: 97

Offence

Pennie was one of three offenders involved in the robbery of a woman in the darkened parking lot of a department store. She acted primarily as a lookout while one of her colleagues held the victim and another took her purse and car keys, then opened the car and got into the drivers seat. The offender holding the woman pushed her to the ground and she began to call out. Pennie then threatened to kick the woman and said "shut up or we'll have to hurt you". Pennie got into the back seat of the car and the three offenders drove to a friend's house. The victim was physically unharmed though very shaken.

Pennie was picked up using one of the victim's credit cards to buy groceries and beer for herself and her friends later that day. She initially denied taking part in the robbery but having been identified by the victim in a police lineup, chose to enter a guilty plea in court. She has been convicted of robbery and threatening to harm.

Conviction Record

Juvenile Adjudications: Common Assault
Underage drinking

Adult Misdemeanors: Possession of cannabis
Shoplifting
Disturbing the peace

Adult Felonies: None

Additional information: Offender was not intoxicated at the time of the robbery and denies abusing either drugs or alcohol.
Offender is the sole caregiver of her three-year-old daughter.

Name: Winston Penn : Education: Form Six
DOB: 02/07/1975 Employment: None
Sex: Male Marital status: Single
Ethnicity: European IQ: 97

Offence

Winston was one of three offenders involved in the robbery of a woman in the darkened parking lot of a department store. He acted primarily as a lookout while one of his colleagues held the victim and another took her purse and car keys, then opened the car and got into the drivers seat. The offender holding the woman pushed her to the ground and she began to call out. Winston then threatened to kick the woman and said “shut up or we’ll have to hurt you”. Winston got into the back seat of the car and the three offenders drove to a friend’s house. The victim was physically unharmed though very shaken.

Winston was picked up using one of the victim’s credit cards to buy groceries and beer for himself and his friends later that day. He initially denied taking part in the robbery but having been identified by the victim in a police lineup, chose to enter a guilty plea in court. He has been convicted of robbery and threatening to harm.

Conviction Record

Juvenile Adjudications: Common Assault
Underage drinking

Adult Misdemeanors: Possession of cannabis
Shoplifting
Disturbing the peace

Adult Felonies: None

Additional information: Offender was not intoxicated at the time of the robbery and denies abusing either drugs or alcohol.
Offender is the sole caregiver of his three-year-old daughter.

Appendix B - Questionnaire

I am male/female

I have worked in rehabilitation for _____ years and _____ months

PART A

There are probably a number of causes that you believe may have led the offender to commit this crime. Please list these causes and place an asterisk next to the cause you believe to be the most influential.

PART B

Thinking about the causes you have listed for the offending behaviour, please indicate your position in regard to each of these statements by placing a circle around the number that best describes your immediate reaction to each of the two statements.

A score of 4 indicates that you strongly agree with the statement at this end of the scale

A score of 3 indicates that you think this to be most likely

A score of 2 indicates that you think this probable

A score of 1 indicates that you think it possible

A score of 0 indicates that each statement is equally likely

- | | | |
|--|-------------------|--|
| 1. The cause of this crime is inside the offender | 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 | The cause of this crime is outside the offender |
| 2. The cause of the crime was short-term | 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 | The cause of the crime is long-term |
| 3. This crime was caused by the offender's environment | 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 | This crime was caused by the offender |
| 4. The offender is to blame for the crime | 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 | The offender's colleagues are to blame for the crime |
| 5. The offender was in full control | 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 | The offender was not in full control |
| 6. This crime was caused by the offender | 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 | This crime was caused by the offender's history |
| 7. The cause of this offense is always there | 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 | The cause of this offense was temporary |
| 8. Society is to blame for this crime | 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 | The offender is to blame for this crime |
| 9. The cause of this crime varies over time | 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 | The cause does not vary over time |
| 10. The offender can restrain this behaviour | 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 | The offender cannot restrain this behaviour |
| 11. The cause of this crime is changeable | 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 | The cause is not changeable |

PART C

Imagine that you are in a position to recommend a sentence for this offender. What further information would you require before making a recommendation?

PART D

Please create a prioritized treatment plan for this offender with the most important focus of treatment first.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Appendix C – Information Sheet

A Study of Treatment Provider Perceptions of Offending Behaviour

Information Sheet

This research is being conducted by Massey University student Karen Kyne as part of her MSc degree in psychology, under the supervision of Massey University Psychology Department lecturer Mei Williams. The purpose of the research is to develop insight into the beliefs that treatment providers hold regarding the causal antecedents of criminal behaviour, and how these beliefs are translated into treatment.

Criminal behaviour has many detrimental effects, not only on the victims, but also on offenders and society as a whole. It is hoped that research conducted into criminality will result in new knowledge that may improve the treatment of offenders.

This information sheet provides you with an overview of the project, so that you may make an informed decision as to whether or not you wish to participate. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire which will take between 30 and 45 minutes.

The information collected from this study will be used to examine professional responses to the offending behaviour of adults. All responses are completely confidential and anonymous. Your name and place of employment is neither required nor requested. It will not be possible to identify you from your responses alone as only your gender and approximate length of employment will be requested. Questionnaires will be collected upon completion and placed into a “lock-box” that will not be opened until all the questionnaires are returned. Questionnaires will not be shared with anyone outside of this research project and will be used only for research purposes.

Once the study has concluded, you are able to receive a summary of findings and any other information you are interested in by contacting the researcher (contact details are provided below).

Once the data has been collected it will be stored in a safe and secure location at the University for 5 years, at which time it will be destroyed.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated, however you are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- **withdraw from the study at any time before your response is returned;**
- **ask any questions about the study;**
- **provide information on the understanding that neither your name nor any other personal details will be used;**
- **access a summary of findings upon the conclusion of the research.**

Completion and return of the questionnaire implies consent. You have the right to decline to answer any particular question.

Support Availability

Participation in this study should cause you no harm or distress. However, if you feel uncomfortable at any stage of the study (during or after) please contact either your supervisor or Lifeline NZ on 0800 543 354.

Contact Information

If you have any questions about the nature of this study please do not hesitate to contact Karen Kyne (the researcher) or her supervisor Mei Williams on the following:

Karen Kyne

Email: nkkyne@xtra.co.nz

Mei Wah Williams

Email: M.W.Williams@massey.ac.nz

Ph: (09) 414-0800 extn 9886

Or by mail:

School of Psychology

Private Bag 102 904

North Shore Mail Centre

Auckland

Committee Approval Statement

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee ALB Application 06/011R. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Kerry Chamberlain, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee, Albany on (09) 414 0800 extn 9078 or email humanethicsalb@massey.ac.nz