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MORAL DEVELOPMENT IN YOUNG OFFENDERS:
the effect of cognitive distortions on consistency of moral
judgements

by

Shirley Friesen

B.A. (Hon.), Simon Fraser University, 1988

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of
Psychology

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Moral Development in Young Offenders:
the effect of cognitive distortions on consistency of moral
judgements

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the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examined whether differences in moral reasoning within an offender group could be better understood if compared to a battery of reliable tests used to measure risk and needs in young offenders. Participants included 40 incarcerated male young offenders ranging in age from 15 to 19. Data were available for all participants on: (1) the Sociomoral Reflection Measure - Short Form (Gibbs, Basinger, & Fuller, 1992), (2) The Neutralization Scale (Shields & Whitehall, 1994), (3) The Criminal Sentiments Scale (CSS) (Shields & Simourd, 1991), (4) The Pride in Delinquency Scale (Shields & Whitehall, 1991), (5) The Young Offender - Level of Service Inventory (YO-LSI) (Shields & Simourd, 1991), and (6) The Psychopathy Checklist: Youth Version (PCL:YV) (Hare, Forth, & Kosson, 1995). Results failed to support the theory that moral stage level competencies or moral orientation are mediated by cognitive distortions (measured in terms of Criminal Sentiments and Pride in Delinquency) or levels of risk and need identified by the YO-LSI and the PCL:YV. Results are discussed in terms of the implications for the traditional view that moral development impacts on delinquency.

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INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, juvenile delinquents have been characterized in the psychological and sociological literature as individuals who stand apart as a group from their non-offending cohorts in terms of the content of thought, specifically, their moral value system. It has been assumed that their awareness of conventional mores are deficient (Jurkovic, 1980). However, classic studies evidence a failure to uncover any consistent relationship between knowledge of societal norms and abidance by their dictates (Arbuthnot & Gordon, 1988; Harthshorne & May, 1928; Harthshorne, May, & Maller 1929; Harthshorne, May, & Shuttlesworth, 1930). One possible explanation for the failure to establish meaningful results in the Harthshorne (Harthshorne & May, 1928; Harthshorne et al., 1929; Harthshorne et al., 1930) studies is that past eight years of age little appreciable differences exist between individuals in terms of knowledge of cultural norms and rules (Blasi, 1980).

In contrast, cognitive-moral developmentalists claim that this inability to establish consistent results between the knowledge of specific rules and abidance by them is due to the exclusive focus on the "content" of thought, including knowledge of what the rules are ('quantity' of information regarding rules and norms of society), as

opposed to understanding the 'quality' of that content, or why the rules should be followed (Jurkovic, 1980).

Developmental theories of moral reasoning emphasize that it is the quality of thought, represented by an underlying structural process of how one reasons, which is the key to predicting 'moral behaviour', rather than what the actual belief system contains. They contend that in order for knowledge of rules and norms to be adopted and adhered to an individual must undergo an active construction process of developing structures which translate the meanings of why the laws exist (understandings of the sociomoral world) rather than a passive internalization of those laws. By outlining age-related progression in the developmental sequence, they contend that differences between individuals can be systematically analyzed (Jennings, Kilkenney, & Kohlberg, 1983). Moreover, cognitive-moral developmentalists claim that the structural-developmental studies of juvenile delinquents' moral reasoning represents "a critical empirical and conceptual testing ground" for "elucidating the role of moral values in juvenile delinquency", and thus offers promise for clinical applications within a comprehensive framework which considers other known correlates of developmental psychopathology (Jurkovic, 1980, p.710). Speculating that the antisocial behaviour (behavioural patterns which defy

societal norms and represent legal violations) of the delinquent may reflect a "pre-moral ideological orientation", cognitive-moral developmentalists hypothesize a predictable relationship between delayed moral development and delinquent behaviour in youth (e.g., Foder, 1972; Jurkovic, 1980; Kohlberg, 1969). Conversely, they reason that moral maturity provides a "buffer" against delinquency in that the more morally mature individuals are, the less likely they will be to break laws (Blasi, 1980). The assumption is that the decision to break or uphold the law is somewhat dependent on, or to a degree a function of, the type of morality to which they are committed rather than the depth of understanding or internalization of any particular law per se. They explain that the form of an individual's moral commitment is systematically transformed through increased understanding and ability to take the perspective of others and subsequent consciousness of more general moral issues (Thornton & Reid, 1982).

This "form" of commitment attends to concerns which range from knowing how breaking the law will effect the perpetrator (e.g., what kind of punishment to expect), to understanding the ramifications for society collectively (strictly egocentric focus - pre-moral level of development - as opposed to utilitarian perspective taking ability - moral maturity) (Gibbs, 1993; Walker, 1986).

By departing from conventional wisdom, which holds that delinquents have somehow failed to learn societal rules, or "'hadn't been properly taught' [author's quotations]... to know right from wrong" (Arbuthnot & Gordon, 1988, p. 381), cognitive-moral developmentalists (i.e., Kohlberg, 1976) argue that the quantity (knowledge of actual rules and mores) of information can be of little use in terms of translating into moral (prosocial) behaviour if the quality of the underlying cognitive schema is not sophisticated enough to comprehend this information intrinsically (Arbuthnot & Gordon, 1988; Arbuthnot, Gordon, & Jurkovic, 1987; Jennings et al., 1983).

Kohlberg's (1976) stage theory of moral development states that the quality of thinking and reasoning about moral problems follows a distinct and universal developmental process, whereby a child progresses to adulthood in moral maturity, from less to more complex, logical, and adequate ways of perceiving the sociomoral world. For the most part research has supported the prediction of immature or delayed moral development in juvenile delinquents (Nelson, Smith, & Dodd, 1990). However, and with the exception of one study (Arbuthnot & Gordon, 1986), evaluation of treatment programs which have successfully raised delinquents' level of moral development have not translated into lower incidence of delinquent

behaviour (Gibbs, Arnold, Ahlborn, & Cheesman, 1984; Niles, 1986). Moreover, when delinquent groups are divided according to the presence or absence of the personality variable psychopathy (Moran, 1987; Trevethan & Walker, 1989), the overall consistency of delayed moral development becomes systematically divided such that the delay is only evident in a proportion of the delinquent sample, namely, the psychopathic delinquents.

Taken together, these results suggest that, in fact, the cognitive-structural theory of moral development is not in itself sufficient to define either delinquent youth as an entirely homogeneous group in terms of delayed moral development or to predict the reduction of recidivism based on gains made in through targeting moral reasoning in treatment interventions with delinquent groups. Results to date suggest that further investigation is required with regard to understanding (a) which variables might interfere with the expected reduction in antisocial behaviour following developmental gains in moral reasoning in delinquents, and (b) how the personality variable psychopathy might dilute relationships normally expected within the delinquent population.

Gibbs (1993) offers a neo-Kohlbergian approach which explicitly attends to how "egocentric bias" and "cognitive distortions", independent of stage of moral development,

might mediate or abrogate the relationship from moral reasoning to moral action in given situations or across situations. Gibbs believes that, despite gains in moral development stimulated by intervention, the probability of further engagement in "seriously antisocial behaviour" will be greatest for those whose "orientation" remains "self-centred", and/or whose antisocial attitudes and subsequent proclivity to rationalize (distort) their behaviour allow them to dismiss "legitimate expectations and feelings of others in actual social situations" (p.173). Blasi (1980) astutely hypothesized this same possibility by conceptualizing a cluster of traits which may have an effect, over and above those accounted for in the empirical relation between juvenile delinquents' antisocial behaviour and delayed moral development, on subsequent antisocial behaviour. He suggests that consistency of behaviour according to stage of moral reasoning may be mediated by either a) a subordinate trait, defined as a cluster of "moral" traits which are independent of the relationship expected between moral reasoning and moral behaviour, or b) "personal consistency", which Blasi relates to the notion of "integrity" or in the case of lack of personal consistency, "expediency and opportunism", depending on the consistency between words (moral reasoning) and action (Blasi, 1980, p.6).

This thesis will attempt to identify variables which mediate or abrogate the hypothesized relationship between moral reasoning and moral behaviour in a population of juvenile delinquents. Research indicates that a closer examination of within group differences, related to but independent of stage of moral development, will enable clearer assessment of how moral reasoning contributes to the prediction of antisocial behaviour. It is hoped that these results will aid in the identification of criminogenic needs and developmental and learning styles. Andrews, Bonta, and Hoge (1990) contend that knowledge of such correlates of delinquency can lead to more effective rehabilitation in that treatment "needs" are specifically targeted (matched) with regard to the former, and "responsivity" to those treatments can be assured through knowledge of the latter.

An area of research which has not yet been explored is that of differences in the use of "cognitive distortions" or rationalizations by psychopathic versus non-psychopathic delinquents, although both have been theoretically linked to the disjunction between moral reasoning and delinquency (e.g., Jurkovic, 1980). Although Kohlberg (1976) initially dismissed content variables, Gibbs, Basinger, and Fuller (1992) suggest that a shift in focus to the content of moral thought, such as distorted attitudes and rationalizations, is necessary to elucidate the presently ambiguous

relationship between moral reasoning and moral action. They believe this could provide a method of measuring a motivational force or compulsion to act and thus clarify the role of moral development in juvenile delinquency.

This thesis will attempt to relate Blasi's (1980) conceptions of: "trait consistency", theoretically defined here as the presence or absence of the personality traits clustered and defined as psychopathy, because psychopathy is considered an enduring trait, and "personal consistency", theoretically defined here by a) the extent to which individuals rationalize clearly criminal behaviour, b) their commitment to criminal sentiments, and c) their moral orientation (degree of egocentrism independent of stage), to the relationship between moral developmental delay and juvenile crime.

Cognitive Moral Development: Theoretical Overview

The theory of cognitive moral development put forth by Piaget (1932/1965) and articulated by Kohlberg (1969, 1976; Colby & Kohlberg, 1987) asserts that conformity to societal norms is not simply a artifact of direct internalizing of rules. Rather, it is the product of an indirect process of "natural development" guided by underlying cognitive structures which follow a progression of universal Piagetian-like stages (Kohlberg, 1984, pp. 90-93). These structures conceptually imply that a consistent logic can be

abstracted from the content of an individual's thought in the form of reasoning characteristic of, and relative to, any particular developmental stage. Thus, irrespective of the content of children's thought, as they develop, interact, and actively interpret their environment, they reorganize and integrate both the diverse perspectives of others and pertinent situational factors in terms of moral conflict situations. Subsequently, they become better equipped to make and justify moral judgements by assimilating the new insights with those gained at previous stages. Such reorganization is said to lead to a broader perspective which provides what Kohlberg believes is a more "adequate" way of making and justifying moral decisions, because individuals are able to understand and integrate the diverse perspectives of others across situations while considering factors relevant to a given situation. The cumulative effect represents an upward shift in stage structure (Jennings et al., 1983).

Kohlberg's (1969; 1976) theory describes the developmental process as proceeding through six stages (for full stage descriptions see appendix A) "in a strict Piagetian sense" (Colby, Kohlberg, Gibbs, & Lieberman, 1983), meaning they are ordered and occur in a universal and invariant sequence. Specifically, the stages are said to meet the following three criteria: (1) "structured whole",

each stage represents a consistent way of reasoning across situations, (2) "invariant sequence", all individuals, regardless of culture (universality assumption), develop in the same order, progressively, irreversibly, without skipping any stage, and (3) "hierarchical," concepts of preceding stages of reasoning are reorganized and displaced; thus, each new stage represents a qualitatively more advanced organization and way of thinking. In addition, Kohlberg (1976) maintains that certain levels of cognitive (Piaget, 1932/1965) and perspective taking abilities are "necessary but not sufficient" in order for development to occur. The "not sufficient" clause allows for the final developmental component which assumes that out of social experience arise cognitive conflicts between the "ego"-centred concerns of the individual and the perception of conflicting concerns of others. As the individual develops, an internal dialectic or cognitive conference ensues regarding the perceived conflicting concerns (this presupposes the "necessary" perspective taking ability) and resolution can be achieved by advancing to a qualitatively more advanced level of thinking which integrates the new insights into a broader perspective (higher stage). Finally, it is assumed that the stages occur in the same sequence with all individuals not because the stages are themselves innate, but because the underlying logical

sequence is such that each advancing stage necessarily subsumes the structure of the previous stage and thus development must occur in the upward sequence, following the above criteria (Jennings et al., 1983).

Traditionally, Kohlberg's model is tested with the use of his Moral Judgement Interview (MJI) (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987) which examines the reasoning structures when they are exposed to a situation of moral conflict. Hypothetical dilemmas are presented orally and followed by a set of questions and probes designed to elicit a subject's highest capability of reasoning. There are three levels of moral-judgement development, each containing two developmental stages.

The first level, the preconventional level, is usually typical in children under the age of eleven and of many adolescent offenders (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987); it characterizes individuals who may uphold the rules of convention, but perceive them as external to the self. Within this level, the first stage involves a "punishment" orientation, while a "reward" orientation characterizes the second stage; thus, the former orientation depicts individuals who obey rules to avoid punishment while the latter leads to an orientation of "superficial" conformity in order to obtain rewards. Stage one individuals believe "right" is avoiding behaviour which will be punished and

stage two individuals believe "right" is an agreement or exchange for instrumental purposes.

Stages three and four are considered within the conventional level, and as such involve orientations which require more advanced understanding of how one is perceived by others. Conventional individuals are said to be less egocentric and will identify with authority, to the extent that approval from these sources has become rewarding in itself. This level represents the onset of an indirect internalization, or comprehension of rules and expectations of others. Individuals at this level are interested in maintaining the same values as their family and peers. Stage three individuals are said to conform in order to avoid disapproval from others, in order to maintain mutual respect and trust. Those at stage four do what is "right" with regard to interpersonal relations in the context of the system at large, in other words, an individuals' personal obligations are understood in the context of upholding and maintaining the social order (Kohlberg, 1976).

The postconventional level, comprised of stages five and six, depicts individuals who are capable of defining moral values from a "prior to society" perspective, meaning basic human rights and social contracts (i.e., "the greatest good for the greatest number") are considered above and/or before the laws outlined by society (Kohlberg, 1976, p.35;

see also Kohlberg, 1984). Due to the fact that so few individuals were ever classified as stage six (Jennings et al., 1983)(in fact none of the subjects in Kohlberg's longitudinal study - 1956 to 1976 - reached stage six'), this stage is now interpreted as an hypothetical "ideal" and has been dropped from Kohlberg's scoring system (Kohlberg, 1984; Kohlberg & Kramer, 1969). Kohlberg (1984) conceded that evidence for stage six was based on the "writings of a small elite sample, elite in the sense of its formal philosophical training" (p.270).

Neo-Kohlbergians argue that aspects of maturity described in the highest level are nonetheless evident at the conventional level and therefore one need not look further than this (Gibbs, Basinger, & Fuller 1992; Gibbs & Widaman, 1982; Turiel, 1983; 1989). Moreover, while all stages, as defined up to and including the conventional level, are evident in all cultures, regardless of how industrialized, the same can not be said for the post conventional level's existence (Snarey, 1985). Snarey's (1985) study is worth mentioning though, in that of the 27 countries surveyed, stages one through four were evident and followed the same age related sequence without violating any of Kohlberg's (1976) requisite assumptions. Given the

¹ according to the stage revisions from the original "aspect scoring system" to the "intuitive scoring system" done in the late 1960's (Gibbs et al., 1992).

difficulty with measurement of such theoretical constructs outlined in stages five and six, some researchers have begun to question the utility of including the postconventional level at all (Gibbs et al., 1992).

A Revisionist's View of Kohlberg²

Gibbs, Kohlberg's former student, points out two of the most criticised aspects of Kohlberg's theory and contends with them through what he calls "a revisionist view of Kohlberg." Gibbs' view involves the reduction of Kohlberg's proposed stages from six to four, effectively dropping the most controversial "postconventional level" (Gibbs et al., 1992; Gibbs & Widaman, 1982). In addition, Gibbs et al. (1992) claim that Kohlberg's (1976; 1984) initial dismissal of the direct internalization process of cultural rules and societal laws, "fly in the face" of his description of the progression from preconventional to conventional morality. By concentrating exclusively on the "quality" of thought (why an individual holds certain beliefs) and disregarding the content, or "quantity" (what an individual actually believes) the direct internalization process of cultural referents, that inadvertently characterises the transition from reasoning at the preconventional to conventional level, is glaringly absent and thus the process not wholly explained (Gibbs, 1993; Gibbs et al., 1992). In other

²chapter title in Gibbs et al. (1992).

words, individuals must possess the knowledge of cultural norms before they can perceive the conflicts which precede development from the preconventional to the conventional level and thus the process is at once direct and indirect, yet the direct aspect of internalizing the "cultural referents" is ignored by Kohlberg.

In response to critics who contend that cognitive structures can not be completely separated from content (Beck, 1974; Gibbs, 1993; Gibbs et al., 1992; Sullivan, 1977), Kohlberg capitulated his strong formalistic claims into an approach which now professes to consider content as well (Kohlberg, 1984; Kohlberg, Levine, & Hower, 1983). Kohlberg (1976; Colby & Kohlberg, 1987) reanalyzed earlier studies using a new scoring method which was less subjective, (hence the name "Standard Issue Scoring System"). At this time a further delineation was made among the stages in order to explain how individuals who were pre-moral or quasi-moral in their reasoning capabilities could behave in ways expected of postconventional individuals. The distinction made was that between "intuitive" versus "explicit" moral judgements, meaning that explicit articulation of principled reasoning was still necessary for scoring in the postconventional level, however it was now accepted that lower stage individuals could act or behave in a way which could be considered less "field dependent", or

less egocentrically oriented and more concerned for utilitarian reasons than for the impression they make on others (Gibbs et al., 1984). It was granted that preconventional and conventional individuals could act on moral judgements normally made at higher stage levels; however, their understanding would be considered "intuitive", as they could not yet "explicitly" articulate or elaborate the reasoning expected of individuals scored at the postconventional level. Thus, their reasoning would still be considered quasi-moral, even though the proposed actions may demonstrate an intuitive understanding (Gibbs, et al., 1992). Kohlberg (1976) describes the four moral "orientations" which he subsequently pairs into substages A and B and uses to make the preceding distinction (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987) as follows: **substage A** - 1) normative orientation - focus on following, and making decisions based on the rules and roles of the social moral order, and 2) utilitarianism orientation - focus on the good and bad welfare consequences on the self (egoistic concerns), and others (social concerns)

substage B - 3) fairness - focus on justice issues, regarding relations of equality or reciprocity, and 4) perfectionism - focus on the virtue or goodness of a person, the image of a "good self" or the attainment of a good conscience, dignity, autonomy, and harmony with the self and

others (Jennings et al., 1983; Kohlberg, 1976). The substages are said to represent a more global frame of reference for understanding the moral aspect of society and interpersonal exchanges because individuals are said to orient towards them independent of their stage classification (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987; de Vries & Walker, 1986; Kohlberg, 1976; 1984; Kohlberg & Candee, 1984). Jennings et al. (1983) explain that the moral reasoning process which precedes moral action can be conceptualized as being composed of two factors: (1) a "deontic"³ obligatory judgement of "moral rightness", dependent on and dictated by the stage of reasoning an individual is at, and (2) a judgement of responsibility, which is independent of stage, but dictates the extent to which an individual is committed to and/or feels "compelled to willfully act" in accordance with the first order deontic judgement. To this end justifications for behaviour by substage A individuals are said to be more situation bound and thus they are "given to the rules of authority" regardless of the moral rightness of the request. Individuals at substage B are oriented in a more intrinsic way in that "they choose to the action that is more just from the point of view of the more principled [postconventional] stage at each level" (Jennings et al.,

³adopted by Kohlberg from philosopher Frankena's (1963) classic writings.

1983, p.296). These justifications are considered to generalize across situations rather than being bound by them, as the case would be for substage A (Kohlberg, 1976; Kohlberg & Candee, 1984). Within this broader framework then, a lower stage individual (i.e., pre-conventional) who was also at substage B would intuitively understand a moral dilemma in the same way as a higher staged individual and feel compelled similarly to act in a moral way. In other words, theoretically, a lower stage individual could act in a way one would expect a higher stage individual would act if substage B were also part of the individual's composition, and similarly higher stage individuals who remain at a substage A orientation could theoretically feel less compelled to act in accordance with their judgements than those at the same level with B substage orientation (Gibbs et al., 1984; Kohlberg & Candee, 1984). Another way of conceptualizing the substages as opposed to the stages is to think of the substages as a motivational component. Where substage A limits individuals to perceive "quasi-" moralities (Kohlberg & Candee, 1984), in that dictates of their stage reasoning will be limited to the existing social situations/contingencies arrangements (substage A - recall "given to the rules of authority"), substage B allows individuals at any stage to perceive "intuitively" (as opposed to articulating "explicitly") justice issues

(whether they can articulate or reason at the higher level or not), and thus they are said to be more motivated to act on these perceptions (Gibbs et al., 1984; Jennings et al., 1983; Kohlberg, 1976; Kohlberg & Candee, 1984; Kohlberg, Higgins, Tappan, & Schrader, 1984). Gibbs et al. (1992) adopt the scoring of substages within their scoring of moral development, however they disagree that conventional individuals are "quasi" moral. They view stage three and four individuals (particularly those at substage B) as already morally mature in that they:

..represent a profound moral understanding of the bases for viable interpersonal relationships and social arrangements. However, 3A and 4A thinking is embedded in existing social arrangements - and hence is less clearly ideal - than is that of 3B and 4B reasoning...we suspect that the greater differentiation from social conventions or conformity of type B reflects a more field independent cognitive style expressed in the context of moral judgement (Gibbs et al., 1992, p. 18).

In other words, contrary to Kohlberg (1976), Gibbs et al. (1992) maintain that the stages themselves relate directly to the extent of internalization of content (recall "knowledge of rules" as opposed to intrinsic understanding borne strictly through pure cognitive construction) in that the transition from preconventional to conventional morality must by definition partially involve the internalizing of once external referents. Indeed, Kohlberg's final revisions to the scoring manual (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987) do not include measurement of the content aspect of moral

reasoning, thus appearing incongruent with his claims of a broadened position.

Research supports the clustering of the four orientations according to the substages (Nisan & Kohlberg, 1982; Tietjen & Walker, 1985) outlined by Kohlberg (1976; 1984). As well there is evidence that: a) substage A decreases somewhat with age, while substage B increases with age, however, substage A is most prominent regardless of age or stage, although substage B tends to be most evident in higher stage individuals; b) movement is always from A to B (no regression back to A once B is founded) (de Vries & Walker, 1986; Jennings et al., 1983; Logan, Snarey, & Schrader, 1990; Nisan & Kohlberg, 1982; Tietjen & Walker, 1985). It appears that substages A and B provide information which is independent of moral stage, yet pertains to the moral reasoning to action relationship (Logan et al., 1990).

Unfortunately, no studies to date have explored this relationship between levels of moral development within delinquent populations. Trevethan and Walker (1989), have however, examined the four moral orientations underlying the concept of types A and B (scored from different criteria than the A and B types) in adolescents. They found that although they did appear to cluster consistent with previous research, only one orientation discriminated a within-

delinquent grouping factor (egoistic utilitarianism was more prominent in psychopathic delinquents than non-psychopathic delinquents), but none reliably distinguished delinquents from non-delinquents. According to theory (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987; Kohlberg & Candee, 1984), it seems reasonable to expect that among delinquents, substage A may have an effect on delinquents. In that substage A is an orientation which predisposes individuals to reasoning which is situation-bound, one could expect that the subsequent reasoning process could either prevent preconventional delinquents from advancing to age appropriate stage levels by restricting the generalizability of new information, or, in the case of morally mature delinquents, by mediating or providing a release from the constraint normally provided by conventional reasoning. In the first case preconventional delinquents may have their reasoning entrenched by the subtype A orientation, while the latter conventional delinquents may be predisposed to attending to situational cues which could block action in accordance with their moral judgements. More specifically, conventional delinquents at substage A could become prone to rationalizing away their first order "deontic judgement" in accordance with the situational cues that substage A theoretically predisposes them to. Such results could explain why treatment efforts may have yielded such poor results in terms of stage gains

translating into reduction in juvenile recidivism, and thereby offer additional targets for intervention. Although the A/B typology was added as a method of objectively measuring the effect of content (recall: "knowledge of what the rules are"), and preliminary findings support their inclusion in the equation for the relationship between moral reasoning and moral behaviour (Logan et al., 1990), more direct measures of content variables such as tendency to rationalize delinquent behaviour must also be measured in order to confirm such claims.

Indeed, researchers have found that measurement of such content variables such as commitment to criminal sentiments and tendency to neutralize (rationalize) criminal behaviour can not only distinguish delinquents from non-delinquents, but also predict recidivism in delinquents both while incarcerated and one year following discharge from closed custody incarceration (Shields & Simourd, 1991; Shields & Whitehall, 1994). To date no study has attempted to examine the affect of such variables on moral reasoning.

Despite the shortcomings, Kohlbergians and neo-Kohlbergians (e.g., Blasi, 1980; Gibbs, 1993; Gibbs et al., 1992; Jennings et al., 1983) continue to claim that breaking conventional moral norms becomes less likely as an individual matures, or develops, from the initial preconventional level, to the conventional and post

conventional levels, and is thus a factor which should continue to be considered in the etiology of delinquency.

Developmental Delay in Juvenile Delinquents

In 1932, Piaget (trans., 1965) proposed the idea that "youthful delinquents" might "supply the richest material for analysis" (pp. 112 & 192) of the developmental process of morality. More than twenty years later, Anthony (1956) reflected on Piaget's contributions and surmised that these "difficult" children might be delayed in their development of moral reasoning. It was not until Kohlberg's (1969; 1971) elaboration of these concepts, culminating in his stage theory and assessment method, however, that research in this area proliferated. From the outset, Kohlberg's (1969; 1971), cognitive-developmental stage theory of morality emphasized the import on establishing a link between the moral reasoning process to criminality. Since then, comparisons controlling for the effects such as age, I.Q., and socioeconomic status (SES) consistently support the theory that juvenile delinquents are in fact delayed in their cognitive-moral development and perspective-taking abilities compared to non-delinquent children and adolescents (Blasi, 1980; Jennings et al., 1983; Nelson et al., 1990; Thornton & Reid, 1982; Trevethan & Walker, 1989).

As part of his doctoral dissertation, Kohlberg (1958 in Jurkovic, 1980) found support for his stage sequence of

moral judgement by comparing matched groups (age, SES and IQ) of delinquent and non-delinquent boys on his hypothetical moral dilemmas. As hypothesized, his results indicated that delinquents reasoned primarily at the preconventional level (approximately stage two average), while the non-delinquents had progressed to the conventional level (stages three and four) (Jurkovic, 1980; Trevethan & Walker, 1989). These results are impressive in that the difference was significant at the $p < .01$ level even though the group sizes were small ($n=12$) (cited in Blasi, 1980). Since then comparative studies have yielded mixed results.

In a comprehensive review of the literature on "moral cognition and moral action", Blasi (1980) found considerable support for the hypothesis that moral reasoning is related to moral action. The "reasoning to action" hypothesis had been, to date, tested with regard to predicting honesty (as opposed to cheating, returning lost money, etc.), altruistic behaviour, and delinquent behaviour (Blasi, 1980). Blasi points out that in the 15 studies comparing the moral reasoning of delinquents to non-delinquents, it had been assumed that a degree of congruency exists between the reasoning and subsequent actions of the delinquents which is distinct from that of non-delinquents. Considering that these studies used a variety of different measures of moral judgement (in fact none would have used the most recent and

most objective of the Kohlberg series, the Moral Judgement Interview (MJI), Colby & Kohlberg, 1987) the results are quite impressive: ten of the fifteen studies comparing stages of moral development in delinquents and non-delinquents found that delinquents were significantly lower in stage of moral judgement than age, I.Q., and socio-economic status matched non-delinquents. In addition, Blasi attempted to test Kohlberg's contention that the majority of delinquents are fixed at the preconventional level (stages one and two). Of the 12 studies examined, six reported at least 80% of delinquents within the preconventional stages and four showed good representation of stages from one (preconventional) to four (conventional). It is interesting to note that this review suggests that delinquents do not appear to be fixated in their overall delay in moral reasoning. In fact, the study with the oldest delinquents (referred to by Blasi as adults, no ages reported) had the highest moral reasoning scores, ranging up towards (and in some cases reaching) the postconventional level. Blasi's (1980) review, as well as a similar review by Jurkovic (1980), although appearing to confirm the hypothesis that delinquents are significantly delayed compared to non-delinquents, fails to define delinquents as homogenous in terms of preconventional morality. The latest review of studies of moral reasoning in delinquent youth by Nelson et

al. (1990) takes the test of Kohlberg's hypothesis one step further by conducting a meta-analysis in order to integrate quantitatively the studies and test the statistical difference of the pooled mean effect size. Whereas both Blasi and Jurkovic cautioned interpretation of review results, due to the possibility that the variety of measures of moral judgement may have led to erroneous results, the procedure of meta-analysis statistically controls for such potential confounds. Thus, the results of the Nelson et al. (1990) study can be interpreted with greater confidence. Their results support the hypothesis that juvenile delinquents are immature in moral reasoning relative to matched non-delinquents at the 95% confidence interval. These results are particularly impressive given that the various methodologies (scoring blind or not, type of measure used, etc.) failed to influence the magnitude of the results (Nelson et al., 1990). Unfortunately the second assumption, that juvenile delinquents use predominantly preconventional reasoning, was not tested.

The import of determining a developmental lag in the moral reasoning of juvenile delinquents compared to non-delinquents is so ingrained that the construct validity hypothesis is considered to be confirmed when a given measure of moral development succeeds in reliably replicating this result (Gibbs et al., 1992).

Within this "overall" consistency of results exist a handful of young offenders who belie such a relationship by evidencing mature levels of moral reasoning. So the question remains, can moral reasoning predict moral behaviour, or, the converse, "immoral" behaviour (such is the implicit assumption regarding juvenile delinquent behaviour)?

According to Kohlberg, indeed the relationship from moral reasoning to moral action exists, however he concedes that this "reason to action" continuum is complexly mediated, and thus other situational and personality variables must be examined in tandem. Indeed, although the majority of delinquents appear to be delayed in moral reasoning, they do not appear fixated at preconventional levels, and individuals within the non-delinquent group have not all progressed to the conventional level, thus stage of moral judgement can not on its own explain delinquency. However, what it can provide is a useful framework for understanding the developmental psychopathology of delinquency. Although all three of the major aforementioned reviews (Blasi, 1980; Jurkovic, 1980; Nelson et al., 1990) do discuss studies which have attempted to "bridge" the apparent gap between moral cognition and moral action' by

'Title of Blasi's (1980) article, "Bridging moral cognition and moral action: A critical review of the literature."

subdividing delinquent groups by potential correlates which have been theoretically considered as modifiers of the developmental process, none has attempted to combine the results and test them in a meaningful way. To date research has focused on the validation of the structural character of reasoning. However, Jurkovic (1980) points out that given the overall consistency in delay amongst delinquents compared to non-delinquents, and the apparent heterogeneity in reasoning within the delinquent groups, the greatest contribution that the developmental approach could potentially make is in differentially assessing the magnitude of effect that "content" variables and "biopsychosocial characteristics" (such as that of the psychopathic personality) have on the development and maintenance of delinquency. To this end much agreement exists that the delay in juvenile delinquents may be more meaningfully understood in the context of the development of moral competency in reasoning and/ or the evocation of such competencies, and that results could be of clinical use in classifying specific deficits to target for treatment needs (Blasi, 1980; Gibbs, 1993; Nelson et al., 1990; Trevethan, 1987; Trevethan & Walker, 1989).

Delayed cognitive moral development is referred to by Gibbs (1991) as a "sociomoral delay" which is characterised by "an inordinate degree of egocentric bias and immature

moral judgement" (p.95). Furthermore, Gibbs maintains that it is precisely this delay, and the accompanying cognitive distortions, which must be targeted in order to increase the efficacy of treatment programs for delinquent youth.

Gibbs (1991, 1993) distinguishes two types of distortions: primary, defined as self-centred attitudes and beliefs, and secondary, defined as pre- or post-transgression rationalizations that serve to support the primary distortions by "neutralizing" (Sykes & Matza, 1957) moral conscience and thereby preventing cognitive dissonance which would normally provide a buffer against delinquency (Gibbs, 1991; 1993). This typology can be seen as a return to the content type variables previously dismissed by Kohlberg (1974). Although Kohlberg added the substage typology to examine indirectly the interplay of content variables, Gibbs extends this focus by directly emphasizing the crucial role of both implicit and explicit measures of distortions in that both may interfere with either the development of moral reasoning or the relationship between moral reasoning and moral behaviour in delinquents. This shift in focus can also be seen to parallel the recommendations of Blasi (1980) who called for an examination of the psychological nature of integrity, or the impact psychological correlates may have on responsibility or compulsion to act on deontic judgements (recall:

judgements of what one ought to do morally).

Primary cognitive distortions are self centred attitudes and beliefs which stem from an egocentric bias (Gibbs, 1991). Egocentric bias is characteristic of Kohlberg's (1984) preconventional stages, for example, stage two individuals "have a supersensitive Unfairness Detector when it comes to finding all the ways that people are unfair to them. But they have a big blind spot when it comes to seeing all the ways they aren't fair to others" (Lickona, 1983, p. 128). This egocentric bias normally decreases with age, but, as we have seen, this developmental process occurs much slower in delinquents. Egocentric bias is also characteristic of Kohlberg's substage, Type A which recall is a moral orientation, independent of stage, that theoretically predisposes individuals at any given stage to limit their judgements to existing social arrangements (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987). Although this subtype is not unlike the immature or premoral orientation involved at preconventional levels, it is not limited to these stages and as such may explain why delinquents who have progressed into moral reasoning at mature levels according to stage of development continue to commit crimes.

Trevethan and Walker (1989) compared the four moral orientations (which theoretically divide into the two subtypes/-stages) between two groups of delinquents,

psychopathic and non-psychopathic, and a group of non-delinquent controls by stage of moral development, scored on both hypothetical and real-life dilemmas. Both dilemmas distinguished delinquents from non-delinquents, consistent with previous research, and although the real-life dilemma did lead to a lower mean stage for all groups than the standard hypothetical dilemma, the difference was moderate and by an average of only one half stage. The most interesting and germane result is that although egoistic utilitarian orientation (conceptualized within substage A) characterized and distinguished psychopathic delinquents significantly from the non-psychopathic delinquents and the non-delinquent controls, no differences were found between the controls and the non-psychopathic delinquents. So although stage of reasoning distinguished delinquents in general from non-delinquents, orientation was only capable of distinguishing psychopathic delinquents (Trevethan & Walker, 1989). This in itself is a critical finding in that of the seven studies which have examined moral stage differences between psychopathic delinquents and non-psychopathic delinquents have met with equivocal results. The variable of psychopathy has been conceptualized as a theoretical baseline of moral development in all of the key review articles on developmental delay in juvenile delinquents, because, by definition, these individuals are

believed to be devoid of conscience, a necessary component of stage progression at the conventional level (Blasi, 1980; Jurkovic, 1980; Nelson et al., 1990); therefore, this hypothesis will be examined separately. But first the evidence linking secondary cognitive distortions to the understanding of conventional (morally mature) delinquents will be considered.

Kohlberg (1984) states that the feeling of guilt is in itself a moral self-judgement, and therefore its presence presupposes the presence of mature moral judgement. So whereas primary cognitive distortions may predispose morally delayed juveniles to delinquent behaviour, in that the "me-centred" bias, dictated by their pre-moral orientation/stage, predisposes them to a failure to perceive the affect they have on others, secondary cognitive distortions can extend and support this bias into moral maturity by allowing the "me-centredness" (egocentric bias) to expand to "me-and-my-few-friends" (Gibbs, 1993, p. 164). Secondary cognitive distortions are characterized as pre- or post-transgression rationalizations that an individual invokes to "neutralize" (Sykes & Matza, 1957) guilt associated with moral maturity and thus prevent assaults against the self-image that would normally follow engaging in crime (Gibbs, 1991; 1993). Gibbs (1991) suggests that the stress normally produced from the cognitive dissonance

between actions which harm others and the self-image of one who would not unjustifiably harm others is thereby neutralized by secondary cognitive distortions. In this way it is theoretically possible, and probable, for delinquents to evidence stage three (or higher) moral judgement and yet continue to engage in "seriously anti-social" behaviour by pre-empt the harmful effect the behaviour has on others (Gibbs, 1993). Gibbs and Potter (unpub. 1991, cited in Gibbs, 1993)) found that when morally delayed juvenile delinquents reflected on their offenses they made no spontaneous references regarding the victims. Their chief concerns at the time of the offenses were whether they could "...get what they wanted and get away with it..", which is directly in keeping with the moral orientation of stage two judgements.

On the other hand, some juveniles engage in the construction of biased interpretations of their behaviour and its effects by externalizing blame, or blaming the victim for provoking the behaviour in some way, or euphemizing seriously antisocial behaviour (Bandura, 1991) as a mere "prank" (Sykes and Matza, 1957). This use of secondary cognitive distortions implies a need for reducing cognitive dissonance or "empathy-based guilt" which subsequently implies that there is guilt (Gibbs, 1993). Thus, the presence of secondary cognitive distortions may be

the distinguishing characteristic of conventional delinquents. If this is the case it could explain why interventions which raise moral development to conventional levels do not always translate into reductions in juvenile recidivism, in that the interventions have ignored the preempting effect of secondary cognitive distortions (Gibbs, 1993).

Radosevich and Krohn (1981) and Lanza-Kaduce, Radosevich, and Krohn (1983) made similar observations. They noted that cognitive moral developmentalists "have failed to specify or characterize in any detail the form" cognitive distortions might take on and subsequently affect whether or not individuals will act on the moral judgements they make (Radosevich & Krohn, 1981, p.407). Radosevich and Krohn (1981) attempted to compare a measure of Sykes and Matza's (1957) "techniques of neutralization" (described by Gibbs (1991, 1993) as secondary cognitive distortions) to Kohlberg's stages of moral development in order to evaluate Matza's (1964) premise that deviation from legally acceptable behaviour may be seen as "legally defensible justifications...extended to a legally unacceptable extent" (Radosevich & Krohn, 1981, p.406).

The concept of neutralizations, according to Sykes and Matza (1957), involves a process whereby an individual's perceived moral responsibility to act in a morally and

legally acceptable way can be abrogated by five types of justifications. These "neutralizations" include: (1) denial of responsibility -assuming that no responsibility need be taken if the action was unintentional, or due to external "forces", (2) denial of injury - claiming no damage or minimal damage was or would be done, (3) denial of the victim - justifying harm to the victim as deserved, given certain characteristics of the victim, (4) condemnation of the condemners - deflecting attention away from the self by finding fault in those who disapprove, and (5) appeal to higher loyalties - elevating the needs of the individual above the demands of society.

Radosevich and Krohn (1981) hypothesized that conventional individuals' moral evaluation of behaviours would be most affected by neutralizing definitions ("situational mitigators") because "they are, by definition, so highly susceptible to social influences" (desire to please others in order to maintain a good image; p. 408). Their results indicated that there was no relationship between types of neutralizations and any particular stage; however, consistent with their hypotheses, conventional individuals were more susceptible to neutralizations, inasmuch as the presence of neutralizations in subsequent presentations of the vignettes led to a change in the evaluation of the moral rightness of the actors behaviour.

The pattern of results took on a curvilinear form, in that preconventional individuals' evaluations did not change as much as conventional individuals' in light of added neutralizations, while postconventional individuals' evaluations were not influenced at all by neutralizations. The generalizability of these results is extremely limited for the purpose of the present study, as the subjects in the sample were high school students, and no attempt was made to test reliability or validity of the neutralization measure, and no steps were taken to measure differences in self reported delinquency.

In the second study by Lanza-Kaduce, Radosevich, and Krohn (1983), delinquency was operationally defined as "detected", self-reported contact with the law, and "undetected", assumed through self-reported marijuana use. Again, an untested measure of neutralization propensity was used, and, in addition, methodological problems resulted from the measure of moral development (they used a controversial pencil and paper "recognition" measure, the Defining Issues Test (DIT) by Rest (1979), which measures a moral "preference" rather than a "competence" level in moral reasoning and thus is not considered an acceptable substitute for Kohlberg's measure (Gibbs et al., 1992). In light of data which appeared to be plagued with methodological difficulty, and amounted to little more than

weak and most likely spurious results, they concluded, "our first shot at trying to specify how the general normative structures of the developmental sequence relate to more directly acquired specific normative orientations to produce deviance was a complete misfire" (Lanza-Kaduce et al., 1983, p.455). Therefore, the pre-empting effect of neutralizations, or secondary cognitive distortions on conventional delinquents reasoning has yet to be confirmed.

To the extent that research supports the relationship between propensity to neutralize and deviancy (Ball, 1966; Minor, 1981; Priest & McGrath, 1970) and that a reliable measure of such propensity has been found to distinguish not only delinquents from non-delinquents, but also predict institutional predatory misconduct and subsequent delinquency one year post-discharge ($r = .38$) (Shields & Whitehall, 1994), further investigation into the convergence between moral stage and neutralizations is warranted. In addition, it has been suggested that the variation in moral behaviour among delinquents is not completely captured by moral structure because moral content, such as tolerance for deviancy, is not taken into account directly (Jurkovic, 1980). Lickona (1983) argues that some children may resort to resolving conflicts with pre-moral modes of moral reasoning because they do not value the higher moral concepts. Jurkovic (1980) suggests that delinquents who are

committed to criminal sentiments (subjective attitudes and values), although capable of higher moral reasoning, may not invoke higher stage judgements and consequently leave external variables to the task of determining the level of "functional moral reasoning and behavioural choice" (p. 723). Krebs, Vermeulen, Carpendale, and Denton (1991) explain that Kohlberg's hypothetical dilemmas appear to extract from the individual the highest level of moral competency; however, although moral competency may be indicative of an homogeneous underlying stage structure, moral judgement may not be. Theoretically, depending on how many stages preceded the highest stage attained, individuals have more or fewer structures available that they may invoke in response to any given situation. The developmental process, described by Kohlberg (1978), explains that individuals retain the structures formed at lower stages into a broader, more mature, and consequently inclusive structure when they advance to the next developmental level. Furthermore, and again theoretically, the higher the stage of development, the greater the number of structures subsumed, and consequently a greater number of moral judgement options potentially available to the individual. In support of this hypothesis, Krebs, Vermeulen et al. (1991) found that subjects did appear to invoke different structures from different stages as a function of

dilemma type presented (real-life versus hypothetical'). The authors note that the results are somewhat counterintuitive in that they suggest that preconventional individuals may in fact be the most consistent in their moral judgements as their highest competency within that level would be only one stage above the lowest stage, whereas more advanced maturity would increase the judgement options one could invoke (Krebs, Vermeulen, et al., 1991). These results lead to convergent conclusions of previously reviewed studies in that they agree moral competency can not on its own predict behaviour; however, they assume that the difficulty in predicting behaviour from stage of moral development involves a violation to the "structured whole" assumption in that individuals may not reason further than the preconventional level in any given situation (Krebs, Denton, Vermeulen, Carpendale, & Bush, 1991). In other words, they claim that moral judgement is not organized in homogenous structures; thus, individuals could be seen to regress to lower stage structures in response to varying situations. Given the fact that Kohlberg's (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987) substages were not taken into account, and

'for example, dilemmas regarding impaired driving, and prostitution, which tend to direct toward one moral choice, between personal convenience and upholding the law or life, or avoiding punishment, as opposed to the classic hypothetical dilemmas which pit more complex values such as violating law over life or vice versa (Krebs, Vermeulen et al., 1991).

thus his explanation of such discrepancies as those found as not considered, this position appears too extreme. To assume that individuals evoke entirely different stage structures in different situations and subsequently conclude that judgement itself is therefore not consistent with stage of competency, could lead to the conclusion that a violation of the "structured whole" assumption exists; consequently, such an assumption jeopardizes Kohlberg's entire developmental model.

On the contrary, previous research (e.g., Blasi, 1980; Gibbs, 1993; Jennings et al., 1983; Petronio, 1980) has alluded to explanations whereby mature reasoning may be invoked to the higher levels, but delinquency may prevail over behaviour judged "morally right" because neutralizing definitions, various anti-social attitudes or lack of personal integrity, pre-empt moral behaviour.

The most prudent line of research would include an examination of the effect of mediating variables where one need not assume such violations, but instead simply clarify the reasoning to action relationship by directly and indirectly examining the content variables. To this end, the present study will use a measure of moral judgement which avoids the potential confounds that situational factors in dilemma presentations appear to allow. Gibbs et al. (1992) have developed such a measure which leads to

subjects spontaneously producing statements which can be stage scored in a fashion similar to Colby and Kohlberg's (1987) as well as containing provisions for scoring the subtypes.

The present study will examine the role of previously dismissed content variables such as neutralizing propensity and criminal sentiments (attitudes) on moral judgement. By examining the hypotheses that such personal variables either affect utilization of developed competencies in conventional juvenile delinquents, or potentially interfere with development in preconventional delinquents, an attempt will be made to clarify the functional role moral development plays in delinquency.

Psychopathy

In the nineteenth century the term "moral imbecile" was replaced by "psychopathy" (Smith, 1978); hence, historically, this personality type has been considered, by definition, incapable of behaving morally as the intrinsic ability to understand moral commitments is absent (Hare, 1970). Psychopathy is a personality disorder which has become almost synonymous with criminal behaviour; inasmuch as they are known for their deft skill as manipulators, it is argued that this aptitude is inherent; thus, crime is believed almost an obligatory behaviour for the psychopath (Person, 1986). Hervey Cleckley (1976) describes the

psychopath as an individual who is morally inept yet scrupulously concealed by an impressive ability to mimic normal emotions (namely remorse and guilt), while remaining entirely incapable of experiencing them.

Surprisingly, only seven studies (Campagna & Harter, 1975; Chandler & Moran, 1990; Fodor, 1973; Jurkovic & Prentice, 1977; Lee & Prentice, 1988; Link, Scherer, & Byrne, 1977; Trevethan & Walker, 1989) have attempted to examine the hypothesized premoral characteristic in juvenile delinquents' moral judgements by subdividing delinquent groups according to the diagnostic criteria for the personality disorder psychopathy. Of these seven, only Chandler and Moran (1990) and Trevethan and Walker (1989) used reliable and valid instruments for classification, while the others relied on clinical judgement of psychiatrists or purely behavioural indices, both methods being open to great subjectivity and neither capturing the personality variables outlined by Cleckley. Consequently, the results of these studies do not lend themselves well to replication.

Fodor (1973) examined the moral reasoning of delinquent psychopaths and non-psychopaths and found that the psychopathic delinquents were at significantly lower stages of moral development; however, six of the 30 psychopathic delinquents were found to be at the conventional level.

Campagna and Harter (1975) compared the moral development of "sociopathic"⁶ boys in a psychiatric treatment centre to that of non-sociopathic age and I.Q. matched boys from local schools. Their results indicated that psychopathic children were significantly lower in moral reasoning than the non-psychopathic children; however, none of the children had developed into the conventional stages (three and four). Similarly, Jurkovic and Prentice (1977) found that psychopathic delinquents were significantly less morally mature than two other types of delinquents (labelled neurotic and subcultural, according to Quay's classification system), as well as a group of non-delinquent controls; however, the non-psychopathic delinquents neither differed from each other nor the controls. Again, none of the groups evidenced a mean moral maturity score above stage 2(3)'.⁷

Lee and Prentice (1988) used the same delinquent subgroups as Jurkovic and Prentice (1977) in an attempt to relate a number of other indices of sociocognitive development to moral maturity with delinquency. Although they were able to determine that delinquents were significantly less morally mature than non-delinquents, they

⁶considered by the authors to be synonymous with psychopathy, however, the diagnosis was derived mainly from behavioural ratings.

⁷stage 2(3) indicates a transition state from stage two to stage three, thus this state is not considered conventional, but rather in flux.

failed to replicate the results found previously; delinquent sub-groups did not differ from each other. Two other interesting findings should be mentioned here: first, 28.94% of psychopathic delinquents were scored within the conventional level, and second, no significant differences were found between any groups (including non-delinquent control subjects) on either of two measures taken of empathy (Lee & Prentice, 1988). Lee and Prentice (1988) suggest the possibility that empathy may be an unstable trait in juveniles and thus a positive relationship between moral judgement may only emerge in adulthood; however, this is inconsistent with the composition of the psychopath, who is defined as one who is not believed to experience guilt. The answer to this apparent paradox may lie in Johns and Quay's (1962) description of the psychopath as one who "knows the words but not the music (p. 217)."

Interestingly, a frequently overlooked study by Link et al. (1977) began with the assumption that psychopathic criminals would evidence higher stages of moral development than non-psychopathic criminals or controls (controls were attendants for the inmates). They reasoned that strong feelings of guilt might in fact obscure the clear, objective rationality required in reasoning at postconventional levels, and therefore psychopaths, being characteristically devoid of such encumbrance of conscience, would thus be at an

advantage over non-psychopaths. In fact, their hypothesis was confirmed. Psychopathic adolescent inmates in their study were not only significantly more morally mature (modal stages in the upper limits of the conventional level) than non-psychopathic inmates and the attendant group, but also evidenced more stage 5 (postconventional) responses than either group (36% more than nonpsychopathic inmates and 5% more than attendants). However, this study was flawed in several ways. Most notably, the use of an earlier draft of Kohlberg's Moral Judgement Interview which renders the upper limits of the stages found questionable (see Colby & Kohlberg, 1987). As well, the attendant group was not assessed as to presence or absence of psychopathy. Despite these flaws, the results raise an interesting possibility, that delinquents who achieve conventional levels of moral development (not impaired in moral judgement), may nonetheless disregard their morally mature judgements in favour of opportunism. Such would be in keeping with the modus operandi of the psychopathic personality.

Finally, the only two studies, one by Trevethan and Walker (1989) and the other by Chandler and Moran (1990), to use valid and reliable measures of both moral judgement and psychopathy (Kohlberg's most recent Moral Judgement Interview by Colby & Kohlberg (1987) and a version of Hare's

Psychopathy Checklist (PCL), which had been modified for use with adolescents - see Chandler & Moran, 1990, & Trevethan & Walker, 1989) found that psychopathy did appear to distinguish differences in moral functioning in juvenile delinquents. Although neither study found clear differences between the psychopathic and non-psychopathic delinquents in terms of stage of moral development, both uncovered significant relationships between moral functioning and the psychopathic delinquent. Chandler and Moran (1990) found that canonical coefficients derived from combining six moral maturity measures (including measures such as perspective taking ability, which is not in itself a measure of moral maturity, but a hypothetical precursor to moral development) led to the correct classification of 80% of the delinquent subjects as psychopathic or non-psychopathic delinquents. Trevethan and Walker (1989) were able to establish that psychopathic delinquents were significantly characterized by egoistic utilitarianism compared to non-psychopathic delinquents and control subjects (recall that egoistic utilitarianism is one of the two orientations captured by substage A). Combined, these two studies help establish the validity and reliability of Hare's Psychopathy Checklist in younger populations as well as demonstrate that although stage of moral judgement may be statistically related to moral action in delinquents as opposed to non-delinquents,

the predictive power of any given moral stage may be extremely limited within delinquent samples on its own. This again underscores the importance of understanding how psychopathy (lack of integrity or opportunistic individuals), moral orientation (substage A - Colby & Kohlberg, 1987), and cognitive distortions (neutralizations and criminal attitudes - Gibbs, 1993) co-exist and potentially lead to inconsistencies between moral reasoning and moral action in juvenile delinquents.

Summarizing the Problem

Systematic analysis of within group differences are of vital importance as young offenders are not a homogeneous group in terms of personality, attitudes, or types of crimes which they commit (Lee & Prentice, 1988). Andrews and Bonta (1994) explain that where a sample is found on one level to be homogeneous and prediction is the goal, "the task is to discover, measure, and validate those predictive dimensions on which the sample is not homogeneous"(p.157). Such differences within delinquent samples have indeed been shown to predict subsequent delinquency as well as outlining important targets for rehabilitative efforts (Shields & Whitehall, 1994). To date no study has attempted to compare moral development to reliable measures of criminal latitudes of known predictive validity. Although studies have confirmed the mediating effect of certain within delinquent

group differences, it has yet to be established how and to what extent the relationships potentially impact on subsequent commission of crimes. Factors which inhibit the developmental process, either in progression of stages or utilization of competencies, once articulated, could provide valuable classification indices and implications for individualizing treatment plans.

Kohlberg's theory has been revised throughout the last two decades in an effort to contend with a body of research which is often punctuated with anomalous results. Research is now more encompassing of psychological and psychosocial characteristics of moral behaviour and it appears that the absence of these variables in previous research designs may have diluted certain results and led to some of the contradictory findings. Moreover, in a recent meta-analysis of the literature on juvenile delinquents' moral reasoning, Nelson and his colleagues (1990) concluded that the empirical evidence is "overwhelmingly impressive" (p.237) in terms of consistency of results, and the magnitude of the differences in moral judgement between juvenile delinquents and nondelinquents in spite of oft-cited methodological and measurement problems and is thus worthy of further investigation within delinquent populations. Their conclusions echo those made by Blasi (1980) ten years before, namely, that "the bridge" from moral reasoning to

moral behaviour is far more complexly mediated than initially presumed, both in terms of initial evocation of reasoning capabilities and in their behavioural manifestations (Jurkovic, 1980; Krebs, Vermeulen et al., 1991; Nelson et al., 1990), and therefore, future research should involve the systematic study of the personality and situational variables which retard development or mediate the effect of moral maturity on behaviour (Gibbs, 1993; Nelson et al., 1990). Specifically, it has been suggested that the building of "moral profiles" (Jurkovic, 1980), or typical personality compositions of delayed versus mature delinquents, would provide a clearer picture of the relationship between moral reasoning and delinquent behaviour.

In summary, several variables have been found to be associated with preconventional or conventional reasoning in delinquents and have been hypothesized to attenuate both the developmental process as well as the predicted behavioural repertoire. Key among these are (a) a cluster of personality attributes characteristic of the disorder commonly known as psychopathy (Chandler & Moran, 1990; Trevethan & Walker, 1987), (b) certain attitudes, sentiments, and defense mechanisms (Gibbs, 1993; Haan, 1977; Hart & Chmiel, 1992; Lanza-Kaduce, Radosevich, & Krohn, 1983; Radosevich & Krohn, 1981; Rest, 1974), (c) moral

orientations, type A and B (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987; Kohlberg & Candee, 1984), all of which theoretically relate to personal integrity or responsibility and subsequently could effect the degree of compulsion to act on judgements made depending on "moral atmosphere", which includes context and situational variables (e.g., peer and family relationships) (Blasi, 1980; Jurkovic, 1980; Kutnick, 1986).

Jurkovic (1980) summarizes the situation best:

...it is apparent that we have reached a point of diminishing returns of simply comparing the moral judgement of heterogeneous groups of delinquent and non-delinquent youngsters. Not only has the research yielded inconsistent results, but it has failed to circumvent the pitfalls of a long tradition in the empirical study of correctional populations that has its origins in trait derived methodologies...That is, there has been a tendency to treat juveniles as enduring cross-situationally consistent characteristics...A conceptual model, however preliminary and descriptive in nature, that sufficiently attends to this point is needed to help order the results presented earlier and to guide continued investigation of the delinquents morality (p. 720).

Despite this call for a matrix-like approach to studying the within group differences in juvenile offenders, for the most part, research over the past fourteen years has continued in this same simplistic vain of examining juvenile offenders moral judgement to that of their non-offending peers.

The present study will attempt to examine within group differences in moral reasoning of juvenile offenders with regard to the variables hypothesized to attenuate competency

(moral action) in conventional delinquents or arrest development in the case of preconventional delinquents.

Framing the Problem

The personal, interpersonal, and community reinforcement perspective on deviant behaviour (PIC-R, Andrews, 1982a) is a version of the social learning approach used to guide the understanding of human behaviour in general, and deviant or criminal behaviour specifically. What this theory offers is a broad framework which allows a method of organising and synthesising results from various schools of thought in such a way that new information regarding the factors which enhance prediction of deviance can be realized. One of the fifteen principles outlined which captures the essence of the proposal states: "the predictability of behaviour and its amenability to influence, increase with individualised assessment of the signalled reward/cost contingencies"(Andrews, 1982a, p.41). An extension of this principle allows for the inclusion and subsequent examination of any potentially relevant personal (including psychological and biological factors), interpersonal and community variables with respect to their effect on the development, maintenance, and modification of perceptions of situational (individually relevant rewards and costs) contingencies. An example of the utility of this approach exists within a psychology of criminal conduct,

which provides a comprehensive, hands on approach to advancing the development and analysis of rehabilitation. Andrews et al. (1990) outline four criteria for classifying information in such a way that classification, management, and rehabilitative efforts can be advanced and subsequently enhanced. The criteria are summarised accordingly:

1. Risk: Higher levels of service are reserved for higher risk cases. In brief, intensive service is reserved for higher risk cases because they respond better to intensive service than to less intensive service, while lower risk cases do as well or better with minimal as opposed to more intensive service.

2. Need: Targets of service are matched with the criminogenic needs of offenders. Such needs are case characteristics that, when influenced, are associated with changes in the chance of recidivism. If reduction in the chances of recidivism is an ultimate goal, the more effective services are those that set reduced criminogenic need as intermediate target of service.

3. Responsivity: Styles and modes of service are matched to the learning styles and abilities of offenders. A professional offers a type of service that is matched not only to criminogenic need but to those attributes and circumstances of cases that render cases likely to profit from that particular type of service.

4. Professional override: Having considered risk, need, and responsivity, decisions are made as appropriate under present conditions.

(Andrews, Bonta, & Hoge, 1990, p.20).

Specifically, it has been suggested (e.g., Jennings et al., 1983) that research endeavours may be undermined by ignoring the personality construct of psychopathy, as these

individuals appear on the surface to be like their antisocial peers, but respond differently to external stimuli at the psychological and physiological levels. For example, one of the trademarks of the psychopathic personality is their modus operandi which renders them incapable of profiting from experience and consequently extremely high risk for reoffending; thus, they pose a unique challenge not only in terms of assessment of their needs, but also in terms of responsivity, or amenability to treatment. In addition, cognitive moral developmentalists claim that classifying individuals according to their moral stage level may be crucial in determining treatment needs. They propose that a developmental lag in delinquents' moral reasoning may have a strong bearing on responsivity to various treatment modalities (Arbuthnot & Gordon, 1988); Jennings et al., 1983; Gibbs, 1993). Jennings and his colleagues (1983) explain that whereas behaviourism offers a method of altering behaviour by manipulating reward contingencies, social learning theorists demonstrate the reversibility or reflexivity of this process and the inability of learned principles to generalize readily. They contend that the cognitive dialectic between individuals and their respective experiences must also be examined in order to affect long term behaviour change.

In summary, the cognitive developmentalists' position

proposes a model of delinquent behaviour which accounts for the interaction between individuals and their environments, and between cognition and experience. They stress an active reflective responding to the environment rather than the relatively passive reflexive nature of responding described by behaviourists and social learning theorists (Jennings et al., 1983). Much like the concept of reward density outlined by the PIC-R (Andrews, 1982a), Jennings and his colleagues (1983) emphasize the fact that "stimuli are reinforcing only to the extent that they become meaningful to the individual" (p. 294), and this underscores the need to examine the effect of psychological variables which affect the individuals world view (moral understanding) and subsequent perceptions of rewards and costs in it (i.e., cognitive distortions).

Approaches as diverse as social learning theory, control theory, and behaviourism may have broader explanatory power and effect on modifying delinquent behaviour, if combined and framed within a unifying model such as cognitive-moral development (Jennings et al., 1983). Like the PIC-R (Andrews, 1982a), this approach recognizes the value in combining these paradigms and systematically studying other hypothesised predictors (correlates) of delinquency. They believe that by using such an eclectic approach which also accounts for the process of cognitive

moral development, the limitations or deficiencies encountered by past attempts to apply theory to practise can be overcome and the discrepancy between moral reasoning and moral action can be better understood.

The present study will explore the principles of risk, need and responsivity by examining the heuristic value a battery of tests, which have demonstrated predictive validity in terms of both subsequent delinquency (recidivism) and predatory behaviour, have on the relationship between moral reasoning and criminal behaviour in delinquent psychopathic and non-psychopathic youth. The general purpose of this study is to examine the factors which have been theoretically postulated to impact on the predicted relationship between cognitive-moral development and delinquent behaviour, by framing them within a "psychology of criminal conduct".

Few studies have examined the relationship between psychopathy and moral development; of those, preliminary results are inconclusive. The majority of these studies appear to demonstrate that juvenile delinquent psychopaths are significantly delayed in moral development compared to non-psychopaths. If these results were conclusive it might help explain why juvenile delinquents appear as a group to be delayed in their moral development. One study (Link et al., 1977), however, demonstrated a significant positive

relationship between psychopathy and moral development in a population of delinquents while another uncovered a positive relationship between adolescent psychopathic sex offenders and moral reasoning (Moran, 1987). In an effort to explain these seemingly anomalous results, researchers have postulated that intervening thought processes may interfere with the predicted relationship between moral reasoning and moral action. Suggested variables of importance are the extent to which individuals "neutralize" or rationalize their behaviour, certain criminal sentiments or attitudes which might be seen to take precedence over moral judgements, and the presence of the personality disorder psychopathy. Within the current battery of tests under examination are two subtests which examine propensity to disengage cognitively oneself from moral prohibitions, The Neutralization Scale (Shields & Whitehall, 1994) and The Criminal Sentiments Scale (CSS)(Andrews, 1985b, adaptation for young offenders by Shields & Simourd, 1991). In addition, The Young Offender-Level of Service Inventory (YO-LSI) (Shields & Simourd, 1991) has proven itself as an invaluable measure within this battery. Three studies which have compared the original adult version of the YO-LSI, The Level of Supervision Inventory (LSI) (Andrews, 1982b) to the Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R) (Hare, 1991) demonstrate the predictive validity and high correspondence

of the two measures (Harris, Rice, & Cormier, 1991; Rettinger, 1991; Stevenson & Wormith, 1987); however, both Rettinger (1991) and Stevenson and Wormith (1987) concluded that the overlap of the two measures was not entirely complete. Since the PCL-R measures two factors, factor one, an affective component (that is more reflective of enduring personality features such as grandiosity, shallow affect, and callousness) and factor two, that measures a behavioural component (Hare, 1991), it appears that the high correlation between measures may simply be an artifact of the overlap in the descriptions of criminal behaviour. Both measures have been found to be highly reliable predictors of violent recidivism (Andrews, Wormith, & Keissling, 1985; Harris, Rice, & Cormier, 1991) and, in light of the high correlation between them, some authors have speculated that the LSI may in itself tap the personality construct of psychopathy (Andrews & Bonta, 1994; Stevenson & Wormith, 1987).

Although impressive in their convergent properties, such conclusions can be considered tenuous at best, due to methodological problems and the nature of the remaining discrepant areas (i.e., various items from the factor one, affective component, of the PCL-R failed to correlate with the LSI; Rettinger, 1991), as well, neither study compared the respective predictive validity of the measures on their samples.

The YO-LSI (Shields & Simourd, 1991) contains the following sub-sections: criminal history, substance abuse, family and peer relations, education/employment, accommodation and other "miscellaneous" (referred to as psychological variables in the original LSI, Andrews, 1982b). Together they have been found to be psychometrically sound and effectively predict delinquency within institutional settings (namely, institutional violence or "predatory behaviour") (Shields & Simourd, 1991) and recidivism post release (Shields, 1993). To this end, the addition of the YO-LSI may provide a means of verifying the convergent divergent properties of the measures of psychopathy, neutralizations, criminal sentiments, moral stage, and moral orientation in that it provides a useful framework of a social milieu and criminal history (behaviour) with which to understand the relationships respective affects on one another.

In addition, a closer examination of the theoretical constructs (psychopathy, cognitive distortions, moral orientation, and moral stage level) may have great potential in terms of their contribution to the understanding of a battery of tests used to assess risk and need.

Purpose and Predictions

The primary aim of the present study was to systematically examine the discrepancies between moral judgements and moral behaviour in juvenile delinquents in terms of the role the following variables have on mediating or abrogating that relationship. The variables are summarized as follows: a) substage A or B, the former representing an immature moral orientation (predisposition) at each stage (theoretically independent of stage) and the latter representing an orientation of moral maturity at each stage; b) contextual dependent variables, variables which have been thought to affect consistency of following through on moral judgements by way of providing a means of distorting cognitively and subsequently allowing for disengaging cognitively from the environment or initially perceived moral constraints (these were measured via the propensity to neutralize, commitment to criminal sentiments (CSS), and Pride in Delinquency); c) psychopathy, a personality profile which has provided the most accurate portrait of perhaps the highest risk individuals in terms of recidivism, and theoretically represents the amoral individual (Forth, Hart, & Hare, 1990; Harris et al., 1991). It was felt that the measure of this construct would (theoretically) provide a means of examining the effect of those individuals who would reject personal integrity (moral

judgements made) in favour of opportunism (recall Blasi's (1980) discussion of factors which effect consistency between words and actions). Finally, in that the YO-LSI provides a way of measuring the context for the above factors to be understood, as well as providing an index of interpersonal strengths and shortcomings, it was felt that this measure of needs/ risk may shed light on the relationship between moral developmental delay within the young offender population. Of the preceding, both a) and b) represent hypothesized factors which relate to "personal inconsistency" (Blasi, 1980), in that they are assumed to mediate personal integrity, the last variable, described in c), represents a psychological factor, the psychopathic personality, which reflects "trait consistency" and as such is thought to potentially abrogate the relationship between moral reasoning competencies and moral action (Blasi, 1980). The psychopaths can be defined as trait inconsistent, inasmuch as they are the embodiment of opportunism and yet have been found to reason at a morally mature level. Thus one could expect that psychopaths will be inconsistent in their behaviour to the extent that situations which offer opportunity for pleasure will take priority over regard for personal integrity. In other words, this study proposes that, whereas psychopaths may reach conventional levels of moral development, their moral reasoning or understanding

may or may not predict the expected "moral behaviour", depending on if the behaviour also had some tangible benefit for the psychopath. Thus the behaviour would be "inconsistent" according to the "trait" of psychopathy, and conversely, more consistent in the absence of this trait for opportunism.

Hypotheses:

1. In that moral maturity should theoretically preclude delinquency, and that in order to continue such behaviour and retain a self-image consistent with the orientation and desires inherent in stage three and four conventional individuals, it was predicted that there would be a positive relationship between moral reasoning and measures of cognitive distortion (i.e., Neutralizations and Criminal Sentiments).
2. Similarly, in that orientations characteristic of substage B may allow an individual at a preconventional level to feel similarly biased against delinquency as an individual at the conventional level, a positive relationship between moral orientations (substage A and B) and Neutralization and Criminal Sentiments was expected. It was predicted that individuals who possess substage B would also be prone to cognitive distortions and criminal sentiments independent of level of moral judgement, as the two are theoretically considered conceptually to be

independent. In other words, regardless of stage, it was predicted that with increasing moral ideality an increase in cognitive distortions (antisocial attitudes and propensity to neutralize) would be necessary in order for increasingly morally intuitive (substage B) delinquents to justify their criminal behaviour. As discussed, cognitive distortions and criminal attitudes were expected to allow mature individuals to perceive a world view restricted to "me-and-a-few-of-my-friends", and subsequently disregard those who fell outside of their self defined "worthy circle." Again, although intuitively moral, the behaviour was expected to be inconsistent due to the presence of neutralizing definitions, criminal sentiments and the amount of pride they felt about their delinquent behaviour. Thus "personal consistency" was expected to be mediated by moral reasoning, which was in turn expected to be mediated by cognitive distortions and criminal attitudes's.

3. Since moral orientation (substage) is scored on the basis of moral reasoning believed to be reflective of "intuitive" moral understanding, as opposed to the "explicit" understanding scored as moral stage level, the relationship between moral substage was expected to differentiate psychopathic from non-psychopathic delinquents more reliably than moral stage level. Whereas the stage scores are derived from "explicit" statements, moral orientation

(subtype/stage), or moral ideality (the continuum of subscores comprising the subtypes), is scored according to criteria meant to capture a more subtle and "intuitive" understanding and thus it was predicted that this criteria would be more difficult for the psychopath to mimic.

Covariates and Relationships Between Moral Development and the Identification of Risk/ Needs:

In general, it was expected that the greater the level of moral maturity the greater the need would be to generate or identify with criminal sentiments and techniques of neutralization. However, given that the psychopathic individuals have been found to articulate high levels of moral development and yet are defined as those who only mimic conscience, it was predicted that the same relationship may exist for them as with non-psychopaths with regard to moral stage, neutralizations and criminal sentiments, but that they would evidence primarily substage A orientations and thus be distinguished in this way from their non-psychopathic peers. In other words, it was felt that the psychopathic delinquents might mimic moral stage competencies and know enough to endorse the cognitive distortions which are necessitated in order to justify their delinquent behaviour, but would emerge as more egocentrically oriented in terms of their substage, in

keeping with their personality profile.

Although an exploratory hypothesis, it was expected that a negative relationship would emerge in delinquents between moral development and the YO-LSI. It was reasoned that moral developmental delay in young offenders may be related to poverty in early relationships and that this could have an effect on moral stage competency to the extent that poor social environment might preclude the necessary role taking opportunities for moral development to occur. Given historical difficulty with educational, familial, and peer relationships are accounted for in the scoring of the YO-LSI, it was predicted that high scores on this measure would be associated with the preconventional (immature) moral level and low scores with the conventional level.

In that the main intention of this study was to examine the mediating effect of cognitive distortions, (measured as neutralizations, criminal sentiments, and pride in delinquent behaviour), it was deemed necessary to hold constant the effects of moral atmosphere and psychopathy. As discussed, there are good theoretical reasons to expect that the relationship between cognitive distortions and moral development could be obscured by moral atmosphere (social environment) and psychopathy, (the trait hypothesized to predispose delinquents to inconsistent moral behaviour) inasmuch as they too have the potential to mediate moral

development as well as the main predictor variables.

However, recall that both of the hypothesized covariates, the YO-LSI and the PCL-YV, have the greatest potential for predicting risk of violence and identifying specific needs within delinquent populations, and thus it was expected that convergent and divergent properties of all of the measures combined might contribute to the understanding of the role of moral development in the assessment of risk and needs among delinquent youth.

METHOD

Participants

Data was made available on 41 male participants processed as young offenders and incarcerated in a closed custody regional detention centre in Ontario. One individual had not been administered the CSS, Neutralization Scale or the Pride in Delinquency measure and so was dropped from the sample. The final sample consisted of 40 males, 32 Caucasian, 2 Asian, 2 First Nations, 1 Black, and 3 unknown, the mean age of which was 17 ($\underline{SD}$ = .87, range = 15 to 19).

Permission to use data was granted from two sources: the unit psychologist at the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre (O.C.D.C.), Dr. Ian Shields, and Dr. Adelle Forth, Psychology department, Carleton University. The present author was involved in the data collection as an intern student at O.C.D.C. and as a research assistant for Dr. Forth. All data was collected independent of the present study and each source obtained signed informed consent independently from the participants (Dr. Forth obtained consent from the participants to review and use information from the institutional files as well as for her interview battery). As well, Dr. Forth's research was done with the approval of the Ontario Ministry of Corrections and Carleton University's Ethics committee. Inter-rater reliability was available for the scores on the moral

development measure and the psychopathy scores.

Measures:

Sociomoral Reflection Measure-Short Form (SRM-SF) (Gibbs et al., 1992)

The SRM-SF is a production measure of moral judgement based on a "revisionist view" of Kohlberg's theory of moral judgement. The scale consists of 11 questions regarding sociomoral values such as saving a life, keeping a promise, telling the truth, and obeying the law.

Research has demonstrated acceptable levels of reliability. As well, concurrent validity between the SRM-SF and Kohlberg's (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987) Moral Judgement Interview has been established: $r=.69$ (see Gibbs et al., 1992).

Scoring:

Two scorers self-trained according to the guidelines set out by Gibbs et al. (1992). Although the scorers were blind to the study, they did know that the sample was that of incarcerated young offenders. All scoring was done in compliance with the rules for protocol scoring outlined in the scoring manual (Gibbs et al., 1992).

Scoring was arrived at from the short answers subjects give to the question of "why" it is or is not important to tell the truth, keep a promise, etcetera. Scoring is done

by comparing the participants answers to specific criteria outlined in the scoring manual for each question (see scoring manual in Gibbs et al., 1992). All matches for citations, aspects, and Moral Type B references were recorded on the standard score sheet contained in the manual.

Stage scores were assigned to each of the questions on a seven point continuum ranging from 1 to 4 with transitional levels $1/2$, $2/3$, and $3/4$ in between. In the case of a response matching more than one stage level, the score for the answer is awarded to the highest level noted. Criteria are also specified to identify "unscorable responses", those which do not provide moral justification (see "unscorable response units", pp. 51-52, Gibbs et al., 1992), unanswered questions fall under this category as well. Valid protocols must have a minimum of seven scorable responses. All 40 subjects met this criteria.

The primary summary score, the Sociomoral Reflection Maturity Score (SRMS), involves adding all scorable items and taking the arithmetic mean (transitional scores are first replaced with numeric values, e.g., $1/2$ becomes 1.5).

Global stage status is obtained by locating the "developmental vicinity" of the SRMS score; this ten level scale is as follows: 1.00-1.25 = Stage 1; 1.26-1.49 = Transition 1(2); 1.5-1.74 = Transition 2(1); 1.75-2.25 =

Stage 2; 2.26-2.49 = Transition 2(3); 2.5-2.74 = Transition 3(2); 2.75-3.25 = Stage 3; 3.26-3.49 = Transition 3(4); 3.50-3.74 = Transition 4(3); and 3.75-4.00 = Stage 4. Stages 1 to 2 (including Transition 2(3)) comprise the preconventional level and stages 3 to 4 (including Transitions 3(2) and, 4(3)) comprise the conventional level.

Moral Orientation is scored by summing responses on each question which match the specific scoring criteria for the three Type B components. The three components are labelled: Balancing, Fundamental Valuing, and Conscience; indications of these are given by criteria separate from that used to score stage. The following quotes are given in the scoring manual as example responses to SRM-SF questions which indicate Moral Type B citations: "...each case must be judged individually " - example of Moral Type B, Balancing"; "...you have broken a sacred trust"- example of Moral Type B, Fundamental Valuing; "for the sake of(one's) self-respect, integrity, inner order, or sense of personal responsibility"- example of Moral Type B Conscience (Gibbs et al., 1992, pp. 122-124). A score of no more than one is assigned for each type of match, and a protocol which has two of three types of components is designated Moral Type B. By default, any protocol with less than two Moral Type B components is designated Moral Type A, meaning the absence of mature orientation. In addition, "Moral Ideality" is

interpreted quantitatively as a continuum of the Moral Type B components (scale from 0 to 3). Although research has not been reported on such, Gibbs et al. recommend the use of the continuum of scores on the moral type B components (at present ill defined, but nonetheless referred to as "moral ideality") as an alternative method of measuring moral orientation for research purposes, and conceptually define this as movement toward a theoretical "moral ideal"(Gibbs et al., 1992).

The Neutralization Scale (Shields & Whitehall, 1994)

The Neutralization Scale is based on the authors' conception of Sykes and Matza's (1957) theory of delinquency, which maintains that delinquents share the same moral prohibitions as their prosocial peers, but employ a technique called "neutralization" to justify their antisocial activity. The scale has been demonstrated to be internally consistent ($KR-20 = .90$), temporally stable (difference between test-retest scores with young offenders, $n = 22$, after one month was not significant), and predictive of subsequent delinquency one year post-discharge from closed custody (Shields & Whitehall, 1994).

Scoring:

The scale consists of 4 vignettes, each describing a crime, followed by 5 questions (neutralizations) regarding

the protagonist's moral justification for committing the offense. Each endorsement of a neutralization results in a score of 1. Agreement with a neutralization consists of responding that the protagonist was not morally wrong for committing the offense given one or more of the 5 situational factors. Thus a total score of 20 is possible.

Criminal Sentiments Scale (CSS) (Shields & Simourd, 1991, adaptation from: Andrews, 1985; Andrews, Wormith, & Kiessling, 1985).

The CSS used in the present study is a modified version developed for young offenders (Shields & Simourd, 1991). This version has been found to be psychometrically reliable and is effective in predicting subsequent delinquency in young offenders both while incarcerated (Shields & Simourd, 1991) and one year following discharge from closed custody (Shields, 1993).

Scoring:

This measure of attitudes, values, and beliefs supportive of law violations and criminal behaviour consists of 41 prosocial and antisocial sentiments (e.g. "pretty well all laws deserve our respect"; "it's OK to break the law as long as you don't get caught") which can be summarized in five categories: attitudes: (1) towards the police - 7 statements, (2) towards laws - 10 statements, (3) towards

law violation -10 statements, (4) towards the courts - 8 statements, and (4) identification with criminal others - 6 statements. Participants are asked whether they agree, disagree, or are undecided with each statement. Each endorsement of an antisocial statement or rejection of a prosocial statement yields a score of 2 points, undecided responses are given a score of 1, and rejection of an antisocial statement or endorsement of a prosocial statement is scored 0. Total CSS score results by summing items, thus the higher the score the greater the criminal sentiments.

The Pride in Delinquency Scale (Shields & Whitehall, 1991)

The Pride in Delinquency Scale consists of 10 descriptions of antisocial acts. The participants are asked to imagine that they had committed the act and rate on a scale from +10 to -10 how proud (+10 extremely proud) or ashamed (-10 extremely ashamed) they would be if they had.

Scores are achieved by summing the ratings and adding 100. The total score has been shown to reliably predict institutional misconduct and predatory behaviour in closed custody young offender populations and predict recidivism following discharge (see Shields & Whitehall, 1994).

The Young Offender-Level of Service Inventory (YO-LSI)
(Shields & Simourd, 1991)

The YO-LSI is a risk/need assessment inventory

developed to measure need for psychological services and to predict risk of recidivism in young offenders (propensity to violate rules). It is based on two established instruments: the Level of Supervision Inventory (LSI)(Andrews, 1982), intended for adult offenders, and the Youth Level of Service Inventory (Y-LSI) (Andrews, Hoge, & Robinson, 1984; Andrews, Robinson, & Balla, 1986), intended for troubled children, and was established specifically for adolescent offenders (Shields & Simourd, 1991).

The YO-LSI is a standardized, structured interview scale consisting of 76 items, divided into 7 subtests: criminal history, substance abuse, education/employment problems, family problems, peer relation problems, accommodation problems, and indications of psychological difficulty, labelled "miscellaneous variables". Each of the items are scored in a 0-1 basis, 0 indicating an absence of a problem situation and 1 indicating the presence of an area of difficulty. Summing the 76 items results in the total score, thus maximum score = 76.

The Psychopathy Checklist: Youth Version (PCL:YV)

(Hare et al., 1995)

The PCL:YV is a modified version of the PCL:R (Hare, 1991) used for adults. Like the parent measure, the PCL:YV consists of 20 items which measure affective, interpersonal

and, behavioural dimensions central to the construct or disorder of psychopathy (Forth & Tobin, 1995).

Scoring:

Scoring was done on the basis of a semi-structured interview and collateral file reviews conducted on institutional files and in accordance with procedures described in the PCL-R (Hare, 1991) manual. Nine items are modified in the PCL:YV to more accurately assess young offenders (Hare et al., 1995). As with the parent measure, each of the 20 items is scored on a 3 point scale: 2 if the item definitely applies, 1 if the item applies with too many doubts to warrant a 2, and 0 if the item definitely does not apply. Items are added (and prorated for any unscorable items) together for a total score which could range from 0 to 40.

Procedure:

The first source of data originated from the detention centre where each young offender was orally administered a battery of tests which included the Pride in Delinquency Scale, the YO-LSI, the CSS, and the Neutralization Scale by either the unit psychologist or a psychology intern. In addition, the Sociomoral Reflection-Short Form (SRM-SF) was temporarily added to the routine battery and administered orally by two psychology interns at O.C.D.C. (the present author was one of the interviewers). All results were coded

and entered into the psychology files held at the detention centre. The SRM-SF was scored by two self-trained raters who were blind to the hypotheses of this thesis and blind to each others scores. Both raters were aware that the sample consisted of incarcerated young offenders though, as the questionnaires were riddled with reference to this fact.

Data from the second source originated from a separate study, where two research assistants (psychology graduate students) administered a semi-structured interview lasting between one and two hours in order to score the PCL:YV. In addition, extensive file reviews, consisting of institutional behaviour reports and psychological test batteries, were used as collateral information for confirming PCL:YV scoring. Interrater reliability estimates were made available for 13 protocols from a second rater who was blind to the original PCL:YV scores.

RESULTS

Prior to analysis, all variables were examined through SPSS programs for accuracy of data input, missing values, and between their respective distribution fit with the assumptions of multiple regression analysis.

Predictor Variables

Pearson correlations were computed between the identified independent variables (CSS, the Neutralization Scale, the Pride in Delinquency Scale) and covariates (YO-LSI and PCL:YV), both with each other and with the two separate dependent measures for hypothesis 1 (regarding SRMS), and hypothesis 2 (regarding moral substage, or orientation - SRMsub).

Consistent with previous research (Shields & Simourd, 1991; Shields & Whitehall, 1991; 1994), the results summarized in Table 1 illustrate a reliable relationship between the CSS, the YO-LSI, and Pride in Delinquency. As well, the Neutralization Scale was found to be reliably correlated with Pride in Delinquency and the CSS; however, after correcting alpha for familywise (FW) error, only the intercorrelations between the YO-LSI, CSS, and Pride in Delinquency retained statistical significance.

Table 1

Intercorrelations Between Measures of Moral Stage and Orientation, Cognitive Distortions, Psychopathy, and the YO-LSI

Variable	SRMS	SRMsub	NEUT	PRIDE	CSS	YO-LSI	PCL:YV
SRMS		.29*	.26	.06	.05	.03	.02
SRMsub			.10	-.36**	-.24	-.28*	-.24
NEUT				.38**	.43**	.17	.01
PRIDE					.69***	.61***	.36**
CSS						.48***	.26*
YO-LSI							.55***
PCL:YV							

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, all one tailed; with adjustment for alpha level for familywise error, only *** represents a significant result at $p < .02$.

Note. **SRMS** represents mean moral stage and **SRM sub** reflects moral ideality scores; cognitive distortions are: Neutralization scores (**NEUT**), criminal sentiments (**CSS**), Pride in Delinquency, (**PRIDE**); covariates are: The Psychopathy Checklist Youth Version score (**PCL:YV**) and The Young Offender Level of Service Inventory (**YO-LSI**).

In addition, Table 1 illustrates the positive correlations between the PCL:YV scores and YO-LSI scores ($r = .55$, $p < .001$; $p < .02$, corrected for FW error). This result parallels the convergent validity reported by Rettinger (1991), obtained through analysis of scores for 40 adult male offenders on adult versions of these measures (PCL-R and LSI, $r = .65$). Convergent properties of the PCL:YV are

also evident in this table by the significant correlations between two other identified risk/needs scales, the CSS ($r = .26$, $p < .05$) and the Pride in Delinquency scale ($r = .36$, $p < .01$); however, this result is also rendered non-significant once the alpha level is adjusted for number of comparisons (FW).

Inter-rater reliability was available for 13 protocols (32.5% of the sample) for total scores on the PCL:YV, $r = .92$ for total score agreement. The PCL:YV scores indicated (according to Hare's (1991) diagnostic cut off score of 30) that 30% of the sample could be classified as psychopathic, and the remaining 70% as non-psychopathic (range = 8 to 36, mean = 25.43, S.D. = 6.76). Inter-rater agreement for the diagnostic cutoff was 100%.

Criterion Variables

A good range of mean moral stage scores (SRMS) was evidenced in this sample (range = 1.79 to 3.36, mean = 2.51, SD = .92), and can be summarized as 52.5% falling within the conventional level and 47.5% within the preconventional level of moral development. The moral orientation of the sample, analyzed also as "Moral ideality" (SRMsub), (recall the continuum from A to B) was split with 77.5% classified as subtype A and 22.5% as subtype B. 8 (20% of the sample) SRM-SF protocols were scored by a second rater and the results indicate high correspondence for both SRMS scores, r

= .93 with Cronbach's alpha = .96, and moral subtype, $r = .86$ with Cronbach's alpha = .92, which exceed the minimum acceptable inter-rater reliability correlation of $r = .80$ (Gibbs et al., 1992).

Hypothesis 1:

The focus of hypothesis 1 was on whether cognitive distortions and neutralizations could explain or predict the variability in moral stage scores within the young offender group. As expected, the young offenders were not found to be homogeneous in stage of moral development and, as mentioned previously, only 47.5% could be classified as delayed in moral stage level for age.

Unfortunately, results from Table 1 indicate that none of the hypothesized predictor variables was significantly correlated with the hypothesized criterion measure (SRMS).

It was also expected that YO-LSI and PCL:YV scores would be meaningfully associated with both moral development (SRMS and SRM sub) and the independent variables and, consequently, would obscure the predicted relationship of interest. Given this expectation, the planned analysis involved treating PCL:YV and YO:LSI scores as covariates and controlling their effect by entering them together in the first block of the hierarchical regression analysis. Since neither of these hypothesized covariates were reliably

correlated with the dependent measure, but had the potential to cause instability due to their high correlation with the independent variables, the hierarchical regression planned to control their effects was not necessitated. Moreover, because neither the hypothesized covariates nor the other proposed independent variables were reliably correlated with the SRMS, but were with each other, a further breakdown of their subscales was undertaken in an attempt to arrive at a stable set of independent variables.

As expected, many of the subscales and covariates correlated reliably with each other; however, none of the subscales was found to be correlated significantly with the SRMS scores. Given the large size and strength of association (indicated by the Pearson correlations) within and between the independent variables and the hypothesized covariates, and subsequent failure to establish significant strength of association between these with the dependent measure, the proposed multiple regression was not warranted. In other words, results indicated that specification errors had occurred which led to the proposed regression model being untenable^a.

^a highly correlated independent variables, logically and statistically threaten the stability of the analysis with multicollinearity and singularity, as well the analysis is weakened by the reduction of the degrees of freedom for error (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989).

Hypothesis 2:

It was predicted that the relationship between moral orientation and measures of cognitive distortions would be related in the same fashion as that predicted for moral stage development in hypothesis 1. It was predicted that the more mature (Type B) the individual, the greater the need to invoke neutralizations and cognitive distortions, thus a positive linear relationship was expected. This hypothesis was tested by treating moral substage/type (orientation) scores as a continuous variable, referred to as such as "moral ideality", with possible scores ranging from 0 to 4, with 0 representing pure substage A, and increments representing movement toward moral ideality, substage B (Gibbs, et al., 1992).

As evidenced in Table 1, the correlational pattern ran somewhat counter to what was hypothesized. The results, prior to correcting alpha for number of comparisons (FW), indicate that moral ideality (SRMsub) was related to Criminal Sentiments (CSS), Pride in Delinquency (Pride), YO-LSI, and PCL:YV scores opposite to the predicted direction. However, and once again, these results were not found to be reliable once correcting the alpha for number of comparisons.

As can be seen from Table 1, the convergence between the two measures of moral development (SRMS and SRM sub) is reliable ($r=.29$, $p<.05$) only before correcting for FW error. In addition, the trend illustrated by their respective relationships to the independent measures and the hypothesized covariates appears quite opposite. Interestingly, while moral ideality, substage scores (SRMsub), were found to be negatively associated with the independent variables and covariates (with the exception of neutralization scores), the trend of relationship to stage scores (SRMS) was positive, although none of these relationships was substantiated with significance once corrected for FW error rates.

In order to determine if cognitive distortions and neutralizations improved prediction of moral ideality (SRMsub) beyond what could be accounted for by psychopathy and actuarial measures subsumed in YO-LSI scores, the proposed hierarchical regression analysis was employed. Results of evaluation of assumptions underlying regression analysis led to a decision to drop CSS from the analysis, as correlations suggest redundancy with Pride in Delinquency (see Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989, p.87 & 151), and since the latter was a more reliable independent variable it was selected for

the final analysis. Results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Hierarchical Regression of Neutralizations and Cognitive Distortions on Moral Ideality with YO-LSI and PCL:YV Controlled

Block 1			
Variable			
YO:LSI			
PCL:YV			
$R = .30, R^2 = .09.$			
Block 2 (full model)			
Variables	<u>B</u>	<u>SE B</u>	Beta
PCL:YV	-.01	.03	-.09
YO:LSI	-.001	.02	-.02
NEUT	.05	.03	.26
PRIDE	-.01	.01	-.42*
(Constant)	1.94	.58	
$R = .45, R^2 = .21 (.11 \text{ adjusted}).$			

* $p < .05$

NOTE. Moral Ideality is continuum of moral orientation scores, cognitive distortions are: Neutralizations (**NEUT**) and Pride in Delinquency scores (**PRIDE**); covariates are: The Young Offender Level of Service Inventory score (**YO-LSI**) and the Psychopathy Checklist: Youth Version score (**PCL:YV**).

After entering PCL:YV and YO-LSI in block 1, R was not found to be significantly different from zero;

however, after Neutralization and Pride in Delinquency scores were entered in the second block, R approached significance (with alpha set at .05) ($F(4, 35) = 2.25$, $p = .08$). Only the addition of Pride in Delinquency reliably added to the prediction of moral ideality once the effects of PCL:YV and YO-LSI were removed.

Relationship Between Moral Reasoning and Psychopathy

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the discrepancies between moral reasoning and moral behaviour in juvenile delinquents. To this end it was proposed that the inconsistency between moral reasoning and moral action may be better understood if the personality disorder psychopathy were taken into account. In terms of the trait consistency hypothesis it was predicted that although psychopaths might go undetected as far as stage of development, they would be distinguished from their non-psychopathic peers by evidencing primarily substage A orientation. Cross tabulations were constructed and are summarized in Tables 3 and 4. From Table 3 it can be seen that the psychopaths were evenly split into conventional (50%) and preconventional (50%) levels, while 54% of non-psychopaths fell in the conventional range and 46% in the preconventional range. The chi-square for this cross tabulation was not found to be significant.

Table 3

Psychopaths versus Non-Psychopaths in Level of Moral Development

Total <u>n</u> =40	Psychopaths <u>n</u> =12 (30%)	Non-Psychopaths <u>n</u> =28 (70%)
Preconventional <u>n</u> =19 (47.5%)	<u>n</u> = 6 (50%)	<u>n</u> =13 (46%)
Conventional <u>n</u> =21 (52.5%)	<u>n</u> = 6 (50%)	<u>n</u> =15 (54%)

Table 4

Psychopaths versus Non-Psychopaths in Moral Orientation

Total <u>n</u> =40	Psychopaths <u>n</u> =12 (30%)	Non-Psychopaths <u>n</u> =28 (70%)
Substage A <u>n</u> =31 (77.5%)	<u>n</u> =11 (92%)	<u>n</u> =20 (71%)
Substage B <u>n</u> = 9 (22.5%)	<u>n</u> = 1 (8%)	<u>n</u> = 8 (29%)

Given the small sample and unequal group sizes, resulting from the categorizations of the young offenders seen in tables 3 and 4, it is not surprising that the results of the cross tabulation here did not achieve significance. However, it is interesting to note that only one psychopath met the criteria for substage B, and that this particular individual not only obtained the highest stage score (SRMS=3.36), but also the second highest psychopathy score (PCL:YV

score=35). In general, then, it can be seen that a good portion of the young offenders did achieve substage B moral maturity (22.5%).

Because factor analysis of the PCL:YV goes beyond the scope of this study, Factor 1 scores were calculated for the PCL:YV according to Hare's (1991) criteria. Recall that Factor 1 is composed of eight items from the PCL which together describe the a constellation of traits usually identified as typical characteristics endemic to the construct of psychopathy. For example, items used to calculate scores on factor 1 capture quintessential characteristics of the psychopath such as the inability to experience feelings of remorse or guilt (Hare, 1991). With Factor 1 used as the dependent measure, two one way ANOVAs were performed, one between moral type A and B groups and the other between preconventional and conventional groups. As can be seen from Tables 7 and 8, neither of the F ratios were significant with alpha set at .05, suggesting that the respective group means were not different (subtype A: mean=8.32, $S.D.$ =3.76 versus subtype B: mean=7.22, $S.D.$ =4.02; Conventional: mean=8, $S.D.$ =3.9 versus Preconventional: mean=8.16, $S.D.$ =3.79).

Table 5

One Way Analysis of Variance for PCL:YV Factor 1 Scores by Moral Stage Level

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>
Between Groups	1	.25	.25	.02
Error (within)	38	562.53	14.80	

Table 6

One Way Analysis of Variance for PCL:YV Factor 1 Scores by Moral Orientation (Substage)

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>
Between Groups	1.00	8.45	8.45	.58
Error (within)	38	554.33	14.59	

Finally, it was hypothesized that moral reasoning may have the potential to provide an additional index for determining specific treatment needs if it were found to be related to contextual inadequacies identified in the sub-scales of the YO-LSI. To test this hypothesis a series of ANOVAs were conducted with each of the subscales (indicating the problem area by their individual labels), criminal history, substance abuse, education/employment, peers, family, accommodation, and miscellaneous, serving as the dependent variable and moral stage level and moral substage (orientation) as the grouping factor.

Results must be prefaced with the acknowledgment

2 OF 2

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that given the small sample and the number of analyses, the probability of a type I error is increased substantially. That said, only one of the 14 ANOVAs resulted in a significant $F(1,38)$ ratio (see Table 7); substage A participants in this group had slightly lower (under 3 points) criminal history scores (see appendix 'C' for summary tables of all ANOVAs). However, once the alpha level of significance of .05 for this one result is divided by the 14 analyses, this result is also rendered non-significant.

Overall, then, and contrary to the hypotheses, no differences between levels of needs/risk, as indicated by scores on the YO:LSI, were found to exist between different stage or substage levels of moral maturity.

Table 7

One Way Analysis of Variance for YO-LSI Sub-Scale
'Criminal History' by Moral Orientation

Criminal History					
Group	<u>n</u>	mean	<u>S.D.</u>		
Substage A	31	9.45	3.30		
Substage B	9	6.67	3.67		
		<u>df</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>
Between groups		1	54.10	54.10	4.74*
Within groups (error)		38	433.68	11.41	

* $p < .05$

DISCUSSION

On first glance, the results of the present research appear consistent with previous studies, and Kohlberg's contention, to the extent that the young offenders in this study can be classified as delayed in moral stage development compared to what is expected in the normal population (Blasi, 1980; Nelson et al., 1990). According to Kohlberg (1976), normal development is indicated by achieving conventional levels by age 11, and yet the average stage score of this group of older delinquents was transitional from the preconventional to the conventional level. However, the group mean is misleading to the extent that it does not capture the fact that the majority of the juvenile offenders in this group were classified as conventional (mature) in their moral reasoning capabilities.

This finding is also consistent with previous research (e.g. review by Nelson et al., 1990), although it is frequently overlooked by the traditional comparative research used by cognitive moral developmentalists who attend to averaging groups of offenders and treating them as homogeneously delayed in moral judgement.

Moreover, on reviewing the protocols a startling

range of individual stage scores within the questionnaires were noted (recall that although individuals obtain one score for moral stage level, this score is obtained by averaging 11 separate stage scores within each individual's protocol). Both scorers in this study remarked at how odd it seemed that there was no criterion to account for this, especially when it appeared that almost every individual in the study obtained a range of stage scores from the lowest possible to the highest possible within their protocols. Despite the fact that Kohlberg's stage theory hinges on explicitly stated assumptions regarding the irreversibility of stages, no criteria exist to invalidate or account for the existence of a range of stage scores within a given protocol. Neither Kohlberg (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987) nor Gibbs (Basinger et al., 1991) address this issue in their most recent scoring manuals.

Perhaps the most illuminating finding of this study was that none of the proposed mediating variables were able to differentiate between morally delayed and mature individuals within the sample of young offenders. Time and again similar findings of delayed moral stage levels in juvenile delinquent groups compared to age matched non-delinquents have been used

to support the theory that criminality could be likened to a barometer for morality. In that no meaningful relationships were uncovered between morally mature or moral delayed juvenile offenders on any of the measures, it appears that this barometer, at best, offers little insight into potential for recidivism within offender groups.

Implications of the above general findings will be discussed next according to the distinction initially proposed between personal and trait consistency. Recall that this distinction was invoked in order to frame the variables thought to have an effect on either arresting delay in the moral development of preconventional young offenders, or mediating the expected consistency between moral competency and moral behaviour that moral maturity should offer those young offenders at conventional levels of development.

Personal Consistency

Moral orientation, propensity to neutralize, and commitment to criminal attitudes and sentiments have been postulated as factors which might inhibit or mediate moral competencies in conventional delinquents (e.g., Gibbs, 1993; Petronio, 1980).

Blasi's conceptualization of this relationship, or means of understanding the potential pre-empting effect

of these factors on moral action, is defined in terms of "integrity" or "personal consistency" (Blasi, 1980).

Recall that personal consistency would be realized when the theoretical "buffer" provided by the acquisition of mature standing within Kohlberg's stages. On the other hand, "Inconsistency" is indicated by morally mature law breakers. The rationale for this is presumably derived from the Kohlbergian model which has typically treated criminality as a proxy for moral immaturity (Blasi, 1980).

Given the assumption that moral maturity would provide a buffer against delinquency, it was hypothesized that mature young offenders might mediate or abrogate the predicted relationship between moral reasoning and moral action by invoking neutralizations or having entrenched criminal attitudes. It was felt that perhaps these types of distortions would allow young offenders a means of dismissing their judgement of what they ought to do and supply rationalizations for acting opposite to what would normally be indicated by moral judgements at their level.

To this end, the results did not indicate a relationship between personal consistency (or inconsistency) and the utilization of moral

competencies. Morally mature (conventional) delinquents were no more likely to neutralize or endorse criminal sentiments than those individuals defined as morally delayed.

One possible reason for failure to uncover the hypothesized relationship may lie in the scoring of the moral judgement protocols. As discussed, although the sample was clearly split into morally mature and delayed offenders, the measure did not account for the wide range of stage scores within each individual protocol.

Although defined as morally delayed, many of the protocols of this group contained high level responses; however, it could be that certain questions simply failed to illicit the higher reasoning and consequently the individual averages led to those individuals being classified as delayed. If this were the case an artificial split between delayed and mature participants may have been responsible for the absence of results. In order to avoid ambiguous results due to false categorization, future studies could devise a method of accounting for the range of stage scores within protocols.

Given that less than 25% of the participants could be categorized as morally mature according to

substage criteria, it is difficult to draw conclusions from the results of this study. However, the dearth of mature orientation within this sample may itself be an important result.

One interesting interpretation can be derived from Gibbs' (1993) suggestion that young offenders may develop a world view which is morally mature, but attained in an "us against them", anti-authority environment, development may only progress from ego-centrism of the preconventional level to what Gibbs (1993) calls a "me-and-a-few-of-my-friends" world view at the conventional stage level. This orientation, or limited world view, although restricted, would not necessarily preclude development conventional moral maturity, but could abrogate the growth toward subtype B orientation, moral ideality. Accurate prediction of moral behaviour could theoretically be limited to these individuals' underlying "me-and-a-few-of-my-friends" underlying perspective taking process, which would fall short of the mature universalistic world view (subtype B), which characteristically is defined by a broad respect for all human life.

To summarize, in the absence of moral ideality, substage B, conventional stage reasoning could be rendered ineffective in providing a buffer against

delinquency, and yet neutralizations would not be entirely necessary, as the restricted world view itself could mediate the moral action by excluding situations or individuals from the circle of the young offenders' world view.

This theoretical turn suggested by Gibbs (1993) of such a restricted world view could also explain why such a wide range of competencies are evidenced within the offender protocols. It could be that certain questions are emotionally attached to an experience in which individuals have made or would make exceptions in their acting on moral judgements or in their judgement on a particular issue. However, and again, this result would indicate that moral judgement is more flexible and reversible than a valid stage theory could allow (i.e. violation of assumptions).

Since little research has been conducted on moral orientations, in either the normal population or offender populations, understanding this process and verifying the implications from Gibbs' (1993) suggestion, would require investigation and comparison of protocols from both offenders and non-offenders. Moreover, longitudinal research may also be required in order to ascertain which environmental conditions limited or facilitated moral ideality.

Finally, it was hypothesized that moral stage and substage would be related to contextual variables measured in the YO-LSI and provide another index of variables which might mediate moral competency and subsequently effect personal integrity (consistency).

Contrary to previous findings that family and peer relationships, substance use, and education (all which contribute to the overall score in the YO-LSI), are related to developmental delay (see review by Jennings et al, 1983) the correlational analysis between the YO-LSI and moral SRMS stage scores failed to confirm this.

A significant negative correlation was found between substage scores and the YO-LSI prior to correction for number of comparisons. Although the relationship was not robust, it does suggest the proposed trend for those with fewer psychosocial problems to have better intuitive moral reasoning capacity.

The absence of relationship between moral development and the YO-LSI could be due to the fact that the participants in this study were all more serious offenders (closed custody), and at the higher end of age for young offenders. In that the subcategories of the YO-LSI indicate problems such as

those with family, peers, and accommodation, it could be that distinguishing between problem areas which pre-existed the offending or resulted from offending may have led to more enlightening results.

However, despite these limitations, and given the failure to establish any meaningful relationships between stage of moral development and any of the other measures in the battery under study could represent a threat to the validity of Kohlberg's pure developmental stage theory itself. Perhaps that is why researchers in the past have chosen to dig deeper into Kohlberg's theory in order to explain anomalous or inconsistent results (e.g., Jurkovic & Prentice, 1974) and modify assumptions (Gibbs et al., 1993) and scoring criteria (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987) rather than re-thinking the relevance of moral stage theory to applied psychology of criminal behaviour.

Looked at in this way, a review of the twists and turns in theory development, combined with results of this study, could be interpreted as indications that stage of moral development is, at best, not an important predictor of future or subsequent delinquency.

One limitation of this study was that the sample was comprised of incarcerated young offenders, this

factor may have had an effect in itself, and should be considered in future studies. Additionally, a control group of non-offenders may have been useful in understanding how moral orientation is distributed in general as well as within the separate groupings.

Trait Consistency

An attempt was made to determine whether previous findings that the personality construct of the psychopath could explain the inconsistency between moral reasoning and moral actions in delinquents. In keeping with the profile of the psychopath, it was expected that they could potentially "fake" moral maturity verbally in terms of explicit stage scoring, but be identified by the absence of the more intuitive moral capabilities scored as substage.

While no relationship was evident between stage or substage scores and the PCL:YV, only one psychopathic young offender was classified as substage B, intuitively mature.

These findings are not entirely different from those reported by Trevethan and Walker (1989), in the sense that psychopaths were not found to be distinguishable from non-psychopaths in terms of their stage of moral development. However, Trevethan and Walker found that psychopaths evidenced more of the

intuitive reasoning components underlying subtype A orientation (pre-moral or heteronomous) in psychopaths than non-psychopathic young offenders.

Although the criteria for scoring substage B in the SRM-SF is different from the criteria used by Trevethan and Walker (1989), who actually measured the four criteria underlying the substages rather than the substages themselves, the results of the two studies taken together suggest that moral substage may be a more subtle and reliable indicator of internalization of moral understanding.

According to theory (Kohlberg, 1984), recall that substage scoring is said to involve intuitive understanding rather than the explicit verbalizations and thus it may be more difficult to express "the words without the music" (Johns & Quay, 1962, p.217) for psychopaths.

Unfortunately small sample sizes in both this study and the Trevethan and Walker (1989) study limit the conclusions which can be made. However, it does appear that psychopathy is an important variable in mediating moral action to the extent that these individuals are assumed to behave without regard for integrity and yet are not distinguishable from non-psychopathic delinquents in terms of moral stage level.

Not accounting for this personality dimension could be one of the reasons for equivocal results in recidivism rates reported by Petronio (1980) who found that conventional delinquents had significantly higher reoffense rates while on probation than preconventional delinquents. In order for the theory of moral judgement to be useful for the understanding of juvenile crime then, it appears that further research is needed with regard to the substages.

Ironically, substage was added by Kohlberg (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987) to explain apparent violations to his stage model which were indicated by discrepancies in results using his measure and while moral orientation is independent of stage development it appears to be the more hopeful measure in terms of relationships to other variables associated with criminality.

Unfortunately, the scoring criteria for substage was only made explicit by Kohlberg in 1987 (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987), and for juveniles by Gibbs in 1992 (Gibbs et al., 1992); furthermore, studies using the substage scores are extremely limited and population parameters in general are unknown. Consequently, their relationship to criminal behaviour per se, independent of, or in relation to stage of moral development and criminal behaviour is purely theoretical and no one has

even speculated on just how treatment could target substage enhancement.

Why Act on Kohlberg's Moral Judgements?'

Overall, results from this study suggest that the distinction between trait and personal consistency may be more useful in relation to moral orientation (substage) than actual moral developmental stages in understanding why the bridge from moral reasoning to moral behaviour is not crossed by juvenile delinquents and why it may continue to be avoided even once the delayed offenders in delinquent groups are raised to a mature standing.

Blasi (1980, p.24) commented that "there is a noncalculating, nonpragmatic inconsistency that is the norm of moral life, as there is a kind of consistency that is the norm of immoral life." The ambiguity of the preceding implications from the results may be better understood with an eye to Blasi's (1980, p.26): "thus generosity can become recklessness, helping can become irresponsibility, and compassion cruelty." In other words, one's justification for inaction in accordance with what one might assume to be the morally right action may be consistent to street wise youths equipped

'Title of Straughan (1986), "Why Act on Kohlberg's Moral Judgements? (Or How to Reach Stage 6 and Remain a Bastard)."

with experience which modifies the "traditional" view of moral behaviour, and although their moral development has progressed to a mature level, moral behaviour is defined quite differently. Consequently, no neutralizing or rationalizing is required to justify their behaviour.

Unfortunately, the most important results may lie in the subtleties of the responses not presently measured by any moral judgement criteria. Both scorers of the SRM-SF protocols commented on how impressed they were with the level of sophistication the juveniles were capable of; apparently many of the young offenders proved to be capable of the highest level of reasoning and displayed an impressive ability to understand intuitively the concept of balancing, indicative of moral substage B reasoning.

For example, the scorers noted for the issue of legal justice the majority of offenders verbalized a need for the judicial system to consider the plausibility of the intention behind the sentence for particular crimes and the need for leniency under certain conditions, which demonstrates a clear progression in role taking ability as well as meets the criteria for the highest stage rating in the SRM-SF (Gibbs, et al, 1992). Moreover, many of the young

offenders expressed a great concern for whether the hypothetical criminal would be more likely to be rehabilitated in jail, and/ or whether the public needed to be protected from particular types of criminals. In addition, responses such as "no it's not important" [to save the life of a stranger if you can without losing your own life] "because the stranger probably wouldn't do it for you" and "no a child shouldn't help his parents because if they haven't been treated with respect they shouldn't give it" are credited as examples of Moral Type B "balancing." These types of responses although indicating intact moral functioning seem to turn the usual behavioural prediction of moral behaviour upside down and perhaps here is the problem of defining criminal behaviour as immoral and overlooking the consistency in the behaviour of delinquents. Moral behaviour is redefined, but cannot be considered less moral in Kohlberg's model even though "helping" behaviour is inhibited by moral judgements which indicate "irresponsibility" - the bridge from reason to action is still crossed although no aid is given to a drowning stranger.

Ironically, juvenile offenders as a group may very well be acting on their moral judgements (both quasi,

as in preconventional judgements and truly moral within the conventional judgements made by delinquents). This would explain the absence of any systematic relationship between measures of risk and moral reasoning in the present study, as well as offer alternative explanations for the anomalous findings that recidivism is actually higher for mature delinquents than delayed delinquents (Petronio, 1980).

Alternatively, in that the consistency, or lack thereof, between moral reasoning and moral action is not well understood in the general population, the search for such in delinquent populations may be even more difficult. Straughan (1986) criticized Kohlberg for assuming too much from the moral judgement of individuals and perhaps this study supports this contention that simply knowing from an intuitive level what one "ought" to do has little bearing on what one will do. Another point made by Straughan was in the question of who says Kohlberg's definition of moral behaviour is in fact moral behaviour? Kohlberg himself acknowledged that even murder could be seen as a moral act in a given situation, so perhaps the whole assumption of delinquents as unreliable or immoral agents is simply a straw man for a theory which, although elegant and intuitively appealing, has no

practical utility for understanding juvenile crime.

In summary, although it appears that moral reasoning may be measured, the ambiguity of defining moral, or immoral, behaviour does not lend itself well to such scrutiny. Consequently, the mediation of moral judgement and moral behaviour is somewhat of a "Gordian Knot" which Kohlberg has attempted to cut by looking to delinquents rather than unravel in the general population. Following Kohlberg's assumption that crime could in itself be seen as indicative of immoral behaviour may in fact be the key to difficulties in elaborating the clinical implications of the theory. That said, the present study was an attempt to examine a cross section of the cut made by Kohlberg and the results appear to generate more questions regarding the utility of the theory for understanding juvenile delinquency than they answer.

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Appendix 'A'

Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development

LEVEL 1: PRECONVENTIONAL

STAGE 1: Heteronomous morality

What is right: To avoid breaking rules backed by punishment, obedience for its own sake, and avoiding physical damage to persons and property.

Reasons for doing right: Avoidance of punishment and the superior power of authorities.

Sociomoral perspective of stage: Egocentric point of view. Doesn't consider the interests of others or recognize that they differ from the actors, doesn't relate two points of view. Actions are considered physically rather than in terms of psychological interests of others. Confusion of authority's perspective with one's own.

STAGE 2: Individualism, instrumental purpose, and exchange

What is right: Following rules only when it is to someone's immediate interest; acting to meet one's own interests and needs and letting others do the same. Right is also what's fair, what's an ideal exchange, a deal, an agreement.

Reasons for doing right: To serve one's own needs or interests in a world where you have to recognize that other people have their interests, too.

Sociomoral perspective of stage: Concrete individualistic perspective. Aware that everybody has his own interests to pursue and these conflict, so that right is relative (in the concrete individualistic sense).

LEVEL 2: CONVENTIONAL

STAGE 3: Mutual interpersonal expectations, relationships, and interpersonal conformity

What is right: Living up to what is expected by people close to you or what people generally expect of people in your role as son, brother, friend, etc.

"Being good" is important and means having good motives, showing concern about others. It also means keeping mutual relationships, such as trust, loyalty, respect, and gratitude.

Reasons for doing right: The need to be a good person in your own eyes and those of others. Your caring for others. Belief in the Golden Rule. Desire

to maintain rules and authority which support stereotypical good Behaviour.

Sociomoral perspective of stage: perspective of the individual in relationships with other individuals. Aware of shared feelings, agreements, and expectations which take primacy over individual interests. Relates points of view through the concrete Golden Rule, putting yourself in the other guy's shoes. Does not yet consider generalized system perspective.

STAGE 4: Social system and conscience

What is right: Fulfilling the actual duties to which you have agreed. Laws are to be upheld except in extreme cases where they conflict with other fixed social duties. Right is also contributing to society, the group, or institution.

Reasons for doing right: To keep the institution going as a whole, to avoid the breakdown in the system "if everyone did it," or the imperative of conscience to meet one's defined obligations.

Sociomoral perspective of stage: Differentiates societal point of view from interpersonal agreement or motives. Takes the point of view of the system that defines roles and rules. Considers individual relations in terms of place in the system.

LEVEL 3: POSTCONVENTIONAL, OR PRINCIPLED

STAGE 5: Social contract or utility and individual rights

What is right: Being aware that people hold a variety of values and opinions, that most values and rules are relative to your group. These relative rules should usually be upheld, however, in the interest of impartiality and because they are the social contract. Some nonrelative values and rights like life and liberty, however, must be upheld in any society and regardless of majority opinion.

Reasons for doing right: A sense of obligation to law because of one's social contract to make and abide by laws for the welfare of all and for the protection of all people's rights. A feeling of contractual commitment, freely entered upon, to family, friendship, trust, and work obligations. Concern that laws and duties be based on rational calculation of overall utility, "the greatest good for the greatest number."

Sociomoral perspective of stage: Prior-to-society perspective. Perspective of a rational individual aware of values and rights prior to social attachments and contracts. Integrates perspectives by formal

mechanisms of agreement, contract, objective impartiality, and due process. Considers moral and legal points of view; recognizes that they sometimes conflict and finds it difficult to integrate them.

STAGE 6: Universal ethical principles

What is right: Following self-chosen ethical principles. Particular laws or social agreements are usually valid because they rest on such principles. When laws violate these principles, one acts in accordance with the principle. Principles are universal principles of justice: the equality of human rights and respect for the dignity of human beings as individual persons.

Reasons for doing right: The belief as a rational person in the validity of universal moral principles, and a sense of personal commitment to them.

Sociomoral perspective of the stage: Perspective of a moral point of view from which social arrangements derive. Perspective is that of any rational individual recognizing the nature of morality or the fact that persons are ends in themselves and must be treated as such.

Note. From Kohlberg, 1976, pp.34-35.

Appendix 'B'

Analysis of Variance of Criminal History by Global Stage Score

Source	D.F.	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F Ratio	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	0.2813	0.2813	0.0219	0.8831
Within Groups	38	487.4937	12.8288		
Total	39	487.775			

Group	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
preconve	19	8.7368	3.1945	.7329
conventi	21	8.9048	3.8975	.8505
Total	40	8.8250	3.5365	.5592

Analysis of Variance of Substance Use by Global Stage Score

Source	D.F.	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F Ratio	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	5.4897	5.4897	.9835	.3276
Within Groups	38	212.1103	5.5818		
Total	39	217.6			

Group	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
preconve	19	3.2105	1.7820	.4088
conventi	21	3.9524	2.7835	.6074
Total	40	3.6000	2.3621	.3735

Analysis of Variance of Education/Employment by Global Stage Score

Source	D.F.	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F Ratio	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	1.1932	1.1932	.2595	.6134
Within Groups	38	174.7068	4.5975		
Total	39	175.9			

Group	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
preconve	19	4.6316	1.8918	.4340
conventi	21	4.2857	2.3483	.5124
Total	40	4.4500	2.1237	.3358

Analysis of Variance Family Global Stage Score

Source	D.F.	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F Ratio	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	0.0006	0.0006	.0001	.9931
Within Groups	38	283.7744	7.4677		
Total	39	283.775			

Group	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
preconve	19	4.5789	2.7752	.6367
conventi	21	4.5714	2.6939	.5879
Total	40	4.5750	2.6975	.4265

Analysis of Variance of Peers by Global Stage Score

Source	D.F.	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F Ratio	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	0.016	0.016	.0032	.9551
Within Groups	38	189.584	4.9891		
Total	39	189.6			

Group	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
preconve	19	4.4211	2.2929	.5260
conventi	21	4.3810	2.1789	.4755
Total	40	4.4000	2.2049	.3486

Analysis of Variance of Psych/Misc by Global Stage Score

Source	D.F.	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F Ratio	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	0.1504	0.1504	.0609	.8064
Within Groups	38	93.8246	2.4691		
Total	39	93.975			

Group	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
preconvi	19	2.2105	1.5121	.3469
conventi	21	2.3333	1.6228	.3541
Total	40	2.2750	1.5523	.2454

Analysis of Variance of Accomodation by Global Stage Score

Source	D.F.	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F Ratio	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	4.3339	4.3339	1.3905	.2457
Within Groups	38	118.4411	3.1169		
Total	39	122.775			

Group	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
preconve	19	1.5789	1.7738	.4069
conventi	21	2.2381	1.758	.3836
Total	40	1.925	1.7743	.2805

Analysis of Variance of Substance Use by Moral Subtype A or B

Source	D.F.	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F Ratio	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	1.6573	1.6573	.2916	.5923
Within Groups	38	215.9427	5.6827		
Total	39	217.6			

Group	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
type A	31	3.7097	2.2977	0.4127
type B	9	3.2222	2.6822	.8941
Total	40	3.6	2.3621	.3735

Analysis of Variance of Education/Employment by Moral Subtype A or B

Source	D.F.	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F Ratio	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	7.1258	7.1258	1.6044	.2130
Within Groups	38	168.7742	4.4414		
Total	39	175.9			

Group	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
type A	31	4.6774	2.1038	.3778
type B	9	3.6667	2.1213	.7071
Total	40	4.4500	2.1237	.3358

Analysis of Variance of Family by Moral Subtype A or B

Source	D.F.	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F Ratio	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	1.4453	1.4453	.1945	.6617
Within Groups	38	282.3297	7.4297		
Total	39	283.775			

Group	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
type A	31	4.6774	2.7005	.4850
type B	9	4.2222	2.8186	.9395
Total	40	4.5750	2.6975	.4265

Analysis of Variance of Peers by Moral Subtype A or B

Source	D.F.	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F Ratio	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	6.2452	6.2452	1.2943	.2624
Within Groups	38	183.3548	4.8251		
Total	39	189.6			

Group	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
type A	31	4.6129	2.3047	.4139
type B	9	3.6667	1.7321	.5774
Total	40	4.4000	2.2049	.3486

Analysis of Variance of Psych/Misc by Moral Subtype A or B

Source	D.F.	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F Ratio.	F Prob
Between Groups	1	0.0323	0.0323	.0131	.9095
Within Groups	38	93.9427	2.4722		
Total	39	93.975			

Group	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
type A	31	2.2903	1.5534	.2790
type B	9	2.2222	1.6415	.5472
Total	40	2.2750	1.5523	.2454

**Analysis of Variance of Accomodation by Moral Subtype
A or B**

Source	D.F.	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F Ratio	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	5.7356	5.7356	1.8622	.1804
Within Groups	38	117.0394	3.08		
Total	39	122.775			

Group	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
type A	31	2.129	1.8026	0.3238
type B	9	1.2222	1.5635	0.5212
Total	40	1.925	1.7743	0.2801

END

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