

Social Perceptions of Homicides: The Effect of the Age of the Victim,  
the Relationship between the Offender and the Victim,  
the Sex of the Offender and the Intent

By

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## Abstract

The present work builds on the crime seriousness research, focusing specifically on whether 1) certain homicides are reliably considered worse than others, and 2) people generally agree on which homicides are considered worse. Four variables were examined: age of the victim, the relationship between the offender and the victim, the sex of the offender and the intentionality. Sixty-five university students were involved in the pilot study that focused on the meaning of the term 'seriousness' and whether the four variables affected rankings of 12 crimes with different combinations of these variables. Results indicate that there was a high level of consensus in the rankings and the four variables did influence the rankings. The main study sought to overcome the confounds of the pilot study. Ninety-two university students used a Q-sort technique to place 52 crimes into 11 columns from most wrong to least wrong. Results indicate a high degree of consensus with the intentional death of a young child by the mother being considered the most serious crime and the unintentional death of a senior citizen by a stranger being considered the least serious crime. These results are discussed within an evolutionary framework.

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*Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.*  
*Confucius*

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## Introduction

The story appears on the front page of the newspaper: a murder. Readers may feel a variety of emotions such as shock, anger, fear and sadness, but not all murders evoke the same emotional responses. Why do some murders result in strong reactions whereas others hardly affect us at all? Moreover, to what extent are the reactions similar across readers as opposed to varying person to person? Do most people consider the murder of a child more emotionally powerful than the murder of an older person? The present research attempts to answer these questions. It builds on a tradition of research called crime seriousness, which asks whether certain crimes are considered more serious than others and why. The present study will examine the influence of four variables on the judgments of the seriousness of different homicides: the age of the victim, the relationship between the victim and the offender, the sex of the offender, and intent. It also examines the degree of consensus people share about the relative seriousness of various homicides. If people agree, then why? If not, are there any variables that predict differences in perceptions of crime seriousness?

The study of popular perceptions is an integral part of the study of social life. In criminological and criminal justice research, public perceptions of the nature of criminal behaviour and of crime as a social problem constitute an important area of investigation (Newman & Trilling, 1975). A pivotal question in the sociology of law is the extent to which the criminal law reflects the values held by the public and the extent to which the public agrees on criminal justice issues. This issue is addressed by two main theoretical models: the consensus model and the conflict model. The consensus model draws on the work of Durkheim (1939), Pound (1943) and Parsons (1951). Moral functionalists

essentially view the law as the product of value consensus, reflecting a common consciousness (Hagan, 1980). From this perspective, there is a general value consensus in society from which the definitions of acceptable and unacceptable conduct are derived and ultimately represented in criminal law (Chambliss, 1973). The consensus model would predict that there would be widespread agreement concerning what would constitute a criminal offence, the seriousness of the offence, and the nature and severity of the sanctions that may be imposed on offenders (Chambliss, 1973).

The conflict model has its roots in Karl Marx's theories about economy and class inequality (Abdo, 1996). It holds that criminal law is a social control device imposed by the more powerful in society on the less powerful. In other words, criminal law is the result of a political process in which powerful groups seek to have their values legitimated in the criminal code and supported by the coercive power of the government (Chambliss, 1973). Most people who hold the conflict perspective see the criminal law as oppressive in as much as it is forced by elites on the less powerful in society (Chambliss, 1973; Thomas, Cage & Foster, 1976). Yet as Hagan (1980) argues, there is dissensus found among the elite in regards to criminal attitudes. Given that the present studies are not interested in examining the concept of social class, it may be more appropriate to re-title this perspective the dissensus viewpoint and broadening it to explore individual difference based on other variables besides social class.

There are a number of important policy implications and possible practical applications of studies of crime seriousness. Sellin and Wolfgang (1964) argued that until their pioneering study, it was legal experts who decided the seriousness of crimes. It was deemed necessary to determine whether the opinion held by legal experts matched public

opinion. Rossi and Henry (1980) note that the state legislature in Colorado requested a public survey of crime seriousness in connection with drafting a revised criminal code. There is also much evidence to suggest that the seriousness of the crime should wholly or partly determine the severity of the punishment (Hamilton & Raytina, 1980; Warr, Meier & Erickson, 1983).

In a review of the crime seriousness literature, Blum-West (1985) has observed that the public's perception of seriousness appears to be influenced by the following factors: degree of bodily hurt, economic damage, emotional damage, potential for harm, intent and fair play. That is people perceive that crimes resulting in more bodily injury, greater economic or emotional damage, greater potential for harm, intentional crimes and those crimes where the perpetrator and the victim were pitted unevenly in favour of the perpetrator as more serious. For example, according to the United States National Survey of Crime Severity done by Wolfgang, Figlio, Tracy and Singer (1985) the scenario 'a factory knowingly gets rid of its waste in a way that pollutes the water supply of a city. As a result, 20 people die' is judged as more serious than 'a factory knowingly gets rid of its waste in a way that pollutes the water supply of a city. As a result 20 people become ill but none require medical treatment'. Similarly, 'an employee embezzles \$1000 from his employer' is judged more serious than 'an employee embezzles \$10 from his employer'. In terms of fair play, Casey and O'Connell (1999) found that the mugging of a young man was judged to be less serious than the mugging of an elderly woman. While it appears the greater the economic damage, emotional damage and degree of bodily hurt are positively related to the concept of seriousness, the present studies are interested in

examining the crimes where the degree of bodily hurt is the most severe: crimes that result in the death of the victim.

Another question that the various studies have examined is the degree to which there is agreement among individuals and groups in seriousness perceptions. Crimes on the upper end of the seriousness scale, like murder and armed-robbery produce more consensus, even cross-culturally (Newman, 1976). Victimless crimes, on the other hand, produce more dissensus (Carlson & Williams, 1993; Evans & Scott, 1984; Miethe, 1984; Newman, 1976). Various studies (e.g. Figlio, 1975; Hawkins, 1980; Rossi, Waite, Bose & Berk, 1974; Sellin & Wolfgang, 1964) have found consensus across sex, social class, age groups as well as racial/ethnic groups. For example, Rossi and colleagues argue sex consensus across rankings of 140 crimes that range from the planned killing of a policeman (the most serious crime) to being drunk in a public place (the least serious) based on the males' rankings correlated .94 with the females' rankings. This finding however, has been challenged by other studies that have found aggregate differences (e.g. Akman & Normandeau, 1968; Geboyts, Roberts & DasGupta, 1988; Lampe, 1982; Vogel, 1988; Walker, 1978). For example, Lampe (1982) found that when participants were asked to list the six worst crimes significant sex differences emerged. Male participants rated murder as the most serious crime while female participants were more likely to identify rape as the most serious crime. Similarly, Davis and Kemp (1993) found significant sex, age and socioeconomic differences in a sample of 115 Christchurch City residents who were asked to estimate the seriousness of 25 different crimes, ranking from murder to defacing a coin. On average, respondents over the age of 55 found nine of the 25 crimes as significantly more serious than those in the 15-35 age group or the 36-55

age group. These crimes include selling cannabis, blackmail, rioting, and fraud. Yet it is important to note that these are crimes that were judged by the entire sample as not being very serious in comparison to other crimes evaluated.

Miethe (1982) has also criticized the findings of consensus, stating that although correlations based on subgroup data may yield high correlations, there still may be significant within group variability. For example, Rossi and colleagues (1974) found a .94 correlation between males and females on their ratings of 140 offences. However, for some crimes the variance in ratings was very large (indicating a lack of agreement). Although ratings for the most serious acts (e.g. planned murder of a policeman) had relatively small variances ( $\underline{M} = 8.47, s^2 = 2.00$ ), ratings for other offences (e.g. loitering in a public place) had large variances ( $\underline{M} = 3.38, s^2 = 8.11$ ). Miethe (1982) argues that measures of dispersion have been neglected in past studies and that measures of dispersion are the single best indicator of agreement (i.e. consensus).

There seems to be widespread consensus that murder is the most serious crime (see Cavadino & Wiles, 1994; Cullen, Link, Travis III & Wozniak, 1985; Rossi et al., 1974; Schragger & Short, 1980; Velez-Diaz & Megargee, 1970) yet the topic has not been explored fully. Are certain murders worse than others? Various studies seem to indicate that certain murders are worse than others. For example, Wolfgang and colleagues (1985) found that the death a child at the hands of its parent is more serious than a husband fatally stabbing his wife, which in turn is more serious than a wife killing her husband. Similarly Hawkins (1980) found that participants in his study ranked homicides among the most serious in a list of 25 crimes (including rape, armed-robbery, failure to pay income taxes and shoplifting). The seven homicides in his study ranked within the top 11

worst crimes with the crimes of armed robbery, rape, hit and run (of a child), rape of a babysitter and a farmer selling contaminated grain for livestock were also included in the top 11 with the homicides. Of particular interest to the present study, there were two homicides that included family members as the perpetrators: 'parents beating a young child to death' was the number one (worst) ranked and '22-year-old man kills parents and sisters' was ranked as the eleventh worst crime. The rest of the homicides involved acquaintance or strangers in relation to the victim.

Thus far comparisons between different murder scenarios are impossible because some authors have included different amounts of information in their description of the offence, ranging from the simple title of 'murder' to a more involved description of the relationship between the offender and the victim and the motivation. Also, in certain studies such as the National Crime Survey by Wolfgang and colleagues (1985), participants were only given a selection of possible offences to rank.

One study has examined the perpetrator's intent as a variable that affects crime seriousness ratings of different homicide scenarios. Mitchell (1998) argued that while the law does recognize very specific kinds of homicides such as assisted suicide and infanticide, he was interested in whether the public recognize variations in gravity between homicides. Mitchell discovered that there was a great deal of variability in the rankings. For example, one of the crimes participants were asked to rank involved a woman who killed her abusive husband while he slept. One third of participants ranked this crime as one of the three worst crimes (out of eight crimes) but 40 % ranked it as one of the least serious. Despite the variability in rankings, participants clearly understand the difference between premeditated murder and accidental murder and they rank

premeditated murder as more serious. Participants were also asked to describe the worst possible homicide they could think of. Results indicate that the most commonly mentioned aspects were the victim characteristic, the motive, and method of killing. In terms of the victim characteristic, the worst possible homicide involved an innocent victim, an elderly victim, and a policeman/fireman. Female participants were more likely than male participants to choose child killings as the worst, as did respondents with children or grandchildren. Descriptions of the least serious homicide involved mercy killing, accidental killing, or self-defence. Interestingly, participants describing these types of homicides did not use the term 'murder'. Clearly Mitchell's (1998) work affirms that the public recognizes variations in the gravity of homicides and believes that various factors make a death at the hands of another person more or less serious.

Herzog's (2004) work also supports the conclusion that not all murders are perceived as equally serious. Research participants in Herzog's study generally matched the typical seriousness categorization of criminal law – planned deliberate (first degree) murders were considered more serious than unplanned but intentional (manslaughter) murders. In turn, both kinds of murders were considered significantly more serious than unintentional, negligent homicides, which, in turn were perceived as significantly more serious than homicides committed legally by police officers. Offender's criminal intent at the time of the homicide significantly affected respondent's seriousness perceptions. For example, a murder that occurs as a result of a political dispute was considered more serious than one that results from romantic infidelity.

**Why are some homicides more serious than others?**

There appears to be some evidence in the literature on crime seriousness that there is some degree of consensus among members of the public about the relative seriousness of crime. What accounts for this phenomenon? One possibility is evolutionary theory.

*Evolutionary Theory*

Charles Darwin's (1859) theories of adaptation, natural selection and evolution have changed the way scientists view the natural world. The theory emphasizes two related principles: natural selection and survival of the fittest. Darwin explained that certain varieties of a species were selected by nature to survive in particular parts of the world because they had characteristics that fit with, or were adapted to their surroundings. Members of a species lacking characteristics that enable them to meet the challenges of their environment were less likely to survive. In the past 10 years, the view that human social behaviour can be understood from the perspective of evolution based theories of natural and sexual selection has gradually taken hold in psychology (Tooby & Cosmides, 1988). Evolutionary psychology has also provided some new ways of understanding various topics such as prosocial behaviour (Cunningham, 1985/6), mate selection (Buss, 1988), rape (Thornhill & Palmer, 2000; Travis, 2003), female crime (Campbell, Muncer & Bibel, 2001) and child abuse (Lightcap, Kurland & Burgess, 1982). Daly and Wilson (1988) have argued that the evolutionary perspective is especially useful in understanding homicide. According to Daly and Wilson, the concepts of resource competition, kin selection, male sexual jealousy and exploitation that guide the study of animals by biologists are also useful in studying human behaviour, including

homicide. For example, while infanticide was once considered in the natural world to be a rare, maladaptive practice (King, 1963), there is now much evidence to suggest that it is a functional adaptive practice that occurs commonly in many species, including mammals (see Brooks, 1984; Fossey, 1984; Sommer, 2000). Many of the reasons for infanticide in non-human animals as outlined by Hrdy (1979) can be seen in cases of human filicide (Bugos Jr. & McCarthy, 1984; Daly & Wilson, 1984). Daly and Wilson (1988) also argue that human homicide by acquaintances can frequently be understood in terms of competition for resources.

While evolutionary theory can help researchers understand human action, the question remains of whether people think in a way that is reflective of evolutionary theory. There is evidence to suggest that evolutionary ideas are reflected in people's thoughts and opinions. Burstein, Crandall and Kitayama (1994) examined helping behaviour and found that in life-or-death situations people choose to aid close kin over distant kin, the young over the old, the healthy over the sick, the wealthy over the poor and the premenopausal woman over the postmenopausal woman as evolutionary theory would predict. Evolutionary theorists (e.g. Buss, 2004) argue that humans may not be aware that their actions and thoughts are so influenced by evolutionary mechanisms. For example, Buss (2003) argues that when participants were asked about mate preference, statements made by both men and women clearly reflected evolutionary mechanisms. For example, the waist-to-hip ratio is important in determining attractiveness in a female partner. Apparently, this ratio provides cues to a woman's reproductive capacity although most people may not be specifically aware of this (Singh, 1993). Similarly,

there is now evidence that men can detect when women ovulate and find women more attractive during this time of the month (Symons, 1995).

Recall that the present study is interested in examining the influence four variables have on judgments of crime seriousness: age, the relationship between the victim and the offender, the sex of the offender and the intent. While the present study is not interested in directly testing evolutionary theory, it will be used a framework. As we shall see, evolutionary theory makes certain predictions about how people will respond to each of these variables in relation to the crime of homicide.

### **Age of the Victim**

The evolutionary perspective would make some specific suggestions in terms of the seriousness of homicides. Much emphasis in this perspective is placed on the reproductive value of an individual or the usefulness of the individual to the community, for example, in terms of producing food. According to evolutionary theory, young, healthy adults in their prime reproductive years should be valued more than adults outside their reproductive years or unhealthy adults. In many cultures, such as the Inuit culture, the value of preserving adults of reproductive age at the expense of the young and elderly in famine situations was communally understood (Jenness, 1922; Tester & McNicoll, 2004). Many societies advocate only rearing children who are strong to begin with during ideal conditions, given the incredible parental investment (Daly & Wilson, 1978; Dickemann, 1979; Langer, 1974; Moseley, 1986). If the evolutionary theory were to make predictions about the relation between crime seriousness and the age of the victim, it would predict that reproductive potential (over a lifetime) is of key importance. Therefore, a 10 year old has greater potential than a 30 year old. A one year old probably

has less potential than a 10 year old in the sense that chances of a one year old dying before reaching reproductive time is greater than a 10 year old. The homicides of young children and the elderly should therefore be considered the least serious according to the evolutionary perspective, and the homicides of those nearing or in their reproductive years should be considered most serious.

There is also much evidence to suggest that people's thoughts on the age of the victim will not reflect an evolutionary standpoint. One such study (Burnstein, Crandall & Kitayama, 1994) has found that there is a greater tendency to help a one year old than a 10 year old in life-or-death situations. This runs counter to evolutionary theory, as helping infants is riskier than helping adolescents because there are more opportunities for harm to befall infants before they can reach reproductive age. Respondents in the study seemed to ignore the risk and assume that the infants have at least as much likelihood of reproducing as do 10 year olds even though the 10 year old is much closer to reaching reproductive age. The researchers speculated that in present day culture, participants do not think about infant mortality or childhood diseases and therefore gave little weight to the possibility that an infant may not survive. Burnstein, Crandall and Kitayama (1994) then asked participants to imagine an environment where life is short and uncertain, somewhere like a Sub-Saharan country that has high rates of infant mortality, famine and disease. Under these conditions, participants were more likely to help the 10 year old than the one year old.

Stanton (1990) and Margolin (1990) argue the death of a child evokes the greatest sadness and indignation. This type of homicide is most likely to make front-page news (Sorenson, Peterson-Manz, & Berk, 1998). Dally (1982) has argued that the way in

which present-day North American society cherishes children and childhood is very different than other cultures or any other time period. In the past children were viewed as labourers (Berk, 1997). Furthermore, high rates of infant mortality and large family sizes led to minimal parental attachment (Berk, 1997). This paradigm shift is unique to our society and has many implications. The fundamental value children hold in our society is illustrated by the deep concern that people share for the health and welfare not only of their own children but also of the children of others (Lord, Bourdeaux, Jarvis & Weeks, 2002). People now recognize that children have rights to basic necessities and nurturance. Millions of dollars are invested into the physical and psychological well-being of children. Child labour is seen as abhorrent to most and child abuse is no longer considered a family issue but a social problem in need of intervention (Newman, 2000; Pfohl, 1993).

Researchers state that there are many negative stereotypes about the elderly in this culture (Healey, 1985; Hummert, 1995; Kimmel, 1988; Palmore, 1982; Snyder & Miene, 1995; Thornton, 2002). For example, Bowd (2003) examined jokes about the elderly and found common negative themes: the impotent male, the forgetful old person, the immobilized old person and the unattractive female. Elderly people are often seen as burdens as they are no longer working and 'contributing to society' (Lubrosky & McCullen, 1999; Palmore, 1982). Yet, there are also positive stereotypes regarding the elderly and this may play a large role in social perceptions of crime with elderly victims. The elderly in this culture of often perceived as child-like and in need of protection (Palmore, 1982). Therefore, the crimes against the elderly may be judged as particularly serious. Yet, at the same time, there may not be the same sense of loss as when a younger

person dies as people may rationalize that an older person was closer to death than a younger person was. North American ideology surrounding aging and the elderly may be particularly unique as in other cultures, particularly Asian cultures, the wisdom of the elderly is revered and the elderly have an important place within the household (Kaker, 1998).

There has been some research regarding the impact age has on social perceptions surrounding issues of justice. The majority of the research has focused on the age of the child victim and their perceived credibility in sexual assault cases with the general finding being that crimes involving younger victims are perceived to be more serious (Back & Lips, 1998; Bottoms, 1993; Bottoms, Davis, & Epstein, 2004; Bottoms, & Goodman, 1994; Calhoun, Selby, Long & Laney, 1980; Maynard & Wideman, 1997; Nightingale, 1993). Various researchers have examined how expectations about age can affect how people react to someone's death. Research has found that death is perceived as more tragic when it occurs at a younger age (Chasteen & Madey, 2003; Neugarten, 1979). Gamino, Sewell and Easterling (1998, 2000) demonstrated that the decedent's age was negatively correlated with grief misery and suggested that survivors experienced greater difficulties in grieving when the decedent was child or young adult. Jecker and Schneiderman (1994) argue that the perceived tragedy of dying young may be a phenomenon of western industrialized society as people expect that they, and those around them, to live into their eighties. The death of a younger person may result in shattered assumptions, a concept outlined by Janoff-Bulman (1992).

### **The Relationship between the Offender and the Victim**

The present study was designed to examine four different relationships between the victim and offender: filicide (parent killing child), parricide (child killing parent), acquaintance and stranger. Canadian data on homicides between 1993 and 2002 found that family homicides accounted for almost 37% of solved homicides. Acquaintances (48%), strangers (15%) and an accused with an unknown relationship to the victim (1%) make up the remaining homicides (Statistics Canada, 2004). Studies done in various American cities by Wolfgang (1958) and Wilbanks (1984) indicate that the breakdown among the different categories is similar.

The evolutionary perspective would also make some predictions regarding the relationship between the victim and the offender and its impact on crime seriousness. Hamilton (1964) has argued from an evolutionary standpoint that rather than ensuring that the single individual survives, human behaviour has the ultimate goal of enhancing the survival of one's gene pool. The kin selection theory states that both humans and animals show preferential treatment of kin (Chapais, 2001). From this it stands that one should prefer to help those to whom one is genetically related and various research has supported these predictions (e.g. Burnstein, et al., 1994; Essock-Vitale & McGuire, 1985). If humans prefer kin, then it makes sense that crimes involving close kin will be seen as more serious than those involving acquaintances or strangers. Quinsey, Lalumière, Querée and McNaughton (1999) have found a linear relationship between biological kinship and perceived seriousness of various crimes.

While evolutionary theory does discuss paternal investment, one must also examine the social concept of the family. The role of nurturer is given to parents,

particularly mothers. The term 'Motherhood Mystique' encompasses the ideology of how all mothers should act. Mothers are expected to have infinite patience and will put her children's needs above her own, and that children are best served by their mother's full time devotion (Hays, 1996; Hoffnung, 1989; Oakley, 1981; Rich, 1976; Rossiter, 1988). The crime of filicide challenges this ideology. The crime of parricide involves a violation that parents are to be respected and obeyed.

Various researchers (Hotaling & Finkelhor, 1990; Silverman and Kennedy, 1987; Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980) argue that the majority of people do not recognize that family homicides and family violence are so common. Research has shown that the public is concerned but is generally ignorant about issues surrounding child abuse and partner abuse (Fuselier, Durham & Wurtele, 2002; Genteman, 1984; Reynolds & Birkimer, 2002; Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980). The majority of people feel that stranger homicides are much more common than they actually are and present more of a threat to society than other forms of violence (Riedel, 1987).

Various studies have examined differences in sentences based on the relationship between the offender and victim. Daly and Wilson (1988) found that offenders who are related to victims tend to receive lighter sentences than non-family members, except in cases of sexual assault where family members tended to receive harsher sentences than do non-family members. In the United States, men who murder strangers are twice as likely to get the death penalty as those who murder family members (Rapaport, 1991). Janicki (1999) has examined differences in the perceptions of homicide according to the relationship between the victim and the offender. This researcher compared filicide with spousal homicide and stranger homicide and found that the death of an infant was rated

as least intentional while the perpetrator who killed a stranger was seen as the most dangerous. Of the three types of homicides studied, participants thought that the spouse murder involved the most provocation on the part of the victim.

### **The Sex of the Offender**

Concerning the sex of the offender, evolutionary theory would predict no differences in social perceptions of a male versus a female offender. In the natural world, aggression by both sexes is common (Hrdy, 1984). Perhaps the only difference would be in the case of a father who kills a child because he is uncertain of paternity. Evolutionary theory explores how the biological aspects of reproduction create great differences in parental investment and how males of all species have developed adaptations to ensure paternal certainty in order to avoid expending the investment for the benefit of unrelated young (Daly & Wilson, 1984). A male uncertain of paternity or a male invading a new territory will often kill the young (Hrdy, 1984). In humans, the concepts of male sexual jealousy and parental investment have been used to explain why stepfathers abuse and kill stepchildren at far higher rates than do fathers killing their biological children. A father who kills a child because he is uncertain of paternity may evoke a different reaction than a father who kills for another reason (Daly & Wilson, 1988). Evolutionary theory has been used to understand why females are universally less criminal than males (Daly & Wilson, 1988) and how resource scarcity drives both property and violent offending in women (Campbell, Muncer & Bibel, 2001) but does not really make any predictions regarding social reactions to the sex of the offender.

The female offender comprises less than five percent of the entire prison population in the United States (d'Orban, 1990; Mann, 1996). Daly and Wilson (1988) argue that

there is no known society where the levels of human violence committed by women even begins to approach that committed by men. It is only recently that female criminality has been the subject of scientific investigation rather than speculation (see Belknap, 1996; Messerschmidt, 1993; Rasche 1974). When a female kills, it is most likely a family member (Mann, 1996). The largest group of victims (46%) was children, followed by a spouse or lover (34%) (Daly & Wilson, 1988). Female homicide outside the family is unexplored territory and is of considerable criminological and psychiatric interest (d'Orban, 1990).

While justice is supposed to be blind, various researchers have also found that the sex of the defendant has a powerful influence on court procedures. Differences in role expectations and sex stereotypes lead to very different outcomes. Some researchers (Bogoch, 1999; Koons-Witt, 2002; Moulds, 1978; Poe-Yamagata & Butts, 1996; Steffenmeiser, 1980; Zingraff & Thomson, 1984) have provided evidence that the criminal justice system is more lenient towards female offenders than male offenders. Yet other researchers (e.g. Chesney-Lind, 1977) argue that female offenders are punished more severely than are male offenders. The concepts of dominant paternalism and protective paternalism may explain the discrepancy (see Glick & Fiske, 1996). When a female offender violates the female stereotype, she is presented as out-of-control and in need of punishment, not only for her crime, but also for violating the female stereotype. She will receive a longer sentence in comparison to the male offender. The sentence is seen as a way of keeping the female offender in line, much like an authoritarian parent keeps a child in line. The harsher sentences for female offenders are especially seen in the juvenile court system, in particular, for status offences. When males commit status

offences, it is more common to attribute this behaviour to 'boys being boys' but when a female commits a similar act, her act will be considered a precursor of worse crimes to come unless she is disciplined (Armstrong, 1977). In contrast, when a female offender embodies the female stereotype, she is more likely to receive a lenient sentence. This stems from the belief that women are weaker than men are and the criminal justice system is there to protect them and guide them as a parent guides a child (protective paternalism).

While researchers (Ballinger, 2000; Edwards, 1986ab, Faith, 1993; Wilczynski, 1991; Worrall, 1990) have found evidence that sex expectations and stereotypes do explain the discrepancy in sentences, it does not tell the whole story. Various researchers (e.g. Daly & Wilson, 1988; Streib, 1990; Wilczynski & Morris, 1993) argue that the crimes (in particular the homicides) that women commit are qualitatively different from the crimes that men commit. Streib (1990) also argues that there are typically more mitigating factors in homicides involving female offenders such as Battered Wife-Syndrome. Steffensmeier (1980) has found that unlike men who may be viewed as criminal because of dispositional characteristics, women's criminal activities are often interpreted as resulting from situational or environmental factors outside of their control. Furthermore, people seem to need some outside explanation for female criminality rather than accept that the female chose to be criminal. The medicalization of the female delinquent is common and this can be seen with defences such as postpartum psychosis and premenstrual syndrome (Brusca, 1990, Caplan, McCurdy-Myers & Gans, 1992; Nelson, 1991). Not surprising, because of this view that women's criminality is based

more on external factors than internal factors, women are rated as better candidates for rehabilitation, less dangerous and less likely to commit future crimes (Strieb, 1990).

### **Intent**

Mitchell's (1993) study found that intent is an important part of social perceptions of homicide where an intent to commit murder was more serious than an accidental action that resulted in the death of someone. Yet practically, it is difficult to assess someone's intent without knowing for sure his or her thoughts. Evolutionary theory offers very little in understanding how this variable will influence people's rankings of crime. It is much more of a social/cognitive construct (see Heider, 1964; Weiner, 1985). It is hypothesized for the present study that homicides that are intentional will be seen as more serious than homicides that are not intentional. Yet the real interest in this variable is in the possible interaction it may have with the other variables, for example, it is possible that a mother killing a child may be seen as more serious than other crimes regardless of her intent since she is responsible for that child.

### **Individual Differences**

While the consensus model argues that the public generally agrees on criminal justice issues, research tells us that conflicting opinions are everywhere from opinions on the death penalty (Thomas & Foster, 1975) to abortion (Shaw, 2003). It is very difficult to make public policy with which everyone agrees. The conflict/dissensus position argues that there will be individual differences in people's perceptions of crime seriousness. The present study is interested in identifying some of the sources of differences and will look at three possible mediators: Just World Belief, Ambivalent Sexism and the sex of the participant.

## **Just World Belief**

Individuals have a fundamental need to perceive their social world as stable, orderly, and predictable (Bowlby, 1969; Erickson, 1950; Greenberg, Solomon & Pyszczynski, 1997; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Lerner, 1980). Perceiving the social world as orderly and predictable provides individuals with a number of benefits, including enhanced control, motivation, self-efficacy, self-worth, mental health, and normative proscriptions for behaviour (Greenberg et al., 1997; Janoff-Bulman, 1989; Lipkus, Dalbert, & Siegler, 1996). The just world belief (JWB) contributes to the perceived orderliness and stability of the social world. JWB refers to the conviction that individuals get what they deserve and deserve what they get (Lerner, 1980). Individuals differ in the extent to which they endorse JWB, with strong endorsers of JWB being more likely to possess an internal locus of control, endorse the Protestant work ethic, support conservative political values, and score highly on measures of authoritarianism relative to weak endorsers of JWB (see Furnham & Procter, 1989, for a review).

What happens, however, when the belief that the good things happen to good people is challenged? When individuals encounter strong evidence that their world is not just and fair after all, they experience a heightened sense of fear, stress, anxiety, and vulnerability (Janoff-Bulman, 1989; Lerner, 1980; Tannenbaum & Gaer, 1965). According JWB theory, one response to unjust events would be to restore justice cognitively, for example, by convincing oneself that people who suffered deserved their fate and by derogating victims (Lerner & Matthews, 1967; Lerner, Miller & Holmes, 1976). Relative to those with low JWB, individuals with high JWB have been found to attribute more blame to victims of rape, poverty, and AIDS for their plight (Bierhoff,

2002; Bohner, Reinhard, Rutz, Sturm, Kerschbaum & Eifler, 1998; Campbell, Carr, & MacLaughlan, 2001; Carmody & Washington, 2001; Connors & Heaven, 1990; Cozzarelli, Wilkinson & Tagler, 2001; Dalbert & Yamauchi, 1994; Foley & Pigott, 2000; Harper, Wagstaff, Newton & Harrison, 1990; Lambert & Raichle, 2000; Montada, 1998). This strategy of blaming the victim is attenuated, however, when individuals identify with the victim (Chaikin & Darley, 1973; Lerner & Mathews, 1967). When individuals perceive that they could suffer the same fate as the victim, they respond with sympathy and understanding, rather than victim blame.

A second response to such events would be revenge—to punish the transgressor or group responsible for the threat. Getting retribution is an effective technique for protecting one's belief that the world is just and for re-establishing moral order (Lerner, 1980; McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick, & Johnson, 2001). If the transgressors are punished for their behaviour, then perceptions of injustice are attenuated because the perpetrators get what they deserve (Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978). Furthermore, individuals who are most distressed over moral offences are particularly likely to advocate revenge (McCullough et al., 2001).

Although many studies have focused on JWB and the victim, one study has examined the effects of Just World Belief (JWB) on perceptions of perpetrators and victims of crime. O'Quin, and Vogler (1989) had participants read a description of a robbery which varied in terms of the blameworthiness of the victim and the justness of the perpetrator's sentence. Results indicate that high JWB participants (compared to low), generally show less sympathy with the perpetrator but more sympathy with the victim. However, when the perpetrator was given a long, unjust sentence (compared to a

just sentence), those with high JWB sympathized with the perpetrator more and as a result, they then blamed the victim for the crime. Finamore and Carlson (1987) suggested that a high belief in a just world should be associated with a 'crime-control' attitude, that is, a presumption of guilt, a belief that police make few mistakes and a lack of sympathy for the rights of those accused of crime. Moran and Comfort (1986) have found that belief in a just world among felony jurors was positively related to attitude toward the death penalty for men but not for women. The present studies are interested in examining and comparing those with high JWB and low JWB to see if there is a difference in social perceptions of homicide. To the extent that there are indeed differences in rankings, we will examine whether they are related to scores on the JWB. The exact nature of the difference between those with high JWB and low JWB is unclear but one possibility is that those with high JWB will rank the crime of purposeful murder of a child at the hands of the mother as more serious than those with low JWB as this crime might represent the ultimate challenge to their notion that the world is fair and just.

### **Ambivalent Sexism**

Recall that one of the variables the present study is interested in examining is the sex of the offender. It has been suggested in the literature that sex stereotypes affect the sentencing of female offenders (e.g. Edwards, 1986ab; Janicki, 1999). It is hypothesized that sex stereotypes that the participants hold will influence their rankings of various crimes. Traditional research has examined prejudice in terms of social distance and negative stereotypes (Allport, 1954). This notion of prejudice has been examined in terms of sexism (see Spence & Helmreich, 1972; Swim, Aiken, Hall and Hunter, 1995) and racism (see Schuman, Steeh & Bobob, 1985). Glick and Fiske (1996) argued that

hostile sexism fails to capture the prejudice that men have towards women. Rather, sexism is a prejudice marked by a deep ambivalence rather than a uniform antipathy towards women. They developed a model of sexism as an ambivalent phenomenon, in which both hostile and benevolent beliefs about women tend to coexist. Under Glick and Fiske's (1996) model, hostile sexism encompasses a wide range of negative affect (e.g., antipathy, resentment, anger, etc.). Analogous to its hostile counterpart is benevolent sexism that includes the desire to protect, to help, and to cherish. Although it may seem counter-intuitive that benevolent sexism and hostile sexism are positively correlated, Glick & Fiske's (1996) original study with three large samples found positive correlations (between .40 and .55) between hostile and benevolent subscale scores for both male and female student respondents. Further studies using the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) support this association (see, Glick, Diebold, Bailey-Warner & Zhu, 1997; Tendayi, Abrams & Hutchison, 2003). The concept of Ambivalent Sexism has been used in research on sexist jokes (Greenwood & Isabell, 2002), attitudes towards menstruation (Forbes, Adams, Leah, White, Holmgren, 2003), and rape (Abrams, Viki, Masser & Bohner, 2003). The concept of Ambivalent Sexism may have some value when trying to understand how the public responds to female versus male offenders as well as how this influences sentencing. Janicki (1999) found that attitudes of benevolent sexism were correlated with female offenders receiving lighter sentences.

### **Sex of the Participant**

The present studies examined whether the participant's sex will affect the outcome of the ranking task. There has been some research examining sex differences in public policy opinions. In general, men have been found to be more punitive in political

policies whereas women are more supportive than men of social service policies such as welfare (Sandys & McGarrell, 1995). Women are considered more supportive of 'compassion' policies in ways that conform to the ethic of care. Women also express greater sympathy for the disadvantaged compared to men (Gilligan, 1982; Petersen & Donnenwerth, 1998). Similarly, various researchers (Applegate, Cullen & Fisher, 2002; Haghghi & Lopez, 1998) have found that women were more supportive of treatment for offenders compared to men and men favoured capital punishment more compared to women.

It is widely believed by lawyers that demographic information could be used to predict how potential jurors would vote (Ford, 1986; Fried, Kalman & Kelin, 1975). Research has found that jurors with characteristics similar to the defendant may be more favourable to him or her (Fried, Kalman & Kelin, 1975). There has been some research that examined the effect the sex of the jurors in sexual assault cases. The results are equivocal with some studies suggesting that juror's sex does not have significant direct effects on verdicts in rape cases (Field, 1978; Nelligan, 1988; Villemur & Hyde, 1983) while other researchers (Deitz, Blackwell, Daley & Bentley, 1982; Hastie, Penrod & Pennington, 1983) have found that women have more empathy for the victim and are more likely to regard the defendant in a rape case as guilty.

The sex of the juror may even have implications for sentencing. Sprott (1999) found that women are less punitive than men only when focusing on young offenders while Mills and Bohannon's (1980) findings reveal that female jurors tend to be more conviction prone than male jurors. It appears the type of case may modify the effect, as men are more likely than women to support the use of capital punishment for murders

(Shapiro & Mahajan, 1986) while women favour more punitive responses to rape and domestic abuse and are more likely to convict those charged with violent crimes (Mills & Bohannon, 1992). Weir's (1992) findings also suggest that females in general take family violence more seriously. Hurwitz and Smithey (1998) argue that it is women's fear of these particular crimes that creates sex differences in opinions on criminal justice issues. Given the discrepancies in the literature, it is very difficult to develop a hypothesis regarding whether male participants and female participants will vary in their reactions to various homicides for the present studies.

### **The Pilot Study**

The pilot study served to clarify certain issues before the large-scale study was carried out. Overall, the purpose of the research was to examine whether certain homicides are regarded as more disturbing or frightening than others and if so, to test some factors that might explain or account for this. If there are certain homicides that are deemed worse than others, is this a view that is held by the majority of people (consensus model) or do different people have different perceptions of which homicides are worse (individual difference model)? If an individual difference model is supported, are there characteristics of the people, such as age, sex or worldview that will predict their perceptions on the differences in homicides severity?

The first goal of the pilot study was to examine the concept of seriousness. Past research in the area of crime seriousness has neglected to define the construct of seriousness (Stylianou, 2003). The adjective 'serious' and the noun 'seriousness' have been used, both in measurement instruments and in research reports without formal specification of meaning. In fact, most studies are based on the assumptions that such

definitions are not necessary, an opinion voiced by Rossi, Waite, Bose and Berk (1974). Yet this view has been criticized (Blum-West, 1985; Lynch & Danner, 1993; Miethe, 1992). Miethe (1982), for example, argues that it is unclear whether the way participants have defined this construct is the same as researchers have defined it. Warr (1989) found that the concepts of harmfulness and wrongfulness independently predicted ratings of 'seriousness'. Warr (1989) asked participants to rank a series of 31 crimes ranging from robbing a store and killing two employees to trespassing in a railroad yard on seriousness, wrongfulness and harmfulness. Noting that some crimes are morally wrong but not harmful, whereas others are harmful to not morally wrong, Warr found that people use both constructs in assessing 'seriousness'. In my pilot study, participants were asked to rank 12 crimes in terms of wrongfulness, harm to society, challenges one's belief system, and fear-provoking.

The second goal of the pilot study was to do some exploratory research to see if there were any significant differences in ratings of seriousness as a function of the sex of the offender, the age of the victim (1 year old, 10 year old, 25 year old, 45 year old, 60 year old and 80 year old), the motive for the murder (frustration and negligence) and finally, the relationship between the offender and the victim (parent, child, acquaintance, or stranger). The general question of the pilot study was whether people generally agreed in their rankings or whether rankings were relatively individualistic. To the extent that there are individual differences, I am interested in seeing if there are predictors.

## Methods

### Participants

Sixty-nine Psychology 1001 and 1002 students were recruited to participate in a study about serious crime. Four participants were excluded in data analysis as they failed to follow instructions properly. Of the 65 participants with usable data, 41 (63.1%) were female. The mean age of participants was 20.4 (ranging from 17 to 29,  $SD = 3.16$ ). In terms of marital status, the majority of participants (83.1%) have never been married. The remaining proportion indicated they were common law/married (13.8%) or separated/divorced (3.1%). Not surprisingly, participants who were common law, married or separated/divorced tended to be significantly older than participants who were single ( $F(2, 62) = 17.71, p < .001$ ).

### Procedure

After reading and signing an informed consent, participants were given a battery of questionnaires including a) demographics b) a modified version of the Just World Belief Scale c) a modified version of the Criminal Attitude Scale d) Ambivalent Sexism Inventory<sup>1</sup>. Participants were also asked to complete the ranking crime task.

### Description of Materials

#### *The ranking crime task*

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<sup>1</sup> For the pilot study, we also considered whether reminders of mortality might influence rankings following Terror Management Theory (see Greenberg, Solomon and Pyszczynski, 1986). Half of the participants were randomly assigned to the mortality salience group and they were told that because this is a study about serious crime, they needed to reflect on their own death. They were asked to write down first about their own death and what happens to their body when they die. The other half of the participants were told to write about dental pain. This is the classic mortality salience devised by Greenberg, Solomon and Pyszczynski (1997) as part of Terror Management Theory. However, as this manipulation had no effect on rankings, we do not consider it further.

There were 12 different murder scenarios presented to all participants, each with a different combination of the four variables: age of the victim, relationship between the offender and victim, sex of the offender and intent. Participants were asked to rank the crimes from 1 to 12 (1 = most, 12 = least) on the different dimension that may underlie the construct of 'seriousness': wrongfulness, harm to society, challenges your belief system and would make you fearful if it happened in your town. Participants were then asked to explain why they gave the two most extreme scores (#1 and #12) on each dimension to those particular crime scenarios.

#### *Just World Belief Scale*

The *Just World Belief Scale* (JWB) (Rubin & Peplau, 1975) assesses the extent to which one believes that the world is just (e.g. "Students almost always deserve the grades they receive in school", "Good deeds often go unnoticed and unrewarded"). This 18-statement scale was modified from the original by Rubin and Peplau (1975) to reflect a more gender-neutral tone. The response scale for this study was true/false. Although Furnham and Proctor (1989), in a review of the literature, reported reliability coefficients of previous studies of the scale ranged from the upper .60 to upper .70, the alpha obtained in this study was .27. This may have been owing to the change in response scale from a 6-point 'strongly agree'-'strongly disagree' to a true/false scale. Given the low alpha, we do not report results involving the JWB scale.

#### *Criminal Attitude Scale*

The Criminal Attitude Scale was developed by Taylor (1968) and was originally administered to convicted criminals as a measure of their attitudes on various issues surrounding justice. This scale was then administered to members of the public with the

goal of comparing their attitudes to those of the criminals. The pilot study involved a modified version of the original scale. Several questions were dropped and others were added to reflect the researcher's particular interests for a total of 13 questions. Participants were asked to indicate true or false to the statements (e.g. 'Once a criminal, always a criminal', 'too many people use psychiatric illness as an excuse for crimes'). For the present purpose, we were interested in whether people who possessed attitudes that were incongruent from the majority on this questionnaire would also tend to be different from the majority in their ranking of crime seriousness. Therefore, we calculated a sum of the minority endorsements indicated by each participant.

#### *Ambivalent Sexism Inventory* (Glick & Fiske, 1996)

The *Ambivalent Sexism Inventory* (ASI) was used to assess gender stereotypes and attitudes. The ASI consists of 22 statements which people are asked to rate on a Likert scale of zero ('agree') to five ('disagree'). The overall Cronbach's Alpha for the scale was .71. Eleven of these questions assess benevolent sexism and eleven assess for hostile sexism. The Alpha for the Benevolent Sexism subscale was .78 and .58 for the Hostile Sexism scale. Unlike previous studies (e.g. Glick & Fiske, 1996) where the two subscales were highly correlated, the pilot study found no significant correlation ( $r = .07$ ,  $p = .57$ ).

### **Results**

To assess the construct of crime seriousness, we correlated the rankings of each crime along the four dimensions ('wrongfulness', 'harm to society', 'challenges your belief system', and 'would create fear if it happened in your town' across the sample (i.e., 65 participants x 12 crimes). The correlations, provided in Table 1, indicate that rankings

were very similar for the dimensions of wrongfulness, harm, and challenge, but less similar for the dimension of fear. Based on this, the rankings on the wrongfulness, harm, and challenge variables were combined to yield an index of severity ( $\alpha = .81$ ), and fear was left as a distinct variable. This made sense after reviewing the data for this dimension, including the qualitative section where participants were asked to explain why they ranked the #1 crime and the #12 crime the way they did. For the dimension of fearfulness responses tended to be more individual in nature where the responses for the other three dimensions tended to be more evoking of a worldview response. For this reason, it was decided that while fear is an interesting concept to examine in conjunction with responses to crime, it was not the purpose of the study. Given the high correlation between rankings on the dimensions of wrongfulness, harm to society and challenges your belief system, it was decided to average the rankings of these three dimensions and create a new variable. The variable 'severity' was created using the mean ranking of the three other dimensions. Table 2 displays the mean ranking, standard deviation and interquartile range for each crime. The average interquartile range was 2.65 units, suggesting a fair degree of consensus in the rankings.

#### *Age of the victim*

A Repeated Measures ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences in rankings as a function of age of the victim ( $F(5, 60) = 94.33, p < .001$ ). The data, presented in Table 3, fit a quadratic function ( $F(1, 64) = 96.08, p < .001$ ) over and above a linear function ( $F(1, 64) = 295.09$ )<sup>2</sup>. In general, rankings were lower (more severe) for young victims, except that homicide victims aged 80 were considered more serious than

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<sup>2</sup> The data also fit a cubic and 4<sup>th</sup> order function ( $F$ 's  $> 22, p < .05$ ) but the primary effects are linear and quadratic.

victims aged 60. There was no significant interaction with participant's sex ( $F(1, 63) = .72, p = .40$ ) nor with the ASI scores ( $F(1, 62) = .42, p = .51$ ). (Table 7 displays descriptive statistics for the scales and subscales).

*Relationship between the offender and the victim*

A Repeated Measures ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences in rankings as a function of the relationship between the offender and the victim ( $F(3, 62) = 149.65, p < .01$ ). As Table 4 demonstrates, crimes where the parent is the offender were ranked as most serious. Crimes involving strangers were ranked as the least serious on average. There was no interaction with participant sex ( $F(1, 63) = .004, p = .95$ ), but there was a significant interaction with the ASI scores ( $F(1, 62) = 6.7, p < .01$ ) as displayed in Figure 1. Those with low ASI scores rated parent perpetrated homicide as more serious than those participants with high ASI scores yet homicides involving acquaintances and strangers were rated as more serious by those with high ASI scores than low ASI scores.

*The sex of the offender*

The sex of the offender was mentioned for crimes involving filicide and parricide. The sex where the offender was a stranger or acquaintance was not disclosed. A Repeated Measures ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences in rankings as a function of the sex of the offender ( $F(2, 63) = 145.04, p < .01$ ). As Table 5 shows, the crimes committed by male family members were ranked as more serious than were those committed by female family members. There was no interaction with sex of the participant ( $F(1, 63) = .96, p = .33$ ). Again, there was a significant interaction with the ASI scores ( $F(1, 62) = 13.16, p < .001$ ) (see Figure 2). It appears that the mean rankings

of crimes involving female offenders and male offenders are more similar for those with low ASI scores than those with high ASI scores. It appears that those with high ASI scores ranked the crimes committed by females as less serious than those with low ASI scores did.

### *Motive*

A Repeated Measures ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences in rankings as a function of the motive ( $F(1, 64) = 134.96, p < .01$ ). Not surprisingly, crimes involving explosions of frustration were ranked as more serious than those involving negligence, although the difference was not as extreme as predicted. These results are displayed in Table 9. There was no interaction with sex of the participant ( $F(1, 63) = .72, p = .40$ ) or Ambivalent Sexism Inventory ( $F(1, 62) = .42, p = .52$ ).

Looking at the 12 crimes given in the pilot study, there were five pairs that differed on only one variable. Analyses were conducted to examine these pairs of crimes. The first contrast involved comparing 'a one year old is killed by the mother in an explosion of frustration' and 'a one year old is killed by the father in an explosion of frustration'. A paired-samples t-test revealed that this difference was significant ( $t(64) = 5.53, p < .001$ ). A mother killing an infant is ranked more severe ( $M = 2.39, SD = 1.56$ ) than a father killing an infant when the intent is an explosion of frustration ( $M = 2.94, SD = 1.42$ ). The next contrast was 'a 10 year old is killed by the father as a result of negligence' and 'a 10 year old is killed by an acquaintance as a result of negligence'. A paired-samples t-test revealed that this difference was significant ( $t(64) = 7.36, p < .001$ ). These results suggest that the homicides where the offender is a family member are considered more serious than crimes involving acquaintances, at least for a 10-year-old

victim killed as a result of an explosion of frustration ( $\underline{M} = 4.54$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 1.56$  vs.  $\underline{M} = 6.15$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 1.76$ ). The next contrast involved ‘a 25 year old is killed by an acquaintance in an explosion of frustration’ and ‘a 25 year old is killed by the father in an explosion of frustration’. A paired-sample t-test revealed that this difference was significant ( $t(64) = 4.28$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Again, this result indicates that crimes where the offender is a family member are perceived to be more serious ( $\underline{M} = 5.88$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 1.79$ ) than crimes involving acquaintances ( $\underline{M} = 7.02$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 2.12$ ). The next contrast involved ‘a 60 year old killed by an acquaintance as a result of negligence’ compared to ‘a 60 year old killed by a stranger as a result of negligence’. A paired-sample t-test revealed that this difference was significant ( $t(64) = 2.00$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The crime involving the acquaintance was considered more serious ( $\underline{M} = 9.27$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 1.53$ ) than the crime involving the stranger ( $\underline{M} = 9.65$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 1.80$ ). The last possible comparison is ‘a 60 year old is killed by a stranger as a result of negligence’ ( $\underline{M} = 9.65$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 1.80$ ) and ‘a 45 year old is killed by a stranger as result of negligence’ ( $\underline{M} = 9.59$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 1.83$ ). Paired-samples t-test revealed that this difference was non-significant ( $t(64) = .27$ ,  $p = .79$ ).

#### Qualitative Analysis

A qualitative analysis (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) of the answers people gave when asked to explain their highest and lowest ranking on each dimension produced four interesting themes. The first theme cited most frequently by people to explain why either the crime of ‘a one year old is killed by the mother in an explosion of frustration’ or the crime of ‘a one year old is killed by the father in an explosion of frustration’. A total of 66.2% of the sample evoked the theme of ‘innocence’ or ‘defenseless’ when explaining

why this crime was the most wrong, most harmful or most challenging to their belief system. The following are quotes taken from participants explaining their rankings

“The child is so innocent and the mother should be the protector”.

“it’s a baby, only 1 year old, didn’t deserve that”

“no way of defending him/herself”

“There is absolutely no excuse for murdering a defenceless, helpless child”

“because it was an innocent baby.”

The second major theme to emerge was the devaluation of the elderly victim. A total of 36.9% of participants made statements that were coded under this theme. The following quotes are taken from participants explaining their rankings.

“his/her use to society is pretty much over. Natural selection would expire him soon enough.”

“Elderly people are hard to look after”

“had a chance to live”

“ they are no longer contributing”

“When someone is older, the crime seems less serious”

“Older individuals are usually restricted in many ways, unable to continue to contribute positively to society.”

“their time is coming”

“An 80 year old has less potential as a member of society”

The third major theme to emerge was blaming the victim. Blaming an adult victim (25 or 45 years old) was done by 34.4% of all participants. Blaming an elderly victim (60 or

80 years old) was done by 4.7% of the participants. The following quotes are taken from participants to illustrate this theme.

“a 60 year old can care for themselves and should know what they are getting into with strangers”

“it wasn’t entirely the (offender’s) fault”

“If someone is dying because of negligence chances are they aren’t very useful to society anyways”

“I believe that these people usually have it coming to them in a conflict”

“The father did something seriously harmful to his daughter in order to make her kill him”

“perhaps the 25 year old was very wrong”

The fourth and final major theme to emerge was the value the 25 year old victim had to society. The following quotes represent this theme.

“Because the 25 year old had the most to offer society in terms of production, intellectual capacity, future contributions so forth.”

“People in the middle age... they are holding the most value of the society, especially at age 25.

“A 25 year old probably has an education, job; that is important in society”

“the 25 year old individual is the economic, social and key age range that is the future of your world”.

In examining the Criminal Attitude Scale, it was clear the participants had various views on the various criminal justice attitudes. Some questions such as ‘criminals choose a life of crime’ demonstrated non-consensus among participants where 58% disagreed

with the statement. Other questions produced consensus such the statement ‘rich people can ‘buy’ justice’ with which 92% of participants agreed. Recoding was done to examine if there were participants whose answers represented the minority view for most of the questions and those whose answers represented the majority view, for most of the questions. Results indicate that there were a small group of participants who were highly consistent on both extremes. Analysis was performed to determine if this subset of participants ranked the homicide crimes differently than the rest of the participants and no significant differences were found ( $F$ 's  $< 1.4$ ,  $p > .25$ ).

### **Discussion**

The pilot study demonstrated that three of the four ranking dimensions were highly correlated. Participants were consistent in their rankings of ‘wrongfulness’, ‘harm to society’ and ‘challenges your belief system’. Rankings of crimes in terms of ‘fearful that it might happen in your town’ were less consistent. This is not surprising as people’s responses to this dimension were very individualistic. Analysis of this dimension was further complicated by the fact that the researcher was not sure about the ‘town’ in reference, whether participants were imagining a metropolitan city or a small suburban community and whether this would influence the results. The pilot study also demonstrated that participants were capable of ranking these homicides and that they are relatively consistent in their rankings. The homicides involving children were consistently perceived as most serious (i.e. most wrong, most harmful to society, most challenging to one’s own belief system) and homicides involving 60 year olds were viewed as least serious. Homicides involving family members were considered more serious than those involving acquaintances and strangers. Within the category of family

members, homicides committed by parents against children were considered more serious than homicides committed by children against parents. When the sex of the offender was provided, participants ranked the crimes involving male offenders as more serious than those involving female offenders unless the victim was the offender's one year old child, in which case crimes committed by the mother were deemed more serious. Finally, those crimes where the intent was given as an explosion of frustration were considered more serious than those due to negligence.

Generally participants were able to complete the scales and rankings without any problems. Furthermore, from an ethical perspective, there were no participants who were disturbed by the content enough to withdraw from the study nor did any participant voice any discomfort upon debriefing. Finally, the pilot study suggests that the variables of age of the victim, relationship of between the offender and the victim, the sex of the offender and the intent are important factors that people take into account in evaluating the severity of homicides. It appears that young children killed by parents are the most serious crimes of those participants were asked to rank. Yet in the pilot study it was impossible to make definite statement about the main effects of these variables and their interactions because of confounds. This is because only 12 of a possible 72 combinations were being ranked. For example, it appears that the crimes involving the 80 year old victim were judged to be more serious than those involving 45 or 60 year-old victims but there is a confound with the variable of the relationship between the offender and the victim. Both crimes involving the murder of the 80 year old had family members as offenders, one being the son who killed his parent in an explosion of frustration, the other being the daughter who killed her parent as a result of negligence. Perhaps the reason

that the average ranking of the crimes involving the 80-year-old victim was lower than the average ranking of the crimes involving 60 year-old-victims is that the two former were killed by kin whereas the latter were killed by non-kin. A further study is needed to understand how these variables operate in isolation from one another.

### **Main Study**

#### **Methods**

#### **Participants**

Ninety-two Psychology 1001 and 1002 students were recruited to participate in a study about serious crime. One participant was excluded in data analysis as there appeared to be a language barrier to understanding and following instructions. Of the 91 participants with usable data, 66 (72.5%) were female. The mean age of participants was 20.1 (ranging from 18 to 51,  $SD = 4.93$ ). In terms of marital status, the majority of participants (94.5%) have never been married. The remaining proportion indicated they were common law/married (4.4%) or separated/divorced (1.1%).

Participants were asked in what city or country they were raised and what city or country they considered to be 'home'. Seventy-nine percent of the participants were raised in Canada and considered a city/town within Canada to be their 'home'. There were 8.8% of participants raised outside of Canada but considered a city/town in Canada to be their 'home'. Within this group, one participant was from the Middle East, two from Africa, three from Asia and one from the Caribbean. Finally, 12.1% of the sample was raised outside of Canada and still considered a city or country outside of Canada to be their 'home'. Within this group, four consider 'home' to be the Middle East, three

selected Africa, two selected Europe, Asia was indicated by one participant and the USA was 'home' to one participant.

Participants were asked whether they considered themselves to be religious: 24.2% of the sample considered themselves 'not at all religious'; 'a little religious' was the response selected by 28.6% of the sample; 28.6% of the sample consider themselves 'somewhat religious'; 'quite religious' was the response given by 16.5% of the sample; and finally 2.2% considered themselves 'very religious'. Participants were then asked if they belonged to a faith group. 31.9% of the sample did not belong to a faith group. The Baha'i faith represented 3.3 % of the sample; Catholic was the faith group to which 34.1% of the sample belonged; 12.1% were Non-Catholic Christians; Muslims represented 13.2% of the sample, 2.2% were Hindu; and 1.1% were Jewish. Finally, 2.2% selected the option of 'other' for faith group.

Participants were then asked to indicate which category best represented their political orientation. 2.2% consider themselves 'very conservative'; 11% consider themselves 'conservative'; 'Moderate' was the response selected by 17.6% of the sample. 23.1% consider themselves 'liberal'; and 9.9% consider themselves 'very liberal'. Finally, 33 % said they were not politically oriented and 3.3% selected 'other'.

Not surprisingly, participants who were common law, married or separated/divorced tended to be significantly older than participants who were single ( $F(2, 88) = 29.01, p < 0.001$ ).

### **Procedure**

After reading and signing an informed consent, participants were given a battery of questionnaires including a) demographics, b) a modified version of the Just World

Belief Scale, c) the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, and d) the Criminal Sentiments Scale-Modified. The order that the participants completed the scales was randomized. Analysis revealed that the order did not affect any of the results. The main task in this experiment was the card-sort task where participants were asked to rank a series of crimes. Then they were asked to recommend the appropriate punishments for those judged guilty of what they have decided as the most wrong, mid wrong and least wrong crimes. They were then asked a couple of questions about their feelings about the death penalty and its place as the worst punishment the criminal justice system could impose. Upon the completion of the questionnaire package and the card-sort task participants were fully debriefed.

### **Description of Materials**

#### *Just World Belief Scale*

The *Just World Belief (JWB) Scale* (Rubin & Peplau, 1975) is a series of 18 statements that tap into the notion of whether participants feel the world is just (e.g. “Students almost always deserve the grades they receive in school”, “Good deeds often go unnoticed and unrewarded “). As with the pilot study, slight modifications were made to the original scale so as to reflect a more sex-neutral tone. Participants were asked to indicate their opinion of the statement based on a Likert scale where -3 indicates that they strongly disagree with the statement to +3 indicates that they strongly agree with the statement. This was a change from the pilot study where participants indicated whether they felt the statements were true or false. The goal of this change was to improve the reliability of the scale, which was .27 in the pilot study. Although the Cronbach’s Alpha

in the main study was improved to .45, it was a lot lower than that reported in previous studies using the scale (e.g., Rubin and Peplau, (1973) report an alpha of .79).

*Ambivalent Sexism Inventory* (Glick & Fiske, 1996)

The *Ambivalent Sexism Inventory* (ASI) was used to assess the value sex stereotypes and attitudes have on predicting the rankings of the homicides. The ASI consists of 22 statements which people are asked to indicate on a Likert scale of -3 (strongly disagree) to +3 (strongly agree) how they feel about a statement. Eleven of these statements assess benevolent sexism whereas the remaining 11 items assess hostile sexism. The overall Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .83, which is similar to previous studies reported by Glick and Fiske (1996). The alphas for the two subscales were both .76. Unlike the pilot study where the two subscales were uncorrelated, ( $r = .07$ ), in the present study, the subscales were positively and significantly correlated,  $r = .45$ ,  $p < .001$ . This finding is consistent with prior research using this instrument (e.g. Glick & Fiske, 1996).

*Criminal Sentiments Scale-Modified.*

*The Criminal Sentiments Scale-Modified* (Simourd, 1997) replaced the Criminal Attitude Scale (Taylor, 1968) used in the pilot study. This scale is a modified version of the original Criminal Sentiments Scale (CSS) (Gendreau, Grand, Leipeiger & Collins, 1979). Research suggests this scale is a reliable and valid measure of criminal attitudes (Shields & Simourd, 1991, Simourd, 1997) and has predictive validity of recidivism in forensic populations (Simourd & Van De Ven, 1999). It is a self-report instrument that measures antisocial attitudes, values and beliefs directly related to criminal activity. The CSS-M consists of 41 items grouped into five subscales: Attitudes towards the Law,

Attitudes towards the Court, Attitudes towards the Police, Tolerance for Law Violations (TLV) and Identification with Criminal Others (ICO). Statements are evaluated on a 3-point Likert scale of agree/disagree/uncertain. Higher scores represent greater pro-criminal attitudes. The overall Cronbach's alpha for the CSS-M was .81. Alphas for the subscales were lower, ranging from an alpha of .68 for the "Attitudes towards the Law" subscale to .13 for the "Identification with Criminal Others" subscale.

#### *The card-sort task*

The card-sort task of crime seriousness was based on the Q-sort technique developed by Stephenson (1958) and refined into a standard psychometric instrument by Block (1961) with the California Q-set (CQS). According to Stephenson (1958), the Q-sort technique helps facilitate the task of ranking or prioritizing valuable, complex and partially overlapping items. As a result, it reduces information processing demands making it faster and more reliable. Stephenson was interested in providing a way to reveal the subjectivity involved in any situation. Q methodology combines the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research traditions (Dennis & Goldberg, 1996; Sell & Brown, 1984).

A Q-sample (or Q-set) consists of a set of stimuli each printed on a separate card. Typically, the stimuli are statements expressing different opinions on a certain issue, and the number of statements is somewhere between 30 and 60, though as many as 100 statements are not unusual (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). Stimuli are rank-ordered by the participant along a continuum based on the participant's subjective point of view on the issue of interest (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). Commonly, participants are asked to sort the items according to those with which they *most agree* to those with which they *most*

*disagree*. Another common application of the Q-sort technique has been in personality assessment where various personality traits are written upon the cards and participants must sort the items according to those that are *most like* themselves/ person X to those *most unlike* themselves/ or person X (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). The usual technique involves a *forced sort*, i.e. placing a prescribed number of cards under each point on the continuum a prescribed number of cards. The distribution of the pile sizes usually follows a modification of a (flattened) normal curve. In addition to the well-shuffled pack of cards, the participant in a Q-sort session is provided with either a single long ruler or a set of separate distribution marker cards that would represent the ranking continuum with its pile categories under which the cards will be laid out in the prescribed distribution.

Although there are a number of advantages of using the Q-sort technique for obtaining ratings (as opposed to using the more common Likert-type rating scale), this technique was adopted for the rankings of crime seriousness because (a) it forces participants to make judgements about the relative seriousness of the various crimes, as opposed to a Likert-type scale where one might rank many crimes as ‘most serious’, and (b) it is easier for the participants than requiring that they rank order each of the 52 crimes. In the pilot study, where there were 12 crimes, a ranking procedure was feasible; rank ordering crimes from 1 to 52 was considered too arduous a task.

Participants in the present study used the Q-sort technique to rank crimes. Each crime was a combination of four variables: the age of the victim (1 year old, 10 years old, 25 years old, 45 years old, 60 years old, and 80 years old), the relationship between the offender and the victim (parent killing child, child killing parent, acquaintance and stranger), the sex of the offender (male or female) and the intent (intentional or non-

intentional). The sex of the offender was only provided if the offender was the parent or the child of the victim. The sex of the offender was not provided when the offender was described as an acquaintance of the victim or a stranger, although previous studies indicate that people will assume the offender is male (e.g. Mitchell, 1993). The reason for this decision was that varying sex of offender for these crimes would create too many combinations and overwhelm participants.

Certain combinations of variables were excluded because they were not plausible or unlikely (such as an 80 year old being killed by a parent or a 25 year old being killed by a child). After eliminating implausible combinations, there were 52 crimes (see Appendix) in the Q-set that participants were asked to sort. The 52 cards fit into a distribution with 11 columns (1 card in # 1 (most wrong), 2 in # 2, 4 in # 3, 6 in # 4, 8 in # 5, 10 in # 6, 8 in # 7, 6 in # 8, 4 in # 9, 2 in # 10, 1 in # 11 (least wrong)).

Instructions were given verbally to the participants. Participants had an opportunity to ask any questions before they began the task. Each participant was asked to read through the 52 cards to become familiar with them. As this was done, the participant sorted them into three piles: those crimes which the participant felt were least wrong, those crimes which he or she felt were most wrong, and those that he or she considered to be mid-wrong. Participants could begin with either the pile representing the most wrong crimes or the least wrong crimes. Participants sorted through the cards in the most wrong crime pile and decide which one crime, in their opinion, represents the most wrong crime. They placed this card in the # 1 spot. Participants then decided which two crimes represent the two next most wrong crimes. These two cards were placed within the # 2 spot. Participants were advised that the order of cards within a column did

not matter. Participants then decided which four crimes represent the next three most wrong crimes and placed them in the # 3 spot. The next six most wrong crimes are placed in the # 4 spot. Participants could then switch to work on the completing the right side of the board representing the least wrong crimes. Participants chose the crime that represents the least wrong crime and place it in spot # 11. The next two least wrong crimes were placed in spot # 10. The next three least wrong crimes were placed in spot #9. The participants continued with this pattern, placing all the cards in all the spots. Participants were free to make changes as decided.

Before sorting cards, participants were given the following information in the instructions:

1. All offenders are found mentally competent to stand trial. No offender has any psychiatric disorder that played a role in the crime they committed.
2. Try not to add additional information to that provided. Do not assume motive or circumstances that led up to the crime.
3. There are no right or wrong answers. Please go with your opinions rather than any knowledge of the law.

#### *Appropriate Punishment Questionnaire*

Upon completing the card-sort task, participants were asked to make recommendations about appropriate punishment. They were asked to indicate the appropriate punishment for the crimes placed in the #1 (most wrong), #6 (mid- wrong) and # 11(least wrong) positions. They were asked to choose from 15 different punishments that include probation, fines, and imprisonment. These data provide insight on the range of seriousness underlying their card-sorting distribution. For example, if

participants gave a serious punishment (such as the death penalty) to both the crimes that they ranked as the most wrong and the least wrong, then that indicates that they consider that the differences between rankings to be negligible in terms of degree of seriousness (i.e., low variance). On the other hand, if participants' punishment recommendations for the most and least serious crimes differ a great deal, then this indicates greater variance in rankings of seriousness.

## Results

Table 8 displays the mean ranking, standard deviation and interquartile range for each of the 52 crime scenarios. The average interquartile range was 1.42 units, suggesting a high degree of consensus in the rankings. The crime with the lowest mean (the most wrong) was 'a one year-old is killed by the mother intentionally'. This crime was placed in the #1 spot (most wrong) by 57.1% of the sample and the #2 spot by 20.9% of sample. The crime with the second lowest mean was 'a one year-old is killed by the father intentionally'. This crime was placed in the #1 spot (most wrong) by 11.0% of the sample and in the #2 spot by 63.7% of the sample. The crime with the highest mean (least wrong) was 'an 80 year old is killed by an adult stranger unintentionally'. This crime was placed in the #11 spot (least wrong) by 36.3% of the sample. A quick perusal of the rankings in Figure 10 confirms that intentionality had a huge effect on Q-rank. Given this, it makes sense to treat intentionality as a factor in subsequent analysis.

### *Age of the Victim X Intent*

A doubly Repeated Measures ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences in rankings as a function of intent ( $F(1, 90) = 2833.18, p < .001$ ) and age of the victim ( $F(5, 450) = 131.69, p < .001$ ). In addition, a significant interaction of age by

intent was observed ( $F(5, 450) = 16.19, p < .001$ ). The means, presented in Figure 3, show that when the death was considered intentional, rankings were closer to 1 (worst), particularly when the death involved a child. The effects of age group when death was intentional fits a quadratic function ( $F(1, 90) = 62.65, p < .001$ ) with large differences between rankings of deaths involving one and ten year old children relative to those involving adult victims. The effect of age when death was unintentional best fits a linear function ( $F(1, 90) = 75.11$ ). Analyses were conducted to test whether demographic variables (age of participant, sex, and whether Canada was considered home) or attitudinal measures (JWB, ASI, CSS-M) moderated the patterns of results. Where participants were raised/considered home yielded a significant interaction with intent ( $F(2, 88) = 4.11, p < .05$ ), age group ( $F(10, 440) = 2.31, p < .05$ ) and the intent by age group effect ( $F(10, 440) = 2.92, p < .01$ ). As Figure 4, illustrate, there were little differences in the rankings as a function of age for intentional crimes yet for unintentional crimes, there were differences. For those raised outside of Canada and considered somewhere other than Canada their 'home', the age of the victim did not affect the rankings of these unintentional crimes whereas for the group that was raised in Canada and considered Canada their 'home', and for the group that was raised outside of Canada but considered Canada their 'home', the age of the victim did matter. None of the other potential moderating variables yielded significant between-subjects effects. It should be noted that caution is recommended in interpreting these effects as they may be attributable to chance: of the six potential moderators considered, this was the only one to yield a significant effect. Bonferroni adjustments for multiple tests would render these moderation effects nonsignificant.

### *Sex of the Offender X Intent*

A doubly Repeated Measures ANOVA (sex of offender X intentionality) indicated that there were significant differences in rankings as a function of intent ( $F(1, 90) = 1916.84$   $p < .001$ ) and sex of the offender ( $F(1, 90) = 3.95$   $p < .05$ ). The interaction between intent and sex of the offender was not significant ( $F(1, 90) = .86$   $p = .36$ ). The means, presented in Figure 5, indicate that crimes committed by female offenders are judged to be slightly more serious than those committed by male offenders, regardless of whether the crime is intentional or unintentional. None of the potential moderating variables yielded significant between-subjects effects.

### *Relationship of Offender to Victim X Intent*

Several doubly Repeated Measures ANOVAs were run to determine whether the relationship of the offender to the victim affected the rankings of the crimes. The first ANOVA involved comparing the crime of filicide (parent killing child), parricide (child killing parent), acquaintance killings and stranger killings. A doubly Repeated Measures ANOVA indicated significant differences as a function of intent ( $F(1, 89) = 2890.28$   $p < .001$ ) and the relationship of offender to victim ( $F(3, 267) = 6.98$   $p < .001$ ). Additionally, a significant intent by relationship interaction was observed ( $F(3, 267) = 10.00$   $p < .001$ ). As displayed in Figure 6, when the death was considered intentional, rankings were closer to 1 (worst), particularly when the death involved a parent killing a child. Post hoc tests, using Howell's (2006) suggestion for paired t-tests revealed that acquaintance killings, both intentional and unintentional, were considered worse than parricide and stranger killings but there were no significant differences in the rankings of parricide and stranger killings for both intentional and unintentional deaths. Follow-up ANOVAs were

conducted to determine whether these effects varied as a function of demographic or attitudinal measures, and none yielded significant effects.

A second doubly Repeated Measures ANOVA was run examining the relationship of offender to the victim. In this analysis, I compared the rankings of maternal filicide (mother killing child) with paternal filicide (father killing child). Results indicated significant differences as a function of intent ( $F(1, 90) = 1098.49$   $p < .001$ ) and the relationship (mother/father) ( $F(1, 90) = 12.83$   $p < .001$ ). No significant intent by relationship interaction was observed ( $F(1, 90) = 1.10$   $p = .29$ ). As Figure 7 shows, crimes involving maternal filicide were considered more 'wrong' than crimes involving paternal filicide. None of the demographic or attitudinal variables moderated these effects.

A final doubly Repeated Measures ANOVA was run examining the relationship of offender to victim. In this analysis, I compared the rankings of son killing parent with daughter killing parent. Results indicated significant differences as a function of intent ( $F(1, 90) = 1180.94$   $p < .001$ ), but no effect of relationship (son/daughter) ( $F(1, 90) = 1.48$   $p < .23$ ). Furthermore, there was not a significant interaction between intent and relationship ( $F(1, 90) = .06$   $p = .80$ ). None of the demographic or attitudinal variables moderated these effects.

### *Punishment*

Participants were asked two questions in regards to the death penalty. The first question involved their opinion regarding the death penalty. Thirty-six percent of the sample indicated they were 'opposed to the death penalty under any circumstance'. 'Opposed to the death penalty except in a few cases where it might be appropriate' was

the option selected by 47.3% of the sample; 6.6% indicated that they were 'generally in favour of the death penalty except in a few cases where it may not be appropriate'; 5.5% selected the response 'I am strongly in favour of the death penalty as an appropriate punishment' and 4.4% of the sample responded that they did not know how they felt about the death penalty. Participants were also asked to indicate whether they felt the death penalty or life imprisonment without the possibility of parole was the worst punishment the criminal justice system (CJS) could impose on someone found guilty of a serious crime. Life imprisonment without the possibility of parole was selected by 70.3% of the sample.

With the responses about the death penalty in mind, analyses were conducted on the punishments that participants assigned to the crime scenarios in the #1 spot on the Q-sort (the worst crime), the midpoint of the continuum (#6) and the # 11 spot (least wrong). Tables 9, 10, and 11 present the frequencies given for each punishment option.

Given the different opinions participants had regarding whether the death penalty or life imprisonment was the worst crime the criminal justice system could impose, the punishment data were recoded so that both the death penalty and life imprisonment without the possibility of parole were given a score of 13. The 13 other punishments were coded according to severity with 'no penalty' receiving a score of 0, 'probation' receiving a score of 1, and so on up to 'life imprisonment with the probability of parole' receiving a score of 12.

Analyses were then conducted to determine whether the punishment differed depending on which crime participants chose as the most wrong and the least wrong. Recall that 57.1% of the sample selected the crime scenario of 'a one year-old is killed by the mother

intentionally' as the worst crime. This group was compared to those who selected another crime as the worst crime. An ANOVA indicates that the two groups did not differ in the punishment that they prescribed to the most wrong crime ( $F(1, 89) = .52, p = .47$ ).

Similarly, 36.3% of the sample selected the crime scenario of 'an 80 year old is killed by an adult stranger unintentionally' as the least wrong crime. An ANOVA compared this group with those who selected another crime scenario as the least wrong. Results indicate that the two groups did not differ in the punishment that they imposed to the least wrong crime.

A Repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to determine whether there were differences between the punishments participants gave to the worst, the least worst crimes and the homicides in the middle of their continuum. As Figure 8 indicates, the pattern is linear ( $F(2, 89) = 145.67, p < .001$ ), with the crime ranked most wrong by participants receiving a recommendation of the more severe punishments ( $M = 12.29, SD = 1.24$ , corresponding to 'Life with possibility of parole'); those ranked least wrong receiving a recommendation of more lenient punishments ( $M = 5.55, SD = 3.80$ , corresponding to approximately 1 year imprisonment); and those ranked mid-wrong receiving a punishment roughly half way between these two extremes ( $M = 9.16, SD = 2.32$ , corresponding to '11- 15 years imprisonment'). Mauchley's Test of Sphericity was significant, indicating that the assumption about equal variances was not met. There was more consensus about the punishment for the most wrong crime and far less consensus about the punishment for the crime ranked as least wrong. Analyses were then conducted to determine whether there were any significant effects of demographic or attitudinal variables (e.g., Just World Belief, Ambivalent Sexism Inventory and Criminal Sentiments

Scale-Modified) on recommended punishments (worst, least worst and the range between worst and least worst). There was a significant interaction of participant sex by crime ranking ( $F(1, 88) = 3.78, p < .05$ ), indicating that males and females gave similar punishments to the crimes ranked as the most wrong and those crimes in the middle of the continuum but females recommended harsher punishment ( $M = 6.1, SD = .46$ ) than male participants ( $M = 4.13, SD = .76$ ) to the crimes judged as the least wrong (see Figure 9). Age of the participant also interacted with crime ranking ( $F(1, 89) = 4.45, p < .039$ ). Those twenty years of age and under and those above twenty years of age gave out similar punishments to the crime considered to be the most wrong and those in the middle of the continuum but, as Figure 10 demonstrates, those twenty years of age and under recommended harsher punishment for the crimes judged as the least wrong ( $M = 6.14, SD = .42$ ) than those over the age of twenty ( $M = 3.17, SD = .85$ ). No other potential moderator had a significant effect on the punishments.

### *Subsidiary Issues*

Table 12 presents the means and standard deviations for each of scales and subscales utilized in the main study. Tables 13 and 14 present the correlations among scales and subscales. Analyses were conducted to determine whether there were any differences in scores on the scales as a result of the demographic variables. ANOVAs and correlations yielded no significant differences on the Just World Belief scale. There was, however, a significant correlation between age and ASI score ( $r = -.30, p < .004$ ) such that older participants tended to have lower sexism scores. There were also significant differences in ASI scores as a result of where participants were raised and considered to be 'home' ( $F(2, 88) = 7.19, p < .001$ ). Those raised in Canada and consider

Canada to be their 'home' had the lowest scores ( $\underline{M} = -6.90$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 17.33$ ) followed by those who were raised outside of Canada but considered Canada to be their 'home' ( $\underline{M} = 5.38$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 20.16$ ). Those who were raised outside of Canada and considered a city or country outside of Canada to be their 'home' had the highest scores ( $\underline{M} = 13.27$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 19.28$ ). Post hoc Scheffe tests reveal a significant difference between the group raised in Canada and consider Canada 'home' and the group raised outside of Canada and consider somewhere besides Canada 'home'. There was a significant correlation between ASI score and degree of religiosity ( $r = .29$ ,  $p < .006$ ).

An ANOVA comparing those who did not belong to a faith group with those who did belong to a faith group on ASI scores yielded a significant effect ( $F(1, 89) = 5.92$ ,  $p < .018$ ). Those with no faith group had lower scores ( $\underline{M} = -10.28$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 17.34$ ) than those who belonged to a faith group ( $\underline{M} = -0.16$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 18.99$ ).

There was a significant correlation between age and the Benevolent Sexism score ( $r = -.30$ ,  $p < .003$ ). There were also significant differences in Benevolent Sexism scores as a result of where participants were raised and considered to be 'home' ( $F(2, 88) = 5.49$ ,  $p < .006$ ). The groups that were raised outside of Canada and considered a city or country outside of Canada to be their 'home' scored highest ( $\underline{M} = 8.36$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 13.28$ ), followed by those who were raised outside of Canada but considered Canada to be their 'home' ( $\underline{M} = 1.63$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 13.44$ ), followed by the group that was raised in Canada and consider Canada to be their 'home' ( $\underline{M} = -2.67$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 9.75$ ). Post hoc Scheffé tests were conducted to determine where differences were significant. These analyses indicated that there was a significant difference between the group that was raised in Canada and

considered Canada their 'home' and the group that was raised outside of Canada and considered somewhere besides Canada 'home'.

There were also significant differences in Hostile Sexism scores as a result of where participants were raised and considered to be 'home' ( $F(2, 88) = 4.8, p < .01$ ). Those who were raised outside of Canada and considered a city or country outside of Canada to be their 'home' had a higher score ( $M = 4.91, SD = 11.48$ ) than those who were raised outside of Canada but considered Canada to be their 'home' ( $M = 3.75, SD = 10.89$ ), whose scores were in turn higher than the group that was raised in Canada and considered Canada to be their 'home' ( $M = -4.24, SD = 10.76$ ). Post hoc Scheffé tests were conducted to determine where differences were significant. These analyses indicated that there was a significant difference between the group that was raised in Canada and considered Canada their 'home' and the group that was raised outside of Canada and considered somewhere besides Canada 'home'.

An ANOVA indicates significant sex differences on the Criminal Sentiments Scale-Modified ( $F(1, 88) = 6.84, p < .01$ ) with male participants scoring higher (more antisocial/pro criminal) on this scale ( $M = 31.58, SD = 10.09$ ) than female participants ( $M = 26.14, SD = 8.21$ ). An ANOVA reveals significant differences on the CSS-M based on where participants were raised and consider 'home' to be ( $F(2, 88) = 4.96, p < .009$ ). Those who were raised outside of Canada and considered a city or country outside of Canada to be their 'home' had higher scores ( $M = 34.91, SD = 11.04$ ) than those who were raised outside of Canada but considered Canada to be their 'home' ( $M = 28.88, SD = 7.36$ ), whose scores were in turn higher than the group that was raised in Canada and considered Canada to be their 'home' ( $M = 26.11, SD = 8.49$ ). Post hoc Scheffé tests

revealed a significant differences between the group that was raised in Canada and considered Canada their 'home' and the group that was raised outside of Canada and considered somewhere besides Canada 'home'.

Analyses were then conducted on each of the CSS-M's subscale. There were significant sex differences on the Attitudes towards the Law subscale ( $F(1, 88) = 9.31, p < .003$ ) with male participants scoring higher ( $M = 6.29, SD = 3.37$ ) than female participants ( $M = 4.35, SD = 2.37$ ). Sex differences were also seen on the TLV subscale ( $F(1, 88) = 9.31, p < .003$ ) with male participants scoring higher ( $M = 6.29, SD = 3.37$ ) than female participants ( $M = 4.35, SD = 2.37$ ). There were significant differences on the Court subscale based on where participants were raised and considered their home ( $F(2, 88) = 4.11, p < .02$ ). The group that was raised in Canada and consider Canada to be their 'home' had the lowest scores ( $M = 6.74, SD = 2.8$ ) followed by those who were raised outside of Canada but considered Canada to be their 'home' ( $M = 7.00, SD = 1.07$ ). Those who were raised outside of Canada and considered a city or country outside of Canada to be their 'home' had the highest scores ( $M = 9.27, SD = 2.94$ ), representing the most negative attitudes towards the court system. Post hoc Scheffe tests revealed significant differences between the group that was raised in Canada and considered Canada their 'home' and the group that was raised outside of Canada and considered somewhere besides Canada 'home'. There were significant differences on the TLV subscale based on where participants were raised and considered their home. ( $F(2, 88) = 4.75, p < .01$ ). Those who were raised outside of Canada and considered a city or country outside of Canada to be their 'home' had the highest scores ( $M = 11.36, SD = 3.47$ ), followed by those who were raised outside of Canada but considered Canada to be their

'home' ( $M = 9.25$ ,  $SD = 3.96$ ), followed by the group that was raised in Canada and consider Canada to be their 'home' ( $M = 8.10$ ,  $SD = 3.25$ ). Post hoc Scheffe tests revealed significant differences between the group that was raised in Canada and considered Canada their 'home' and the group that was raised outside of Canada and considered somewhere besides Canada 'home'.

### Discussion

The central purpose of this study was to establish whether certain homicides are considered worse than others. Secondary to this central purpose was the goal of determining the extent to which there exists reasonable consensus in how people rate the severity of various homicides. The present research clearly indicates that certain crimes are consensually considered worse than others, in particular the intentional killings of children by parents. Homicides considered the least serious were those involving the unintentional killing of senior citizens. These results are consistent across the two studies.

Given that some homicides are more wrong than others, the question that this research also addressed was whether people would agree on which homicides are more and less serious, and to the extent that there was variability in ranking, whether individual differences might account for some of the variability. In general, I found that participants exhibited a great deal of consensus, as indicated by the low inter-quartile ranges for each of the crimes. Given this high degree of consensus, it is perhaps not surprising that demographic factors (such as age and sex of participant) and attitudes (such as belief in a just world, criminal attitudes, political and religious views, and attitudes towards women) had negligible effects on rankings. It is significant that although the sample contained people from various ethnic, religious, and political backgrounds, and differ from one

another on a host of issues (e.g., differing on their attitudes towards women), they generally agree on the relative seriousness of 52 homicides.

The study also examined four variables to determine the extent to which they had any effect on the rankings of homicides. It was found that the age of the victim, the sex of the offender, the relationship of offender to victim, and intent (intentional vs. unintentional) each had a significant effect on how serious the participants ranked the crimes. Intent yielded the strongest effect. Not surprisingly, all intentional homicides were judged as more 'wrong' than the unintentional homicides. Following this, the variable that then seemed to have the biggest effect in how people completed this task was the age of the victim. The death (intentional or unintentional) of a 1 year old was considered the most serious. The younger the victim, the more serious the crime was considered. With regards to the sex of the offender, crimes committed by female offenders were judged as worse than male offenders. Filicide (the killing of a child by a parent) was considered worse than acquaintance killings, followed by parricide (the killing of a parent by a child) and stranger killings being considered equally the least worst. Maternal filicide (mother killing child) was considered worse than paternal filicide (father killing child). Finally, there was no difference in rankings based on whether it was the son or the daughter committing parricide.

Although a consensus appears to exist with regard to the ranking of seriousness of these homicides, the fact that participants were required to rank crimes according to a predefined distribution may have masked wide individual differences in how serious the most or least serious crimes were perceived to be. For instance, two participants may agree in the ordering of homicides, but may differ a great deal in what punishment is

appropriate for each crime. To consider this, participants were asked to recommend a punishment for the crime they ranked most serious, least serious, and the crimes they ranked mid-serious using a list of punishments ranging from 'no penalty' to 'life imprisonment with no opportunity of parole' and 'death sentence'. Results indicated that the ranking task did not artificially create consensus as the majority of participants gave increasing harsher penalties as the wrongfulness of the crime increased. The majority of participants gave the harshest penalty they believed the Criminal Justice System could give out to the worst crime: either the death penalty or life imprisonment without the possibility of parole. There was, however, much less consensus about the punishment for the crime ranked as the least wrong. While there were those who felt that life imprisonment (with or without the possibility of parole) was an appropriate punishment for the crime ranked as the least wrong, there were also quite a few participants who felt that no penalty or probation was an appropriate punishment for this homicide. I also examined whether any of the potential moderators had an effect on the punishments. Again, there was remarkable consensus for punishment of the worst crime, regardless of participant's demographic variables or attitudes. With regard to those crimes deemed less serious, however, individual differences (age and participant sex) accounted for some of the differences in recommended punishments: Females prescribed harsher punishments to those who committed crimes judged as least wrong relative to males. Those 20 years of age and under also prescribed harsher punishment to those who committed crimes judged as least wrong relative to those over 20 years of age.

The main study did replicate several of the main findings of the pilot study, in particular the degree of consensus in the rankings. The significant effect that all four

variables had on the rankings was also seen in both the main study and the pilot study although there were a few differences. In regards to the age of the victim, the main study found that the younger the victim, the more 'wrong' the crime was considered. Recall that the pilot study found a similar finding with the exception that the crimes involving an 80 year old victim were judged as worse than crimes involving a 60 year old victim. The reason for the divergence may be due to the incomplete list of homicides in the pilot study. The crime scenarios in the pilot study involving the 80 year old victim involved family members as the offenders while those involving the 60 year old victim involved non-family members. It may have been the confound with the relationship between the offender and victim that caused the result. With regards to sex of the offender, the main study found that crimes committed by female offenders were judged as worse while the pilot study found that crimes committed by male offenders were judged as worse. The reason the discrepancy may again be due to the incomplete set of homicides in the pilot study. There was only one crime scenario in the pilot that involved a mother whereas there were three involving a father killing young victims. It may have been the age of the victim variable that accounts for the finding in the pilot study. The pilot study did allow for the direct comparison between a '1 year old being killed by the mother in an explosion of frustration' and a '1 year old being killed by the father in an explosion of frustration' and found the maternal filicide was judged as worse than the paternal filicide, a finding replicated in the main study. Finally, with regard to the relationship between the victim and the offender, while both studies clearly found that filicides (parent killing child) were considered most serious, there were differences following this. The pilot study found that after filicides, parricides (child killing parent), were ranked as more

serious, followed by acquaintance killings and then stranger killings. The main study, on the other hand, found no difference in ranking between parricides and stranger killings, and that acquaintance killing was more serious than both. Again, the reason is unclear but it must be remembered that there were confounds in the pilot study and it involved fewer crimes to rank. Another possibility is that the pilot study participants had to rank order each of 12 crimes (no ties permitted), whereas in the main study 'ties' are now an option.

This research supports the argument made in prior research that suggests that certain murders are worse than others (Hawkins, 1980; Mitchell, 1998; Wolfgang et al., 1985). While Mitchell's work found considerable variability in how participants ranked the seriousness of various homicides and assisted suicides, the present research found that there was a high level of consensus in the rankings. Recall that a pivotal question in the sociology of law is the extent to which the criminal law reflects the values held by the public and the extent to which the public agrees on criminal justice issues. The present study provides support for the Consensus perspective. There has been research in the past that has supported the Consensus perspective (e.g. Figlio, 1975; Hawkins, 1980; Rossi, Waite, Bose & Berk, 1974; Sellin & Wolfgang, 1964) while other studies (e.g. Akman & Normandeau, 1968; Geboyts, Roberts & DasGupta, 1988; Lampe, 1982; Vogel, 1988; Walker, 1978) have found aggregate differences in crime rankings, lending support to the Conflict perspective. The present study does provide a possible reason for the discrepancy in the literature. The interquartile range is lower for those crimes in the first half of the list of crimes than the second half of the crimes. In fact, there is a significant correlation ( $r = .39$ ) between the mean and interquartile range. There was more dissensus among the least serious crimes. Furthermore, there was far more

consensus for the punishment for the most wrong crime but lots of dissensus for the punishment for the least wrong crime.

The present study was exploratory in a nature in that it examined four variables that may affect the rankings of crimes: the age of the victim, the sex of the offender, the relationship between the victim and the offender and the intent. With regard to the age of the victim, the present research's finding that the younger the victim, the more serious the crime is supportive of past research. Stanton (1990) and Margolin (1990) argued that the death of a child evokes the greatest sadness and indignation. Burnstein and colleagues (1994) had found that there is a greater tendency to help a one year old than a 10 year old in life-or-death situations. Mitchell (1998) found that the worst possible homicide participant could imagine involved child-murder.

The present study was interested in examining evolutionary theory as a possible explanation for how participants ranked the crimes. Recall that this study was not designed to test evolutionary theory directly but the theory was used as a tool to perhaps gain insight in the crime rankings. Evolutionary theory focuses on the reproductive value of an individual and the usefulness to a community. This theory is useful in understanding why the crimes against the 60 year old and the 80 year old were considered the least serious. Recall that in the pilot study, participants were asked to explain why they ranked the crimes the way they did. Many participants, in explaining why the crimes against the elderly were less serious, stated that these individuals were going to die soon anyways and they are no longer contributing to society. These statements are consistent with an evolutionary perspective. However, according to this theory, crimes involving the 25 year old victim should be considered most serious

because they are in their reproductive prime and presumably can contribute the most to society. Yet participants ranked crimes involving the 25 year old victim as less serious than crimes involving a 10 year old victim and a 1 year old victim. The qualitative analysis from the pilot study does provide some insight as participants commonly made statement that the 1 year old was 'innocent and defenseless'. Furthermore, there were statements of blame against the 25 year old that they were in some way responsible for their death.

The present study examined the effect the sex of the offender had on the rankings of crime but only for the crime of filicide with the maternal filicide being considered worst than paternal filicide. This is supported by past research on gender stereotypes and the motherhood mystique (see Dally, 1986) which argue that mothers are a symbol of goodness in society and the crime of filicide is a ultimate violation of the this goodness and therefore the reaction is more extreme than when fathers kill their children. For the crime of parricide, there were no significant differences between the son or the daughter being the offender.

The present research regarding the relationship between the victim and the offender has been examined within the context of evolutionary theory and kin preference (Chapais, 2001). Various research has shown that people prefer to help those who are genetically related (e.g. Burnstein, Crandall & Kitayama, 1994; Essock-Vitale & McGuire, 1985) and they also find crimes involving close kin are seen as more serious than those involving acquaintances or strangers (Quinsey, Lalumière, Querée & McNaughton, 1999). In this regard, the pilot study was consistent with past findings but differed from findings of the main study, which found that acquaintance-killings were

considered more 'wrong' than a child killing a parent. In attempting to explain this, I note filicide has received much media attention in the last few years with cases such as Andrea Yates and Susan Smith, parricide cases have not received such a spotlight and participants completed the task in the present study may have dismissed the crime of parricide as rare and therefore not very serious. They may also have felt that the parent being killed somehow deserved the death, a response seen in the qualitative part of the pilot study.

The final variable examined in the present research was intent. Mitchell (1998) and Herzog (2004) found that participants are able to differentiate and clearly understand the difference between premeditated murder and accidental murder and they rank premeditated murder as more serious. The present research produced similar findings. Yet interesting, participants in the present research gave a low punishment to the least serious crime, equivalent to about 1-2 years imprisonment, despite the fact that this crime would be considered manslaughter and, according to the Criminal Code, would receive a more substantial penalty. Perhaps this is due to the fact that this crime was compared to a first-degree murder. If the participants were asked to provide punishment to this crime in its own context, perhaps the penalty would be harsher.

This study also has potential practical implications for Crown and defense attorneys. Knowing that people consider homicides against young children to be most serious alters the legal strategy that each may use. While sentencing the accused is not a function of the jury in Canada, there is a partial exception to this rule. In cases where a person is found guilty of second degree murder, the judge informs the jury that the convicted person would be eligible for parole after serving ten years in prison and then

ask the jurors if they wish to make a recommendation as to the number of year that that the convicted person should serve before being eligible for parole (Vidmar & Schuller, 2001). It is, of course, the function of the jury to provide sentencing decisions in the United States. While there are dangers generalizing these findings to an American context, based on the fact that females and those 20 years old and younger recommended harsher punishments to the least serious crime than males and those over 20 years of age, the prosecuting team might want young people and females on the jury while defense attorneys might try to stack a jury with males and those who are older.

### Summary

So what does it mean that certain homicides are considered more wrong than others? It means that while the law may strive to be rational and impartial, the players within system are not. Social perceptions may influence police investigations and trials. All homicides are not considered equally serious. There is much evidence to suggest that the seriousness of the crime should wholly or partly determine the severity of the punishment (Hamilton & Raytina, 1980; Warr, Meier & Erickson, 1983). Therefore, it is possible that child murderers are receiving harsher penalties than those who kill senior citizens. Is this injustice or it is the reality of living in a social world? Should the law be rational or should it reflect the values of a society? Is it tolerable that the value of one life may be considered more or less than another?

### Limitations and Future Directions

The concept of crime seriousness has been defined in many ways in the literature. In the pilot study, I demonstrated that participants' ranking of crimes were comparable when asked to rank according to "wrongfulness", "harm to society" and "challenges your

belief system”, suggesting that the terms may be getting at the same construct. Rankings differed, however, when participants ranked crimes in terms of “fearfulness”. In the main study, it was not feasible to ask participants to sort crimes multiple times (given the much larger set of crimes), and so participants were asked only to sort crimes in terms of “wrongfulness”. Although other researchers have operationalized crime seriousness in terms of “wrongfulness”, it might be argued that “crime seriousness” and “wrongfulness” represent somewhat different concepts in the minds of participants. Future research should establish whether these terms are perceived as interchangeable.

A second limitation of the two studies concerns the lack of precision (or reliability) of measurement for some of the attitudinal measures proposed as moderators (e.g., the belief in a just world). The reliability of the Just World Belief scale in the main study was an improvement over the pilot study but still in the low range. Also, the reliability score for the subscale, Identification of Criminal Others, from the Criminal Sentiments Scale-Modified was .13. This may be due to the lack of variability in the answers plus the difficult wording on some of the questions. Because these instruments have low reliability or precision, their use as moderators is compromised (see Baron & Kenny, 1986, for an argument on the importance of assessing moderators with high degree of precision).

Third, the sample was predominantly female and under the age of 20. This makes generalizing to the entire population problematic. It is quite possible that young females think about crime differently than other aggregates. Future research may endeavour to use a sample more representative of the Canadian population. It would also be interesting to examine whether having children and the age of such children would affect

rankings of homicides. In addition, questions could be asked about whether participants are currently taking care of elderly parents in order to examine if this may play a role in the devaluation of the elderly.

The present study also produced some interesting findings regarding the role of culture in the rankings of crimes yet understanding these cultural differences is limited by the fact that the groups of those raised outside of Canada but considered Canada their home and those who were raised outside of Canada and consider somewhere outside of Canada to be their home were relatively small. Furthermore, the fact that the sample mostly was from the Middle East or Africa also presents dangers in generalizing. Despite these limitations, it does appear that there are cultural differences in homicide rankings as suggested by past research (see Akman & Normandeau, 1968; Geboys, Roberts & DasGupta, 1988; Lampe, 1982; Vogel, 1988; Walker, 1978). This is an exciting potential for future research, in particular, to examine different homicide laws and practices and see how they relate to rankings of homicides by citizens. It would be really interesting to examine cultures where poverty and the death of children is the norm as opposed to our culture where childhood is equated with innocence and the death of a child is an unusual and horrid event. Jecker and Schneiderman (1994) argue that the perceived tragedy of dying young may be a phenomenon of western industrialized society as people expect themselves and those around them to live into their eighties. Future research could also examine cultures where patriarchy is the norm and see how this influences rankings of homicides, in particular for the variable of sex of the offender. Recall that my findings suggest that this may be a fruitful direction as the group that was raised outside of Canada and considered somewhere besides Canada as their 'home' were more sexist and had

more 'pro criminal' attitudes. It is unclear whether this group was referring to the Canadian justice system or the justice system in the country they were raised when answering the Criminal Sentiments Scale-Modified. Another line of research would compare society that focus more on the individual to those who focus more on the good of society.

Another potential area of future research would be to see if there is a link between crime seriousness and the allocation of resources in the criminal justice system. This study suggests that people (or at least university students) think that society should not spend as many resources to imprison those who cause the death of someone unintentionally as those who cause the death of someone intentionally. It also suggests that if police resources are limited, then people would sooner support spending these resources to punish those who commit crimes against children from serious crime rather than those who commit crimes against senior citizens. It also suggests that people may be more concerned with incarcerating those who commit filicide than stranger killings, if pressed to make a choice.

One further avenue for future research is to examine what assumptions people make about the different homicides. Although participants were told not to add any additional information to the scenarios, it is not possible to know from these data whether (or the extent to which) participants assumed certain conditions. It would be interesting to examine what assumptions did they make. Do people think that parents killed by their children somehow deserved to die? Are people more likely to assume mental illness was a factor in maternal filicide than paternal filicide?

The present study examined four variables that affected crime rankings but there are many more that future research could endeavour to examine or other possibilities within the variables examined. For the relationship of the victim to the offender, possibilities include spousal homicide or sibling homicide. Another variable of interest would be the age of the offender. For instance, do people perceive crimes committed by juvenile offenders differently than crimes committed by adult offenders and even elderly offenders? Also, this study only examined sex of the victim when the crime was filicide and parricide but it would be interesting to examine female and male offender for acquaintance killings and stranger killings, especially given the lack of consensus regarding this variable found in the present research and past research. Clearly, there is a wealth of variables that can be studied to understand their influence on homicide rankings.

The present research brought together many interesting areas: psychology, sociology, philosophy and criminology in an attempt to answer some very interesting questions that had both theoretical and practical implications. Newspaper editors seem to know something this research confirms: the majority of people react very strongly to the intentional death of a young child at the hands of its parent, in particular the mother. This is why these stories appear on the front page and the unintentional death of seniors are hidden somewhere in the paper. Not all homicides are considered equal. Some lives have more value than others. That is the reality of this social world.

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**Table 1: Pilot Study: Correlations between Dimensions of Seriousness**

	Wrong	Harm	Challenge
Harm	.46		
Challenge	.84	.45	
Fear	.27	.56	.29

Note: N = 780 (i.e., 65 participants X 12 scenarios)

**Table 2: Pilot Study; Descriptive Statistics for Ranking of Crimes**

Crime	Mean	Std. Deviation	Inter Quartile range (middle 50% of scores) (Q3-Q1)
A 1 year old is killed by the mother in an explosion of frustration	2.39	1.56	$3 - 1 = 2.00$
A 1 year old is killed by the father in an explosion of frustration	2.94	1.42	$3.5 - 2 = 1.5$
A 10 year old is killed by the father as a result of negligence	4.54	1.56	$5.67 - 3 = 2.67$
A 25 year old is killed by the father in an explosion of frustration	5.88	1.79	$7.33 - 4.33 = 3$
A 10 year old is killed by an acquaintance as a result of negligence	6.15	1.76	$7.33 - 4.83 = 2.5$
An 80 year old is killed by the son in an explosion of frustration	6.28	2.21	$7.5 - 5 = 2.5$
A 45 year old is killed by the daughter in an explosion of frustration	6.59	1.96	$7.5 - 5 = 2.5$
A 25 year old is killed by an acquaintance in an explosion of frustration	7.02	2.12	$8.33 - 5.5 = 2.83$
An 80 year old is killed by the daughter as a result of negligence	7.72	2.41	$9.00 - 6 = 3.33$
A 60 year old is killed by an acquaintance as a result of negligence	9.28	1.53	$10.67 - 8 = 2.67$
A 45 year old is killed by a stranger as a result of negligence	9.59	1.83	$11 - 8.167 = 2.83$
A 60 year old is killed by a stranger as a result of negligence	9.65	1.80	$11 - 8 = 3$

Note: Rankings represent the mean of three rankings: Wrong, Harmful to society and Challenges your belief system where 1 = most wrong, harmful, etc and 12 = least wrong, harmful etc.

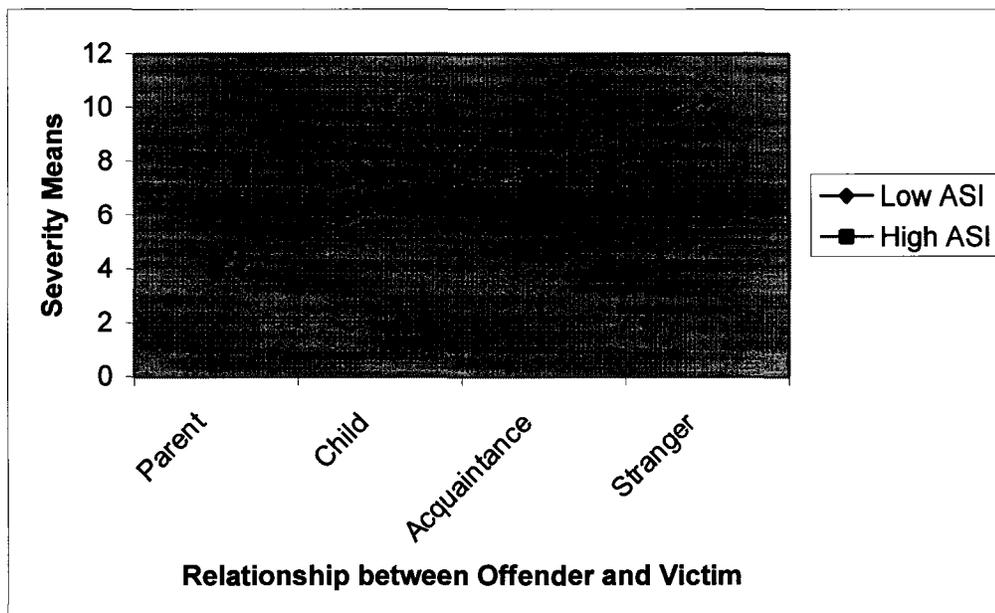
**Table 3: Pilot Study; Severity Scores as a Function of the Age of the Victim**

Age of Victim	Mean	Std. Deviation
01	2.66	1.44
10	5.35	1.41
25	6.45	1.65
45	8.09	1.18
60	9.46	1.50
80	7.00	2.02

**Table 4: Pilot Study; Severity Scores as a Function of the Relationship of the Offender to the Victim.**

Relationship	Mean	Std. Deviation
Parent of victim	3.94	0.98
Child of victim	6.86	1.52
Acquaintance	7.48	0.95
Stranger	9.62	1.60

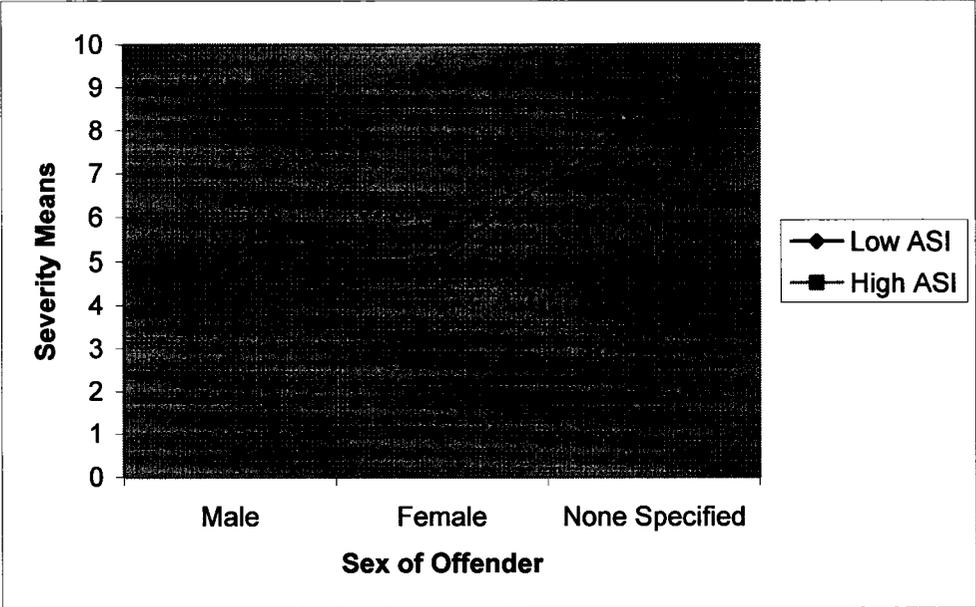
**Figure 1: Pilot Study; Interaction between ASI scores and the Relationship between the Offender and the Victim**



**Table 5: Pilot Study; Severity Scores as a Function of the Sex of the Offender**

Sex	Mean	Std. Deviation
Male	4.91	0.75
Female	5.56	1.08
None specified	8.34	1.08

**Figure 2: Pilot Study; Interaction between ASI scores and Sex of the Offender**



**Table 6: Pilot Study; Severity Scores as a Function of the Motive**

Motive	Mean	Std. Deviation
Frustration	5.18	0.91
Negligence	7.82	0.92

**Table 7: Pilot Study; Descriptive Statistics of Measures**

Scale	Mean	Std. Deviation
JWB	8.02	2.43
Benevolent Sexism Subscale	25.97	10.49
Hostile Sexism Subscale	27.09	8.315
Ambivalent Sexism Inventory	53.06	12.90

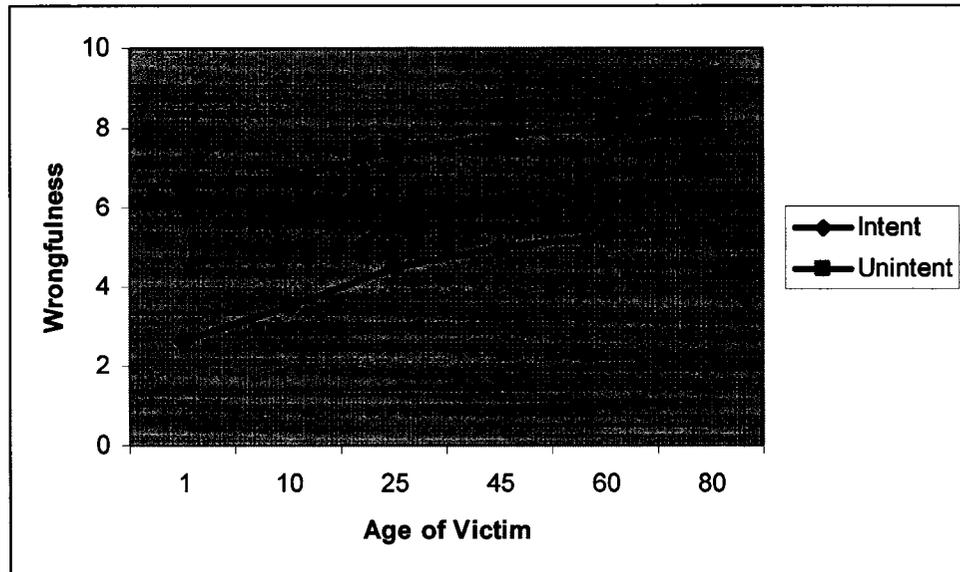
**Table 8: Main Study; Descriptive Statistics for Crime Scenarios**

<b>Crime Scenario</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Interquartile Range Q3- Q1</b>
A 1 year old is killed by the mother intentionally	1.86	1.34	$2 - 1 = 1$
A 1 year old is killed by the father intentionally	2.36	1.10	$3 - 2 = 1$
10 year old is killed by the mother intentionally	3.01	1.02	$3 - 2 = 1$
A 1 year old is killed by an adult acquaintance intentionally	3.12	1.21	$4 - 2 = 2$
A 10 year old is killed by the father intentionally	3.15	1.02	$3 - 3 = 0$
A 1 year old is killed by an adult stranger intentionally	3.23	1.40	$4 - 2 = 2$
A 10 year old is killed by an adult acquaintance intentionally	3.74	.99	$4 - 3 = 1$
A 10 year old is killed by an adult stranger intentionally	4.14	1.24	$5 - 3 = 2$
A 25 year old is killed by the mother intentionally	4.20	1.12	$5 - 4 = 1$
A 25 year old is killed by the father intentionally	4.21	1.01	$5 - 4 = 1$
A 45 year old is killed by the mother intentionally	4.63	1.01	$5 - 4 = 1$
A 25 year old is killed by an adult acquaintance intentionally	4.74	1.01	$5 - 4 = 1$
45 year old is killed by the son intentionally	4.77	1.01	$5 - 4 = 1$
A 45 year old is killed by the father intentionally	4.82	.94	$5 - 4 = 1$
A 45 year old is killed by the daughter intentionally	4.84	1.18	$5 - 4 = 1$
A 60 year old is killed by the son intentionally	4.89	1.10	$6 - 4 = 2$
A 25 year old is killed by an adult stranger intentionally	4.91	1.18	$6 - 4 = 2$
A 60 year old is killed by the daughter intentionally)	4.99	1.03	$5 - 4 = 1$
An 80 year old is killed by the daughter intentionally	5.05	1.27	$6 - 4 = 2$

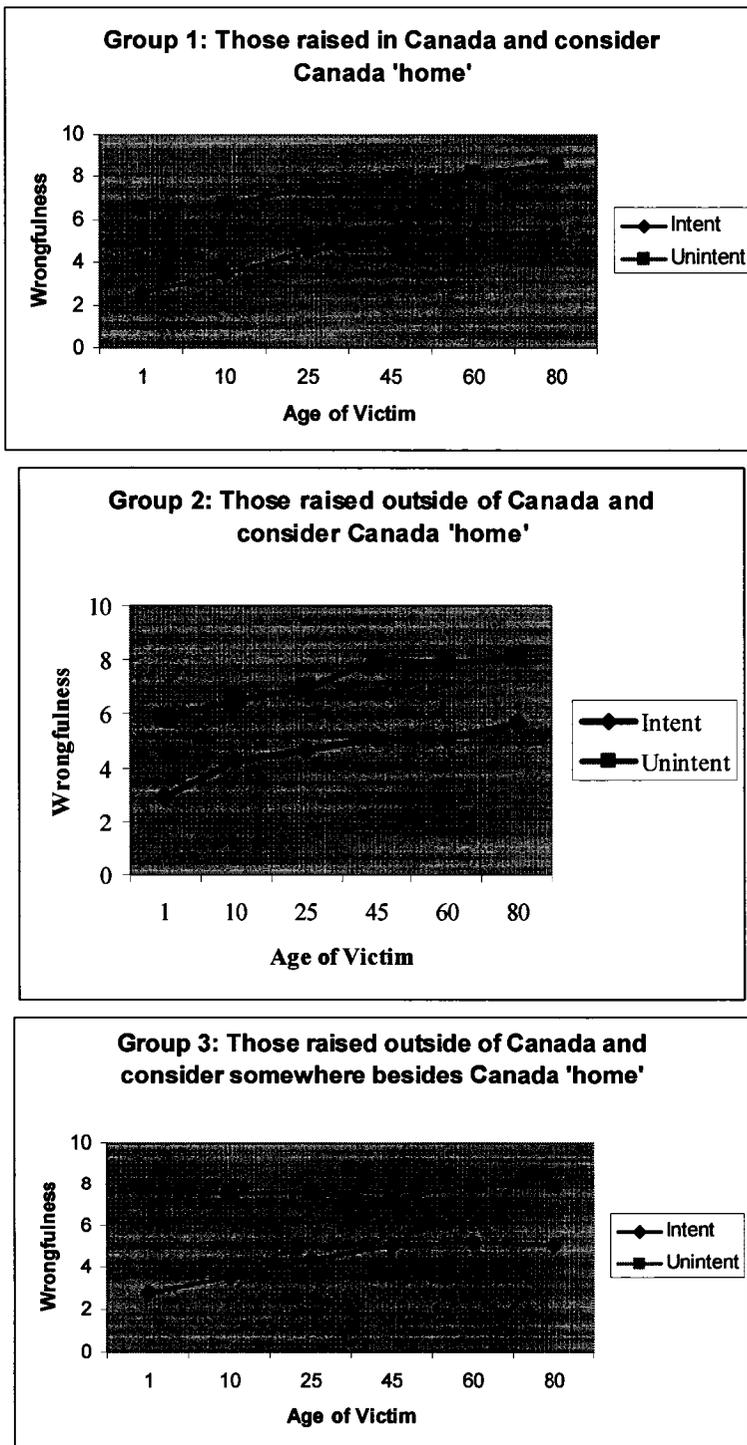
An 80 year old is killed by the son intentionally	5.07	1.27	$6 - 4 = 2$
A 45 year old is killed by an adult acquaintance intentionally	5.38	1.190	$6 - 5 = 1$
A 60 year old is killed by an adult acquaintance intentionally	5.43	.88	$6 - 5 = 1$
A 45 year old is killed by an adult stranger intentionally	5.59	1.16	$6 - 5 = 1$
An 80 year old is killed by an adult acquaintance intentionally	5.69	1.15	$6 - 5 = 1$
An 80 year old is killed by an adult stranger intentionally	5.76	1.49	$6 - 5 = 1$
A 60 year old is killed by an adult stranger intentionally	5.79	.95	$6 - 5 = 1$
A 1 year old is killed by the mother unintentionally	6.45	2.11	$7 - 6 = 1$
A 10 year old is killed by the mother unintentionally	6.47	1.35	$7 - 6 = 1$
A 1 year old is killed by the father unintentionally	6.54	1.82	$7 - 6 = 1$
A 1 year old is killed by an adult acquaintance unintentionally	6.59	1.59	$7 - 6 = 1$
A 10 year old is killed by the father unintentionally	6.73	1.23	$7 - 6 = 1$
A 10 year old is killed by an adult acquaintance unintentionally	6.74	1.34	$7 - 6 = 1$
A 1 year old is killed by an adult stranger unintentionally	6.77	1.73	$8 - 6 = 2$
A 10 year old is killed by an adult stranger unintentionally	7.11	1.41	$8 - 6 = 2$
A 25 year old is killed by the mother unintentionally	7.13	1.04	$7 - 7 = 0$
A 25 year old is killed by the father unintentionally	7.36	1.11	$8 - 7 = 1$
A 45 year old is killed by the son unintentionally	7.57	.92	$8 - 7 = 1$
A 45 year old is killed by the father unintentionally	7.60	1.08	$8 - 7 = 1$
A 45 year old is killed by the mother unintentionally	7.62	.93	$8 - 7 = 1$
A 25 year old is killed by an adult acquaintance unintentionally	7.62	1.23	$8 - 7 = 1$
A 25 year old is killed by an adult	7.63	1.49	$9 - 7 = 2$

stranger unintentionally			
A 45 year old is killed by the daughter unintentionally	7.74	.95	$8 - 7 = 1$
A 45 year old is killed by an adult acquaintance unintentionally	7.91	1.05	$9 - 7 = 2$
A 60 year old is killed by the daughter unintentionally	7.93	1.05	$9 - 7 = 2$
A 60 year old is killed by the son unintentionally	7.95	1.26	$9 - 7 = 2$
A 60 year old is killed by an adult acquaintance unintentionally	8.07	1.21	$9 - 7 = 2$
An 80 year old is killed by the son unintentionally	8.20	1.52	$9 - 7 = 2$
An 80 year old is killed by the daughter unintentionally	8.27	1.53	$9 - 7 = 2$
A 45 year old is killed by an adult stranger unintentionally	8.30	1.35	$9 - 7 = 2$
An 80 year old is killed by an adult acquaintance unintentionally	8.51	1.46	$10 - 7 = 3$
A 60 year old is killed by an adult stranger unintentionally	8.57	1.42	$10 - 8 = 2$
An 80 year old is killed by an adult stranger unintentionally	8.97	1.90	$11 - 7 = 4$

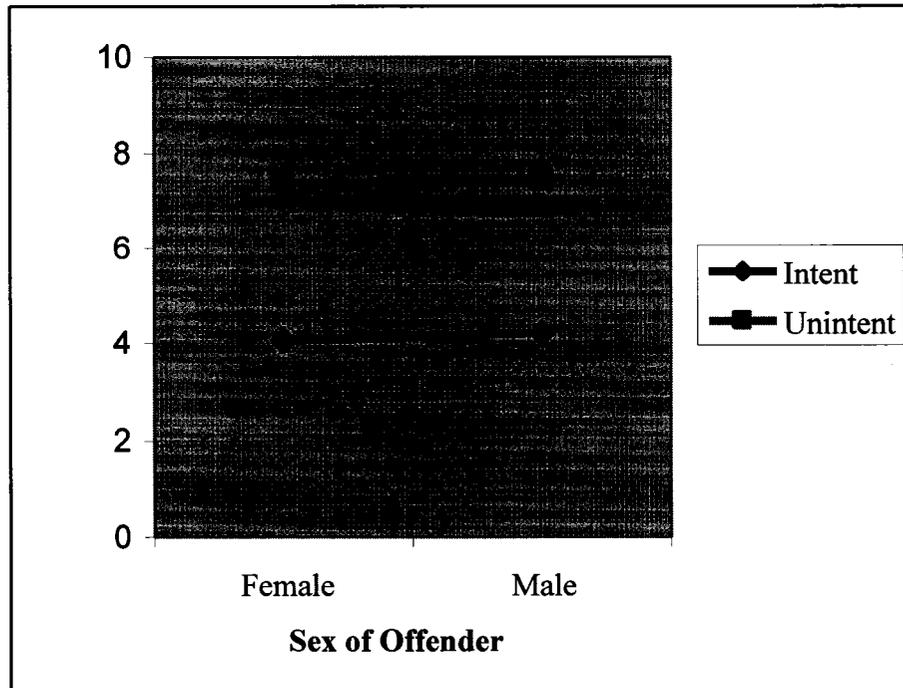
**Figure 3: Main Study; Wrongfulness Scores as a Function of the Age of the Victim and Intentionality**



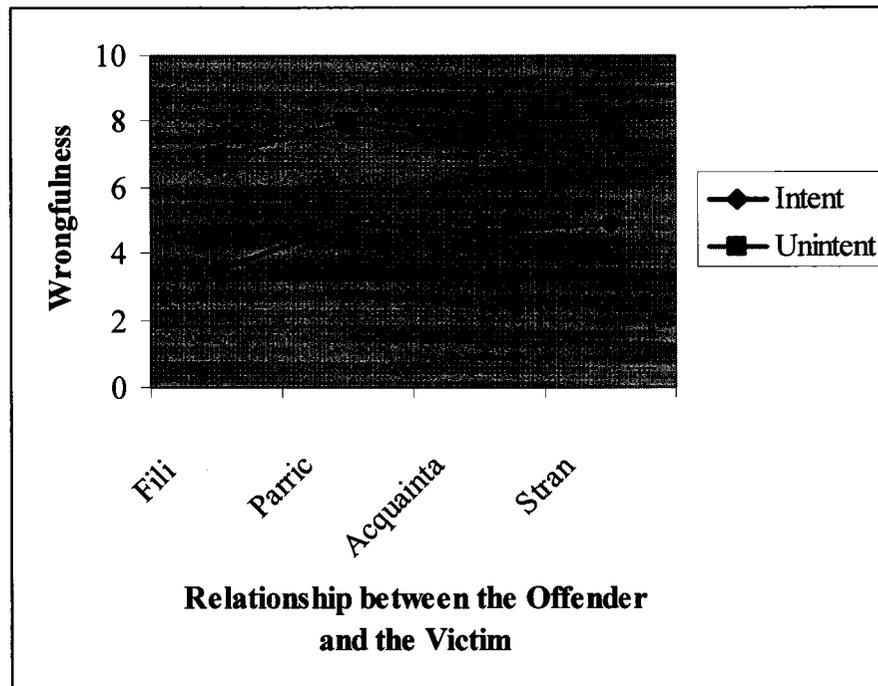
**Figure 4: Main Study; Wrongfulness Scores as a Function of the Age of the Victim and Intentionality with where participants were raised and consider 'home' as a between-subjects effect**



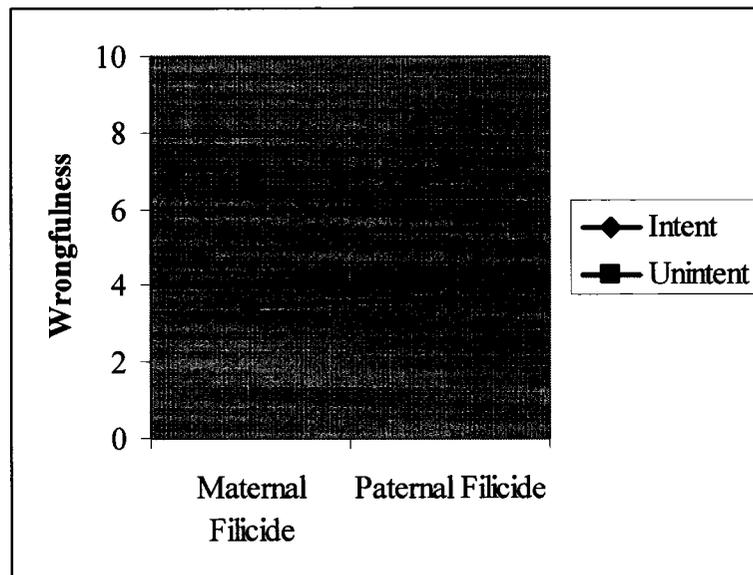
**Figure 5: Main Study; Wrongfulness Scores as a Function of the Sex of the Offender and Intentionality**



**Figure 6: Main Study; Wrongfulness Score as a Function of Relationship between the Offender and the Victim (Filicide, Parricide, Acquaintance-killing and Stranger-killing) and Intentionality**



**Figure 7: Main Study; Wrongfulness Scores as a Function of Relationship between the Offender and the Victim (maternal filicide and paternal filicide) and Intentionality**



**Table 9: Main Study; Frequency of Punishments for the 'Most Wrong Crime'**

Punishment	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1 year - 2 years	1	1.1	1.1
6-10 years	1	1.1	2.2
11 -15 years	1	1.1	3.3
16 - 20 years	5	5.5	8.8
21 - 25 years	8	8.8	17.6
Life imprisonment with parole	18	19.8	37.4
Life imprisonment without parole	47	51.6	89.0
Death penalty	10	11.0	100.0

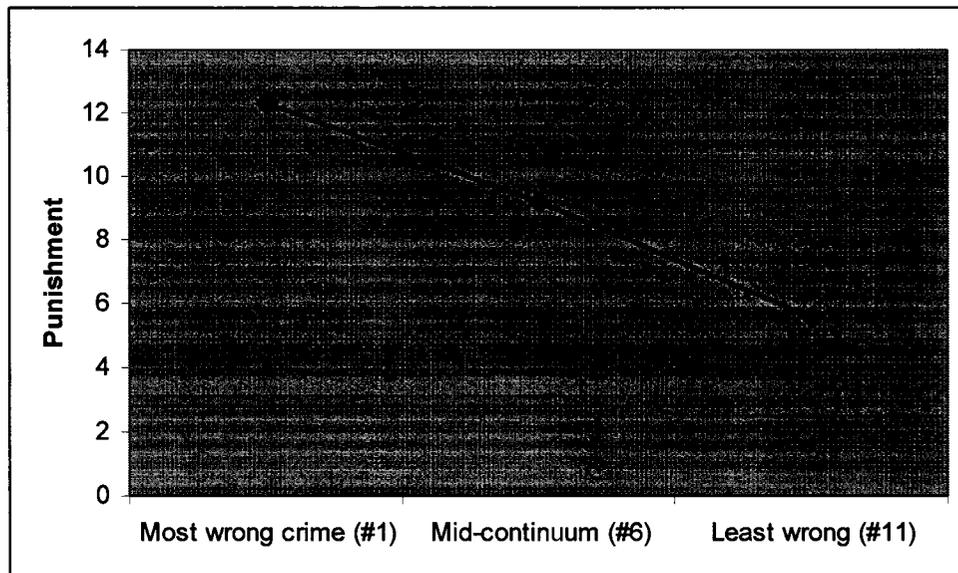
**Table 10: Main Study; Frequency of Punishments for the 'Least Wrong Crime'**

Punishment	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
No penalty	17	18.7	18.7
Probation	6	6.6	25.3
Fine greater than \$1000	4	4.4	29.7
Less than 6 months	7	7.7	37.4
6 months - 1 year	6	6.6	44.0
1 year - 2 years	7	7.7	51.6
3 - 5 years	15	16.5	68.1
6 -10 years	8	8.8	76.9
11- 15 years	7	7.7	84.6
16 - 20 years	5	5.5	90.1
21- 25 years	4	4.4	94.5
Life imprisonment with parole	4	4.4	98.9
Life imprisonment without parole	1	1.1	100.0

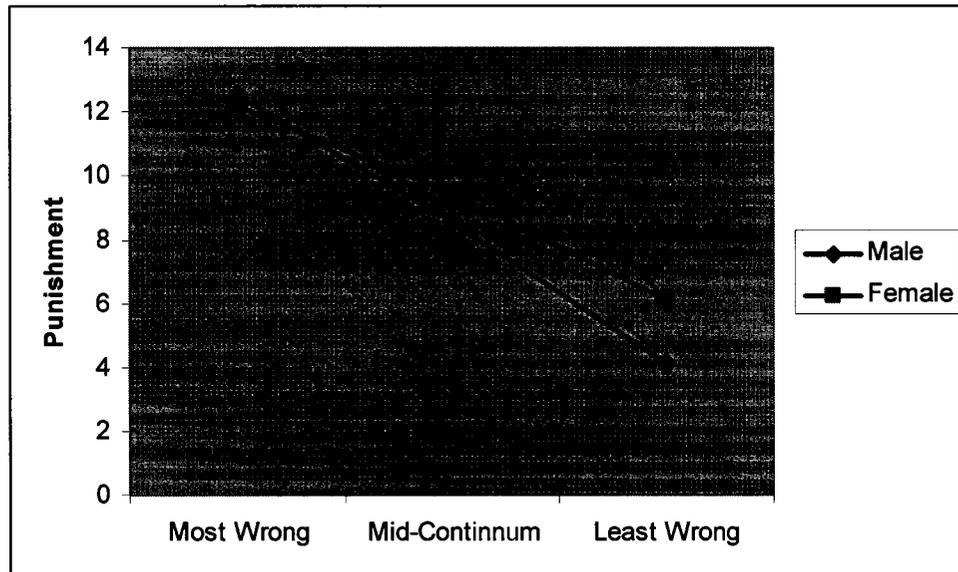
**Table 11: Main Study; Frequency of Punishments for the ‘Middle Continuum Crimes’**

Punishment	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Less than 6 months	3	3.3	3.3
6 months - 1 year	5	5.5	8.8
1 year - 2 years	2	2.2	11.0
3 - 5 years	11	12.1	23.1
6 - 10 years	15	16.5	39.6
11 -15 years	14	15.4	54.9
16 - 20 years	12	13.2	68.1
21-25 years	12	13.2	81.3
Life with parole	11	12.1	93.4
Life without parole	5	5.5	98.9
Death Penalty	1	1.1	100.0

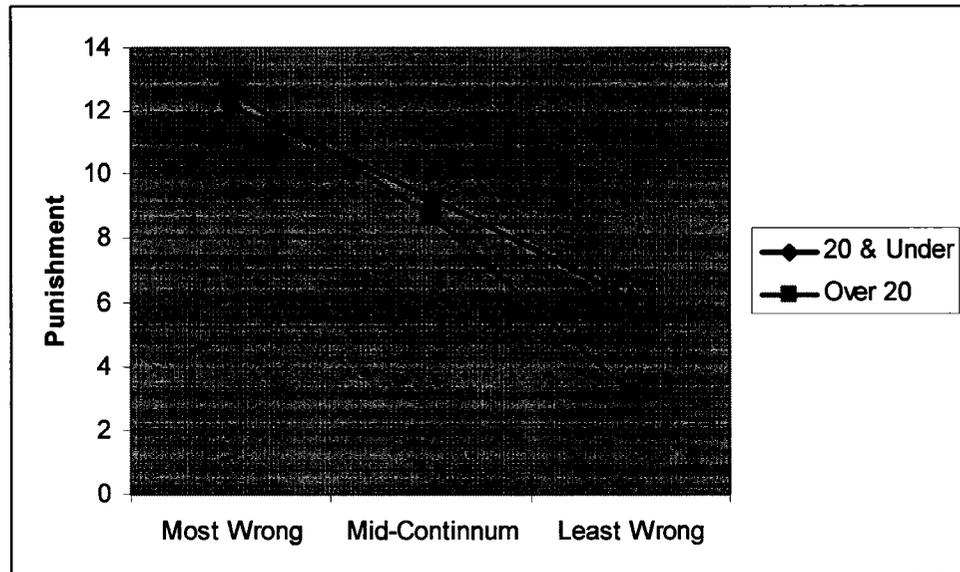
**Figure 8: Main Study; Punishment given to Crime considered Most Wrong, Mid-Continuum and Least Wrong**



**Figure 9: Main Study; The Punishment given to Crime considered most Wrong, Mid-continuum and Least Wrong and Sex as a Between-Subjects Effect**



**Figure 10: Main Study; The Punishment Given to Crime considered Most Wrong, Mid-continuum and Least Wrong and Age as a Between-Subjects Effect**



**Table 12: Main Study; Descriptive Statistics for Scales**

Scale	Mean	Std. Deviation
Just World Belief	-1.22	9.80
Benevolent Sexism	-.96	11.06
Hostile Sexism	-2.43	11.30
Ambivalent Sexism Inventory	-3.38	18.9
Criminal Sentiments Scale Modified	27.42	9.12
Attitudes Towards Law	4.82	2.81
Attitudes Towards Court	7.07	2.83
Attitudes Towards Police	3.74	2.54
Tolerance for Law Violations	8.59	3.47
Identifications with Criminal Others	3.20	1.58

**Table 13: Main Study; Correlations between Scales**

	JWB	ASI	HS	BS	CSS-M
JWB	X	.03	-.07	-.01	-.28**
ASI	.03	X	.85**	.85**	.31**
HS	-.07	.85**	X	.45**	.23*
BS	-.01,	.85**	.45**	X	.29**
CSS-M	-.28**	.31**	.23*	.29**	X

\* significant at  $p < .05$ , \*\* significant at  $p < .01$

**Table 14: Main Study; Correlations between subscales of Criminal Sentiment Scale-Modified**

	Law	Court	Police	TLV	ICO
Law	X	.44**	.34**	.43**	.17
Court	.44**	X	.42**	.49**	.11
Police	.34**	.42**	X	.23*	.14
TLV	.43**	.49**	.23*	X	.24*
ICO	.17	.11	.14	.24*	X

\* significant at  $p < .05$ , \*\* significant at  $p < .01$

## Appendix A: Pilot Study Questionnaire

Please complete the following information.

### Background Information

Sex:

Age:

Marital status:

Never married \_\_\_\_\_

Common-law or married \_\_\_\_\_

Separated or divorced \_\_\_\_\_

Widowed \_\_\_\_\_

### *Terror Management Manipulation*

Shortly you will be reading and ranking different serious crimes. In order to get you in the proper state of mind we ask you to think for a few minutes about your own death.

Please answer the following questions

*(Mortality Saliency condition)*

OR

Shortly you will be reading and ranking different serious crimes. In order to get you in the proper state of mind we ask you to think for a few minutes about dental pain. Please answer the following questions

*(Control condition)*

1. Imagine for a moment that you are dying. Please write down what you imagine happening to you as you die. *(Mortality Saliency condition)*

OR

Imagine for a moment you have dental pain Please write down what you imagine happening to you as you have dental pain.

*(Control condition)*

2. Please write down as specifically as you can what will happen to your body after you have died. *(Mortality Saliency condition)*

OR

Please write down as specifically as you can what will happen as your tooth is being drilled at the dentist.

*(Control condition)*

*Just World Belief Scale*

There are 18 statements below, which represent opinions that some people hold. Would you please indicate if you agree or disagree with the opinions by circling *T* if you agree with the statement and *F* if you do not agree. Remember there are no 'right' or wrong' answers, but your own opinion is one that counts. Answer all questions and be honest. Thank you.

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| 1. I've found that a person rarely deserves the reputation she/he has.                   | T | F |
| 2. Basically, the world is a just place.   | T | F |
| 3. People who get 'lucky breaks' usually earned their good fortune.                      | T | F |
| 4. Careful drivers are just as likely to get hurt in traffic accidents as careless ones. | T | F |
| 5. It is a common occurrence for a guilty person to get off free.                        | T | F |
| 6. Students almost always deserve the grades they receive in school.                     | T | F |
| 7. People who keep in shape have little chance of suffering a heart attack.              | T | F |
| 8. The political candidate who sticks up for their principles rarely gets elected.       | T | F |
| 9. It is rare for an innocent person to be wrongly sent to jail.                         | T | F |
| 10. In professional sports, many fouls and infractions never get called by the referee.  | T | F |
| 11. By and large, people deserve what they get.  | T | F |
| 12. When parents punish their children, it is almost always for good reasons.            | T | F |
| 13. Good deeds often go unnoticed and unrewarded.  | T | F |
| 14. In almost any business or profession, people who do their job well rise to the top.  | T | F |
| 15. Parents tend to overlook the things most to be admired in their children.            | T | F |
| 16. It is often impossible for a person to receive a fair trial.                         | T | F |
| 17. People who meet with misfortune have often brought it on themselves.                 | T | F |
| 18. Many people suffer though absolutely no fault of their own.                          | T | F |

Please rank these crimes first in terms of how wrong you think each crime is where #1 is the most wrong, #2 is the second most wrong, all the way to #12 which is the least wrong. Then rank each crime in terms of how much harm to society you think each crime causes is where #1 is the most wrong and #12 is the least harm. Next, rank these crimes in terms of how much they challenge your belief system where #1 is the most challenging and #12 is the least challenging. Finally, rank these crimes in terms of how fearful it would make you if this crime happened in your town where #1 is the most fearful and #12 is the least fearful. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers, just your own opinion.

Scenario	Wrongfulness	Harm to Society	Challenges Your Belief System	Would make you fearful if it happened in your town
A 1 year old is killed by the mother in an explosion of frustration				
A 10 year old is killed by the father as a result of negligence				
A 45 year old is killed by the daughter in an explosion of frustration				
An 80 year old is killed by the son in an explosion of frustration				
A 25 year old is killed by an acquaintance in an explosion of frustration				
A 60 year old is killed by an acquaintance as a result of negligence				
A 25 year old is killed by the father in an explosion of frustration				
A 1 year old is killed by the father in an explosion of frustration				
A 60 year old is killed by a stranger as a result of negligence				
An 80 year old is killed by the daughter as a result of negligence				
A 10 year old is killed by an acquaintance as a result of negligence				
A 45 year old is killed by a stranger as a result of negligence				

Look at the first column of 'wrongfulness' rankings:  
Please explain why you ranked #1 as most serious

Please explain why you ranked #12 as least serious

Look at the next column of 'harm to society' rankings:  
Please explain why you ranked #1 as most serious

Please explain why you ranked #12 as least serious

Look at the next column of 'challenges your belief system' rankings  
Please explain why you ranked #1 as most serious

Please explain why you ranked #12 as least serious

Look at the last column of 'makes you fearful' rankings  
Please explain why you ranked #1 as most serious

Please explain why you ranked #12 as least serious

### *Criminal Attitude Scale*

We are now interesting in your opinions/values on a few different issues. Would you please indicate if you agree or disagree with the opinions by circling *T* if you agree with the statement and *F* if you do not. Remember there are no 'right' or wrong' answers, but your own opinion is one that counts. Answer all questions and be honest. Thank you.

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| 1. Criminals deserve their sentence.                                     | T | F |
| 2. Criminals do not want the police to catch them.                       | T | F |
| 3. There are bigger criminals outside prison than inside it.             | T | F |
| 4. The police hound those with criminal records.                         | T | F |
| 5. The authorities are interested in criminals and trying to help them.  | T | F |
| 6. Once a criminal, always a criminal.                                   | T | F |
| 7. Rich people can 'buy' justice.  | T | F |
| 8. Too many people use psychiatric illness as an excuse for crimes.      | T | F |
| 9. Criminals choose a life of crime                                      | T | F |
| 10. The criminal justice system should focus more on rehabilitation.     | T | F |
| 11. Prisons are like resorts.  | T | F |
| 12. No murder is ever justified  | T | F |
| 13. Certain groups are more likely to be found guilty than other groups. | T | F |

If you answered 'true' to question #13, which groups are more likely to be found guilty?

### *Ambivalent Sexism Inventory*

Below is a series of statements concerning men and women and their relationships in contemporary society. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement using the following scale:

- 0 = disagree strongly
- 1 = disagree somewhat
- 2 = disagree slightly
- 3 = agree slightly
- 4 = agree somewhat
- 5 = agree strongly

1. No matter how accomplished he is, a man is not truly complete as a person unless he has the love of a woman. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Many women are actually seeking special favours, such as hiring policies that favour them over men, under the guise of asking for 'equality'. \_\_\_\_\_
3. In a disaster, women ought not necessarily to be rescued before men. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Women are too easily offended. \_\_\_\_\_
6. People are often truly happy in life without being romantically involved with a member of the other sex. \_\_\_\_\_
7. Feminists are not seeking for women to have more power than men. \_\_\_\_\_
8. Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess. \_\_\_\_\_
9. Women should be cherished and protected by men. \_\_\_\_\_
10. Most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them. \_\_\_\_\_
11. Women seek to gain power by getting control over men. \_\_\_\_\_
12. Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores. \_\_\_\_\_
13. Men are complete without women. \_\_\_\_\_
14. Many women exaggerate problems they have at work. \_\_\_\_\_
15. Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to put him on a tight leash. \_\_\_\_\_
16. When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against. \_\_\_\_\_
17. A good woman should be set on a pedestal by her man. \_\_\_\_\_
18. There are actually very few women who get a kick out of teasing men by seeming sexually available and then refusing male advances. \_\_\_\_\_
19. Women, compared to men, tend to have superior moral sensibility. \_\_\_\_\_
20. Men should be willing to sacrifice their own well being in order to provide financially for the women in their lives. \_\_\_\_\_
21. Feminists are making entirely reasonable demands of men. \_\_\_\_\_
22. Women, as compared to men, tend to have more refined sense of culture and good taste. \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you. Please let the experimenter know you are finished this package.

## Appendix B: Main Study Questionnaire

## Social Perceptions of Homicides questionnaire

Please complete the following information. We are asking for this information to help us understand whether these factors affect your ranking of crimes.

Sex: Male Female

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Marital status:

Never married \_\_\_\_\_

Common-law or married \_\_\_\_\_

Separated or divorced \_\_\_\_\_

Widowed \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnicity: In what country were you raised: \_\_\_\_\_

What country or city do you consider to be 'home'? (e.g. Montreal, Ottawa, England, China) \_\_\_\_\_

Religion: Do you consider yourself to be religious?

not at all  
religious

a little religious

somewhat  
religious

quite religious

very religious

Do you belong to a faith group?

No

Yes

Baha'i

Buddhist

Christian: Catholic

Christian: Non-Catholic

Hindu

Jewish

Muslim

Other:

Political: Which of the following categories best represents your political orientation?:

very conservative

conservative

moderate

liberal

very liberal

not politically oriented

other: \_\_\_\_\_

*Just World Belief Scale*

There are 18 statements below that represent opinions that some people hold. Please indicate how you feel about the statement by writing the appropriate number beside the statement. There are no right or wrong answers, just your opinions.

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3

---

1. I've found that a person rarely deserves the reputation she/he has. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Basically, the world is a just place. \_\_\_\_\_
3. People who get 'lucky breaks' usually earn their good fortune. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Careful drivers are just as likely to get hurt in traffic accidents as careless ones. \_\_\_\_\_
5. It is a common occurrence for a guilty person to get off free. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Students almost always deserve the grades they receive in school. \_\_\_\_\_
7. People who keep in shape have little chance of suffering a heart attack. \_\_\_\_\_
8. The political candidate who sticks up for their principles rarely gets elected. \_\_\_\_\_
9. It is rare for an innocent person to be wrongly sent to jail. \_\_\_\_\_
10. In professional sports, many fouls and infractions never get called by the referee. \_\_\_\_\_
11. By and large, people deserve what they get. \_\_\_\_\_
12. When parents punish their children, it is almost always for good reasons. \_\_\_\_\_
13. Good deeds often go unnoticed and unrewarded. \_\_\_\_\_
14. In almost any business or profession, people who do their job well rise to the top. \_\_\_\_\_
15. Parents tend to overlook the things most to be admired in their children. \_\_\_\_\_
16. It is often impossible for a person to receive a fair trial. \_\_\_\_\_
17. People who meet with misfortune have often brought it on themselves. \_\_\_\_\_
18. Many people suffer though absolutely no fault of their own. \_\_\_\_\_

*Ambivalent Sexism Inventory*

Below is a series of statements concerning men and women and their relationships in contemporary society. Please indicate how you feel about the statement by writing the appropriate number. There are no right or wrong answers, just your opinions.

Strongly Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Somewhat agree	agree
-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3

1. No matter how accomplished he is, a man is not truly complete as a person unless he has the love of a woman. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Many women are actually seeking special favours, such as hiring policies that favour them over men, under the guise of asking for 'equality'. \_\_\_\_\_
3. In a disaster, women ought not necessarily to be rescued before men. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Women are too easily offended. \_\_\_\_\_
6. People are often truly happy in life without being romantically involved with a member of the other sex. \_\_\_\_\_
7. Feminists are not seeking for women to have more power than men. \_\_\_\_\_
8. Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess. \_\_\_\_\_
9. Women should be cherished and protected by men. \_\_\_\_\_
10. Most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them. \_\_\_\_\_
11. Women seek to gain power by getting control over men. \_\_\_\_\_
12. Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores. \_\_\_\_\_
13. Men are complete without women. \_\_\_\_\_
14. Many women exaggerate problems they have at work. \_\_\_\_\_
15. Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to put him on a tight leash. \_\_\_\_\_
16. When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against. \_\_\_\_\_
17. A good woman should be set on a pedestal by her man. \_\_\_\_\_
18. There are actually very few women who get a kick out of teasing men by seeming sexually available and then refusing male advances. \_\_\_\_\_
19. Women, compared to men, tend to have superior moral sensibility. \_\_\_\_\_
20. Men should be willing to sacrifice their own well being in order to provide financially for the women in their lives. \_\_\_\_\_
21. Feminists are making entirely reasonable demands of men. \_\_\_\_\_
22. Women, as compared to men, tend to have more refined sense of culture and good taste. \_\_\_\_\_

You will now be asked to complete a card-sorting task. Please let the experimenter know you are ready and she/he will provide you with instructions. Please do not complete the rest of this questionnaire until after the card-sorting task.

*Appropriate Punishment Questionnaire*

Below are a series of punishments.

- A. No penalty
- B. Probation
- C. Fine less than \$1000
- D. Fine greater than \$1000
- E. Less than 6 months imprisonment
- F. 6 months -1 year imprisonment
- G. 1-2 years imprisonment
- H. 3-5 years imprisonment
- I. 6-10 years imprisonment
- J. 11-15 years imprisonment
- K. 16-20 years imprisonment
- L. 21-25 years imprisonment
- M. Life imprisonment with the possibility of parole
- N. Life imprisonment without the possibility of parole
- O. Death penalty

Take a look at the crime that you selected in the card-sort task for the #1 position (most wrong). What do you feel would be an appropriate punishment for someone found guilty of this crime? Please indicate your choice by writing the letter corresponding to the chosen punishment. \_\_\_\_\_

Take a look at the crime that you selected in the card-sort task for the #11 position (the wrong). What do you feel would be an appropriate punishment for someone found guilty of this crime? Please indicate your choice by writing the letter corresponding to the chosen punishment. \_\_\_\_\_

Take a look at the crimes that you selected in the card-sort task for the #6 position (mid wrong). What do you feel would be an appropriate punishment for someone found guilty of these crimes? Please indicate your choice by writing the letter corresponding to the chosen punishment. \_\_\_\_\_

Which statement best represents your opinion regarding the death penalty?

1. I am opposed to the death penalty under any circumstance
2. I am opposed to the death penalty except in a few cases where it might be appropriate.
3. I am generally in favour of the death penalty except in a few cases where it may not be appropriate.
4. I am strongly in favour of the death penalty as an appropriate punishment.
5. I don't know.

Circle the punishment you consider to be the worst punishment the judicial system can impose on someone found guilty of serious crimes

1. death penalty
2. life imprisonment without the possibility of parole

Thank you. Please let the experimenter know you are finished with this package.