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## The effects of individual factors on punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders

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THE EFFECTS OF INDIVIDUAL FACTORS ON PUNITIVE ATTITUDES TOWARD  
JUVENILE OFFENDERS

An Abstract of a Thesis  
Submitted  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

Jennifer Keely Mac Connell

University of Northern Iowa

December 2001

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to examine the relationship between individual factors and punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders. The individual factors examined were attributional style, authoritarianism, anxiety, self-esteem, the Five-Factor model of personality, and gender. It was hypothesized that possessing a punitive attributional style, maintaining authoritarian beliefs, and being male would predict punitive attitudes toward adolescent offenders. I also examined the effects of age of the offender and severity of the crime on attributions and punishment decisions. College students ( $N = 185$ ) at a Midwestern university completed questionnaire packets in partial fulfillment of their introductory psychology course requirements.

Individuals who were high in conscientiousness, authoritarianism, and openness to experience, had a more internal attributional style, and were low in agreeableness held more punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders. Contrary to previous findings, gender was not predictive of punitive attitudes. Older adolescents and those who engaged in the less severe crime of stealing were perceived as causing a hypothetical crime to occur, being in control of their actions, and being likely to commit the same actions in the future more than younger adolescents. Older offenders were also considered more responsible and blameworthy than younger offenders, regardless of the crime committed. Younger offenders in the stealing scenario were perceived as being more responsible and blameworthy than in the shooting scenario. Adolescents, especially older ones, who committed a severe crime were given more severe hypothetical sentences than those who participated in a less severe crime.

Understanding the composition of punitive attitudes may provide useful information regarding the decision-making process of punitive individuals. This has important implications for the jury selection process and for the presentation of juvenile crime statistics and other relevant reports.

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This study by: Jennifer Keely Mac Connell

Entitled: THE EFFECTS OF INDIVIDUAL FACTORS ON PUNITIVE  
ATTITUDES TOWARD JUVENILE OFFENDERS

has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the  
Degree of Master of Arts.

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my grandfather. His calm spirit, quiet confidence, and belief in my abilities have helped me to achieve this accomplishment. I also want to thank my family and friends for all of the support they have shown me throughout the years.

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## CHAPTER 1

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Introduction

Two adolescent girls in Eastern Iowa, a 12-year-old and a 15-year-old, set a schoolmate on fire because she was allegedly flirting with the older girl's boyfriend (Hogan, 2000). A 6-year-old boy recently beat his 3-year-old brother to death for throwing a rock at him ("Boy, 6, beats brother," 2001). These news accounts may prompt sadness, fear, rage, and even disgust from the general population. Before having time to become acclimated to one account of childhood violence, it seems that the media is reporting a new case of youth crime. The seemingly constant string of reports on juvenile violence leads the public to believe that juvenile crime is increasing (Reaves, 2001) and leaves many people wondering what course of action needs to be taken in dealing with young offenders.

It is important to remember, however, that juvenile crime is not a new phenomenon. Children have committed violent acts throughout history. The methods of violence and the ages of the offenders may fluctuate, but the debate regarding juvenile crime continues. Public leaders and the general population tend to sway between wanting to rehabilitate youthful offenders and desiring punitive measures as a means of decreasing juvenile delinquency (Bartollas & Miller, 1994). During the 1960s and the mid-1970s, rehabilitation was the primary approach taken with juvenile offenders (Bartollas & Miller, 1994). However, the mid-1970s through the 1990s was

characterized by a more punitive approach (Bartollas & Miller, 1994). This change may have been reflective of the incidence of juvenile crime.

The juvenile violent crime arrest rate increased during the 1980s, peaking in 1994 (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999). However, by 1998 juvenile violent crime arrest rates had decreased by 30% (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999). The increase of juvenile crime in the late 1980s and early 1990s has resulted in many people becoming dissatisfied with the rehabilitative nature of the juvenile justice system (Schwartz, 1992). While the statistics regarding the decrease in juvenile violent crime seem to offer reassurance that the acts of violence reported in the media are the exception and not the rule, people may tend to remember the vivid news stories instead (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974).

Dependent on their attitudes toward juvenile crime, people may advocate rehabilitation, punishment, or a combination of both for juvenile offenders. These attitudes may prove to be important when voting on legislation regarding policies on juvenile crime or when serving on jury duty, as people tend to make decisions and behave according to their attitudes and beliefs (Petty, 1995). Furthermore, individual factors (e.g., demographic or personality variables) may be an important determinant of the types of attitudes and beliefs people hold.

The present study measured college students' attitudes toward juvenile crime in order to determine the role that individual differences play in shaping punitive attitudes. This study focused on the structure of punitive attitudes to better understand the popularity of the get-tough approach in dealing with juvenile crime (Reaves, 2001).

Furthermore, understanding the composition of punitive attitudes may assist in providing useful information for the jury selection process.

### The Creation of the Juvenile Justice System

Prior to the inception of the juvenile court, crimes committed by juveniles fell under the jurisdiction of the criminal court. Children under the age of 7 were not subjected to this rule because they were not considered blameworthy (Small, 1997). A child between the ages of 7 and 14 was considered less blameworthy than an adult; however, if the child made attempts to hide his or her deviant acts then the child would fall under the jurisdiction of the criminal court, as this was proof that he or she knew the difference between right and wrong (Watkins, 1998). By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the notion of rehabilitation became more prominent, and many people sought to reform the treatment of children in the criminal justice system (Watkins, 1998).

Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, juveniles and adults were housed in the same correctional facilities. In 1825, reformers in New York created a facility known as the House of Refuge for juvenile offenders. A number of other cities created their own separate facilities for juvenile offenders as well. The houses of refuge soon became overcrowded, and many youth were sent to work in the West as indentured servants until they reached the age of 21. In 1848, the first reformatory was created in Massachusetts. Reformatories were state funded, in contrast to the privately funded houses of refuge, and served the purpose of confining juveniles (Watkins, 1998). The creation of separate facilities for juveniles highlighted the importance of creating a separate court system as well (Merlo, 1995).

The first juvenile court was established in Cook County, Illinois in 1899 (Merlo, 1995). The creation of a separate system for juvenile offenders put forth the idea that juveniles and adults should be treated differently. Unlawful acts committed by juveniles were no longer considered crimes (Merlo, 1995). The court operated on the principle of parens patriae, in which the state acts as the parent and in the best interest of the child (Mears, 1998). Juvenile court was informal and nonthreatening (Merlo, 1995). This system was different from the criminal court system in many ways. Juveniles were not afforded the same rights as adult offenders. Juveniles were not represented by attorneys, were not protected by the 5<sup>th</sup> amendment, and were not subjected to the standard of having their guilt proven beyond a reasonable doubt (Humes, 1996). Each case was dealt with on an individual basis, leaving no standard for punishment (Humes, 1996).

Although these characteristics were intended to help young offenders, this was not always the case. In re Gault (1967) was the case of a 15-year-old male who was sentenced to a state training school for a period of time no longer than 6 years for being suspected of making an obscene phone call (Merlo, 1995). He was not allowed to have an attorney present and was not able to face his accuser (Merlo, 1995). Gerald Gault's constitutional rights were not recognized because juvenile court proceedings were not criminal in nature and the constitutional rights of juveniles were considered to detract from the court's role as a parent (Watkins, 1998). However, the Supreme Court did not agree with the philosophy of the juvenile court and, in 1967, awarded juveniles due process rights within the juvenile court system (Merlo, 1995).

Regardless of the changes in the juvenile court system, juveniles are still considered less morally blameworthy than adults in the justice system (Grisso, 1996). Many people support the philosophy that children and adolescents are more malleable than adults and should not be held fully accountable for their actions. However, some people believe that the juvenile justice system should only deal with youth who have been neglected or abused and not with those who commit crimes (Bartollas & Miller, 1994). As juveniles gained their constitutional rights within the courts during the early 1970s, a number of state legislatures began to contend that certain juvenile offenders should be held accountable for their criminal acts and be treated as adults who have committed the same acts of violence (Merlo, 1995). Consequently, a number of juveniles now face the prospect of being transferred to the adult system.

#### Juveniles in Adult Court

Despite the creation of the juvenile court system, the possibility of transferring young offenders to criminal court remained. The concept of transferring juveniles to adult court rested on the presumption that there were juveniles with issues that were beyond the scope of the juvenile court (Sanborn, 1994). However, the decision to transfer juveniles to adult court was not common during the first half of the twentieth century (Bishop, Frazier, Lanza-Kaduce, & Winner, 1996). The increase in juvenile crime that occurred in past decades resulted in the belief that the juvenile court is no longer effective (Bishop et al., 1996), which has helped fuel the argument for transferring young offenders to criminal court on a more frequent basis.

Legislators and other individuals in the criminal justice field justify making changes in transfer decisions by citing the public demand for harsher treatment of juveniles and the desire to implement the just deserts philosophy, where offenders are punished in direct proportion to the amount of harm they inflicted and their degree of blameworthiness (Stalans & Henry, 1994). Presently, all states allow certain juveniles to be tried as adults. While most states have set the minimum age at 14 years, many states have set the minimum age for transfer to adult court below the age of 14 years or have no minimum age specified (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999). Between 1992 and 1997, 44 states and the District of Columbia passed legislation that made it easier to try juveniles in adult criminal court (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999). While an automatic transfer is usually reserved for cases of homicide, a number of states have provisions to automatically try juveniles as adults for other violent offenses (Grisso, 1996).

Once a juvenile is tried as an adult, he or she must face an adult sentence. This raises a number of issues, from sentencing adolescents to adult correctional facilities to imposing the sentence of death on a juvenile offender. Imposing adult sentences on juvenile offenders has not proven to be effective. Transferred adolescents receive longer periods of incarceration, yet they return to engaging in criminal acts more often than youth who have not been transferred (Bishop et al., 1996).

The effectiveness of imposing the death penalty on juveniles has not yet been demonstrated. The execution of juveniles, while rare, is not new to the United States. The first execution of a juvenile occurred in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1642 (Skovron, Scott, & Cullen, 1989), and the youngest person to have been executed in the

United States was 10 years old (Streib, 1988). A number of states specify that the minimum age for the death penalty be set between 16-18 years of age; however, as of 1997, eight states had no minimum age (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999). Although these states have not specified a minimum age limit for the imposition of capital punishment, the Supreme Court ruled in Thompson v. Oklahoma (1987) that the execution of a 15-year-old defendant was unconstitutional under the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment (Crosby, Britner, Jodl, & Portwood, 1995). Therefore, any state attempting to impose the death penalty on anyone 15 years old or younger will have to bring its case before the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court has upheld the constitutionality of executing individuals who are 16 years and older (Stanford v. Kentucky, 1989). The Stanford plurality concluded that this decision was appropriate based on the “evolving standards of decency,” stating that the job of the Court is to identify these standards, determining “not what they should be, but what they are” (Stanford v. Kentucky, p. 378; see also Finkel, 1993).

The justices have utilized social science research in order to determine whether or not the death penalty has been applied in an arbitrary fashion (Acker, 1993). The justices have also considered social science research on the emotional, cognitive, social, and moral development of adolescents in order to determine whether or not adolescent offenders should receive the death penalty (Crosby et al., 1995). The use of research in order to help determine the evolving standards of decency was a practice that was not common in the Supreme Court prior to the 1980s. The justices considered findings from social science research, also termed socioscientific evidence, in deciding 36% of the death penalty cases they presided over between 1986-1989 (Acker, 1993).

Not all of the justices agreed with relying on this type of social science research in deciding cases. In Stanford v. Kentucky (1989), Justice Scalia argued against using research on the development of adolescents in order to determine the evolving standards of decency, stating that the Court should consider the national consensus, or community sentiment, instead (Finkel, 1993). Community sentiment is often measured by state legislation, by research studies on mock juror decisions, public opinion polls, and by statistics on the number of juvenile death sentences delivered (Crosby et al., 1995). Basing the constitutionality of the juvenile death penalty on the evolving standards of decency as measured by community sentiment may result in the age limit either increasing or decreasing.

### Community Sentiment

#### Death Penalty

Support for the death penalty in general is quite high (Ellsworth & Gross, 1994). In the 1995 Gallup Poll, 77% of respondents indicated that they favored the death penalty for someone convicted of murder (Durham, Elrod, & Kinkade, 1996). A recent poll indicated that 78% of the U. S. adult population favored the execution of Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh (Howlett, 2001). In fact, the data suggest that the public would like to see the death penalty used in more homicide cases, such as those cases involving involuntary manslaughter (Durham et al., 1996). Retribution and deterrence are among the most frequently cited motives for the use of capital punishment (Haddock & Zanna, 1998). Increased support for the use of capital punishment is likely related to

high rates of crime. When people perceive that crime rates are growing, they tend to look for harsher punishments to help those rates decrease (Ellsworth & Gross, 1994).

### Punishing Juvenile Offenders.

In general, research conducted on community sentiment toward juvenile crime has varied in its results. Findings range from suggesting that adults believe that rehabilitation is a viable option for juvenile offenders (Skovron et al., 1989) to suggesting that adults in a Mid-Atlantic state would be willing to execute a defendant as young as 10 years of age (Crosby et al., 1995). A national survey demonstrated that Americans are willing to uphold the practice of transferring juveniles to criminal court for serious offenses (Schwartz, Guo, & Kerbs, 1993). While public opinion preferences indicate that juveniles accused of serious crimes be tried in adult court, public opinion does not favor giving juveniles the same sentences as adults or sentencing juveniles to adult prison (Schwartz et al., 1993). Conversely, findings with the general population were not reflected among elected officials. Fifty-five percent of a sample of policy makers in Tennessee reported having no problems with using capital punishment on juveniles (Whitehead, 1998).

The public does not completely endorse the rehabilitative philosophy of the juvenile court, as demonstrated by their support of moving juveniles to adult court (Schwartz et al., 1993). However, adults do not want to relinquish efforts to rehabilitate youthful offenders (Schwartz et al., 1993). Overall, the majority of adults seem to support the rehabilitation of juvenile offenders (Skovron et al., 1989).

### Individual Factors

There are a number of individual factors that may influence attitudes toward punishing juvenile offenders. Prior research has examined the effects of demographic variables on adults' opinions of juvenile offenders (Schwartz et al., 1993; Skovron et al., 1989). Older adults hold more punitive attitudes than younger adults, a trend that begins around middle age. Additionally, adults with children tend to be less punitive toward juvenile offenders than adults without children (Schwartz et al., 1993). Punitive attitudes are associated with individuals who have less education and who are fearful of being the victim of a crime (Schwartz et al., 1993). A telephone survey regarding adults' attitudes toward punishing juvenile offenders found that individuals were less likely to support the juvenile death penalty if they believed in the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs and if they were not very religious (Skovron et al., 1989).

The present study examines factors beyond age and religiosity. While several factors have been examined in relationship to crime and/or punishment decisions, they have usually been examined in isolation. This study examines a number of individual factors in terms of their association with punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders to determine which factors best predict those attitudes. The individual factors that will be examined in the present study include attributional style, authoritarianism, anxiety, self-esteem, the five-factor model of personality, and gender. These factors have been previously related to attitudes toward crime, punishment, and unfavorable attitudes toward others (Altemeyer, 1988; Atwater, Dionne, Camobreco, Avolio, & Lau, 1998; Costa & McCrae, 1992; Graham, Weiner, & Zucker, 1997; McFarland, 2001; Peterson,

Doty, & Winter, 1993; Schwartz et al., 1993; Soldz & Vaillant, 1999). Not all of these factors have been examined in terms of how they relate to juvenile crime and the punishment of juvenile offenders.

### Attributional Style and Perceptions of Responsibility

Attributional style is based on Weiner's (1993) attributional theory and suggests one method by which people determine whether or not to hold another person responsible for an event, situation, or illness. This theory has been successfully applied to perceptions of homosexuality, individuals with handicaps (Weiner, 1993), the O. J. Simpson case, and a hypothetical crime (Graham et al., 1997). While Weiner's (1993) attributional theory has been applied to adult offenders, it has not yet been applied to perceptions of responsibility and punishment decisions with juvenile offenders.

Prior to deciding that someone is responsible for committing a crime, a number of attributions must be made regarding the cause of the crime. Three characteristics have been identified as necessary components in attribution decisions (Graham et al., 1997). These characteristics are locus, controllability, and stability (Weiner, 1995). The locus dimension taps into the question of who or what is responsible for the cause of the crime. This dimension assists the individual in determining whether the cause of the crime resides within the offender or is due to the situation (Weiner, 1995). This is exemplified in the familiar Heinz dilemma (Kohlberg, 1963). If Heinz, who cannot raise the money to pay the pharmacist in full, decides to steal the drug that would save his wife, the cause of the crime would likely be attributed to the situation. However, if he stole the drug

from the pharmacist despite having the money to pay for it, he would be held responsible for the cause of the crime.

The dimension of controllability seeks to answer the question of whether or not the cause of the crime was subject to volitional change (Graham et al., 1997). Essentially, this taps into whether or not the alleged offender had a say in his or her criminal behavior and whether or not he or she could have made a different decision. For example, if a person was taken hostage during the course of a bank robbery and was then told to take the money from the teller, with a gun placed to his or her head, that individual would most likely not be seen as being in control of his or her behavior.

The dimension of stability addresses the question of whether or not the alleged offender would continue to engage in the same criminal action in future situations. Stability assesses whether the behavior was a result of stable traits within the individual or whether the cause of the criminal behavior varies over time (Graham et al., 1997). The role of mitigating factors is considered when attributions of stability are made (Weiner, 1995). Mitigating factors are defined as any factor that may alleviate the offender of moral responsibility, such as stealing to save someone's life or not understanding the difference between right and wrong (Weiner, 1995). Age of the offender is considered a mitigating factor. Accordingly, adults are more likely to recommend adult court for a 16-year-old than a 14-year-old defendant (Stalans & Henry, 1994).

While all three components of locus, controllability and stability are important in perceptions of responsibility, perceptions of locus are essential in determining whether or not attributions of controllability and stability need to be made. If the crime is seen as

being a result of the situation (an external attribution), the offender cannot be responsible for the cause of the crime. Given an internal locus attribution, the dimension of controllability is the major determinant in whether or not the alleged offender is perceived as being responsible for the crime (Weiner, 1995). If the cause of the crime is attributed to the individual and the offender is seen as being in control of his or her actions, he or she is blamed for the crime (Weiner, 1995). Stability plays an important role once this determination is made because if the offender's behavior is perceived as being stable, then similar criminal behavior will likely be expected and a more severe punishment decision may be made (Graham et al., 1997).

Based on this theory's success across a variety of situations, it is likely that perceptions of locus, controllability, and stability will influence whether or not one has punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders. Although it is probable that attributions of locus, controllability, and stability influence punitive attitudes, these attributions may vary according to individual differences, such as social motivation (Weiner, 1995). While some individuals may consider the specific aspects of a particular situation prior to advocating punishment or rehabilitation, others may endorse punitive attitudes across situations. People who possess a punitive attributional style are expected to hold more punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders than individuals who are not as punitive across situations.

Furthermore, while the age of the offender may affect attributions of locus, controllability, and stability, it may also affect the degree to which the offender is blamed for the crime and, subsequently, the degree to which he or she is punished. Juveniles are

often considered less morally blameworthy than adults (Grisso, 1996). The effect of the severity of the crime committed on punishment decisions has not been specifically examined (see Graham et al., 1997). The degree of crime severity may also influence the degree to which an offender is perceived as being responsible, the degree to which the offender is blamed for the crime, and the severity of punishment the offender receives for his or her actions. In this study a 2 by 2 within-participants design tested whether attributions of locus, controllability, stability, responsibility, blame, and subsequent punishment decisions differed by the age of the offender and the severity of the crime.

### Authoritarianism

The researchers who initially examined the concept of authoritarianism studied the underlying roots of prejudice and, specifically, the roots of anti-Semitism (Lippa & Arand, 1999). They found that individuals who held anti-Semitic beliefs also were prejudiced toward other minority groups (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950). Authoritarianism was defined as a personality syndrome that consisted of nine specific traits. According to this initial definition, the authoritarian individual adheres to conventional values; holds submissive attitudes toward authority; punishes, condemns and rejects individuals who violate convention; is not supportive of individuals who are imaginative or “tender-minded;” tends to think rigidly; is preoccupied with the distinction between strength and weakness in social relationships; is generally hostile; believes that the world is dangerous; and is overly concerned with sexual issues (Adorno et al., 1950).

Adorno et al. (1950) explained the development of authoritarianism in psychodynamic terms. As children, authoritarians were thought to be insecure, angry, and defensive as a result of having harsh, cold, and distant parents (Adorno et al., 1950). They were not able to express anger toward their parents because they were fearful of the consequences of displeasing them (Stone, Lederer, & Christie, 1993a). Parents of authoritarians ingrain in their children the belief that what is socially accepted is good and what is different and deviates from social norms is bad. The child is repeatedly discouraged from being independent. This type of parenting was seen as interfering with the identity development of the child (Adorno et al., 1950). As adults, the anger and hostility that was not expressed directly to their parents is projected onto whatever groups have been legitimized by authority as targets (Milburn & Conrad, 1996). The desire to submit to authority is coupled with the early resentment of the parents, and this continues to influence the authoritarian person's relationship with authority in general which, in some cases, may result in the decision to follow outside authority (e.g., the Nazis; Adorno et al., 1950).

Robert Altemeyer found the psychodynamic basis for authoritarianism to be problematic. Research did not support the argument that authoritarianism had its origins in one's childhood or that it was linked to psychoanalysis (Altemeyer, 1994; Stone et al., 1993a). Therefore, Altemeyer approached authoritarianism, and particularly right-wing authoritarianism, from a learning perspective (Altemeyer, 1981; Stone, Lederer, & Christie, 1993b). Right-wing authoritarians submit to authorities that are established in society and are perceived by them as being legitimate (Altemeyer, 1994). The term right-

wing does not refer to an economic state or a political orientation, as right-wing authoritarians support the established authority in their country (Altemeyer, 1988, 1996). Left-wing authoritarians submit to perceived authorities that promote removing the established authorities from power (Altemeyer, 1994). Nazis prior to 1933 are classified as left-wing authoritarians; once they became the established authority, followers would be considered right-wing authoritarian (Altemeyer, 1996).

According to Altemeyer (1988), right-wing authoritarianism is the combination of authoritarian submission (a high degree of submissiveness to established authorities), authoritarian aggression (displaying aggression, holding aggressive attitudes toward individuals, and perceiving that this aggression is endorsed by authority), and conventionalism (adherence to social conventions that appear to be approved by society and the established authorities). It is important to note that authoritarians do not automatically submit to all authority; however, they submit to authority more readily than do nonauthoritarian individuals (Altemeyer, 1988).

Individuals classified as high authoritarians (according to their scores on Altemeyer's Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale [RWA], 1988) tend to support unjust acts by the government and are punitive in their hypothetical sentencing of criminal offenders (Altemeyer, 1994). They are strong supporters of using and extending the use of capital punishment (Altemeyer, 1994). This may be a result of the authoritarian belief that unconventional behavior should be controlled through punishment (Altemeyer, 1988). Authoritarians endorse physical punishment with both children and adults (Altemeyer, 1988).

Overall, authoritarians support harsh, punitive viewpoints, dislike leniency in the courts, and are unlikely to support the punishment of wrongs committed by established authority (Altemeyer, 1988; Peterson et al., 1993). Juveniles who commit serious crimes may be perceived as violators of conventional values. Altemeyer (1981, as cited in Christie, 1993) found that individuals with high scores on the RWA were more punitive in deciding the hypothetical case of a juvenile offender with a long police record. Additionally, authoritarian beliefs tend to be influenced by external events. Societal events can raise scores on the RWA Scale, and members of society tend to resort to authoritarian attitudes during crises (Altemeyer, 1994). Therefore, individuals may endorse more authoritarian beliefs if they perceive that violent juvenile crime is increasing. Because authoritarians place emphasis on punishment and not rehabilitation, it is likely that they would support more punitive measures for juvenile offenders.

### Anxiety

Barlow (1988, as cited in Carter & Barlow, 1995, p. 354) defines anxiety as “a diffuse blend of intense emotional reactions that reflect anger, interest, excitement, and a primary component of fear.” Anxiety is a common emotional experience and often serves a protective function against environmental threats. Anxiety can be divided into the components of state and trait anxiety. State anxiety consists of any anxiety symptoms an individual may be experiencing at that particular moment (Carter & Barlow, 1995). Trait anxiety describes those anxiety symptoms that a person usually experiences (Carter & Barlow, 1995). State anxiety is descriptive of a more transient emotional experience,

whereas trait anxiety reflects general tendencies to experience anxiety (Spielberger & Rickman, 1990).

At times anxiety reflects real and objective threats. Yet anxiety often arises from misperceptions that reality is dangerous (Beck, 1985, as cited in Twenge, 2000). Beck (1985, as cited in Twenge, 2000) proposes that an individual's cognitive appraisal of a situation defines whether or not that person will feel anxious, regardless of the actual presence or absence of a threat. A recent meta-analysis indicated that Americans have increased in trait anxiety in recent decades (Twenge, 2000). This increase may be related to an increased willingness to acknowledge and admit feelings of anxiety. However, it has also been correlated with a variety of social issues, including violent crime rates (Twenge, 2000). This suggests the possibility that trait anxiety is associated with fear of crime. Fear of crime, like anxiety, is not always based on reality. Individuals living in communities with vastly different crime rates have similar levels of fear associated with crime (Koomen, Visser, & Stapel, 2000).

Fear of crime has been related to media reports of violent and illegal acts. The more attention the media gives to stories on crime, the more fearful individuals become (Koomen et al., 2000). Reports on apparently random criminal acts that are sensationalized and do not contain an obvious motive especially tend to arouse fear in others (Koomen et al., 2000). Media reports about instances of youth violence, such as school shootings or the recent case of the 6-year-old who murdered his 3-year-old brother ("Boy, 6, beats brother", 2001) may be more salient than statistics reporting a decrease in juvenile violent crime. This phenomenon, also known as the availability heuristic, is not

uncommon. People often fail to adjust their initial beliefs despite receiving evidence to the contrary (Anderson, Lepper, & Ross, 1980). When a situation is salient or has occurred recently, people tend to overestimate the frequency with which that situation occurs (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). This may offer an explanation as to why individuals perceive juvenile crime as being pervasive despite evidence that juvenile violent crime rates have decreased since the mid-1990s.

Increased fear of being the victim of a violent crime is related to punitive attitudes toward juveniles (Schwartz et al., 1993). Furthermore, individuals who worry about being the victim of one offense tend to also worry about being the victim of other offenses (Walker, 1994). Individuals high in trait anxiety are predisposed to perceive a variety of situations as threatening (Walters, 2000). The fear of being victimized coupled with a tendency to perceive a variety of situations as threatening may affect attitudes toward punishing youthful offenders.

### Self-Esteem

Little research exists on the relationship between self-esteem and punishment-related attitudes (Atwater et al., 1998). People who are induced to feel uncertain about a personal dilemma endorse harsher attitudes about social issues, such as capital punishment and abortion, than those individuals who do not experience feelings of uncertainty (McGregor, Zanna, Holmes, & Spencer, 2001). Endorsing harsh attitudes reduces participants' feelings of uncertainty (McGregor et al., 2001). Because feelings of personal uncertainty are related to low self-esteem, it is possible that endorsing harsh attitudes could have the same effect on self-esteem.

The literature on self-esteem also suggests that low self-esteem results in negative attitudes toward others, without proposing that these attitudes may result in raising self-esteem. Persons with low self-esteem may be more vulnerable than others to stress and threats (Baumeister, 1995). Individuals with low self-esteem are not only negative about themselves, but tend to be negative toward others in general (Baumeister, 1995). It is possible that this general negativity may influence punishment decisions, although this may depend on whether the individual identifies with the juvenile defendant or with individuals who desire protection from such offenders. Based on this literature, it seems plausible that low self-esteem, at some point, influences punishment decisions. However, it remains unclear whether one's self-esteem will remain low or will increase as a result of holding punitive attitudes.

#### Five-Factor Model

Another possible way of assessing personality variables that may be associated with punitive attitudes is by using the Five-Factor model of personality. The five factors account for the general structure of personality (Riemann, Angleitner, & Strelau, 1997; Soldz & Vaillant, 1999) and much of the variability that is found in personality data (Riemann et al., 1997). This approach to understanding personality has become a widely accepted theoretical perspective (Scandell, 2000). The Five-Factor model has been effective in describing the personality of individuals in both clinical and non-clinical populations (Carter & Barlow, 1995) and is a comprehensive yet simple way to measure personality (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

The five factor dimensions include neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Neuroticism assesses adaptability and emotional stability. The tendency to experience “negative affects, such as fear, sadness, embarrassment, guilt, anger and disgust,” is measured by this factor (Costa & McCrae, 1992, p. 14). Individuals scoring high in neuroticism have difficulty controlling emotional impulses and tend to cope poorly with stress (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Neuroticism is related to a general dislike of and prejudice toward outgroups (McFarland, 2001). Due to the negative emotions such as fear and anger that a person high in neuroticism experiences, it is possible that neuroticism may influence punitive attitudes.

Extraversion is a domain that is characterized by being assertive, outgoing, energetic, optimistic, talkative, and people-oriented (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Extraversion has been correlated with holding conservative attitudes (Soldz & Vaillant, 1999). Because extraversion has been linked with conservative attitudes, it may also be related to punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders. However, the optimistic and people-oriented nature of extraversion may result in less punitive attitudes.

Openness consists of being “idealistic, imaginative, insightful, affectionate, optimistic, versatile, and unconventional” (Costa & McCrae, 1992, p. 15). Open individuals are willing to question authority and are prepared to entertain new ethical, social, and political ideas (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Openness is negatively correlated with conservative political attitudes and prejudice toward outgroups (McFarland, 2001; Soldz & Vaillant, 1999). Because an open individual tends to be optimistic,

unconventional, idealistic, and willing to question authority, he or she may be more prone to agree with a rehabilitation philosophy.

Agreeableness is described as being “altruistic, forgiving, trusting, kind, tolerant, patient, sympathetic, and eager to help others” (Costa & McCrae, 1992, p. 15).

Individuals who are high in agreeableness are less likely to hold prejudicial attitudes toward members of outgroups. (McFarland, 2001). Due to the sympathetic and helpful nature of these individuals, this factor may be negatively correlated with punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders.

The final factor, conscientiousness, consists of being “confident, intelligent, methodical, efficient, persistent, energetic, mature, and patient” (Costa & McCrae, 1992, p. 16). Prior research has suggested a link between conscientiousness and conservative attitudes (Soldz & Vaillant, 1999), but the exact nature of the relationship between conscientiousness and punitive attitudes remains unclear. Conscientious individuals may hold more punitive attitudes toward individuals who violate the rights of others. However, individuals high in conscientiousness may consider all factors involved in the case of a juvenile offender, resulting in more rehabilitative attitudes.

### Gender

Past studies of juvenile offenders, and particularly of juvenile murderers, have reported gender differences in the willingness to try juveniles in adult court and give them adult sentences. Men are more likely than women to recommend adult court for first time offenders accused of killing a stranger (Stalans & Henry, 1994) and to support the juvenile death penalty (Skovron et al., 1989). Among a sample of former jurors, men

were more in favor of the death penalty than women, a discrepancy that increased as the age of the hypothetical juvenile defendant decreased (Crosby et al., 1995). Overall, research suggests that women are less punitive toward juvenile offenders than men, although this difference may be mediated by attitudes toward juveniles (Crosby et al., 1995).

### Overview of the Study

The present study identified individual factors that influence punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders. The relationship between some of these individual factors and punitive attitudes has previously been examined. However, these individual factors have not been examined in combination with one another in order to determine their importance in predicting punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders. The present study examined attributional style, authoritarianism, anxiety, self-esteem, the Five-Factor model of personality, and gender and their relationship to punitive attitudes in order to better understand and predict attitudes toward juvenile offenders.

The research reviewed above examined attitudes of former jurors, policy makers, and primarily middle-aged adults. Yet, it is also important to examine college students' attitudes on this issue. Young adults account for 13% of the United States population (Day & Gaither, 1998) and can have an influence on the legislation that is passed regarding the juvenile justice system. People are more likely to vote as their level of education increases (Day & Gaither, 1998). Furthermore, the age of the participants may not affect the outcome of this study. Other studies predicting attitudes using personality

and demographic variables have shown very similar results with college students and non-college student adults (McFarland, 2001; Whitley & Lee, 2000).

Hypothesis #1: People who have a punitive attributional style (perceiving juvenile offenders as being responsible for the cause of their actions [locus], likely to commit the same actions again [stability], and in control of their actions [controllability]) will demonstrate greater punitive attitudes on the juvenile attitude scale than people who have a malleable attributional style (perceiving that juveniles are not fully responsible for their actions, may not be likely to commit the same actions again, and are not in full control of their actions).

Hypothesis #2: Participants scoring high in authoritarianism will hold punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders.

Hypothesis #3: Men will hold more punitive attitudes than women.

Research Question #1: What is the relationship between anxiety and punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders?

Research Question #2: What is the relationship between self-esteem and punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders?

Research Question #3: What is the relationship between neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness and punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders?

Research Question #4: To what extent does the age of the offender and degree of severity of the crime affect perceptions of responsibility, blame, and punishment?

## CHAPTER 2

### METHOD

#### Participants

Ninety-one male and 94 female undergraduates participated in this study. Their participation was in partial fulfillment of their introductory psychology course requirements. The majority of participants were Caucasian (90%). The remaining participants were African American (2%), Asian (3%), Hispanic (2%), or other (1%). Four participants (2%) chose not to disclose their ethnicity. The participants were primarily college freshman (72%) and ranged in age from 18–44 years ( $M = 19.46$ ,  $SD = 2.31$ ). The vast majority of participants had never previously been arrested (91%) and thus had little direct experience with the juvenile justice system.

#### Measures

##### Background Questionnaire

The background questionnaire (see Appendix A) requested information regarding age, year in school, state of origin, approximate size of city or town the participant lived in for the majority of his or her life, ethnicity, gender, and whether or not the participant had ever been arrested. Participants also chose one of three statements that best represented their attitude toward juvenile crime. The statements reflected punitive, moderate, and rehabilitative approaches to dealing with juvenile offenders.

### Attribution Scenarios

The attribution scenarios measure (see Appendix B) consisted of four brief scenarios describing crimes committed by juveniles. One scenario described either a 12-year-old or a 16-year-old male who stole from his neighbor. Another scenario described either a 12-year-old or a 16-year-old male who shot an acquaintance with whom he engaged in an argument earlier that day. Participants rated their opinion on five scales measuring attributions regarding the perceived locus, controllability, stability, responsibility, and blame assigned either to the protagonist or the situation. The following is an example of one of the scales:

To what extent is he responsible for his actions?  
 Not responsible at all (1)--2--3--4--5--6--(7) Entirely responsible

Each scale ranged from 1 (a label disagreeing with the statement) to 7 (a label agreeing with the statement). Responses for the locus, controllability, and stability scales were totaled across the four scenarios, providing a general score for these areas. High scores indicated that respondents assigned attributions of locus, stability, and controllability to the protagonist in the scenario. Participants also rated the severity of the punishment they believed each juvenile should receive. Nine possible responses ranged from juvenile probation to the death penalty. After rating the fourth scenario, participants rated their agreement with four statements regarding the purpose of punishing a youthful offender on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This scale was modeled after one used by Graham et al. (1997). The internal reliabilities for locus, controllability, and stability were .70, .77, and .75, respectively. The overall internal reliability for perceptions of locus, controllability,

and stability was .74. Correlational analyses included each individual scale score, but in order to reduce the number of variables used in the regression analysis and because the combination of these variables results in whether one is perceived as being responsible (Weiner, 1995), the locus, controllability, and stability scales were totaled and entered into the regression equation as the attributional style variable.

### Juvenile Attitude Scale

The Juvenile Attitude Scale measure (see Appendix C) consisted of 21 statements regarding attitudes about punishing juvenile offenders. The majority of the items have been used in past research on adult attitudes toward juvenile offenders (Crosby et al., 1995; Schwartz et al., 1993; Skovron et al., 1989). The author generated the remaining items. These items are rated on a 5-point scale, ranging 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Examples of items presented on this questionnaire include:

There is little hope that juveniles will be rehabilitated.

Juveniles are less responsible for their actions than adults (reverse scored).

Higher scores are indicative of punitive attitudes, whereas lower scores are indicative of rehabilitative attitudes. This questionnaire was administered to 46 undergraduate students at a Midwestern university in order to pretest the items. Three items were dropped from the scale in order to improve its reliability. The internal reliability of the revised version of the scale in the pretest was .87. The internal reliability was .85 in the present study.

Right Wing Authoritarianism Scale (RWA) Altemeyer, 1988.

The RWA (see Appendix D) is a 30-item scale designed to measure variables of authoritarian aggression, authoritarian submission, and conventionalism (Altemeyer, 1988). Each statement is rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The following are examples of statements from the RWA:

Obedience and respect for authority are the most important virtues children should learn.

Everyone has a right to his/her own life-style, religious beliefs or disbeliefs, and sexual preferences as long as it doesn't hurt others (reverse scored).

High scores indicate the endorsement of more authoritarian traits (Altemeyer, 1988). Test-retest reliability was .95 after one week and .85 after two weeks (Altemeyer, 1988). When compared with similar measures of authoritarianism and conservatism, the RWA had higher reliabilities (Christie, 1991). In the present study the internal reliability was .87.

State-Trait Anxiety Inventory, form Y, T-anxiety (STAI-Y T-anxiety) Spielberger, 1983

The STAI-Y T-anxiety form (see Appendix E) is a self-report measure of trait anxiety. The scale consisted of 20 statements that assess the anxiety that the participant generally feels (Carter & Barlow, 1995). Participants read each statement and rated the degree to which the statement generally applied to them, ranging from 1 (almost never) to 4 (almost always). Examples of items from the STAI-Y T-anxiety form are as follows:

I feel nervous and restless.

I make decisions easily (reverse scored).

High scores indicate greater levels of trait anxiety. The trait form of the revised STAI has been found to have alpha coefficients that are greater than .90 (Carter & Barlow, 1995). The test-retest reliability for the trait scale was .73 (after 30 days; Carter & Barlow, 1995). The trait form of the STAI is correlated with other measures of anxiety (Taylor, Koch, & Crockett, 1991). The internal reliability in the present study was .89.

#### Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) Rosenberg, 1965

The RSE is a 10-item self-report questionnaire that was originally designed to measure the self-esteem of high school students. The RSE has since been used with a variety of groups, including college students and other adults from various occupations, and assesses a general level of self-esteem (Fischer & Corcoran, 1994). Participants read each item and rated their level of agreement with each statement on a 4-point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). A higher score indicates a high self-esteem. Examples of items on the RSE are as follows:

I wish I could have more respect for myself (reverse scored).

I take a positive attitude toward myself.

The RSE has been correlated with other measures of self-esteem and has demonstrated construct validity (Corcoran & Fischer, 2000; Robins, Hendin, & Trzesniewski, 2001). Test-retest reliability was .85 after one week and .88 after two weeks (Fischer & Corcoran, 1994). Alpha reliabilities range from .88 to .92 (Fischer

& Corcoran, 1994; Robins et al., 2001). The internal reliability in the present study was .98.

The NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI), Costa & McCrae, 1992

The NEO-FFI (see Appendix G) is a self-report measure that provides a global measure of personality. The measure contains 60 items that assess the five domain scales of Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E), Openness to Experience (O), Agreeableness (A), and Conscientiousness (C). The 60 items are divided into five 12-item scales. Each item is presented as a descriptive statement that is rated on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The following are examples from the NEO-FFI:

I often feel inferior to others. (N)

I like to be where the action is. (E)

I am intrigued by the patterns I find in art and nature. (O)

I would rather cooperate with others than compete with them. (A)

When I make a commitment, I can always be counted on to follow through. (C)

Higher scores on each domain indicate possession of the traits described by the domain. The NEO-FFI correlates with other measures of the five factors of personality, demonstrating its construct validity (Costa & McCrae, 1992). According to Costa and McCrae (1992), internal consistency ranged from .68 (A) to .86 (N). The 3-month retest reliability of this scale ranged from .75 (A) to .83 (C). In the present

study the internal reliabilities for each domain were .85 (N), .79 (E), .71 (O), .68 (A), and .81 (C).

### Procedure

Students participated in mass testing sessions. Participants read and signed an informed consent form that explained the nature of the study, that anonymity was guaranteed, and that no penalty would result from withdrawal from the study.

Participants then completed the questionnaire packet at their own pace. Participants received one of four versions of the questionnaire packet. Each packet contained the background questionnaire, four attribution scenarios (in counterbalanced order), and the juvenile attitude scale in that order. Participants completed these measures first as they were placed at the beginning of all of the questionnaire packets. The measures of authoritarianism, self-esteem, and the Five-Factor model of personality followed, also in counterbalanced order.

The participants were a part of a larger study on college student attitudes and behaviors and also completed a second questionnaire packet regarding alcohol usage. Approximately half of the participants completed the alcohol usage questionnaire packet first, whereas the remaining participants first completed the questionnaire packet for the present study. When both questionnaire packets were completed, participants handed them in to the experimenter and received a form explaining the nature of the study.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESULTS

#### Plan of Analysis

The maximum number of responses was used in each of the following analyses, ranging from 183 to 185 responses because of missing data. First, a series of one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA's) were conducted in order to determine whether or not the order of the presentation of the alcohol and juvenile attitude questionnaire packets affected participants' responses. A series of one-way ANOVAs was then conducted on the order in which the scenarios and questionnaires were presented within the juvenile attitude questionnaire packet in order to determine whether or not any order effects were present. Additionally, a series of one-way ANOVAs were conducted to examine possible gender differences on attributional style, authoritarianism, anxiety, self-esteem, and the Five-Factor model of personality.

Next, the internal consistency and validity of the Juvenile Attitude Scale (JAS) was examined. The internal reliability of the scale was computed using Cronbach's  $\alpha$ . As a validity check, the JAS responses were compared to participants' self-categorization as punitive, moderate, or rehabilitative in their approaches to dealing with juvenile offenders on the demographic questionnaire by using a one-way ANOVA with scale scores as dependent variables and category as the independent variable. Tukey's HSD determined any differences within the main effect. Participants' self-categorizations were expected to match their responses on the JAS. Additionally, JAS responses were correlated with several single-item responses

concerning the purpose of punishment. JAS responses were also compared with political orientation and whether the participants had ever been arrested.

Third, correlations were computed between the individual factors of attributions of locus, controllability, and stability, authoritarianism, anxiety, self-esteem, the Five-Factor model of personality, gender, and attitudes toward juvenile offenders (as measured by the JAS) for the total sample and for each gender separately. Any gender differences in the relationships between variables were examined using Fisher's z comparisons (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991).

Fourth, two-way repeated measures ANOVA's were conducted with attributions and punishment as dependent variables and age and degree of severity of the crime as independent variables to test whether or not the age of the offender and the severity of the crime affected participants' attributions and punishment decisions.

Finally, a multiple regression analysis was conducted with juvenile justice attitudes as the criterion variable and attributional style, authoritarianism, anxiety, self-esteem, neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and gender as predictors.

#### Preliminary Analyses

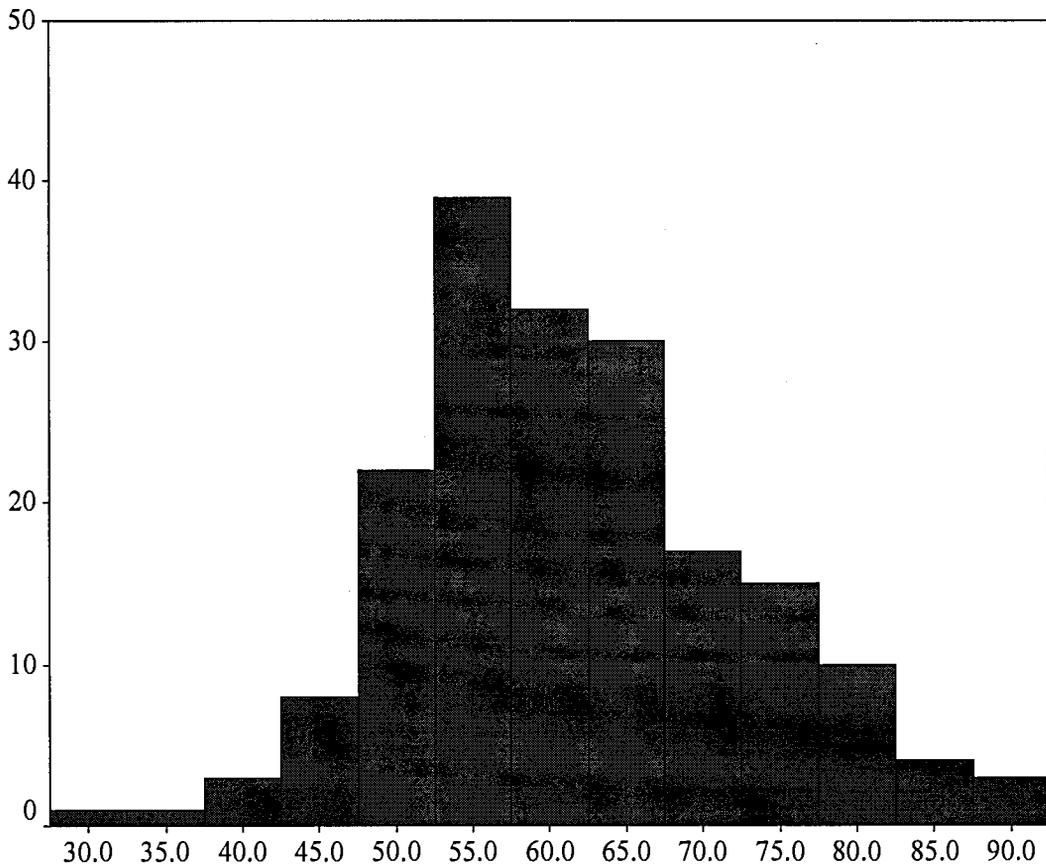
A series of one-way ANOVAs with perceptions of locus, controllability, stability, responsibility, blame, authoritarianism, anxiety, self-esteem, and the Five-Factor model as dependent variables revealed that the order in which participants received the alcohol and juvenile attitude questionnaire packets did not affect their responses. The significance level was set at .004, using Bonferroni's correction (all

$p$ 's > .04). No order effects were present within the juvenile attitude questionnaire packets either (all  $p$ 's > .01). Finally, there were no gender differences in perceptions of locus, controllability, stability, responsibility, blame, authoritarianism, anxiety, self-esteem, or the Five-Factor model of personality (all  $p$ 's > .01). In addition, men and women did not differ in their overall punishment decisions in the attribution scenarios,  $p > .20$ .

#### Reliability and Validity of the Juvenile Attitude Scale

The mean score on the JAS was 61.75 ( $SD = 10.90$ ), with scores ranging from 32–89 out of a possible range of 21–105 (Figure 1). The JAS appears to be reliable and internally consistent (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .85$ ). The split-half and odd-even reliabilities were .66 ( $p < .01$ ) and .79 ( $p < .01$ ), respectively. The scale also appears to be valid, as measured by comparing participants' self-categorization as punitive, moderate, or rehabilitative with responses on the JAS. The punitive ( $M = 76.17$ ,  $SD = 7.78$ ), moderate ( $M = 60.87$ ,  $SD = 8.83$ ), and rehabilitative ( $M = 51.57$ ,  $SD = 10.28$ ) groups were all significantly different from each other,  $F(2, 181) = 46.09$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .34$ . Seventy-five percent of the participants classified themselves as holding moderately punitive beliefs toward juvenile offenders, 13% classified themselves as punitive, and 11% classified themselves as holding rehabilitative beliefs toward juvenile offenders.

Figure 1. Juvenile Attitude Scale Frequency Histogram.



Participants endorsed harm reduction, retribution, rehabilitation, and deterrence as acceptable purposes of punishment for juvenile offenders. Participants who were less rehabilitative held more punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders ( $r = -.18, p < .05$ ). Harm reduction, retribution, and deterrence were associated with punitive attitudes ( $r = .26, .20, \text{ and } .20$ , respectively; all  $p$ 's  $< .01$ ).

Participants also classified themselves as liberal (19%), moderate (17%), conservative (21%), or reported that they did not know their political orientation (43%). An independent samples t-test revealed that, surprisingly, there was no

significant difference between liberal ( $M = 62.06$ ,  $SD = 10.62$ ) and conservative ( $M = 64.63$ ,  $SD = 13.06$ ) participants' punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders, as measured by the JAS,  $p > .12$ .

Additionally, 9% ( $n = 14$ ) of the participants acknowledged having previously been arrested. JAS responses of participants who had and had not previously been arrested were compared. The two groups were significantly different from each other,  $F(1, 158) = 8.78$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .053$ . Participants who had been arrested scored lower on the JAS ( $M = 54.00$ ,  $SD = 6.77$ ), indicating less punitive attitudes than those who had not been arrested ( $M = 62.55$ ,  $SD = 10.58$ ). There were no gender differences on the JAS,  $p > .19$ .

### Correlations

Individuals endorsing authoritarian attitudes tended to be more punitive toward juvenile offenders (Table 1). Additionally, individuals who scored high in conscientiousness and believed that the adolescent offender in the scenarios was in control of his actions were likely to hold punitive attitudes. Locus, stability, anxiety, self-esteem, neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and gender were not related to punitive attitudes in the zero-order correlations.

Individuals who believed that the offender was in control of his actions endorsed more authoritarian beliefs (Table 1). Agreeable individuals attributed the

Table 1

Correlations Between The JAS, Attributional Style, and Individual Factors (n = 185)

	JAS	Locus	Stability	Controllability
Authoritarianism	.19**	.01	-.03	.20**
Anxiety	.01	-.12	.07	.01
Self-Esteem	-.01	.02	-.09	-.05
Neuroticism	.09	-.08	.11	.08
Extraversion	.01	.08	-.07	.04
Openness to Experience	-.11	.02	.09	.00
Agreeableness	-.06	.17*	-.03	-.00
Conscientiousness	.19**	.01	-.12	.06
Gender	.09	.03	-.04	-.08
Locus	.11	--	.15*	.29**
Stability	.07		--	.19**
Controllability	.24**			--

Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

cause of the hypothetical crime to the offender. The tendency to make internal attributions regarding the cause of the hypothetical crime was also associated with making attributions regarding stability and controllability.

In general, previous research has shown that men and women hold different attitudes regarding punishing others (Crosby et al., 1995; Skovron et al., 1989; Stalans

& Henry, 1994). Therefore, correlations between the variables were computed separately for men and women. Women who believed that the cause of the criminal behavior rested within the adolescent actor held more punitive attitudes toward punishing youthful offenders

Table 2

Correlations Between the JAS and Attributional Style and Individual Factors For Women (n = 94) and Men (n = 91)

	Females JAS	Males JAS
Authoritarianism	.04	.34**
Anxiety	-.12	.11
Self-Esteem	.11	-.10
Neuroticism	-.05	.21*
Extraversion	.12	-.12
Openness	.08	.11
Agreeableness	-.02	-.13
Conscientiousness	.17	.23*
Locus	.41**	-.18
Stability	.04	.10
Controllability	.19	.33**

Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ .

(Table 2). Stability, controllability, authoritarianism, anxiety, self-esteem, neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness were not related to women's punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders.

Men had punitive attitudes to the extent that they endorsed authoritarian beliefs and believed that the adolescent offender had control over his actions (Table 2). Additionally, men who scored high in neuroticism and conscientiousness held more punitive attitudes. Locus, stability, anxiety, self-esteem, extraversion, openness to experience, and agreeableness were not related to men's punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders.

Meta-analytic techniques were used to compare the correlations that were significant for one gender, but not for the other (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991). Authoritarianism was significantly more correlated with punitive attitudes toward juveniles for men than for women ( $z = 2.10, p < .05$ ). Neuroticism was more highly correlated with punitive attitudes toward young offenders for men than for women ( $z = 1.76, p < .05$ ). Perceiving the juvenile, rather than the situation, as the cause of the crime was more related to women's punitive attitudes than to men's ( $z = 4.13, p < .001$ ). No other correlations were significantly different between men and women.

#### Perceptions of Responsibility

A series of two-way repeated measures ANOVA's were conducted in order to examine whether the age of the offender and the severity of the crime affected attributions and punishment decisions. The older adolescent offender was perceived

as being more responsible for the cause of the crime, more in control of his actions, and more likely to commit the same actions again (Tables 3 and 4).

In terms of locus, personal aspects of the offenders were seen as the cause of the less severe crime of stealing more than their counterparts in the shooting scenarios.

Table 3

Means Across Attribution Scenarios (n = 184)

	12-year old Not severe	12-year old Severe	16-year old Not severe	16-year old Severe
	<u>M (SD)</u>	<u>M (SD)</u>	<u>M (SD)</u>	<u>M (SD)</u>
Locus	5.43 (1.52)	5.15 (1.73)	5.89 (1.34)	5.56 (1.67)
Controllability	5.92 (1.42)	5.61 (1.41)	6.44 (1.07)	6.03 (1.41)
Stability	4.16 (1.63)	3.15 (1.77)	4.42 (1.73)	3.56 (1.93)
Responsibility	6.31 (.98)	6.21 (.94)	6.65 (.68)	6.70 (.57)
Blame	6.53 (.79)	6.40 (.88)	6.77 (.52)	6.80 (.48)
Punishment	1.18 (.49)	4.06 (1.99)	1.73 (1.09)	5.55 (1.94)

The offenders were seen as being more in control of their stealing behavior than their shooting behavior. Furthermore, the stealing behavior of both the younger and older offender was seen as being a result of stable personality characteristics to a greater degree than in the shooting scenario. No significant age by severity interactions were present for perceptions of locus, controllability, or stability (Tables 3 and 4).

Participants believed that older offenders were more responsible for their actions and were considered more blameworthy than younger offenders. No main

Table 4

Effects of Age and Crime Severity on Attributions

	Age of offender	$\eta^2$	Severity of crime	$\eta^2$	Age x Severity	$\eta^2$
	$F(1, 184)$		$F(1, 184)$		$F(1, 184)$	
Locus	30.78**	.14	6.53*	.03	.14	.00
Controllability	45.23**	.20	18.56**	.09	.56	.00
Stability	10.97**	.06	70.23**	.28	.94	.01
Responsibility	65.92**	.26	.36	.00	4.29*	.02
Blame	47.96**	.21	1.38	.01	6.25*	.03
	$F(1, 183)$		$F(1, 183)$		$F(1, 183)$	
Punishment	183.58**	.50	668.85**	.21	48.30**	.21

Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

effects were present for the severity of the crime on perceptions of responsibility and blame. An interaction was demonstrated between age and severity of crime for perceptions of responsibility and blame (Tables 3 and 4). The simple main effects for responsibility within the offender's age group were not significant (all  $p$ 's > .14). There was a slight tendency for older offenders to be held more responsible for shooting than for stealing, while the opposite was true for younger offenders. In terms of perceptions of blame, the younger offender who engaged in stealing behavior was considered more blameworthy than the younger offender who shot another person,  $F(1, 184) = 4.10, p < .05, \eta^2 = .02$ . A significant difference was not present in the degree of blameworthiness attributed to older offenders based on the severity of the crime,  $F(1, 184) = .75, p > .37, \eta^2 = .00$ .

The age of the offender and the severity of the crime influenced the participants' punishment decisions as well. An interaction between age of the offender and severity of the crime also was present (Tables 3 and 4). Offenders in the shooting scenarios received a more severe hypothetical sentence than those in the stealing scenarios (Tables 3 and 4), and older offenders were punished more severely than younger offenders in both scenarios (Tables 3 and 4). Simple main effects within each age group were present in the scenarios with the older offender,  $F(1, 184) = 410.26, p < .001, \eta^2 = .80$ , and in the scenarios with the younger offender,  $F(1, 184) = 655.50, p < .001, \eta^2 = .70$ . While harsher sentences were suggested for the shooter regardless of age, there was more of a difference between crimes for the older offender than for the younger one.

### Multiple Regression

Prior to conducting the multiple regression, an examination of the intercorrelations among the predictor variables was conducted (Table 5). Authoritarianism and openness to experience were negatively correlated, indicating that authoritarian beliefs are associated with lower scores on openness to experience. In addition, anxiety, self-esteem, neuroticism, and extraversion were intercorrelated. Low self-esteem was related to higher levels of neuroticism and anxiety. Neuroticism and anxiety were related to lower levels of extraversion. Although these intercorrelations raise the possibility of multicollinearity, this may not be problematic as all but one of the intercorrelations were less than .80 (Licht, 1995). The correlation between neuroticism and anxiety ( $r = .80$ ) is problematic. However, neither variable predicted punitive attitudes, indicating that they did not share any variance with the criterion variable (Licht, 1995).

People who were more conscientious, held more authoritarian beliefs, were more open to experiences, had a punitive attributional style, and were less agreeable had more punitive attitudes,  $F(10, 171) = 3.46, p < .001, \underline{R}^2 = .17, \text{adjusted } \underline{R}^2 = .12$  (Table 6). Conscientiousness was the strongest predictor of punitive attitudes in the equation. Authoritarianism, openness to experience, attributional style, and agreeableness all predicted punitive attitudes, in that order, in the equation as well. Because there were no hypothetical reasons to expect some variables to be more important than others, all variables were entered simultaneously. Subsequent

Table 6

Regression Table (n = 183)

Variable	<u>B</u>	<u>SEB</u>	<u>β</u>
Attributional Style	.20	.08	.18*
Authoritarianism	.16	.06	.21*
Anxiety	-.12	.18	-.09
Self-Esteem	-.01	.26	.03
Neuroticism	.18	.18	.12
Extraversion	-.01	.15	-.03
Openness	.39	.15	.20*
Agreeableness	-.37	.17	-.17*
Conscientiousness	.41	.15	.22*
Gender	2.99	1.62	.14

Note.  $R^2 = .17$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .12$ ,  $p < .01$ . \* $p < .05$

Table 5

Correlations Between Predictor Variables

Predictor Variable	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Attributional Style	61.33	9.61	--	.07	-.01	-.06	.06	.01	.06	.06	-.04	-.04
2. Authoritarianism	91.0	14.31		--	.07	-.07	.11	.01	-.44**	.06	.26**	-.08
3. Anxiety	38.5	8.34			--	-.75**	.80**	-.48**	-.01	-.26**	-.29**	.12
4. Self-Esteem	31.9	4.73				--	-.68**	.49**	-.04	.18*	.37**	-.18*
5. Neuroticism	33.7	7.30					--	-.46**	.05	-.29**	-.27**	.12
6. Extraversion	43.7	6.05						--	.03	.31**	.26**	.08
7. Openness	37.9	5.80							--	.04	-.18*	.16*
8. Agreeableness	43.8	5.02								--	.26**	.16*
9. Conscientiousness	43.3	5.96									--	-.11
10. Gender												--

Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

regressions using step-wise and hierarchical methods revealed a similar pattern of results.

## CHAPTER 4

### DISCUSSION

This study examined the relationship between attributional style, authoritarianism, anxiety, self-esteem, the Five-Factor model of personality, and gender and punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders. Punitive attitudes were measured by the JAS, which was shown to be a reliable and valid measure. The validity of the JAS was demonstrated by participants' responses matching their self-categorization as punitive, moderate, or rehabilitative in their attitudes toward juvenile offenders and their endorsements of the purpose of punishment. Participants with liberal or conservative political orientations did not significantly differ in their responses on the JAS, suggesting that the JAS may be independent of political ideology.

#### Hypothesis 1: Punitive Attributional Style and Punitive Attitudes

The present study found that attributional style, consisting of perceptions of locus, controllability, and stability across the four scenarios, predicted punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders. Participants with higher scores on the attributional style variable believed the juvenile offenders in the scenarios caused the crimes, that the adolescents could have controlled their actions, and that the criminal behavior was a result of stable personality characteristics. This finding suggests that people who tend to see juvenile offenders as more responsible (making internal attributions) across situations have more punitive attitudes. This result is consistent with earlier findings that the components of locus, controllability, and stability influence punishment decisions (Graham et al., 1997). Furthermore, individuals who attribute more personal responsibility to juvenile offenders

may also believe that those offenders should be held accountable for their actions, which may lead to punitive attitudes.

### Hypothesis 2: Authoritarianism and Punitive Attitudes

Authoritarianism predicted punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders in the present study, consist with other findings regarding the relationship between authoritarianism and punitive attitudes (Altemeyer, 1981, 1994). It is likely that individuals with authoritarian beliefs perceive offenders, both juvenile and adult, as violators of social values and customs (Altemeyer, 1988). Authoritarians may believe that punishment is the most appropriate way to mold adolescents into productive and law-abiding members of society. Punishing individuals who engage in moral transgressions may provide authoritarian individuals with a sense of security in a world that is perceived as dangerous.

### Hypothesis 3: Gender Differences in Punitive Attitudes

Men have typically been found to be more punitive than women across a number of situations (Crosby et al., 1995; Skovron et al., 1989; Stalans & Henry, 1994). However, in the present study gender was not predictive of punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders. The JAS measured whether juveniles should receive adult sentences for specific crimes, whether juveniles are more capable of reform than adults, and whether more severe penalties will benefit juvenile offenders. The results suggest that men and women hold similar attitudes on these issues.

In previous studies, the punitive attitude measures were much more specific, assessing attitudes about executing juvenile offenders or punishing abused offenders

(Crosby et al., 1995; Stalans & Henry, 1994). However, men and women in this study did not differ in their punishment decisions across situations on the hypothetical scenarios either. Contrary to previous studies, participants were not forced to choose between the death penalty and one lesser option, but had the opportunity to choose one of nine possible penalties. When forced to make a decision between an extreme penalty and one that is perceived to be too lenient, men may endorse the more extreme penalty. In a study that forced participants to choose between executing and not executing a juvenile who committed murder, men chose the death penalty at a higher rate than women, regardless of the age of the offender (Crosby et al., 1995). Perhaps when participants are given a variety of choices that range in severity, men may not choose the most punitive option. It should also be noted that the present study took place in a state that does not have the death penalty. Therefore, the juvenile death penalty may not have been seen as a viable option, leading male and female participants to endorse similar, less extreme penalties. Consistent with previous findings, men favored the death penalty more than women,  $F(1, 183) = 3.96, p < .05, \eta^2 = .02$ , as measured by one item on the JAS. However, men and women did not differ in their endorsement of an item on the JAS that specifically addressed the juvenile death penalty,  $p > .13$ .

One study found that gender differences in punitive attitudes toward adolescent offenders were mediated by attitudes about the culpability of juveniles (Crosby et al., 1995). This suggests that gender differences may be better explained by personality and attitudinal variables. If previous studies had a wider range on some of these variables,

this variability may have led to apparent gender differences that were not evident in this study.

While there were no gender differences in punitive attitudes, there were gender differences in which individual factors related to punitive attitudes. Authoritarianism and neuroticism were more strongly associated with punitive attitudes in men than in women, whereas making internal attributions regarding the cause of a crime was more associated with punitive attitudes in women than in men. One explanation for the difference in the relationship between authoritarianism and punitive attitudes is that punitive attitudes in men may be associated with hostility, aggression, and respect for authority to a higher degree than in women. Perhaps men's punitive attitudes are associated with restoring social order, whereas women's punitive attitudes may be influenced by considering the perspective of the victim or protecting others from becoming victims.

Neuroticism, another variable that is related to punitive attitudes to a greater degree in men than in women, is characterized by negative affect. Certain aspects of neuroticism, such as the tendency to experience fear and sadness, may be more accepted in women than in men. However, the emotions of anger and disgust may be more acceptable when expressed by men than by women. Women's expression of neuroticism tends to be inflicted inward, toward themselves, while men's expression of this personality characteristic is more accepted when it is expressed outward, toward others (Unger & Crawford, 1992). Women may experience neuroticism in terms of lowered self-esteem or increased anxiety, whereas men may experience neuroticism by adopting aggressive, punitive attitudes.

There was a greater relationship between attributing the cause of a crime to the offender and punitive attitudes in women than in men. Women may associate punitive attitudes with personal accountability. Perhaps knowing that an individual was responsible for the crime, and that situational variables could not explain the offender's behavior, evoked more punitive attitudes in women than in men. Men's punitive attitudes may be associated with the crime that was committed as opposed to the actual cause of the criminal behavior.

#### Research Question 1: Anxiety and Punitive Attitudes

Trait anxiety has been associated with violent crime rates (Twenge, 2000), and the fear of being the victim of a violent crime has been related to punitive attitudes toward juveniles (Schwartz et al., 1993). However, trait anxiety was not predictive of punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders in the present study. Trait anxiety may be too broad a category to address specific fears or anxieties associated with criminal behavior. The anxiety experienced by participants may be related to academic or social difficulties instead. An additional consideration is that this particular sample was not particularly anxious ( $M = 38.53$ ,  $SD = 8.34$ ). Future research may benefit from obtaining a sample reflecting a wider range of trait anxiety in order to determine whether or not a relationship exists with punitive attitudes.

#### Research Question 2: Self-Esteem and Punitive Attitudes

Self-esteem was not predictive of punitive attitudes in the present study. However, participants generally had a high level of self-esteem. The average score was 31.95 ( $SD = 4.73$ ), with a highest possible score of 40. It is possible that the generally

reported high levels of self-esteem may have limited the ability to determine whether low self-esteem influenced punitive attitudes. Self-esteem may not share a simple relationship with punitive attitudes. People with low self-esteem may endorse harsh attitudes in order to raise their self-esteem (McGregor et al., 2001), making them indistinguishable from people with high self-esteem on self-report measures. Future research might investigate the differences in punitive attitudes between people with stable self-esteem versus unstable self-esteem (Baumeister, 1995).

### Research Question 3: The Five-Factors and Punitive Attitudes

The Five-Factor model of personality accounts for the general structure of personality (Riemann et al., 1997; Soldz & Vaillant, 1999) and for much of the variability in personality data (Riemann et al., 1997). However, the relationship between each of the five factors and punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders had not previously been examined. Neuroticism and extraversion were not predictive of punitive attitudes. This suggests that experiencing negative emotions and being socially outgoing may not be related to punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders. While individuals who hold punitive attitudes may possess either of these traits, it is not likely that neuroticism and extraversion contribute to the composition of punitive attitudes.

Openness to experience and being less agreeable were predictive of punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders. Conscientiousness was the strongest predictor of punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders. While only conscientiousness was correlated with punitive attitudes using zero-order correlations, openness to experience and agreeableness were both predictors in the regression equation. This suggests that the

relationship between openness to experience and punitive attitudes and agreeableness and punitive attitudes only appears once other individual factors are controlled for.

A surprising finding is the positive relationship between openness to experience and punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders. Openness to experience is descriptive of someone who is idealistic, willing to question authority, and willing to entertain new ethical, social, and political ideas (Costa & McCrae, 1992). It is possible that open individuals believe the recent reforms in juvenile justice legislation are new ideas that should be implemented. Open individuals may consider a more punitive approach to be beneficial to everyone involved (the community, the victim of the crime, and the offender). Furthermore, a tendency to be more willing to question authority may not be indicative of a tendency to defy or question authority in every situation. Perhaps the open individuals in this sample may not find the issue of punishing juvenile offenders particularly relevant and may be more willing to question authority on issues that are perceived as being relevant to them.

Lower scores on agreeableness predicted punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders. Agreeable individuals tend to be helpful, “forgiving, tolerant, and sympathetic” (Costa & McCrae, 1992, p. 15). The tendency to forgive others and sympathize with their plights may result in less punitive attitudes. Individuals who are less forgiving, tolerant, and sympathetic may be less willing to consider the offender’s perspective, which may lead to more punitive attitudes.

Conscientious individuals may be more punitive because they view punishment as a way to protect others from criminal behavior. Additionally, conscientious individuals

may see punishment as helping the offender learn from his or her actions. Because conscientious individuals tend to be responsible, it is possible that they expect others to be responsible as well.

The present study found that individual factors predicted punitive attitudes beyond the Five-Factor model of personality. This suggests that the Five-Factor model, which is purported to be an all-encompassing model of personality, may not account for a number of personality and individual variables that predict punitive attitudes. This is consistent with research that has shown lower level personality traits sometimes predict attitudes better than the Five-Factor model (Block, 2001; Piedmont, 1999).

#### Research Question 4: Age, Severity of Crime and Punishment Decisions

The age of the offender influenced perceptions of locus, controllability, stability, responsibility, and blame. The older adolescent was believed to be more at fault for the cause of the crime, more in control of his actions, and more likely to engage in criminal behavior in the future. Older offenders were also considered more responsible for their actions and more blameworthy than younger offenders.

The severity of the crime influenced attributions. Adolescents who stole from a neighbor were considered more responsible for the cause of that crime, more in control of their actions, and more likely to commit similar actions again than offenders who shot an acquaintance. The age of the offender did not significantly interact with the severity of the crime for locus, controllability, or stability.

There was a slight tendency for older offenders to be held more responsible in the shooting scenario than in the stealing scenario, and younger offenders were held more

responsible for stealing than shooting. The younger offender who stole from a neighbor was blamed to a greater degree than the younger offender who shot a neighbor, but the degree of blameworthiness was not significantly affected by the severity of the crime committed for the older offenders.

These findings suggest that more internal attributions are made for offenders who engage in stealing from, rather than shooting, another person. It is possible that individuals believe that an adolescent should be expected to know better than to steal. Perhaps situational variables are taken into account more when an adolescent shoots another individual (e.g., a crime of passion). These findings also suggest that age is still a factor in deciding the degree to which a juvenile offender is considered morally blameworthy for a criminal offense. The type of offense may not be as important as the age of the offender in determining whether a juvenile offender is perceived as being responsible and to blame for the crime.

The age of the offender and the severity of the crime influenced subsequent punishment decisions. Older offenders were given more severe hypothetical sentences than younger offenders, and offenders who committed the more severe crime of shooting another person received more severe sentences. Although offenders in the shooting scenario received more severe sentences, overall, there was more of a difference between the two crimes for the older offender than for the younger one.

When making punishment decisions, individuals take into account the age of the offender, the severity of the crime, and the relationship between the age of the offender and the crime he or she committed. Although individuals seem to consider juvenile

offenders who steal as being more responsible for the cause of the crime, in control of their actions, and likely to commit the same actions again than juvenile offenders who shoot another person, the offenders who committed the more severe crime were punished more severely. This suggests that regardless of the type of attribution (internal vs. external) made, punishment decisions are based on the severity of the crime that has been committed. Furthermore, while punishment decisions tended to be somewhat related across situations ( $r = .36$ ), suggesting that individual factors do play a role in punitive attitudes, the information provided from the interactions and simple main effects indicate that situations also play a role in predicting punitive attitudes.

#### Limitations and Future Research

One limitation of the present study is that the sample population is not representative. The majority of participants were Caucasian, under the age of 20, and from the Midwest. The participants were all college students as well. While the sample does not allow the generalization of punitive attitudes to a wider population, the relationship between the variables should be similar across populations (McFarland, 2001; Whitley & Lee, 2000), lessening the impact of this limitation.

The measures used were all self-report measures, leading to the possibility that social desirability may have been a factor in participants' responses. However, the participants were guaranteed anonymity, which may have lessened some of the pressure to provide socially desirable responses. Another potential limitation is that the anonymous nature of the study may have resulted in some participants not taking the questionnaires seriously. The questionnaires contained obvious content and did not

include validity scales. However, the researcher did not include data from participants whom she judged obviously did not take the content of the questionnaires seriously from their responses ( $n = 2$ ).

An additional limitation is that the present study only examined the individual factors of attributions of locus, controllability, stability, authoritarianism, anxiety, self-esteem, the Five-Factor model of personality, and gender in relation to punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders. There are many other individual factors that may also be predictive of punitive attitudes that were not measured in the present study, such as religiosity, dogmatism (Rokeach, 1960), and social dominance orientation (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994).

The present study found that the individual factors of conscientiousness, authoritarianism, openness to experience, personal attributions, and agreeableness predicted 17% of punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders. A substantial portion of punitive attitudes remains unaccounted for. Future research may identify other individual variables that assist in explaining the composition of punitive attitudes. In addition, 13% of punishment decisions across the scenarios can be explained by stable individual factors. This suggests that although individual factors play an important role in determining punitive decisions, people still rely on situational factors in making punishment decisions. Further support for this claim is evidenced by the fact that the age of the offender and severity of the crime influenced the types of attributions and punishment decisions made by participants. Future research may attempt to discover what types of situations tend to evoke lenient versus punitive responses.

In the future, research may identify whether these individual factors are predictive of punitive attitudes in a variety of populations, where age, ethnicity, and geographic regions vary. Life experiences may also vary when sampling a diverse population, which may influence participants' perspectives on a number of socially relevant issues, including juvenile crime. While the personality variables themselves may not be altered, a wider range of variability on individual factors may be obtained. Perhaps the relationship of particular individual factors and punitive attitudes will be more apparent among participants who hold dissimilar attitudes. Finally, validation studies should be conducted on the JAS in order to determine its appropriateness for use in a variety of populations.

### Conclusion

The topic of juvenile crime is an important social issue. Many people believe that the juvenile crime rates are increasing, despite statistics that report otherwise. The public holds a number of attitudes about the best way to deal with juvenile offenders. Some people still believe in the rehabilitative philosophy of the juvenile court. Yet, others are increasingly dissatisfied with the juvenile court's rehabilitative efforts (Bishop et al., 1996; Schwartz, 1992), wanting to try juveniles in adult court and sentence juveniles as adult offenders. There may be a number of factors that influence whether people hold generally rehabilitative or punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders. The present study attempted to identify the individual factors that predispose individuals to hold punitive attitudes by examining attributional style, authoritarianism, anxiety, self-esteem, the Five-Factor model of personality, and gender.

The factors that predicted punitive attitudes toward young offenders describe a person who may be reliable and consistent. This individual may place quite a bit of thought and effort into making significant decisions and may consider new ideas in the process of making decisions. Although this person is likely intelligent and imaginative, he or she tends to think rigidly about accepted customs and social norms. This individual may be extremely respectful of authority that is perceived as being legitimate and may be hostile toward others who violate the societal conventions. This person is expected to dislike leniency in the courts, which is demonstrated in his or her tendencies to be less sympathetic and less forgiving of others' moral transgressions. An individual possessing these factors may make internal attributions, perceiving the offender as being responsible for his or her own plight.

Understanding the composition of punitive attitudes may reveal why some individuals endorse more severe penalties for juveniles despite information that many of these approaches have proven to be ineffective (Bishop et al., 1996). Additionally, knowing which individual factors predict punitive attitudes may prove useful in jury selection. This information may aid both prosecuting and defense attorneys in selecting ideal jurors for a case in which a juvenile is being tried as an adult.

Furthermore, information on the composition of punitive attitudes may be useful in the promotion or denouncement of legislation related to punishing juvenile offenders. Understanding the individual factors related to punitive attitudes may influence the way in which research on the incidence of juvenile crime is presented in the media, so that punitive attitudes might not be triggered as easily. As a result, the public may gain a

more objective understanding of the statistical results. Finally, the information in this study may provide another useful measure of community sentiment on the issue of youth crime, which, in turn, may be used as a gauge for the evolving standards of decency.

The present study identified several individual factors that aided in predicting punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders. Although conscientiousness, authoritarianism, openness to experience, attributional style, and agreeableness accounted for a portion of punitive attitudes, a large portion of the composition of punitive attitudes remains unexplained. This study, along with future research, should provide useful information regarding why people hold particular attitudes toward young offenders and may offer valuable information for political, social, and legal spheres.

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## APPENDIX A

## Background Questionnaire

1. Sex:     \_\_\_ Male           \_\_\_ Female
2. Age:     \_\_\_
3. Ethnicity  
    \_\_\_ Caucasian           \_\_\_ Asian           \_\_\_ African American  
    \_\_\_ Hispanic           \_\_\_ Other           \_\_\_ Prefer not to answer
4. Year in college:  
    \_\_\_ Freshman           \_\_\_ Junior           \_\_\_ Other  
    \_\_\_ Sophomore         \_\_\_ Senior
5. Population of Hometown:  
    \_\_\_ under 1,000         \_\_\_ 5,000-10,000         \_\_\_ 50,000-100,000  
    \_\_\_ 1,000-5,000        \_\_\_ 10,000-50,000        \_\_\_ Over 100,000
6. In what state (e.g., IA) did you spend the majority of your time before age 18? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Where are you currently living?  
    \_\_\_ In Dorms           \_\_\_ Off Campus (including Roth and University Apartments)
8. With whom do you currently live?  
    \_\_\_ By myself           \_\_\_ With roommate/roommates  
    \_\_\_ With my spouse/partner     \_\_\_ With parents  
    \_\_\_ In a Fraternity/Sorority    \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_
9. What is your political orientation?  
    \_\_\_ Liberal           \_\_\_ Moderate  
    \_\_\_ Conservative       \_\_\_ Don't know
10. Which statement best describes your opinion  
    \_\_\_ Juvenile offenders should receive the same penalties as adults.  
    \_\_\_ Some juvenile offenders should receive adult penalties.  
    \_\_\_ Juvenile offenders should remain under the jurisdiction of juvenile court (not receive the same punishments as adult offenders).
11. What is your religious affiliation?  
    \_\_\_ Agnostic           \_\_\_ Atheist           \_\_\_ Baptist  
    \_\_\_ Baptist (Southern)   \_\_\_ Catholic           \_\_\_ Episcopalian  
    \_\_\_ Hindu           \_\_\_ Jewish           \_\_\_ Lutheran (ELCA)  
    \_\_\_ Lutheran (LCMS)    \_\_\_ Methodist         \_\_\_ Muslim  
    \_\_\_ Non-denominational   \_\_\_ Presbyterian       \_\_\_ Wesleyan  
    \_\_\_ Unaffiliated         \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_
12. Have you ever been arrested for any offense?                   \_\_\_ yes           \_\_\_ no

## APPENDIX B

## Attribution Scenarios

## Crime #1

Please read the following scenario and rate according to the scales provided.

A 12-year old boy breaks into his neighbor's home and steals a Playstation 2.

1. Think about the probable cause of this crime. How would you rate this cause?

Mostly due to the situation      1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7      Mostly due to the 12-year old

2. The 12-year old's behavior is a result of stable personality characteristics.

Entirely temporary/unstable      1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7      Entirely permanent/stable

3. The 12-year old had control over his actions.

Entirely uncontrollable      1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7      Entirely controllable

4. To what extent is the 12-year old responsible for his actions?

Not responsible at all      1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7      Entirely responsible

5. Should the 12-year old be blamed for his crime?

Definitely no      1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7      Definitely yes

6. If he is found guilty of this crime what punishment should he receive?

- juvenile probation
- 1-2 years in a residential treatment facility
- 2-5 years in a residential treatment facility
- 1-2 years in an adult prison
- 2-5 years in an adult prison
- 5-15 years in an adult prison
- 15-25 years in an adult prison
- Life in prison
- Death Penalty

## Crime #2

Please read the following scenario and rate according to the scales provided.

A 16-year old boy breaks into his neighbor's home and steals a DVD player.

1. Think about the probable cause of this crime. How would you rate this cause?

Mostly due to the situation      1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7      Mostly due to the 16-year old

2. The 16-year old's behavior is a result of stable personality characteristics.

Entirely temporary/unstable      1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7      Entirely permanent/stable

3. The 16-year old had control over his actions.

Entirely uncontrollable      1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7      Entirely controllable

4. To what extent is the 16-year old responsible for his actions?

Not responsible at all      1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7      Entirely responsible

5. Should the 16-year old be blamed for his crime?

Definitely no      1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7      Definitely yes

6. If he was found guilty of this crime what punishment should he receive?

- juvenile probation
- 1-2 years in a residential treatment facility
- 2-5 years in a residential treatment facility
- 1-2 years in an adult prison
- 2-5 years in an adult prison
- 5-15 years in an adult prison
- 15-25 years in an adult prison
- Life in prison
- Death Penalty

## Crime #3

Please read the following scenario and rate according to the scales provided.

A 12-year old boy gets into an argument with his neighbor. Knowing the neighbor would return home late that evening, the boy waits and shoots the neighbor.

1. Think about the probable cause of this crime. How would you rate this cause?

Mostly due to the situation      1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7      Mostly due to the 12-year old

2. The 12-year old's behavior is a result of stable personality characteristics.

Entirely temporary/unstable      1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7      Entirely permanent/stable

3. The 12-year old had control over his actions.

Entirely uncontrollable      1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7      Entirely controllable

4. To what extent is the 12-year old responsible for his actions?

Not responsible at all      1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7      Entirely responsible

5. Should the 12-year old be blamed for his crime?

Definitely no      1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7      Definitely yes

6. If he is found guilty of this crime what punishment should he receive?

- juvenile probation
- 1-2 years in a residential treatment facility
- 2-5 years in a residential treatment facility
- 1-2 years in an adult prison
- 2-5 years in an adult prison
- 5-15 years in an adult prison
- 15-25 years in an adult prison
- Life in prison
- Death Penalty

Crime #4

Please read the following scenario and rate according to the scales provided.

A 16-year old boy gets into an argument with his employer. The boy returned later that evening as his employer was locking up and shot his employer.

1. Think about the probable cause of this crime. How would you rate this cause?

Mostly due to the situation      1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7      Mostly due to the 16-year old

2. The 16-year old's behavior is a result of stable personality characteristics.

Entirely temporary/unstable      1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7      Entirely permanent/stable

3. The 16-year old had control over his actions.

Entirely uncontrollable      1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7      Entirely controllable

4. To what extent is the 16-year old responsible for his actions?

Not responsible at all      1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7      Entirely responsible

5. Should the 16-year old be blamed for his crime?

Definitely no      1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7      Definitely yes

6. If he is found guilty of this crime what punishment should he receive?

- juvenile probation
- 1-2 years in a residential treatment facility
- 2-5 years in a residential treatment facility
- 1-2 years in an adult prison
- 2-5 years in an adult prison
- 5-15 years in an adult prison
- 15-25 years in an adult prison
- Life in prison
- Death Penalty

Please rate according to the following scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Slightly Disagree

4 = Neutral

5 = Slightly Agree

6 = Agree

7 = Strongly Agree

\_\_\_\_\_ The purpose of punishing juvenile offenders is to protect others from future criminal acts by those juveniles.

\_\_\_\_\_ The purpose of punishing juvenile offenders is to make them pay for their actions.

\_\_\_\_\_ The purpose of punishing juvenile offenders is to rehabilitate them so that they can once again be productive members of society.

\_\_\_\_\_ The purpose of punishing juvenile offenders is to send a message to others that criminal behavior, at any age, will not be tolerated.

## APPENDIX C

## Juvenile Attitude Scale

Answer **SD** if you strongly disagree or the statement is definitely false.

Answer **D** if you disagree or the statement is mostly false.

Answer **N** if you are neutral on the statement, you cannot decide, or the statement is equally true and false.

Answer **A** if you agree or the statement is mostly true.

Answer **SA** if you strongly agree or the statement is definitely true.

Please respond to all the statements, giving only one answer for each.

- 1. The death penalty should be used on persons under 21.
- 2. The death penalty should be used on persons under 18.
- 3. Juveniles charged with serious violent crimes should be tried as adults.
- 4. Juveniles charged with serious property crimes should be tried as adults.
- 5. Juveniles tried in adult court should face the same sentences as adults.
- 6. Juveniles charged with a drug offense should be tried in adult court.
- 7. Juveniles tried in adult court should be sentenced to adult prisons.
- 8. Persons under the age of 16 should be tried as adults for all crimes.
- 9. Persons under the age of 16 should be tried as adults for some crimes.
- 10. Juveniles are less responsible for their actions than adults. \*
- 11. Juveniles are less morally blameworthy than adults. \*
- 12. Adults owe a special duty to juveniles that should prevent them from executing a juvenile for committing a crime. \*
- 13. Juveniles do not have the maturity or life experience to appreciate fully all of the possible consequences of their actions. \*
- 14. Juveniles should never be sentenced to death because they are more capable of reform than adults.\*

- \_\_\_ 15. Juveniles have the mental capacity to appreciate fully all of the possible consequences of their actions.
- \_\_\_ 16. The age of the defendant should be considered when making a decision whether or not to execute a juvenile for a capital crime. \*
- \_\_\_ 17. Only juveniles who are repeat offenders should be tried as adults.
- \_\_\_ 18. There is little hope that juveniles will be rehabilitated.
- \_\_\_ 19. The punishment for a serious crime should be consistent, regardless of the age of the offender.
- \_\_\_ 20. Juveniles should face less severe penalties than adults for the same crimes. \*
- \_\_\_ 21. If juvenile offenders faced adult penalties, this may deter other juveniles from committing these crimes.

\* Reverse scored.

## APPENDIX D

## Right Wing Authoritarianism Scale

For each statement, state your agreement or disagreement using the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree				Strongly Agree

- \_\_\_1. The way things are going in this country, it's going to take a lot of "strong medicine" to straighten out the troublemakers, criminals, and perverts.
- \_\_\_2. It is wonderful that young people today have greater freedom to protest against things they don't like and to "do their own thing." \*
- \_\_\_3. It is always better to trust the judgment of the proper authorities in government and religion than to listen to the noisy rabble-rousers in our society who are trying to create doubt in people's minds.
- \_\_\_4. People should pay less attention to the Bible and the other old traditional forms of religious guidance and instead develop their own personal standards of what is moral and immoral. \*
- \_\_\_5. It would be best for everyone if the proper authorities censored magazines and movies to keep trashy material away from the youth.
- \_\_\_6. It may be considered old-fashioned by some, but having a decent, respectable appearance is still the mark of a gentleman, and especially, a lady.
- \_\_\_7. The sooner we get rid of the traditional family structure, where the father is the head of the family and the children are taught to obey authority automatically, the better. The old-fashioned way has a lot wrong with it. \*
- \_\_\_8. There is nothing wrong with premarital sexual intercourse. \*







## APPENDIX E

### State-Trait Anxiety Inventory, form Y, T-anxiety

The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory, form Y, T-anxiety is copyrighted material.

Therefore, this instrument will not be included in this appendix.

## APPENDIX F

## Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale

**Please answer the next set of questions using the following scale:**

**SD=** Strongly Disagree

**D=** Disagree

**A=** Agree

**SA=** Strongly Agree

**Circle the correct response:**

**SD D A SA** 1. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

**SD D A SA** 2. I wish I could have more respect for myself. \*

**SD D A SA** 3. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

**SD D A SA** 4. I certainly feel useless at times. \*

**SD D A SA** 5. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

**SD D A SA** 6. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure. \*

**SD D A SA** 7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

**SD D A SA** 8. I feel I do not have much to be proud of. \*

**SD D A SA** 9. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

**SD D A SA** 10. At times I think I am no good at all. \*

\* Reverse scored.

## APPENDIX G

## The NEO-Five-Factor Inventory

This questionnaire contains 60 statements. Read each statement carefully. For each statement, provide the response that best represents your opinion:

*Answer **SD** if you strongly disagree or the statement is definitely false.*

*Answer **D** if you disagree or the statement is mostly false.*

*Answer **N** if you are neutral on the statement, you cannot decide, or the statement is about equally true and false.*

*Answer **A** if you agree or the statement is mostly true.*

*Answer **SA** if you strongly agree or the statement is definitely true.*

Please respond to all the statements, giving only one answer for each.

- 1. I am not a worrier. \*
- 2. I like to have a lot of people around me.
- 3. I don't like to waste my time daydreaming. \*
- 4. I try to be courteous to everyone I meet.
- 5. I keep my belongings clean and neat.
- 6. I often feel inferior to others.
- 7. I laugh easily.
- 8. Once I find the right way to do something, I stick to it. \*
- 9. I often get into arguments with my family and co-workers. \*
- 10. I'm pretty good about pacing myself so as to get things done on time.
- 11. When I'm under a great deal of stress, sometimes I feel like I'm going to pieces.
- 12. I don't consider myself especially "light-hearted." \*
- 13. I am intrigued by the patterns I find in art and nature.
- 14. Some people think I'm selfish and egotistical. \*
- 15. I am not a very methodical person. \*
- 16. I rarely feel lonely or blue. \*
- 17. I really enjoy talking to people.

Answer **SD** if you strongly disagree or the statement is definitely false.

Answer **D** if you disagree or the statement is mostly false.

Answer **N** if you are neutral on the statement, you cannot decide, or the statement is about equally true and false.

Answer **A** if you agree or the statement is mostly true.

Answer **SA** if you strongly agree or the statement is definitely true.

- \_\_\_ 18. I believe letting students hear controversial speakers can only confuse and mislead them. \*
- \_\_\_ 19. I would rather cooperate with others than compete with them.
- \_\_\_ 20. I try to perform all the tasks assigned to me conscientiously.
- \_\_\_ 21. I often feel tense and jittery.
- \_\_\_ 22. I like to be where the action is.
- \_\_\_ 23. Poetry has little or no effect on me. \*
- \_\_\_ 24. I tend to be cynical and skeptical of others' intentions. \*
- \_\_\_ 25. I have a clear set of goals and work toward them in an orderly fashion.
- \_\_\_ 26. Sometimes I feel completely worthless.
- \_\_\_ 27. I usually prefer to do things alone. \*
- \_\_\_ 28. I often try new and foreign foods.
- \_\_\_ 29. I believe that most people will take advantage of you if you let them. \*
- \_\_\_ 30. I waste a lot of time before settling down to work. \*
- \_\_\_ 31. I rarely feel fearful or anxious. \*
- \_\_\_ 32. I often feel as if I am bursting with energy.
- \_\_\_ 33. I seldom notice the moods or feelings that different environments produce. \*
- \_\_\_ 34. Most people I know like me.
- \_\_\_ 35. I work hard to accomplish my goals.
- \_\_\_ 36. I often get angry at the way people treat me.
- \_\_\_ 37. I am a cheerful, high-spirited person.
- \_\_\_ 38. I believe we should look to our religious authorities for decisions on moral issues.\*
- \_\_\_ 39. Some people think of me as cold and calculating. \*

Answer **SD** if you strongly disagree or the statement is definitely false.

Answer **D** if you disagree or the statement is mostly false.

Answer **N** if you are neutral on the statement, you cannot decide, or the statement is about equally true and false.

Answer **A** if you agree or the statement is mostly true.

Answer **SA** if you strongly agree or the statement is definitely true.

- \_\_\_ 40. When I make a commitment, I can always be counted on to follow through.
- \_\_\_ 41. Too often, when things go wrong, I get discouraged and feel like giving up.
- \_\_\_ 42. I am not a cheerful optimist. \*
- \_\_\_ 43. Sometimes when I am reading poetry or looking at a work of art, I feel a chill or wave of excitement.
- \_\_\_ 44. I'm hard-headed and tough-minded in my attitudes. \*
- \_\_\_ 45. Sometimes I'm not as dependable or reliable as I should be. \*
- \_\_\_ 46. I am seldom sad or depressed. \*
- \_\_\_ 47. My life is fast-paced.
- \_\_\_ 48. I have little interest in speculating on the nature of the universe or the human condition. \*
- \_\_\_ 49. I generally try to be thoughtful and considerate.
- \_\_\_ 50. I am a productive person who always gets the job done.
- \_\_\_ 51. I often feel helpless and want someone else to solve my problems.
- \_\_\_ 52. I am a very active person.
- \_\_\_ 53. I have a lot of intellectual curiosity.
- \_\_\_ 54. If I don't like people, I let them know it. \*
- \_\_\_ 55. I never seem to be able to get organized. \*
- \_\_\_ 56. At times I have been so ashamed I just wanted to hide.
- \_\_\_ 57. I would rather go my own way than be a leader of others. \*
- \_\_\_ 58. I often enjoy playing with theories or abstract ideas.
- \_\_\_ 59. If necessary, I am willing to manipulate people to get what I want. \*
- \_\_\_ 60. I strive for excellence in everything I do.

\* Reverse scored.

Neuroticism = 1, 6, 11, 16, 21, 26, 31, 36, 41, 46, 51, 56.

Extraversion = 2, 7, 12, 17, 22, 27, 32, 37, 42, 47, 52, 57.

Openness to Experience = 3, 8, 13, 18, 23, 28, 33, 38, 43, 48, 53, 58.

Agreeableness = 4, 9, 14, 19, 24, 29, 34, 39, 44, 49, 54, 59.

Conscientiousness = 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55, 60.