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## **Attributions of Criminal Responsibility of Children : An Exploratory Study of the Role of Wrongdoer age, Victim Harm and Perceptions of Intent and Consequence**

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Attributions of Criminal Responsibility of Children: An Exploratory Study  
of the Role of Wrongdoer Age, Victim Harm and Perceptions of  
Intent and Consequence  
James McCue

A Report Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the  
Requirements for the Award of  
Bachelor of Arts (Psychology) Honours  
Faculty of Community Studies, Education and Social Science  
Edith Cowan University

27 October 2003

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Attributions of Criminal Responsibility of Children: An Exploratory Study of the  
Role of Wrongdoer Age, Victim Harm and Perceptions of Intent and Consequence

Abstract

Recent cases, such as that of James Bulger, have provided anecdotal evidence of children's capacities to commit illegal acts. Currently however, the public's attributions of children who engage in antisocial and criminal behaviour, and whether they should be held criminally responsible for their actions, has received little attention in terms of empirical research. The aim of the present study was to examine these attributions and establish whether they concur with the guidelines for criminal responsibility set down by the Western Australian criminal justice system. Two independent variables were manipulated using vignettes and included the age of the wrongdoer (7, 10 or 14 years of age) and the consequence, or harm, caused to the victim (no physical consequence, moderate physical consequence or extreme physical consequence), thus meaning there were nine experimental conditions in total. One hundred and eighty university students participated in this exploratory research and each participant was required to read a vignette and then fill in an eight-item questionnaire that measured their perceptions of the scenario, depicted using a seven-point Likert scale. A qualitative measure was also included to supplement the quantitative data in terms of how the public believed the wrongdoer should be dealt with. Results indicated that the consequence to the victim significantly influenced perceptions of the harmfulness of the wrongdoer's behaviour, perceptions of the severity of the harm and perceptions of whether the wrongdoer should be dealt with by the justice system. The age of the wrongdoer did not significantly influence any of the variables measured. Perceptions of responsibility, intent and behavioural severity were influenced by contextual factors related to the vignette presented. Overall it was found that the public do believe children should be held responsible for their actions. However, results showed that the wrongdoer should be dealt with according to the contextual circumstances of the act, rather than applying punitive justice system punishments. The results ultimately highlight a disparity in the perceptions of the public and the current legislation of the Western Australian Criminal Code. These results are discussed in relation to previous research and implications for the Western Australian criminal justice systems are also presented.

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
Supervisor: Dr Deirdre Drake

Co-Supervisor: Dr Dianne McKillop

Submitted: 27 October 2003

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate, without acknowledgment, any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signature: 

Date: 11-12-08

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## Introduction

The public's attributions of children who engage in antisocial and criminal behaviour, and whether they should be held criminally responsible for their actions, has received little attention in terms of empirical research (Doob & Sprott, 1998; Ghetti & Redlich, 2001; James & Jenks, 1996). Recent cases have highlighted both the capacities of children to commit illegal acts and the relevance of investigating the public's attitudes in this area. One such case is that of James Bulger, a 2-year-old, who was abducted by two 10-year-old boys from a British shopping centre on February 12, 1993 (Wolff & McCall Smith, 2000). The two boys took James to a railway line where they beat him with rocks and an iron bar, then tied him to the tracks and left him to be run over (Wolff & McCall Smith, 2000). Following a three-week trial the two boys were sentenced to be detained for an indeterminate prison term, with a minimum of eight years (Wolff & McCall Smith, 2000). The European Court of Human Rights has since released the boys and provided them with new identities.

The James Bulger case is not an isolated incident. More recently, it was reported by *The Sunday Times* newspaper, that a 12-year-old boy became the youngest person in Western Australia's history to be charged with murder (Day, 2003). It has been alleged the boy stabbed his 33-year-old stepfather in the chest after the man repeatedly head-butted him (Day, 2003; Noakes, 2003). Other Western Australian cases, identified by the media, that exemplify the relevance of investigating children's capacity to commit crime and whether the public believes they should be held criminally responsible have been identified by Morfesse (2003). Amongst them was that of a 16-year-old girl who shot and killed a police officer in 1979. In 1981 a 14-year-old boy was convicted of wilful murder, whilst 5 years following that incident, a

16 year-old boy was convicted after battering his younger brother to death with a hammer. In 1991 another 16-year-old was convicted for the rape and murder of a 4-year-old boy. Finally, again in 1991, a 16-year-old girl stabbed a classmate 18 times at Churchlands Senior High School (Morfesse, 2003).

Although these cases highlight the topical nature of children engaging in antisocial behaviour and committing crime, little systematic research has been conducted to investigate the public's attitudes towards these individuals. Being exploratory in nature, this paper will draw on insights from different domains in order to provide a framework to investigate whether the public believe children should be held criminally responsible and the factors that influence their attributions. From an investigation of the literature, several research questions will be presented in relation to the current study.

Importantly, consideration must be given to the factors that influence public attributions, as they provide a basis for understanding how the community reasons in terms of criminal behaviour and justice. Another domain that will be investigated is the legal system and its provisions for children who commit crime, based on age related factors. This will enable an understanding of whether the public's reasoning is similar to that of the Western Australian legal system, and therefore whether the public believes children's ability to be held criminally accountable is based on the age of the child. Finally, in providing a framework for the present study, this paper will also discuss children's psychological development and the age at which they are able to comprehend notions of right and wrong. Such literature allows a comprehension of the legal provisions and whether the public have an understanding of the implications developmental factors have on decision making and reasoning.

*Children and the Societal Perspective: Factors that Influence Attributions*

Anecdotal cases such as that of James Bulger influence perceptions of crime and those who perpetrate it (Doob & Roberts, 1984; James & Jenks, 1996). Often, the process of justice occurs external to the wants of the community, however, it is the community that the justice system is designed to represent and protect (Bronitt & McSherry, 2001). Therefore, whether the public believes children should be held accountable for their actions needs to be investigated. The factors that may influence such decision-making also need to be understood. Much of the research looking at the public's perceptions of crime has focussed on adult offenders. It is arguable whether findings pertaining to the public's attributions of crime can be generalised to juvenile offenders. A separate section discussing the minimal literature on perceptions of juvenile offenders will be presented later.

Firstly it is important to consider the role of the media in shaping public attitudes towards issues of crime and justice, such as the case of James Bulger mentioned previously (Doob & Roberts, 1984; James & Jenks, 1996). Doob and Roberts (1984) have found that the media significantly influences the public's negative perceptions of the sentences handed down by the court through a lack of detailed information. James and Jenks (1996) have argued that the media has jaded the public's perceptions of children in general, by amplifying the negative behaviours of some children.

Doob and Sprott (1998) have investigated the common belief held by the public, that youth violence is becoming more serious. The study was based on arrest rates and distributions of youth court cases and it was found youth crime is not becoming more serious in nature (Doob & Sprott, 1998). Rather, new statutes and policies have lead to different cases being heard by the courts, thus causing a belief that the young offenders are committing more serious crimes, a message, the authors claim, is being

given by the media (Doob & Sprott, 1998). Wegs (1999) also found the public's view of young offenders and the type and frequency of criminal acts they engage in is clearly exaggerated.

The media has also been found to play a role in proliferating the public's fear of being a victim of crime (Chiricos, Padgett, & Gertz, 2000). In summarising previous research, Chiricos et al. (2000) stated that the potential for people's attitudes to be influenced by television media has been well documented, particularly in relation to the perceived and lived reality of the images portrayed. Findings from the research indicated that the frequency of the public's consumption of television news was significantly related to fear of crime (Chiricos et al., 2000). Finally, Heath, Kavanagh and Thompson (2001) argued television media and its influence on the public's levels of fear of crime is able to explain why the fear of crime levels have failed to drop in accordance with the crime rates in the United States. From the research findings presented, it can be seen the media is influential in forming and reinforcing the stereotypes of the public (Weiten, 1989). Specifically, when the media portrays images that confirm individual's schemes, their stereotypes are reinforced. Social psychology has highlighted the importance of stereotypes in the formation of people's schemes and the inferences people draw about the causes of events and others' behaviours (Weiten, 1989).

The concept of crime seriousness has also been found to play a significant role in affecting public attributions of offenders (Carroll & Payne, 1977). It has been found people rely on perceptions of crime seriousness and causal attributions when making judgements regarding offenders and crime in general (Carroll & Payne, 1977). Myers (1980) investigated whether perceptions of crime are influenced by the context within which, the criminal act occurs. Analysing the verdicts recorded in Indiana, United

States, results indicated both the consequence of the action and the context in which it occurred influenced juror's judgements. The author further found juror's decisions were also based on the perceived severity of the act (Myers, 1980).

Perceived crime seriousness has been investigated by Warr (1989), who looked at defining this concept. Warr (1989) utilised survey methods to measure the perceptions of 336 Dallas residents based on the crimes listed in the survey. Results indicated that the types of crime committed influenced the perceived severity of the crime.

Specifically, crimes against the person were found to be more serious than property and public order crimes (Warr, 1989). O'Connell and Whelan (1996) have further purported that crime seriousness can be looked at in terms of wrongfulness and impact. O'Connell and Whelan (1996) further suggested that the effect of perceived crime seriousness on punitiveness should be investigated.

Australian research regarding perceptions of crime seriousness and responsibility has been conducted by Feather (1996) who examined variables considered to influence cognitive and affective reactions to crime. Specifically, 220 participants were required to read three scenarios and then complete a questionnaire containing items that measured perceptions of seriousness, responsibility and deservingness of punishment (Feather, 1996). Results indicated the participant's perceptions of the seriousness of the offence influenced the perceived level of responsibility of the offender. These variables were also found to influence perceptions of deservingness of punishment and the harshness of the penalty (Feather, 1996). Kwan, Chiu, Ip and Kwan (2002) have furthered this research and have suggested that this relationship between crime seriousness, responsibility and deservingness can be generalised to other cultures.



Sprott (1999) further investigated the dimensions of punitiveness and questioned whether the public is tough on crime. The researcher conducted over 1000 telephone interviews, with interviewees being asked to comment on both adult and juvenile crime and criminal justice (Sprott, 1999). Results indicated that participant's gender significantly influenced punitiveness, however only in terms of juvenile crime. Specifically, women were found to be less punitive than men and tended to prefer community sanctions for young offenders. Other factors found to be important included general beliefs pertaining to the leniency of the court, and a belief that community sanctions work (Sprott, 1999). From the findings of the literature presented within this section, the perceptions of the public towards children can be expected to be influenced by the age and gender of the participants, victim and offender characteristics as well as the context in which the scenario is presented.

#### *Children and the Societal Perspective: Perceptions of Juvenile Offenders*

In aiming to understand public perceptions of juvenile crime, Schwartz, Guo and Kerbs (1993) investigated public opinions towards juveniles and examined data from a 1991 national survey. The data indicated that the majority of participants favoured trying juvenile offenders (aged 16) as adults for serious crimes. The researchers also found that punitive attitudes were common among older participants, with punitiveness increasing after the age of 50 years (Schwartz et al., 1993). Similarly, Stalans and Henry (1994) examined citizen's views regarding juveniles, accused of homicide and whether they should be tried as adults. Findings from this research suggested the public were sensitive to the context of the crime and the offender, and preferred juveniles being tried in an adult court only when they are repeat offenders (Stalans and Henry, 1994). It is important to consider the generalisability of this

research, as it was conducted using a sample from the United States, meaning the attitudes presented may not be reflected in an Australian sample.

In extending the previous study Crosby, Britner, Jodl and Portwood (1995) investigated public punitiveness towards juvenile offenders and specifically whether the public believes juveniles should be sentenced to death. A sample of 179 former jurors were required to vote on whether to execute juvenile defendant, aged 10, 15, 16 or 19 in a hypothetical situation (Crosby et al., 1995). Results indicated that a significant number of participants across all conditions were prepared to execute the defendant. Such findings are contrary to previous research by Skovron, Scott and Cullen (1989) who concluded, the public was generally opposed to executing juveniles. Importantly, findings further revealed that the defendant's age and the perceived culpability of the defendant were factors that significantly influenced whether participants voted to sentence the juvenile to death (Crosby et al., 1995). Typically, the higher the age of the child to be sentenced, the higher the participant's perceptions of culpability and the more likely they were to select the death penalty. Further, Grisso (1996) has claimed that although juveniles should be punished in response to public attitudes, distinctions should be made between adult and juvenile offenders, especially in terms of how defendants are treated and punished.

Research has also investigated whether current court sentences are too lenient and therefore whether juveniles should be tried in an adult court (Baron & Hartnagel, 1996). Baron and Hartnagel (1996) used a telephone survey method and asked participants to respond to a series of survey questions that pertained to the punitiveness of the public toward young offenders, liberalness and conservativeness of attitudes as well as attitudes towards juvenile offender rehabilitation. Results revealed respondents were punitive in their attitudes towards juvenile offenders.

Additionally, it was found these attitudes were determined by the participant's conservative social values. Importantly, the attitudes do not represent a large cross section of the American population, as the sample used was limited to one particular area in the United States. However, the results provide insight into the punitiveness of the public towards juveniles.

Ghetti and Redlich (2001) have recently investigated reactions to youth crime. The authors argued, that although research is now beginning to highlight factors that influence the public's decisions and attributions of the culpability of juvenile criminals, many questions remain unanswered including the relationship between variables such as influence of defendant age, perceived culpability, competence and crime characteristics. Ghetti and Redlich, (2001) presented 480 participants with scenarios that manipulated the age of the juvenile, the type of crime, the outcome of the crime and the impulsivity of the juvenile. Results from the questionnaires measuring culpability and competence indicated the type of crime committed and the outcome of the crime were major motivating factors that influenced sentencing decisions. Although younger offenders were generally seen as being less culpable and less competent, sentence allocation and punishment attitudes were not significantly influenced by the age of the offender (Ghetti & Redlich, 2001).

From the research presented discussing the public's perceptions of crime, predictions with regard to future research findings can be inferred. Research involving the public's attributions of criminal behaviour would arguably show social attributions to be punitive and most strongly influenced by the context of the situation presented, including the type of crime and the personal attributes of the wrongdoer. Further, the seriousness of the wrongdoer's act, the harm caused to the victim and perceptions of intent may all play a role in attributions of criminal responsibility.

Finally, the age of the wrongdoer may also be a factor the public considers when attributing notions of criminal responsibility and blame to children.

### *Children and the Legal Perspective*

An important facet of a discussion of children being held criminally responsible, that is, having sanction placed upon them by the legal system, is the notion of whether children have the ability to form the intent and to comprehend the legal consequences of their actions. Criminal behaviour can be defined as any act, committed intentionally, that infringes on the criminal law, which makes it punishable (Bartol, 1999). In order to be held criminally responsible for a crime, the defendant must satisfy two principles that underpin the law. The elements are *actus reus* (meaning the person has committed an illegal act) and *mens rea* (meaning the person had the capacity to know what they were doing was wrong) (Bronitt & McSherry, 2001; O'Regan, 1982; Urbas, 2000). However, it has been recognised that certain individuals are unable to meet these legal requirements and as such, provisions have been made in the Western Australian Criminal Code (1988). Specifically, mentally impaired persons and children who commit legal wrongs are deemed to be unable to meet the requirement of *mens rea* (Bronitt & McSherry, 2001; O'Regan, 1982; Urbas, 2000).

Therefore, the Western Australian Criminal Code (1988) makes concessions regarding the prosecution of child offenders in particular. Section 29 of the Western Australian Criminal Code (1988) states that children under the age of ten cannot be held responsible for their actions. This presumption is called *doli incapax*, which translated, means that children do not have the capacity to form the intent to commit evil acts (Bartholomew, 1998; Blazey-Ayoub, 1996; Bronitt & McSherry, 2001; Grove, 1996; O'Regan, 1982; Urbas, 2000). Section 29, further states that children

older than ten, and less than fourteen years of age, are able to be held criminally responsible, providing the child had the capacity to know that their behaviour was wrong at the time of the offence (Western Australian Criminal Code, 1988).

This second provision is known as a rebuttable presumption and allows the prosecution to demonstrate that the child in question had the capacity to form the intent to commit a criminal act. Moreover, the onus is on the prosecution to show that the child in question, not only knew that their action was wrong, but that they understood the criminal nature of their transgression (Bartholomew, 1998; Blazey-Ayoub, 1996; Bronitt & McSherry, 2001; Grove, 1996; O'Regan, 1982; Urbas, 2000). Bronitt and McSherry (2001) have outlined types of evidence that can be submitted to the court to show that the child knew that their actions were wrong and constituted a criminal act. Examples of such evidence include, information relating to the child's upbringing, admissions made by the child to the police, conduct following the act including crime concealment, conduct and demeanour in court, mental capacity and any relevant prior convictions (Bronitt & McSherry, 2001).

It is commonly believed that very young children should not be held criminally responsible for their actions, however, jurisdictions differ greatly on the ages at which children can and cannot be held criminally responsible (Bronitt & McSherry, 2001; O'Regan, 1982; Urbas, 2000). Western Australia's defining ages under section 29 of the Criminal Code have been adopted from centuries-old British common law (O'Regan, 1982). Only recently have each of the Australian states undergone reforms to make the ages of criminal responsibility consistent throughout the country (Bronitt & McSherry, 2001; O'Regan, 1982; Urbas, 2000). Internationally, however, vast differences in the ages of criminal responsibility are apparent. In contrast, the criminal codes of many countries prescribe a higher minimum age at which children can be

held criminally responsible. For example, Urbas (2000) has shown that Canada, Greece and the Netherlands have a prescribed age of 12 years. France and New Zealand prescribe an age of 13 years, whilst 14 years of age is prescribed in Austria, Germany and Italy. Japan, Portugal and Spain state that 16 years of age is the age of criminal responsibility, and the age of criminal responsibility in Belgium and Luxembourg is 18 years of age, one of the highest ages of responsibility (Urbas, 2000).

The *doli incapax* rule has been criticised, largely due the vast discrepancy between different jurisdictions in terms of the defining minimum age of responsibility (Bartholomew, 1998; Blazey-Ayoub, 1996; Bronitt & McSherry, 2001; Grove, 1996; O'Regan, 1982; Urbas, 2000). Moreover, no stringent scientific methods appear to have been applied in order to define the age at which all children have the ability to form criminal intent and understand the magnitude of criminal wrongs. Despite such criticism, most agree that provisions need to be made for children based on their developing mental capacity (Bartholomew, 1998; Blazey-Ayoub, 1996; O'Regan, 1982; Urbas, 2000). Making provisions for children, in terms of whether they should be held criminally responsible, should be done following empirical investigation that draws upon legal philosophies, psychological principles and public attitudes, in order to enable the best interests of the child and society to be considered (Levine, Williams, Sixt & Valenti, 2001; Scott, Reppucci & Woolard, 1995; Warling & Peterson-Badali, 2003; Woolard, Repucci & Redding, 1996). From this, the concurrence of legal, psychological and public attitudes in terms dealing with children that engage in antisocial behaviour and commit crime can be investigated.

*Children and their Capacity in a Legal Context*

Combining legal and psychological philosophies is important as the public's judgements of whether children should be held criminally responsible, may be influenced by children's ability to comprehend legal concepts and procedures. Levine et al. (2001) and Warling and Peterson-Badali (2003) have argued that punishing children using a system of rules they do not have the capacity to understand is inherently prejudicial and unjust. Levine et al. (2001) questioned the fairness of holding children criminally responsible if they do not understand the legal context in which their actions were committed. Research by Adelson, Green and O'Neil (1969) investigated the understanding of 120 adolescents (aged 11, 13, 15 and 18) concept of law. Participants were required to develop a legal framework for a hypothetical and newly established Pacific island (Adelson et al., 1969). Results from this research indicated that younger adolescents viewed the concept of law in concrete terms, whereas older adolescents were able to view the concept in more abstract terms (Adelson et al., 1969). This research highlights the notion that younger adolescents have a limited capacity to understand the complexities of the law. It could therefore also be assumed that children younger than 11, also have similar difficulties in understanding legal concepts.

Similar to Adelson et al. (1969), Morse (1997) claimed, blame and culpability are socially constructed concepts. As such, Morse (1997) questioned whether it is reasonable to hold an immature mind accountable for their actions using complex laws and unwritten social expectations. However, it has been purported that crime and antisocial acts are behaviours most often seen in adults (Repucci, 1999). Therefore, children that engage in such behaviours have an adult-like capacity to reason and understand the wrongfulness of their actions. Reppucci (1999) investigated this notion

that children who commit criminal acts must, in turn, have an adult mind. He found, that criminality is not an accurate indicator of a mature mind and that the individual's maturity and their capacity to reason, are more salient factors to be considered when deciding whether to hold a child responsible.

Reppucci (1999) concluded that legal concessions should be made for adolescents and children based on findings suggesting that adolescents and adults have different cognitive and volitional capacities, and that such differences do not dissipate because an adolescent commits a crime. Palermo and Ross (1999) have taken a similar position in their discussion and evaluation of mass murders. They claimed that although many similarities between adult and adolescent mass murders existed, in terms of psychological and environmental traits, developmental differences should not be overlooked (Palermo & Ross, 1999). Cauffman and Steinberg (2000) have also refuted claims adolescents and adults are equally competent in terms of decision-making and cognitive abilities and should therefore be afforded the same treatment in a legal setting. Fried and Reppucci (2001) further found juvenile's abilities to judge criminal behaviour was directly related to their age following an investigation of juvenile's responses on a criminal decision-making index.

Contrary to the previous findings though, Helwig and Jasiobedzka (2001) found that children were able to apply concepts of harm, individual rights and justice in order to inform their beliefs of legal compliance. Although these findings purported that children have the ability to understand and pass judgement on legal issues, whether children utilise this capacity in an introspective manner in order to judge and understand their own behaviour is debatable. Clearly, the majority of the research in this area has claimed that children have a limited capacity to understand legal concepts and that being held accountable by the legal system is therefore unfair to the



child. However, whether the public believes age and an ability to comprehend legal issues is an important factor in judging children's wrongful behaviour remains unknown and may influence their perceptions of responsibility.

*Children and the Developmental Perspective: Morals and Social Justice Reasoning*

Children's psychological development is saliently relevant in a discussion of children's ability to understand legal concepts (Cauffman & Steinberg, 2000; Fried & Reppucci, 2001). Importantly, psychological development may also be a factor pertinent to the public and their attributions of whether children should be held criminally responsible. Three specific concepts relevant to both children's psychological development and their ability to conceptualise wrongful behaviour include moral reasoning, decision-making and cognitive development.

Moral reasoning can be defined as the ability to make choices on an ethical basis when presented with a moral dilemma and can be measured through the situational cues people attend in order to employ a technique to solve ethical dilemmas (Krcmar & Cooke, 2001). In this sense moral decision-making can refer to simple decisions of right and wrong and appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. It is generally posited that children develop moral reasoning, and thus an ability to distinguish right from wrong, through interactions with socialising agents, such as parents and peers, as well as through experience (Krcmar & Cooke, 2001). It has been observed that younger children do not have internal cues that guide their moral decisions, rather, they rely on authority figures to differentiate between right and wrong. This again, may present as a factor the public considers when attributing notions of culpability to children (Krcmar & Cooke, 2001).

Theoretical frameworks by Piaget (1929, cited in Weiten, 1989) and Kohlberg (1964, cited in Weiten, 1989) have been used to explain the developmental stages in

which children attain increased moral and cognitive abilities. With development, children also gain a better understanding of wrongful behaviours and the consequence that are related to certain behaviours (Darley & Shultz, 1990). Thus, they are better able to comprehend abstract concepts such as those that govern the legal system. Specifically, Piaget's work outlined age-defined stages that relate to the development of certain cognitive skills. It is posited under this theory that children between the ages of two and 11 have a limited ability to reason abstractly about complex concepts and clearly have very different capacities to adults. Research by Elkind (1967) has supported this model, as a valid instrument by which development can be gauged. Costanzo, Coie, Grumet and Farnill (1973) also investigated children's cognitive development and found older children are more likely to consider intent as an important factor when passing judgement (Costanzo et al., 1973). Research by Grueneich (1982) has supported this finding and has also added that consequence was also important in terms of children's judgements.

Helwig, Hildebrandt and Turiel (1995) have noted however, the importance of delineating between younger and older children in terms of their reasoning abilities. Specifically, the authors asked 72 children aged 6 to 11 years to comment on a series of stories involving psychological harm (Helwig et al., 1995). Results indicated that younger children were more likely to base punishments and judgements on the contextual factors of the scenario, such as the rules of the game. However, older children were shown to utilise the intentions, consequences and the victim's perspective when passing judgement on the scenario (Helwig et al., 1995). Zelazo, Helwig and Lau (1996) and Helwig, Zelazo and Wilson (2001) also found that children have an early understanding of harm, however, such an understanding changes in terms of complexity with age. This research highlights children's

understanding of right and wrong as well as their ability to apply concepts of justice and punishment. Children might also apply this understanding to themselves and the public may have an expectation that they do.

Kohlberg's theory of moral development parallels cognitive development and again occurs in a series of stages (Weiten, 1989). Kohlberg however, claimed that whilst people advance through these stages based on their age, people do not progress through the stages at the same rate and may not attain the highest level of moral reasoning (Weiten, 1989). The stage applicable to most children is that of the preconventional level of moral development. Individuals at this level of moral development are focussed on avoiding punishment and attaining rewards (Weiten, 1989). In this sense, they act based on external influences as they have not internalised concepts of right and wrong to the point where they can regulate their own appropriate behaviour.

The internalisation of rules and norms occurs during the second stage of moral development, which generally takes place in late childhood. According to the conventional morality stage, older children's behaviour is defined by their internalisation of rules and the goal to maintain social order in order to gain approval from those around them (Weiten, 1989). Postconventional morality is generally attained during young adulthood and symbolises reasoning governed by what is good for all of society (Weiten, 1989). Again, these moral development stages highlight age related factors that influence behaviour, and provide support for prescribing legal considerations to children according to their age (Bartholomew, 1998; Blazey-Ayoub, 1996; Bronitt & McSherry, 2001; Grove, 1996; O'Regan, 1982; Urbas, 2000).

Again, considerable research (Boom, Brugman & van der Heijden, 2001; Walker, de Vries & Bichard, 1984; Walker & Taylor, 1991) has supported this model and its

ability to describe moral development. Smetana (1981) specifically investigated children's conceptions of moral and social rules. Findings from this research suggested that children's ability to understand and differentiate between morals and societal convention is dependent on age (Smetana, 1981). It was concluded that this result exemplifies the difference in moral understanding of younger and older children. Similar trends in terms of children's moral reasoning and decision-making abilities have been found in other cultural settings (Song, Smetana & Kim, 1987; Taylor, Ogawa & Wilson, 2002). From the research presented here, Piaget's and Kohlberg's models of development have been shown to be valid instruments by which development can be gauged. This would suggest that young children do have a capacity to make judgements of fairness and justice, however such an ability is limited and improves with age.

From the research presented and the support afforded to the stage theories, it can be stated children have different moral and reasoning capacities to adults (Elkind, 1967; Walker et al., 2001). Research has found children's abilities to reason abstractly and judge behaviour in terms of right, wrong and social sanctions does not develop until later childhood. However, some research contradicts this and has indicated young children, some as young as four-and-a-half years old, have the ability to judge and apply punishments to wrongful acts (Helwig et al., 2001; Zelazo et al., 1996). This is also consistent with the finding that children are also able to judge behaviours based on social conventions and moral rules (Smetana, 1981). However, the studies have looked at children's perceptions of other's behaviours, thus, whether children can apply such judgements introspectively and to their own behaviours requires further investigation. From this literature, it appears the law has a sound foundation upon which it can provide legal concessions for children who commit crime.

However, whether the societal view concurs with that of the legal system and the psychological literature is the subject of the study reported in this thesis.

*The Present Exploratory Study: Attributions of Criminal Responsibility of Children*

As discussed, with the exception of the research by Ghetti and Redlich (2001) very little research is in relation to factors that influence societal attributions of the criminal responsibility of children. Of the research that has been conducted in terms of children's moral development and society's perceptions of crime and juvenile justice issues, there is little conclusive evidence upon which to base decisions about whether children should be held criminally responsible for their transgressions.

Clearly the need for research in this area is vital. The criminal justice system should reflect the mores and values of the society in which it operates through the methods it uses to deal with offenders (Bronitt & McSherry, 2001). As such, this exploratory study examined the attributions of members of the Western Australian community, with regard to children who transgress from society's expectations of appropriate behaviour. The study further explored whether the guidelines set out in the Western Australian Criminal Code concur with the current values and expectations of the Western Australian community.

The literature discussed to this point ultimately provides a framework for the current study. The moral development and social psychology literature has generally utilised vignettes and questionnaire measures. To this extent, such methodology is a valid attitudinal measure (Ghetti & Redlich, 2001). The present study utilised a quantitative design to establish how the age of the offender and the level of harm caused (consequence) to the victim, influenced the public's evaluations of responsibility, intent and seriousness. A qualitative design was also employed in order to investigate how participants believed the child should be dealt with and whether the

Justice System should be involved. In this sense, the researcher will not just assume that participants would prescribe a justice system based punishment for the behaviour depicted.

The research questions investigated by this study included;

- 1) Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of intent?
- 2) Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of the severity of the wrongdoer's behaviour?
- 3) Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of the harmfulness of the wrongdoer's behaviour?
- 4) Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of the severity of the consequence (harm caused) to the victim?
- 5) Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of responsibility?
- 6) Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of the severity of the participants suggested consequence for dealing with the wrongdoer?
- 7) Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of whether the justice system should be involved in dealing with the wrongdoer?
- 8) Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of how severely the wrongdoer should be dealt with by the justice system?

Ultimately, by exploring each of these variables, a greater insight regarding societal notions of whether children should be held criminally responsible and the factors that influence such attributions will be gained.

## Method

### *Design*

A 3 x 3 between-subjects design was employed. The two independent variables include the age of the wrongdoer and the consequence to the victim. These variables have been manipulated in a vignette, in which an altercation occurs between two boys, both aged either 7, 10 or 14 years. The defined ages are based on the prescribed minimum age of criminal responsibility under section 29 of the Western Australian Criminal Code (1988) as previously discussed. Consequence to the victim was also manipulated in the scenario with one boy being pushed in front of a car. One of three possible outcomes resulted; 1) the car either missing the child, 2) the car hitting the child causing a fractured arm, or 3) the car hitting the child resulting in paralysis. This therefore means that there were nine experimental conditions.

Eight dependent variables were measured in this study; 1) perceptions of intent, 2) perceptions of the severity of the wrongdoer's behaviour, 3) perceptions of the harmfulness of the wrongdoer's behaviour, 4) perceptions of the severity of the harm (consequence) caused to the victim, 5) perceptions of responsibility, 6) perceptions of the severity of the participant's suggested consequence, 7) perceptions of whether the justice system should deal with the wrongdoer, 8) finally perceptions of the severity of any justice system punishment. As mentioned, a qualitative design has also been applied in order to gather meaningful responses to supplement quantitative data. Specifically, this measure gained opinions of participants with regard to how they believed the wrongdoer should be dealt with in terms of the type of punishment they should receive, if any, and why.

### *Participants*

The participants utilised in this research consisted of a sample of students from Edith Cowan University (Western Australia), who were enrolled in either Psychology and listed on a research participation register, or Justice Studies. The sample consisted of 180 participants (20 per condition), 140 (77.8%) of which were female and 39 (21.7%) were male, with one participant withholding information regarding their gender. The sample also ranged in age from 18 to 65 years of age, however, a majority of the participants were aged between 18 and 21 years (53.3%). Additionally, 23 (12.8%) of the participants were aged 22 to 25 years, 29 (16.1%) of participants were aged 26 to 35 years, 26 (14.4%) of participants in the sample were aged 36 to 45 years. Only 5 (2.8%) of the participants were aged between 46 and 65 years, and one participant withheld information pertaining to their age. The participants in this research were offered an incentive for their voluntary participation. Specifically, those students obtained from the School of Psychology Participant Register were given a raffle ticket that entered them into a draw to win a fifty-dollar cash prize at the end of the semester.

### *Materials*

The materials used in this study consisted of a participation information sheet, a consent form, a scenario and a participant questionnaire. The participant information sheet, included as 'Appendix A', was designed to inform participants of the research and what it was investigating. The sheet also documented the contact details of the researcher, the researcher's supervisors as well as numbers of organisations that would be useful to participants in the unlikely event that they found any section of the research distressing. The information sheet also documented the participant's rights and responsibilities and informed them of their ability to withdraw their voluntary



consent from the research at any stage as well as the fact that their responses would remain confidential.

The consent form, included as 'Appendix B', reiterated the aforementioned rights of the participants in this research and requested that they sign the form as recognition that they were willing to volunteer in this study and understood their rights and responsibilities as voluntary participants.

The vignette used in the experimental conditions consisted of a short, half-page scenario describing an altercation between two school-aged boys. The end result of the altercation in every condition was that one boy (called the wrongdoer for purposes of identification without labelling in a detrimental way) pushed the other onto the road and in front of an oncoming car. There were nine versions of the vignette in accordance with systematic variation of wrongdoer age and consequence to the other child. Each of the nine vignettes used has been included as 'Appendix C'.

The questionnaire, included as 'Appendix D', required participants to give responses that best represented their opinions of each question. These responses were measured using a 7-point Likert scale. Increments from one to seven were listed on the scale, however only the first and last increments were labelled in order to identify both extremes (Breakwell, Hammond & Fife-Schaw, 2000). For example, question five asks, "How responsible is Jason (the wrongdoer) for the harm caused to Stephen (the victim)? The scale then ranges from 1 (not responsible at all) to 7 (totally responsible). Each of the increments in between were numbered, for ease of analysis, however they are not labelled in order to avoid making the scale too prescriptive (Feather, 1996). Finally, the questionnaire also included a section for participants to list suggestions of possible consequences the wrongdoer should face, and why such measures were appropriate. The methodology of using vignettes and questionnaire

response sheets, adopted by this study, has been utilised previously by numerous researchers (for example, Baron & Hartnagel, 1996; Doob & Roberts, 1984; Ghetti & Redlich, 2001; Stalans & Henry, 1994). The method has been identified as a simple and efficient means of gathering public opinions in relation to issues of moral decision-making (Ghetti & Redlich, 2001).

### *Procedure*

Participants were given all of the materials upon arrival and were instructed to read the information sheet and complete the consent form if they agreed to the requirements of participating. Before commencing, it was reiterated to participants that their participation was strictly voluntary and they were able to withdraw at any stage. They were further verbally informed that all responses would be kept strictly confidential and that they would not be able to be identified by their responses. Participants then read the vignette and completed the questionnaire. Upon completion of the questionnaire, the psychology student volunteers were given a raffle ticket that gave them the opportunity to win a fifty-dollar cash prize. Once finished, participants were debriefed and informed of the research questions being investigated, the variables being manipulated and the experimental condition they were assigned to. Participants were then thanked for their participation.

## Results

Due to the number of research questions involved in the study, the results for each question will be discussed separately as a means of simplifying the reporting of the analysis and making it more readable. All data and SPSS statistical analyses are presented as Appendix E.

### *Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of intent?*

Exploratory analysis of the participant's responses on the 7-point Likert scale was undertaken and the frequencies revealed that one participant failed to give a response to this item. This was coded as missing data (999) and was not replaced due to the sample size, the random nature of the missing case and the fact that the missing response accounted for 0.55% of the data (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). This method was consistent across all research questions that presented with missing responses. Calculations of z scores indicated that no univariate outliers were present. Tests of normality showed that responses deviated significantly from a normal distribution  $w(179) = 0.886, p < .05$ . Descriptive statistics further revealed the data was negatively skewed (-0.938) with a notable deviation from zero, whilst the kurtosis statistic also deviated from zero (0.797). Data transformation was not undertaken due to the sample size and the presence of equal groups. Tabachnick and Fidell (1996) have asserted that the impact of skewness and kurtosis diminishes in the presence of a large sample and equal groups. This rationale was applied to the other research questions where assumptions of normality were violated.

A 3 x 3 factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed on the participants' responses. Descriptive data revealed  $M = 5.38$  and  $SD = 1.337$ . No significant main effect was found for the independent variable, wrongdoer age  $F(2, 170) = 0.753, p = 0.472$ . Similarly, no significant main effect was found for

consequence to the victim  $F(2, 170) = 0.462, p = 0.631$  and there was no interaction of the two independent variables  $F(4, 170) = 0.329, p = 0.858$ . Wrongdoer age and the consequence to the victim therefore, did not significantly influence perceptions of intent.

*Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of the severity of the behaviour?*

Missing data in this variable accounted for 0.55% of the total data set and as such, the case was not replaced or removed for the reasons discussed previously. Two outliers were present ( $z < -3.29$ ) and represented 1.11% of the data. Tabachnick and Fidell (1996) have stated that a small percentage of univariate outliers should be expected in the presence of a large population. Furthermore, the authors have argued that when outliers are present due to a value from an intended population being more extreme than the normal distribution, the researcher should use their discretion in deciding whether to remedy the situation depending on the potential impact the outliers pose (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). On the basis of this argument, the outliers were not deleted from the sample. This rationale was applied to the analysis of the other research questions where outliers were present. In terms of distribution, measures of skewness (-1.624) and kurtosis (3.639) again significantly deviated from the mean  $w(179) = 0.756, p < .05$ .

The mean ( $M = 6.17$ ) and standard deviation ( $SD = 1.064$ ) were gained from an analysis of the data. A  $3 \times 3$  factorial ANOVA was performed and indicated that no significant main effect was found for wrongdoer age  $F(2, 170) = 0.846, p = 0.431$  and no significant main effect was found for consequence to the victim  $F(2, 170) = 2.487, p = 0.086$ . Similarly, the results yielded no significant interactions  $F(4, 170) = 0.075,$

$p = 0.990$ . Therefore, wrongdoer age and consequence to the victim had no significant effect on the perceptions of the participants.

*Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of the harmfulness of the behaviour?*

Missing data again accounted for 0.55% of the data set and as such was deemed to have a negligible impact on the results (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Standardised  $z$  scores revealed three low extreme scores as outliers, which represented 1.67% of the data set having little impact on the results (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Tests of normality indicated that the data significantly deviated from the mean  $w(179) = 0.733$ ,  $p < .05$ , whilst scores for skewness (-1.789) and kurtosis (3.610) deviated from zero and indicated that the data was negatively skewed. No data transformation was conducted (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996).

Analysis using a  $3 \times 3$  factorial ANOVA was conducted and results indicated that the age of the wrongdoer did not yield a significant main effect  $F(2, 170) = 2.329$ ,  $p = 0.101$ . However, a significant main effect for consequence to the victim was found  $F(2, 170) = 18.391$ ,  $p < .05$ . No interactions were present  $F(4, 170) = 1.279$ ,  $p = 0.280$ . The marginal means and standard deviations for each of the levels of consequence to the victim are tabulated below in Table 1.

Table 1

*Marginal Means for Type of Consequence Caused to the Victim*

Type of Consequence	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	N
Low Consequence	5.51	1.369	60
Moderate Consequence	6.33	0.774	60
Extreme Consequence	6.63	0.920	60

Post hoc analyses, were conducted using the Tukey's Highest Significant Difference (HSD) method due to its conservativeness in terms of type one error (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998). Analyses revealed that the perceived levels of the harmfulness of the behaviour were significantly higher ( $p < .001$ ) for participants in the extreme consequence condition compared to the low consequence condition, whilst a significant difference ( $p < .001$ ) was also found between the moderate consequence condition and the low consequence condition. No interactions were present.

*Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of the severity of the harm?*

Exploratory analysis revealed that no missing data was present. Using the standardised  $z$  scores, only one response in the set was detected as being an outlier ( $< -3.29$ ) and was not removed (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Tests of normality yielded a significant result ( $w(180) = 0.837$ ) indicating that the distribution of responses differed from normal. Statistics of skewness ( $-0.961$ ) and kurtosis ( $0.443$ ) deviated from zero indicating that the distribution of responses were negatively skewed and peaked. No data transformation was undertaken (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996).

As with the previous research questions, a  $3 \times 3$  factorial ANOVA was conducted on the responses to this question and the overall mean ( $M = 5.79$ ) and standard deviation ( $SD = 1.298$ ) were obtained. No significant main effect for wrongdoer age was found  $F(2, 171) = 0.987, p = 0.375$ . Although, a significant main effect for consequence to the victim was detected  $F(2, 171) = 58.364, p < .001$ . The analysis further revealed that no significant interaction effects were present  $F(4, 171) = 1.560, p = 0.187$ . Means and standard deviations for the consequence to the victim condition, are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

*Marginal Means for Type of Consequence Caused to the Victim*

Type of Consequence	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	N
Low Consequence	4.90	1.189	60
Moderate Consequence	5.62	1.027	60
Extreme Consequence	6.87	0.791	60

Further post hoc analyses using Tukey's HSD (Hair et al., 1998) indicated that means for each of the consequence conditions were significantly different. In essence, participants in the extreme consequence condition recorded significantly higher levels ( $p < .001$ ) of perceived harm compared to both the moderate and low consequence conditions. Participants in the moderate consequence condition also perceived significantly higher levels of harm compared to participants in the low consequence condition ( $p < .001$ ). Therefore, perceptions of how severe the harm caused to the victim was increased as the consequence to the victim become more severe.

*Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of the responsibility?*

In this response set, two cases of missing data were detected from the exploratory analysis. The missing case account for 1.11% of the data set and as such the impact of such cases on the results was deemed to be negligible, therefore, the cases was labelled as missing data and were not transformed or removed. Utilising the standardised *z* scores, two responses were found to have a score less than  $-3.29$  and were therefore identified as outliers. As with other outliers identified, these only represent 1.11% of the total data and as such were not removed. In terms of normality, statistics of skewness deviated from zero ( $-1.023$ ), whilst kurtosis values also deviated

from the normal zero (1.931). As such, the data was negatively skewed, a finding also consistent in the tests of normality  $w(178) = 0.845, p < .05$ .

A 3 x 3 factorial ANOVA was conducted on the data gathered from the question pertaining to whether the child should be accountable. Results indicated that there was no significant main effect for the variable, wrongdoer age  $F(2, 169) = 0.356, p = 0.701$ . There was also no significant main effect for the consequence to the victim variable  $F(2, 169) = 0.239, p = 0.788$ , nor were there any significant interactions  $F(4, 169) = 0.747, p = 0.562$ . The mean ( $M = 5.86$ ) and standard deviation ( $SD = 1.072$ ) were also obtained as part of the analysis conducted.

*Qualitative Analysis: How should the wrongdoer be dealt with and why?*

Qualitative analysis was conducted using a coding scheme that placed written responses into non-overlapping categories. This allowed major themes from the participant's responses to be obtained (Breakwell et al., 2000). Of the 180 response sheets, 179 were able to be coded by the experimenter. A second independent and experienced coder also analysed a percentage of the responses and an inter-rater reliability percentage of 85.71% was obtained (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1990). The qualitative data was gathered from two questionnaire items, namely, question 6a ("What should happen to Jason (the wrongdoer?)") and question 6b ("Why"). In order to understand the qualitative findings, the themes gained from the participant's responses in both of the aforementioned questions will be discussed by condition. A tabulated summary of the qualitative content analysis has been included as 'Appendix F'.

*Condition: Age Seven, No Physical Consequence*

In this first condition, the most common way participants suggested the wrongdoer should be dealt with, was through school-based punishments. In this condition, the



school-based punishment theme consisted of the wrongdoer having privileges withdrawn, such as not being allowed to play with sports equipment, and being suspended from school. Another way participants suggested the wrongdoer should be dealt with was through counselling methods. Examples detailed by participants included anger management and behaviour modification programs. A number of participants also believed the wrongdoer should be dealt with by his parents. Only two participants out of the twenty in this condition suggested that the wrongdoer should be punished by the justice system. One participant stated, “(the wrongdoer should be) dealt with harshly... (school-based punishments) would not be adequate”. Importantly in this condition, as with the others, many of the suggestions of how the wrongdoer should be dealt with were not exclusive of one another. In fact, many participants combined punishments. Most participants justified their reasons for punishment by stating that the suggested punishment was a way of educating the wrongdoer, and teaching the wrongdoer that his behaviour was wrong.

*Condition: Age Seven, Moderate Physical Consequence*

Majority of the respondents (16 out of 20) in this condition suggested that the wrongdoer should undergo some form of counselling. Types of counselling specified by participants included, anger management, interpersonal skills and one-on-one therapy. One participant stated “(the wrongdoer) should be ordered to participate in a counselling program that deals with anger management. He should also speak with a psychologist on a weekly basis in order to come to terms with his problem and learn how to deal with it.” A minority of participants suggested school-based punishments, whilst others provided somewhat unorthodox suggestions including the wrongdoer being spoken to by an authority figure such as a police officer, and the wrongdoer’s parent being held responsible and paying for the victim’s medical expenses. The

primary reason provided for punishing the wrongdoer was to educate him and highlight the wrongfulness of his transgression. Another reason cited was to deter the wrongdoer from behaving in a similar manner in the future.

*Condition: Age Seven, Extreme Physical Consequence*

Respondents in this condition again stated that counselling was the most appropriate way to deal with the wrongdoer. One participant suggested active counselling, stating “Show (the wrongdoer) the harm he has caused, confine him to a wheelchair 24/7 to show him the effect he has had on (the victim’s) life”. The second most common theme pertaining to how the wrongdoer should be dealt with was justice system intervention. Examples provided by participants included placing the wrongdoer on a good behaviour bond and sending him to a juvenile detention centre. One respondent stated “Jason (the wrongdoer) should be trialed against a jury and be convicted for attempted murder and causing grievous bodily harm. Spending most of his childhood in jail.” Other participants suggested that whilst the justice system should be involved, the wrongdoer should not be institutionalised. Interestingly, one participant suggested that the wrongdoer should not be punished due to the trauma caused by witnessing the incident. Education, deterrence and retribution were the most commonly cited reasons for punishment found in the thematic analysis.

*Condition: Age Ten, No Physical Consequence*

The most commonly cited method of dealing with the wrongdoer, suggested by participants in this condition, was school-based punishment. Examples provided included, a warning from teachers, being banned from using sports equipment, detention, expulsion and most commonly suspension. The second most commonly cited action was the wrongdoer being disciplined by his parents. Only a minority of participants in this condition suggested counselling, whilst one person suggested that

the wrongdoer and the victim should enter into a mediation session to resolve the dispute. Again, education featured as the most prominent reason for taking action against the wrongdoer, however, unlike previous conditions, many participants qualified their suggestions with wanting to understand the wrongdoer, being the purpose of punishment.

*Condition: Age Ten, Moderate Physical Consequence*

School-based punishments, namely suspension, and anger management counselling were the most common themes that emerged in terms of how the wrongdoer should be dealt with. In this condition, the wrongdoer making an apology to the victim was also a frequent suggestion. One participant included a justice system based punishment, “Jason (the wrongdoer) should have to apologise (to the victim) and then attend an anger management course. He (the wrongdoer) should also maybe do some community work.” As with previous conditions, respondents qualified their suggested actions against the wrongdoer, by citing wrongdoer education and deterrence as the reason.

*Condition: Age Ten, Extreme Physical Consequence*

Participants in this condition cited counselling and justice system interventions as the most appropriate forms of action to deal with the wrongdoer. Interestingly these two forms of action were commonly suggested to be used in conjunction with one another. Most participants suggested that the wrongdoer should be formally charged and punished by the justice system and others suggested that the wrongdoer should be sent to a juvenile detention centre. Many participants suggested that the wrongdoer should be made to work as a volunteer with either the victim or the disabled. Interestingly, one participant assigned some blame to the victim and stated “Stephen (the victim) contributed to the fight”. No one reason given by participants for taking

the action they suggested was common across all respondents. Rather, a mixture of themes including education, deterrence and a desire to understand the wrongdoer were cited.

*Condition: Age Fourteen, No Physical Consequence*

In this condition, participants cited counselling and school-based punishments as the most appropriate way of dealing with the wrongdoer. Some participants suggested an “active” form of counselling such as visiting a hospital emergency room. In terms of school-based punishments, suspension and expulsion featured prominently. The main reason for taking such action, according to respondents was for educational and rehabilitative purposes. One participants stated that the purpose of the school based punishment they suggested was to “teach (the wrongdoer) responsibility. Another participants suggested that counselling should be used “to help the wrongdoer empathise”.

*Condition: Age Fourteen, Moderate Physical Consequence*

The wrongdoer undergoing counselling was the most commonly cited action respondents’ thought should be taken. This counselling included anger management therapy and educational counselling such as assisting the victim with recovery and visiting hospitals. Other methods of dealing with the wrongdoer suggested included school-based punishments such as suspension, wrongdoer, victim mediation and justice system intervention, namely community service. Educating and making the wrongdoer understand that his behaviour was inappropriate was the most frequently cited reason for suggesting counselling and or punishment. One participant stated that “(the wrongdoer) would benefit psychologically” from entering into counselling.

*Condition: Age Fourteen, Extreme Physical Consequence*

In this condition, counselling and justice system intervention were the most frequently suggested ways of dealing with the wrongdoer. In terms of justice system intervention, most participants suggested that the wrongdoer should be sent to a juvenile detention centre. Interestingly, other participants, in conjunction with counselling or justice system punishments, suggested that the wrongdoer should make some reparation to the victim. One participant stated, “(the wrongdoer) should contribute a percentage of his life earnings to the victim”. Also in this condition, many participants saw the wrongdoer as needing psychological and/or corrective treatment. The reasons cited by participants to justify their suggested punishments were education and rehabilitation, deterrence and retribution.

*Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of the severity of the participants suggested consequence for dealing with the wrongdoer?*

As part of the qualitative section in the questionnaire used, question 6c required participants to provide a quantitative response in order to measure how severe they believed the suggested actions for dealing with the wrongdoer in questions 6a and 6b they provided were. The question specifically stated “How severe do you view the consequence you have suggested (in question 6a) to be?”. Descriptive data showed that eight participants did not respond to this question. This accounted for 4.44% of the data set and was therefore not transformed or removed (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). No outliers were present in the data set, whilst test of normality showed that responses significantly deviated from normal  $w(172) = 0.945, p < .05$ . Statistics representing measure of skewness (-0.275) and kurtosis (-0.275) deviated from zero minimally and due to a large sample size, no data transformation was conducted.

A 3 x 3 factorial ANOVA was conducted on the data. Results indicated that there was no main effect for the variable wrongdoer age  $F(2, 163) = 0.138, p = 0.871$ . Furthermore tests of the second variable, consequence to the victim, also yielded a non-significant result  $F(2, 163) = 2.149, p = 0.120$ . The results also showed that there were no significant interactions present  $F(4, 163) = 0.648, p = 0.629$ . As part of the analysis the overall mean ( $M = 4.27$ ) and standard deviation ( $SD = 1.490$ ) of the responses were obtained.

*Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of the whether the Justice System should be involved in dealing with the wrongdoer?*

The questionnaire item that related to this research question required participants to select 'yes' or 'no' in answer to the question "Should Jason be dealt with by the Justice System?". The categorical data collected was analysed using a non-parametric, chi-square test. Specifically, 58 participants responded 'yes' on the item of the questionnaire, 121 participants responded 'no', whilst one responded did not select either of the options. The independent variable of wrongdoer age was analysed using a one-way chi square test, data accuracy was checked and all expected frequencies were greater than five. The relationship between wrongdoer age and participants beliefs of whether the justice system should be involved was not found to be significant  $\chi^2(2, N = 179) = 5.458, p = 0.065$ . The between groups similarities are highlighted in Table 3.

Table 3

*Wrongdoer Age and Justice System Involvement Recommendations*

Wrongdoer Age	Justice System Involvement		Yobs		Total
	Observed	Expected	Observed	Expected	
7 years	18 (30.0%)	19.4	42 (70.0%)	40.6	60
10 years	14 (23.7%)	19.1	45 (76.3%)	39.9	59
14 years	26 (43.3%)	19.4	34 (56.7%)	40.6	60
Total	58 (32.4%)	58.0	121 (67.6%)	121.0	179

Similarly, a one-way chi square analysis was performed on the independent variable of consequence to the victim. None of the expected frequencies were less than five and only one missing case was present. A significant relationship between consequence to the victim and justice system involvement was found  $\chi^2 (2, 179) = 31.566, p < .05$ . Table 4 highlights the differences between each of the levels of the consequence to the victim condition.

Table 4

*Consequence to the Victim and Justice System Involvement Recommendations*

Type of Consequence	Justice System		Involvement		Total
	Observed	Expected	Observed	Expected	
Low	12 (20.3%)	19.1	47 (79.7%)	39.9	59
Moderate	10 (16.7%)	19.4	50 (83.3%)	40.6	60
Extreme	36 (60.0%)	19.4	24 (40.0%)	40.6	60
Total	58 (32.4%)	58.0	121 (67.6%)	121.0	179

Therefore, consequence to the victim significantly influenced participant's attitudes regarding whether the wrongdoer should be dealt with by the justice system, whilst wrongdoer age did not have this influential effect as shown by the non-significant result.

*Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of how severely the wrongdoer should be dealt with by the Justice System?*

The 58 participants that selected 'yes' to the previous question pertaining to whether they believed the child should be dealt with by the criminal justice system, were required to respond to this question on a 7-point Likert scale. The data set was too small to conduct any statistical analyses and as such, the means and standard deviation were scanned for between-groups differences. Table 5 summarises the data collected.



Table 5

*Descriptive Data of the Severity of any Justice System Punishment*

Experimental Condition				
Wrongdoer Age	Level of Consequence	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	N
7 years	Low	3.00	1.41	4
7 years	Moderate	2.50	0.71	2
7 years	Extreme	4.25	1.66	12
10 years	Low	4.00	-	1
10 years	Moderate	3.00	1.00	3
10 years	Extreme	4.60	1.51	10
14 years	Low	2.86	1.77	7
14 years	Moderate	4.20	1.09	5
14 years	Extreme	4.92	1.38	13

From the above depiction of the descriptive results, the means between groups do not vary greatly. The largest difference between the means can be viewed between the low consequence conditions and each of the extreme consequence conditions for the seven and 14 year-old conditions.

## Discussion

The aim of the present study was to investigate whether the public believe children should be held criminally responsible for their transgressions. As part of this investigation, factors that have been shown to influence such beliefs were measured. Overall, eight research questions were examined, six of which measured participant's responses through quantitative measures, namely a 7-point Likert scale. A qualitative design was also employed by way of two questionnaire items in order to supplement the quantitative measures and further understand the publics' attributions.

The two independent variables manipulated included the age of the wrongdoer and the consequence (harm caused) to the victim. Findings showed that the variable, consequence to the victim, significantly influenced perceptions of the harmfulness of the wrongdoer's behaviour, perceptions of the severity of the harm caused and perceptions of whether participants believed the wrongdoer should be dealt with by the justice system. Neither independent variable influenced perceptions of the other dependent measures including perceptions of, the severity of the wrongdoer's behaviour, intent, responsibility, severity of the consequence suggested by the participants, or the severity of any justice system punishment. These findings were supported by qualitative responses, which indicated that the punishments suggested by the public increased in severity as the consequence to the victim became more severe. Interestingly, punishments assigned to the wrongdoer appeared to be based on the context provided in the vignette, as many participants suggested that punishing the wrongdoer should be the responsibility of the wrongdoer's school. The findings, in terms of each research question will be discussed further and presented separately, with the statistically significant findings being presented first. Implications of these

findings in relation to previous research and the Western Australian criminal justice system will be presented.

*Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of the harmfulness of the behaviour?*

In terms of the public's perceptions of the harmfulness of the wrongdoer's behaviour, findings indicated that the consequence to the victim significantly influenced their perceptions. As the physical consequence to the victim became more severe, the public perceived the wrongdoer's behaviour to be increasingly harmful. Specifically, the wrongdoer's behaviour was perceived to be more harmful by participants in the extreme physical consequence and moderate physical consequence conditions when compared to the no physical consequence condition. No such difference was found between the moderate and extreme physical consequence conditions. Conversely, the age of the wrongdoer did not influence the perceptions of the public.

The results indicated that the public made a distinction between physical and non-physical harm. That is, the wrongdoer's behaviour was perceived as being harmful when a physical consequence to the victim occurred. O'Connell and Whelan (1996) have purported that perceptions of crime seriousness are often looked at in terms of wrongness and impact. The result presented here may therefore be evidence of the public defining impact, as that which is physically harmful in nature. This would imply that perceptions of the wrongdoer's behaviour, more generally, were based on physical consequences to the victim. According to Myers (1980) and O'Connell and Whelan (1996), the present findings may hold implications for whether participants held the wrongdoer criminally responsible. The authors have claimed that the perceptions of an act influence judgements and punitiveness.

*Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of the severity of the harm?*

In terms of this research question, the consequence to the victim variable was again shown to significantly influence perceptions of the severity of the harm caused to the victim, by the wrongdoer. A significant difference between each of the consequence conditions was found, meaning that the harm caused to the victim in the extreme physical consequence condition was perceived by participants to be more harmful than the other two conditions. Additionally, participants perceived the harm caused to the victim in the moderate physical consequence condition to be greater than in the no physical consequence condition.

Whilst such a result may seem intuitive, as it acts as a manipulation check of the independent variables, researchers (for example, Feather, 1996; Myers, 1980; O'Connell & Whelan, 1996; Warr, 1989) have noted the importance of the public's perceptions of serious acts and consequences in shaping their attributions. This previous research has shown that the public attributes greater culpability and harsher penalties to wrongdoers on the basis of the severity and type of harm perpetrated against the victim. Thus, the findings presented here would be predictive of the public holding the wrongdoer responsible and being punitive towards them. The previous research question highlighted the public's ability to delineate between physical and non-physical harm. In this instance, the findings showed the public to perceive a difference between physical and non-physical harm as well as different types of physical harm, that is, short-term and long-term.

*Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of the whether the Justice System should be involved in dealing with the wrongdoer?*

Results highlighted that only a minority of participants believed that the wrongdoer should be dealt with by the justice system. Of those that held this belief, the consequence caused to the victim, by the wrongdoer, significantly influenced perceptions of whether the wrongdoer should be dealt with by the justice system. Specifically, participants in the extreme physical consequence condition were more likely to perceive justice system intervention as more necessary, than participants in the other consequence conditions.

Ghetti and Redlich (2001) found that although age influenced perceptions of culpability, it did not influence the punitiveness of the public. Rather, the consequence of the act was a greater motivating factor in terms of sentencing allocations (Ghetti & Redlich, 2001). The results of the present research are consistent with this finding. Interestingly, the fact that age of the wrongdoer did not factor into the perceptions of the public, suggests that public reasoning is inconsistent with the reasoning of the Western Australian justice system, which would not deal with offenders under the age of 10 years (Bartholomew, 1998; Blazey-Ayoub, 1996; Bronitt & McSherry, 2001; Grove, 1996; O'Regan, 1982; Urbas, 2000). Thus, it would appear the public is either unaware, or does not support the current minimum age for criminal responsibility. Moreover, the finding also shows that the public's beliefs are inconsistent with that of previous researchers who found that children are unable to understand the complexities of the legal system due to their age and cognitive abilities (Adelson et al., 1969; Cauffman & Steinberg, 2000; Morse, 1997; Repucci, 1999).

The results of this research question, may at face value, suggest the public are not punitive in their dealings with young wrongdoers. However, the qualitative responses

pertaining to the public's suggestions for dealing with the wrongdoer are able to supplement the current findings. Many participants in the written section of the questionnaire stated that the wrongdoer should receive some form of school-based punishment. The most commonly suggested forms of school-based punishments were suspension and expulsion. Importantly, such suggestions were not made exclusively in one experimental condition, rather, they were common across all conditions, shedding a more punitive light on the public. The suggestions made by the public in terms of school-based punishment, are clearly an experimental artefact due to the vignette describing an altercation between two children on school property. This scenario may have ultimately led to participants viewing the punishment of the wrongdoer to be the responsibility of the school, rather than the responsibility of the justice system.

However, it is also important to note that a number of participants still made suggestions of punishment that related directly to the justice system. Suggestions provided by participants included community service, probation, good behaviour bonds and juvenile detention. Such responses were generally observed in the extreme physical consequence conditions, however, they were not made exclusively in one particular age group. Importantly, many participants believed education should be a goal of dealing with the wrongdoer and as such, suggested that the wrongdoer undergo anger management counselling, often in conjunction with punitive action. Clearly whilst many participants saw the wrongdoer as punishable despite his age, they also tailored punitive action to the context of the wrongdoer, rather than relying on justice system punishment.

*Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of the severity of the behaviour?*

Unlike the previous research questions, neither of the independent variables were found to significantly influence perceptions of the severity of the wrongdoer's behaviour. This intimates that participants across all conditions perceived the wrongdoer's behaviour to be equally severe. However, an examination of the grand mean (6.174) demonstrated that the wrongdoer's behaviour was considered very severe across all experimental conditions. Therefore, in this instance the scenario presented clearly influenced perceptions of the severity of the wrongdoer's behaviour.

It has been suggested that this perception of severity may be caused by an individual's cognitive schemas (Weiten, 1989) whereby the experience of harm, whether it is real or potential may encourage individuals to perceive the behaviour as serious in nature (Weiten, 1989). Furthermore, according to attributional models, the expectation of the public may be that a serious threat or consequence to an individual's physical well-being must be caused by serious behaviour (Weiten, 1989). There is also empirical support for this proposition with Carroll and Payne (1977), Myers (1980) O'Connell and Whelan (1996) showing the importance of perceived seriousness in influencing attitudes of culpability and punitiveness. Therefore, the findings of this research, whilst not significant in terms of the independent variables, may hold numerous implications for perceptions of responsibility, and may have influenced the public's punitiveness in the school-based context.

*Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of intent?*

Consistent with the previous research question, neither independent variable significantly influenced the public's perceptions of intent. This implies that participants across all conditions perceived a similar level of intent in the wrongdoer's

actions. Moreover, a grand mean of 5.380, on a 7-point scale indicates that a relatively high level of intent was inferred.

Previous research has concentrated little on the role of intent, other than to consider it an important factor in decisions of culpability and punitiveness. However, one plausible explanation for this finding is based on people's attributional schemas (Weiten, 1996). Chiricos et al. (2000) and Heath et al. (2001) have noted the media's influence in shaping perceptions of the public. Through this experience therefore, the public may have encoded into their schemas, that events containing violent behaviour also contain intent on the part of the wrongdoer. Therefore, in this situation, participants saw the wrongdoer's behaviour as intentional due to a natural expectation that intent precipitates violence.

It is important to consider that this result may also be related to the finding of the previous research question. Specifically, a perceived high level of intent across all participants may have influenced perceptions of the severity of the wrongdoer's behaviour, a conclusion drawn from previous researchers linking both variables with the overall concept of crime seriousness (Myers, 1980; O'Connell & Whelan, 1996; Warr, 1989). In terms of the Western Australian criminal justice system, the *doli incapax* principle used under section 29 of the criminal code operates on the assumption that children under the age of ten are unable to form criminal intent (Bartholomew, 1998; Blazey-Ayoub, 1996; Bronitt & McSherry, 2001; Grove, 1996; O'Regan, 1982; Urbas, 2000). The finding presented here suggests that the public believe differently, in that a seven year old and a 14-year-old are equally capable of forming the intent to commit wrongful acts.



*Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of the responsibility?*

In terms of perceptions of whether the wrongdoer should be held responsible, neither independent variable was significantly influential. A grand mean of 5.858 would suggest that the participants across all conditions believed the wrongdoer was responsible for the harm caused to the victim. Such perceptions were most likely influenced by the context presented in the vignette, whereby the scenario presented clearly portrayed a wrongdoer and a victim, allowing participants to assign blame to one of the individuals. This finding is consistent with that of Stalans and Henry (1994) who found that the public was sensitive to the context in which wrongful action occurred, allowing it to be influential in public perceptions. Also of noteworthiness is the point raised by research that suggests perceptions of the severity of the act influence perceptions of culpability (Feather, 1996; Kwan et al., 2002). This research has documented perceived high levels of severity and intent, which can be hypothesised as influencing the present perceived high level of responsibility across all conditions.

Previous research by Crosby et al. (1995) found that age significantly influenced perceptions of culpability. The findings of Crosby et al. (1995) suggested that the higher the age of the wrongdoer, the more likely they were to be held responsible. Similarly, Ghetty and Redlich (2001) found that younger wrongdoers were typically seen as being less culpable than older transgressors. Both of these studies clearly show the public to be sensitive to the age of the wrongdoer when assigning responsibility. The present study, however, found no such effect. Ultimately the current findings suggest that the public considered the context presented to be more

indicative of assigning responsibility to the wrongdoer, than the wrongdoer's age or the harm they caused to the victim.

Research has highlighted children's limited ability to morally and cognitively understand their behaviour (Helwig et al., 1995; Krcmar & Cooke, 2001; Zelazo et al., 1996). It has been further stated that children under the age of approximately 11 have not internalised cues that guide their reasoning. Young children have also been shown to have a limited capacity to pass judgement on others behaviour, let alone their own (Helwig et al., 1995; Krcmar & Cooke, 2001; Zelazo et al., 1996). The result presented by the current research however, would suggest that the public are either unaware of children's limited cognitive abilities, or they do not consider such abilities to be important when deciding whether a child should be held responsible for their actions.

Overall, the findings of the current study present an interesting implication for the Western Australian criminal justice system. The current system of justice in Western Australia operates under the *doli incapax* principle. Consistent with the psychological development literature, the essence of this principle is that children under the prescribed age of 10 are unable to be held responsible for their actions (Bartholomew, 1998; Blazey-Ayoub, 1996; Bronitt & McSherry, 2001; Grove, 1996; O'Regan, 1982; Urbas, 2000). Therefore, the present finding would suggest that the public do not agree with this standard. Rather, it would appear the public believe children do have the capacity to be held responsible for their actions, regardless of the child's age.

*Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of the severity of the participants suggested consequence for dealing with the wrongdoer?*

Measurements of participants in this research question were based on their perceptions of their own suggested methods by which the wrongdoer could be dealt

with. Neither the age of the wrongdoer nor the consequence to the victim influenced these perceptions. The overall mean of respondent's perceptions indicated that they believed their methods of punishment to be fair in terms of not being too severe or too lenient. Although little research has been conducted on the public's perceptions of their own attributions, it can be hypothesised that the participants did not wish to appear too punitive or too lenient towards the wrongdoer.

*Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of how severely the wrongdoer should be dealt with by the Justice System?*

This question was only applicable to those participants who considered the wrongdoer should be dealt with by the justice system. Due to only a minority of participants believing the justice system should be involved, no statistical analysis could be performed on this question. Rather, an observation of the means and standard deviations appears to show that participants thought the wrongdoer should be punished by the justice system more severely as the consequence to the victim increased. Although not empirically analysed, this finding supports previous studies that have shown the severity and consequence of the act to influence the public's punitiveness (Carroll & Payne, 1977; Feather, 1996; Ghetti & Redlich, 2001; Myers, 1980). However, this result must be interpreted with caution due to the experimental groups being uneven.

*Limitations, Caveats and Directions for Future Research*

It is important when considering the aforementioned interpretations that potential limitations of this study exist. Firstly, the methodology of utilising vignettes in order to gain responses is potentially flawed as noted by researchers such as Ghetti and Redlich (2001). Arguably, the use of vignettes does not evoke the same emotional reactions of the public as real life, or visual scenarios. Moreover, due to the scenario

being written as opposed to visual, the public may have misinterpreted or misunderstood what was being portrayed. Arguably, a visual component being utilised in place of a written scenario may have created more realistic and accurate responses from the participants.

A second limitation in terms of design is the age difference between the wrongdoers across each condition. The present study utilised the depiction of an altercation between two children aged either seven, 10 or 14 years. As has been noted, no significant main effects for age were found across any of the variable measures. One reason for this may simply be that the age of the wrongdoer used in the different conditions was too similar. Although the ages were chosen based on the current distinction set by the Western Australian criminal code, the public may have considered that there was little difference between the age groups due to them being numerically similar. Therefore, a suggestion for future research is to increase the difference between each of the age groups (for example, five, 10 and 15).

Similarly, the altercation in the vignettes described two males at school with the wrongdoer and victim being the same age. Although this method was a starting point for this exploratory research, the interpretations of the findings are somewhat limited in terms of gender and context. Future research, in expanding this study, could replace the current wrongdoer and victim with females, a mixture of females and males, or even depict the wrongdoer and victim as being different in terms of age. Removing the altercation from the school context would also remove the participant's reliance on school-based punishments. Such changes to the current vignette would arguably be useful in further understanding the dynamics of public perceptions towards the criminal responsibility of children.

A final consideration of the present study to be noted is the sample utilised. Although not a limitation per se, it does have the potential to influence the results and interpretations of the present research. It should be noted that psychology and criminal justice students were used in the research and as such they may be more sensitive to issues of psychological development and legal issues, compared to members of the general public. This sampling consideration, may have resulted in less punitive attitudes being displayed. Finally, as mentioned, 77% of the sample was female. Research by Sprott (1999) showed that females are less punitive towards juvenile offenders than males. Therefore, in a sample containing mostly females, the results obtained here, would be expected to be less punitive than if a sample consisting of equal numbers of males and females was obtained. Clearly, the role of future research would not only be to avoid the limitations encountered by this study, but also to expand the present design in order to further understand the public's attributions towards holding children criminally responsible.

### *Conclusions*

The aim of the present study was to understand the public's attributions towards children and specifically, whether they believe children should be held criminally responsible for their transgressions. This study found that members of the public believe children are capable of forming intent and therefore should be held responsible for their actions. Interestingly however, the public did not necessarily believe the wrongdoer should be held responsible in a formal legal setting. Although a minority of participants believed the wrongdoer should be dealt with by the justice system, most participants believed the wrongdoer should receive a school-based punishment.

Contrary to previous research, the current study found that the age of the wrongdoer did not influence public perceptions, rather perceptions of the wrongdoer were generalised across all age groups. This implies that the public do not consider the cognitive differences between children of different ages to be important when assigning responsibility. Further, the inability of the consequence to the victim to consistently influence public perceptions would suggest that other factors are important, such as intent and the seriousness of the wrongdoer's behaviour. An interesting caveat to the present study was the public's distinction between physical and non-physical harm in terms of overall perceptions of seriousness. This is clearly something future research should investigate.

Finally, the public's belief that children should be held criminally responsible despite their age is contrary to that of the criminal justice system. However, despite holding polar beliefs, the public generally appeared to have a desire to avoid punishing the wrongdoer in a custodial setting. Rather, the public provided suggestions for dealing with the wrongdoer that were tailored to the context in which the transgression occurred. In conclusion, whilst the public, in holding the wrongdoer responsible appeared to lack sensitivity to the psychological implications of the child's age, they did appear cognisant to the context in which the wrongful act occurred. In this sense, although the public differed from the justice system in expressing the attitude that children should be held responsible, they did concur with the current legislation, in that they believed children should not be held responsible within the legal system.

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Appendix A

**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM**

Dear participant,

My name is James McCue and I am completing my Honours degree in Psychology at Edith Cowan University.

The notion of children who violate the rules and norms of society is both a current and controversial topic. Research in this area is sparse and as such the goal of this exploratory study is to shed further light onto this current controversy from a public perception perspective.

Participation in this research will involve reading a brief scenario and then completing a questionnaire. The scenario presented, is half a page in length and outlines a violent altercation between two children. The questionnaire that follows consists of two parts. The first part is designed to gather **your opinions** with regard to the scenario. Importantly, there are no correct or incorrect answers, only your opinions are required. The second part of the questionnaire requires you to answer questions regarding your demographic background.

Please note that participation in this research is **completely voluntary** and you are **free to withdraw your participation at any time**. If at any stage you are not comfortable with the statements or questions asked, please feel free to leave the question and move on to the next one. **All information collected during the research will be kept strictly confidential.**

This study has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences. Prior to reading the vignettes and filling out the questionnaire, all participants will be required to complete the consent form supplied. If you have any questions regarding the study, I can be contacted on 0499 08 09 78 or by e-mail at [james.mccue@ecu.edu.au](mailto:james.mccue@ecu.edu.au). Additionally, you can also contact my supervisors regarding any concerns you have, **Dr Deirdre Drake on 6304 5020**, or **Dr Dianne McKillop on 6304 5736**. If you wish to speak to someone unconnected with the study, please contact **Professor Alison Garton on 6304 5110**.

Further, in the unlikely event that you become distressed as a result of your participation in this research you may wish to contact a health care service. Some services and contact details are provided below.

Crisis Care –	9233 1199 (counselling services)
Lifeline –	13 11 14 (counselling services)
Family Helpline –	9223 1100 (family difficulties and counselling)

Thankyou for taking the time to read this information letter. Your assistance in this research is **greatly appreciated**.

Yours sincerely,  
James McCue

Appendix B

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

I have read the Participant Information Form and am aware of the aims and goals of this research. I am aware that my participation in this research involves reading a brief vignette and completing a questionnaire. Further, I am aware of my rights as a participant in this research. Specifically, that my participation in this research is completely voluntary. I also understand that I do not have to complete any questions of the questionnaire that I am uncomfortable with. Any information I give will remain confidential and will be used for the purposes of this research project only, and I am able to withdraw my participation at any stage of the research.

---

I therefore give my consent to undertake the specified tasks required of me as part of the aforementioned research project.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Dated \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/2003\_\_

Appendix C

**VIGNETTE**

**7 YEARS OLD/ NO PHYSICAL CONSEQUENCE**

Stephen, a 7-year-old schoolboy was playing with sports equipment on his school oval during the recess break, when Jason, another 7-year-old schoolboy approached him. Jason wanted to use the same sports equipment and was not willing to share with Stephen. Jason began to taunt Stephen and call him names in order to get the equipment from Stephen. Stephen however, ignored Jason's taunts and verbal abuse and did not move. Angered by Stephen's stubbornness, Jason pushed Stephen to the ground. In retaliation to Jason's violence, Stephen pushed Jason back and a fight ensued. The fighting boys moved closer and closer to the road that runs parallel with the school oval. Jason threw a punch that connected with Stephen's jaw and knocked him to the ground. As Stephen tried to get up Jason pushed Stephen into the path of the oncoming vehicle. The car narrowly missed Stephen.

**VIGNETTE**

**7 YEARS OLD/ MODERATE PHYSICAL CONSEQUENCE**

Stephen, a 7-year-old schoolboy was playing with sports equipment on his school oval during the recess break, when Jason, another 7-year-old schoolboy approached him. Jason wanted to use the same sports equipment and was not willing to share with Stephen. Jason began to taunt Stephen and call him names in order to get the equipment from Stephen. Stephen however, ignored Jason's taunts and verbal abuse and did not move. Angered by Stephen's stubbornness, Jason pushed Stephen to the ground. In retaliation to Jason's violence, Stephen pushed Jason back and a fight ensued. The fighting boys moved closer and closer to the road that runs parallel with the school oval. Jason threw a punch that connected with Stephen's jaw and knocked him to the ground. As Stephen tried to get up Jason pushed Stephen into the path of the oncoming vehicle. The car hit Stephen and resulted in his arm being fractured in two places. Stephen must now have his arm in a plaster cast for 2 months.



## **VIGNETTE**

### **7 YEARS OLD/ EXTREME PHYSICAL CONSEQUENCE**

Stephen, a 7-year-old schoolboy was playing with sports equipment on his school oval during the recess break, when Jason, another 7-year-old schoolboy approached him. Jason wanted to use the same sports equipment and was not willing to share with Stephen. Jason began to taunt Stephen and call him names in order to get the equipment from Stephen. Stephen however, ignored Jason's taunts and verbal abuse and did not move. Angered by Stephen's stubbornness, Jason pushed Stephen to the ground. In retaliation to Jason's violence, Stephen pushed Jason back and a fight ensued. The fighting boys moved closer and closer to the road that runs parallel with the school oval. Jason threw a punch that connected with Stephen's jaw and knocked him to the ground. As Stephen tried to get up Jason pushed Stephen into the path of the oncoming vehicle. The car hit Stephen and resulted in his spine being fractured in three places. Stephen is now paralysed for life and confined to a wheelchair.

**VIGNETTE**

**10 YEAR OLDS/ NO PHYSICAL CONSEQUENCE**

Stephen, a 10-year-old schoolboy was playing with sports equipment on his school oval during the recess break, when Jason, another 10-year-old schoolboy approached him. Jason wanted to use the same sports equipment and was not willing to share with Stephen. Jason began to taunt Stephen and call him names in order to get the equipment from Stephen. Stephen however, ignored Jason's taunts and verbal abuse and did not move. Angered by Stephen's stubbornness, Jason pushed Stephen to the ground. In retaliation to Jason's violence, Stephen pushed Jason back and a fight ensued. The fighting boys moved closer and closer to the road that runs parallel with the school oval. Jason threw a punch that connected with Stephen's jaw and knocked him to the ground. As Stephen tried to get up Jason pushed Stephen into the path of the oncoming vehicle. The car narrowly missed Stephen.

**VIGNETTE**

**10 YEARS OLD/ MODERATE PHYSICAL CONSEQUENCE**

Stephen, a 10-year-old schoolboy was playing with sports equipment on his school oval during the recess break, when Jason, another 10-year-old schoolboy approached him. Jason wanted to use the same sports equipment and was not willing to share with Stephen. Jason began to taunt Stephen and call him names in order to get the equipment from Stephen. Stephen however, ignored Jason's taunts and verbal abuse and did not move. Angered by Stephen's stubbornness, Jason pushed Stephen to the ground. In retaliation to Jason's violence, Stephen pushed Jason back and a fight ensued. The fighting boys moved closer and closer to the road that runs parallel with the school oval. Jason threw a punch that connected with Stephen's jaw and knocked him to the ground. As Stephen tried to get up Jason pushed Stephen into the path of the oncoming vehicle. The car hit Stephen and resulted in his arm being fractured in two places. Stephen must now have his arm in a plaster cast for 2 months.

## **VIGNETTE**

### **10 YEARS OLD/ EXTREME PHYSICAL CONSEQUENCE**

Stephen, a 10-year-old schoolboy was playing with sports equipment on his school oval during the recess break, when Jason, another 10-year-old schoolboy approached him. Jason wanted to use the same sports equipment and was not willing to share with Stephen. Jason began to taunt Stephen and call him names in order to get the equipment from Stephen. Stephen however, ignored Jason's taunts and verbal abuse and did not move. Angered by Stephen's stubbornness, Jason pushed Stephen to the ground. In retaliation to Jason's violence, Stephen pushed Jason back and a fight ensued. The fighting boys moved closer and closer to the road that runs parallel with the school oval. Jason threw a punch that connected with Stephen's jaw and knocked him to the ground. As Stephen tried to get up Jason pushed Stephen into the path of the oncoming vehicle. The car hit Stephen and resulted in his spine being fractured in three places. Stephen is now paralysed for life and confined to a wheelchair.

**VIGNETTE**

**14 YEARS OLD/ NO PHYSICAL CONSEQUENCE**

Stephen, a 14-year-old schoolboy was playing with sports equipment on his school oval during the recess break, when Jason, another 14-year-old schoolboy approached him. Jason wanted to use the same sports equipment and was not willing to share with Stephen. Jason began to taunt Stephen and call him names in order to get the equipment from Stephen. Stephen however, ignored Jason's taunts and verbal abuse and did not move. Angered by Stephen's stubbornness, Jason pushed Stephen to the ground. In retaliation to Jason's violence, Stephen pushed Jason back and a fight ensued. The fighting boys moved closer and closer to the road that runs parallel with the school oval. Jason threw a punch that connected with Stephen's jaw and knocked him to the ground. As Stephen tried to get up Jason pushed Stephen into the path of the oncoming vehicle. The car narrowly missed Stephen.

**VIGNETTE**

**14 YEARS OLD/ MODERATE PHYSICAL CONSEQUENCE**

Stephen, a 14-year-old schoolboy was playing with sports equipment on his school oval during the recess break, when Jason, another 7-year-old schoolboy approached him. Jason wanted to use the same sports equipment and was not willing to share with Stephen. Jason began to taunt Stephen and call him names in order to get the equipment from Stephen. Stephen however, ignored Jason's taunts and verbal abuse and did not move. Angered by Stephen's stubbornness, Jason pushed Stephen to the ground. In retaliation to Jason's violence, Stephen pushed Jason back and a fight ensued. The fighting boys moved closer and closer to the road that runs parallel with the school oval. Jason threw a punch that connected with Stephen's jaw and knocked him to the ground. As Stephen tried to get up Jason pushed Stephen into the path of the oncoming vehicle. The car hit Stephen and resulted in his arm being fractured in two places. Stephen must now have his arm in a plaster cast for 2 months.

## **VIGNETTE**

### **14 YEARS OLD/ EXTREME PHYSICAL CONSEQUENCE**

Stephen, a 14-year-old schoolboy was playing with sports equipment on his school oval during the recess break, when Jason, another 7-year-old schoolboy approached him. Jason wanted to use the same sports equipment and was not willing to share with Stephen. Jason began to taunt Stephen and call him names in order to get the equipment from Stephen. Stephen however, ignored Jason's taunts and verbal abuse and did not move. Angered by Stephen's stubbornness, Jason pushed Stephen to the ground. In retaliation to Jason's violence, Stephen pushed Jason back and a fight ensued. The fighting boys moved closer and closer to the road that runs parallel with the school oval. Jason threw a punch that connected with Stephen's jaw and knocked him to the ground. As Stephen tried to get up Jason pushed Stephen into the path of the oncoming vehicle. The car hit Stephen and resulted in his spine being fractured in three places. Stephen is now paralysed for life and confined to a wheelchair.

Appendix D

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

**PART ONE – PERSONAL OPINIONS**

**INSTRUCTIONS TO PARTICIPANTS –**

Having read the scenario, please complete the following questionnaire.

**Please respond to the statements as honestly as possible and please note that there are no right or wrong answers.**

If at any stage you are not comfortable with the questions asked, please feel free to leave the question and move on to the next one.

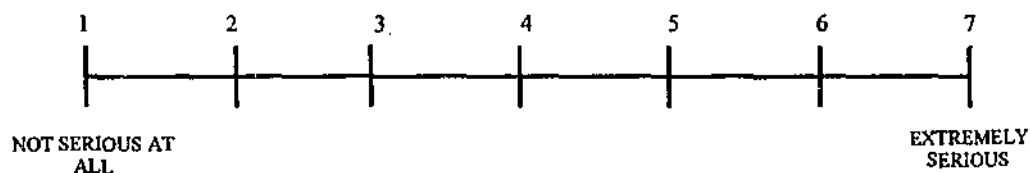
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Please circle the rating on the scale that best represents your opinion.

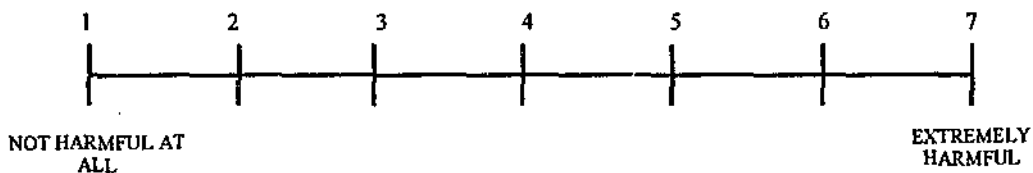
**1. How deliberate were Jason's actions?**



**2. How serious was Jason's behaviour?**



**3. How harmful was Jason's behaviour?**



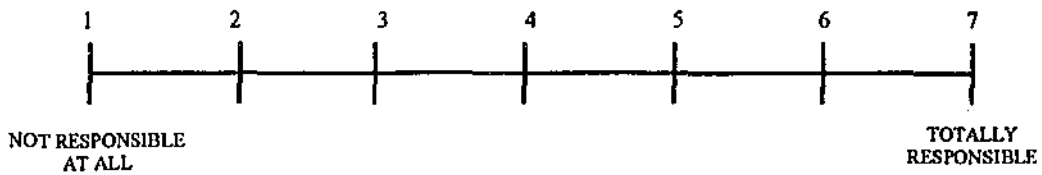
*Continued on next page...*



**4. How serious was the harm caused to Stephen?**



**5. How responsible is Jason for the harm caused to Stephen?**



**6. (a) What should happen to Jason? *(please provide as much detail as you can)***

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---

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**(b) Why?**

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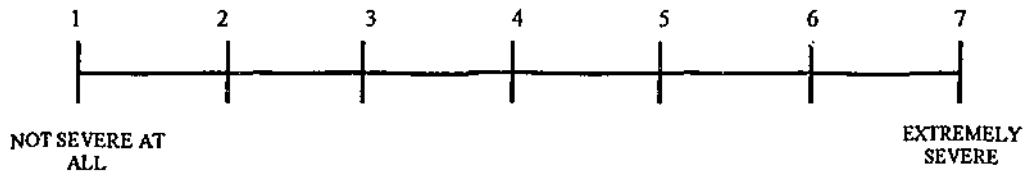
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*Continued on next page ...*

(c) How severe do you view the consequence you have suggested (in question 6a) to be?



7. Should Jason be dealt with by the justice system?

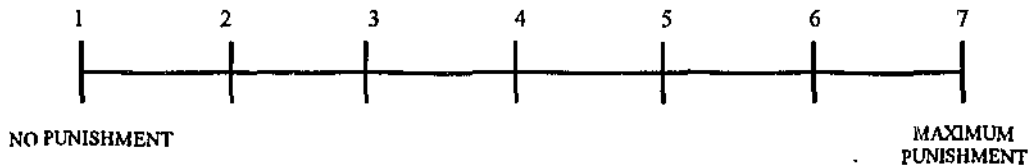
☐

YES

☐

NO

8. If you answered 'YES' to question 7, to what degree should Jason be punished by the justice system?



*Thankyou for completing Part One of this questionnaire. Now please complete Part Two.*

---

*Continued on next page...*

## QUESTIONNAIRE

### PART TWO – GENERAL INFORMATION

#### INSTRUCTIONS TO PARTICIPANTS –

Please complete the following information regarding your background. Remember that all information will remain confidential and you will not be able to be identified by completing this section.

---

#### 1. Age Group.

- ☐ 18 – 21
- ☐ 22 – 25
- ☐ 26 – 35
- ☐ 36 – 45
- ☐ 46 – 55
- ☐ 56 – 65
- ☐ Over 65

#### 2. Gender.

☐ Male

☐ Female

---

**THANKYOU** very much for completing this questionnaire. Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

Appendix E

**Data Explanations**

**Variable Label**

Location: Column 1

Title: off.age

Definition: Wrongdoer age (*Independent Variable*)

1 = 7 years

2 = 10 years

3 = 14 years

999 = Missing Data

Location: Column 2

Title: conseq

Definition: Consequence to the Victim (*Independent Variable*)

1 = No physical consequence (the car misses the victim)

2 = Moderate physical consequence (the car hits the victim causing a broken arm)

3 = Extreme physical consequence (the car hits the victim causing paralysis)

999 = Missing Data

Location: Column 3

Title: intent

Definition: Perceived Level of Intent

1 = Not deliberate at all

2 = No Label

3 = No Label

4 = No Label

5 = No Label

6 = No Label

7 = Completely deliberate

999 = Missing Data

Location: Column 4

Title: perc.sev

Definition: Perceived Severity of the Wrongdoer's Behaviour

1 = Not serious at all

2 = No Label

3 = No Label

4 = No Label

5 = No Label

6 = No Label

7 = Extremely serious

999 = Missing Data

Location: Column 5

Title: perc.har

Definition: Perceived Harmfulness of the Wrongdoer's Behaviour

1 = Not harmful at all

2 = No Label

3 = No Label

4 = No Label

5 = No Label

6 = No Label

7 = Extremely harmful

999 = Missing Data

Location: Column 6

Title: sev.harm

Definition: Perceived Severity of the Harm Caused to the Victim

1 = Not serious at all

2 = No Label

3 = No Label

4 = No Label

5 = No Label

6 = No Label

7 = Extremely serious

999 = Missing Data

Location: Column 7

Title: respons

Definition: Perceived Responsibility of the Wrongdoer

1 = Not responsible at all

2 = No Label

3 = No Label

4 = No Label

5 = No Label

6 = No Label

7 = Totally responsible

999 = Missing Data

Location: Column 8

Title: sev.cons

Definition: Perceived Severity of the Participant's Suggested Punishment

1 = Not serious at all

2 = No Label

3 = No Label

4 = No Label

5 = No Label

6 = No Label

7 = Extremely serious

999 = Missing Data

Location: Column 9

Title: just.sys

Definition: Perceptions of Whether the Wrongdoer Should be Dealt with by the Justice System

1 = Yes      2 = No      999 = Missing Data

Location: Column 10

Title: sev.pun

Definition: Degree to which the Wrongdoer should be Punished by the Justice System

1 = Not punishment  
2 = No Label  
3 = No Label  
4 = No Label  
5 = No Label  
6 = No Label  
7 = Maximum Punishment  
999 = Missing Data / Not Applicable

Location: Column 11

Title: age

Definition: Participant's Age

1 = 18 - 21  
2 = 22 - 25  
3 = 26 - 35  
4 = 36 - 45  
5 = 46 - 55  
6 = 56 - 65  
7 = Over 65  
999 = Missing Data

Location: Column 12

Title: gender

Definition: Participant's Gender

1 = Male      2 = Female      999 = Missing Data

Location: Column 13

Title: cond

Definition: Experimental Condition

1 = 7 years old/ No Physical Consequence  
2 = 7 years old/ Moderate Physical Consequence  
3 = 7 years old/ Extreme Physical Consequence  
4 = 10 years old/ No Physical Consequence  
5 = 10 years old/ Moderate Physical Consequence  
6 = 10 years old/ Extreme Physical Consequence  
7 = 14 years old/ No Physical Consequence  
8 = 14 years old/ Moderate Physical Consequence  
9 = 14 years old/ Extreme Physical Consequence

	off.age	conseq	intent	perc.sev	perc.har	sev.harm	respons
1	1	1	5	7	7	5	7
2	1	1	4	5	5	4	4
3	1	1	7	7	6	5	7
4	1	1	5	4	5	5	6
5	1	1	6	7	6	6	6
6	1	1	6	6	5	4	4
7	1	1	6	7	7	5	6
8	1	1	6	6	7	5	6
9	1	1	5	5	6	5	5
10	1	1	3	5	3	5	5
11	1	1	6	6	6	6	7
12	1	1	4	5	6	5	5
13	1	1	6	6	7	5	7
14	1	1	5	6	6	4	7
15	1	1	7	7	999	5	5
16	1	1	6	7	7	6	7
17	1	1	7	7	7	4	6
18	1	1	7	2	4	5	7
19	1	1	4	7	7	3	7
20	1	1	7	6	6	4	6
21	1	2	6	7	6	6	5
22	1	2	7	7	6	6	5
23	1	2	5	6	6	5	6
24	1	2	5	7	7	7	6
25	1	2	6	7	7	6	6
26	1	2	5	6	6	6	5
27	1	2	5	5	6	6	7
28	1	2	6	6	6	6	6
29	1	2	5	7	7	5	5
30	1	2	5	6	7	7	5
31	1	2	6	6	7	6	6
32	1	2	5	6	6	4	5
33	1	2	5	5	7	7	6
34	1	2	4	5	6	7	5
35	1	2	5	5	6	7	5
36	1	2	6	7	7	6	6
37	1	2	5	6	7	5	6
38	1	2	6	7	7	4	7
39	1	2	7	7	7	5	999
40	1	2	4	5	5	4	6
41	1	3	7	7	7	7	7
42	1	3	3	6	6	7	7
43	1	3	6	7	7	7	7

## Criminal Responsibility and Children E.5

	sev.cons	just.sys	sev.pun	age	gender	cell
1	6	2	999	2	1	1
2	3	2	999	3	2	1
3	6	2	999	2	2	1
4	4	2	999	1	1	1
5	7	1	1	1	1	1
6	4	2	999	1	2	1
7	5	2	999	1	2	1
8	4	1	3	1	2	1
9	4	2	999	1	2	1
10	999	2	999	1	2	1
11	5	2	999	1	2	1
12	3	2	999	1	2	1
13	5	2	999	1	2	1
14	6	2	999	1	1	1
15	999	2	999	1	2	1
16	5	2	999	1	2	1
17	7	1	4	1	2	1
18	3	2	999	1	2	1
19	999	1	4	1	2	1
20	4	2	999	1	2	1
21	4	2	999	3	2	2
22	3	2	999	2	2	2
23	3	2	999	1	2	2
24	3	2	999	4	2	2
25	4	2	999	2	2	2
26	2	2	999	2	2	2
27	6	1	2	2	1	2
28	2	1	3	2	2	2
29	3	2	999	3	2	2
30	4	2	999	4	1	2
31	5	2	999	3	2	2
32	1	2	999	1	2	2
33	5	2	999	3	2	2
34	5	2	999	4	1	2
35	4	2	999	1	2	2
36	6	2	999	4	2	2
37	4	2	999	1	2	2
38	4	2	999	1	2	2
39	3	2	999	1	2	2
40	3	2	999	1	2	2
41	3	1	1	3	2	3
42	6	1	3	3	2	3
43	5	1	6	1	2	3



	off.age	conseq	intent	perc.sev	perc.har	sev.harm	respons
44	1	3	4	7	7	7	6
45	1	3	6	7	7	7	5
46	1	3	6	6	7	7	6
47	1	3	6	7	6	6	6
48	1	3	6	7	7	7	7
49	1	3	6	6	7	7	5
50	1	3	4	5	6	7	6
51	1	3	6	7	7	7	7
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53	1	3	7	7	7	7	6
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55	1	3	6	6	7	7	5
56	1	3	7	7	7	7	7
57	1	3	7	7	7	7	5
58	1	3	5	7	7	7	6
59	1	3	6	7	7	7	7
60	1	3	5	5	5	7	5
61	2	1	5	6	6	2	5
62	2	1	7	4	5	4	7
63	2	1	7	5	6	5	6
64	2	1	5	5	6	5	6
65	2	1	4	6	5	3	4
66	2	1	7	5	5	4	6
67	2	1	2	5	6	6	5
68	2	1	7	7	3	6	7
69	2	1	5	5	5	3	5
70	2	1	6	6	7	6	5
71	2	1	7	7	2	2	7
72	2	1	7	7	2	6	7
73	2	1	4	4	4	5	4
74	2	1	6	7	7	7	7
75	2	1	5	6	6	6	6
76	2	1	4	7	4	4	7
77	2	1	6	7	6	5	6
78	2	1	7	7	7	7	7
79	2	1	5	5	5	4	6
80	2	1	5	7	4	4	6
81	2	2	3	5	5	4	4
82	2	2	3	4	5	5	5
83	2	2	5	7	7	6	7
84	2	2	6	6	6	4	6
85	2	2	7	6	6	6	7
86	2	2	7	7	7	7	6

	sev.cons	just.sys	sev.pun	age	gender	cell
44	1	1	4	1	2	3
45	5	2	999	1	2	3
46	5	1	3	1	2	3
47	7	1	4	1	2	3
48	2	1	6	6	2	3
49	3	2	999	1	2	3
50	5	2	999	1	2	3
51	1	1	3	2	2	3
52	6	2	999	4	1	3
53	4	2	999	4	2	3
54	2	2	999	4	2	3
55	2	2	999	4	2	3
56	5	1	5	2	1	3
57	5	1	4	1	2	3
58	5	1	5	1	2	3
59	7	1	7	1	1	3
60	4	2	999	3	2	3
61	5	2	999	3	1	4
62	4	2	999	1	1	4
63	5	2	999	1	1	4
64	4	2	999	1	1	4
65	999	2	999	1	2	4
66	4	2	999	1	1	4
67	4	2	999	1	2	4
68	5	2	999	1	2	4
69	3	2	999	1	2	4
70	999	999	999	999	999	4
71	3	2	999	1	1	4
72	6	2	999	3	1	4
73	4	2	999	1	2	4
74	5	2	999	3	2	4
75	4	1	4	2	2	4
76	5	2	999	1	2	4
77	5	2	999	1	2	4
78	4	2	999	1	1	4
79	4	2	999	1	2	4
80	5	2	999	1	2	4
81	3	2	999	1	2	5
82	3	2	999	1	2	5
83	2	2	999	4	2	5
84	4	1	3	1	2	5
85	4	2	999	3	2	5
86	5	2	999	3	2	5

	off.age	conseq	intent	perc.sev	perc.har	sev.harm	respons
87	2	2	5	5	6	6	6
88	2	2	6	6	5	5	5
89	2	2	6	6	6	5	6
90	2	2	5	6	6	6	6
91	2	2	5	6	6	6	7
92	2	2	3	6	4	4	6
93	2	2	5	6	6	5	6
94	2	2	5	6	6	6	6
95	2	2	6	6	7	6	7
96	2	2	6	6	7	5	5
97	2	2	4	7	7	5	7
98	2	2	7	7	6	6	7
99	2	2	2	7	7	3	7
100	2	2	5	6	6	5	7
101	2	3	5	6	6	7	6
102	2	3	5	7	7	7	5
103	2	3	4	4	6	7	4
104	2	3	5	5	7	7	5
105	2	3	6	7	7	7	5
106	2	3	6	7	7	7	6
107	2	3	6	5	7	7	5
108	2	3	5	6	7	7	4
109	2	3	6	7	7	7	6
110	2	3	6	7	6	7	6
111	2	3	7	7	7	7	6
112	2	3	5	7	7	7	4
113	2	3	5	7	7	7	6
114	2	3	7	7	7	7	5
115	2	3	7	7	7	7	7
116	2	3	2	7	7	7	7
117	2	3	5	6	5	7	7
118	2	3	1	5	7	7	7
119	2	3	4	6	6	7	5
120	2	3	4	4	7	7	7
121	3	1	6	7	7	6	6
122	3	1	7	7	7	7	5
123	3	1	6	7	7	7	5
124	3	1	2	5	4	4	6
125	3	1	6	6	5	3	6
126	3	1	6	7	6	6	6
127	3	1	6	7	5	3	7
128	3	1	4	5	7	4	7
129	3	1	4	5	6	5	7

	sev.cons	just.sys	sev.pun	age	gender	cell
87	4	2	999	3	1	5
88	4	2	999	1	2	5
89	4	2	999	3	2	5
90	4	2	999	2	1	5
91	5	2	999	4	2	5
92	3	2	999	1	2	5
93	4	1	4	2	2	5
94	4	2	999	1	1	5
95	5	2	999	1	1	5
96	2	2	999	1	2	5
97	6	2	999	1	2	5
98	999	1	2	1	2	5
99	4	2	999	1	2	5
100	5	2	999	1	2	5
101	4	1	4	1	2	6
102	5	1	3	1	2	6
103	4	1	4	3	2	6
104	5	1	4	1	2	6
105	6	2	999	5	2	6
106	4	2	999	3	1	6
107	6	1	6	2	2	6
108	3	2	999	3	2	6
109	6	1	5	2	2	6
110	3	2	999	2	2	6
111	7	1	7	6	2	6
112	3	2	999	1	2	6
113	3	1	2	1	2	6
114	6	1	6	1	1	6
115	1	2	999	1	1	6
116	6	2	999	4	2	6
117	6	2	999	1	2	6
118	1	2	999	1	1	6
119	4	2	999	1	1	6
120	7	1	5	5	2	6
121	1	1	2	1	2	7
122	7	1	5	3	2	7
123	5	1	4	4	2	7
124	3	2	999	1	2	7
125	2	1	1	4	2	7
126	6	2	999	1	1	7
127	5	2	999	1	2	7
128	4	2	999	4	2	7
129	4	2	999	1	2	7

	off.age	conseq	intent	perc.sev	perc.har	sev.harm	respons
130	3	1	6	7	6	6	7
131	3	1	4	5	3	5	5
132	3	1	7	7	7	6	5
133	3	1	7	7	6	6	7
134	3	1	6	7	4	5	6
135	3	1	5	7	7	6	6
136	3	1	6	7	6	6	6
137	3	1	7	6	5	6	4
138	3	1	3	4	3	4	5
139	3	1	6	6	6	5	6
140	3	1	4	3	4	4	3
141	3	2	5	7	7	7	7
142	3	2	6	6	7	4	7
143	3	2	6	7	7	7	5
144	3	2	5	3	7	7	4
145	3	2	5	6	6	5	6
146	3	2	7	6	6	6	7
147	3	2	6	7	7	5	7
148	3	2	7	7	4	4	4
149	3	2	7	7	7	7	5
150	3	2	4	6	7	6	3
151	3	2	4	7	7	6	6
152	3	2	3	6	7	7	4
153	3	2	6	7	7	6	6
154	3	2	5	7	7	7	7
155	3	2	4	5	6	6	6
156	3	2	6	6	5	5	7
157	3	2	5	5	7	6	5
158	3	2	7	7	7	6	7
159	3	2	6	7	6	6	7
160	3	2	6	999	6	4	4
161	3	3	6	7	7	7	7
162	3	3	5	6	6	7	5
163	3	3	7	7	7	7	7
164	3	3	7	7	7	7	7
165	3	3	7	7	7	7	7
166	3	3	6	7	7	7	7
167	3	3	6	7	7	7	6
168	3	3	6	7	7	7	7
169	3	3	2	5	6	6	2
170	3	3	6	7	7	7	5
171	3	3	999	7	7	7	999
172	3	3	7	7	7	7	7

	sev.cons	just.sys	sev.pun	age	gender	cell
130	5	1	5	4	2	7
131	3	2	999	2	2	7
132	4	1	1	4	2	7
133	5	1	2	1	2	7
134	5	2	999	1	2	7
135	5	2	999	1	2	7
136	7	2	999	1	2	7
137	4	2	999	1	2	7
138	4	2	999	1	2	7
139	3	2	999	2	2	7
140	4	2	999	3	1	7
141	6	2	999	3	2	8
142	4	1	4	2	2	8
143	5	2	999	4	2	8
144	1	2	999	4	2	8
145	4	2	999	2	1	8
146	5	1	3	1	2	8
147	4	1	6	1	1	8
148	1	2	999	3	1	8
149	5	1	4	1	2	8
150	4	2	999	1	2	8
151	5	2	999	2	2	8
152	5	2	999	2	2	8
153	4	2	999	1	2	8
154	6	2	999	1	1	8
155	6	2	999	2	1	8
156	2	2	999	1	1	8
157	4	2	999	3	2	8
158	6	1	4	4	2	8
159	5	2	999	4	2	8
160	2	2	999	1	2	8
161	7	1	5	1	2	9
162	5	2	999	4	2	9
163	6	1	5	4	2	9
164	4	1	7	4	1	9
165	7	1	999	3	2	9
166	5	1	5	5	2	9
167	999	1	5	3	2	9
168	5	2	999	1	2	9
169	6	2	999	3	2	9
170	2	1	2	3	2	9
171	7	2	999	3	2	9
172	4	1	4	2	2	9

	off.age	conseq	intent	perc.sev	perc.har	sev.ham	respons
173	3	3	2	7	7	7	5
174	3	3	7	7	7	7	7
175	3	3	1	1	1	1	1
176	3	3	5	7	7	7	7
177	3	3	6	7	7	7	6
178	3	3	5	7	7	7	5
179	3	3	5	7	7	7	5
180	3	3	5	7	7	7	5

	sev.cons	just.sys	sev.pun	age	gender	cell
173	6	2	999	4	2	9
174	5	1	7	1	1	9
175	1	2	999	4	2	9
176	2	1	6	4	2	9
177	999	1	5	3	1	9
178	5	1	5	1	1	9
179	3	1	3	1	2	9
180	2	1	5	1	2	9



## Exploratory Data Analysis

Frequencies

## Perceived Intent

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	2	1.1	1.1	1.1
	2	6	3.3	3.4	4.5
	3	8	4.4	4.5	8.9
	4	21	11.7	11.7	20.7
	5	48	26.7	26.8	47.5
	6	57	31.7	31.8	79.3
	7	37	20.6	20.7	100.0
	Total	179	99.4	100.0	
Missing	999	1	.6		
Total		180	100.0		

## Severity of the behaviour

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	.6	.6	.6
	2	1	.6	.6	1.1
	3	2	1.1	1.1	2.2
	4	7	3.9	3.9	6.1
	5	30	16.7	16.8	22.9
	6	48	26.7	26.8	49.7
	7	90	50.0	50.3	100.0
	Total	179	99.4	100.0	
Missing	999	1	.6		
Total		180	100.0		

## Harmfulness of behaviour

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	.6	.6	.6
	2	2	1.1	1.1	1.7
	3	4	2.2	2.2	3.9
	4	9	5.0	5.0	8.9
	5	19	10.6	10.6	19.6
	6	53	29.4	29.6	49.2
	7	91	50.6	50.8	100.0
	Total	179	99.4	100.0	
Missing	999	1	.6		
Total		180	100.0		

**Severity of the harm**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	1	.6	.6	.6
2	2	1.1	1.1	1.7
3	6	3.3	3.3	5.0
4	23	12.8	12.8	17.8
5	33	18.3	18.3	36.1
6	42	23.3	23.3	59.4
7	73	40.6	40.6	100.0
Total	180	100.0	100.0	

**Responsibility**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	1	.6	.6	.6
2	1	.6	.6	1.1
3	1	.6	.6	1.7
4	13	7.2	7.3	9.0
5	46	25.6	25.8	34.8
6	57	31.7	32.0	66.9
7	59	32.8	33.1	100.0
Total	178	98.9	100.0	
Missing 999	2	1.1		
Total	180	100.0		

**Severity of suggested consequence**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	9	5.0	5.2	5.2
2	13	7.2	7.6	12.8
3	24	13.3	14.0	26.7
4	48	26.7	27.9	54.7
5	44	24.4	25.6	80.2
6	23	12.8	13.4	93.6
7	11	6.1	6.4	100.0
Total	172	95.6	100.0	
Missing 999	8	4.4		
Total	180	100.0		

**Justice System Involvement**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	58	32.2	32.4	32.4
No	121	67.2	67.6	100.0
Total	179	99.4	100.0	
Missing 999	1	.6		
Total	180	100.0		

## Severity of J.S. Punishment

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	4	2.2	7.0	7.0
	2	6	3.3	10.5	17.5
	3	9	5.0	15.8	33.3
	4	15	8.3	26.3	59.6
	5	13	7.2	22.8	82.5
	6	6	3.3	10.5	93.0
	7	4	2.2	7.0	100.0
	Total	57	31.7	100.0	
Missing	999	123	68.3		
Total		180	100.0		

## Participant Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18 - 21	96	53.3	53.6	53.6
	22 - 25	23	12.8	12.8	66.5
	26 - 35	29	16.1	16.2	82.7
	36 - 45	26	14.4	14.6	97.2
	46 - 55	3	1.7	1.7	98.9
	56 - 65	2	1.1	1.1	100.0
	Total	179	99.4	100.0	
Missing	999	1	.6		
Total		180	100.0		

## Participant Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	39	21.7	21.8	21.8
	Female	140	77.8	78.2	100.0
	Total	179	99.4	100.0	
Missing	999	1	.6		
Total		180	100.0		

Exploratory and Descriptive Statistics**Descriptives**

			Statistic	Std. Error
Perceived Intent	Mean		5.38	.100
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	5.18	
		Upper Bound	5.58	
	5% Trimmed Mean		5.48	
	Median		6.00	
	Variance		1.787	
	Std. Deviation		1.337	
	Minimum		1	
	Maximum		7	
	Range		6	
	Interquartile Range		1.00	
	Skewness		-.938	.182
	Kurtosis		.797	.361
Severity of the behaviour	Mean		6.17	.080
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	6.02	
		Upper Bound	6.33	
	5% Trimmed Mean		6.29	
	Median		7.00	
	Variance		1.133	
	Std. Deviation		1.064	
	Minimum		1	
	Maximum		7	
	Range		6	
	Interquartile Range		1.00	
	Skewness		-1.624	.182
	Kurtosis		3.639	.361
Harmfulness of behaviour	Mean		6.16	.086
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	5.99	
		Upper Bound	6.33	
	5% Trimmed Mean		6.30	
	Median		7.00	
	Variance		1.316	
	Std. Deviation		1.147	
	Minimum		1	
	Maximum		7	
	Range		6	
	Interquartile Range		1.00	
	Skewness		-1.789	.182
	Kurtosis		3.610	.361
Severity of the harm	Mean		5.79	.097
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	5.60	
		Upper Bound	5.99	
	5% Trimmed Mean		5.91	

Responsibility	Median		6.00	
	Variance		1.684	
	Std. Deviation		1.298	
	Minimum		1	
	Maximum		7	
	Range		6	
	Interquartile Range		2.00	
	Skewness		-.961	.161
	Kurtosis		.443	.360
	Mean		5.86	.080
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	5.70	
		Upper Bound	6.02	
	5% Trimmed Mean		5.94	
	Median		6.00	
Severity of suggested consequence	Variance		1.150	
	Std. Deviation		1.072	
	Minimum		1	
	Maximum		7	
	Range		6	
	Interquartile Range		2.00	
	Skewness		-1.023	.182
	Kurtosis		1.931	.362
	Mean		4.27	.114
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	4.04	
		Upper Bound	4.49	
	5% Trimmed Mean		4.30	
	Median		4.00	
	Variance		2.220	
Severity of J.S. Punishment	Std. Deviation		1.490	
	Minimum		1	
	Maximum		7	
	Range		6	
	Interquartile Range		2.00	
	Skewness		-.275	.185
	Kurtosis		-.271	.368
	Mean		4.07	.211
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	3.65	
		Upper Bound	4.49	
	5% Trimmed Mean		4.08	
	Median		4.00	
	Variance		2.531	
	Std. Deviation		1.591	
	Minimum		1	
	Maximum		7	
	Range		6	
	Interquartile Range		2.00	
	Skewness		-.119	
	Kurtosis		-.483	3

## Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov(a)			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Perceived Intent	.204	179	.000	.886	179	.000
Severity of the behaviour	.284	179	.000	.756	179	.000
Harmfulness of behaviour	.276	179	.000	.733	179	.000
Severity of the harm	.229	180	.000	.837	180	.000
Responsibility	.204	178	.000	.845	178	.000
Severity of suggested consequence	.161	172	.000	.945	172	.000
Severity of J.S. Punishment	.149	57	.003	.951	57	.021

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

### Statistical Analyses

*Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of intent?*

#### 3 x 3 Factorial Analysis of Variance

##### Descriptive Statistics

Dependent Variable: Perceived Intent

Offender Age	Level of Consequence	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
7 years old	Low Consequence	5.60	1.188	20
	Moderate Consequence	5.40	.821	20
	Extreme Consequence	5.55	1.234	20
	Total	5.52	1.081	60
10 years old	Low Consequence	5.55	1.395	20
	Moderate Consequence	5.05	1.432	20
	Extreme Consequence	5.05	1.538	20
	Total	5.22	1.451	60
14 years old	Low Consequence	5.40	1.429	20
	Moderate Consequence	5.50	1.147	20
	Extreme Consequence	5.32	1.797	19
	Total	5.41	1.452	59
Total	Low Consequence	5.52	1.321	60
	Moderate Consequence	5.32	1.157	60
	Extreme Consequence	5.31	1.523	59
	Total	5.38	1.337	179

##### Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances(a)

Dependent Variable: Perceived Intent

F	df1	df2	Sig.
.941	8	170	.484

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept+OFF.AGE+CONSEQ+OFF.AGE \* CONSEQ

## Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Perceived Intent

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	6.862(b)	8	.858	.468	.877	.022
Intercept	5178.801	1	5178.801	2828.080	.000	.943
OFF.AGE	2.759	2	1.379	.753	.472	.009
CONSEQ	1.691	2	.845	.462	.631	.005
OFF.AGE * CONSEQ	2.410	4	.603	.329	.858	.008
Error	311.305	170	1.831			
Total	5499.000	179				
Corrected Total	318.168	178				

a. Computed using alpha = .05

b. R Squared = .022 (Adjusted R Squared = -.024)

## 1. Grand Mean

Dependent Variable: Perceived Intent

Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
5.380	.101	5.180	5.579

## 2. Offender Age

Dependent Variable: Perceived Intent

Offender Age	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
7 years old	5.517	.175	5.172	5.862
10 years old	5.217	.175	4.872	5.562
14 years old	5.405	.176	5.057	5.753

## 3. Level of Consequence

Dependent Variable: Perceived Intent

Level of Consequence	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Low Consequence	5.517	.175	5.172	5.862
Moderate Consequence	5.317	.175	4.972	5.662
Extreme Consequence	5.305	.176	4.957	5.653



*Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of the severity of the wrongdoer's behaviour?*

### 3 x 3 Factorial Analysis of Variance

#### **Descriptive Statistics**

Dependent Variable: Severity of the behaviour

Offender Age	Level of Consequence	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
7 years old	Low Consequence	5.90	1.294	20
	Moderate Consequence	6.15	.813	20
	Extreme Consequence	6.45	.759	20
	Total	6.17	.994	60
10 years old	Low Consequence	5.90	1.071	20
	Moderate Consequence	6.05	.759	20
	Extreme Consequence	6.20	1.056	20
	Total	6.05	.964	60
14 years old	Low Consequence	6.10	1.210	20
	Moderate Consequence	6.26	1.046	19
	Extreme Consequence	6.55	1.395	20
	Total	6.31	1.221	59
Total	Low Consequence	5.97	1.178	60
	Moderate Consequence	6.15	.867	59
	Extreme Consequence	6.40	1.092	60
	Total	6.17	1.064	179

#### **Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances(a)**

Dependent Variable: Severity of the behaviour

F	df1	df2	Sig.
1.174	8	170	.318

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept+OFF.AGE+CONSEQ+OFF.AGE \* CONSEQ

## Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Severity of the behaviour

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	7.947(b)	8	.993	.872	.541	.039
Intercept	6820.701	1	6820.701	5986.648	.000	.972
OFF.AGE	1.928	2	.964	.846	.431	.010
CONSEQ	5.666	2	2.833	2.487	.086	.028
OFF.AGE * CONSEQ	.342	4	.085	.075	.990	.002
Error	193.684	170	1.139			
Total	7023.000	179				
Corrected Total	201.631	178				

a. Computed using alpha = .05

b. R Squared = .039 (Adjusted R Squared = -.006)

## 1. Grand Mean

Dependent Variable: Severity of the behaviour

Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
6.174	.080	6.016	6.331

## 2. Offender Age

Dependent Variable: Severity of the behaviour

Offender Age	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
7 years old	6.167	.138	5.895	6.439
10 years old	6.050	.138	5.778	6.322
14 years old	6.304	.139	6.030	6.579

## 3. Level of Consequence

Dependent Variable: Severity of the behaviour

Level of Consequence	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Low Consequence	5.967	.138	5.695	6.239
Moderate Consequence	6.154	.139	5.880	6.429
Extreme Consequence	6.400	.138	6.128	6.672

*Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of the harmfulness of the wrongdoer's behaviour?*

### 3 x 3 Factorial Analysis of Variance

#### Descriptive Statistics

Dependent Variable: Harmfulness of behaviour

Offender Age	Level of Consequence	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
7 years old	Low Consequence	5.95	1.129	19
	Moderate Consequence	6.45	.605	20
	Extreme Consequence	6.60	.681	20
	Total	6.34	.863	59
10 years old	Low Consequence	5.05	1.504	20
	Moderate Consequence	6.05	.826	20
	Extreme Consequence	6.70	.571	20
	Total	5.93	1.233	60
14 years old	Low Consequence	5.55	1.356	20
	Moderate Consequence	6.50	.827	20
	Extreme Consequence	6.60	1.353	20
	Total	6.22	1.277	60
Total	Low Consequence	5.51	1.369	59
	Moderate Consequence	6.33	.774	60
	Extreme Consequence	6.63	.920	60
	Total	6.16	1.147	179

#### Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances(a)

Dependent Variable: Harmfulness of behaviour

F	df1	df2	Sig.
2.897	8	170	.005

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept+OFF.AGE+CONSEQ+OFF.AGE \* CONSEQ

## Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Harmfulness of behaviour

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	50.754(b)	8	6.344	5.876	.000	.217
Intercept	6792.303	1	6792.303	6290.973	.000	.974
OFF.AGE	5.029	2	2.515	2.329	.101	.027
CONSEQ	39.713	2	19.856	18.391	.000	.178
OFF.AGE * CONSEQ	5.525	4	1.381	1.279	.280	.029
Error	183.547	170	1.080			
Total	7031.000	179				
Corrected Total	234.302	178				

a. Computed using alpha = .05

b. R Squared = .217 (Adjusted R Squared = .180)

## 1. Grand Mean

Dependent Variable: Harmfulness of behaviour

Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
6.161	.078	6.007	6.314

## 2. Offender Age

Dependent Variable: Harmfulness of behaviour

Offender Age	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
7 years old	6.332	.135	6.065	6.600
10 years old	5.933	.134	5.669	6.198
14 years old	6.217	.134	5.952	6.481

## 3. Level of Consequence

Dependent Variable: Harmfulness of behaviour

Level of Consequence	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Low Consequence	5.51	1.369	59
Moderate Consequence	6.33	.774	60
Extreme Consequence	6.63	.920	60
Total	6.16	1.147	179

*Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of the severity of the consequence (harm caused) to the victim?*

### 3 x 3 Factorial Analysis of Variance

#### Descriptive Statistics

Dependent Variable: Severity of the harm

Offender Age	Level of Consequence	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
7 years old	Low Consequence	4.80	.768	20
	Moderate Consequence	5.75	1.020	20
	Extreme Consequence	6.95	.224	20
	Total	5.83	1.152	60
10 years old	Low Consequence	4.70	1.490	20
	Moderate Consequence	5.25	.957	20
	Extreme Consequence	7.00	.000	20
	Total	5.65	1.412	60
14 years old	Low Consequence	5.20	1.196	20
	Moderate Consequence	5.85	1.040	20
	Extreme Consequence	6.65	1.348	20
	Total	5.90	1.324	60
Total	Low Consequence	4.90	1.189	60
	Moderate Consequence	5.62	1.027	60
	Extreme Consequence	6.87	.791	60
	Total	5.79	1.298	180

#### Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances(a)

Dependent Variable: Severity of the harm

F	df1	df2	Sig.
7.696	8	171	.000

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept+OFF.AGE+CONSEQ+OFF.AGE \* CONSEQ

Post hoc Analyses**Multiple Comparisons**

Dependent Variable: Harmfulness of behaviour

**Tukey HSD**

	Moderate Consequence	-.82(*)	.191	.000
	Extreme Consequence	-1.12(*)	.191	.000
Moderate Consequence	Low Consequence	.82(*)	.191	.000
	Extreme Consequence	-.30	.190	.256
Extreme Consequence	Low Consequence	1.12(*)	.191	.000
	Moderate Consequence	.30	.190	.256

95% Confidence Interval	
Lower Bound	Upper Bound
-1.28	-.37
-1.58	-.67
.37	1.28
-.75	.15
.67	1.58
-.15	.75

Based on observed means.

- The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

## Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Severity of the harm

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	127.244(b)	8	15.906	15.618	.000	.422
Intercept	6043.606	1	6043.606	5934.290	.000	.972
OFF.AGE	2.011	2	1.006	.987	.375	.011
CONSEQ	118.878	2	59.439	58.364	.000	.406
OFF.AGE * CONSEQ	6.356	4	1.589	1.560	.187	.035
Error	174.150	171	1.018			
Total	6345.000	180				
Corrected Total	301.394	179				

a. Computed using alpha = .05

b. R Squared = .422 (Adjusted R Squared = .395)

## 1. Grand Mean

Dependent Variable: Severity of the harm

Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
5.794	.075	5.646	5.943

## 2. Offender Age

Dependent Variable: Severity of the harm

Offender Age	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
7 years old	5.833	.130	5.576	6.091
10 years old	5.650	.130	5.393	5.907
14 years old	5.900	.130	5.643	6.157

## 3. Level of Consequence

Dependent Variable: Severity of the harm

Level of Consequence	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Low Consequence	4.90	1.189	60
Moderate Consequence	5.62	1.027	60
Extreme Consequence	6.87	.791	60
Total	5.79	1.298	180

Post hoc Analyses**Multiple Comparisons**

Dependent Variable: Severity of the harm

**Tukey HSD**

	Moderate Consequence	-.72(*)	.184	.000
	Extreme Consequence	-1.97(*)	.184	.000
Moderate Consequence	Low Consequence	.72(*)	.184	.000
	Extreme Consequence	-1.25(*)	.184	.000
Extreme Consequence	Low Consequence	1.97(*)	.184	.000
	Moderate Consequence	1.25(*)	.184	.000

95% Confidence Interval	
Lower Bound	Upper Bound
-1.15	-.28
-2.40	-1.53
.28	1.15
-1.69	-.81
1.53	2.40
.81	1.69

Based on observed means.

\* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.



*Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of responsibility?*

### 3 x 3 Factorial Analysis of Variance

#### Descriptive Statistics

Dependent Variable: Responsibility

Offender Age	Level of Consequence	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
7 years old	Low Consequence	6.00	1.026	20
	Moderate Consequence	5.68	.671	19
	Extreme Consequence	6.00	.858	20
	Total	5.90	.865	59
10 years old	Low Consequence	5.95	.999	20
	Moderate Consequence	6.15	.875	20
	Extreme Consequence	5.65	1.040	20
	Total	5.92	.979	60
14 years old	Low Consequence	5.75	1.070	20
	Moderate Consequence	5.85	1.182	20
	Extreme Consequence	5.68	1.734	19
	Total	5.76	1.331	59
Total	Low Consequence	5.90	1.020	60
	Moderate Consequence	5.90	.941	59
	Extreme Consequence	5.78	1.247	59
	Total	5.86	1.072	178

#### Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances(a)

Dependent Variable: Responsibility

F	df1	df2	Sig.
2.258	8	169	.026

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.  
a. Design: Intercept+OFF.AGE+CONSEQ+OFF.AGE \* CONSEQ

## Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Responsibility

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	4.928(b)	8	.616	.524	.837	.024
Intercept	6104.671	1	6104.671	5195.844	.000	.968
OFF.AGE	.836	2	.418	.356	.701	.004
CONSEQ	.562	2	.281	.239	.788	.003
OFF.AGE * CONSEQ	3.509	4	.877	.747	.562	.017
Error	198.561	169	1.175			
Total	6315.000	178				
Corrected Total	203.489	177				

a. Computed using alpha = .05

b. R Squared = .024 (Adjusted R Squared = -.022)

## 1. Grand Mean

Dependent Variable: Responsibility

Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
5.858	.081	5.697	6.018

## 2. Offender Age

Dependent Variable: Responsibility

Offender Age	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
7 years old	5.895	.141	5.616	6.173
10 years old	5.917	.140	5.640	6.193
14 years old	5.761	.141	5.483	6.040

## 3. Level of Consequence

Dependent Variable: Responsibility

Level of Consequence	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Low Consequence	5.900	.140	5.624	6.176
Moderate Consequence	5.895	.141	5.616	6.173
Extreme Consequence	5.778	.141	5.499	6.057

*Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of the severity of the participants suggested consequence for dealing with the wrongdoer?*

### 3 x 3 Factorial Analysis of Variance

#### **Descriptive Statistics**

Dependent Variable: Severity of suggested consequence

Offender Age	Level of Consequence	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
7 years old	Low Consequence	4.76	1.300	17
	Moderate Consequence	3.70	1.302	20
	Extreme Consequence	4.15	1.843	20
	Total	4.18	1.548	57
10 years old	Low Consequence	4.39	.778	18
	Moderate Consequence	3.95	1.026	19
	Extreme Consequence	4.50	1.792	20
	Total	4.28	1.292	57
14 years old	Low Consequence	4.30	1.490	20
	Moderate Consequence	4.20	1.576	20
	Extreme Consequence	4.56	1.886	18
	Total	4.34	1.628	58
Total	Low Consequence	4.47	1.230	55
	Moderate Consequence	3.95	1.319	59
	Extreme Consequence	4.40	1.816	58
	Total	4.27	1.490	172

#### **Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances(a)**

Dependent Variable: Severity of suggested consequence

F	df1	df2	Sig.
2.929	8	163	.004

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept+OFF.AGE+CONSEQ+OFF.AGE \* CONSEQ

**Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Dependent Variable: Severity of suggested consequence

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	15.819(b)	8	1.977	.886	.530	.042
Intercept	3137.660	1	3137.660	1405.520	.000	.896
OFF.AGE	.618	2	.309	.138	.871	.002
CONSEQ	9.596	2	4.798	2.149	.120	.026
OFF.AGE * CONSEQ	5.784	4	1.446	.648	.629	.016
Error	363.878	163	2.232			
Total	3512.000	172				
Corrected Total	379.698	171				

a. Computed using alpha = .05

b. R Squared = .042 (Adjusted R Squared = -.005)

**1. Grand Mean**

Dependent Variable: Severity of suggested consequence

Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
4.279	.114	4.053	4.504

**2. Offender Age**

Dependent Variable: Severity of suggested consequence

Offender Age	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
7 years old	4.205	.198	3.813	4.597
10 years old	4.279	.198	3.888	4.670
14 years old	4.352	.196	3.964	4.740

**3. Level of Consequence**

Dependent Variable: Severity of suggested consequence

Level of Consequence	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Low Consequence	4.485	.202	4.086	4.883
Moderate Consequence	3.949	.197	3.565	4.333
Extreme Consequence	4.402	.196	4.014	4.790

*Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of whether the justice system should be involved in dealing with the wrongdoer?*

### One-Way Chi Square Analyses

#### Wrongdoer Age & Justice System Involvement

##### Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Offender Age * Justice System involvement	179	99.4%	1	.6%	180	100.0%

##### Offender Age \* Justice System involvement Crosstabulation

			Justice System involvement		Total
			Yes	No	
Offender Age	7 years old	Count	18	42	60
		Expected Count	19.4	40.6	60.0
		% within Offender Age	30.0%	70.0%	100.0%
		% within Justice System involvement	31.0%	34.7%	33.5%
		% of Total	10.1%	23.5%	33.5%
	10 years old	Count	14	45	59
		Expected Count	19.1	39.9	59.0
		% within Offender Age	23.7%	76.3%	100.0%
		% within Justice System involvement	24.1%	37.2%	33.0%
		% of Total	7.8%	25.1%	33.0%
	14 years old	Count	26	34	60
		Expected Count	19.4	40.6	60.0
		% within Offender Age	43.3%	56.7%	100.0%
		% within Justice System involvement	44.8%	28.1%	33.5%
		% of Total	14.5%	19.0%	33.5%
Total		Count	58	121	179
		Expected Count	58.0	121.0	179.0
		% within Offender Age	32.4%	67.6%	100.0%
		% within Justice System involvement	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	32.4%	67.6%	100.0%

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.458(a)	2	.065
Likelihood Ratio	5.424	2	.066
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.421	1	.120
N of Valid Cases	179		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 19.12.

**One-Way Chi Square Analyses****Consequence to the Victim & Justice System Involvement****Case Processing Summary**

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Level of Consequence * Justice System involvement	179	99.4%	1	.6%	180	100.0%

Level of Consequence \* Justice System involvement Crosstabulation

			Justice System involvement		Total
			Yes	No	
Level of Consequence	Low Consequence	Count	12	47	59
		Expected Count	19.1	39.9	59.0
		% within Level of Consequence	20.3%	79.7%	100.0%
		% within Justice System involvement	20.7%	38.8%	33.0%
		% of Total	6.7%	26.3%	33.0%
	Moderate Consequence	Count	10	50	60
		Expected Count	19.4	40.6	60.0
		% within Level of Consequence	16.7%	83.3%	100.0%
		% within Justice System involvement	17.2%	41.3%	33.5%
		% of Total	5.6%	27.9%	33.5%
	Extreme Consequence	Count	36	24	60
		Expected Count	19.4	40.6	60.0
		% within Level of Consequence	60.0%	40.0%	100.0%
		% within Justice System involvement	62.1%	19.8%	33.5%
		% of Total	20.1%	13.4%	33.5%
Total	Count	58	121	179	
	Expected Count	58.0	121.0	179.0	
	% within Level of Consequence	32.4%	67.6%	100.0%	
	% within Justice System involvement	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	32.4%	67.6%	100.0%	

## Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	31.566(a)	2	.000
Likelihood Ratio	31.055	2	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	21.387	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	179		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 19.12.

*Do wrongdoer age and/or consequence to the victim influence perceptions of how severely the wrongdoer should be dealt with by the justice system?*

Scanning of Means and Standard Deviations

<u>Experimental Condition</u>				
<u>Wrongdoer Age</u>	<u>Level of Consequence</u>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
7 years	Low	3.00	1.41	4
7 years	Moderate	2.50	0.71	2
7 years	Extreme	4.25	1.66	12
10 years	Low	4.00	-	1
10 years	Moderate	3.00	1.00	3
10 years	Extreme	4.60	1.51	10
14 years	Low	2.86	1.77	7
14 years	Moderate	4.20	1.09	5
14 years	Extreme	4.92	1.38	13



## Appendix F

## QUALITATIVE RESULTS SUMMARY

Question 6a &amp; 6b – Content Analysis Table

Age Condition	Consequence Condition	General Trends (Q. 6a)	General Trends (Q. 6b)	Other Findings
7	No Physical Consequence	School based punishment most pop. Another common suggestion was counselling. Some also saw punishment of the wrongdoer as the parent's responsibility.	Most gave their suggestions as a means of educating the wrongdoer.	Most common action & reason was School Based Punishment (SBP) / Counselling as a form of Education.
7	Moderate Consequence	Counselling was most pop action (16/20). SBP 2 <sup>nd</sup> most popular, but far less than previous condition.	Education was the primary reason for punishment. Deterrence also more of a focus.	One participant suggested making the wrongdoer's parents pay for the victim's medical expenses (restorative justice).
7	Extreme Consequence	Counselling most pop action. Justice System Intervention (JSI) 2 <sup>nd</sup> most pop. Included Good Behaviour Bond and Juvenile Detention. Most wanted to avoid institutionalisation.	Education most cited reason. Deterrence featured prominently. Retribution mentioned for first time.	1 person stated no punishment required because of the trauma and guilt of causing paralysis. 3/20 believed the victim should decide punishment (eg; help paralysis victim's).
10	No Physical Consequence	SBP most common action. Punishment via the wrongdoer's parents 2 <sup>nd</sup> most common.	Education cited as most common reason for action. Understanding the offender featured prominently.	One participant suggested mediation.

10	Moderate Consequence	SBP and Counselling were most popular actions. An apology from the wrongdoer was also a common suggestion.	Educating the wrongdoer was most popular reason. Deterrence also a common reason.	On participant cited that the action should be SB because the incident occurred on school property during school hrs.
10	Extreme Consequence	Counselling was most popular action, followed by JSI and SBP.	Education most popular reason, but not majority. Some suggested deterrence and other showed concern for the wrongdoer who witnessed the paralyzing accident.	Expulsion was a condition of the SBP for some participants, whilst one participant said, "the victim contributed to the fight". Some said the wrongdoer should care for the victim and help paralysed people.
14	No Physical Consequence	Counselling and SBP featured most prominently.	Most concerned with the wrongdoer being educated. Deterrence also a reason cited often. Some also saw the harm caused as a reason for action.	One participant mentioned the need for both Counselling and SBP due to the "emotional harm caused".
14	Moderate Consequence	Most pop action was Counselling SBP, Apology, Mediation and JSI were also common responses	Education most common reason cited. Deterrence, and understanding the wrongdoer were also features.	One participant said both boys were responsible. Another thought that the wrongdoer needed psychological help.
14	Extreme Consequence	Counselling and JSI were the most common actions (often in conjunction with one another)	Reasons cited most commonly were education followed by deterrence and due to the harm caused	Most saw the wrongdoer's actions as deliberate. Others saw the wrongdoer as needing psychological and/or corrective treatment.

**Qualitative Label Meanings – Question 6a**

<u>LABEL</u>	<u>MEANING</u>
Parents Accountable	Jason's parents should be held accountable
No Punishment	Jason should not be punished
Apology	Jason should apologise to the victim
Counselling	Anger management and education
Mediation	Both families talk about incident
Parental Punishment	Jason punished by his parents
Punishment via Victim	Jason punished by victim's family
School Based Punishment	Detention, suspension, expulsion
Justice System Intervention	Comm. Service, probation, fine or prison

**Qualitative Label Meanings – Question 6b**

<u>LABEL</u>	<u>MEANING</u>
Harm Caused	Because of severity of harm caused
Potential Harm	Because of potential harm
Deterrence/Prevention	To deter/prevent future violent acts
Retribution	To gain a sense of justice for Stephen
Educate offender (Rehabilitation)	To help Jason understand his actions
Understand Offender	To help understand Jason's behaviour
Witness to Event	Witnessing event was punishment enough