

COGNITIVE DYNAMICS IN MORAL JUDGMENTS

by

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requirements for the degree

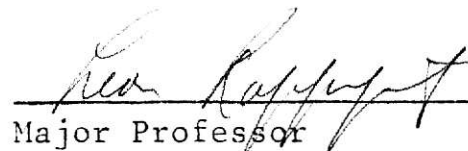
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## CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

Burgeoning social conflicts over such issues as abortion and capital punishment are indicative of moral crises in American society. Pro-life groups argue that abortion terminates a life and therefore is murder. However, the same point, sanctity of human life, is ignored by those who support capital punishment. In essence there is an asymmetry in the apparent logic concerning support for legalized abortion and capital punishment. This asymmetry often goes unquestioned. It is this asymmetry and the cognitive process making it possible which are the points of study.

The purpose of this study is not to determine whether abortion and capital punishment are morally right or wrong. Rather, the intent is to examine the way in which these issues may be perceived as being either consistent or inconsistent with personal values concerning morality.

Capital punishment may be supported because it satisfies the victim's and the public's desire for retribution or social retaliation. According to Mittendorf (1971) there are five reasons for punishment: retribution, general deterrence, special deterrence, incapacitation, and reformation. He suggests that retribution is a continuously persistent goal of punishment. Moreover, he states that no penal system, legislator, or judge can ignore the so-called people's sense of justice. The sense of justice is a psychological reality. Therefore, a penal system which does not satisfy this psychological reality may result in the people taking the law into their own hands. Consequently, it appears that the need for retribution overrides the contradictory logic of support for both legalized abortion and capital punishment.



It is hypothesized that retribution, in the form of the people's sense of justice, may be sustained by a belief in a just world. The belief in a just world is a pervasive cognitive tendency linking goodness and happiness, or wickedness and punishment (Lerner, 1965). The links, in fact, are so strong that given one of these conditions the other is frequently assumed. Thus, people see a harmonious fit between happiness and goodness, or between wickedness and punishment. This fit between conditions becomes the objective reality ought.

Ought is the moral standard which "is considered to belong to the objective reality that is the same for everyone" (Heider, 1958; p. 230). The two major defining characteristics of the moral standard ought are: (1) different people should perceive the same ought demands in a given situation (consensual validation), and (2) ought demands should manifest themselves across situations (cross-situational consistency) (Ross and DiTocco, 1975; p. 92). Thus, moral standards are defined, as are all external attributions, by consistency over time and over modalities and consensus among different persons in their reactions.

In the above example the justice ought suggests people merit their misfortunes. Therefore, when conditions do not coexist as they should, the imbalance is discordant. This motivates people to establish a fit so the situation exists as they think it should. By suggesting a fit between wickedness and punishment, capital punishment may be viewed as an instance of justifiable retribution for transgressing against society's laws. In evaluations of capital punishment and legalized abortion it appears that: (1) since others support capital punishment and deny legalized abortions the individual will do so (consensus) and (2) since all bad behaviors

are punishable (cross-situational consistency) then the ought concerning sanctity of life is overridden by making evaluations in accord with (1) others' opinions and (2) the concept, as it is sustained by the belief in a just world, that links goodness and happiness, or wickedness and punishment. Consequently, the need to retain a fit between goodness and happiness, or between wickedness and punishment is so strong the moral aspects of the support for capital punishment are disregarded.

In addition to examining the asymmetry in the logic between issues of capital punishment and legalized abortion, this study may also provide some understanding of the "ought-is" drift (Kelley, 1971). Kelley identified this drift as the tendency to accept what "is" as the equivalent to the objective reality "ought".

This drift blends rational and social morality. Rational morality rises from the conscious decisions of individuals. Therefore, the moral standard "ought" is equivalent to rational morality. Social morality evolves from unreflectively accepted customs based on behavior consciously or unconsciously imitated by others. The behavior that is imitated becomes the norm. Therefore, social morality is equivalent to "is".

An examination of the "ought-is" drift may lead to a better understanding of rational and social morality. Social morality, because it is influenced by consensus or consistency changes over time. This flux allows behavior that was not acceptable at one time, to be acceptable at some later date. The changes in moral standards occur because people make evaluations in the same way that they make external attributions. Thus, the standard "ought" is contaminated and is no longer stated in absolute terms. Study

of this problem can provide an understanding of the social rules which satisfy the need for retribution and subsequently allow people to ignore the principle of the sanctity of human life.

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## CHAPTER 2

### Prior Theory and Research

The chapter opens with a summary of Piaget's theory of cognitive development and its influence on Heider's theory of attributions of responsibility. A review of recent research findings concerning sources of biases in the attribution of responsibility that seem relevant to the problem of moral judgment follows. The conditions in which a person may confuse information used in making attributions of responsibility are examined. Next, Lerner's (1965) hypothesis concerning the belief in a just world and the cultural, psychological, and cognitive-development perspectives associated with this belief are presented. It is then argued that moral judgments may be understood in terms of how beliefs in a just world can influence attributions of responsibility.

### Moral Judgment Research

#### The Cognitive Basis of Moral Development

Piaget's general theory of cognitive development views the acquisition of knowledge and competence as a consequence of growth and interaction with the physical and social environments. This developmental approach attempts to identify the environmental factors which retard or advance development.

Three fundamental principles underlying Piaget's notions of cognitive development are (1) biological maturation, (2) experience with the physical environment, and (3) experience with the social environment. To this he adds the concept equilibration, a progressive, self-regulating process of balancing contradictory cognitive structures.

As the individual matures biologically, familiar behaviors follow an orderly development. This maturational process, which

is not independent of learning, emphasizes the sequence, not the content of development. As the child experiences his environment sensorimotor skills for locomotion and manipulation develop. Three experiences important to the development of sensorimotor skills are: exercise, physical experience, and logico-mathematical experience. Exercise leads to a refinement of movement. Physical experience leads to extracting information from objects in the environment. Logico-mathematical experiences depend on special properties of subject-object interaction and do not depend on the object's physical properties. Thus, the emphasis is placed on the cognitive abilities involved in solving logically difficult operations. It is the experience with the social environment which provides the opportunity to learn many kinds of activities, concepts, and relationships such as co-operation and competition, mutual respect, folkways, and mores.

The process of equilibration organizes these experiences. In order to understand equilibration two concepts, assimilation and accommodation, are employed. These concepts serve to describe the mechanics of equilibration. The fitting of external reality into an existing structure is assimilation, and the modification the structure undergoes while this is taking place is accommodation. Equilibration is fundamental in co-ordinating the other three factors in cognitive development.

#### An Attributional Analysis of Moral Evaluations

Heider's (1958) theory of moral development follows a stage-wise treatment. Each stage takes into account the importance of environmental factors and its subsequent effect on the determination of responsibility. All stages seem correlated with Piaget's theory of cognitive development. At the first level evaluations

of responsibility are primitive and undifferentiated. During the course of cognitive development evaluations become more sophisticated in dealing with the environmental determinants of actions.

The five stages and their Piagetian correlates are:

Level 1. Global-Association: The person is held responsible for any effect that he is connected with in any way. In Piaget's (1955) terms, responsibility at this most primitive stage is determined by syncretistic, pseudocausal reasoning rather than by consideration of objective causal connections. Thus, a person may be blamed for harmful acts committed by his friends.

Level 2. Extended Commission: The person is held responsible for any effect that he produced by his actions, even though he definitely could not have foreseen the consequences of his actions. As in Piaget's (1932) "objective responsibility" the person is judged according to what he does but not according to his motives.

Level 3. Careless Commission: The person is held responsible for any foreseeable effect that he produced by his actions even though the effect was not a part of his goals or intentions. He is held responsible for the lack of restraint that a wider cognitive field would produce.

Level 4. Purposive Commission: The person is held responsible for any effect that he produced by his actions, foreseeing the outcome and intending to produce the effect. This corresponds roughly to Piaget's "subjective responsibility" in which motives are the central issue.

Level 5. Justified Commission: The person is held only partly responsible for any effect that he intentionally produced, if the circumstances were such that most persons would have felt

and acted as he did. That is, responsibility for the act is at least shared by the coercive environment.

### Biases in Attributions of Responsibility

Because moral judgments appear to be a specific type of the more general process of responsibility attribution, the following review considers the relevant results showing how the attribution process may be biased.

People interpret responsibility in different ways. Heider suggests the sophistication of the interpretation of responsibility changes as a function of one's cognitive development. Shaw and Sulzer (1964) demonstrated that people may confuse the importance of environmental factors when making moral evaluations of responsibility. Two groups were presented brief stories depicting Heider's five interpretations of responsibility (Heider, 1958). Children (6-9 years old) and college students assigned responsibility for positive and negative outcomes to agents in the stories. It was found that college students tended to differentiate more than did the children in those situations when the consequences could have been foreseen or intended from those in which foreseeability and intentionality were clearly absent. Shaw and Sulzer concluded moral evaluations differ as a function of the external factors influencing the total situation as interpreted by the individual.

Although Shaw and Sulzer's work supports Heider's observation that the level of sophistication in making attributions of responsibility increases over time, it has been demonstrated that even mature individuals often make "primitive" attributions. Parameters such as defensive attributions (Shaver, 1970a), perceived severity of consequences and fate similarity (Chaiken and Darley,



1973), attributional contexts (Lerner, 1965), or belief in a just world (Lerner, 1965) may influence moral judgments. It seems reasonable to conclude that people will confuse the information used to make moral judgments when "the reason fits the wishes of the person and the datum is plausibly derived from the reason" (Heider, 1958, p. 172). Evaluations which are biased allow the attributor to maintain constancy between his perceptions of the world and his evaluations.

Thus, it appears incorrect to assume that the attributions an individual makes are at the highest level of the individual's cognitive ability. People may make attributions which are often primitive relative to what they are capable of doing. Ross and DiTecco (1975) identify four factors which may be seen to influence the sophistication of attributions of responsibility. These four factors are: specification, linguistic usage, attributional context, and motivational biases.

**Specification:** In this condition the individual is instructed as to the particular interpretation of responsibility he should use. For example, in the court system, a judge will instruct the jury as to the response level they should adopt, i.e. murder requires proof of intentionality. Since people can be instructed as to the particular interpretation of responsibility they should use it appears that responsibility can be interpreted in different ways.

**Linguistic usage:** Language implicitly forms the basis by which an individual interprets events (Kanouse, 1971; Whorf, 1941). Kanouse provides evidence that the language used to describe a phenomenon will affect the attributions an individual is likely to make in order to explain it.

Attributional context: An individual will engage in a full-blown causal analysis when the need to predict and control another's behavior is clearly present. However, when this motivation is lacking, a detailed analysis of the situation is not warranted. It is at this time that primitive attributions are likely to be made. (Ross and DiTecco, 1975). Individuals may often not be motivated to seek the best possible answer for an event, but merely a sufficiently satisfactory one. Therefore, primitive attributions may be sufficiently satisfactory when the consequences of the attribution are in terms of its future significance for the attributor.

Motivated biases: It is assumed that individuals' perceptions of responsibility are influenced by their own desires and self-interests. Thus, an observer may make "primitive" attributions of responsibility for the harmful consequences of another's actions. By making primitive attributions, the observer will assign blame to the innocent victim of an accident because any other attribution, i.e. chance occurrence or external causation, implies that a misfortune could occur to anyone, including the observer. This process of defensive attributions (Shaver, 1970a) may have a role in the level of sophistication employed by an observer when he is making attributions of responsibility.

#### Defensive Attributions

Walster (1966) asked adult subjects to indicate the extent to which they felt a car owner was responsible for an automobile accident caused by a mechanical failure in the automobile. Since the owner did not intend or foresee the consequences, though they might have been foreseen, Walster's description represents Heider's third level of attribution. Subjects' judgments indicated that

as the severity of the alleged consequences increased more responsibility was attributed to the person who caused it.

Replications of this study have failed to demonstrate how severity of consequences affects attributions of responsibility (Shaver, 1970a; 1970b; Stokols and Schopler, 1973; Walster, 1967). A study by Chaiken and Darley (1973) is partially supportive. They showed that as severity of the consequences increased, the subjects were less apt to see chance as responsible. However, attributions of responsibility to the harmdoer did not increase significantly with the severity of the consequences.

One interpretation of these conflicting results is that the studies reflect the subject's uncertainty as to what interpretation of responsibility to utilize in making their judgments (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1973). It is not clear however, why subjects adopt one level in the Walster (1966) and Chaiken and Darley (1973) studies and a different level in the remaining studies.

In general, it seems clear that despite the ambiguity of some research findings, the current literature on attribution of responsibility reveals that a variety of both personal and impersonal factors may have strong influence over individual judgments. In the following review of the just world hypothesis, it will be apparent that belief in a just world, as a personal, moral value, can be interpreted as a major factor influencing the attribution process.

### The Just World Hypothesis

The just world hypothesis states that:

Individuals have a need to believe that they live in a world where people generally get what they deserve. The belief that the world is just enables the individual to confront his physical and social environment

as though they were stable and orderly  
(Lerner and Miller, 1978; p. 1031).

Lerner hypothesizes that the belief in a just world is adaptive because it allows an individual to strive for long-term goals under the assumption these goals can be achieved by hard work.

People do not believe, nor do they need to believe everything that happens in the world is just. The belief in a just world functions best as events come closer to a person's world and are relevant to his own fate. Consequently, the need to explain or make sense of events increases as the concern over injustice to one's self increases.

Reactions to the visible suffering of others. Lerner and Simmons (1966) conducted the first experiment which is the prototype of a series of experiments on the belief in a just world. These studies focus on victim derogation as a reaction to the visible suffering of others.

Lerner and Simmons had female subjects watch a fellow student on videotape. These subjects, believing that they were participating in a human learning experiment, were (1) given the opportunity to compensate the victim who was shocked for each incorrect answer, (2) could not reward the victim and were informed that the suffering would continue, or (3) informed that the victim had allowed herself to be shocked for the sake of the experiment.

The findings were that in condition one, when they were allowed to restore justice through compensation most subjects did compensate the victim. In conditions two and three, subjects rated the victim unfavorably. This unfavorable rating was most pronounced in the third condition. Researchers concluded that the sight of an innocent person who suffered without the possibility

of reward motivated the subjects to devalue (derogate) the attractiveness of the victim in order to bring about a more appropriate fit between fate and character. This general finding has been replicated a number of times with diverse populations.

It appears when someone suffers without the possibility of reward or compensation, a person may be motivated to devalue the attractiveness of the victim in order to bring about a more appropriate fit between fate and character. A person who feels responsible for the suffering of the victim will derogate the victim as a means to reduce guilt. In sum, the belief in a just world is a defense against the belief that (1) misfortune would happen to them or (2) they could themselves precipitate suffering in the future.

The development of the belief in a just world. Rubin and Peplau suggest the belief in a just world is fostered by three conditions (1) the theme of a just world in Western culture, (2) the psychological functions of the belief in a just world, and (3) the links between this belief and theories of cognitive development. These conditions are not mutually exclusive.

The theme of a just world is perpetuated in Western culture by fairy tales and popular myths. Tales and myths emphasize that rewards follow from virtue and punishments from misbehavior. A child's respect for authority is encouraged by the belief in a just world. Admiration for authority is one-sided. The emphasis is on virtues, not flaws in power. Children are taught to admire parents, policemen, and political figures, and to revere American institutions. As a result "...children from families in which idealized and uncritical respect for authority is encouraged will

be especially likely to have a strong belief that the world is just" (Rubin and Peplau, 1975; p. 73).

Religions also foster this belief in a just world. Judaism and Christianity teach that rewards are inevitable. The Protestant Ethic emphasizes the links between hard work, financial success, and spiritual salvation. Prosperity is viewed as a sign of virtue. Therefore, children who grow up in "religious" households are likely to develop a strong belief in a just world.

The just world belief functions psychologically to reduce the threatening notion that with a delay in gratification a reward may not always follow. Lerner (1974) hypothesizes that the progression from the "pleasure principle" (taking what you can get and doing what feels good now) to the "reality principle" (giving up immediate rewards in favor of sustained effort to achieve future goals) is accompanied by an implicit belief that investment of effort and self-denial pays off in the end. The achiever is threatened by the realization that if other people do not get what they deserve, then he may not either. Therefore, a person engages in activities assuming that the world is stable and orderly. This assumption allows the individual to strive for future goals. He believes that because the world is just his hard work ultimately will be rewarded.

Cognitive Aspects of Belief in a Just World: Piaget identified the phenomenon "immanent justice" in his systematic analysis of the changes that occur in children's ideas about morality. Immanent justice is a belief that "a fault will automatically bring about its own punishment" (Piaget, 1965; p. 250). This belief declines with age, on occasions when parents are shown to be wrong

or unfair, and by an expansion of the child's social world to include egalitarian relationships with peers.

In a broader context of cognitive and moral development Piaget found that children see parents as either "absolute, omniscient authorities who define what is fair and just. For children, the fact someone is punished by an adult is proof of his wrongdoing" (Rubin and Peplau, 1975; p. 75). Piaget believes that this belief, although it declines with age, persists to some degree in adults.

The belief in a just world functions for both the individual and society. This belief encourages good behavior, hard work, and respect for authorities and institutions. Only as the child develops cognitively and morally does he question this belief. Personal experiences with injustice and attainment of a principled view of morality that transcends obedience to conventional standards and authorities result in questioning this belief.

#### Personality correlates of the belief in a just world.

Social learning theory implies that two personality dimensions related to the belief in a just world are trust and personal efficacy. A person must believe or trust that one ultimately receives deserved rewards. Secondly, the person must have a sense of personal efficacy or the ability to manipulate one's environment to bring about just rewards. Thus, the belief in a just world is linked to a sense of internal control over one's outcomes.

Rubin and Peplau admit little research of the sort that could shed direct light on the development of the belief in a just world has been conducted. Their consideration of developmental perspectives has suggested several hypotheses about the likely correlates among adults. It is expected people with a strong belief



in a just world will be authoritarian, trusting, religious, adhere to the Protestant Ethic, and possibly have a sense of internal or personal control of their reinforcements. Rubin and Peplau feel each of these hypotheses has received some support in recent investigations employing the Just World Scale. Relevant findings are summarized below.

Authoritarianism: The belief in a just world and authoritarianism are linked because authoritarians tend to describe leaders in idealized terms. Authoritarianism and the just world belief share the theme linking strong and powerful people to goodness, and weak and powerless people to wickedness. Authoritarianism has been shown to be related to intolerance for cognitive inconsistency (Steiner and Johnson, 1963) and hostility toward handicapped and underprivileged persons and groups. These tendencies are also expected to follow from the belief in a just world.

A .56 correlation between JW scores and a 10-item version of the F-scale focusing on authoritarian submission and a correlation of .20 between the two scales (a larger pool of F-scale items) in a sample of 106 Canadian students were reported. A correlation of .35 was obtained between the Just World Scale and a five-item form of the F-scale administered six months after the Just World Scale.

Factor analytic studies demonstrate that there is a conceptual difference between the belief in a just world and authoritarianism. F-scale scores were associated with a general ethnocentrism among Canadian student respondents, including negative attitudes toward both Americans (a highly advantaged group) and Indians and Metis (disadvantaged groups). Just World scores, in contrast, were



consistent with positive attitudes toward Americans (winners) and negative attitudes toward Indians and Metis (losers). The pattern of relationships is consistent with the just world hypothesis. Groups which are defined as successful (the Americans) are liked and respected, while groups defined as losers (Indians and Metis) are derogated.

In general, therefore, it seems that although the F-scale and JW scale tend to overlap in some ways, they are quite different from each other.

Trust: It is suggested that one might be a trusting person if he is assured that people are getting what they deserve. Rubin and Peplau (1975) report that a .55 correlation between JW scores and Rotter's (1967) Interpersonal Trust Scale was obtained. They also report that a significant relation between Just World Scale Scores and three factors on the Rotter scale was found: institutional trust ( $r = .42$ ), trust in other people's sincerity ( $r = .34$ ), and trust that one will not be taken advantage of by others ( $r = .32$ ). These results may reflect in large measure the link between the belief in a just world and the uncritical acceptance of authority. There is a suggestion that the belief in a just world may also be related to a more generalized trust of others.

Religiosity: Because Western religions endorse the belief in a just world it was suggested that relatively religious people will be especially likely to espouse this belief. A .42 correlation between JW scores and reported frequency of church or synagogue attendance was obtained (Rubin and Peplau, 1975). In their conception of God, respondents' JW scores and belief in an active God were significantly correlated ( $r = .31$ ).

Protestant ethic: The Protestant Ethic Scale, developed by Mirels and Garrett (1971), and the Just World Scale were significantly correlated ( $r = .35$ ). High scores on the Protestant Ethic Scale reflect an emphasis on hard work both as a value in its own right and as a key to success. MacDonald (1972) found that high scorers on the Protestant Ethic Scale were significantly more likely than low scorers to derogate social victims, agreeing that "most people on welfare are lazy." Scores on this scale are also positively related to authoritarianism and to the expectancy for internal control of reinforcements. Thus, the tenets of the Protestant Ethic, reflected in this scale, have much in common with the belief in a just world.

Locus of control: Rubin and Peplau (1973) reported a correlation of  $-.44$  between JW scores and scores on Rotter's Locus of Control measure. (High scores on the Locus of Control scale indicate an external locus of control.) The belief in a just world supports an internal locus of control. It removes the threatening notion that if the world was not just, people may strive, and fail to get their reinforcements because of unforeseen external events. It is concluded that the Protestant Ethic, locus of control as a sign of personal efficacy, and belief in a just world are related.

Sex, age, and social class: The subject samples employed have yielded limited evidence concerning links between the belief in a just world and three dimensions of social identity — sex, age, and social class. A general hypothesis relevant to these dimensions is that the belief in a just world will be diminished to the extent that a person has direct experience with injustice. The expectations are that the just world belief is less pronounced (a) among women than among men, (b) among older people than among

younger people, (c) among members of less privileged socioeconomic groups than among members of more privileged groups. Available evidence on each of these is mixed.

No clear sex differences have emerged. Males and females who were administered the Just World Scale and other measures did not score differently from each on the Just World Scale. It is suggested that women, although they have encountered more than their share of personal social obstacles, have seldom experienced such inequalities as unjust. Rather, the prevailing ideological climate has caused females to see inequalities as just.

Just World scores were negatively correlated with age for men ( $r = .22$ ,  $p < .01$ ) but not for women. The reason that the age trend was found only for men remains unclear.

In one sample there was no relationship between social class (as measured by father's educational level) and scores on the Just World Scale ( $r = .03$ ). It is hypothesized that ideological factors counteract the tendency for people of lower-class origins to perceive greater injustice in the world. Lower-class respondents may not perceive injustices because of their fundamentalist religious ideology. This ideology teaches that "what may appear as inequity on the surface is really the result of sin or it will be corrected in the future — Heaven or Hell" (Rubin and Peplau, 1975; p. 81).

Some studies suggest the tendency to perceive others as deserving their fates may contribute to the perpetuation of social injustice. Respondents' scores on the Just World Scale and statements of agreement or disagreement inquiring whether blacks, women, and the poor were responsible for their inferior positions were small and nonsignificant. The exception was one study (Rubin and Peplau, 1975) where for both males and females belief in a just

world was somewhat correlated with derogating blacks, ( $r = .21$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and women ( $r = .31$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

An index of political and social activism such as demonstrating, picketing, or contributing money to political and social issues was constructed by Rubin and Peplau (1975). The correlation between Just World scores and this activism index was  $r = -.29$ ,  $p < .001$ . An inverse correlation ( $-20$ ,  $p < .01$ ) was found between Just World scores and students' global self-ratings of their degree of involvement in "political or social action groups or activities."

The magnitude of links between the belief in a just world and the derogation of social victims is small. It is suggested this belief is only one of many determinants of attitudes toward socially disadvantaged groups and of political activism. These studies do suggest however, that the tendency to perceive others as deserving their fates is based on the belief that the world is just.

#### The moral judgment problem in this study.

The foregoing review of attribution theory research and the just world hypothesis indicates that both are related to the problem of moral judgment, and that the JW scale appears to provide a measure of a moral value belief system that is directly related to how people will evaluate moral issues. Based on this material, a more specific approach to the moral questions of capital punishment and abortion can not be developed following from ideas suggested by Kelley (1971).

One of the benefits of attribution theory as it may be applied to the problem of moral evaluations is that it allows the experimenter to study the interplay of systems making up the unique

properties of a moral system. Kelley's (1971) study of moral judgment concerns (1) the process by which an individual makes judgments about people and behaviors and (2) statements about what ought to be done. Kelley gives an example of how the resolution between personal needs and social ideals subsequently affects statements about what ought to be done.

He suggests that judgments may be based on a reality evaluation and an achievement evaluation. A reality orientation measures what is correct and incorrect. An achievement orientation measures success and failure. The conditions of an evaluation are regard for broad social ideals, without regard for the agent or personal interest. Often, an individual cannot satisfy these conditions and tension develops.

The evaluation systems of reality and achievement induce tension because a reality orientation emphasizes conventionalism and an achievement orientation emphasizes individuality. This conflict gives rise to different kinds of morality. When the reality orientation dominates, assessment of blame increases as the appeal of the behavior decreases. When the achievement orientation dominates, the assessment of the person succumbing to that incentive increases as the magnitude of the incentive increases. The variability of judgments is a function of the system used by the evaluator.

From this illustration an analogy to the process of making moral evaluations is drawn. An individual is taught that judgments of right and wrong are to be discriminated and judged consistently and to be validated consensually, just as other aspects of reality are discriminated and validated. This has serious consequences for an individual. Objective reality, because it is

based on consensus and consistency, will fluctuate according to majority opinion.

Moral philosophers warn that dependance on others to evaluate social behavior is dangerous (e.g. Frankena, 1963). Assuming that morality is based on consensus and consistency implies morality changes as the public majority mandates it. This is a fallacy. Statements about what ought to be done, in a moral sense, should not be validated consensually.

Kelley's understanding of how systems operate in the evaluation process is reflected in his study of evolving moral standards. There is a tendency, or what Kelley terms a drift, to accept what "is" (based on consensus and consistency) as being equivalent to the objective reality "ought." "Ought" as a moral standard is considered to belong to an objective reality that is the same for everybody. "Ought" appears the same to all men (or all men in the appropriate reference group) and appears the same to each person under his successive careful examination. Kelley contends that "ought" is contaminated by the process of evaluating one's behavior in relation to the actions and opinions of others. An individual will shift evaluations so his evaluations are consonant with what he has chosen to do. This shift occurs under minimal extraneous justification. This tendency to confuse information in evaluations of moral responsibility and its effect on the evaluation of norms are the focuses of this study.

#### General Summary and Statement of Aims.

It is evident that primitive judgments are made to fit the attributor's personal wishes. The interpretations of responsibility may be influenced by the processes of defensive attributions,

perceived severity of consequences, attributional contexts, fate similarity, or belief in a just world. Any of these processes may occur when the reason fits the wishes of the person and the datum is plausibly derived from the reason. Thus, the variability of judgments is a function of the attributor's personal wishes.

Furthermore, according to Kelley, the principles of consensus and consistency, which define our objective reality, have an adverse effect on our moral standards. An individual seeks to evaluate behavior in terms of others' opinions and actions. The individual will make judgments so they are consonant with either his beliefs or his previous behaviors. (In this case, the belief in the just world has linked goodness to happiness, or wickedness to punishment. Thus for people to remain consistent with this belief they will punish behavior by withholding abortions or instituting capital punishment.)

Moral philosophers warn that this is dangerous. Although there are properties, i.e. consensus and consistency, shared between moral evaluations and other types of evaluations it should not be implied that morality changes as the public majority mandates it. However, it appears people do not reject this implication. Kelley (1971) speculated that moral evaluations based on consensus and consistency result in a contamination of Heider's "ought." There is a tendency, or what Kelley terms a drift, to accept what "is" (based on consensus and consistency) as being equivalent to the objective reality "ought." Thus, "ought" is contaminated by this drift and shifts the meaning of moral evaluations to have self-serving consequences, i.e. a resolution to the conflict between the regard for personal needs and broad social ideals.



The purpose of this study is two-fold. The study is designed to focus on the belief in a just world and the influence this belief exerts on moral evaluations. The second point of this study is to determine whether the belief in a just world is related to the evolution of moral norms. This will be achieved by studying the types of arguments used by attributors to support their positions.

The problem: When people are confronted with moral issues concerning legalized abortion and capital punishment, how do they evaluate them\*. Those who are against both will presumably appeal directly, as justification, to the sacredness of life. When there are exceptions to this case resulting in support of either issue, it is hypothesized that the exceptions will be justified by appealing to "justice" or "equity," or to personal rights founded on justice.

It is hypothesized that those who support capital punishment and do not support legalized abortion will score high on the Just World Scale (Rubin and Peplau, 1975). However, it is those who score high on JWS but are not supportive of capital punishment and those who score high on JWS and are for legalized abortion who are of interest, because their attitudes would seem to be out of line with their JWS scores. The reasons for the inconsistency between JWS scores and opinions about moral issues may be important in studying the evolution of moral norms. An examination of the reasons for the inconsistency between JWS scores and opinions about moral issues may explain how the asymmetry in the apparent logic concerning evaluations on capital punishment and legalized abortion



goes unquestioned as these evaluations are judged relative to the existing moral norms.

The relation between Just World Scale scores and moral issues will be studied in an interview setting. People who show opinions on moral issues that do not seem appropriate to their Just World Scale scores will be confronted and requested to explain how they resolve the apparent inconsistency. The resolution of a moral conflict will be analyzed to determine how it reflects a contamination of ought. It is hypothesized that those who score high on JWS will be influenced by arguments that are socially acceptable and are based on popular opinion. Those who do not express strong belief in a justice rationale, i.e. the low scorers on JWS, will presumably not be influenced by arguments that reflect popular notions.

## CHAPTER 3

## Method and Design

The design was developed to investigate how the belief in a just world influences moral judgments. Questionnaires were administered to determine whether, and under what conditions, the respondent supported capital punishment and legalized abortion. Interview sessions with selected subjects were conducted to examine why people held certain views.

Subjects.

Subjects were selected on the basis of their Just World Scale scores. One hundred and forty-three students in introductory psychology classes were administered the Just World Scale. After the scores were tabulated a sign up sheet listing the names of 80 individuals was posted. This list contained the names of 40 individuals who were labeled low scorers and 40 individuals who were labeled high scorers.

Because there were difficulties in recruiting subjects, more than the 80 individuals whose names were originally posted were eligible to be subjects. Thus, people were selected by taking the fifty highest scorers and forty-five lowest scorers. Students whose scores were 3.5 and greater and students whose scores were 3.05 and less were subjects. The range of scores was 2.30 to 4.55. (See Appendix A for the distribution of scores.)

From among those who signed up, 23 people from the "low" group ( $\bar{x} = 2.74$ ), and 17 from the "high" group ( $\bar{x} = 3.91$ ) were available for the study. A  $t$  - test between the means of these two groups showed that their JW scores were significantly different from one another ( $t = 14.68$ ,  $p. < .01$ ).

## Instruments

1. The Just World Scale (see Appendix D) was developed by Rubin and Peplau (1973). The scale, a twenty-item paper-and-pencil test, was designed to measure the extent to which people perceive others as deserving their fates in a wide range of situations. Each item requires the respondent to indicate his degree of agreement or disagreement on a 6-point continuum. A score of one means an extreme rejection of the belief that the world is just. A score of six is an extreme acceptance that the world is just.

Some items on the scale refer to the belief in a just world in general terms. These items are scored positively. Other items which refer to the "unjust" possibilities such as guilty people being rewarded are scored negatively. When computing the score, all items labeled as "unjust" are tallied by reversing the score along the continuum. For example, if a subject marked the fifth place along the 6-point continuum of a statement designated as "unjust" then this score is reversed. The statement is subsequently scored as a two. The scores for the 20 items are then summed and averaged to yield the JW score.

Previous work by Rubin and Peplau shows that college-aged subjects typically make scores fitting an approximate normal distribution. In a sample of 90 male and 90 female undergraduates at Boston University the mean individual items score was 3.08. This indicated a slight tendency on average to reject the notion that the world is a just place. There was a wide distribution of total scores on the scale, ranging from total rejection to qualified acceptance of the just world ideology. A revised version of the scale (26 items) was also administered to 35 male and 27 female students. The mean individual item score was 3.79, pointing to a

stronger belief in a just world among these subjects than among the earlier noted sample. Researchers found a wide range of individual scores however. In both samples the scale had a high internal consistency (coefficient alpha or KR-20 equal to .80 in the first sample and .81 in the second sample). Rubin and Peplau contend that: "The psychometric data suggest that in spite of the broad spectrum of contents sampled, the scale is tapping an underlying general belief that can meaningfully be viewed as a single attitudinal continuum" (p. 70).

The mean individual item score for the 143 subjects in the present study was 3.29. The variance of the scores equaled .23. It should be noted that Rubin and Peplau do not include the variances of the distributions of scores when writing about the construct validity of the scale. They mention that scores range from one to six (the entire continuum). The scores of the 143 subjects tested for this study ranged from 2.3 to 4.55.

2. The moral issues questionnaire (see Appendix E) was designed to determine:

a) whether the subject supported capital punishment and legalized abortion

b) the conditions under which the subject would support either issue

c) whether the conditions for support changed when a family member, close friend, or the subject himself was involved

d) what arguments, which were published in the school newspaper, had influenced support for capital punishment and legalized abortion.

The rationale for the structure of the moral-issues questionnaire follows.

After it was determined whether the subject supported capital punishment and legalized abortion subjects were asked to indicate the conditions for which they supported either issue. This was done for two reasons. First, it was felt that support for capital punishment and legalized abortion is not *carte blanche*. It was necessary to demonstrate that people discriminate the conditions of support for capital punishment and legalized abortion.

Secondly, an attempt was made to show that the conditions of support may change depending on who is involved. Since the belief in a just world functions best as events come closer to a person's world and are relevant to his own fate it was necessary to investigate whether the conditions of support for capital punishment and legalized abortion change from the list of reasons for support in general (not personally-relevant conditions) and reasons for support when a family member, close friend, or the subject himself is involved (personally-relevant conditions).

In actuality, the results from the conditions under which subjects supported capital punishment and legalized abortion (not personally-relevant conditions) were examined in two ways. First, the results were examined to determine the conditions under which subjects supported capital punishment and legalized abortion. Second, in keeping with the idea that belief in a just world functions as events become relevant to one's fate, the conditions of support for capital punishment and legalized abortion were ranked according to the percentage of support each condition received. The rankings for this condition were then compared to the rankings of the conditions of support for capital punishment and legalized abortion in the personally-relevant conditions. The comparison was necessary to determine whether the conditions of support change between the two conditions.

In order to determine whether there were differences between JW scores and the statements which influenced support for capital punishment and legalized abortion, subjects were asked to rank a set of statements as these statements had influenced their support for capital punishment and legalized abortion. The statements were excerpts from "Letters to the Editor" published in the school newspaper.

This equation was designed to determine whether the belief in a just world was related to the arguments often used to substantiate support for capital punishment and legalized abortion. If a relationship between JW scores and statements could be identified, then future studies could examine the role the belief in a just world plays in the evolution of moral norms.

The statements revolved around certain themes. The capital punishment statements concerned themes of retribution, the positive effects of capital punishment, anti-capital punishment statements, or concurrence with the majority's opinion. The statement: "Murderers have proven time and again that they consider human life to be very cheap. It is these individuals (murderers) who feel that a human life is so inexpensive that they must take one who should be compelled to pay with their own lives," is labeled a retribution statement. The statements: "Capital punishment is a deterrent to the commission of crimes" and "The prevention of crime through the incapacitation of the murderer is reason enough for having a death penalty" are considered to be the statements denoting the benefits of capital punishment. The statements: "Capital punishment is 'cruel and unusual punishment' and unconstitutional" and "Capital punishment should be rejected because an innocent man may be wrongly sentenced to die" are considered to

be anti-capital punishment statements. "The majority opinion supports capital punishment" was a measure of agreement with the majority.

The legalized abortion statements revolved around themes pertaining to a woman's right or choice to have an abortion, the ethics or morality concerning abortion, whether abortion is murder, and agreement with the majority. The statements: "Give a child a chance to be wanted and loved or don't let it be born at all. Until a time when a group of cells can be exhumed from its mother successfully to continue on its own,...the woman has the right to get rid of it," "A choice for abortion is a God-given right that cannot be taken away regardless of what laws may be written," and "Abortion should be left to a woman's discretion since it is a choice a male shall never have to make" pertain to a woman's right to an abortion or a woman's choice to have an abortion. "A civilized society should be concerned about the right to life of all human beings and should not make life and death decisions based on personal and social convenience" concerned the ethics or morality of abortions. "The majority opinion supports legalized abortion" is a measure of agreement with the majority. An abortion, as an instance of murder, is the theme of the statement: "Abortion is a choice to murder."

3) A nine-item social issues questionnaire (see Appendix F) similar in format to the Just World Scale was included with the moral issues questionnaire. The questionnaire was employed as a check to determine whether the belief in a just world influenced other issues besides capital punishment and legalized abortion. The items reflected the notion that people should be rewarded (avoid the draft because the person is a student) or compensated



(compensation because of natural disaster) because they had either worked hard to attain the goal or were innocent victims of some random misfortune. The statements, in essence, were comparable to the items from the JW Scale with the exception that each item could be associated with matters of public policy, i.e. the draft, federal housing, or federal compensation.

It was expected that since these issues were not as well publicized as capital punishment and legalized abortion the responses to the statements would be indicative of how the belief in a just world influenced attitudes toward public policy.

#### Procedure

Subjects. Forty-three subjects were administered the questionnaires concerning moral and social issues. One subject did not answer the booklet correctly and the data were omitted. Two other subjects' data were randomly dropped to bring the total number of subjects to 40. There were 17 high JW scorers and 23 low JW scorers. There were 19 females and 21 males. The average age was 19.1 years.

The study was conducted in two parts — a group session and an interview session. Subjects were administered the questionnaires in group sessions. At the end of each group session all subjects were asked to return later for an interview. Only subjects in the following categories were interviewed:

#### High Just World Scale scorers who:

- a) supported neither legalized abortion or capital punishment
- b) supported legalized abortion and did not support capital punishment



c) did not support legalized abortion and did support capital punishment.

Low Just World Scale scorers who:

a) supported legalized abortion and capital punishment

b) supported legalized abortion and did not support capital punishment

c) did not support legalized abortion and supported capital punishment.

## CHAPTER 4

## Results

The results are presented in two parts. First is an examination of questionnaire responses concerning capital punishment and legalized abortion. In this section hypotheses are tested in accord with the prediction that those who score high on a Just World Scale will support capital punishment and be against legalized abortion. Second is an analysis of responses from the interviews with subjects whose evaluations of capital punishment and legalized abortion were not in accord with their Just World Scale scores.

#### A. Statistical Analysis of Questionnaire Responses

The answers concerning support for capital punishment and legalized abortion were analyzed by using the Fisher exact probability technique.

The hypothesis that those who score high on the Just World Scale will support capital punishment was not supported ( $p = 0.31$ ). Nor was any significant relation between high and low scorers on the Just World Scale and support for legalized abortion found ( $p = 0.15$ ). The responses concerning capital punishment and legalized abortion were not in the predicted direction. In both cases, more low scorers than high scorers favored capital punishment and were against legalized abortion. (See Tables 1 and 2 for complete breakdown of response patterns.)

A point biserial correlational analysis of the relation between individual JW scores and views on capital punishment and legalized abortion did not support the hypotheses. Analyses show that the relation between JW scores and support for capital punishment was non-significant ( $r_{pb} = -.25$ ;  $t = 1.73$ ) and in the direction opposite of what was predicted. With regard to legalized abortion no relation between individual JW scores and support for legalized abortion was found ( $r_{pb} =$

TABLE 1

Support for Capital Punishment by High and Low Scorers on the  
Just World Scale

| Scores | Support for Capital Punishment |         |
|--------|--------------------------------|---------|
|        | For                            | Against |
| High   | 12                             | 5       |
| Low    | 21                             | 2       |

N = 40  
p = 0.31

TABLE 2

Support for Legalized Abortion by High and Low Scorers on the  
Just World Scale

| Scores | Support for Legalized Abortion |         |
|--------|--------------------------------|---------|
|        | For                            | Against |
| High   | 14                             | 3       |
| Low    | 16                             | 7       |

N = 40

p = 0.15

In order to test the second set of hypotheses that (a) those who score high on the JWS will be influenced by socially acceptable arguments based on popular opinions and (b) low scorers are not influenced by arguments that reflect popular opinions, subjects responses to how statements had influenced their support for capital punishment and legalized abortion were analyzed.

First, the rankings for each statement by the sample as a whole were calculated. Second, the rankings by high JWS scorers were calculated and compared to the rankings by low JWS scorers.

Capital Punishment. Ranked first is the following statement: "It is permissible to compel murderers to pay with their own lives since murderers have proven time and again that they consider human life to be so inexpensive that they take one." Statements supportive of capital punishment because of its social benefits were ranked second and third. The respondents ranked second the statement: "Capital punishment is a deterrent to the commission of crimes." "The prevention of crime through the incapacitation of the murderer" was ranked third. Anti-capital punishment statements were ranked fourth and fifth. The statement: "Capital punishment should be rejected because an innocent man may be wrongly sentenced to die" was ranked fourth. The respondents ranked fifth the statement: "Capital punishment was 'cruel and unusual' punishment and unconstitutional." The respondents ranked sixth the statement indicating they had been influenced by the majority opinion. (Table 3 presents a complete breakdown of the response pattern.)

The themes of the statements fall into the following order: (1) retribution, (2) the social benefits of capital punishment,

TABLE 3

Overall Rankings of Statements which had Influenced Subjects Views  
on Capital Punishment

| Statements   | Rankings |
|--|----------|
| Murderers have proven time and again that they consider human life to be very cheap. It is these individuals (murderers) who feel that a human life is so inexpensive that they must take one who should be compelled to pay with their own lives. | 1        |
| Capital punishment is a deterrent to the commission of crimes.   | 2        |
| The prevention of crime through the incapacitation of the murderer is reason enough for having a death penalty.  | 3        |
| Capital punishment should be rejected because an innocent man may be wrongly sentenced to die.   | 4        |
| Capital punishment is "cruel and unusual punishment" and unconstitutional.   | 5        |
| The majority opinion supports capital punishment.  | 6        |

N = 40

(3) anti-capital punishment statements, and (4) concurring with the majority's opinion.

The rankings of statements by high JW scorers were compared to the rankings by low JW scorers. There were no differences between rankings. (See Appendix B.)

Legalized Abortion. The statement: "Give a child a chance be wanted and loved or don't let it be born at all. Until a time when a group of cells can be exhumed from its mother successfully to continue on its own,...the woman has the right to get rid of it," was ranked first by the respondents. The statement: "A choice for abortion is a God-given right that cannot be taken away regardless of what laws may be written" was ranked second. Tied for the third rank were the statements: "A civilized society should be concerned about the right to life of all human beings and should not make life and death decisions based upon personal and social convenience" and "Abortion should be left to a woman's discretion since it is a choice a male shall never have to make." "Abortion is murder" was ranked fifth. As in the capital punishment conditions, respondents indicated they did not perceive themselves to be influenced by the majority opinion. (See Table 4 for a complete breakdown of the response pattern.)

The themes of the statements fall into the following order: (1) the woman's right or choice to have an abortion, (2) the ethics or morality concerning abortion, (3) whether abortion is murder, and (4) concurring with the majority's opinion.

The rankings of statements by high JW scorers were compared to the rankings by low JW scorers. There were no differences between rankings of statements by either group. (See Appendix B.)



TABLE 4

Overall Rankings of Statements which had Influenced Subjects Views  
on Legalized Abortion

| Statements   | Rankings |
|--|----------|
| Give a child a chance to be wanted and loved or don't let it be born at all. Until a time when a group of cells can be exhumed from its mother successfully to continue on its own,... the woman has the right to get rid of it. | 1        |
| A choice for abortion is a God-given right that cannot be taken away regardless of what laws may be written.   | 2        |
| Abortion should be left to a woman's discretion since it is a choice a male shall never have to make.  | 3.5      |
| A civilized society should be concerned about the right to life of all human beings and should not make life and death decisions based upon personal and social convenience.   | 3.5      |
| Abortion is a choice to murder.  | 5        |
| The majority opinion supports legalized abortion.  | 6        |

N = 40

## Conditions of Support for Capital Punishment and Legalized Abortion

Subjects were instructed to indicate the conditions under which they supported capital punishment and legalized abortion. With each issue (capital punishment or legalized abortion) subjects were given two lists. One list is defined as the not personally-relevant conditions. The other list is termed the personally-relevant conditions. The two lists presented similar conditions under which to support either issue. The difference between the two lists is that the personally-relevant condition listed instances when a family member, close friend, or the subject himself was, in some way, involved in the circumstances under which capital punishment or legalized abortion would be supported.

The two conditions are presented this way as a means to determine whether a subject's views on either capital punishment or legalized abortion changed when the subject was directly involved with the issues. In theory, the personally-relevant condition was included to evoke the justice motivation. (See Appendix J for some comments concerning problems with evoking the justice motivation.)

### Conditions of Support for Capital Punishment

Not personally-relevant conditions. As indicated in Table 1, page 35, 82% of the subjects support capital punishment. However, when subjects were asked to respond to a list of conditions under which capital punishment may be supported, their choices were variable. Thus, it appears subjects supported capital punishment for different reasons. (This point is important in later discussions.)

Support for capital punishment in the conditions of premeditated murder is indicated by 32.7% of the subjects. Selected

by 24% of the subjects is the condition: murder for hire. Rape and child molesting are selected by 12.5% of those responding. These conditions are selected approximately less than one-half as often as capital punishment in cases of murder for hire (24%). Capital punishment in cases of homosexual molestation and in cases of kidnapping are selected by only 8.3% and 4.6% of the subjects.

Personally-relevant conditions. Thirty and one-half percent of the respondents indicated they would most likely support capital punishment in cases when a family member or close friend was murdered. Capital punishment is selected by 28.7% of the subjects in cases when a family member or close friend was killed by a hired gunman. Cases when (1) a family member or close friend was raped and (2) a family member's or close friend's child was molested are selected by 11.1% of the subjects. These conditions are selected less than one-half as often as capital punishment in cases when people are convicted of being hired killers (28.7%). Capital punishment is selected by 8.33% of the subjects when a family member or close friend was homosexually molested. Selected by 4.61% of the subjects is capital punishment when a family member or close friend was kidnapped.

#### Conditions of Support for Legalized Abortion

Not personally-relevant conditions. As indicated in Table 2, page 36, 75% of all subjects supported legalized abortion. However, when subjects were asked to respond to a list of conditions under which legalized abortion may be supported, their choices were variable. Their selections took the following pattern. Legalized abortion in cases of rape is selected by 30.9% of the subjects. Abortion in cases when the mother's physical and mental health were involved is selected by 26.5% of the subjects.

Legalized abortion in cases of financial difficulties is selected by 10.6% of the subjects. This condition is selected less than one-half as often as legalized abortion in cases when the mother's physical and mental health are involved (26.5%). Selected by 9.7% of the subjects is legalized abortion in cases: (1) the freedom to have no children, (2) the stability of the marriage, and (3) as a means to control overpopulation.

Personally-relevant conditions. Selected by 31.3% of the subjects was legalized abortion in cases when they, a family member, or close friend was raped. Abortion when a family member's, close friend's, or their own physical and mental health were involved was selected by 26.7% of the subjects. Abortion in cases of (1) financial difficulties or (2) as a means to protect the marriage's stability is selected by 10.71% of the subjects. The support for these conditions is less than one-half of the support indicated by people supporting legalized abortion when a family member's, close friend's, or their own physical and mental health were involved (26.7%). Abortion as a means to ensure the freedom to have no children is selected by 9.8% of the subjects. Abortion as a means to control overpopulation is selected by 8.8% of the subjects.

There are no differences between the rankings for conditions of support for capital punishment in the not personally-relevant conditions and personally-relevant conditions. Nor does it appear that there are differences between the rankings for conditions of support for legalized abortion in the not personally-relevant and personally-relevant conditions. Any differences that do occur are for the third and succeeding rankings. Subjects do not differ in

selecting legalized abortion in cases of rape or in cases of health for either the not personally-relevant or the personally-relevant conditions.

#### Attitude Control Items

Two separate analyses of high and low scorers' responses to the nine items included as a check on how the belief in a just world influenced public issues besides capital punishment and legalized abortion were conducted. No significant relationships were found between reactions for each statement and high and low scorers on the Just World Scale. (See Appendix C for a complete breakdown of the response patterns.) Differences between the means of high and low scorer's responses to each of the statements were analyzed. The differences between the means were not significant. The means and variances of these scores are presented in Table 5.

Extreme groups analysis. Because none of the predicted relationships between JW scores and attitudes were obtained it seemed probable that a more stringent comparison would be useful. Thus, the analysis comparing high and low Just World Scale scores was repeated for a subsample of the most extreme high and low scorers. The people who were selected scored at the ends of the distribution of scores of the 40 subjects previously tested. The responses by 11 high scorers and nine low scorers were analyzed. There are 11 high scorers and nine low scorers rather than 10 high scorers and 10 low scorers because exactly 11 high scorers who were tested fell at the other end of the distribution of scores. To have achieved an equal number of subjects between the two groups would have entailed adding one set of responses to the group of low scorers. This one set of responses would have been randomly selected from two sets of responses at the next scoring interval.

TABLE 5

Mean Magnitude of Agreement with Attitude Control Items  
by High and Low JW Scorers

| Statements   | Scorers on JWS                   |                                  |            |
|--|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------|
|  | High<br>Scorers<br>(n = 17)      | Low<br>Scorers<br>(n = 23)       |            |
| Compensation by government<br>for natural disasters              | $\bar{X} = 3.12$<br>$6^2 = 2.45$ | $\bar{X} = 3.26$<br>$6^2 = 1.32$ | $t = 0.18$ |
| Capital punishment doesn't<br>deter crime                        | $\bar{X} = 3.65$<br>$6^2 = 1.64$ | $\bar{X} = 3.83$<br>$6^2 = 2.57$ | $t = 0.80$ |
| Tenants ruin low-rent<br>housing projects                        | $\bar{X} = 3.53$<br>$6^2 = 1.64$ | $\bar{X} = 3.47$<br>$6^2 = 1.98$ | $t = 0.23$ |
| Exempt college students<br>from draft                            | $\bar{X} = 3.89$<br>$6^2 = 3.07$ | $\bar{X} = 3.95$<br>$6^2 = 2.22$ | $t = 0.22$ |
| Women make better<br>executives                                  | $\bar{X} = 2.35$<br>$6^2 = 2.23$ | $\bar{X} = 2.91$<br>$6^2 = 2.60$ | $t = 1.66$ |
| Abortion leads to sexual<br>promiscuity                          | $\bar{X} = 3.88$<br>$6^2 = 3.63$ | $\bar{X} = 4.13$<br>$6^2 = 2.29$ | $t = 0.96$ |
| The Jews are responsible<br>for own suffering in Nazi<br>Germany | $\bar{X} = 5.29$<br>$6^2 = 0.44$ | $\bar{X} = 5.78$<br>$6^2 = 0.52$ | $t = 0.34$ |
| Unstable family structure<br>contributes to blacks'<br>problems  | $\bar{X} = 4.05$<br>$6^2 = 1.82$ | $\bar{X} = 4.43$<br>$6^2 = 2.15$ | $t = 0.60$ |
| Compensation by government<br>to victims of crime                | $\bar{X} = 3.94$<br>$6^2 = 1.58$ | $\bar{X} = 3.30$<br>$6^2 = 1.34$ | $t = 1.18$ |

Note. The scale ran on a continuum between agreement and disagreement. A score of 1 indicated total agreement with the statement. A score of 6 indicated total disagreement with the statement.

N = 40

Likewise, at the other end of the distribution one of the high scorers' responses would have had to be randomly dropped to reduce the number of high scorers' responses for this analysis from 11 to 10. By having 11 high scorers and nine low scorers this was avoided.

The only significant differences between the means of each group of scores occurred for two general attitude items. More low scorers than high scorers agreed with the statement: No college student should be exempt from the draft ( $t = 2.96$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

More low scorers than high scorers disagreed with the statement: The Jews were responsible for their own suffering in Nazi Germany ( $t = 4.96$ ,  $p < .001$ ). No apparent reasons for significance can be determined. Moreover, it was only when a high-powered and inappropriate parametric test was used that significant differences were found. Table 6 presents the means and variances of this analysis.

Summary. In sum, the hypothesis that people who score high on the Just World Scale will support capital punishment was not supported. The relationships between scores on the Just World Scale and support for legalized abortion were nonsignificant. There were no significant differences between high and low scorers in their rankings of statements which had influenced their views on capital punishment and legalized abortion. Analyses of responses to the scale used to measure attitudes toward public policies were nonsignificant. With the exception of two statements, even high-powered parametric analyses of responses by extreme scorers to the same nine statements were nonsignificant.

#### B. Analysis of the Interview Session

What Constituted the Groups to be Analyzed. As mentioned on page 32 in the method and design chapter, certain subjects were selected to be interviewed. A total of 28 subjects, whose views



TABLE 6

Mean Magnitude of Agreement with Attitude Control Items  
by High and Low Extreme Scorers on JWS

| Statements   | Scorers on JWS                   |                                  |                 |
|--|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|
|  | High<br>Scorers<br>(n = 9)       | Low<br>Scorers<br>(n = 11)       |                 |
| Compensation by government<br>for natural disasters              | $\bar{X} = 2.67$<br>$6^2 = 2.00$ | $\bar{X} = 3.27$<br>$6^2 = 1.29$ | $t = 1.30$      |
| Capital punishment doesn't<br>deter crime                        | $\bar{X} = 3.33$<br>$6^2 = 1.78$ | $\bar{X} = 3.81$<br>$6^2 = 2.87$ | $t = 0.69$      |
| Tenants ruin low-rent<br>housing projects                        | $\bar{X} = 4.22$<br>$6^2 = 1.92$ | $\bar{X} = 3.73$<br>$6^2 = 2.19$ | $t = 1.43$      |
| Exempt college students<br>from draft                            | $\bar{X} = 4.67$<br>$6^2 = 1.33$ | $\bar{X} = 3.55$<br>$6^2 = 2.97$ | $t = 2.96^*$    |
| Women make better<br>executives                                  | $\bar{X} = 2.44$<br>$6^2 = 2.46$ | $\bar{X} = 2.72$<br>$6^2 = 2.74$ | $t = 0.75$      |
| Abortion leads to sexual<br>promiscuity                          | $\bar{X} = 3.89$<br>$6^2 = 3.21$ | $\bar{X} = 4.55$<br>$6^2 = 2.06$ | $t = 0.92$      |
| The Jews are responsible<br>for own suffering in Nazi<br>Germany | $\bar{X} = 5.33$<br>$6^2 = 0.44$ | $\bar{X} = 5.91$<br>$6^2 = 0.08$ | $t = 4.96^{**}$ |
| Unstable family structure<br>contributes to blacks'<br>problems  | $\bar{X} = 4.33$<br>$6^2 = 1.78$ | $\bar{X} = 4.55$<br>$6^2 = 2.25$ | $t = 0.06$      |
| Compensation by government to<br>victims of crime                | $\bar{X} = 4.00$<br>$6^2 = 2.00$ | $\bar{X} = 3.55$<br>$6^2 = 1.52$ | $t = 1.44$      |

Note. The scale ran on a continuum between agreement and disagreement. A score of 1 indicated total agreement with the statement. A score of 6 indicated total disagreement with the statement.

N = 20

\*p < .01

\*\*p < .001

on capital punishment and legalized abortion were not consistent with their scores on the Just World Scale were interviewed. The complete breakdown is as follows: among the high scorers on the JW scale there were two subjects who supported neither legalized abortion and capital punishment, two subjects who supported legalized abortion and did not support capital punishment, and one subject who did not support legalized abortion and did support capital punishment. Fourteen subjects who scored low on the JW Scale supported legalized abortion and capital punishment. Among the remaining low scorers who were selected to be interviewed there were two subjects who supported legalized abortion and did not support capital punishment and seven subjects who did not support legalized abortion and supported capital punishment.

Interview Procedure. At the beginning of the interview subjects were informed their views on capital punishment and legalized abortion did not follow from their scores on the scale. Subjects were told this in order to examine how they resolved the imbalance between their scores and views on these issues. In addition to raising these questions subjects were also queried as to (1) how their interpretations on matters of life and death influenced their views on capital punishment and legalized abortion, (2) what issues they considered when capital punishment and legalized abortion are discussed and (3) whether retribution is a factor which influences views on these issues.

Results. Because of the low numbers in the subcategories the subjects were grouped in the following ways. To determine whether there was a difference between the JW scores of subjects who were selected to be interviewed and JW scores of subjects who were not

selected to be interviewed a t-test analysis between the two groups of JW scores was conducted. Secondly, the scores of subjects who did not see any inconsistency between their scores and the relation with their views on capital punishment and legalized abortion and the scores of subjects who realized their views on capital punishment and legalized abortion were inconsistent with their scores were compared.

The difference between JW scores of interviewed subjects and JW scores of subjects who were not interviewed was nonsignificant (t = 1.85; n.s.). The relation between JW scores and the realization that JW scores and views on capital punishment and legalized abortion were inconsistent was nonsignificant (t = .15, n.s.).

Twenty-two of the 28 subjects who were interviewed responded that they did not think their views were inconsistent. Some respondents questioned what their JW scores represented. Other explanations for why they felt they were consistent are as follows: "That's just the way I see things," "People should be responsible for their actions." (See Table 7 for a complete breakdown of response patterns.)

Six subjects realized their views on capital punishment and legalized abortion were inconsistent with their JW scores. These subjects resolved the imbalance by: (1) questioning the value of capital punishment, (2) citing their support of either capital punishment or legalized abortion as exceptions to the justice rationale, (3) saying capital punishment did not compensate for all past crimes, (4) considered life in prison as more punishing than death, (5) questioned what the JW scores represented, and (6) feared that with capital punishment an innocent person would be killed.

TABLE 7

Explanations by Subjects who Felt Their Views were Consistent  
with Their JW Scores

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"Although both are murder, capital punishment is more fair because people get what they deserve."

"That's the way I feel."

"Abortion shouldn't be legal but a lot of women have them."

"Capital punishment is punishment for acts. Now, criminals aren't getting what they deserve. Abortion is not related."

"People should be responsible for acts. Wrong to support abortion if woman doesn't accept responsibility."

"I support prolife. With capital punishment people have forfeited their right to life by murdering."

"With abortion people have the right to live. With capital punishment if a person kills, he should be killed because he should have sense before he does something."

"I doubt the score is related to my opinion."

"I don't see relation between scores, especially abortion. But, with capital punishment it may be that people are getting what they deserve."

"I support abortion in cases of rape and I support capital punishment in cases of premeditated murder."

"In capital punishment cases, especially for murder or violent crimes, they (the criminals) are getting what they deserve."

"With capital punishment the person deserves it since if someone works for something, they should get it. With abortion, it should be permitted only if the pregnancy is a danger to health. Otherwise, give the baby up for adoption."

"Capital punishment gives people what they deserve. Abortion should be allowable when there is a need for it."

"I support abortion and capital punishment in certain instances. Abortion is permissible in cases of rape or health. Capital punishment should be permissible as a function of the case."

"Capital punishment helps crime."

"It is better for an unwanted child not to be born."

"People don't get what they deserve in some cases. Hopefully with capital punishment they will be very sure they have the right man."

"I am unsure of the issues so I would rather not support it."

"I will support abortion only if the woman is in danger. With capital punishment there is too much of a possibility that an innocent man would die."

---

Note. Three subjects answered they felt they were consistent but they chose not to offer an explanation for the consistency.

### Examining the Meaning of Capital Punishment and Legalized Abortion

Subjects were asked whether they considered matters of life and death when evaluating their support for capital punishment and legalized abortion. If subjects did not consider abortion as terminating a life and these same subjects supported capital punishment, then no imbalance exists for the subjects. Logically it would not be inconsistent for these people to support capital punishment and abortion since they do not consider abortion as murder. Thus, arguing abortion should be illegal because it is murder would not be valid for these people. If people did not support abortion because they considered it murder but they also supported capital punishment then these people are logically inconsistent.

Twenty-seven respondents replied capital punishment terminated life. One subject was unsure. Eighteen subjects considered abortion as terminating life. There were eight subjects who indicated abortion did not terminate life and two who were unsure.

### Substantiating Support for Capital Punishment and Legalized Abortion

To determine the point of reference a person employs when he begins to substantiate support for capital punishment and legalized abortion subjects were asked what two things they considered when either capital punishment or legalized abortion was discussed.

#### Capital Punishment

Topic mentioned first: Most subjects (39.5%) considered retribution when capital punishment was discussed. Other topics mentioned when capital punishment is discussed are: the horrors associated with capital punishment or the horrible crimes and

murders that were committed (31.4%); whether capital punishment is justified or fair (18.1%); and whether capital punishment is murder (11%).

Topic mentioned second: Most subjects (39.3%) considered the horrors of capital punishment when the issue is discussed. Other topics mentioned are: is capital punishment justified or fair (21.4%); capital punishment is cruel treatment (14.2%); satisfying the need for retribution (10.7%); is capital punishment murder (7.2%); and capital punishment as a deterrent to crime (7.2%).

#### Legalized Abortion

Topic mentioned first: When legalized abortion is mentioned people questioned: whether abortion is murder (28.6%); whether the pregnancy was planned (25%); the child's welfare (10.7%); the mother's physical and mental health (7.1%); whether abortion is an easy way out for people who should be held responsible for their actions (10.7%); and the legal, moral or religious aspects of abortion (17.9%).

Topic mentioned second: Subjects considered the legal, moral or religious aspects of abortion when legalized abortion is discussed (32.3%). Other topics mentioned are: the mother's physical and mental health (21.4%); the child's welfare (14.3%); the prolife movement (7.1%); birth control 7.1%; whether the pregnancy was planned (3.6%); abortion as murder (3.6%); and whether abortion is an easy out for people who should be held responsible for their actions (3.6%).



## Retribution as a Motive to Support Capital Punishment and Oppose Legalized Abortion

To determine whether retribution is the motive for supporting capital punishment and not supporting legalized abortion subjects were asked (1) if capital punishment could be considered retribution for illegal behaviors and (2) if pregnancy could be considered retribution for a woman's sexual behavior.

Twenty-four subjects considered capital punishment to be retribution for illegal behavior. Ten subjects indicated they considered pregnancy as retribution for a woman's sexual behavior.

Summary. Twenty-eight subjects were selected to be interviewed because their views on capital punishment and legalized abortion did not follow from their scores on the Just World Scale. However, 22 of these subjects did not seek to resolve the imbalance between their scores and views on capital punishment and legalized abortion. The remaining subjects observed that their views on these issues were inconsistent with their scores. These subjects resolved the inconsistency by questioning what the test score represented. Twenty-seven subjects who were interviewed indicated they believed capital punishment terminated a life. The remaining subject was undecided. The reasons for this response were not examined. One may speculate that the subject did not understand the question. Eighteen subjects considered abortion as terminating a life. Eight gave negative responses and two were undecided that abortion involves taking a life.

The topics subjects mentioned when capital punishment was discussed were: retribution; the horrors associated with capital punishment; the horrible crimes committed; whether capital punishment is justified; and whether capital punishment is murder.

When abortion is discussed, subjects indicated they considered whether abortion is murder; whether the pregnancy is planned; the child's welfare; the mother's physical and mental health; whether abortion is an easy way out for people who should be held responsible for their actions; the legal, moral, or religious aspects of abortion; and the difficulty in deciding to have an abortion.

Twenty-four respondents considered capital punishment as retribution for illegal behavior. Ten subjects indicated they considered pregnancy as retribution for a woman's sexual behavior.

Since more than three-quarters of the respondents who were interviewed considered capital punishment as retribution for illegal behavior it appears retribution is related to views on capital punishment. However, retribution does not appear to be related to views on legalized abortion. Less than one-half of the people who were interviewed considered pregnancy as retribution for a woman's sexual behavior.

#### General Summary

The hypotheses were not supported. High scorers on the Just World Scale did not significantly differ from low scorers in their views on capital punishment and legalized abortion. Nor were there significant differences between high and low scorers' responses as to what items influenced their views on capital punishment and legalized abortion.

An examination of the conditions under which subjects would support capital punishment and legalized abortion was made. Subjects selected capital punishment in cases of premeditated murder and murder for hire more than twice as often as in the remaining conditions. Legalized abortion was selected in cases of rape and

when the mother's physical and mental health was involved. These two conditions were selected twice as often as in the remaining conditions.

Analyses of the responses to the social issues questionnaire were nonsignificant. Thus, it does not appear that the belief in a just world is related to evaluations of public policies.

The relation between JWS scores and subjects who were selected to be interviewed was nonsignificant. Nor was there a relation between JWS scores and subjects who thought their evaluations were inconsistent with the just world belief. Most subjects considered retribution when capital punishment was discussed, but subjects questioned whether abortion was murder when they talked about legalized abortion. More than half of the subjects saw capital punishment as retribution for illegal behaviors but less than one half of the subjects saw pregnancy retribution for sexual behaviors.

## CHAPTER 5

## Discussion

The hypothesis that those who score high on the Just World Scale will be in favor of capital punishment and against legalized abortion was not supported. Other hypotheses: (1) high scorers on the Just World Scale will be influenced by socially acceptable arguments and (2) low scorers on the Just World Scale will not be influenced by arguments that reflect popular notions, were also not supported. Thus, it appears that the just world belief has no bearing on attitudes toward public issues concerning capital punishment and legalized abortion.

In further support that high and low scorers on the Just World Scale do not differ in their views on these issues it was demonstrated that the conditions in which subjects expressed support for capital punishment and legalized abortion did not differ in either the not personally-relevant and personally-relevant conditions. Although the just world belief functions best as events come closer to a person's world and are relevant to his own fate, the analyses of the rankings in these conditions do not significantly differ. Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that the issues of capital punishment and legalized abortion are beyond a person's desire to satisfy his need for retribution, as this need is influenced by the just world belief. If this were not so, then differences in rankings between rationales in the not personally-relevant and personally-relevant conditions might have been obtained.

Furthermore, it appears that subjects do not see, for themselves, any relation between the belief in a just world and views on capital punishment and legalized abortion. Some interview

responses to why they, the subjects, did not think their views were inconsistent also support this point.

Other findings indicate the just world belief has no bearing on diverse matters of public policy. Analysis of responses to the social-issues questionnaire employed as a check to determine whether the belief in a just world influenced other issues besides capital punishment and legalized abortion indicated there were no significant relationships between reactions for each statement and high and low scorers on the Just World Scale. In fact, reactions to these attitude control items, even when analyzed by a high-powered parametric test, indicated no meaningful relationships to the Just World scores.

One plausible explanation of these results is that subjects may be influenced by perceptions of personal responsibility. A careful examination of responses to questions designed to determine the conditions under which the subject supports capital punishment and legalized abortion indicate subjects are concerned with ascertaining personal responsibility. It appears, however, that the desire to satisfy the need for retribution cannot be discounted when people make their evaluations. When subjects were asked whether they considered capital punishment as retribution for illegal behavior, 24 of the 28 subjects who were interviewed answered affirmatively. But, only 10 of the 28 interviewed subjects viewed pregnancy as retribution for sexual behavior. Although there is a difference in the percentage of those who viewed capital punishment and pregnancy as instances of retribution, this difference can be explained according to Heider's theory of levels of attribution of responsibility.

It appears that respondents are concerned with determining personal responsibility when making judgments about issues. Subjects indicated they supported capital punishment in cases of premeditated murder and murder for hire. These two cases, in both the not personally-relevant and the personally-relevant conditions, individually received more than twice as much support as the succeeding cases. Likewise, in the legalized abortion lists, subjects indicated they supported legalized abortion in cases when the mother's physical and mental health were involved or in cases of rape. These two conditions individually received more than twice the support than each of the succeeding conditions.

In these instances the findings indicate that responsibility is a key factor when making moral evaluations. Subjects support capital punishment when they believe that the individual knowingly involved himself with murder. Respondents chose rape and the mother's physical and mental health as two conditions when they would support legalized abortion because an abortion for reasons of health is not perceived as trying to avoid responsibility for sexual behavior. Nor does an abortion for a pregnancy resulting from rape release the individual from the consequences of sexual behavior since the pregnancy is unplanned.

These findings suggest that it is the desire to satisfy the need for retribution as it is mediated by perceptions of personal responsibility and not the need for retribution mediated by the belief in a just world, that influences opinions about capital punishment and legalized abortion. Judgments concerning these issues are not indiscriminate. Respondents attempt to justify their desire to punish by determining personal accountability. Consequently, capital punishment is permissible in two instances:

premeditated murder and murder for hire. Similarly, legalized abortion is permissible to terminate a pregnancy that was either a consequence of rape or which needs to be terminated for health reasons.

Heider's theory seems relevant to this interpretation. The most easily categorized responses concern those made in relation to the capital punishment issue. By all indications, when this issue is evaluated, people operate at Heider's fourth level of moral development, Purposive Commission. Subjects' responses indicated that they feel a person should be held responsible for any effect that he produced by his actions, foreseeing the outcome and intending to produce the effect. Thus, support for capital punishment is perfectly acceptable for those respondents in premeditated murder and murder for hire. In these two cases the guilty person is judged to have willingly produced the desired effect, death of another person. Consequently, retribution mediated by the concept of personal responsibility is acceptable. It is not someone being punished for illegal behavior because goodness and happiness, or wickedness and punishment are linked. Rather, punishment is permissible because someone must account for his actions which led to a planned and thus foreseeable conclusion.

However, a new rationale must be introduced to explain why less than one half of the interviewed subjects considered pregnancy as retribution for sexual behaviors. Since pregnancy is not always the desired goal of sexual behavior but can be an incidental consequence of it, the need for retribution is not as strong in the legalized abortion issues as it is in matters concerning capital punishment. Respondents apparently operate at



Heider's third level of attribution of responsibility when legalized abortion is concerned. This level, Careless Commission, states that a person is held responsible for his actions even though the effect was not a part of his goals or intentions. This would explain why a portion of the subjects wanted to know whether the pregnancy was planned and also why they supported abortion in cases of rape. The need to know whether the consequences, i.e. the pregnancy, were incidental or intentional play a role in attributions of responsibility when legalized abortion is discussed.

Thus, people may operate at two different levels by basing their evaluations on whether consequences are intentional or incidental. For the people who are making these evaluations, there is no asymmetry in their logic involving the life or death matters as was suggested in the introduction of this paper. It appears that evaluations are based on determining an individual's culpability in relation to issues of capital punishment and legalized abortion. Consequently, any dissonance which may ensue from evaluations based solely on whether capital punishment and legalized abortion terminated a life is avoided.

### Conclusions

Theoretical review of the negative results obtained in this study suggests that the hypotheses relating beliefs in a just world to moral judgments concerning capital punishment and abortion were inadequate because they failed to consider the importance subjects would attach to the question of personal responsibility. Re-examination of the results in accord with Heider's theory of attribution of responsibility provides a very plausible explanation for both the failure to support the initial hypotheses as well as the comments made by subjects during interviews, and

the reasons they selected for endorsing capital punishment, or the right of women to have abortions.

More generally, the idea that beliefs in a just world may be employed as a direct predictor of moral judgments involving life and death issues does not appear tenable. Instead, it appears that such judgments may be mediated by views concerning personal responsibility. If this interpretation is correct, then future research on the theory of the Just World belief system should include measures of personal responsibility as suggested by Heider's theory, and hypotheses should be constructed to test the relative importance of just world beliefs and attributions of personal responsibility in connection with moral judgments of life and death issues.

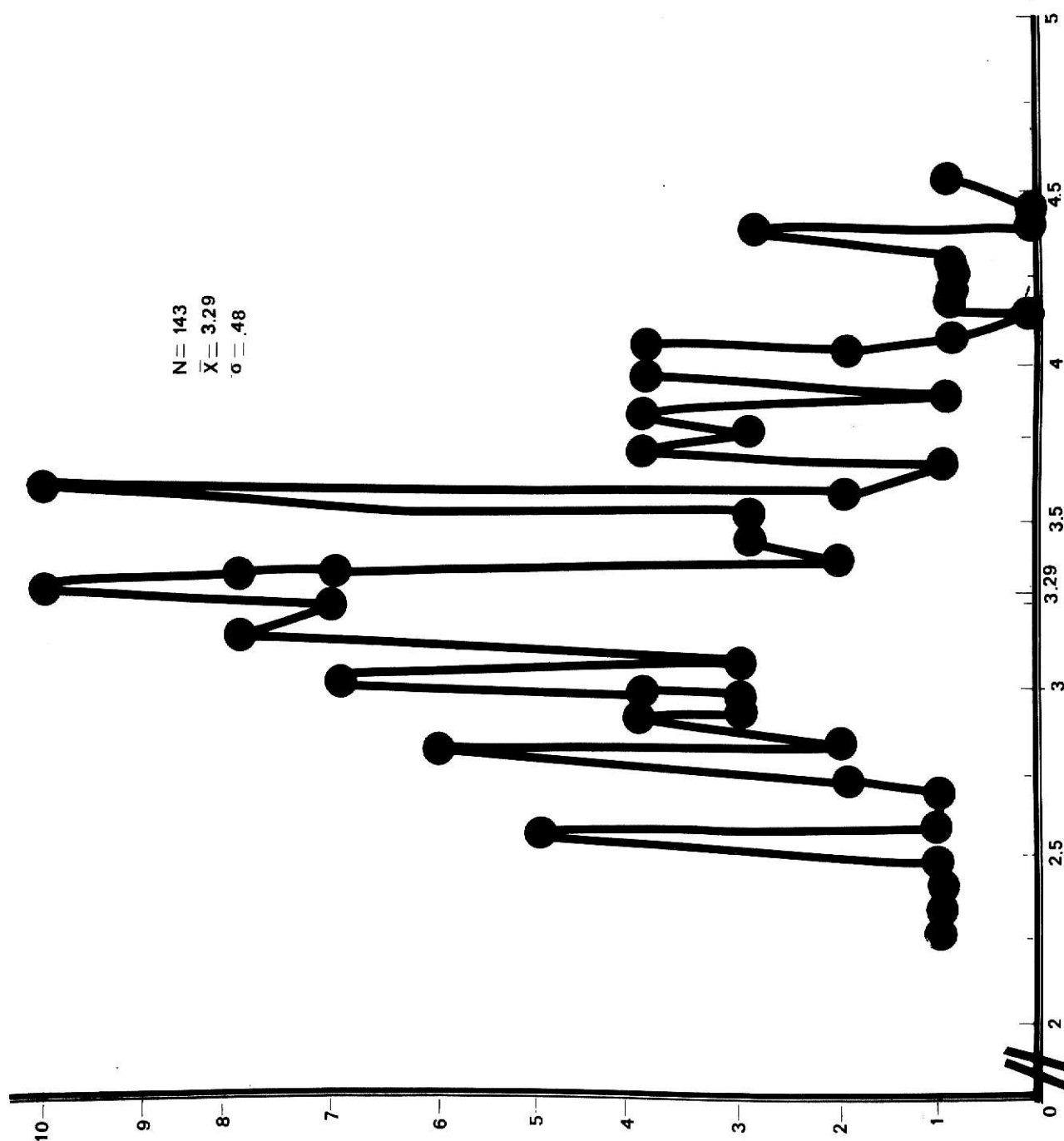
## APPENDIX A

Frequency Distribution of JW Scores for 143 Subjects  
Initially Tested

**THIS BOOK  
CONTAINS  
NUMEROUS PAGES  
WITH DIAGRAMS  
THAT ARE CROOKED  
COMPARED TO THE  
REST OF THE  
INFORMATION ON  
THE PAGE.**

**THIS IS AS  
RECEIVED FROM  
CUSTOMER.**

# FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF 143 SUBJECTS' SCORES



## APPENDIX B

Just World Scale Scorers' Rankings of Statements  
which had Influenced Their Views on  
Capital Punishment and  
Legalized Abortion

High and Low JW Scorers' Rankings of Statements which had Influenced  
Their Views on Capital Punishment

| Statements   | Rankings                    |                            |
|--|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
|  | High<br>Scorers<br>(n = 17) | Low<br>Scorers<br>(n = 23) |
| Capital punishment is a deterrent to the commission of crimes.   | 2                           | 2                          |
| Capital punishment is "cruel and unusual punishment" and unconstitutional.   | 5                           | 5                          |
| Capital punishment should be rejected because an innocent man may be wrongly sentenced to die.   | 4                           | 4                          |
| The prevention of crime through the incapacitation of the murderer is reason enough for having a death penalty.  | 3                           | 3                          |
| Murderers have proven time and again that they consider human life to be very cheap. It is these individuals (murderers) who feel that a human life is so inexpensive that they must take one who should be compelled to pay with their own lives. | 1                           | 1                          |
| The majority opinion supports capital punishment.  | 6                           | 6                          |

Note. A rank of 1 indicates the statement was most influential, whereas a rank of 6 indicates which statement was least influential.

N = 40  
p = 0.53

# High and Low JW Scorers' Rankings of Statements which had Influenced Their Views on Legalized Abortion

| Statements   | Rankings                 |                         |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------------|
|  | High Scorers<br>(n = 17) | Low Scorers<br>(n = 23) |
| A choice for abortion is a God-given right that cannot be taken away regardless of what laws may be written.   | 2                        | 2                       |
| Abortion is a choice to murder.  | 5                        | 5                       |
| A civilized society should be concerned about the right to life of all human beings and should not make life and death decisions based upon personal and social convenience.   | 3.5                      | 3.5                     |
| Abortion should be left to a woman's discretion since it is a choice a male shall never have to make.  | 3.5                      | 3.5                     |
| Give a child a chance to be wanted and loved or don't let it be born at all. Until a time when a group of cells can be exhumed from its mother successfully to continue on its own,... the woman has the right to get rid of it. | 1                        | 1                       |
| The majority opinion supports legalized abortion.  | 6                        | 6                       |

Note. A rank of 1 indicates the statement was most influential, whereas a rank of 6 indicates which statement was least influential.

N = 40  
p = 0.41



## APPENDIX C

Analysis of High and Low JWS Scorers' Reactions  
to Attitude Control Items

Relationship of Agreement between JW High Scorers and JW Low Scorers  
and Attitude Control Items

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|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| 1. Compensation by government<br>for natural disasters          | H = 0.025 |
| 2. Capital punishment doesn't<br>deter crime                    | H = 0.519 |
| 3. Tenants ruin low-rent<br>housing projects                    | H = 0.230 |
| 4. Exempt college students<br>from draft                        | H = 0.102 |
| 5. Women make better executives<br>than men                     | H = 0.160 |
| 6. Abortion leads to sexual<br>promiscuity                      | H = 0.519 |
| 7. The Jews are responsible<br>for own suffering                | H = 0.006 |
| 8. Unstable family structures<br>contribute to blacks' problems | H = 0.410 |
| 9. Compensation by government<br>to victims of crime            | H = 0.314 |

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N = 40

Analysis is by the Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance by ranks.

APPENDIX D  
The Just World Scale

Please respond to each item as honestly as you can. There are no right or wrong answers and your answers are completely anonymous.

1. I've found that a person rarely deserves the reputation he has.  
I strongly agree \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_: I strongly disagree.
2. Basically, the world is a just place.  
I strongly agree \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_: I strongly disagree.
3. People who get "lucky breaks" have usually earned their good fortune.  
I strongly agree \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_: I strongly disagree.
4. Careful drivers are just as likely to get hurt in traffic accidents as careless ones.  
I strongly agree \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_: I strongly disagree.
5. It is a common occurrence for a guilty person to get off free in American courts.  
I strongly agree \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_: I strongly disagree.
6. Students almost always deserve the grades they receive in school.  
I strongly agree \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_: I strongly disagree.
7. Men who keep in shape have little chance of suffering a heart attack.  
I strongly agree \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_: I strongly disagree.
8. The political candidate who sticks up for his principles rarely gets elected.  
I strongly agree \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_: I strongly disagree.
9. It is rare for an innocent man to be wrongly sent to jail.  
I strongly agree \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_: I strongly disagree.
10. In professional sports, many fouls and infractions never get called by the referee.  
I strongly agree \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_: I strongly disagree.
11. By and large, people deserve what they get.  
I strongly agree \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_: I strongly disagree.

12. When parents punish their children, it is almost always for good reasons.

I strongly agree \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_: I strongly disagree.

13. Good deeds often go unnoticed and unrewarded.

I strongly agree \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_: I strongly disagree.

14. Although evil men may hold political power for a while, in the general course of history good wins out.

I strongly agree \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_: I strongly disagree.

15. In almost any business or profession, people who do their job well rise to the top.

I strongly agree \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_: I strongly disagree.

16. American parents tend to overlook the things most to be admired in their children.

I strongly agree \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_: I strongly disagree.

17. It is often impossible for a person to receive a fair trial in the USA.

I strongly agree \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_: I strongly disagree.

18. People who meet with misfortune have often brought it on themselves.

I strongly agree \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_: I strongly disagree.

19. Crime doesn't pay.

I strongly agree \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_: I strongly disagree.

20. Many people suffer through absolutely no fault of their own.

I strongly agree \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_: I strongly disagree.

APPENDIX E  
The Moral Issues Questionnaire

Please place a check mark on the blank preceding the appropriate answer.

Are you in favor of capital punishment?

\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_ No

Under what conditions would you support capital punishment?  
(Check any of the following.)

\_\_\_ premeditated murder

\_\_\_ rape

\_\_\_ kidnapping

\_\_\_ sodomy

\_\_\_ for hire

\_\_\_ child molesting

\_\_\_ in no instance

\_\_\_ no answer

Under what conditions would you support capital punishment?  
(Check any of the following.)

- ☐ a family member or close friend was murdered
- ☐ a family member or close friend was raped
- ☐ a family member or close friend was kidnapped
- ☐ a family member or close friend was homosexually molested
- ☐ a family member or close friend was killed by a hired man
- ☐ a family member or close friend's child was molested
- ☐ in no instance
- ☐ no answer



Please place a check mark on the blank preceding the appropriate answer.

Are you in favor of legalized abortion?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Under what conditions would you support legalized abortion?  
(Check any of the following.)

☐ rape

☐ the mother's physical and mental health

☐ the freedom to have no children

☐ the stability of marriage

☐ as a means to control overpopulation

☐ financial difficulties

☐ in no instance

☐ no answer

Under what conditions would you support legalized abortion?  
(Check any of the following.)

- ☐ you, a family member, or close friend was raped
- ☐ a family member's, a close friend's, or your own physical and mental health
- ☐ you, a family member, or close friend demanded an abortion to insure the freedom to have no children
- ☐ the stability of a family member's, a close friend's, or your marriage
- ☐ you, a family member, or close friend considered abortion as a means to control overpopulation
- ☐ you, a family member, or close friend is experiencing financial difficulties
- ☐ in no instances
- ☐ no answer

Rank the statements as you feel they have influenced your support for capital punishment. Place a number 1 before the statement which has influenced your position the most through the number 6 which is least influential.

- \_\_\_ Capital punishment is a deterrent to the commission of crimes.
- \_\_\_ Capital punishment is "cruel and unusual punishment" and unconstitutional.
- \_\_\_ Capital punishment should be rejected because an innocent man may be wrongly sentenced to die.
- \_\_\_ The prevention of crime through the incapacitation of the murderer is reason enough for having a death penalty.
- \_\_\_ Murderers have proven time and again that they consider human life to be very cheap. It is these individuals (murderers) who feel that a human life is so inexpensive that they must take one who should be compelled to pay with their own lives.
- \_\_\_ The majority opinion support capital punishment.

Rank the statements as you feel they have influenced your support for legalized abortion. Place a number 1 before the statement which has influenced your position the most through the number 6 which is least influential.

\_\_\_ A choice for abortion is a God-given right that cannot be taken away regardless of what laws may be written.

\_\_\_ Abortion is a choice to murder.

\_\_\_ A civilized society should be concerned about the right to life of all human beings and should not make life and death decisions based upon personal and social convenience.

\_\_\_ Abortion should be left to a woman's discretion since it is a choice a male shall never have to make.

\_\_\_ Give a child a chance to be wanted and loved or don't let it be born at all. Until a time when a group of cells can be exhumed from its mother successfully to continue on its own, ...the woman has the right to get rid of it.

\_\_\_ The majority opinion supports legalized abortion.

APPENDIX F  
The Social Issues Questionnaire

Please respond to each item as honestly as you can. There are no right or wrong answers.

(Place a check mark on the blank along the continuum which reflects your agreement with the statement.)

1. A person should be compensated by the federal government for the loss of material possessions during a natural disaster (earthquake, tornado, flood, or hurricane).

I strongly agree \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_: I strongly disagree.

2. Capital punishment is not a deterrent to crime.

I strongly agree \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_: I strongly disagree.

3. Low-rent housing projects often become rundown because the tenants don't know how to keep a place in order.

I strongly agree \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_: I strongly disagree.

4. No college student should be exempt from the draft.

I strongly agree \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_: I strongly disagree.

5. Men are not temperamentally better suited than women to hold important executive positions.

I strongly agree \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_: I strongly disagree.

6. Legalized abortion will lead to sexual promiscuity.

I strongly agree \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_: I strongly disagree.

7. The Jews were responsible for their own suffering in Nazi Germany.

I strongly agree \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_: I strongly disagree.

8. The problems of blacks in the U.S.A. are to a large extent due to their unstable family structure.

I strongly agree \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_: I strongly disagree.

9. It is the government's responsibility to compensate the innocent victims of crime.

I strongly agree \_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_:\_\_\_\_: I strongly disagree.

APPENDIX G  
Interview Questions

INTERVIEW SESSIONCondition: High JW scores

Your score on the Personal Opinion Survey that you answered in your general psychology class indicated you believed people get what they deserve. However, when you answered the questionnaire you:

- a) did not support either legalized abortion or capital punishment. Do you feel you are being consistent? Why or why not?
- b) support legalized abortion and did not support capital punishment. Do you feel you are being consistent? Why or why not?
- c) did not support legalized abortion and did support capital punishment. Do you feel you are being consistent? Why or why not?

Condition: Low JW scores

Your score on the Personal Opinion Survey that you answered in your general psychology class indicated you did not believe people get what they deserve. However, when you answered the questionnaire you:

- a) support legalized abortion and capital punishment. Do you feel you are being consistent? Why or why not?
- b) support legalized abortion and do not support capital punishment. Do you feel you are being consistent? Why or why not?
- c) do not support legalized abortion and support capital punishment. Do you feel you are being consistent? Why or why not?



2. Do you view abortion as terminating a life? Do you view capital punishment as terminating a life?
3. When you consider the abortion issues, what do you think of first? What do you think of second?
4. When you consider the capital punishment issue, what do you think of first? What do you think of second?
5. Do you see pregnancy as retribution for a woman's sexual behavior?
6. Do you see capital punishment as retribution for illegal behavior?

APPENDIX H  
The Debriefing

## DEBRIEFING

The topic of study is biases in moral judgments. It is my intention to examine the manner in which people make moral judgments.

In your introductory psychology class you answered a questionnaire entitled Personal Opinion Survey. In reality this survey is a scale developed to study belief in a just world. It is my position that a person's judgment is influenced by the belief that the world is just and people merit their misfortunes.

The purpose of the interview session is to determine why people hold the opinions that they do about capital punishment and legalized abortion. The interview was designed to determine how people viewed capital punishment and legalized abortion and thus gain an understanding of how judgments are made.

You should be aware that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Every answer is acceptable. If I seemed to be pressing you during the session, it is only to gain an understanding of your answers in the hope of relating them to your just world scores.

Moreover, the intent of the study was not to influence your opinions concerning these issues. Nor should you feel any discomfort or anxiety concerning your answers. The only objective is to determine how a person arrives at a decision.

Are there any questions?

Were you aware of the true intent of this study?

Postcards are available for those who would like to read the completed study.

I would like to thank you for participating in this study.

## APPENDIX I

### Summary of Nonparametric Tests used to Analyze the Data

The following is a summary of two nonparametric tests used to analyze the data. This is included for the reader who may not be familiar with these types of statistical tests. The Fisher exact probability technique was used to analyze the data in accord with the hypothesis that high scorers on the Just World Scale will support capital punishment and oppose legalized abortion. The Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance by ranks was used to analyze the data gathered from the questionnaire used as a measure of attitudes toward public issues besides capital punishment and legalized abortion. Also included is a guide to understand the rankings by subjects of statements which had influenced their views on capital punishment and legalized abortion.

#### Analysis

1) The Fisher exact probability test was used to analyze the differences between high and low scorers on the Just World Scale and support for capital punishment and legalized abortion. A chi square analysis could not be implemented because the expected frequencies were less than five in at least one of the cells of the analysis.

The Fisher exact probability test is a nonparametric technique for analyzing discrete data when the independent samples are small in size. The scores are represented by frequencies in a 2 x 2 contingency table. The rows represent any two independent groups and the columns any two classifications. The test determines whether the two groups differ in the proportion with which they fall into two classifications:

$$p = \frac{(A + B)! (C + D)! (A + C)! (B + D)!}{N! A! B! C! D!}$$

The exact probability of the observed occurrence is found by taking the ratio of the product of the factorial of the four marginal totals to the product of the cell frequencies multiplied by  $N$  factorial. The  $p$  value must measure the extreme deviations from the distribution under  $H_0$  which could occur with the same marginal totals. Thus, when none of the cells has a frequency of 0, the investigator must consider the possible more extreme deviations for the statistical test of the null hypothesis. When  $N = 30$  and neither of the totals in the right-hand margin is larger than 15, there is a table available which provides significance levels.

2) The conditions of support for capital punishment and legalized abortion are presented in ranks based on percentages. The percentages are based on the frequencies with which subjects chose each condition. Rankings are also provided for the listing of statements which had influenced a person's view on capital punishment and legalized abortion. To enhance understanding of these rankings statements were grouped according to the theme of each statement.

The capital punishment themes were: (1) retribution; (2) the benefits of capital punishment; (3) concurring with the majority; (4) anti-capital punishment statements (capital punishment is cruel and unusual punishment and unconstitutional; and innocent man may wrongly be sentenced to die). The abortion themes were: (1) a woman's right or choice to have an abortion; (2) the ethical and moral problems connected with the abortion issue; (3) concurring with the majority; and , (4) abortion as murder.

3) The Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance by ranks was used to analyze data gathered from the scale used as a measure

of attitudes toward public issues besides capital punishment and legalized abortion.

The Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance by ranks is useful for deciding whether independent samples are from different populations. The test determines whether differences among samples signify genuine population differences or whether they represent merely chance variations such as those to be expected among several random samples from the same populations.

In the computation of the Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance by ranks each of the  $N$  observations are replaced by ranks. All of the scores of the samples combined are ranked in a single series. When  $H_0$  is true, then  $H$  (the test statistic) is distributed as chi square with  $df = k - 1$ .

$$H = \frac{12}{N(N+1)} \sum_{j=1}^k \frac{R_j^2}{n_j} - 3(N+1)$$

$N$  = total number of observations

$k$  = number of independent samples

$n_j$  = number of cases in  $j^{\text{th}}$  sample

$R_j$  = sum of ranks in  $j^{\text{th}}$  sample (column)

$$\sum_{j=1}^k$$

If the observed value of  $H$  is equal to or larger than the value of chi square for a previously set level of significance, then  $H_0$  may be rejected at that level of significance.

## APPENDIX J

### Problems with Just World Research



## APPENDIX J

## Problems with Just World Research

One problem with just world research is that experimental conditions do not create the degree of subject involvement necessary to evoke the justice motivation (Lerner, 1978; p. 1048). Studies, instructing subjects to assign personal responsibility, indicated attributions of responsibility did not differ across conditions varying the severity of consequences. What was lacking in these studies was evidence indicating that subjects were involved in or disturbed by the experiences of the victim.

Yet, a study by Lowe and Medway (1976) underscored this point. This study demonstrated that the severity of the outcome increases the strength of dispositional and responsibility attributions when the target event has some relevance or involvement for the subject. Thus, the degree of involvement necessary to evoke the justice motivation remains moot.

It may be unreasonable to expect that subjects, in this thesis project, would feel their sense of justice and security threatened when reading the conditions under which to support capital punishment and legalized abortion. It may have been unrealistic to expect subjects to ignore the clear reality considerations involved. The instructions do not ask the subject to imagine he will truly be affected by murders, rapes, or pregnancies. Consequently, the findings that there are no differences between the not personally-relevant and personally-relevant conditions, are not credible.

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COGNITIVE DYNAMICS IN MORAL JUDGMENTS

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the way in which views on capital punishment and legalized abortion may be consistent with personal values concerning morality. It is suggested that the belief in a just world, because it links goodness to happiness and wickedness to punishment, allows people to support capital punishment and be against legalized abortion on the grounds that the individual is getting what he/she deserves. In addition, the role of the just world belief as a subsystem in the moral evaluation process is studied.

A subject's belief in a just world was measured by the Just World Scale (Rubin and Peplau, 1973). Subjects were asked when, and under what conditions they supported capital punishment and legalized abortion. It was hypothesized that high scorers would favor capital punishment and be against legalized abortion. It was also hypothesized high scorers would differ from low scorers in their rankings as to what arguments influenced their views on capital punishment and legalized abortion. Subjects whose views on these issues did not follow from their JW scores were interviewed. This allowed subjects the opportunity to explain why they held their views.

The hypotheses were not supported. It appears that attitudes toward capital punishment and legalized abortion cannot be measured by the Just World Scale. Rather, it appears that views on these issues are influenced by ascertaining whether the consequence was the incidental or intentional goal of an individual's actions. Consequently, when evaluators determined that capital punishment was to be instituted in an instance when someone had



intended to kill another person, capital punishment was permissible. Also, when evaluators learned that an abortion was necessary in cases of rape or health, and the pregnancy was unplanned, abortion was permissible.

In conclusion, it does not seem that the Just World Scale generalizes capital punishment or legalized abortion where perceived responsibility was not salient. Subjects, regardless of their Just World Scale scores, indicated they were more concerned with punishing someone when personal responsibility was established than punishing solely to satisfy their need for retribution.