

THE INFLUENCE OF OFFENDER AND VICTIM ETHNICITY ON PERCEPTIONS  
OF CRIME SEVERITY AND RECOMMENDED PUNISHMENT

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By

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## ABSTRACT

Crime severity has been found to be one of the best predictors of sentencing decisions (Darley, Carlsmith, & Robinson, 2000). There is however a dearth of research examining the effect of offender and victim ethnicity on perceptions of crime seriousness, and the few studies that do exist have produced equivocal findings. Some studies find an effect of victim ethnicity (e.g., Cohen-Raz, Bozna, & Glicksohn, 1997), some studies find no significant effects of offender nor victim ethnicity (e.g., Benjamin, 1989), and some studies only find effects under certain conditions, such as when the crime is of low seriousness (e.g., Herzog, 2003a). The present study was conducted in an attempt to clarify these convoluted findings by using measures of modern and old-fashioned prejudice. Whereas *old-fashioned prejudice* refers to the belief that an out group is in some way inferior, *modern prejudice* refers to the view that a minority group no longer faces discrimination or that the minority group is being “too pushy” when advocating for equal rights (McConahay, 1983). Using a sample of undergraduate psychology students, it was found that when the crime was perceived as being quite severe, harsher punishments were recommended for the offender. Further to this, participants scoring high in modern prejudice perceived crimes to be more severe and recommended longer sentences in certain offender-victim ethnicity conditions than participants scoring low in modern prejudice. However, contrary to the hypotheses, no significant differences were found between high and low old-fashioned prejudice participants. Perceived offender responsibility and stability were also found to affect perceptions of crime severity and recommended punishment. When an offence was described as being stable (i.e., the offender had committed similar crimes in the past),

participants rated the crime as being more severe and recommended a harsher punishment than when it was the offender's first offence. Additionally, when participants attributed responsibility for the crime to the offender, crime severity ratings were higher and recommended punishments were longer. The implications of these results are discussed and recommendations for future research are put forward.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NSCS	National Survey of Crime Severity
NCS	National Crime Survey
CSC	Correctional Service of Canada
CCJS	Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics
PAMS	Prejudice towards Aboriginal Men Scale
IMS	Impression Management Scale
BIDR	Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance

## 1. INTRODUCTION

There is a well-documented over-representation of Aboriginal offenders in Canadian penitentiaries: Approximately 18% of all admissions to Canadian federal institutions are Aboriginal, while only 3% of the general population identifies as Aboriginal (The Correctional Investigator, 2006). This trend is continuing despite the fact that in *R v. Gladue* (1999) the Supreme Court of Canada declared that a defendant's Aboriginal status should be considered a mitigating factor, not an aggravating one. This leads to the question: Do Aboriginals simply commit more crimes or is our legal system biased? Although the data available from official reports are limited, there is evidence to support both of these explanations. Not only are crime rates significantly higher in Aboriginal communities, but there is also research that points to discrimination in the justice system, such as the finding that defense lawyers spend significantly less time with clients who are Aboriginal than clients who are not (Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba, 1991).

Crime severity has been found to be one of the best predictors of sentencing decisions (Darley et al., 2000). There is a dearth of research examining the effect of offender and victim ethnicity on perceptions of crime seriousness, and the few studies that do exist have had mixed results. Some studies have found that offender and victim ethnicity do not affect perceptions of crime severity (e.g., Benjamin, 1989), some studies have found an effect of victim ethnicity (e.g., Cohen-Raz et al., 1997), and some studies have found an effect of offender and victim ethnicity only under certain

conditions, such as when the crime is of low or intermediate seriousness (e.g., Herzog, 2003a). This past research suffers from methodological flaws, however (discussed below), which will be addressed in the present study.

If there is a racial bias that leads the general public to see crime committed by Aboriginal Canadians as more serious, this bias could also be present in the Canadian legal system. This could partially explain why Aboriginal offenders receive differential treatment than non-Aboriginal offenders, such as being more than twice as likely to be sentenced to imprisonment or to have their parole revoked than non-Aboriginal offenders (Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba, 1991; Williams, Vallée, & Staubi, 1997). The current study will examine this possibility. Relevant literature regarding these topics will be reviewed and several hypotheses will be put forward.

### *1.1 Perceptions of Crime Severity*

Without a doubt, implicit judgments regarding crime seriousness are imbedded in the criminal justice system. These crime severity judgments are closely tied to how we punish offenders for their wrong-doings. For example, crimes that receive a federal sentence of two years or more (e.g., first-degree murder) are seen as more serious than crimes that receive a provincial sentence of less than two years (e.g., vandalism). Crimes labelled “indictable offences” (e.g., assault with a weapon) are seen as more serious than crimes labelled “summary convictions” (e.g., disturbing the peace). But what is the exact quality that makes one crime asserted as being more “serious” than another?

Amount of harm caused by the crime seems to be an important factor when judging crime severity. Typically, the more harm caused by a crime, the more serious it is rated (Cohen-Raz et al., 1997; Gebotys & Dasgupta, 1987; Rosenmerkel, 2001) and “victimless crimes” (e.g., prostitution) are usually rated as being the least serious

(Herzog, 2003b; Stylianou, 2003). The type of harm also plays a role: Crimes resulting in non-redeemable harm (i.e., harm to the victim that cannot be undone; e.g., murder) are rated as more serious than crimes resulting in redeemable harm (e.g., vandalism; Gebotys & Dasgupta, 1987). A highly consistent finding is that crimes resulting in personal injury are perceived to be much more serious than property crimes (Cohen, 1988; Cullen, Link, & Polanzi, 1982; Herzog, 2003a; McCleary, O'Neil, Epperlein, Jones, & Gray, 1981; Rosenmerkel, 2001; Rossi & Henry, 1980; Stylianou, 2003; Wolfgang, Figlio, Tracy, & Singer, 1985). This also holds true for white-collar crime: Offences that result in physical harm (e.g., manufacturing drugs known to be harmful) are rated as being more serious than offences that do not (e.g., embezzling company funds; Cullen et al., 1982; Wolfgang et al., 1985). Gender (Sinden, 1981) and age (Sellin & Wolfgang, 1964) of the offender do not seem to significantly affect crime severity ratings.

### *1.1.1 History of Crime Severity Research*

There are three landmark studies in the history of crime severity research: (a) Sellin and Wolfgang's *The Measurement of Delinquency* (1964), (b) Rossi et al.'s *Baltimore Crime Seriousness Study* (1974), and (c) Wolfgang et al.'s *National Survey of Crime Severity* (1985). Each of these studies will be discussed in turn.

Sellin and Wolfgang (1964) are credited with pioneering crime severity research. While conducting an evaluation of a program to reduce juvenile delinquency, they felt that it was crucial to examine the severity of delinquent acts in an objective way that would remove individual variation by court judges. As no measure of crime severity was in existence, they undertook the task of constructing one.

To construct their measure of crime severity, Sellin and Wolfgang first studied the offence reports of the Juvenile Aid Division of the Philadelphia police department and made note of all incidences of delinquency that occurred in 1960. This process yielded 1343 incidences of delinquency. These offences were placed into 141 offence categories. The seriousness of the offences was then rated by a group of criminal justice experts, including juvenile court judges and police officers, as well as university students. Participants responded on a seven-point rating scale ranging from 1 = *least serious* to 7 = *most serious*. After the data were collected, the Sellin-Wolfgang Index of Crime Severity was created in which a crime is given a score based on personal injury, threat and intimidation, and property damaged, stolen, or destroyed. The seriousness score for the crime as a whole is the sum of the scores given for each component (see Table 1-1).

One of the main criticisms of the Sellin-Wolfgang Index is the assumption of “additivity.” Even though this was never empirically tested, Sellin and Wolfgang (1964) merely assumed that seriousness scores could be added to obtain a total seriousness score for the complete event (Rose, 1966). For example, if a person assigns a severity score of 15 to assault with a weapon and a score of 20 to rape, would they necessarily assign a severity score of 35 to a crime that involved both assault with a weapon and rape? Pease, Ireson, and Thorpe (1974) conducted a study to test exactly this. Participants were asked to compare the severity of double offences to that of single offences. If the additivity assumption was correct, the double offences would be rated as being twice as serious. Contrary to Sellin and Wolfgang’s (1964) assumption, only 31.8% of respondents perceived the double offences to be twice as serious as single offences. This led the authors to conclude that the additivity assumption was incorrect.

**Table 1-1.** Sellin-Wolfgang Index of Crime Severity

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<u>Injury Component</u>	<u>Score</u>
Victim assaulted	
Minor injury	1
Treated and discharged	4
Hospitalized	7
Killed	26
Intimidation Component	
For each forcible sex offence	
The sex offence	10
Intimidation by weapon	2
For non-sex offence	
Physical or verbal	
Intimidation	2
Weapon intimidation	4
Property Component	
Premises forcibly entered	1
Stolen vehicle	2
Value of property stolen	
Under \$10	1
\$10 - \$250	2
\$251 - \$2,000	3
\$2,001 - \$9,000	4
\$9,001 - \$30,000	5
\$30,001 - \$80,000	6
Over \$80,000	7

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*Note.* From *The Measurement of Delinquency* (p. 402), by T. Sellin and M. Wolfgang, 1964, New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Copyright 1964 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Adapted with permission.

Wellford and Wiatrowski (1975) later challenged this conclusion and identified a major methodological flaw in Pease et al.'s (1974) study: In some of the items used to measure double offences, the two crimes occurred "a few days," "later," and "soon after." This could distinguish the crimes as being two separate events, not one single crime. Wagner and Pease (1978) replicated the study by Pease et al. (1974), with the exception that items designed to measure double offences made it clear that the two

offences were occurring at the same time. Respondents were asked if the double offence was more serious than the single offence. It was found that only 18 % of participants felt the double offence was twice as serious. Surprisingly, 63.5 % of respondents felt that the double offences were the same level of severity as the single offences. These findings once again called into question the assumption of additivity. To date, this controversy has not yet been resolved.

Rossi et al. (1974) conducted the *Baltimore Crime Seriousness Study* in order to develop an index of crime severity for a larger study examining the support for penal reforms among state elites (e.g., political office holders, criminal justice personnel, etc.). They wished to use a more representative sample than that used by Sellin and Wolfgang (1964), as well as to obtain a more detailed analysis of the characteristics of crime severity ratings. The researchers conducted 200 interviews in which respondents rated the severity of 140 offences by placing cards containing a short description of an offence into a box with nine slots (each slot representing a degree of seriousness).

Not surprisingly, it was found that crimes committed against a person were rated significantly more serious than property crimes. White-collar crimes (e.g., embezzlement), victimless crimes (e.g., prostitution), and misdemeanours (e.g., disturbing the peace) tended to be rated the least serious. Crimes against police officers were seen as more serious than crimes committed against others, with “planned killing of a policeman” being perceived as the most serious crime. Severity ratings between subgroups (e.g., Caucasian versus African-American; male versus female, etc.) tended to be quite similar.

The largest study of crime severity was conducted by Wolfgang et al. (1985). Their *National Survey of Crime Severity* (NSCS) included 60,000 respondents. The National Crime Survey (NCS) is conducted annually in the United States of America and collects information regarding the number of rapes, robberies, assaults, burglaries, and thefts committed during the year. When the NCS computes both crime and victimization rates from year to year, each offence type is treated as being equally important. For example, an increase of 100 incidences of theft of \$10 would increase the crime rate as equally as 100 murders. Few people would agree that theft of \$10 is as serious as murder. In attempt to rectify this, Wolfgang et al. (1985) added a survey of crime severity to the 1977 NCS.

In total, the severity of 204 crimes was rated with each respondent rating 25 crimes. All seriousness ratings were combined and scaled as ratios to the severity of a theft of one dollar. This allowed the authors to create a single severity score for each of the 204 crimes. The highest severity score was 72.1 for “a person plants a bomb in a public building. The bomb explodes and 20 people are killed” and the lowest was 0.2 for “a person under 16 years old plays hooky from school.” As is a typical finding in crime severity research, crimes resulting in physical harm (e.g., “a person stabs a victim to death” received a score of 35.7) were seen as more serious than crimes resulting in property loss (e.g., “a person breaks into a bank at night and steals \$100,000” received a score of 15.5). An interesting finding of this study is that the relationship between victim and offender affected severity score: “A parent beats his young child with his fists. As a result, the child dies” received a severity score of 47.8. This was seen as being more serious than a husband fatally stabbing his wife, which was given a score of 39.2. A wife fatally stabbing her husband was given a score of 27.9.

Overall, Wolfgang et al. (1985) found that people tend to be in agreement about the severity of crimes; however, it was found that in general, non-Caucasians rated crimes as being less serious than their Caucasian counterparts. Additionally, older respondents rated theft as more serious than younger respondents. There were no significant differences between males and females. Furthermore, prior victimization of the respondents was found to significantly affect severity ratings, with past victims rating crimes as being more serious than non-victims.

The NSCS was not without its criticisms. Parton, Hansel, and Stratton (1991) identified several theoretical and methodological problems with the study. First, items that are not “crimes” per se were included, such as “playing hooky” from school. Although this may be morally wrong, it is not technically a criminal act. Therefore respondents are rating something qualitatively different than crime seriousness for some items in the study. Second, 12 different versions of the NSCS were used, each with different items. Because of this, it is difficult to draw any definite conclusions comparing results from respondents of varying demographics (e.g., race, geographical region, etc.).

### *1.1.2 Consensus*

Most crime seriousness studies have been conducted in the United States; however, crime severity ratings appear to be quite similar in different countries, including Canada (Akman & Normandeau, 1968), the United Kingdom (Banister & Pordham, 1974), Israel (Fishman, Kraus, & Cohen, 1986), Taiwan (Hsu, 1973), Norway (Kvålseth, 1980), and Puerto Rico (Velez-Diaz & Megargee, 1971). According to Rossi et al. (1974), “the norms defining how serious various criminal acts are considered to be, are quite widely distributed among blacks and whites, males and females, high and low

socio-economic levels, and among levels of educational attainment” (p. 237). The level of consensus between groups is greatest when asked to rate the severity of typically more serious crimes such as violent offences (e.g., rape) as opposed to less serious property offences (e.g., vandalism; Carlson & Williams, 1993; Miethe, 1984; Newman & Trilling, 1975).

There is agreement on the severity of crimes between offenders and non-offenders (Figlio, 1975; Sechrest, 1969). Sechrest (1969) surveyed 79 correctional staff members and 142 male inmates divided into three groups: Early, middle, and late phases of their institutional careers. Respondents rated the severity of 39 offences on a scale ranging from zero to ten (least to most serious). It was found that although the mean rankings of the three groups of inmates as well as the correctional staff differed significantly, the rank-ordering of the offences did not. In other words, although the mean severity ratings differed between groups, the ordering of offences from least to most serious did not differ between correctional staff and offenders (e.g., first-degree murder was the most serious, followed by forcible rape, followed by kidnapping, etc.). Likewise, Figlio (1975) compared judgments of crime seriousness between undergraduate sociology students, inmates of an adult correctional centre in New Jersey, and inmates of juvenile detention home in New Jersey. The university students rated the crimes as being more serious than the group of juvenile offenders, who rated the crimes as more serious than the group of adult offenders; however, as Sechrest (1969) found, the ordering of offences from least to most serious was the same for all three groups.

There is also agreement between the general public and various criminal justice experts. Carroll and Payne (1977) found high agreement between college students and parole decision makers from the Pennsylvania State Board of Probation and Parole.

McCleary et al. (1981) compared seriousness rankings and ratings from lawyers, judges, and probation officers with the ratings obtained by the general population by Rossi et al. (1974). The rankings were highly similar between the two samples, but the criminal justice experts tended to rate the crimes as being *less* serious than the general public. Levi and Jones (1985) found agreement in severity ratings between the general public and police officers for personal crimes (e.g., violence), but police officers rated property crimes (e.g., fraud, burglary) as being less serious than the general public did. Furthering this stream of research, Pontell, Granite, Keenan, and Geis (1985) found that, for the most part, police chiefs in the United States rate the severity of crimes in a similar fashion as the general public. There are also similar severity ratings between the general public and prosecuting lawyers (Roth, 1978).

Miethe (1982) has questioned whether or not consensus findings in the crime severity literature are simply due to an instructional bias. Miethe pointed out that most surveys ask participants to rate the severity of “crimes,” not “behaviours.” This choice of wording could bias respondents, as the event has already been labelled something wrong that is at least somewhat serious. In order to examine this, Travis, Cullen, Link, and Wozniak (1986) compared severity findings when instructions used the terms “crimes,” “deviant behaviours,” and “behaviours.” No significant differences were found. This indicates that consensus is not merely due to instructional bias.

### *1.1.3 Methodological Issues*

Historically, surveys have been the most popular way to measure perceptions of crime severity. Participants are typically given a series of “offence scenarios” followed by a series of questions (Stylianou, 2003). These offence scenarios vary greatly from study to study, with some surveys presenting a single word (e.g., “rape”) and others

presenting scenarios several pages in length. When the crimes to be rated are described in only one or two phrases, Blum-West (1985) found that respondents “fill in” the missing gaps of information, make mental elaborations on the crimes, and imagine worst-case scenarios. Interestingly, the more serious a crime, the more concrete these mental elaborations become (Blum-West, 1985). This calls into question the validity of seriousness surveys and the extent to which findings from different studies may be compared to one another. To the author’s knowledge, the differences in severity ratings obtained with differing lengths of scenarios have not yet been empirically investigated.

It is generally accepted in the realm of social psychology that attitudes can be distorted by the way in which a question is asked and who is asking it. In order to assess response effects on surveys of crime severity, Sheley (1980) administered several different versions of a questionnaire to participants. Questionnaires were either “one-item-per-page” or “full array” (multiple items on one page). Furthermore, item context was varied by combining crimes of varying severity in differing order (e.g., a highly serious crime such as murder following a less serious crime such as theft). It was found that questionnaire form (i.e., full array vs. one-item-per-page) does not significantly affect severity ratings and that item context did not have an effect on responses.

A methodological problem with Sheley’s (1980) study is that it is extremely limited in the sense that to study immediate item context, only one offence, “shoplifting a diamond ring from a jewellery store,” was alternated in three different positions. Evans and Scott (1984) re-examined the effect of item order by rotating seven offences, including violent, property, white-collar, and moral offences. When this more sophisticated methodology was employed, item order did significantly affect crime severity ratings. It was found that when offences followed a series of violent and/or

property offences, they were seen as being more serious than when they followed a series of white-collar and/or moral offences. How serious an offence is perceived to be depends somewhat on the severity of the preceding offence. To combat this effect, Evans and Scott suggest that researchers should make certain that very serious and less serious offences are varied on a questionnaire so that response sets are not formed.

Past crime severity research has typically used one of three methods to measure seriousness: paired comparisons, category scaling, and magnitude scaling (Stylianou, 2003). A *paired comparison* refers to situations in which a respondent is given a pair of crimes and is asked to indicate which of the two he or she perceives to be more serious. When *category scaling* is used, each crime is scored on a rank-ordered continuum, such as circling a number from one to seven (least to most serious). *Magnitude scaling* requires respondents to assign a severity score for a crime, but the crime is scored in relation to a control offence. For example, in Wolfgang et al. (1985), stealing a bicycle was given a severity score of ten and participants were instructed to use this as a basis for assigning severity scores to all other crimes. Despite early assertions that magnitude scaling was the superior method for assessing crime severity (e.g., Sellin & Wolfgang, 1964), studies have found that these three methods of measuring crime severity are highly consistent with one another and result in similar distributions and estimates of crime severity (Bridges & Lisagor, 1975; Walker, 1978). In fact, Miethe (1986) found that magnitude scaling is slightly less reliable than other, more traditional methods (e.g., category scaling).

### *1.2 Punishment and Sentencing*

There are several major criminal justice philosophies that guide punishment for crime. *Deterrence* refers to preventing future crimes by punishing individuals for their

transgressions so that they will not commit another offence due to fear of more punishment. This is specific deterrence. General deterrence occurs when members of the broader society do not commit a crime due to a fear of punishment as a result of knowing someone else was punished for the crime (Goff, 2004).

*Incapacitation* revolves around incarcerating offenders for lengthy periods of time. The logic underlying this model is that if offenders are removed from society, they will not have the opportunity to commit more crimes as they are in prison (Goff, 2004; Wasieleski, 1995). Information regarding the likelihood of recidivism is highly important to those who follow this sentencing philosophy (Darley et al., 2000).

Another justification for sentencing those who commit wrong-doings is *retribution*, or “just deserts.” This is when an offender is punished because of the harm he or she has caused (Darley et al., 2000). Presumably, the punishment should reflect the moral “wrongness” of the crime (Carlsmith, Darley, & Robinson, 2002). This seems to be a popular sentencing philosophy in both the United States and Canada. The *Criminal Code of Canada* states, “a sentence must be proportionate to the gravity of the offence” (718.1), which is indicative of a retributive model of justice.

### *1.2.1 Factors that Influence Punishment and Sentencing*

Crime severity has been found to be one of the best predictors of sentencing, especially when a retributive model of justice is in place (Darley et al., 2000; Hamilton & Rytina, 1980; Harney, Haines, & Saavedra, 1986; Miller, Chino, Skolnick & Shaw, 1994; Pepitone & DiNubile, 1976; Sanderson, Zanna, & Darley, 2000; Wasieleski, 1995). In fact, when the age and prior record of an offender are controlled, crime severity is the main factor influencing sentencing decisions (Warr, Meier, & Erickson, 1983). Similar to perceptions of crime severity, people are generally more punitive

towards offences committed against people than property offences (Douglas & Ogloff, 1996). It seems logical that a convicted murderer would receive a more severe sanction than a vandal who in turn would receive a more severe sanction than a jaywalker.

Crime severity is not the only factor taken into account by judges when sentencing a criminal. If this were true then every identical crime would receive the same sentence. Clearly this is not the case. Hogarth (1971) interviewed 71 Canadian judges and found that the perceptions and sentencing philosophies of judges explained 50% of the variance in sentence length, whereas the facts of the case only accounted for 10%. When deciding on a sentence for a particular offender, Canadian judges are governed by a set of rules outlined in the *Criminal Code of Canada* (Goff, 2004). For example, aggravated assault (i.e., wounding or endangering the victim) can receive a prison term up to fourteen years (Criminal Code of Canada, 1985, 268.1). A judge cannot change this maximum sentence; however, a judge must use his or her discretion to choose a sentence that ranges anywhere from no time served to 14 years imprisonment.

While deliberating, judges are able to take into account factors such as the offender's prior record and offence severity. While a judge is deciding on an appropriate sentence, he or she may use a presentence report, which is provided by a probation officer and contains valuable information about the offender, the crime, and the victim(s). Prosecutors and defense lawyers may also recommend a sentence to the judge (Goff, 2004). Additionally, for less serious offences (e.g., stealing a television set worth \$200) sentencing decisions are influenced by judges' and other court practitioners' perceptions of the public's fear of crime (Ouimet & Coyle, 1991). For more serious offences (e.g., homicide) this effect was not found. One possible explanation put forth

by the authors is that for the more serious offences there are more clear-cut sentencing guidelines as opposed to less serious offences.

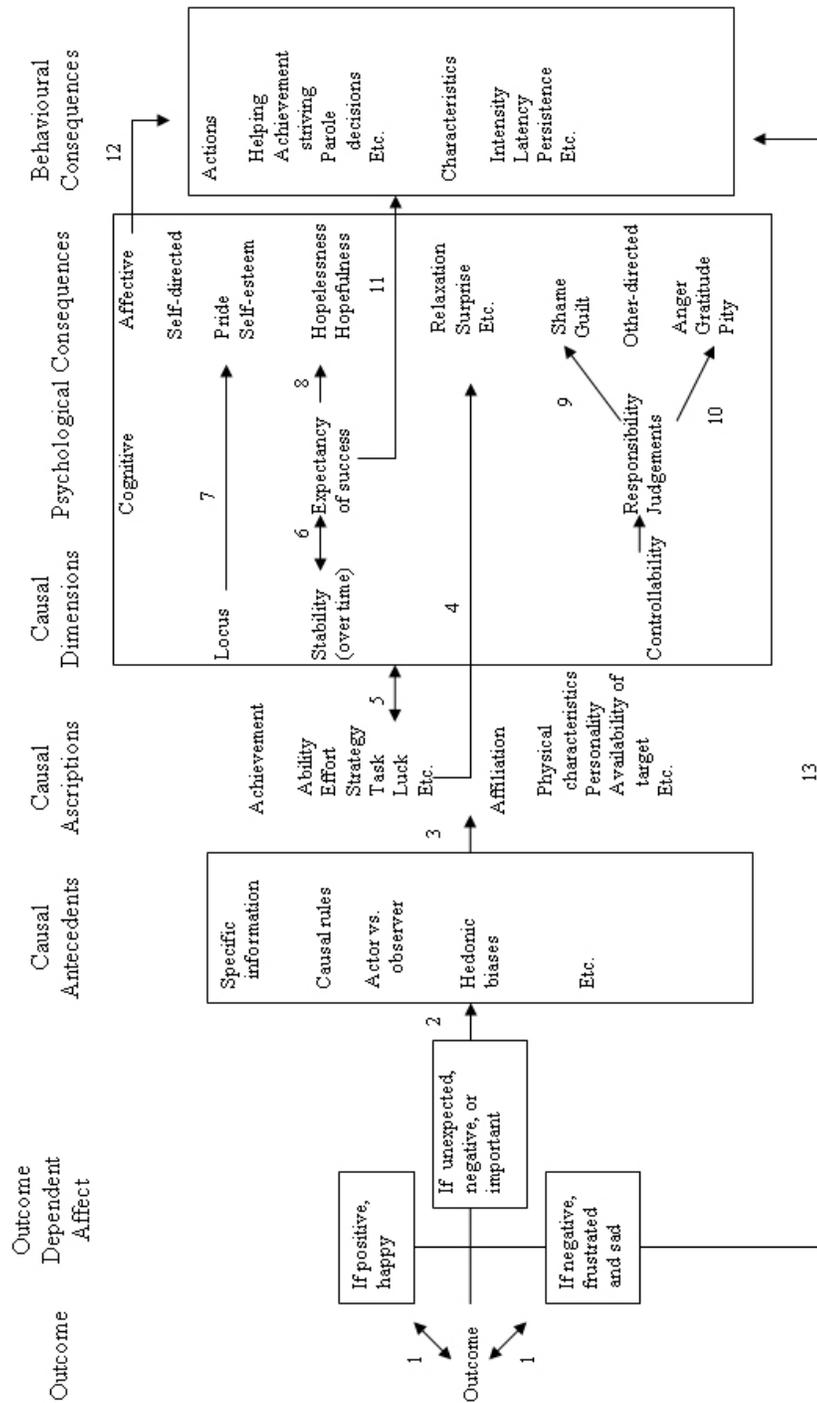
It is evident that there are both mitigating and aggravating factors that are taken into account when sentencing offenders. Crimes can vary in their specifics to a great extent. For example, all crimes labeled first degree murder must have certain characteristics to be legally classified as such (e.g., the crime was planned and deliberate). However, there can be great variation in the circumstances of homicide. Did the perpetrator know the victim? How old was the victim? These variations may or may not be taken into consideration by a judge when sentencing the offender (Wolfgang et al., 1985).

### *1.3 Attribution Theory*

One of the most frequently asked questions is “why?” We want to know why certain events occurred. Knowing the cause of an event then leads us to respond in a certain way. This is the basic tenet of what is known as attribution theory. Heider (1958) is credited with founding this theory, as he put forward the idea that individuals see the cause of an event as either being internal or external to the actor (as will be discussed below). Although there are several different versions of attribution theory in existence (e.g., Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1967), the framework developed by Weiner (1985) will be used in the present study. Weiner’s theory is unique as it accounts for the causal dimension of *controllability*.

#### *1.3.1 Weiner’s (1985) Attribution Theory*

Similar to other attributional frameworks, Weiner’s (1985) attribution theory states that we are constantly striving to understand why events occurred (see Figure 1-1). We are especially prone to seeking causal information (termed a *causal*



**Figure 1-1.** Weiner's (1985) Attribution Theory

*Note.* From "An Attributional Theory of Achievement Motivation and Emotion," by B. Weiner, 1985, *Psychological Review*, 92, p. 402. Copyright 1985 by the American Psychological Association. Adapted with permission.

*search*) when an event is negative, important, and/or unexpected (Weiner, 1985). There are three fundamental properties of causes: locus, stability, and controllability (Weiner, 1985, 2006). The cause of an event can be seen to be either internal or external to the actor. For example, if a person commits a crime, one might say “he did that because he has a criminal personality.” This is an internal cause. Alternatively, one could think, “he did that because he lives in poverty and grew up seeing others commit crimes.” This is an external cause.

A cause for an event can also be stable or unstable. Returning to the previous examples, having a criminal personality is stable. This is the way the offender has always been and probably always will be. It is unlikely that he will change. However, circumstances can also be unstable and able to change, such as in the previous example of living in poverty. The stability dimension of an attribution leads to expectancies regarding future success. If the cause is stable, such as a criminal personality, there is a good chance that the offender will commit more crimes in the future. If it is unstable, we can be hopeful that the offender will refrain from recidivating.

The last dimension of a cause is controllability. If the event was controllable by the actor this leads us to judge him or her as responsible. If it was not controllable, we do not see him or her as responsible. When a person is judged to be responsible for a negative event, we feel anger towards him or her. It was in his or her power to stop the negative event from happening, but he or she did not. Conversely, when an individual is seen as not being responsible for a negative event, we feel sympathy, pity, and compassion for him or her (Weiner, 2006).

Attribution-based emotional reactions stimulate subsequent actions (Weiner, 2006). For example, if one feels anger towards an individual, he or she is likely to

retaliate in an aggressive manner or to withdraw from that person. If, however, one feels sympathy, it is likely to result in a prosocial behaviour such as altruism. To illustrate this, imagine there is a man in ragged clothing standing on a public street corner asking people who pass by for spare change. If a person thinks, “this man is begging for change because he is lazy and refuses to work,” he or she is not likely to give him money. If, however, a person thinks “this man is begging for change because the unemployment rate is so high and he could not work even if he wanted to,” he or she is more likely to help the man and give him money. This connection between controllability attributions and altruism has been confirmed in several studies (e.g., Zucker & Weiner, 1993).

### *1.3.2 Crime and Causal Attributions*

Crime can be considered to be negative, important, and, usually, unexpected. Therefore, a causal search is likely to take place (Graham, Weiner, & Zucker, 1997). Causal attributions have been found to be related to a variety of perceptions regarding crime and criminality. This section will address how the three different dimensions of a causal attribution can affect perceptions of both the offender and an offence.

*1.3.2.1 Locus.* An important dimension of crime attributions is whether or not the cause is seen as being internal or external to the offender. The cause of the crime can either lie with the criminal (internal) or the environment (external; Carroll & Payne, 1977a). When an internal attribution is given to a crime, the offender is evaluated more negatively (Carroll, 1978; Carroll & Payne, 1977b). For example, if a person believed that a man committed robbery because he lost his job due to a rising unemployment rate and was desperate to provide food for his family, it stands to reason that he or she would view this criminal more positively than a man who committed robbery because he is “lazy” and does not want to work to earn money.

1.3.2.2 *Stability*. Is the cause of the crime permanent or is it subject to change? The stability dimension of attributions is extremely influential in making judgments of recidivism risk for both students and criminal justice experts (Carroll, 1978; Carroll & Payne, 1977b). Unstable attributions are associated with less recidivism risk and therefore more favourable parole hearing outcomes. In a study by Carroll (1978), five members of the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole completed a questionnaire after each of 272 parole release hearings. Board members did not use crime severity in making their parole decisions; they left this up to the judge in sentencing decisions. Rather the board members relied on the unstable-stable dimension to make their decisions. Unstable attributions were associated with an offender receiving parole. If it was thought that the offender was capable of change and would not always be a criminal, he or she was more likely to receive parole. The internal-external dimension was marginally significant, with internal attributions being associated with less favourable outcomes.

It has been found that recidivism affects sentencing decisions, with repeat offenders receiving longer sentences than first-time offenders (Carroll & Payne, 1977a; Doob & Roberts, 1983; Sanderson et al., 2000). If an offender has committed an offence more than once, the cause is seen as being stable and unchanging. Therefore, it is inferred that, once released, the offender will commit the crime yet again. To avoid this, he or she must be kept locked away from the rest of society (Weiner, 2006).

1.3.3.3 *Controllability*. Although criminal intent is crucial to decisions made by the criminal justice system, it is not often included in seriousness surveys and the resulting weighting systems (Sebba, 1984). A component of the *Criminal Code of Canada*, *mens rea* is the assumption that one has a “guilty mind” when committing a

crime; it corresponds to the intent of the offender (Goff, 2004). Legally, a person cannot be found guilty of a crime if he or she did not choose to do it out of his or her own free will. The behaviour must have been controllable and the offender chose to commit the criminal act even though there were other courses of action available to him or her (Goff, 2004).

The *Criminal Code* instructs judges that, “a sentence must be proportionate... [to] the degree of responsibility of the offender” (718.1). More severe sentences are recommended for offenders who are seen to have intentionally committed a crime (Ewert & Pennington, 1987; Schmid & Fiedler, 1998; Shepherd & Sloan, 1979). Furthermore, less responsibility is attributed to the victim for more severe crimes (Gold, Landerman, & Bullock, 1977). If an offender is seen as being responsible for the offence, this will elicit an anger response and retribution may become the sentencing goal. This will result in the offender getting his or her “just deserts” and being punished for his or her wrong-doing. If however the cause of the crime is seen as being uncontrollable by the offender, he or she is not responsible for the transgression and feelings of sympathy will result. This usually results in a more utilitarian viewpoint on sentencing, in which deterrence and rehabilitation are the goals (Graham et al., 1997; Weiner, 2006; Weiner, Graham, & Reina, 1997).

It has been found that the intentions of an offender are important considerations when respondents are rating crime seriousness (Casey & O’Connell, 1991). In a study conducted by Fishman et al. (1986), it was found that degree of personal injury and criminal intent are the main components of crime seriousness. When a regression analysis was run, these two dimensions accounted for 78% of the variance in severity ratings. A study by Darley et al. (2000) found that when a murder was committed that

was unintentional (i.e., the criminal behaviour was caused by an inoperable brain tumour), the crime was still perceived as being highly serious, but recommended punishments were less severe. This indicates that responsibility judgments, not crime severity alone, are important when making punishment decisions.

#### *1.4 Ethnicity, Prejudice, & Criminal Justice*

##### *1.4.1 Modern Prejudice & Racism*

For some time now, blatant prejudice has not been socially acceptable in Western society (Devine & Elliott, 1995; McConahay, Hardee, & Batts, 1981). This is especially evident when one considers the finding of the classic “Princeton trilogy” studies. Katz and Braly (1933) developed a procedure for measuring stereotypes in which participants are given a list of adjectives and asked to select which words describe ten different racial and ethnic groups. In their study, it was found that participants generally selected negative adjectives to describe the target groups (e.g., African Americans, Jews). To assess stability and change of stereotypes, this study was replicated by Gilbert (1951) and Karlins, Coffman, and Walters (1969). These three studies are referred to as the Princeton trilogy as they capture three different generations of students at Princeton University.

Both Gilbert (1951) and Karlins et al. (1969) found a reduction in stereotypes of the target groups, as well as students expressing distaste at being asked to make such general statements about the racial and ethnic groups. The results of these studies were taken as evidence that American society was becoming less “stereotype-ridden.” However, Devine and Elliott (1995) highlighted several methodological limitations of these three studies. First, the Princeton trilogy studies did not distinguish between knowledge of the stereotype in question and personal endorsement of the stereotype. It

is plausible that the stereotypes have remained the same, but personal endorsement has decreased. Second, the Princeton trilogy studies did not employ a measure of prejudice. It is equally plausible that high prejudice participants will endorse the stereotypes more than low prejudice participants. When this more sophisticated methodology was employed, it was found that high and low prejudice participants were equally aware of a stereotype of African Americans, but high prejudice participants endorsed the stereotype significantly more than low prejudice participants (Devine & Elliott, 1995).

Since outright prejudice has become so reprehensible, prejudice has become more hidden and only surfaces when the attitude can be attributed to a cause other than prejudice (Michalos & Zumbo, 2001). Whereas *old-fashioned prejudice* is an overt phenomenon which refers to the belief that an out group is in some way inferior, *modern prejudice* is more covert and refers to the belief that a minority group no longer faces discrimination, minorities are being too “pushy” when they seek equal rights, or that minorities are receiving more attention and rights than is fair (McConahay, 1983; McConahay et al., 1981). People scoring high on a measure of modern prejudice are most likely to act in a prejudicial manner only when it is unlikely that an attribution of prejudice will be made for their behaviour. McConahay (1983) theorized five contextual factors that are most likely to result in a display of modern prejudice: (1) ideological ambiguity (i.e., nonracial or political beliefs can be used to justify the behaviour), (2) situational ambiguity (i.e., nonracial attributes can be used to justify the behaviour), (3) when there is a necessity to derogate a person harmed by the subject, (4) situations in which there are no clear social norms to dictate appropriate behaviour, and (5) situations in which ethnicity is not a salient feature.

This old-fashioned versus modern prejudice distinction has been found in several different domains, including racism (McConahay, 1983; McConahay et al., 1981), homonegativity (Morrison & Morrison, 2002), and sexism (Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995). For example, McConahay (1983) presented college students with identical resumés; the only factor that differed was whether there was a picture of a white or black male attached to the resumé. College students who scored high in modern racism were less likely to make favourable hiring decisions when the candidate was black. These participants were able to attribute their decision to not hire the candidate based on his qualifications, not the candidate's race. Participants scoring low in modern racism were not any more likely to hire the black or white candidate.

As a second example, Morrison and Morrison (2002) found that participants scoring high on a measure of modern homonegativity were less likely to sit next to a confederate wearing either a pro-gay or pro-lesbian shirt only in the covert condition when their behaviour was attributable to something other than prejudice. Participants arrived at a room and were told they would be able to choose between two "theatres" where their task would be to watch a short film. In the overt condition, participants were told that a mistake had occurred and the two theatres would be showing the same film, whereas in the covert condition participants had a choice between two films. Prior to choosing a theatre, the participant was given a chance to view the confederate wearing the shirt. In the covert condition, the choice to sit in the theatre without the confederate was attributable to film choice whereas in the overt condition it was not.

As will be discussed below, individuals may react differently to crimes when the offender is from an ethnic minority group. This could be due to modern prejudice. As in the studies described above, the differential treatment is attributable to factors other than

offender ethnicity, such as prior convictions, risk of recidivism, and offence characteristics. The influence of offender ethnicity on perceptions of crime severity, punishment, and attributions will be discussed in turn.

#### *1.4.2 Ethnicity & Crime Perceptions*

As previously discussed, there is an over-representation of Aboriginal offenders in the Canadian legal system (The Correctional Investigator, 2006). Aboriginal offenders are less likely to receive full parole and more likely to be on statutory release (Welsh, 2000). Even when an Aboriginal offender does receive full parole, he or she is more likely to have their parole revoked than a non-Aboriginal individual (Williams et al., 1997). The Correctional Investigator's 2006 Annual Report indicates that these trends are not improving, despite attempts by the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) to incorporate culturally-sensitive programming. It should be noted that few studies examining sentencing of Aboriginal offenders in Canada have been undertaken, as the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS) does not distinguish which defendants are Aboriginal and which are not (La Prairie, 1999).

*1.4.3.1 Ethnicity and Crime Severity.* There is a dearth of research examining the effect of offender and victim ethnicity on perceptions of crime severity. The few studies that do exist have had somewhat mixed results. Benjamin (1989) presented four films to study participants. The films depicted a man armed with a knife entering a convenience store. The man forces the clerk to give him money from a cash register. Upon leaving the store, the clerk shoots the robber. The ethnicity of the clerk and the robber were varied so that there were four versions of the film: black robber – white clerk, white robber – white clerk, white robber – black clerk, and black robber – black clerk. Ethnicity did not significantly affect how serious the participants perceived the crime to

be. However, it is unclear whether or not this finding can be generalized to crime seriousness ratings of other crimes. The crime Benjamin used was not simply an offender committing an act of deviance. Rather, the crime was a convenience store clerk retaliating against a crime already committed, which is qualitatively different.

Additionally, racial biases were only assessed for one type of crime. It could be that there are differential effects for crimes that are low versus intermediate versus high in severity.

Several studies examining offender and victim ethnicity have been conducted in Israel. Israeli society can be divided into two main groups: Jews (80%) and Arabs (20%; Central Intelligence Agency, 2006). The Jewish majority is the dominant social group and there are many tensions that exist between the Jews and the Arabs (Fishman, Rattner, & Weimann, 1987). The relationship between these two ethnic groups is characterized by almost total separation in all aspects of life and both Jews and Arabs carry many strong, negative attitudes towards each other (Herzog, 2003a).

Herzog (2003a) examined whether or not the ethnicity of an offender (Jewish versus Arab) has an effect on perceptions of crime seriousness among 944 adults (63% Jews and 37% Arabs) in Israel. Eighteen different crime scenarios were presented, in which the ethnicity of the offender was varied. No significant differences in seriousness were found, except for the two least serious offences: illegal abortion and false tax declaration. These two offences were seen as being more serious when the offenders were Arab. However, these differences were mainly due to other control variables (the ethnicity of the respondent in particular) and not the offender's ethnicity. Herzog concluded that ethnic crime stereotypes are not activated automatically, but will only be

expressed when the ethnic dimension is relevant (such as interethnic offences with a Jewish victim and Arab offender).

Cohen-Raz et al. (1997) presented thirty-three Israeli policemen with scenarios describing crimes resulting in bodily harm. The incidents were varied according to a four-way factorial design: Crime context (extremist versus criminal), offender ethnicity (Jewish versus Arab), victim ethnicity (Jew versus Arab), and degree of bodily harm (low versus high). Extremist crimes were judged to be more severe than those occurring in a criminal context, as were crimes resulting in a higher degree of bodily harm. Crimes with Jewish victims were rated more severe; however, offender ethnicity did not appear to affect crime severity ratings.

None of the previous research examining the effect of ethnicity on perceptions of crime severity has utilized a measure of prejudice. As the previously discussed findings by Devine and Elliott (1995) show, including a measure of prejudice is crucial. High prejudice participants may display a bias when rating crime severity whereas low prejudice participants may not. Not differentiating between high and low prejudice participants could account for why these previous studies have not found significant results.

*1.4.3.2 Ethnicity and Sentencing Decisions.* Much more research has been conducted examining the effect of defendant race on jury decision-making. A recent meta-analysis of 34 studies found a racial bias for verdict and sentencing decisions, in that mock jurors are more likely to find a defendant guilty and to recommend a harsher sentence if the defendant is a member of a racial out-group (Mitchell, Haw, Pfeifer, and Meissner, 2005). However, it was also found that this bias could be removed with a

dichotomous guilt scale (i.e., guilty versus not guilty) and standard juror instructions (i.e., the defendant must be guilty beyond a reasonable doubt).

In order to assess whether or not mock jurors in Canada produce prejudicial verdicts similar to those found in the United States, Pfeifer and Ogloff (2003) conducted a study where English Canadian subjects read a scenario depicting a sexual assault trial in which the ethnicities of both the defendant and the victim were varied (i.e., English, French, or Native Canadian). When a subjective guilt rating was used (i.e., a seven-point scale ranging from “not guilty” to “extremely guilty”), the defendant was rated as being guiltier when he was either French or Native. However, the effect of racial and cultural bias was no longer present when the legal standard guilt rating (i.e., guilty or not guilty) and juror instructions explaining the elements of the crime and reminding jurors that the defendant must be proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt were used. The authors feel this finding supports the tenet that modern prejudice exists in Canada, as participants only felt comfortable revealing prejudice in situations in which they were subjectively rating the guilt of the defendant. Blatant, old-fashioned prejudice on the other hand, would have resulted in respondents rating the defendant as guilty more often on the legal standard guilt rating.

*1.4.3.3 Ethnicity and Crime Attributions.* It is possible that certain individuals may see the cause of crime as being due to the ethnicity of the offender. This is an internal and stable attribution. Perhaps this is why Aboriginal offenders are less likely to receive full parole, and when they do receive it, it is granted later in their sentence than non-Aboriginals (Vandoremalen, 1998). Bridges and Steen (1998) found that probation officers were more likely to make negative *internal* attributions (e.g., personality) for black young offenders and negative *external* attributions (e.g., environmental

influences) for white young offenders. Furthermore, because the probation officers were more likely to ascribe stable attributions to the black offenders, these youth were seen to have a higher risk of re-offending. An environmental influence (e.g., delinquent friends) is more likely to change than a personality characteristic (e.g., amoral character). If the cause of the crime can change, then there is a chance the offender will cease committing crimes and is a better candidate for parole.

Certain crimes are associated with certain races. This may have a greater biasing effect than simply race in general. Jones and Kaplan (2003) ran a pilot study to identify crimes that were associated with Whites and Blacks. Using a sample of 360 Caucasian university students, it was found that embezzlement was seen as being a “white crime” and grand-theft auto was seen as a “black crime.” Vehicular manslaughter was not significantly associated with a certain race. Jones and Kaplan had study participants read three case studies and record their verdict, their confidence in their verdict, and recommend an appropriate punishment for a crime. They also indicated the extent to which they felt the crime was due to internal or external factors, the likelihood the offender would commit either a similar or different crime in the future, and how responsible the offender was.

There was a significant influence of offender ethnicity, but only for race-stereotypic crimes: Whites charged with embezzlement were judged to be guilty more often and Blacks were more likely to be judged guilty for grand-theft auto. There was no race effect for vehicular manslaughter (the race neutral crime). Blacks received harsher punishments for grand-theft auto, but Whites did not receive harsher punishment for embezzlement. Turning to attribution theory, more internality was attributed to Whites charged with embezzlement and Blacks charged with grand-theft auto. Embezzlement

was seen to be more stable for Whites and grand-theft auto was seen to be more stable for Blacks. Whites were seen as more responsible for embezzlement and Blacks were seen as more responsible for grand-theft auto.

### *1.5 Overview of Research and Hypotheses*

The present research was conducted in order to determine whether or not there is a racial bias in perceptions of crime seriousness and recommended offender punishment. Although this issue has been addressed in past research, the previous studies have several methodological issues which could account for the convoluted results. As previously mentioned, past research examining the effect of race on perceptions of crime seriousness has not included a measure of prejudice. Furthermore, depending on the type of prejudice, modern or old-fashioned, biases should surface under different conditions (i.e., overt versus covert). Not accounting for prejudice could be a contributing factor as to why some studies have not found a significant effect for offender and victim ethnicity (e.g., Benjamin, 1989).

There is evidence to suggest that prejudice is alive and well in Canada (e.g., Pfeifer & Ogloff, 2003). Past studies examining the effect of racial bias on perceptions of crime seriousness have taken place in the United States comparing African-American and Caucasian offenders (e.g., Benjamin, 1989) and Israel comparing Jewish and Arab offenders (e.g., Herzog, 2003a). Although the perceived seriousness of crimes is similar in Canada (Akman & Normandeau, 1968), it is not clear if the effect of racial bias, or lack thereof, is similar. As such, the present study compared perceived severity of offences with Caucasian and Aboriginal male offenders and victims.

Additionally, the present research examined how the previously discussed dimensions of causal attributions theorized by Weiner (1985) affect perceptions of crime

seriousness. When the cause of a crime is controllable and the offender is therefore judged to be responsible, it is thought that the respondent will feel more anger towards the offender and seek to punish the offender more harshly. Likewise, when the cause of a crime is seen as being stable (i.e., the offender has committed similar crimes in the past), there will be a low expectancy of future change and the respondent will recommend harsher sentences.

Two studies were conducted in the course of this research. As is common in crime severity research, offence scenarios were used in order to assess participants' perceptions of crimes. As these offence scenarios were created by the author, a pilot study was conducted in order to ensure that the scenarios were valid and manipulated in the desired way. Upon completion of the pilot study, the principal study was carried out. Based on the literature reviewed above, the specific hypotheses examined in the principal study were as follows:

1. As crime severity is one of the best predictors of sentencing decisions, it is hypothesized that the more serious a crime is perceived to be, the harsher the recommended punishment will be. This is consistent with past research previously discussed (e.g., Darley et al., 2000).
2. For participants who score high in modern prejudice, crimes committed by an Aboriginal offender will be perceived to be more serious and recommended punishments will be longer than crimes committed by a non-Aboriginal offender. It is hypothesized that this effect will be particularly pronounced for interethnic offences in which the victim is Caucasian (Herzog, 2003a). It is also hypothesized that this effect will be more pronounced for crimes resulting in low and intermediate harm. Crimes resulting in low and intermediate harm tend to be more of a "grey area." As

discussed above, it is expected that this situational ambiguity will result in participants scoring high in modern prejudice feeling comfortable in revealing their biases, as their crime severity ratings and recommended punishments will be attributable to factors other than the offender's ethnicity.

3. For participants who score high in old-fashioned prejudice, crimes committed by an Aboriginal offender will be perceived to be more serious and recommended punishments will be longer than crimes committed by a non-Aboriginal offender, regardless of the amount of harm caused by the crime. It is also hypothesized that this effect will be more pronounced for interethnic offences in which the victim is Caucasian. People who score high on measures of old-fashioned prejudice do not need an ambiguous situation to reveal their biases (McConahay, 1983). As such, it is not necessary for their crime severity ratings and recommended punishments to be attributable to factors other than offender ethnicity.
4. The more responsible an offender is judged to be, the more serious the crime will be perceived to be and a harsher punishment will be recommended. This is consistent with past research that has shown a positive correlation between responsibility and perceived seriousness (Feather, 1996) as well as between responsibility and sentencing recommendations (Ewert & Pennington, 1987).
5. If a crime is described as being stable (i.e., the offender has committed similar offences in the past), the crime will be perceived as being more serious and the recommended punishment will be harsher. This is consistent with past research previously discussed (Sanderson et al., 2000).

The independent variables in the principal study were the following: the ethnicity of the offender (Caucasian versus Aboriginal), the ethnicity of the victim

(Caucasian versus Aboriginal), the amount of harm caused to the victim by the crime (high versus medium versus low), stability (first offence versus repeat offence), modern prejudice (high versus low), and old-fashioned prejudice (high versus low). The dependent variables in the principal study were perceived crime severity, recommended punishment for the offence, and the perceived responsibility of the offender.

## 2. METHOD

### *2.1 Pilot Study*

#### *2.1.1 Participants*

Data were collected from 20 participants for the pilot study. Participants were graduate students from the Department of Psychology at the University of Saskatchewan.

#### *2.1.2 Materials and Procedure*

The present study employed six offence scenarios in order to assess participants' perceptions of crimes. As these crime scenarios were created by the author, a pilot study was conducted in order to ensure the validity of the scenarios. This pilot study was conducted in order to ensure that the crime scenarios created were valid and manipulated in the desired way. Each participant read six crime scenarios. The offence scenarios varied on amount of harm caused by the crime (high vs. medium vs. low), offender ethnicity (Aboriginal vs. Caucasian), victim ethnicity (Aboriginal vs. Caucasian), and stability (first offence vs. repeat offence). As such, there were two offence scenarios for each of the levels of harm. One of these scenarios included a stability dimension (i.e., the offender was described as having committed similar crimes in the past) and one did not (i.e., it was the offender's first offence). The scenarios were approximately one paragraph each in length and more than one scenario appeared on each page. For a listing of all scenarios, please refer to Appendix A.

After each scenario, the participant was asked, "Please rate the amount of harm to the victim caused by this crime." Participants responded on a seven-point scale where 1 = *not at all harmful* and 7 = *extremely harmful*. Next, participants were asked, "Please rate the likelihood that the offender will commit future crimes." Participants responded on a seven-point scale where 1 = *not at all likely* and 7 = *extremely likely*. After the participant had read all six scenarios, he or she was asked to indicate the ethnicity of both the offender and victim. The participant was instructed not to return to any of the previous pages when recalling offender and victim ethnicity (see Appendix A).

### 2.1.3 Results

A 3 (Amount of Harm: Low vs. Medium vs. High) x 2 (Stability: Unstable vs. Stable) Repeated-Measures ANOVA was run on participant harm ratings. It was found that amount of harm varied according to the three levels of harm in the scenarios,  $F(2, 38) = 92.45, p < 0.001$ . The difference between low and medium harm crimes was significant,  $t(19) = -5.81, p < 0.001$ , as was the difference between medium and high harm crimes,  $t(19) = -10.91, p < 0.001$ . Participants rated vandalism and theft as being low harm ( $M = 3.95, SD = 1.11$ ), robbery was rated as being medium harm ( $M = 5.58, SD = 0.99$ ), and homicide was rated as being high harm ( $M = 6.93, SD = 0.34$ ). The likelihood of recidivism also varied between whether or not the crime was described as being stable (repeat offence) versus unstable (first offence). A 3 (Amount of Harm: Low vs. Medium vs. High) x 2 (Stability: Unstable vs. Stable) Repeated-Measures ANOVA was run on likelihood of recidivism ratings. There was a significant main effect of stability,  $F(1, 19) = 123.64, p < 0.001$ . When the offender was described as having committed similar crimes in the past, participants rated him as being more likely to reoffend ( $M = 6.05, SD = 0.87$ ) as opposed to when it was the offender's first offence

( $M = 3.85$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ). All participants correctly recalled the ethnicity of both the offender and victim. These results indicate that the scenarios were manipulated in the desired way.

## 2.2 *Principal Study*

### 2.2.1 *Participants*

In total, 365 participants were recruited from the Introductory Psychology participant pool at the University of Saskatchewan. There were no restrictions on who was allowed to participate, although all non-Caucasian participants ( $N = 89$ ) were excluded from analyses. Furthermore, Caucasian participants with missing data ( $N = 20$ ) were also excluded from analyses. This resulted in a final sample size of 256 participants. Using Campbell and Thompson's (2002) *More Power* calculator, it was determined that this would be more than an adequate sample size to detect a three-way interaction effect of partial  $\eta^2 = 0.05$ . All participants received credit towards their final course grade.

### 2.2.2 *Materials*

In order to increase participation, data for this study were collected using an online survey (Deutskens, De Ruyter, Wetzels, & Oosterveld, 2004). This survey included offence scenarios, measures of the participants' perceptions of the crime, measures of modern and old-fashioned prejudice toward Aboriginal men, a control for social desirability, and demographic information. There were four versions of the survey (one for each offender-victim ethnicity condition, which is discussed below).

*2.2.2.1 Offence Scenarios.* As the pilot study indicated that the offence scenarios were manipulated in the desired way, these six scenarios were also used in the main study. In each scenario, both the offender and the victim were always described as being

male and between the ages of 25 and 35. This was done to minimize confounds that may have arisen from age or gender of either the victim or offender, as well as participants' mental elaborations of the crime (Blum-West, 1985). To control for response sets being formed, the scenarios were presented to participants in a random order (Evans & Scott, 1984). Each scenario was presented on a separate page. Although the pilot study questionnaire had more than one scenario per page, past research has found that presenting single crime scenarios versus multiple scenarios per page does not significantly affect results (Sheley, 1980).

To minimize response biases due to participants discerning the true hypothesis of the study, both offender and victim ethnicity were between-subjects factors. Therefore, there were four separate sets of six offence scenarios. Participants in the first condition read six scenarios in which both the offender and victim were Aboriginal, participants in the second condition read six scenarios in which the offender was Aboriginal and the victim was Caucasian, participants in the third condition read six scenarios in which the offender was Caucasian and the victim was Aboriginal, and participants in the fourth condition read six scenarios in which both the offender and victim were Caucasian. All other aspects of the scenarios were identical between conditions.

*2.2.2.2 Perceptions of Crime Severity.* Perceptions of crime severity were assessed via category scaling, which has been shown to be a reliable method for measuring perceptions of severity (Miethe, 1986). Following each crime scenario, participants were asked, "How serious do you think this crime is?" Participants responded on a seven-point rating scale where 1 = *not at all serious* and 7 = *very serious* (see Appendix B).

2.2.2.3 *Perceptions of Offender Responsibility.* In order to assess perceptions of offender responsibility, participants were next asked, “How responsible do you think (name of offender) is for this crime?” Participants responded on a seven-point rating scale where 1 = *not at all responsible* to 7 = *completely responsible* (see Appendix B).

2.2.2.4 *Recommended Punishment.* Participants were next asked, “Should (name of offender) spend time in custody for this crime?” Participants selected yes or no. If they selected yes, they were asked “How much time in custody should (name of offender) serve? Please type your answer in either weeks, months, or years” (see Appendix B). Although participants were free to answer in weeks, months, or years, all answers were converted into months by the researcher.

2.2.2.5 *Prejudice towards Aboriginal Men Scale.* Both modern and old-fashioned prejudice towards Aboriginal men was assessed with the Prejudice towards Aboriginal Men Scale (PAMS) developed by Morrison (personal communication, 2007). A questionnaire containing many items measuring both old-fashioned and modern prejudice towards Aboriginal Canadians was distributed to a sample of students at the University of Saskatchewan. Analyses were run by Morrison in order to select the most appropriate items for the purposes of creating these scales. The items on the original questionnaire distributed by Morrison pertained to Aboriginals in general. For the purposes of the present study, these items were changed to pertain only to Aboriginal men. This was done as the crime scenarios discussed previously only involved male offenders.

In total, there were 11 items measuring old-fashioned prejudice and 14 items measuring modern prejudice. Participants responded to the 25 statements on a seven-point scale where 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. Possible scores on the

modern prejudice sub-scale range from 14 to 98. Possible scores on the old-fashioned prejudice sub-scale range from 11 to 77. For a complete list of items, please see Appendix C.

After data collection, the scores on the scale measuring modern prejudice were summed and a median split was performed. This classified respondents into two groups: high modern prejudice and low modern prejudice. A similar procedure was done with scores on the scale measuring old-fashioned prejudice. This classified respondents into an additional two groups: high old-fashioned prejudice and low old-fashioned prejudice.

*2.2.2.6 Social Desirability.* To control for social desirability bias (the tendency to respond to questionnaires in a way that portrays a positive self-description; Paulhus, 2002), participants completed the Impression Management Scale (IMS), a section of the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR; Paulhus, 1988). Participants responded on a seven-point rating scale where 1 = *not true* and 7 = *very true* to 20 items such as “I don’t gossip about other people’s business” (see Appendix D). Possible scores on the IMS range from 20 to 140. Past research has demonstrated both convergent and discriminant validity with the IMS (Paulhus, 1991).

*2.2.2.7 Demographics.* Participants were also asked to complete several demographic items. Political conservatism is an important variable influencing sentencing decisions (Huang, Finn, Ruback, & Friedmann, 1996). Past studies have also found a positive correlation between prejudice and political conservatism (e.g., Echebarria-Echabe & Guede, 2007; Maranell, 1967; Morrison & Morrison, 2002; Sears & Henry, 2003). To assess this, participants responded to one item measuring their degree of conservatism (see Appendix E). This item was modified from authors cited in Morrison and Morrison (2002) and asks participants to rate themselves as being liberal,

somewhat liberal, conservative, or somewhat conservative. Scores on this scale range from 1 to 4, with higher scores indicating a greater degree of conservatism (Morrison & Morrison, 2002). Single items have been found to be a reliable and valid method for assessing conservatism (Gerbner, Goss, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1994).

Participants were also asked to rate their knowledge of sentencing practices in Canadian courts. If a respondent has a high level of knowledge regarding sentencing procedures, this may influence the punishments they recommend in response to the offence scenarios. The item reads, “Please rate your knowledge/familiarity with sentencing practices in Canadian courts.” Participants responded on a 7-point scale where 1 = *no knowledge* and 7 = *extremely knowledgeable*. Finally, participants were also asked to indicate their gender, age, year of university, and ethnicity (see Appendix E).

### *2.2.3 Procedure*

*2.2.3.1 Recruitment.* Participants for the main study were recruited from the University of Saskatchewan Introductory Psychology participant pool. All first year psychology students had the opportunity to take part in this study. These students log on to a web-based participant pool site where they could choose to take part in studies available through the Department of Psychology. Before they choose to participate, students read a description of the study, the amount of time required, and any restrictions on who is allowed to participate. For each half hour that the student spends completing a study, he or she receives one credit that is worth 1% of his or her final course grade. In order to increase participation, the survey was offered online through this web-based participant pool site. Although there were no restrictions on who was

allowed to participate, data obtained from non-Caucasian students were omitted from subsequent analyses.

*2.2.3.2 Testing.* Before completing the survey, all participants were required to read an informed consent form (see Appendix G). This form detailed the study's purpose, procedure, and potential benefits/risks, as well as statements regarding confidentiality, the student's right to withdraw, and contact information of the researcher. If the student agreed to participate in the survey, he or she clicked "accept" on the screen and was forwarded to the online survey. Participants were urged to print a copy of this screen for their own records, or to contact the researcher if they preferred a copy be sent to them.

The four versions of the survey were uploaded to the participant pool site. When each student logged in to the site, the list of available online surveys was displayed in a random order. There was a restriction placed on the survey so that students could only complete one version. After the students signed the consent form they were asked to complete the survey. No identifying information was asked on the survey so that all answers were anonymous. The students were told that the survey should take approximately 30 minutes to complete, however they could take as long as needed to finish.

After the student completed the survey, he or she was forwarded electronically to a debriefing form on the website (see Appendix H). This debriefing form described the study in detail as well as provided references if the student wished to learn more about the topic. The student was urged to print a copy for his or her records, or to contact the researcher to have a copy sent to him or her. The student was also told to contact the

researcher if he or she wished to be notified of the results of the study once it had been completed.

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1 Demographics and Descriptive Statistics

Of the 256 Caucasian participants included in analyses, there were 196 (76.6%) females and 60 (23.4%) males. The majority of participants were in their first year of university (75.8%). In regards to political conservatism, 107 (41.8%) classified themselves as “somewhat liberal” and the mean age was 19.74 ( $SD = 3.21$ ) years. When asked to rate their knowledge of sentencing practices in Canada, the mean rating was 2.98 ( $SD = 1.28$ ) on a seven-point scale where 1 = *no knowledge* to 7 = *extremely knowledgeable*. For a summary of demographic variables, please see Table 3-1.

**Table 3-1.** Summary of Demographic Variables

	<i>N</i>	%
Sex		
Female	196	76.6%
Male	60	23.4%
Year of university		
First	194	75.8%
Second	38	14.8%
Third	12	4.7%
Fourth	7	2.7%
Fifth or more	5	2.0%
Political Conservatism		
Liberal	38	14.8%
Somewhat liberal	107	41.8%
Somewhat conservative	69	27.0%
Conservative	16	6.3%
Missing data	26	10.2%

### 3.2 PAMS and IMS

For PAMS items measuring modern prejudice, the mean score was 62.21 ( $SD = 16.30$ ), with scores ranging from 15 to 98. The median score was 62.50 and the mode was 59. The majority (76.3%) of participants scored above the scale's midpoint (56). The internal reliability of the scale (Cronbach's Alpha) was  $\alpha = 0.93$ . For PAMS items measuring old-fashioned prejudice, the mean score was 36.91 ( $SD = 11.59$ ), with scores ranging from 12 to 77. The median score was 37 and the mode was 35. Contrary to modern prejudice, the minority (27.3%) of participants scored above the scale's midpoint (44). The internal reliability of the scale (Cronbach's Alpha) was  $\alpha = 0.92$ . The total scores for old-fashioned prejudice were positively correlated with the total scores for modern prejudice,  $r = 0.58$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . A chi-square analysis was performed in order to evaluate the independence of the two prejudice sub-scales:  $\chi^2 = 30.32$ ,  $p > 0.05$ . This analysis indicates that modern and old-fashioned prejudice scores are not independent of one another. Upon closer inspection of the observed scores, it was found that 85 participants scoring high on old-fashioned prejudice also scored high on modern prejudice.

The mean score on the IMS was 76.40 ( $SD = 16.66$ ), with scores ranging from 34 to 120. The median score was 76 and the mode was 62. The internal reliability of the scale (Cronbach's Alpha) was  $\alpha = 0.82$ . The IMS was not significantly correlated to total PAMS scores,  $r = -0.05$ ,  $p = 0.45$ , modern prejudice,  $r = -0.18$ ,  $p = 0.77$ , nor old-fashioned prejudice,  $r = -0.08$ ,  $p = 0.22$ . As such, these measures were not contaminated by participants' desire to appear socially desirable.

### 3.3 Gender Differences

A series of matched-sample t-tests revealed that there were no significant differences between males and females on any of the demographic variables, the IMS, nor the PAMS (see Table 3-2).

**Table 3-2.** Comparison of Females and Males on Demographics and Scales

	Females ( <i>SD</i> )	Males ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>p</i>
Age	19.94 (3.56)	19.07 (1.44)	-1.86	-0.12	0.06
Year of University	1.41 (0.87)	1.37 (0.82)	-0.37	-0.06	0.71
Conservatism	2.25 (0.80)	2.34 (0.88)	0.67	0.13	0.51
Sentencing Knowledge	2.91 (1.24)	3.22 (1.39)	1.62	0.18	0.11
Modern Prejudice	61.62 (16.64)	64.17 (15.11)	1.06	0.01	0.29
Old-Fashioned Prejudice	36.41 (11.24)	38.53 (12.62)	1.24	0.01	0.22
IMS	77.15 (17.24)	73.97 (14.45)	-1.30	-0.01	0.20

However, there were significant gender differences in regards to crime severity ratings. A matched-sample t-test revealed that females rated crimes as being more serious than males,  $t(254) = -2.32, p < 0.05, d = -0.42$ . Looking at particular levels of harm, females rated high harm crimes as being more serious,  $t(254) = -2.80, p < 0.01, d = -0.51$ , as well as low harm crimes,  $t(254) = -2.59, p = 0.01, d = -0.34$ . However, there were no significant differences in crime severity ratings between males and females for crimes resulting in medium harm,  $t(254) = -0.55, p = 0.58, d = -0.07$ . No significant differences were found between males and females for recommended punishment. For a summary of these analyses, please see Table 3-3.

**Table 3-3.** Comparison of Females and Males on Crime Severity Ratings and Recommended Punishment

	Females ( <i>SD</i> )	Males ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>p</i>
Crime Severity					
Low Harm	3.79 (1.07)	3.38 (1.12)	-2.59	-0.34	< 0.01
Medium Harm	5.21 (1.06)	5.13 (1.11)	-0.548	-0.07	0.58
High Harm	6.55 (0.60)	6.28 (0.83)	-2.80	-0.51	0.01
Punishment					
Low Harm	2.92 (6.26)	1.49 (2.36)	-1.74	-0.06	0.08
Medium Harm	21.09 (31.72)	18.31 (20.00)	-0.64	< 0.01	0.52
High Harm	132.38 (99.50)	107.87 (76.33)	-1.76	< 0.01	0.08

### 3.4 Statistical Assumptions

As the planned analyses employed analysis of variance (ANOVA), several statistical assumptions had to first be investigated. The first assumption was that of homogeneity of variance. ANOVA is generally robust to this assumption if equal sample sizes are used, which was done in the current study. The second assumption was that the dependent variables were normally distributed. To ensure the assumption of normality was met, the skewness and kurtosis of the distributions were examined. Through this procedure, it was found that the punishments recommended by the participants were positively skewed. To correct for this, log transformations were computed and are used in subsequent analyses. The third assumption was independence of observations. This assumption was met by randomly assigning participants to conditions.

For the within-subjects factors (amount of harm and stability) there was a fourth assumption: sphericity. Sphericity refers to the assumption that variance of difference

scores in a within-subjects design are equal across all groups (Howell, 2002). In order to meet this assumption, the following analyses use the Huynh-Feldt (1976) adjustment.

The Huynh-Feldt (1976) adjustment is a method of correcting the degrees of freedom in analyses employing a within-subjects design (Howell, 2002).

*3.5 Hypothesis 1: The more serious a crime is perceived to be, the harsher the recommended sentence will be.*

In order to test this hypothesis, correlational analyses were run. There was a significant, positive correlation between rated crime severity and recommended punishment. Overall mean severity ratings were correlated with overall mean recommended punishments,  $r = 0.31, p < 0.001$ . Looking at particular levels of harm, crime severity was positively correlated to recommended punishment for crimes resulting in low harm,  $r = 0.33, p < 0.001$ , medium harm,  $r = 0.31, p < 0.001$ , and high harm,  $r = 0.37, p < 0.001$ . These results provide evidence to support the first hypothesis.

*3.6 Hypothesis 2: For participants who score high in modern prejudice, crimes committed by an Aboriginal offender will be perceived to be more serious and recommended punishments will be longer than crimes committed by a non-Aboriginal offender. It is hypothesized that this effect will be particularly pronounced for interethnic offences in which the victim is Caucasian. It is also hypothesized that this effect will be more pronounced for crimes resulting in low and intermediate harm.*

To test this hypothesis, several ANOVAs were run. The first was a 4 Between (Ethnicity Condition: Aboriginal-Aboriginal vs. Aboriginal-Caucasian vs. Caucasian-Aboriginal vs. Caucasian-Caucasian) x 2 Between (Modern Prejudice: High vs. Low) x 3 Within (Amount of Harm: High vs. Medium vs. Low) Mixed ANOVA on crime

severity ratings<sup>1</sup>. The main effect of harm was significant,  $F(2, 496) = 947.50, p < 0.001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.79$ . Participants rated high harm crimes as being more serious than medium harm crimes,  $t(255) = -25.99, p < 0.001, d = -1.38$ , and medium harm crimes were rated as being more serious than low harm crimes,  $t(255) = -19.57, p < .001, d = -1.45$  (see Table 3-4).

**Table 3-4.** Main Effect of Harm on Crime Severity Ratings

	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>p</i>
High harm	6.48 (0.67)	-25.99	-1.38	< 0.001
Medium harm	5.19 (1.07)			
Medium harm	5.19 (1.07)	-19.57	-1.45	< 0.001
Low harm	3.69 (1.09)			

Crime severity ratings did not differ by offender-victim ethnicity condition,  $F(6, 496) = 0.15, p = 0.95$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.003$ . This was expected, as the differences in crime severity should only be evident when accounting for modern prejudice. The three-way interaction effect between offender-victim ethnicity condition, modern prejudice, and amount of harm was significant,  $F(6, 496) = 2.12, p = 0.05$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.03$  (see Table 3-5).

To investigate the source of the effects contributing to this three-way interaction, three separate 4 (Ethnicity Condition: Aboriginal-Aboriginal vs. Aboriginal-Caucasian vs. Caucasian-Aboriginal vs. Caucasian-Caucasian) x 2 (Modern Prejudice: High vs.

<sup>1</sup> To investigate the effect of stability, a 4 Between (Ethnicity Condition: Aboriginal-Aboriginal vs. Aboriginal-Caucasian vs. Caucasian-Aboriginal vs. Caucasian-Caucasian) x 2 Between (Modern Prejudice: High vs. Low) x 3 Within (Amount of Harm: High vs. Medium vs. Low) x 2 Within (Stability: Stable vs. Unstable) Mixed ANOVA was run on crime severity ratings. No significant effects of stability were found.

**Table 3-5.** ANOVA for Ethnicity Condition, Modern Prejudice, and Amount of Harm on Crime Severity Ratings

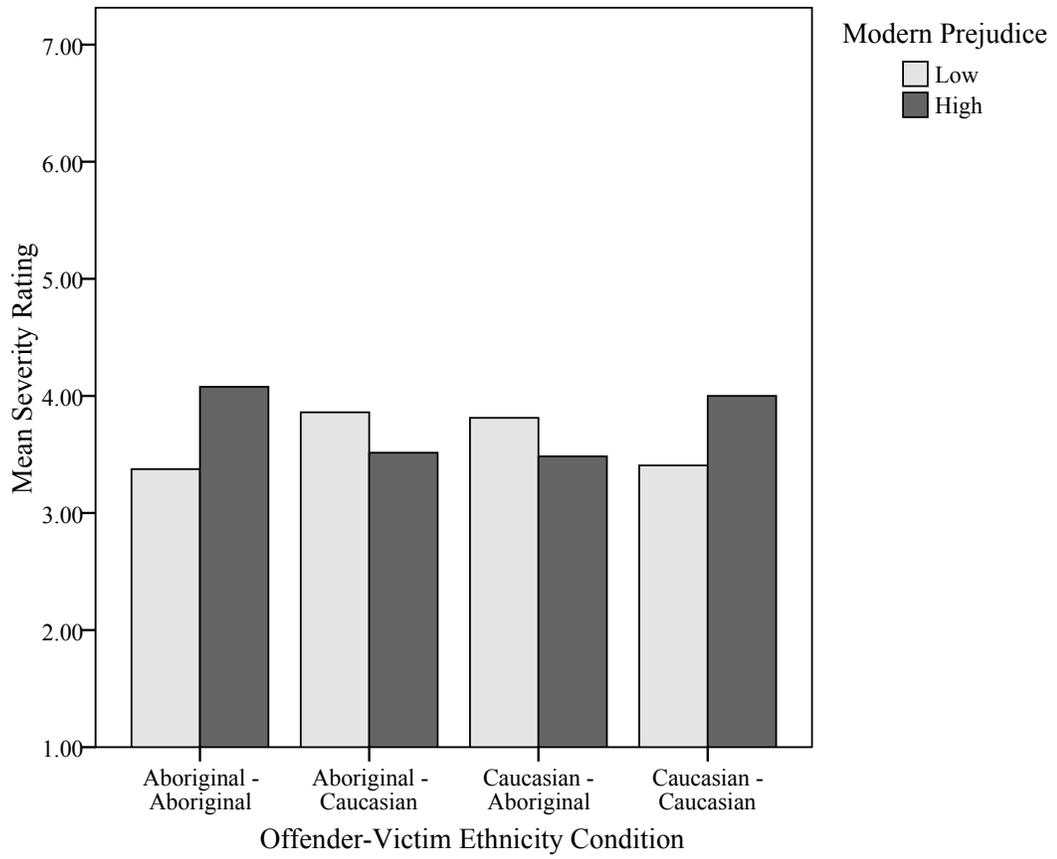
Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	Partial $\eta^2$	<i>p</i>
Harm	2	952.07	0.79	< 0.001
Harm * Ethnicity Condition	5.99	0.23	< 0.01	0.97
Harm * Modern Prejudice Split	2	0.71	< 0.01	0.50
Harm * Modern Prejudice Split * Ethnicity Condition	5.99	2.13	0.03	0.05
Error	495.13	(0.53)		

*Note.* Values enclosed in parentheses represent mean square errors. Degrees of freedom (*df*) and *F* values use the Huynh-Feldt adjustment.

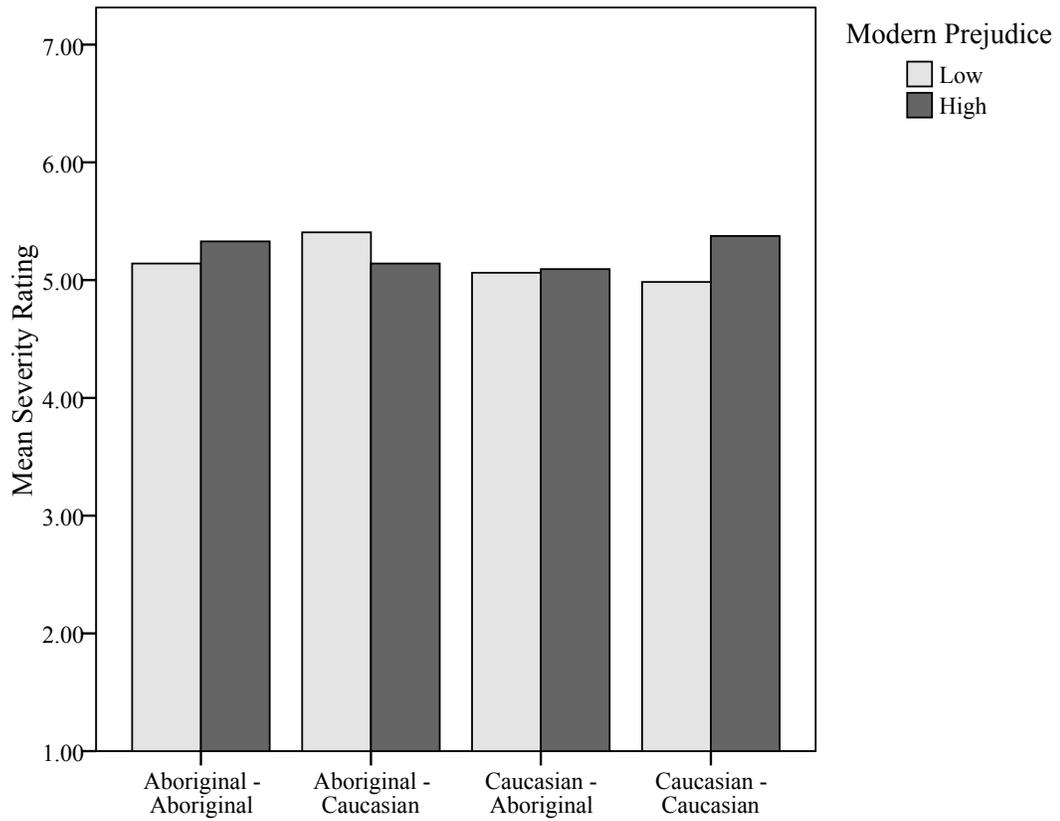
Low) Between-Subjects ANOVAs were run on severity ratings for crimes resulting in the three levels of harm. For low harm crimes, there was a significant two-way interaction effect between modern prejudice and offender-victim ethnicity condition,  $F(3, 248) = 4.48, p < 0.01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.05$ . Accordingly, several independent-sample *t*-tests were run. For crimes resulting in low amounts of harm, when both the offender and victim were Aboriginal, participants scoring high in modern prejudice rated the crime as being more serious ( $M = 4.08, SD = 1.15$ ) than participants scoring low in modern prejudice ( $M = 3.38, SD = 1.11$ ),  $t(62) = -2.49, p < 0.05, d = -0.62$ . There were no significant differences in crime severity ratings between participants scoring high and low in modern prejudice for low severity crimes when the offender was Aboriginal and the victim was Caucasian,  $t(62) = 1.24, p = 0.22, d = 0.31$  nor when the offender was Caucasian and the victim was Aboriginal,  $t(62) = 1.30, p = 0.20, d = 0.33$ . Surprisingly,

when both the offender and victim were Caucasian, participants scoring high in modern prejudice rated crimes resulting in low harm as being more serious ( $M = 4.00$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ) than participants scoring low in modern prejudice ( $M = 3.41$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ),  $t(62) = -2.25$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $d = -0.57$ . The severity ratings for low harm crimes did not significantly differ across offender-victim ethnicity conditions for participants scoring high in modern prejudice,  $F(3, 124) = 2.45$ ,  $p = 0.66$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.06$ , or for participants scoring low in modern prejudice,  $F(3, 124) = 2.05$ ,  $p = 0.11$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.05$ . These results are presented in a graph in Figure 3-1.

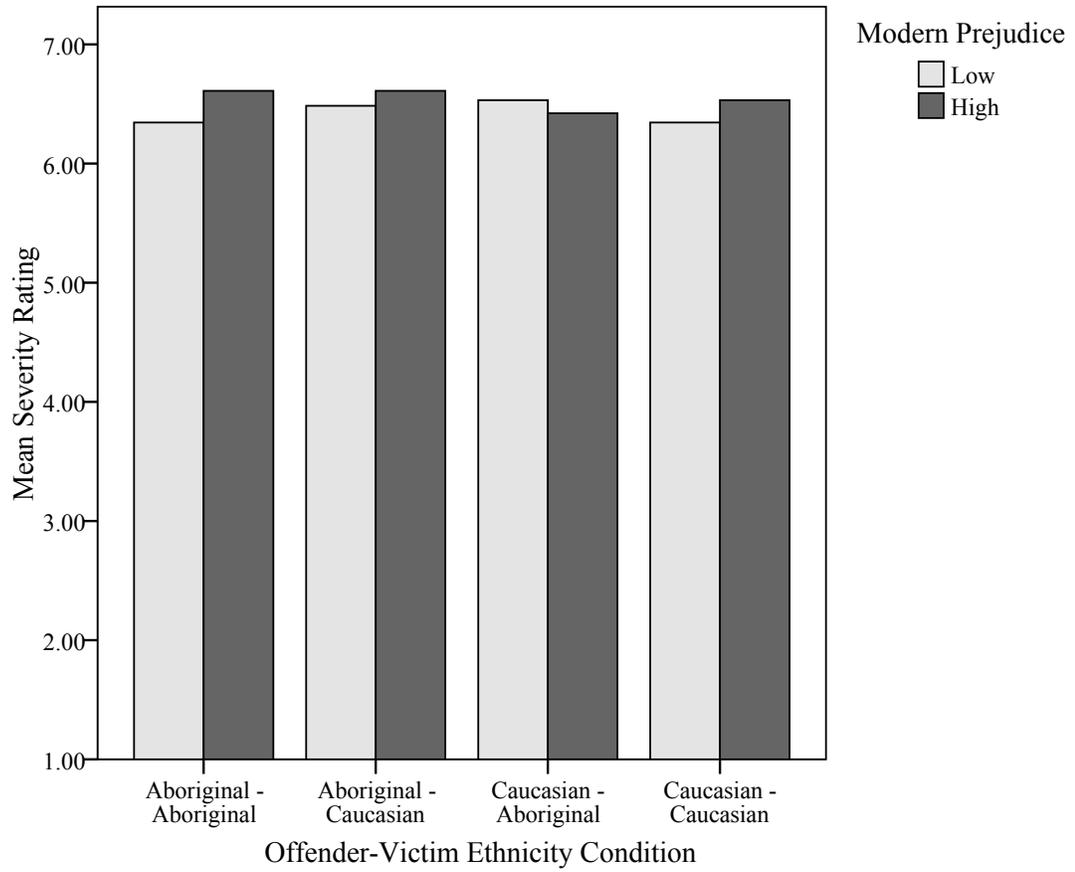
For medium harm crimes, the two-way interaction effect between offender-victim ethnicity condition and modern prejudice was not statistically significant,  $F(3, 248) = 1.06$ ,  $p = 0.37$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.01$  (see Figure 3-2). Similarly, for crimes resulting in high harm, the two-way interaction effect between offender-victim ethnicity condition and modern prejudice was not statistically significant,  $F(3, 248) = 0.93$ ,  $p = 0.43$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.01$  (see Figure 3-3).



**Figure 3-1.** Mean Severity Ratings for Crimes Resulting in Low Harm: High vs. Low Modern Prejudice.



**Figure 3-2.** Mean Severity Ratings for Crimes Resulting in Medium Harm: High vs. Low Modern Prejudice.



**Figure 3-3.** Mean Severity Ratings for Crimes Resulting in High Harm: High vs. Low Modern Prejudice.

To test the second part of hypothesis two, a 4 Between (Ethnicity Condition: Aboriginal-Aboriginal vs. Aboriginal-Caucasian vs. Caucasian-Aboriginal vs. Caucasian-Caucasian) x 2 Between (Modern Prejudice: High vs. Low) x 3 Within (Amount of Harm: High vs. Medium vs. Low) Mixed ANOVA was run on recommended punishments<sup>2</sup>. Once again, the main effect of harm was significant,  $F(2, 306) = 866.71, p < 0.001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.85$ . Participants recommended longer punishments for high harm crimes than for medium harm crimes,  $t(255) = -10.65, p < 0.001, d = -1.33$ , and recommended longer punishments for medium harm crimes than for low harm crimes,  $t(255) = -20.43, p < 0.001, d = -2.56$  (see Table 3-6).

**Table 3-6.** Main Effect of Harm on Recommended Punishment

	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>p</i>
High harm	126.63 (95.01)	-10.65	-1.33	< 0.001
Medium harm	20.44 (28.39)			
Medium harm	20.44 (28.39)	-20.43	-2.56	< 0.001
Low harm	2.59 (5.62)			

Recommended punishment did not differ by offender-victim ethnicity condition,  $F(6, 306) = 0.88, p = 0.51, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.02$ . This was expected, as the differences in recommended punishment should only be evident when accounting for modern prejudice. The three-way interaction effect between offender-victim ethnicity condition, modern prejudice, and amount of harm was significant,  $F(6, 306) = 3.38, p < 0.01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.06$  (see Table 3-7).

<sup>2</sup> To investigate the effect of stability, a 4 Between (Ethnicity Condition: Aboriginal-Aboriginal vs. Aboriginal-Caucasian vs. Caucasian-Aboriginal vs. Caucasian-Caucasian) x 2 Between (Modern Prejudice: High vs. Low) x 3 Within (Amount of Harm: High vs. Medium vs. Low) x 2 Within (Stability: Stable vs. Unstable) Mixed ANOVA was run on recommended punishments. No significant effects of stability were found.

**Table 3-7.** ANOVA for Ethnicity Condition, Modern Prejudice, and Amount of Harm on Recommended Punishment

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	Partial $\eta^2$	<i>p</i>
Harm	2	866.71	0.85	< 0.001
Harm * Ethnicity Condition	6	0.88	0.02	0.51
Harm * Modern Prejudice Split	2	0.58	0.03	0.02
Harm * Modern Prejudice Split * Ethnicity Condition	6	3.38	0.06	0.003
Error	306	(0.14)		

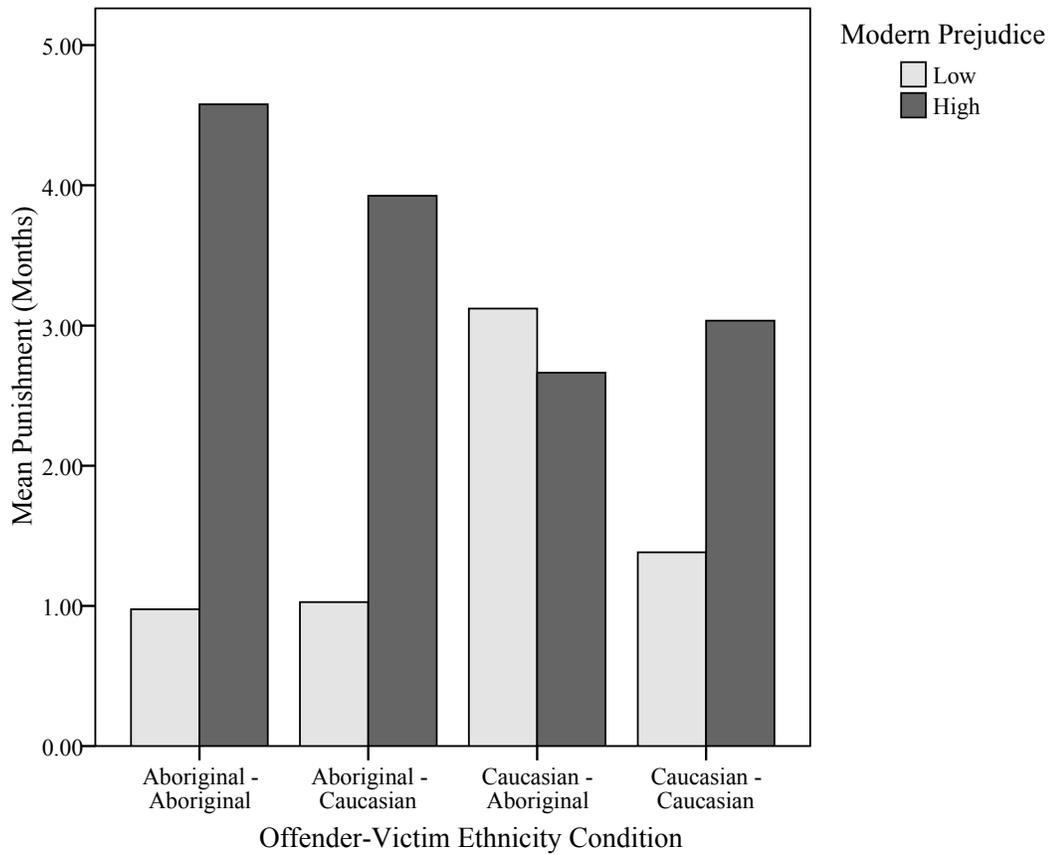
*Note.* Values enclosed in parentheses represent mean square errors. Degrees of freedom (*df*) and *F* values use the Huynh-Feldt adjustment.

To investigate the three-way interaction, three separate 4 (Ethnicity Condition: Aboriginal-Aboriginal vs. Aboriginal-Caucasian vs. Caucasian-Aboriginal vs. Caucasian- Caucasian) x 2 (Modern Prejudice: High vs. Low) Between-Subjects ANOVAs were run on recommended punishment for crimes resulting in the three levels of harm. For low harm crimes, the two-way interaction effect between offender-victim ethnicity condition and modern prejudice was significant,  $F(3, 154) = 3.31, p < 0.05$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.06$ . Accordingly, several independent sample *t*-tests were run. For crimes resulting in low harm, participants scoring high in modern prejudice recommended longer punishments ( $M = 4.58$  months,  $SD = 7.68$ ) than participants scoring low in modern prejudice when both the offender and victim were Aboriginal ( $M = 0.98$  months,  $SD = 1.37$ ),  $t(38) = -3.47, p = 0.001, d = -1.13$ , as well as when the offender was Aboriginal and the victim was Caucasian,  $t(42) = -2.22, p < 0.05, d = -0.69$  ( $M =$

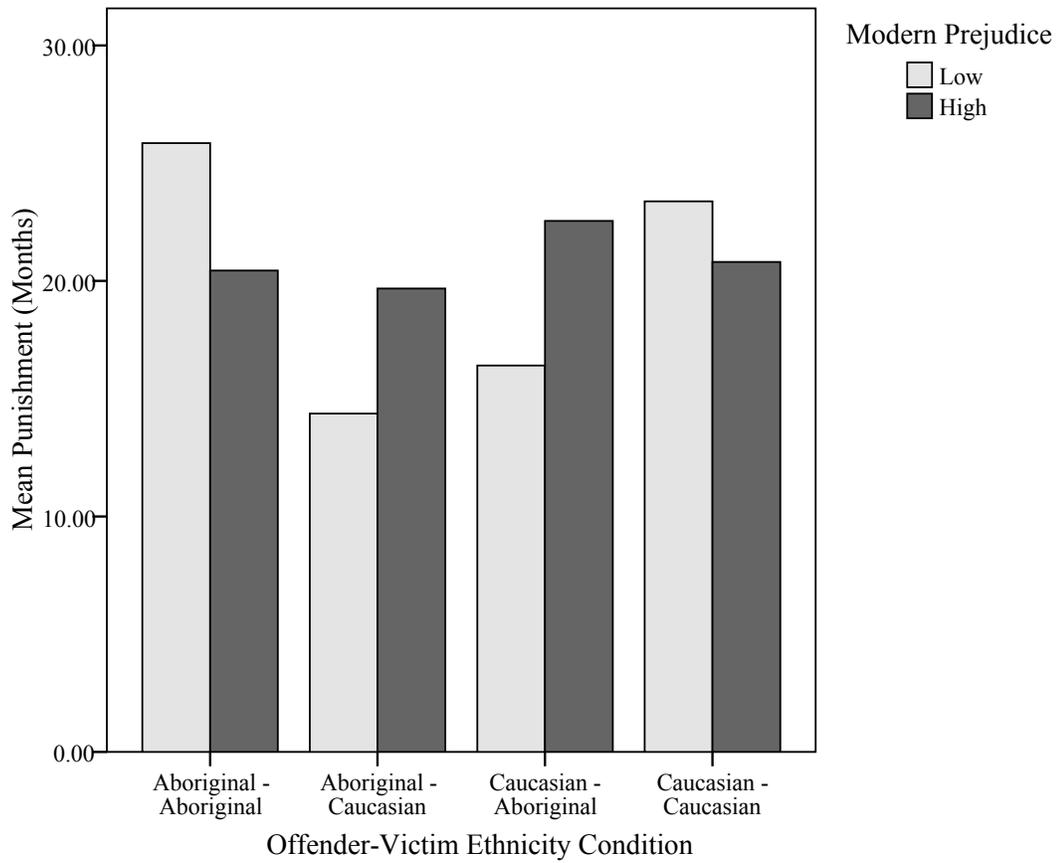
3.93 months,  $SD = 7.36$  for participants scoring high in modern prejudice,  $M = 1.03$  months,  $SD = 1.26$  for participants scoring low in modern prejudice). There were no significant differences between groups when the offender was Caucasian and the victim was Aboriginal,  $t(36) = 1.30$ ,  $p = 0.20$ ,  $d = 0.43$ , or when both the offender and victim were Caucasian,  $t(38) = -0.93$ ,  $p = 0.36$ ,  $d = -0.30$ .

For participants scoring high in modern prejudice, recommended punishments for low harm crimes were not significantly different across offender-victim ethnicity conditions,  $F(3, 78) = 1.40$ ,  $p = 0.25$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.05$ . However, for participants scoring low in modern prejudice, the main effect of offender-victim ethnicity condition was significant,  $F(3, 76) = 4.17$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.14$ . The recommended punishments for low harm crimes were significantly higher when the offender was Caucasian and the victim was Aboriginal ( $M = 3.12$  months,  $SD = 0.67$ ) than when both the offender and victim were Aboriginal ( $M = 0.98$  months,  $SD = 0.49$ ),  $t(40) = -3.07$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $d = -0.97$ , when the offender was Aboriginal and the victim was Caucasian ( $M = 1.03$  months,  $SD = 1.26$ ),  $t(43) = -3.49$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ,  $d = -1.06$ , or when both the offender and victim were Caucasian ( $M = 1.38$  months,  $SD = 3.91$ ),  $t(37) = 2.34$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $d = 0.77$ . These results are displayed in Figure 3-4.

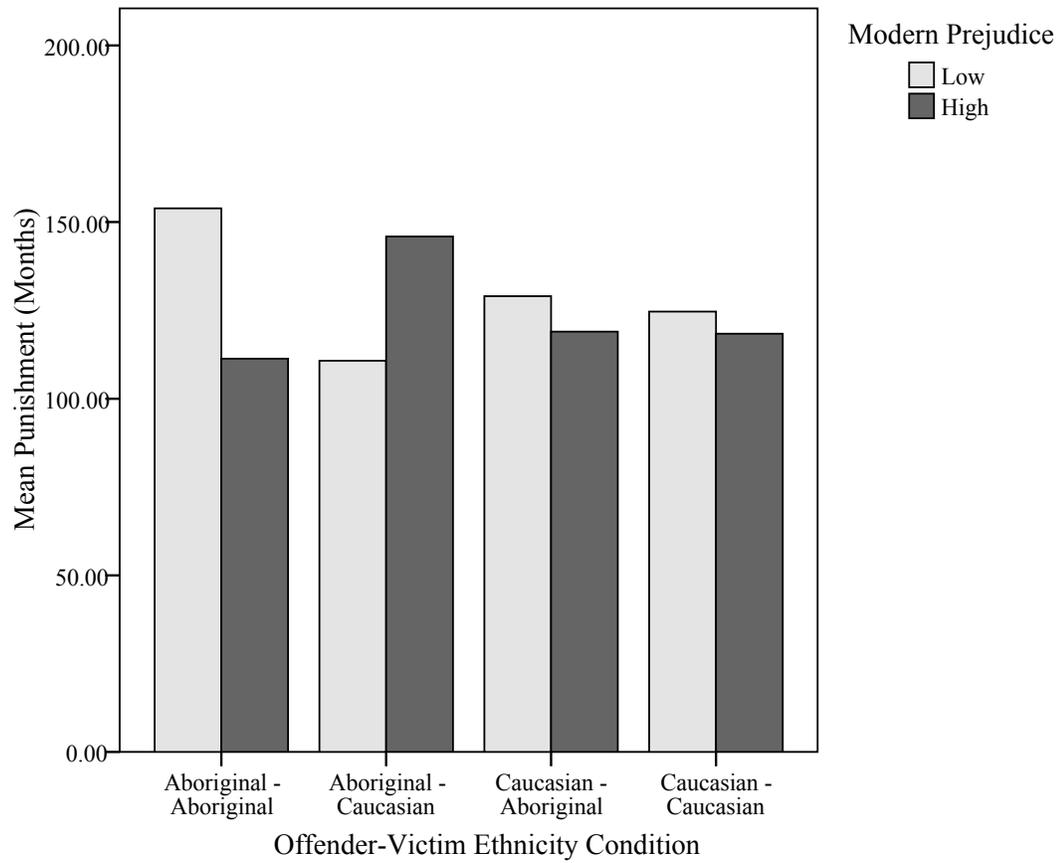
For crimes resulting in medium harm, the two-way interaction effect between offender-victim ethnicity condition and modern prejudice was not statistically significant,  $F(3, 245) = 0.22$ ,  $p = 0.89$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.003$  (see Figure 3-5). The two-way interaction effect between offender-victim ethnicity condition and modern prejudice was also not statistically significant for high harm crimes,  $F(3, 247) = 1.39$ ,  $p = 0.25$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.02$  (see Figure 3-6).



**Figure 3-4.** Recommended Punishment for Crimes Resulting in Low Harm: High vs. Low Modern Prejudice.



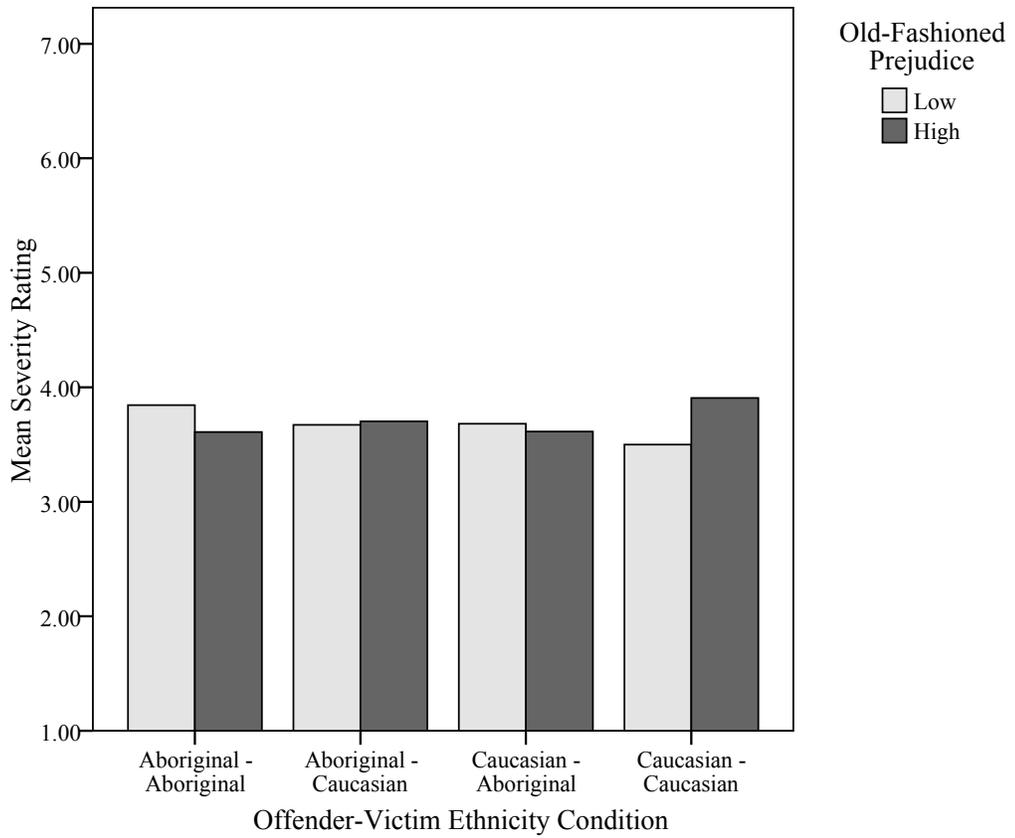
**Figure 3-5.** Recommended Punishment for Crimes Resulting in Medium Harm: High vs. Low Modern Prejudice.



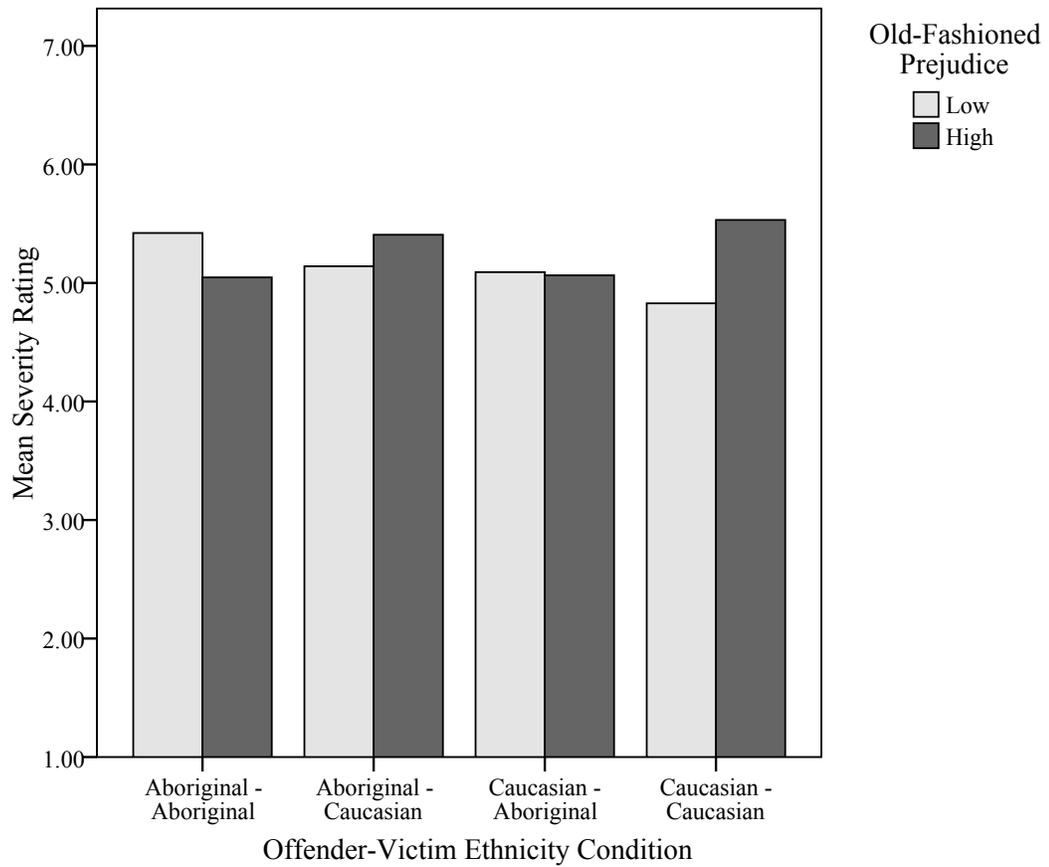
**Figure 3-6.** Recommended Punishment for Crimes Resulting in High Harm: High vs. Low Modern Prejudice.

*3.7 Hypothesis 3: For participants who score high in old-fashioned prejudice, crimes committed by an Aboriginal offender will be perceived to be more serious and recommended punishments will be longer than crimes committed by a non-Aboriginal offender, regardless of the amount of harm caused by the crime. It is also hypothesized that this effect will be more pronounced for interethnic offences in which the victim is Caucasian.*

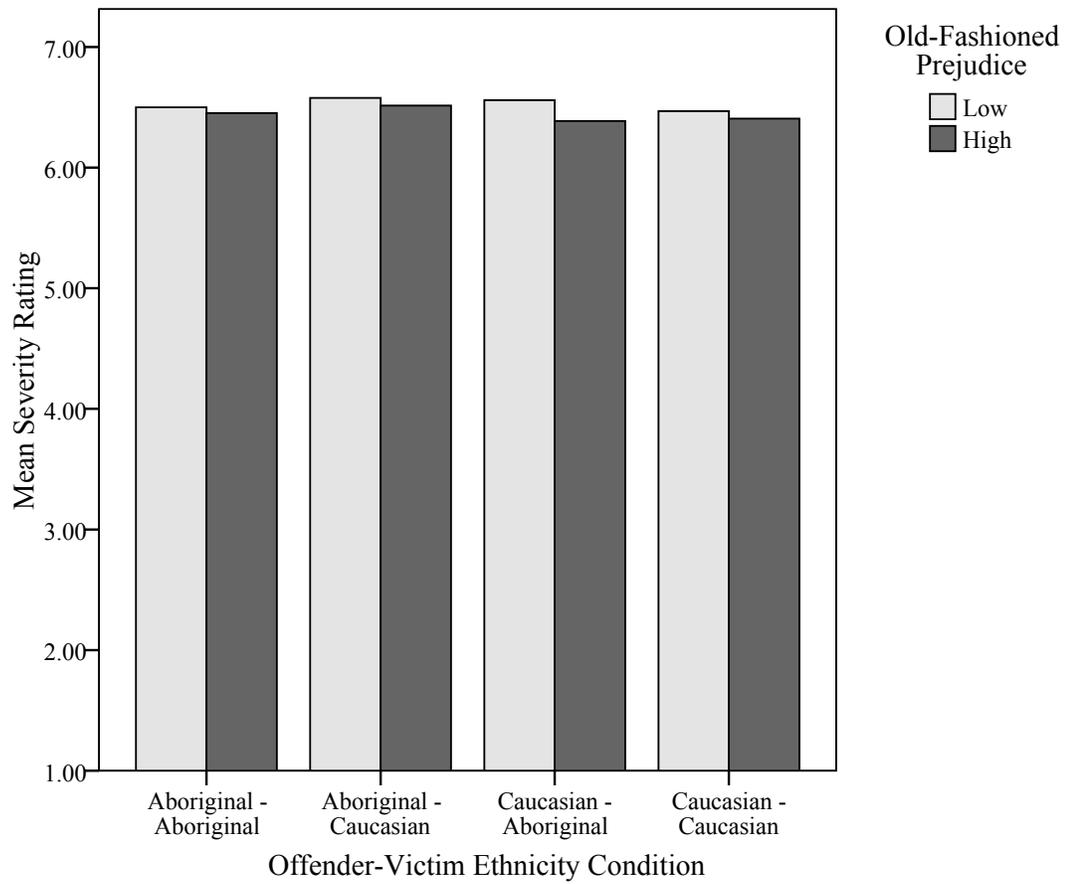
To test this hypothesis, two ANOVAs were run. The first was a 4 Between (Ethnicity Condition: Aboriginal-Aboriginal vs. Aboriginal-Caucasian vs. Caucasian-Aboriginal vs. Caucasian-Caucasian) x 2 Between (Old-Fashioned Prejudice: High vs. Low) x 3 Within (Amount of Harm: High vs. Medium vs. Low) Mixed ANOVA on crime severity ratings. As was found in the analyses for the second hypothesis, the main effect of harm was significant,  $F(2, 496) = 946.55, p < 0.001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.79$ . Contrary to the third hypothesis, there was no significant interaction effect between old-fashioned prejudice and offender-victim ethnicity,  $F(3, 248) = 1.65, p = 0.18, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.02$ . Furthermore, the three-way interaction between old-fashioned prejudice, offender-victim ethnicity, and amount of harm was not statistically significant,  $F(6, 496) = 1.60, p = 0.15, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.02$ . For graphs of these results, please refer to Figures 3-7, 3-8, and 3-9.



**Figure 3-7.** Mean Severity Ratings for Crimes Resulting in Low Harm: High vs. Low Old-Fashioned Prejudice.



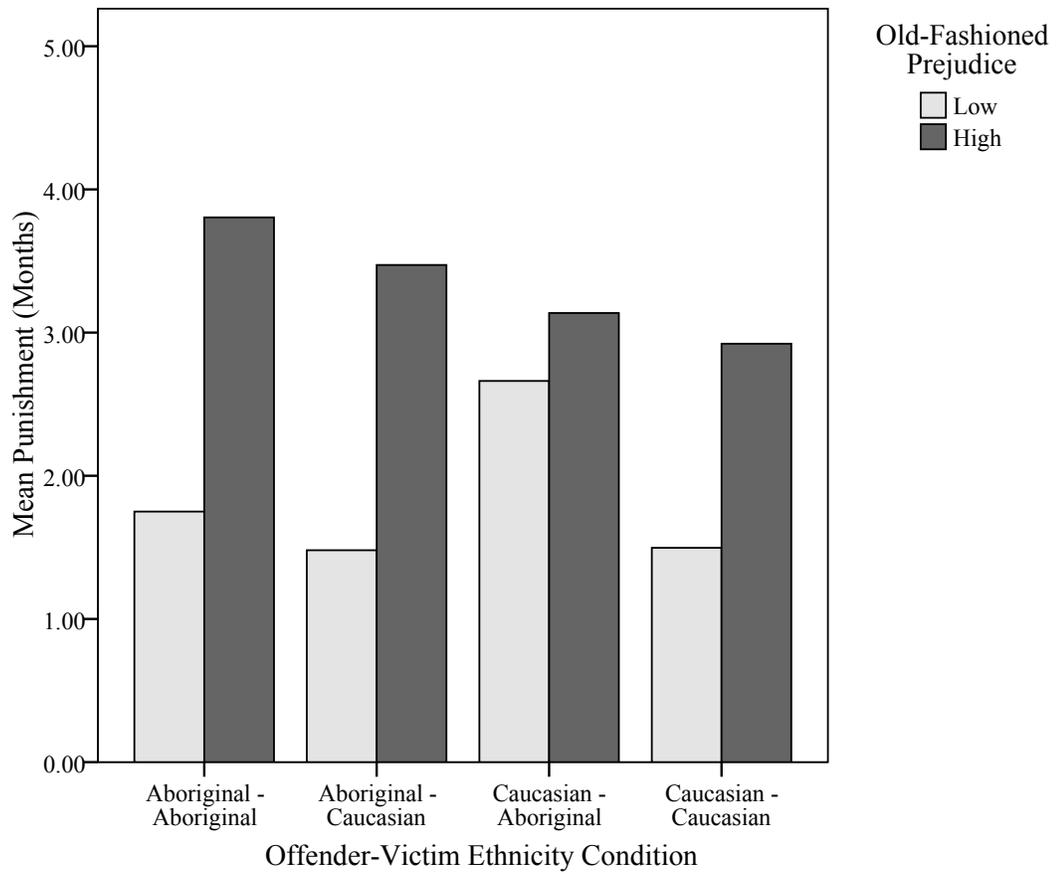
**Figure 3-8.** Mean Severity Ratings for Crimes Resulting in Medium Harm: High vs. Low Old-Fashioned Prejudice.



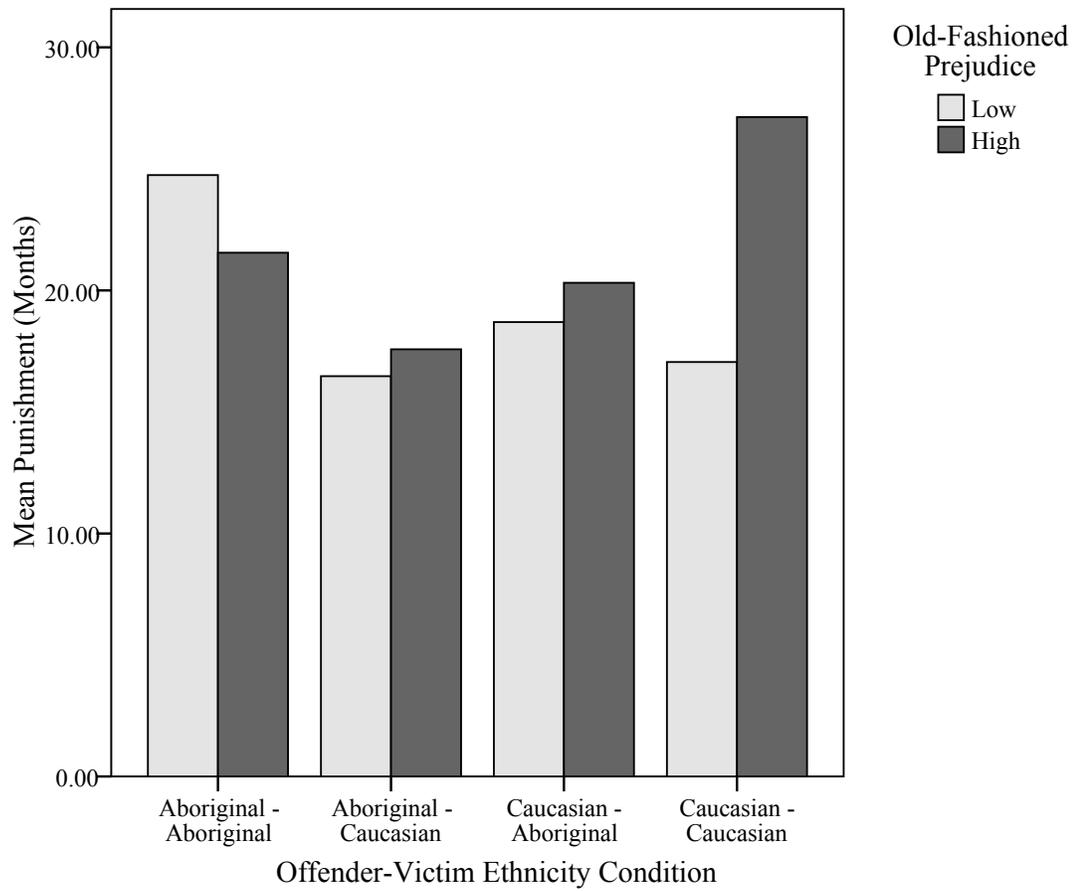
**Figure 3-9.** Mean Severity Ratings for Crimes Resulting in High Harm: High vs. Low Old-Fashioned Prejudice.

In order to test the second part of the third hypothesis, a 4 Between (Ethnicity Condition: Aboriginal-Aboriginal vs. Aboriginal-Caucasian vs. Caucasian-Aboriginal vs. Caucasian-Caucasian) x 2 Between (Modern Prejudice: High vs. Low) x 3 Within (Amount of Harm: High vs. Medium vs. Low) Mixed ANOVA was run on recommended punishments. Once again, the main effect of harm was significant,  $F(2, 306) = 780.75, p < 0.001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.84$ . Contrary to the third hypothesis, there was no significant interaction effect between old-fashioned prejudice and offender-victim ethnicity,  $F(3, 153) = 0.99, p = 0.40, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.02$ . Furthermore, the three-way interaction between old-fashioned prejudice, offender-victim ethnicity, and amount of harm was not statistically significant,  $F(6, 306) = 0.32, p = 0.92, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.01$ . For graphs of these results, please see Figures 3-10, 3-11, and 3-12.

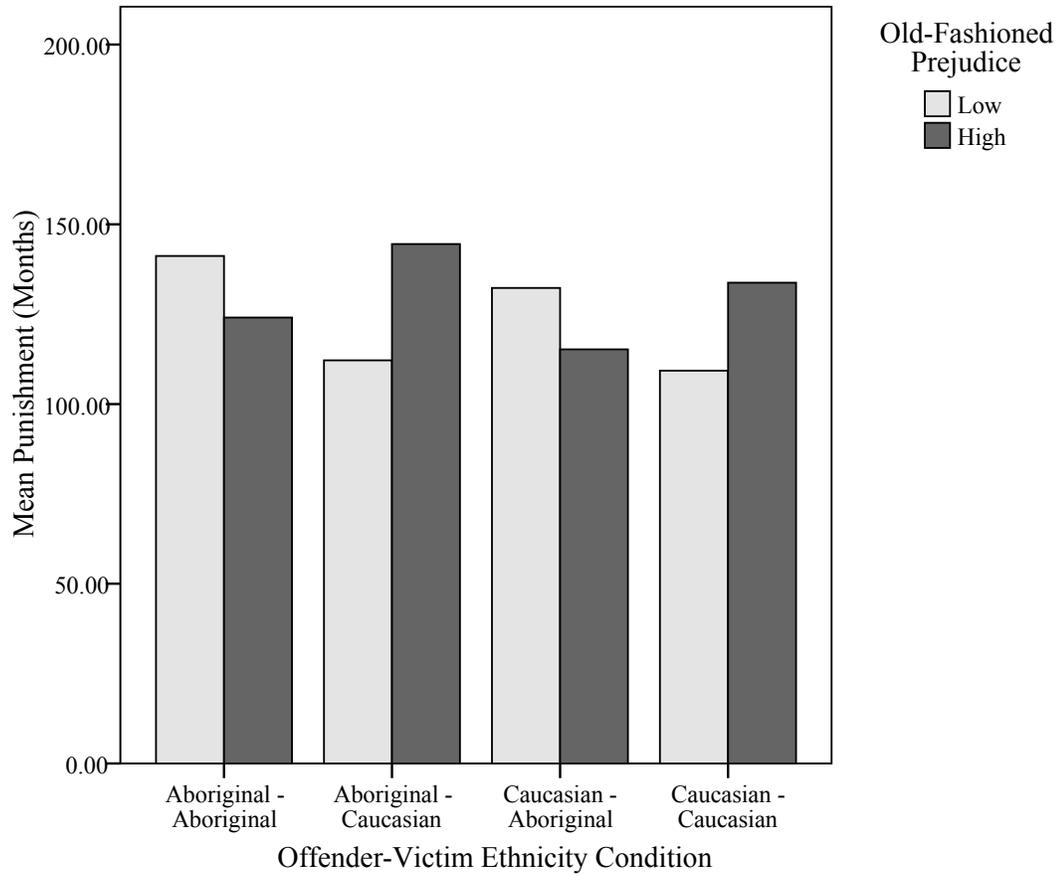
These analyses provide evidence that hypothesis three is not supported. Participants scoring high in old-fashioned prejudice do not appear to rate crimes as being more severe or recommend harsher punishments than participants scoring low in old-fashioned prejudice depending on the ethnicity of the offender or victim.



**Figure 3-10.** Recommended Punishment for Crimes Resulting in Low Harm: High vs. Low Old-Fashioned Prejudice.



**Figure 3-11.** Recommended Punishment for Crimes Resulting in Medium Harm: High vs. Low Old-Fashioned Prejudice.



**Figure 3-12.** Recommended Punishment for Crimes Resulting in High Harm: High vs. Low Old-Fashioned Prejudice.

*3.8 Hypothesis 4: The more responsible an offender is judged to be, the more serious the crime will be perceived to be and a harsher punishment will be recommended.*

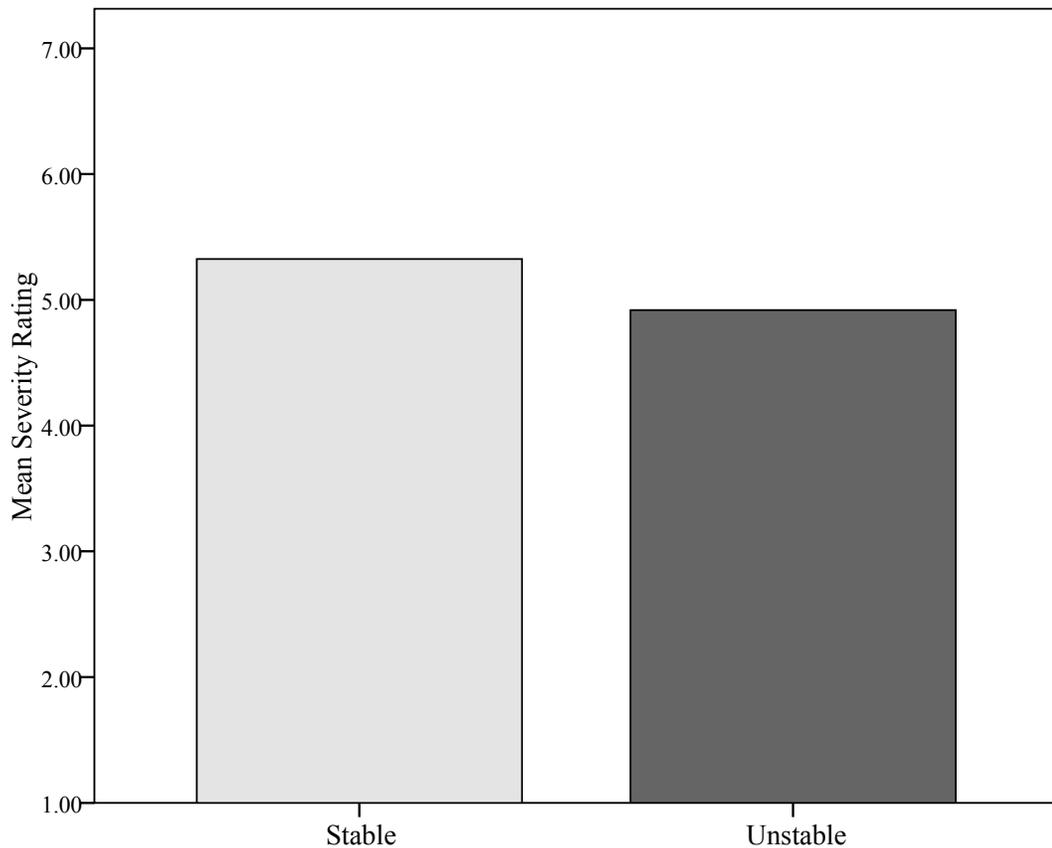
In order to test this hypothesis, correlational analyses were run. There was a significant, positive correlation between rated crime severity and perceived offender responsibility. Overall mean severity ratings were correlated with overall mean responsibility ratings,  $r = 0.33$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . Looking at particular levels of harm, crime severity was positively correlated to offender responsibility for crimes of low harm,  $r = 0.20$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , medium harm,  $r = 0.29$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , and high harm,  $r = 0.31$ ,  $p < 0.001$ .

Similar analyses were run in order to explore the relationship between recommended punishment and perceived offender responsibility. Overall mean recommended punishments were correlated with overall mean responsibility ratings,  $r = 0.16$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . However, for crimes of low harm, offender responsibility was not significantly correlated to recommended punishments,  $r = 0.09$ ,  $p = 0.16$ . There was a modest correlation between offender responsibility and recommended punishment for crimes of medium harm,  $r = 0.15$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , as well as for crimes resulting in high harm,  $r = 0.18$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . Although these analyses suggest that hypothesis four is confirmed, it seems that the relationship between offender responsibility and crime severity is stronger than the relationship between offender responsibility and recommended punishment.

*3.9 Hypothesis 5: If a crime is described as being stable (i.e., the offender has committed similar offences in the past), the crime will be perceived as being more serious and the recommended punishment will be harsher.*

The first part of this hypothesis was tested with a matched-sample t-test to assess whether or not the difference in crime severity ratings between stable and unstable

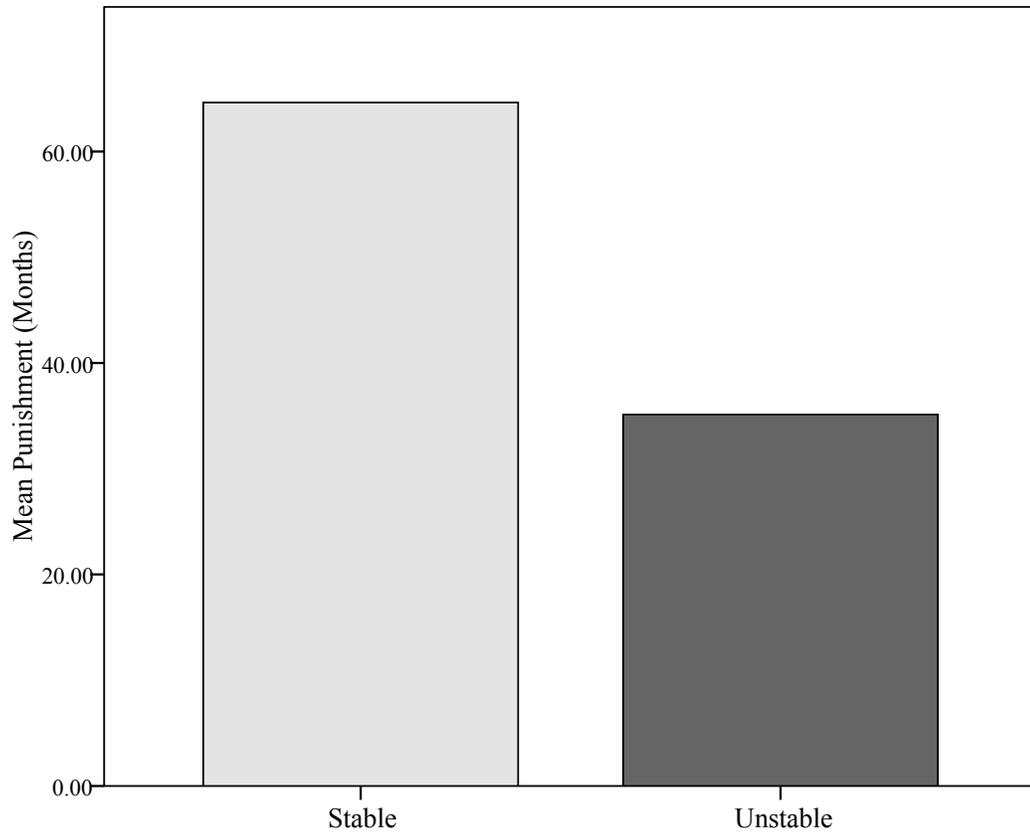
offences was significantly different from zero. In agreement with hypothesis five, participants rated crimes as being more severe when the offender had committed similar crimes in the past ( $M = 5.33$ ,  $SD = 0.79$ ) compared to when it was a first offence ( $M = 4.92$ ,  $SD = 0.83$ ),  $t(255) = 11.42$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $d = 1.43$  (see Figure 3-13).



**Figure 3-13.** Crime Severity Ratings: Stable vs. Unstable.

The second part of this hypothesis was tested with a similar test, with the exception that the dependent variable was recommended punishment. Participants recommended harsher punishments when the offender had committed similar crimes in the past ( $M = 64.64$  months,  $SD = 49.60$ ) compared to when it was a first offence ( $M = 35.13$  months,  $SD = 35.90$ ),  $t(255) = 11.94$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $d = 1.50$  (see Figure 3-14). These

two analyses provide support for hypothesis five.



**Figure 3-14.** Recommended Punishment: Stable vs. Unstable.

## 4. DISCUSSION

### *4.1 Overview of Findings*

To summarize the results of the principal study, full or partial support was found for the majority of the hypotheses. The recommended punishment length increased with crime severity ratings. Differential crime severity ratings were found between high and low modern prejudice participants for low harm crimes in certain ethnicity conditions; however, contrary to hypothesis two, these differences were found in the Aboriginal offender-Aboriginal victim and Caucasian offender-Caucasian victim conditions. However, as hypothesized, high modern prejudice participants recommended longer prison sentences in the Aboriginal offender-Aboriginal victim and Aboriginal offender-Caucasian victim conditions, but only for crimes resulting in low harm.

The third hypothesis was not supported in that there were no significant differences in crime severity ratings nor recommended punishments between high and low old-fashioned prejudice participants. In agreement with the fourth hypothesis, the more responsible an offender was perceived to be, the more serious a crime was rated and a harsher punishment was recommended. Finally, the fifth hypothesis was also supported in that when an offender had committed similar crimes in the past, the crime was rated as being more severe and a harsher punishment was recommended. This chapter will expand on the findings of the study discussed above and the results will be integrated with the relevant literature.

#### *4.2 The Association between Crime Severity & Recommended Punishment*

The first hypothesis of this study was supported: The more serious a crime was perceived to be, the harsher the punishment that was recommended. This finding is consistent with previous research (e.g., Carlsmith et al., 2002; Darley et al., 2000). This is indicative of a retributive model of justice in that the punishment is fitted to the harmfulness of the crime. The more harm an offender causes a victim, the more the offender should be punished. To those who support a retributive rationale for sentencing, this principle of proportionality (i.e., the punishment fitting the severity of the crime) is crucial for a feeling of fairness (von Hirsch, 1992).

There are several theories concerning why wrong-doers deserve this “pay-back” for their crimes. One such theory is the “benefits and burdens” theory. Briefly, this theory states that by committing a crime, the offender is gaining an advantage over others in society. Punishing the offender for this transgression is a way of offsetting the advantage and restoring fairness. Another group of theories on this matter is referred to as “expressive” theories. Generally speaking, these theories posit that punishment is mainly an expression of blame for wrong-doing (von Hirsch, 1992). The results of the current study appear to be more compatible with the expressive theories of retribution. Recommended punishment varied with the amount of harm caused by the offender. The benefits and burdens theory cannot account for why some crimes that result in a high advantage for the offender but are low in harm (e.g., theft) were not punished as severely as crimes that do not result in a direct advantage but are high in harm (e.g., murder).

#### *4.3 The Influence of Modern Prejudice on Crime Severity & Recommended Punishment*

The analyses for the second hypothesis revealed that the main effect of harm was significant, as participants rated crimes as being more severe and recommended harsher punishments according to the level of harm caused by the crime. High harm crimes were rated as being more severe and deserving of longer prison sentences than medium harm crimes, and medium harm crimes were perceived as more serious and recommended punishments were longer than low harm crimes. This is consistent with past research which shows amount of harm is one of the main factors taken into account when judging crime seriousness (e.g., Cohen-Raz et al., 1997; Rosenmerkel, 2001) and sentencing decisions (e.g., Warr et al., 1983).

Hypothesis two was partially supported. When the interaction effect between offender-victim ethnicity condition, modern prejudice, and amount of harm was examined, it was found that when the crime resulted in low harm, participants scoring high in modern prejudice rated crimes as being more severe when both the offender and victim were Aboriginal, as well as when both the offender and victim were Caucasian. No significant differences were found for crimes resulting in medium or high amounts of harm.

It is counterintuitive that participants scoring high in modern prejudice rated crimes as being more serious when both the offender and victim were Caucasian than low modern prejudice participants. Both in-group identification and out-group hostility have been theorized to be components of prejudice (Brewer, 1999). Therefore, it is puzzling that high prejudice participants would show in-group hostility. One explanation for this finding is that perhaps the Caucasian offenders were being held to a higher standard of acceptable behaviour. It is possible that participants scoring high in modern

prejudice felt that it is natural for Aboriginal Canadians to commit crimes. Therefore these crimes were rated as being less serious as this behaviour is to be expected. Contrary to this, these participants may have felt that it is unusual for Caucasians to commit crimes. The Caucasian offenders were deviating from the norm and the crimes were rated as being more severe. Replication of these results should be addressed by future research.

Further to the surprising finding of the Caucasian offender and victim condition, these analyses revealed that there were no significant differences in crime severity ratings between high and low modern prejudice participants in the interethnic condition where the offender is Aboriginal and the victim is Caucasian. It was originally hypothesized that the crime severity bias for high modern prejudice participants would be the most pronounced in this condition. Herzog (2003a) put forward the hypothesis that ethnic crime stereotypes (i.e., perceiving crimes committed by offenders of a different ethnicity as being more serious) will be especially activated in interethnic offences. This finding indicates the hypothesis put forward by Herzog (2003a) is not supported, as no significant differences between high and low modern prejudice participants were found for this condition.

In regards to the second part of hypothesis two, it was found that participants scoring high in modern prejudice recommended harsher punishments for crimes resulting in low harm when both the offender and victim were Aboriginal, as well as when the offender was Aboriginal and the victim was Caucasian. No significant differences were found for crimes resulting in medium or high amounts of harm. These results were as expected, with the exception that the difference in punishment between high and low modern prejudice participants was not more pronounced in the interethnic

condition. Once again, this finding suggests that Herzog's (2003a) ethnic crime stereotype hypothesis is not supported. There were no significant differences between the intra- and interethnic conditions.

Although recommended punishment did not significantly differ across ethnicity conditions for high modern prejudice participants, an interesting difference was found for low modern prejudice participants. This group recommended significantly longer prison sentences when the offender was Caucasian and the victim was Aboriginal compared to the other offender-victim ethnicity conditions. Similar results were found by Squire and Newhouse (2003). In their study, undergraduate students were shown a series of photographs of an individual charged with burglary and asked to rate the defendant's guilt as well as to recommend a prison sentence. Although modern prejudice was not accounted for, it was found that European defendants were rated as being more guilty and sentenced to longer prison terms than African American defendants. The authors concluded that these results may have been due to the participants overcompensating for a racial bias when viewing photographs of African American defendants. In the present study, it appears that only those participants scoring low in modern prejudice show this overcompensation effect.

As hypothesized, differences in crime severity ratings and recommended punishment for low and high modern prejudice participants only emerged for crimes resulting in a low amount of harm. This was expected, as modern prejudice only surfaces in ambiguous situations in which the behaviour is attributable to something other than prejudice (McConahay, 1983; McConahay et al., 1981). Typically, there are high levels of consensus regarding high harm crimes: most people will agree that the act of homicide is quite serious and deserving of a harsh punishment no matter what the

ethnicity of the offender is. However, there is less consensus for crimes resulting in low harm (Carlson & Williams, 1993; Miethe, 1984; Newman & Trilling, 1975). These offences tend to be more of a “grey area” in which biases may be attributed to something other than prejudice towards the offender’s ethnicity. It is possible that this is why Herzog (2003a) only found an effect of offender ethnicity on crime severity ratings for crimes rated the least serious by participants.

#### *4.4 The Influence of Old-Fashioned Prejudice on Crime Severity & Recommended Punishment*

There was no evidence to support the third hypothesis. There were no significant differences between low and high old-fashioned prejudice participants on crime severity ratings or recommended punishment for any of the offender-victim ethnicity conditions. This was found for crimes resulting in low, medium, as well as high levels of harm. It was originally hypothesized that high old-fashioned prejudice participants would rate crimes as being more serious and recommend harsher punishment when the offender was Aboriginal, regardless of the amount of harm caused by the crime. Old-fashioned prejudice is an overt phenomenon. Contrary to modern prejudice, individuals scoring high in old-fashioned prejudice do not require an ambiguous situation in which to reveal their biases.

One possibility for the lack of significant differences is the lower levels of old-fashioned prejudice in the sample compared to modern prejudice. Whereas 76.3% of participants scored above the midpoint on the modern prejudice scale, only 27.3% scored above the midpoint on the old-fashioned prejudice scale. As such, classifying participants into high and low old-fashioned prejudice groups via a median split resulted in the high old-fashioned prejudice group not being as highly prejudiced as the high

modern prejudice group. It is possible that had the high old-fashioned prejudice group scored higher on the scale, significant differences would have been found.

Further to this, the correlation between modern and old-fashioned prejudice was quite high ( $r = 0.58, p < 0.01$ ). A chi-square analysis revealed that 85 of the participants scoring high in old-fashioned prejudice also scored high in modern prejudice. Only 41 participants scored high on the old-fashioned prejudice subscale and low on the modern prejudice subscale. It is possible that participants high in only old-fashioned prejudice would have shown the hypothesized biases. Future research should examine this possibility.

#### *4.5 The Influence of Responsibility on Crime Severity & Recommended Punishment*

The fourth hypothesis was supported in that the more responsible an offender was perceived to be, the more serious a crime was rated as well as the harsher the punishment that was recommended. However, crime severity and recommended punishment appeared to be differentially associated with responsibility. Modest, positive correlations were found between responsibility and crime severity ratings for crimes of all levels of harm. This is consistent with past research (e.g., Gebotys & Dasgupta, 1987; Lurigio, Carroll, & Stalans, 1994). Alternatively, there were differences in the association between responsibility and recommended punishment for low, medium, and high harm crimes. When crimes resulted in low harm, there was no association between responsibility and recommended punishment. For crimes resulting in medium and high harm, there was a small, yet significant, relationship between responsibility and recommended punishment.

Criminal intent is crucial to judgments of guilt in the criminal justice system. In Canada, a defendant cannot be found guilty of a crime unless the behaviour was

controllable and the individual chose to commit the offence (Goff, 2004). Past research has found that along with the amount of harm caused by the crime, criminal intent and responsibility is one of the main components of crime severity (Feather, 1996; Fishman et al., 1986). The findings of the current study are in accordance with this: the more responsible an offender was judged to be, the more serious the crime was rated.

It is surprising that such a weak association between responsibility and recommended punishment was found. When a negative event is seen as controllable by the actor, this should elicit an anger response and a desire for retribution (i.e., recommending a longer sentence). A possible reason for these results is that controllability was not manipulated in the study: participants were merely asked to rate the offender's responsibility on a seven-point scale. Perhaps if controllability had been manipulated, a stronger association would have been found. An example of this manipulation can be found in a study by Darley et al. (2000) that employed scenarios such as the behaviour of committing a murder being caused by an inoperable brain tumour. In this instance, although the crime was being perceived as quite serious, recommended punishments were less severe than for controllable crimes.

#### *4.6 The Influence of Stability on Crime Severity & Recommended Punishment*

The fifth hypothesis was supported in that when the crime was described as being stable (i.e., the offender had committed similar offences in the past), the crime was rated as being more serious and recommended punishments were harsher. This is consistent with past research (e.g., Carroll & Payne, 1977a; Doob & Roberts, 1983; Sanderson et al., 2000). If an offender has committed similar offences in the past, the cause of the crime is seen as being stable and unchanging. Therefore, it is expected that the offender will commit more crimes in the future. It is in this situation that people will

endorse harsher punishments for offenders; if the offender is incapacitated then he or she cannot commit future crimes (Weiner, 2006).

Although stability is mainly associated with deterrence, information concerning future delinquent acts has also been theorized to play a significant role in retributive models of justice. If an offender continues to commit criminal offences, this indicates that he or she is not experiencing remorse for his or her transgressions. This may result in a heightened feeling of anger and “unfairness.” The offender has demonstrated that he or she does not adhere to society’s rules. The public will then seek to punish the offender more severely to compensate for these feelings and to restore a sense of justice (Vidmar & Miller, 1980).

#### *4.7 Methodological Limitations*

There were several methodological limitations in this study. First, prior victimization of participants was not accounted for in the design of the current study. This may be problematic, as Wolfgang et al. (1985) found that past crime victims rated crimes as being more serious than non-victims. However, because participants in the present study were randomly assigned to conditions, it can be assumed that individual differences (i.e., prior crime victimization) among participants was equally distributed (Howell, 2002).

The second methodological limitation is that the main study did not include a manipulation check to ensure that offender and victim ethnicity were salient to participants. This could pose a problem as we cannot be certain that participants were cognizant of the ethnicity of the offender and victim when responding to survey items assessing their perceptions of the crime. However, a manipulation check of ethnicity was included in the pilot study. All pilot study participants correctly identified the

ethnicity of both the offender and victim, which suggests that this manipulation was salient to participants.

Third, it should be noted that one of the measures utilized in this study, the *Prejudice toward Aboriginal Men Scale*, is a new measure that is currently under-going validation and refinement. However, the internal consistency of the scale was quite high in the present study ( $\alpha = 0.93$  for items measuring modern prejudice and  $\alpha = 0.92$  for the items measuring old-fashioned prejudice). The present study helped to advance the construct validity of the PAMS, particularly the modern prejudice sub-scale. Those participants scoring high on the measure of modern prejudice exhibited different behaviour than those participants scoring low.

The fourth major methodological limitation was that the sample consisted of undergraduate students. As such, it is important to exercise caution when generalizing the results. Although the above results were found with first-year psychology students at the University of Saskatchewan, one cannot assume the same results would be found with other populations. Although this is a common limitation with research conducted using undergraduate samples, it is especially pertinent to the current study as it has been found that younger and more educated persons are typically less punitive (Gerber & Engelhardt-Greer, 1996; McCorkle, 1993). Therefore, very different results might be obtained if this study was to be replicated with a sample of the general population which may be older and less educated than university students.

Further to this, we cannot be certain that the same biases exist in the criminal justice system in Canada. Legal professionals differ from undergraduate psychology students on many different levels, the most important of which is that criminal law is posited to be objective and not based on personal opinions. The participants in the

present study were specifically instructed to base their answers on their own opinions and not their knowledge of the Canadian legal system. In order to study whether or not these same biases are present in the legal system, a different methodology would have to be employed with a sample of criminal justice professionals. Additionally, there is some evidence to indicate that criminal justice experts and the general public attend to different information when judging crime scenarios. While the general public tends to base crime severity judgments on relatively few facts about the offence, criminal justice experts (e.g., judges, prosecutors, probation officers) tend to incorporate other factors surrounding the offence (McCleary et al., 1981). For example, in a comparison of undergraduate students and parole decision makers, Carroll and Payne (1977b) found that while the attributional dimensions of locus and stability were useful in predicting the students' responses, they were not useful in predicting the responses of the parole board members. The parole board members tended to use their expertise to predict risk of recidivism based on other information in the crime scenario (e.g., unemployment). This study highlights the caution that must be used when applying findings derived from the general public to members of the criminal justice system.

#### *4.8 General Conclusions & Future Directions*

To summarize, full or partial support was found for four out of the five hypotheses. The only hypothesis that was not supported was that there was no evidence to suggest that persons scoring high in old-fashioned prejudice rated crimes as being more severe or recommended harsher punishments when the offender was Aboriginal. However, as discussed above, this may have been due to the sample not including a sufficient number of old-fashioned prejudice participants.

Many of the findings of the current study are consistent with past research. Amount of harm caused by an offence increases the resulting crime severity rating and recommended punishment. The same effect was found for stability information and perceived offender responsibility. However, the present study also went beyond mere replication of previous research and attempted to add to the small body of literature examining the effect of ethnicity on perceptions of crime severity.

Previous research in this domain has not included a measure of prejudice when examining potential biases. In the present study, it was found that when modern prejudice was not considered, there were no significant differences on rated crime severity and recommended punishment between offender and victim ethnicity conditions. It was only when the participants were split into high and low modern prejudice groups that these biases surfaced. Further to this, these differences were only found for crimes resulting in low harm. Past research has examined whether or not there are biases for relatively high harm crimes (e.g., shooting an armed robber; Benjamin, 1989).

It also appears that these biases are more pronounced in sentencing recommendations than crime severity ratings. Past research has typically concentrated on these severity ratings and has not incorporated methodology asking participants to recommend prison sentences. In the present study, the analyses of whether or not high modern prejudice participants rate crimes as being more severe when the offender is Aboriginal had some results that were counterintuitive and difficult to make sense of using social psychological theory. For example, no significant differences were found in the Aboriginal offender-Caucasian victim condition, and high modern prejudice participants rated crimes as being more severe in the Caucasian offender-Caucasian

victim condition. Conversely, when recommended punishments were analyzed, the results were more congruent with existing theory: high modern prejudice participants recommended harsher punishments in both ethnicity conditions where the offender was Aboriginal and the crime resulted in low harm.

It is interesting that gender differences were found for perceptions of crime severity for low and high harm crimes. Females rated these crimes as being more severe than males. Typically, gender of respondent does not influence crime severity ratings (e.g., Rossi et al., 1974; Wolfgang et al., 1985). One area of research that gender differences have been found is in punitiveness, although findings are far from being clear. Some studies find women more punitive than men (e.g., Hurwitz & Smithey, 1998), some studies find women less punitive (e.g., Stinchcombe et al., 1980), and other studies find women more punitive only for certain crimes such as rape and domestic abuse (e.g., Mills & Bohannon, 1992).

A perception of vulnerability is one variable that is thought to affect attitudes towards crime and punishment (Hurwitz & Smithey, 1998). Perhaps the females in the present study felt more vulnerable than males for low and high harm crimes, but the perception of vulnerability for medium harm crimes was equal between males and females. This would explain why significant differences were found between males and females for high and low harm crimes, but not for medium harm crimes. However, this theory does not account for the lack of gender differences in recommended punishment. Further study is needed in order to further clarify the convoluted relationship between gender and perceptions of crime.

Future research is needed in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complex relationships between offender and victim ethnicity,

prejudice, perceptions of crime severity, and recommended punishment. It is crucial that this future research include measures of prejudice and differentiate between levels of harm caused by the crimes. In the present study it was only when these variables were manipulated that biases in judging crime severity and recommended punishment surfaced. It is also imperative that future research goes beyond simply measuring perceptions of crime severity and examine sentencing decisions as well (Hoffman & Hardyman, 1986). Although there was a relationship between crime severity and recommended punishment in the current study, differential effects were found concerning biases towards Aboriginal offenders. Aside from expanding our knowledge of these biases among the general public, it is also vital that we study these effects in the criminal justice system. It is only then that we will know whether or not this prejudice is a source of the differential treatment Aboriginal defendants and offenders receive in Canada's criminal justice system.

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APPENDIX A  
PILOT STUDY

**Instructions:** Below are six crime scenarios. Please read each scenario carefully and respond to the following questions. When answering, please keep in mind that we are interested in your opinion, not your knowledge of the Canadian legal system

**Scenario I**

Jake H. is a 25 year-old Aboriginal (Caucasian) male who lives in Regina, SK. A couple of days ago, Jake was walking around a local shopping mall and saw another person's backpack was sitting in the hall unguarded. Jake stole the backpack. There was no money in the backpack, but there was a portable CD player worth \$175. The backpack belonged to a 26 year-old Aboriginal (Caucasian) male. Jake has never broken the law before.

1. Please rate the amount of harm to the victim caused by this crime (circle one).

Not at all harmful							Very harmful
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

2. Please rate the likelihood that the offender will commit future crime (circle one).

Not at all likely							Very likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

**Scenario II**

Mike R. is a 25 year-old Aboriginal (Caucasian) male. A few nights ago, Mike entered a 7-11 in downtown Regina, SK. Mike pointed a gun at the cashier, a 30 year-old Aboriginal (Caucasian) male, and demanded he hand over the contents of the cash register. The cashier was not hurt. Mike has been previously convicted of robbery.

1. Please rate the amount of harm to the victim caused by this crime (circle one).

Not at all harmful							Very harmful
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

2. Please rate the likelihood that the offender will commit future crime (circle one).

Not at all likely							Very likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

**Scenario III**

Tony C. is a 25-year old Aboriginal (Caucasian) male who lives in Estevan, SK. Last week, Tony vandalized property belonging to his neighbour – a 34 year-old Aboriginal (Caucasian) male. Tony caused \$200 worth of damage. Tony has vandalized property in Estevan before.

1. Please rate the amount of harm to the victim caused by this crime (circle one).

Not at all harmful							Very harmful
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

2. Please rate the likelihood that the offender will commit future crime (circle one).

Not at all likely							Very likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

**Scenario IV**

Barry M. is a 32 year-old Aboriginal (Caucasian) male who lives in Moose Jaw, SK. Last weekend, Barry was at a party. Barry ended up fighting with his friend Joe, a 31 year-old Aboriginal (Caucasian) male also from Moose Jaw. Barry attacked Joe and as a result of his injuries, Joe died. Barry has never been in trouble with the law before.

1. Please rate the amount of harm to the victim caused by this crime (circle one).

Not at all harmful							Very harmful
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

2. Please rate the likelihood that the offender will commit future crime (circle one).

Not at all likely							Very likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

**Scenario V**

George H. is a 26 year-old Aboriginal (Caucasian) male from Saskatoon. A few days ago, George approached a 27 year-old Aboriginal (Caucasian) male at a bus stop. George showed the man a knife and demanded that he give George his wallet. The man was unharmed. This is the first crime that George has ever committed.

1. Please rate the amount of harm to the victim caused by this crime (circle one).

Not at all harmful							Very harmful
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

2. Please rate the likelihood that the offender will commit future crime (circle one).

Not at all likely							Very likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

**Scenario VI**

Danny S. is a 30 year-old Aboriginal (Caucasian) male who has lived in Saskatoon, SK his entire life. Last Saturday night, Danny mugged a man walking down a poorly lit street. Danny beat the man and took his wallet. The victim was a 27 year-old (Caucasian) Aboriginal male also from Saskatoon. As a result of his injuries, the victim died. Danny has been convicted of assault and robbery in the past.

1. Please rate the amount of harm to the victim caused by this crime (circle one).

Not at all harmful							Very harmful
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

2. Please rate the likelihood that the offender will commit future crime (circle one).

Not at all likely							Very likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

**Instructions:** Please **DO NOT** return to any of the previous pages while answering the following two questions.

1. What was the ethnicity of the offender in the previous six crime scenarios?

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2. What was the ethnicity of the victim in the previous six crime scenarios?

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Thank-you for your participation. Please return the completed questionnaire to the researcher, Carrie Tanasichuk

APPENDIX B  
CRIME SCENARIOS

**Instructions:** Below are six crime scenarios. Please read each scenario carefully and respond to the following questions. When answering, please keep in mind that we are interested in your opinion, not your knowledge of the Canadian legal system.

**Scenario I - Low Harm, Unstable**

Jake H. is a 25 year-old Aboriginal (Caucasian) male who lives in Regina, SK. A couple of days ago, Jake was walking around a local shopping mall and saw another person's backpack was sitting in the hall unguarded. Jake stole the backpack. There was no money in the backpack, but there was a portable CD player worth \$175. The backpack belonged to a 26 year-old Aboriginal (Caucasian) male. Jake has never broken the law before.

1. How serious do you think this crime is?

Not at all Serious							Very Serious
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

2. How responsible do you think Jake is for this crime?

Not at all Responsible							Completely Responsible
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

3. Should Jake spend time in custody for this crime?

- Yes  
 No

If yes, how much time in custody should Jake serve? Please type your answer in either weeks, months, or years.

\_\_\_\_\_ WEEKS

\_\_\_\_\_ MONTHS

\_\_\_\_\_ YEARS

**Scenario II - Medium Harm, Stable**

Mike R. is a 25 year-old Aboriginal (Caucasian) male. A few nights ago, Mike entered a 7-11 in downtown Regina, SK. Mike pointed a gun at the cashier, a 30 year-old Aboriginal (Caucasian) male, and demanded he hand over the contents of the cash register. The cashier was not hurt. Mike has been previously convicted of robbery.

1. How serious do you think this crime is?

Not at all Serious							Very Serious
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

2. How responsible do you think Mike is for this crime?

Not at all Responsible							Completely Responsible
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

3. Should Mike spend time in custody for this crime?

- Yes
- No

If yes, how much time in custody should Mike serve? Please type your answer in either weeks, months, or years.

\_\_\_\_\_ WEEKS

\_\_\_\_\_ MONTHS

\_\_\_\_\_ YEARS

**Scenario III – Low Harm, Stable**

Tony C. is a 25-year old Aboriginal (Caucasian) male who lives in Estevan, SK. Last week, Tony vandalized property belonging to his neighbour – a 34 year-old Aboriginal (Caucasian) male. Tony caused \$200 worth of damage. Tony has vandalized property in Estevan before.

1. How serious do you think this crime is?

Not at all Serious							Very Serious
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

2. How responsible do you think Tony is for this crime?

Not at all Responsible							Completely Responsible
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

3. Should Tony spend time in custody for this crime?

- Yes
- No

If yes, how much time in custody should Tony serve? Please type your answer in either weeks, months, or years.

\_\_\_\_\_ WEEKS

\_\_\_\_\_ MONTHS

\_\_\_\_\_ YEARS

**Scenario IV – High harm, Unstable**

Barry M. is a 32 year-old Aboriginal male (Caucasian) who lives in Moose Jaw, SK. Last weekend, Barry was at a party. Barry ended up fighting with his friend Joe, a 31 year-old Aboriginal (Caucasian) male also from Moose Jaw. Barry attacked Joe and as a result of his injuries, Joe died. Barry has never been in trouble with the law before.

1. How serious do you think this crime is?

Not at all Serious							Very Serious
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

2. How responsible do you think Barry is for this crime?

Not at all Responsible							Completely Responsible
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

3. Should Barry spend time in custody for this crime?

- Yes
- No

If yes, how much time in custody should Barry serve? Please type your answer in either weeks, months, or years.

\_\_\_\_\_ WEEKS

\_\_\_\_\_ MONTHS

\_\_\_\_\_ YEARS

**Scenario V – Medium harm, Unstable**

George H. is a 26 year-old Aboriginal (Caucasian) male from Saskatoon. A few days ago, George approached a 27 year-old Aboriginal (Caucasian) male at a bus stop. George showed the man a knife and demanded that he give George his wallet. The man was unharmed. This is the first crime that George has ever committed.

1. How serious do you think this crime is?

Not at all Serious							Very Serious
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

2. How responsible do you think George is for this crime?

Not at all Responsible							Completely Responsible
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

3. Should George spend time in custody for this crime?

- Yes
- No

If yes, how much time in custody should George serve? Please type your answer in either weeks, months, or years.

\_\_\_\_\_ WEEKS

\_\_\_\_\_ MONTHS

\_\_\_\_\_ YEARS

**Scenario VI – High harm, Stable**

Danny S. is a 30 year-old Aboriginal (Caucasian) male who has lived in Saskatoon, SK his entire life. Last Saturday night, Danny mugged a man walking down a poorly lit street. Danny beat the man and took his wallet. The victim was a 27 year-old Aboriginal (Caucasian) male also from Saskatoon. As a result of his injuries, the victim died. Danny has been convicted of assault and robbery in the past.

1. How serious do you think this crime is?

Not at all Serious							Very Serious
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

2. How responsible do you think Danny is for this crime?

Not at all Responsible						Completely Responsible
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3. Should Danny spend time in custody for this crime?

- Yes
- No

If yes, how much time in custody should Danny serve? Please type your answer in either weeks, months, or years.

\_\_\_\_\_ WEEKS

\_\_\_\_\_ MONTHS

\_\_\_\_\_ YEARS

APPENDIX C  
PREJUDICE TOWARDS ABORIGINAL MEN SCALE (PAMS)

**Instructions:** Please use the following scale to respond to each statement.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. Canada needs to stop apologizing for events that happened to Aboriginal people many years ago.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. Aboriginal men still need to protest for equal rights.\*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3. Aboriginal men should stop complaining about the way they are treated and simply get on with their lives.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4. Most Aboriginal men can NOT take care of their children.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

5. Most Aboriginal men sound intoxicated (drunk).

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. Aboriginal men should simply get over past generations' experiences at residential schools.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

7. Aboriginal men seem to use their cultural traditions to secure special rights denied to non-Aboriginal men.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

8. Most Aboriginal men are on welfare.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

9. Most Aboriginal men need classes on how to be better parents.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

10. Many of the requests made by Aboriginal men to the Canadian government are excessive.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

11. Special places in academics programmes should NOT be set aside for male Aboriginal students.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

12. Aboriginal men have way too many children.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

13. Aboriginal men have no sense of time.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

14. Aboriginal men should be satisfied with what the government has given them.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

15. It is now unnecessary to honour treaties established with Aboriginal men.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

16. Aboriginal men should NOT have reserved placements in universities unless they are qualified.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

17. High standards of hygiene are NOT valued by Aboriginal men.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

18. Diseases that affect Aboriginal men are simply due to the lifestyle they lead.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

19. Aboriginal men should pay taxes just like everyone else.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

20. The government should support programmes designed to place Aboriginal men in positions of power.\*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

21. Drug abuse is a key problem among Aboriginal men.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

22. Poverty on reserves is a direct result of Aboriginal men abusing drugs.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

23. Few Aboriginal men seem to take much pride in their personal appearance.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

24. Non-Aboriginal people need to become sensitive to the needs of Aboriginal men.\*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

25. Government agencies should make every effort to meet the needs of Aboriginal men.\*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Items measuring modern prejudice: 1, 2\*, 3, 6, 7, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 19, 20\*, 24\*, 25\*.  
Items measuring old-fashioned prejudice: 4, 5, 8, 9, 12, 13, 17, 18, 21, 22, 23.

Note: \* represents items to be reverse scored.



APPENDIX F  
DEMOGRAPHICS

**Instructions:** The last section of this survey asks for some general background demographic information about yourself.

1. By my own definition, I would consider myself to be (select one):

- Liberal
- Somewhat liberal
- Somewhat conservative
- Conservative

2. Please rate your knowledge/familiarity with sentencing practices in Canadian Courts (select one).

No							Extremely
Knowledge							Knowledgeable
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

3. What is your gender (select one)?

- Male
- Female

4. What is your age in years? \_\_\_\_\_

5. What year of university are you in (select one)?

- First year
- Second year
- Third year
- Fourth year
- Fifth year or more

6. With which of the following ethnic groups do you most feel a shared ancestral self-identity (check one)?

- European/Caucasian descent
- Aboriginal/Métis
- East Indian
- Asian
- Middle Eastern
- African
- Central American
- South American
- Other

APPENDIX G  
CONSENT FORM

*Please read this form carefully, and feel free to contact the researcher with any questions you might have.*

**Researcher:** Carrie L. Tanasichuk, Department of Psychology, University of Saskatchewan, (306) 966-6719, [carrie.tanasichuk@usask.ca](mailto:carrie.tanasichuk@usask.ca)

**Purpose and Procedure:** The purpose of this study is to examine the opinions university students have about various crimes and the jail sentences that criminals receive. We are interested in how different attitudes affect these opinions. The study involves completing a survey that will ask you your opinion on several crimes as well as various measurements of attitudes. This survey should take approximately 45 minutes to complete.

**Potential Risks:** There are no anticipated risks associated with participating in this study. Please feel free to skip over any questions that you do not wish to answer. You may stop participating at any time. If you decide to withdraw from the study you will still receive your course credit.

**Potential Benefits:** Following the completion of the survey, you will receive a debriefing form which will provide you with current research regarding how we perceive crime and what influences sentencing decisions. This form will also provide you with several references in case you would like to do some further reading on the subject. Furthermore, your answers will aid in a further scientific understanding of what exactly influences our perceptions of crime and criminals.

**Confidentiality:** Your data will be stored on a computer disc in a locked office by Dr. J. S. Wormith for a minimum of five years before it is destroyed. The data from this study will be published and presented at conferences, but only in aggregate form so that individuals cannot be identified. Please do not indicate your name or any other identifying information on the survey.

**Right to Withdraw:** Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time, without penalty of any sort. If you withdraw from the study at any time, any data that you have contributed will not be used in the study.

**Questions:** If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel to contact the researcher at the number or e-mail address provided above if you have questions. This study has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board on **(insert date)**. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Ethics Office (966-2084). Out

of town participants may call collect. If you wish to be informed of the results of this study, please feel free to contact the researcher.

**Consent to Participate:** I have read and understood the description provided above; I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I consent to participate in the study described above, understanding that I may withdraw this consent at any time. You are urged to print a copy of this screen for your own records. Alternatively, you may contact the research, Carrie Tanasichuk, and a copy will be sent to you.

YES, I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE       NO, I DO NOT WISH TO PARTICIPATE

## APPENDIX H DEBRIEFING FORM

First of all, we would like to thank you for participating in our study. The primary objective of this study is to test whether or not the ethnicity of an offender and or victim influences how serious we perceive a crime to be and the length of punishment we recommend for an offender. Simply put, the study's main hypothesis is that people will perceive a crime as more serious and recommend a harsher sentence when an offender is Aboriginal and the victim is Caucasian. There are actually four versions of the survey you just completed. In one version, both the offender and victim are Aboriginal. In a second version, the offender is Aboriginal and the victim is Caucasian. In the third version, the offender is Caucasian and the victim is Aboriginal. In the fourth and final version, both the offender and victim are Caucasian. Once all the data is collected, we will compare the crime severity ratings and recommended punishments to see if there is a difference between the four conditions.

We also asked you to complete a scale measuring prejudice towards Aboriginals. Some of the scale items you completed measured what is called modern prejudice towards Aboriginals, and others measured old-fashioned prejudice. Whereas *old-fashioned prejudice* refers to the view that a minority group is inferior, *modern prejudice* refers to the opinion that a minority group no longer faces discrimination or is being too disruptive in seeking equal rights (Batts, 1998). It is hypothesized that people who score high on modern prejudice will be more likely to have a racial bias when rating a crime's severity and recommending a punishment when the offender is Aboriginal, but only when the crime is not that serious (e.g., vandalism). However, we hypothesize that people who score high on old-fashioned prejudice will rate crimes and punishment in a similar manner, regardless of crime severity.

We also asked you to rate how responsible you thought the offender was for the crime. Weiner's (2006) attribution theory states that when we perceive someone to be responsible for harm done, we feel angry towards that person and may seek to punish them. This study will also see if there is a relationship between how responsible people see an offender as being and how harsh their recommended sentences are.

Thank-you once again for your participation in this study. If you have any questions or concerns or would like to be informed of the findings of this study, please feel free to contact the researcher, Carrie Tanasichuk, at [carrie.tanasichuk@usask.ca](mailto:carrie.tanasichuk@usask.ca); 966-6719.

If you would like to learn more about this topic, the following articles and books are recommended:

- Carlsmith, K. M., Darley, J. M., & Robinson, P. H. (2002). Why do we punish? Deterrence and just deserts as motives for punishment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 83, 284-299.
- McConahay, J. B., Hardee, B. B., & Batts, V. (1981). Has racism declined in America? It depends on who is asking and what is asked. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 25, 563-579.
- Stylianou, S. (2003). Measuring crime seriousness perceptions: What have we learned and else do we want to know. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 31, 37-56
- Weiner, B. (2006). *Social motivation, justice, and the moral emotions: An attributional approach*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

**\*\*You are urged to print a copy of this screen for your own records. Alternatively, you may contact the researcher, Carrie Tanasichuk, and a copy will be sent to you.**