Influential Factors in Lay Attributions of Blame and Punishment: An Enquiry into the Sentiment of Justice.

Thesis

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Influential Factors in Lay Attributions of Blame and Punishment: An Enquiry into the Sentiment of Justice.

Thesis submitted by Georgios Kordonoulis

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Abstract
This thesis addresses the question of what factors might influence people’s moral judgements, specifically attributions of blame and punishment, focusing on considering both philosophical and psychological perspectives and theories in light of empirical evidence regarding the common-sense judgements of lay research participants. Psychologists (e.g., Carlsmith et al. 2002; Rucker et al. 2004) have investigated the motivations behind punitive decisions, examining whether these are mainly past-oriented or future-oriented. In the first case, punishment is given in proportion to the gravity of the offence and perpetrators receive their just deserts. In the second case, punishment is dispensed by taking into account other factors such as deterring future crime and protecting society. This thesis explores factors that are related to both past-oriented and future-oriented considerations in order to cast light on the lay motivations behind punishment. By ‘lay motivations’ I mean the motivations that ordinary people (lay people) have for punishing offenders.

The theoretical background to this research is provided by both psychological (e.g. Tyler et.al 1997; Carlsmith 2002) and philosophical theories of punishment: for example, those developed by J.S. Mill (1868), Friedrich Nietzsche (1878), J.L. Mackie (1986), and Jeffrey Murphy (2012). A further distinctive feature of this thesis is that it examines whether there is a link between punishment and the notions of malicious satisfaction and ressentiment as argued by Nietzsche (1878). This link has never been investigated experimentally, and this thesis aims to provide some preliminary findings on this issue.

The main methodology used is the vignette technique. The participants recruited to take part in this research read crime scenarios and were asked to provide attributions of blame and punishment. Nine experiments were performed, investigating a range of factors that might be thought to influence attributions of blame and punishment. These involved conditions in prison; the social class of the victim; whether an act of revenge can be perceived as justifiable; whether the perpetrator had been the victim of an act of revenge, or an act of fateful punishment; whether a perpetrator had been incapacitated from committing future crimes; information on crime rate; and whether the perpetrator showed repentance. In addition, the severity of the crime was a constant factor that was examined across all of the nine experiments. The results of these experiments provided evidence that retributive considerations are more important than utilitarian considerations in regards to lay attributions of blame and punishment. Moreover, the results corroborate the claim that retribution is inextricably linked with the notion of just deserts and the accomplishment of a sense of equilibrium between crime and punishment. In addition, the results provided some evidence in
favour of Nietzsche’s (1878/1887) claim that attributing punishment involves malicious feelings and feelings of ressentiment.

Overall, this thesis shows the importance of taking into account philosophical ideas in moral psychology, and should inspire further research interest in Nietzsche’s ideas regarding punishment, as well as research on the exact nature of proportionality between crime and punishment that stems from desert-based approaches.
Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to both of my supervisors for their continuous support and encouragement during the period of this research. Their remarks and insights have been instrumental in the shaping of this thesis. Due to its interdisciplinary nature, the thesis required knowledge of philosophy which is a discipline in which I had no prior background. Carolyn Price introduced me to the wonderful process of philosophical thinking (which is extremely challenging and precise) and not only helped me by suggesting corrections and providing insights, but also sparked a desire which caused me to try and think like a philosopher. Claire Hewson was extremely helpful with the psychology aspects of the thesis; her advice on designing the research, analysing the data, and interpreting them was invaluable to me. But above all, perhaps, I was very lucky in the sense that both of my supervisors are very kind hearted and empathic individuals who also supported me emotionally during times in which I had been struggling.

I would also like to say a big thank you to Zoi who has been a true friend and I am grateful for her unconditional support. I would not have been able to complete this thesis had she not supported me in every aspect.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my father who passed away.
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Chapter One-General Introduction

1.1. Introduction

This study draws on the disciplines of philosophy and psychology, and connects to a relatively new trend in philosophy, namely that of experimental philosophy. Experimental philosophy is a relatively new approach in philosophy that tests philosophical propositions through the empirical methods used by psychologists (Nichols 2004; Nichols & Knobe 2008). The methodological arsenal of experimental philosophers is comprised of methods borrowed from the social sciences.

Nichols & Knobe (2017) have distinguished between three programs in experimental philosophy research. The first is the ‘negative program’: its purpose is to provide evidence which shows that the traditional intuitional approach in philosophy is unreliable, and that progress in philosophy has to be made by empirically testing lay intuitions. The second program assesses experimental evidence of lay intuitions in order to make progress on specific topics in philosophy of mind or moral philosophy. Finally, the third research program is not concerned with using lay intuitions for making progress on specific philosophical topics, but aims to enrich our knowledge about people’s feelings and thoughts themselves. Hence, the third program is more descriptive, and aims to provide insights relevant to debates within moral psychology. Hence, this thesis is best understood as a contribution to the third program within experimental philosophy. This is because the experiments are informed by philosophical theory.

Experimental philosophers have conducted various experiments in relation to lay moral judgements. These range from experiments on free will and moral responsibility (e.g. Nichols & Knobe 2007; Phillips & Knobe 2009) to experiments on intentional action and moral responsibility/blameworthiness (e.g. Alicke et al. 1994; Knobe 2003, Cushman et al. 2012) and experiments on causation and moral responsibility (e.g. Roxborough & Cumby 2009).

As I understand it, the manifesto of experimental philosophy speaks to researchers from various disciplines and calls out for collaboration across the board. Since my background is in psychology, my goal is to contribute knowledge both to moral psychology, and moral/experimental philosophy by empirically testing lay intuitions on morality. More specifically, this thesis’s empirical objective is to examine lay intuitions on moral blame and punishment.
Most research in experimental philosophy examining the concepts of blame and punishment focuses on factors that might be thought to influence blame rather than punishment. Lay attributions of blame seem to be influenced by intentionality (i.e., to what extent a perpetrator intends to commit an immoral action) —and attributions of moral responsibility (i.e., whether an action was accidental, negligent, or connected to other extenuating circumstances that can affect attributions of responsibility and hence blameworthiness) (e.g., Alicke et.al 1994; Knobe 2003; Nichols 2004; Woolfolk et.al 2005; Cushman et.al 2012).

Taking an alternative approach, some studies in psychology focus on blame from an evolutionary standpoint (e.g., Fehr & Gachter 2002; Xia & House 2005). These studies typically investigate attributions of blame in the context of cooperation and perceptions of fairness. Other studies in psychology focus solely on punishment and relate to lay choices concerning the best punitive practices to be used when a person is perceived as deserving of punishment (e.g. Carlsmith et.al 2002; Rucker et.al 2004). This area of research is particularly relevant to theories of punishment within the philosophy of law and it has had a strong focus upon whether people opt for retribution, deterrence, or restoration as strategies for legal punishment.

What sets this thesis apart from the relevant body of literature?

This research thesis differs from existing studies in experimental philosophy in a number of respects. First, rather than attempting to manipulate moral responsibility or intentionality, the thesis examines factors that may potentially influence attributions of blame and punishment, when both intentionality and moral responsibility are taken as given. The factors investigated by this thesis are prison conditions (Experiments One & Two), the social class of a victim (Experiment Three), revenge (Experiments Four & Five), fateful punishment (Experiment Six), future-oriented information about crime (Experiments Seven & Eight), and repentance (Experiment Nine). Moreover, a constant factor that has been examined across all of the experiments is the severity of the perpetration.

Secondly, the thesis is original in the sense that it investigates philosophical claims concerning the relationship between punishment and malicious satisfaction. While the relative importance of retribution and deterrence to lay participants making punitive attributions has been tested experimentally by many studies, there are no studies in the literature that have attempted to examine whether there might be an element of malicious satisfaction when lay people are asked to attribute blame and punishment after reading vignettes about crime.
1.2. General Aims of the Thesis

The main aim of this thesis is to investigate factors, other than variation in intentionality and responsibility, that might influence attributions of blame and punishment, as motivated by existing claims within the relevant body of literature. These factors are instrumental in investigating four central research questions. The first and second relate to the extents to which retributive or utilitarian considerations are the motivations behind lay attributions of blame and punishment. The third and fourth focus on whether lay attributions of blame and punishment are influenced by Nietzsche’s notions of malicious satisfaction and ressentiment.

The thesis also has two secondary or peripheral research questions. The first is to investigate attributions of blame and punishment and determine whether they behave similarly across all of the nine experiments. This was done in order to shed some light on the philosophical debate which deals with whether blame has a punitive aspect. The second peripheral aim was to examine whether individual differences play a role in lay attributions of blame and punishment. For instance, the thesis explores whether sadistic tendencies or feelings of inferiority have an effect on attributions of blame and punishment. This second peripheral aim is pursued through correlational exploratory research. The central and peripheral research questions along with the research questions that separately relate to each of the nine experiments can be viewed in Diagram 1.
Diagram 1.

Main Aim
To investigate factors, besides variation in intentionality and responsibility, that might influence attributions of blame and punishment, as motivated by existing claims within the relevant body of literature.

Central Research Questions

To what extent are lay attributions of blame and punishment motivated by malicious satisfaction?

Does cruel versus good prison treatment influence attributions of punishment satisfaction? And to what extent is this due to malicious satisfaction? Addressed by Experiments One and Two.

To what extent are lay attributions of blame and punishment influenced by ressentiment?

Does the social class of the victim influence attributions of blame and punishment? And to what extent is this due to ressentiment? Addressed by Experiment Three.

To what extent are retributive considerations the main motivation behind lay attributions of blame and punishment?

Does cruel versus good prison treatment influence attributions of blame and punishment? Addressed by Experiment One. Is the exaction of revenge perceived as a justifiable act? And is this due to retributive thinking? Addressed by Experiment Four.

Does the presence or absence of revenge influence attributions of blame and punishment? And is this due to retributive thinking? Addressed by Experiment Six.

Peripheral Research Questions

Is blame a punitive emotion?

Are there individual differences in lay attributions of blame and punishment? Addressed by exploratory correlational research.

To what extent are utilitarian/future-oriented considerations the main motivation behind lay attributions of blame and punishment?

Does information about a perpetrator’s permanent incapacitation influence attributions of blame and punishment? Addressed by Experiment Eight.

To what extent does the perpetrator’s repentance influence attributions of blame and punishment? And is this due to utilitarian or retributive considerations? Addressed by Experiment Nine.

Does the presence or absence of an act of lawful punishment influence attributions of blame and punishment? And is this better explained by retributive thinking? Addressed by Experiment Five.

Does information on societal crime rates influence attributions of blame and punishment? Addressed by Experiment Seven.

To what extent does the perpetrator’s repentance influence attributions of blame and punishment? And is this due to utilitarian or retributive considerations? Addressed by Experiment Nine.
1.3. Outline of the Chapters in this Thesis

Chapters Two and Three present a review of the existing literature. The purpose is to provide the reader with an overview of both philosophical and psychological accounts pertaining to blame and punishment. Chapter Two investigates whether lay people understand blame and punishment in retributive or utilitarian/consequentialist terms. There, we will investigate philosophical theories about the main motivations behind punishment. As we shall see, some philosophers have argued that retribution is the main motivation for punishment (e.g., Mill (1868/2001), while others have stressed the importance of utilitarian considerations (e.g., Hobbes 1651; Hume 1740; Ree 1875; Bentham 1789). Following that, we shall discuss how conceptions of punishment and blame relate to the notions of moral reciprocity (Becker 1990) and reciprocal altruism (Trivers 1971). This discussion will focus on evolutionary accounts of punishment that appeal to the notion of cooperation. Apart from discussing theoretical considerations, this section will also present various psychological experiments on fairness and cooperation. Following that, the chapter will present studies in psychology that either support retributive (e.g. Carlsmit 2006; Carlsmit, Darley & Robinson 2002; Darley, Carlsmit & Robinson 2000) or utilitarian considerations (e.g. Orth 2003; Rucker et al. 2004) as the main motivations behind lay punitive judgements. Additionally, Chapter Two will discuss views of the importance of the relationship between revenge and retribution (e.g., Nozick 1981, Vidmar 2001) and present some psychological experiments on revenge (e.g. Gollwitzer et al. 2011). Finally, Chapter Two will discuss the relationship between punishment and repentance (Murphy 2012), and finally the relationship between blame and punishment. There, we shall come across conflicting views regarding moral blame, which can be perceived either as a punitive emotion (e.g., Mill 1868; 2001), or as a non-punitive emotion (e.g., Wallace 1994; 2005).

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1 Psychologists tend to use the term ‘utilitarian’ to refer to consequentialist concerns. As psychologists use it, the term is not to be conflated with the various forms of utilitarianism found in philosophy. Psychologists tend not to distinguish between consequentialism and utilitarianism, and use these terms without paying too much attention to the details of these philosophical theories. As they use the term ‘utilitarianism’ is the view that the purpose of punishment is to benefit society and punitive considerations are in general ‘forward looking’. In contrast, retribution is a matter of punishing an offender in proportion to the seriousness of their crime (i.e., just deserts). This thesis will employ these terms in the way that psychologists understand them except when discussing philosophical views.

2 Only Jeremy Bentham can be classed as utilitarian among these philosophers. However, I am only referring to some of their descriptive views here regarding the overall function of punishment which stem from utilitarian considerations in the sense that these considerations are ‘forward looking’. Discussing normative views is beyond the scope of this thesis. For example, Mill’s normative views on punishment are utilitarian, but his descriptive views are not.
The chapter mainly addresses whether lay attributions of blame and punishment are motivated by utilitarian or retributive considerations, and will introduce the several influential factors in making attributions of blame and punishment which will be addressed by the experimental chapters of this thesis. These factors relate to both utilitarian and retributive considerations about punishment, and they relate to the severity of a perpetration, future-oriented information about crime, revenge, fateful punishment, and repentance.

Chapter Three discusses a third possible motivation for punishment. This has to do with the relationship between punishment and cruelty. The chapter will discuss Nietzsche’s (1878; 1887) views on punishment. Nietzsche argues that the main motivation behind punishment is to experience a sensation of satisfaction at the suffering of the guilty. According to Nietzsche, this satisfaction derives from tendencies for cruelty that are a fundamental part of the human condition. Retribution, argued Nietzsche, is only a pretext for a sensation of satisfaction, that in turn, makes one feel powerful and ‘above’ the guilty party. The concept of malicious satisfaction will also be discussed in relation to revenge and there we shall discuss Paul Ree’s (1875/2003) ideas who was a philosopher contemporary to Nietzsche. Moreover, the chapter will also discuss Nietzsche’s views on ‘ressentiment’: this is a special kind of envy directed towards people whom the subject perceives as more powerful than him or herself.

Continuing, the chapter discusses related views on cruelty from a psychology standpoint. We shall examine the debate about whether cruelty is a human drive (Nell 2006), and we shall also consider the link between cruelty and sadism and investigate psychoanalytical theories of power (Adler 1927; Fromm 1976). Overall, Chapter Three discusses the possibility that lay perceptions of punishment are bound not only to utilitarian and/or retributive considerations, but also to elements of malicious satisfaction and ressentiment. Additionally, Chapter Three points out the importance of repentance (Austin 1976; Murphy 2012) in shaping attributions of blame and punishment.

Chapter Four discusses the general methodological approach taken in the empirical work undertaken for this thesis, explaining the methods used and justifying the broader design choices made.

Chapter Five is the first of three experimental chapters, and focuses on providing answers to the third and fourth central research questions: which concern the extent to which lay attributions of blame and punishment are motivated by malicious satisfaction and ressentiment. The third research question which regards malicious satisfaction is addressed by a more specific experimental research question. This is whether cruel vs good prison treatment
influences attributions of punishment satisfaction, and whether this can be due to malicious satisfaction (addressed by Experiments One and Two). Similarly, the fourth question which regards ressentiment is addressed by a specific experimental research question. This is whether the social class of a victim can influence attributions of blame and punishment, and whether this is due to feelings of ressentiment (addressed by Experiment Three). This chapter is generally devoted to examining Nietzsche’s views.

Chapter Six addresses the first central research question which is the extent to which retributive considerations are the main motivation behind lay attributions of blame and punishment. This central research question underlies more specific experimental research questions. These concern whether cruel vs good prison treatment influences attributions of blame and punishment (Experiment One); whether the exaction of revenge is perceived as a justifiable act (Experiment Four), and whether this might be due to retributive thinking and whether the presence or absence of an act of revenge (Experiment Five) and of an act of fateful punishment\(^3\) can influence lay attributions of blame and punishment. Overall, this chapter aims to examine evidence for and against retribution as the main motivation behind punishment.

Chapter Seven addresses the second central research question which is the extent to which utilitarian/future-oriented considerations are the main motivation behind lay attributions of blame and punishment. This research question breaks into more specific experimental research questions which have to do with whether information about a perpetrator’s permanent incapacitation influences attributions of blame and punishment (Experiment Seven), whether information on societal crime rate influence attributions of blame and punishment (Experiment Eight) and the extent to which the perpetrator's repentance influences attributions of blame and punishment (Experiment Nine).

Finally, Chapter Eight presents a general discussion which will bring all the findings together and discuss them in light of all the aims and research questions.

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\(^3\) The term fateful punishment is used as a handy label that refers to fateful acts that can be potentially interpreted as having a punitive character by lay people. For example, a perpetrator suffered an accident following a certain perpetration.
Chapter Two-Retiibutive vs Utilitarian Ideas about Punishment in Philosophy and Psychology

2.1. Retributive and Consequentialist ideas in Philosophy: Justifying Punishment

In philosophy, the justification of punishment is often accounted for by one of two theories. These are the consequentialist theory and the retributive theory. According to consequentialism, punishment is justified solely by its consequences, for example the prevention or deterrence of crime. Consequentialist accounts usually focus on deterrence, incapacitation, and reform/rehabilitation. All the aforementioned strategies are called ‘consequentialist’ because they aim at producing good consequences. One form of consequentialism is utilitarianism. Utilitarianism was first propounded by Jeremy Bentham (1789/1986), who held that we have just one moral duty which is to ensure the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. Thus, theories that follow this principle for the moral justification of punishment view it as an instrument that is designed to produce beneficial consequences for as many people as possible. An important distinction within utilitarianism is that between act and rule utilitarianism. According to act utilitarianism, the moral rightness of an act depends on the number of good consequences it brings about for the greatest number of people. On the other hand, rule utilitarianism (e.g., Austin 1832; Rawls 1955; Brandt 1959) argues that an act is right if it conforms to a rule which, if were followed, would produce good consequences. Thus, in the context of punishment, it is not individual acts of punishment that are justified in consequentialist terms, but the institution of punishment (understood as governed by the principle of just deserts) as a whole.

Utilitarian punitive strategies fall into three different categories. These are deterrence, rehabilitation/reform, and incapacitation. Deterrence is further subdivided into individual and general deterrence (Carrabine et al. 2009). The former is concerned with preventing individual crimes (i.e. punishing someone very harshly), which would result in him/her avoiding committing a similar offence in the future out of fear of the consequences; the latter is concerned with preventing other people from committing similar crimes out of fear of punishment. Rehabilitation aims to reform a perpetrator through educational programs, and to make him/her change his/her behaviour with the purpose of integrating back to society, so that he/she will no longer pose a threat to its members. Incapacitation focuses on permanently depriving an offender of the ability to commit an offence in order to protect society (e.g., by cutting off a limb, keeping them permanently locked up, or employing the death penalty) (Carrabine et al. 2009).
On the other hand, the retributive theory claims that punishment is justified by desert. In other words, perpetrators deserve to suffer for their crimes in proportion to the wrongness of their actions, and the act of punishment should not take into account any considerations pertinent to the consequences of exacting the punishment. This is also stressed in the biblical notion of lex talionis (i.e. an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth etc.). In addition, some retributivists have moved away from the idea that the person who committed the wrong act should suffer, but have justified punishment on the principle of restoring the balance of burdens and benefits in a society. The thought is that criminals have gained an unfair advantage over ordinary members of society, therefore punishment should aim to take away this unfair advantage from them (see Ten 1991; in Singer 1991).

In philosophy, retributivism is a formal theory concerning the justification of punishment. It was propounded by, amongst others, Kant (1797/1991). Kant asserted that the sole purpose of punishment should be to balance the ‘scales of justice’, and that a perpetrator should be punished only in proportion to the crime committed. Any consequentialist motives for punishment should be irrelevant; otherwise, justice would cease to be justice. Kant also argued that the deserved suffering should happen, not in order to satisfy vengeful tendencies on behalf of victims, but based only upon rational considerations. These are captured in his principles of retaliation and equality. The latter asserts that all humans are equal: a criminal has assumed a superior position by ‘inclining the pointer of the scale of justice on one side’ (Kant, 1991[1797]:105), and thus the principle of retaliation should be applied to rebalance the scale of justice. The principle of retaliation is predicated on the claim that, according to Kant, the act that a criminal has performed ‘is to be regarded as perpetrated on himself’ (Kant, 1991[1797]:104). In other words, if a criminal committed murder, his/her punishment should be death, since according to principle of retaliation, the act is to be regarded as perpetrated on the agent.

The notion of retribution has been also linked by philosophers to lay perceptions of punishment and many philosophers have argued that people think in retributivist terms. Walen (2016) argues that the general lay intuition behind retributivist approaches is that those who commit crimes should be punished even if punishing them would produce no other good. Murphy (2007:11) stated that a lay retributivist is a person who believes that the primary justification of punishment is that the criminal deserves it. Cottingham (1979:1) argued that retribution mainly relates to criminals ‘paying back’ a debt to society. This idea of paying back a debt implies that a perpetrator has taken an unfair advantage of other members of a society, and that the balance between burdens and benefits needs to be somehow restored. Moreover,
perpetrators can pay for their wrongdoings in kind. Retributive motivations for punishment have also been associated with an emotional response to crime, and some philosophers have characterised such responses as ‘retributive hatred’ (Murphy & Hampton 1988: ch3).

Some of the aforementioned approaches for justifying punishment can be found to influence the thinking of legislators, judges and criminal law in general. For example, if we look into the current criminal justice act for the United Kingdom (Criminal Justice Act 2003), we will find that it states that the purposes of criminal sentencing are the punishment of the offenders, the reduction of crime (including its reduction by deterrence), the reform and rehabilitation of offenders, the protection of the public, and the making of reparation by offenders to persons affected by their offences (legislation.gov.uk 2018). Therefore, punishing offenders within UK law may involve both utilitarian concerns (e.g., deterrence), and retributive concerns (i.e., punishing in proportion to the seriousness of a crime).

The aforementioned theories have been explained only in a generic form: retributivist and consequentialist philosophers alike have suggested many variations of these theories and of the ways in which good consequences or the principle of retaliation should be interpreted in relation to punitive practices. However, providing full accounts of these theories is beyond the scope of this thesis, since we are mostly interested in lay motivations behind punishment. On the other hand, it is useful for the reader to have a basic overview of retributive and consequentialist theories in philosophy, since these philosophical theories have influenced psychological accounts of lay motivations behind punishment.

2.2. Why we punish and blame: Introducing Lay Motivations behind Blame and Punishment.

As well as providing philosophers with moral justifications for punishment, these two theories have been also used by psychologists as descriptive theories that explain lay motivations behind punishment (e.g., Carlsmith 2006; Carlsmith, Darley & Robinson 2002; Darley, Carlsmith & Robinson 2000; Hogarth 1971; Mc Fatter 1978, 1982, Warr 1989; Tyler et al. 1997; Vidmar & Miller 1980; Orth 2003; Rucker et al. 2004). In other words, psychologists have investigated whether lay people think more in terms of retributivist or utilitarian/consequentialist concerns when attributing blame and punishment to perceived violations. As we shall see, some studies support the view that people have retribution in mind when making decisions about punishment (e.g., Carlsmith 2006; Carlsmith, Darley & Robinson 2002; Darley, Carlsmith & Robinson 2000; Mc Fatter 1978, 1982), while others support the claim that people have mainly utilitarian concerns in mind (e.g., Tyler & Boeckmann 1997; Orth 2003; Rucker et al. 2004). Moreover, other researchers have suggested
that even when people think in terms of retribution they do so because of utilitarian concerns - in particular, with the aim of maintaining fairness and cooperation within a society (e.g., Vidmar & Miller, 1980, Oswald et al. 2002; 2005).

Philosophers have also made claims about the motivation behind punishment (e.g., Mill 1868/2001, Nietzsche 1887/2003, and Hobbes 1651/2005). Some philosophers (Hobbes 1651; Hume 1740) have also argued that self-interest is the main motivation behind our perception of justice and our punitive attitudes, while others like Ree (1875) provided a mixed account. The philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1651; 2005) maintained that our sense of justice, and for that matter our perceptions of good and bad, are intrinsically related to our desires and goals. People strive for the fulfilment of personal goals and pleasures and the fear and anxiety that this process may be in any way disrupted leads to the establishment of justice and the longing for peace. In other words, the desires and goals that people aspire to achieve need to be realised in a safe and just environment. Hume (1740/1985) argued that we are sensitive to injustices carried on others because of our ability to sympathize. However, justice’s *ratio essendi* is self-interest: ‘We partake of their uneasiness by sympathy; and as everything which give uneasiness in human actions is called vice, and whatever produces satisfaction virtue; this is the reason why the sense of moral good and evil follows up upon justice and injustice. Thus, self-interest is the original motive to the establishment of justice; but sympathy with public interest is the source of moral approbation which attends that virtue’. (Hume, 1985[1740]: 511)

An account which incorporates both retributive and utilitarian accounts of the origin of punishment was propounded by Ree (1875/2003). This philosopher argued that punishment first emerged as a deterrent for war, but then became simply a feeling of retribution, with the original purpose forgotten. According to Ree, at the beginning of human civilization, people engaged in war, but found perpetual war and conflict unbearable, and thus decided to set rules and invented the concept of punishment to *deter* such occurrences. Through the exchange of goods during peace time and the formation of organised communities, people became useful to each other and proceeded to achieve further advancement. The origin of punishment therefore can be found in deterrence, and the maintenance of order in society: ‘Every state or society is a great menagerie in which fear of punishment and fear of shame are the bars that prevent the beasts from tearing one another to pieces’ (Ree, 2003[1875]:113). According to Ree, after punishment was introduced to establish peace and to deter people from threatening that peace, the feeling of justice was experienced as retribution, since punishment’s original aim has been forgotten.
These competing claims made by psychologists and philosophers have motivated the first and second central research questions of this thesis, which are concerned with the extent to which retributive and utilitarian considerations form the main lay motivations behind lay attributions of blame and punishment.

Generally, the claims about lay motivations behind punishment in both philosophy and psychology that we will examine in this chapter fall into four different categories. These categories should not be seen as defining the field, but they can be seen as offering a useful framework to help the reader to identify the broader perspectives involved in the study of the motivation behind punishment.

1. The lay motivation behind punishment concerns only retribution and giving offenders their just deserts. This may be due to the natural instincts of sympathy and self-defence that all humans share (Mill 1868/2001). Blame and punishment developed from the idea of moral reciprocity (Becker 1990), and can be viewed through an evolutionary perspective (Mackie 1982).

2. The lay motivation behind punishment can be solely attributed to utilitarian concerns—lay people want to maintain fairness and respect for rules within a society. This may be due to the evolution of cooperation and the fear that without justice and punishment society would crumble (Tyler et al. 1997; Orth 2003; Rucker et al. 2004).

3. The lay motivation behind punishment takes the form of retribution in that it aims at perpetrators receiving their just deserts, but the attribution of deserts is not the ultimate purpose of punishment. Rather, retribution is used for the purpose of deterrence along with general utilitarian concerns such as maintaining societal order and security (Vidmar & Miller, 1980, Oswald et al. 2002; 2005).

4. The lay motivation behind punishment is retribution, but retribution is used as a vehicle for experiencing sentiments of cruel and malicious satisfaction on the suffering of perpetrators. Punishment takes the form of retribution but is meted out with the purpose of experiencing pleasurable sadistic sentiments, and feeling somehow powerful in comparison with a powerless perpetrator (Nietzsche 1887/2003, Nietzsche 1878/2008).

We shall see that it is very difficult to establish a clear account of the motivation behind punishment due to the number and complexity of the different possibilities raised by both philosophers and psychologists. In this and the next chapter, I shall explain these views and try
to draw some useful conclusions. Previously in section 2.1 we examined some philosophical justificatory accounts of punishment. In the next sections we will examine descriptive accounts regarding the lay motivations behind blame and punishment. We shall begin by discussing blame and punishment in retributive terms (by appealing to the sentiment of justice), and then in utilitarian terms (by appealing to the notion of moral reciprocity-section 2.3). Then, I shall also discuss the notion of reciprocity in retributive terms (section 2.4). Generally, sections 2.3, and 2.4 will look into the origins of punishment by examining views from philosophy and evolutionary psychology.

2.3. Why We Punish and Blame: The Argument from the Sentiment of Justice

According to J.S. Mill (1868/2001) people are willing to punish and blame because they possess a natural sentiment of justice. By the sentiment of justice, I mean people’s pre-reflective conception of the idea of justice which is founded on natural sentiments (hence this is not to be confused with formal theories of justice). Mill (1868/2001) argued that people’s perception of justice is defined through the notion of just deserts. This notion implies that people deserve good if they do right and bad if they do wrong. It also implies that it is unjust for people to obtain a good/evil that they do not deserve. Therefore, according to Mill the principle for punishing a person is retaliation. In his own words:

No rule on the subject recommends itself so strongly to the primitive and spontaneous sentiment of justice as the lex talionis, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. Though this principle of the Jewish and of the Mohammedan law has been generally abandoned in Europe as a practical maxim; there is I suspect in most minds a secret hankering after it; and when retribution accidentally falls on an offender in that precise shape, the general feeling of satisfaction evinced bears witness how natural is the sentiment to which this repayment in kind is acceptable. (Mill 2001[1868], 57)

According to Mill, the lay perception of justice is founded on natural sentiments, because the desire to punish includes the instinct of self-defence and the feeling of sympathy. By this token, it is natural to resent/retaliate against those who hurt us, and blame/retaliate against those who hurt others with whom we sympathize. The just deserts claim is relevant to punishment because when we are thinking about punishment, we are thinking of what the perpetrator deserves to suffer in relation to his/her crime, since evil has to be returned with

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4 Blame is taken to be a punitive emotion, and therefore it will be considered as a form of punishment throughout the coming sections. However, there is some disagreement among philosophers whether this is the case. I shall come back to this at the end of this chapter.
evil. Mill then argues that to blame someone is to view him/her as an object of punishment. In other words, if we cannot physically punish a person, we can at least punish him/her through our opinions about his act. By expressing these opinions, we are essentially punishing him/her. As we saw earlier, the element of just deserts is also accounted for by a formal theory of justice, namely that of retributivism. However, Mill appeals to retribution in giving a descriptive account of the way people attribute blame and punishment, not a normative theory which is about how we should punish. Notably, Mill’s normative views on punishment were utilitarian.

2.4. Why we punish and blame: Moral Reciprocity

The above account of retribution as a descriptive theory of punishment can be further elucidated if we examine the link between retribution and moral reciprocity, which is a concept that has been extensively studied by evolutionary psychologists, along with some philosophers and sociologists. As we shall see moral reciprocity can fit both within a utilitarian framework for explaining the lay motivation behind punishment, but also within a retributive framework. We shall begin by examining the relationship between reciprocity and utilitarian motivations behind punishment and following that we shall discuss a possible link between reciprocity and retributive considerations.

2.4.1. Reciprocity, Punishment, Blame and Utilitarian Considerations

The philosopher Lawrence Becker (1990) has defined moral reciprocity as a complex disposition to make suitable return for the benefit we receive from others, to resist the harm that others inflict on us rather than retaliating against others for that harm and to make restitution for the harm that we cause. Sociologist Alvin Gouldner (1960) locates the tenets of moral reciprocity in the principles of helping the people who help you, and in not injuring them. Another sociologist Peter Blau (1986), contends that reciprocity (or social exchange as he refers to the phenomenon), is crucial in developing relations of interpersonal trust within a society and promoting cooperation. Moreover, he argues that we commence with minor reciprocal exchanges, and if the other person responds accordingly, we incrementally increase both the greatness of the exchanges, and the level of trust in the other person. In this way reciprocation acts as a starting mechanism for social, and indeed moral interaction. Moral interaction is aimed at maintaining cooperation and imposing sanctions on those who become free riders or violate moral rules.

From an evolutionary perspective reciprocity has been understood in terms of reciprocal altruism (Trivers 1971). Trivers asserted that an organism acts in a manner that temporarily reduces its fitness levels, while increasing another organism’s fitness levels, with the
expectation that the other organism will act in a similar manner at a later time. In this way cooperation between individuals occurs, not for the sake of altruism per se, but to accomplish personal gains and increase personal fitness. Moreover, Trivers, and other evolutionary theorists such as Price (2008), viewed reciprocal altruism as a form of egoism.

On the other hand, other theorists argued that selfishness/egoism occurs only at the level of genes. The idea here is that genes are being ‘selfish’ in order to advance their replication. Things are very different at the level of organisms since the latter would behave in ways that increase inclusive rather than personal fitness. In his classic work *The Selfish Gene*, Dawkins (1976) argues that genes are metaphorically ‘selfish’ in their struggle to increase their replication; that is to increase the number of copies of them that are produced. Dawkins argues that feelings of vengeance or resentment and punitive practices in regards to the violation of rules in a society are a by-product of evolution. Tit for tat is a form of reciprocal altruism (you scratch my back and I will scratch yours). Relationships of mutual benefit, argues Dawkins, are the epitome of any successful strategy for genes to be replicated and for the organisms that carry these genes to achieve optimal conditions for survival. Dawkins provided his readers with many examples from the animal world showing that there is always something of mutual interest to be achieved in any cooperative relationship. For instance, while bee workers may appear to be sacrificing their reproductive interests for the interests of their queen, they rather do it for their own genes’ purposes. By working for the queen, argues Dawkins, they increase her reproductive capacity, and therefore increase the probability of their own genes being replicated in the future (Dawkins 2006 [1976] p179).

On this line of thought, if reciprocal altruism did not exist then many species would become extinct. To illustrate this, Dawkins gives an example of insects that pull parasites from each other’s bodies; this society comprises of ‘suckers’ that always pull the parasite, and ‘cheaters’ that never pull the parasite. It seems that cheaters are being ‘selfish’ and do not reciprocate as they know that they will find a sucker to do the job. Cheaters therefore will begin to multiply more easily as they have less work to do. In the end however, as cheaters become the majority of the population, inevitably the population will become extinct as a result of the parasites that no one is helping to pull off. This, according to Dawkins, is a highly unsuccessful strategy for genes to achieve their future replication. If on the other hand, suckers in the above example were ‘grudgers’ that remembered the cheaters that did not pull off their parasites and refuse to reciprocate in the future, the chances of maintaining future gene replication for this population would increase dramatically, with grudgers remaining a majority and cheaters a minority. Arguably, the same point could be applied to human beings. Trivers (1971) argued that
‘cheaters’ (or non-reciprocators as he uses the term) would be subjected to the sentiments of indignation, which evolved to maintain gene survivability. While Dawkins talks about selfishness only at the level of genes, Trivers applies selfish motives to organisms too (as noted earlier).  

At the level of organisms, not everyone agrees with Trivers’ account. Gintis et al. (2008) have argued that people enjoy being helpful or ethical and that reciprocity does not stem from self-interest. They argue that people engage in cooperation at a personal cost, and also show a willingness to punish violators of cooperative norms at a personal cost too. Since people are willing to punish at a personal cost and with no personal gain involved, then Trivers’ (1971) account cannot be right. The main difference between Trivers’ (1971) and Price’s (2008) notions of reciprocal altruism and the one developed by Gintis et al. (2008) relates to people’s intentions. For Trivers and Price, people engage in reciprocal altruism with the explicit aim of advancing their self-interest, while for Gintis et al. people’s intentions reflect a genuine concern about other people. Indeed, the fact that people are willing to punish even at a personal cost has led many other theorists to argue that people have genuine concerns about justice and fairness too, which would not make sense under the notion of instrumental self-interest (Frank 1988; Kahneman, Knetzsch & Thaler 1986; Kahneman & Tversky 2000).

Experiments have showed that the above idea may be correct (Gintis 2000; Fehr and Gachter 2002; Xiao and Houser 2005; Guth and Levatti 2007). The former type of games involves groups of participants who are tested for their willingness to participate in public goods production (see Ledyard 1995). On the other hand, ultimatum games involve only two players (typically a proposer and a respondent).

The simplest form of game involves giving two players a certain amount of money, and asking one player to propose how they should divide it between them; and the other player is then asked to either accept or reject the offer. In such an experiment, Guth et al. (1982) showed that 50/50 was the most common allocation, but in some cases, players offered a 90/10 allocation in favour of the player that made the proposal. The experimenters also informed participants that if the offer is not accepted by the other player, they would both leave with nothing. On these occasions where proposals were unfair (90/10) the offers were always rejected. According to Frank (1988), experiments such as the above show that people are not instrumentally selfish (since even by accepting an unfair offer, they could have still walked out with some money rather than with nothing), but rather have a genuine concern about fairness. Similar results were also obtained by Kahneman, Knetzsch & Thaler (1985), and Fehr &

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5 Dawkins did allow for this possibility by referring to Trivers but he did not pursue such an argument.
Gachter (2002). Kahneman et al. (1985) suggested that the motive for rejecting unfair offers despite this being against one’s self interest may lie partly in the need to punish those who made the unfair proposals.

In a public goods experiment, Fehr and Gachter (2002), arranged 240 students into groups of four. Each student was given 20MUs (money units that had a real value after the game finished), and asked for a contribution to the group. The interest rate for group investments was 0.4MU for each 1MU contributed. Thus, if four people in a group had invested all of their MUs the return would have been 32MUs for each member separately. The experimenters also told participants that they could punish group members that they thought did not offer enough MUs, through a system of points. Therefore, each of them could assign from zero to ten punishment points to a defector. However, each of the punishment points assigned would cost the defector 3MUs and the punisher 1 MU respectively. The researchers repeated the game for six rounds, and were careful to change groups’ members continuously so that no member sat with another on the same table twice. This was done to avoid future cooperation after the use of punishment.

The results showed that in the majority of cases punishment was exercised from co-operators (above average contributions), to defectors (below average contributions). What was striking however was that in all of the cases punishment occurred at a personal cost to the punishers, despite the fact that they were engaging in one shot cases. Now if they were not one-shot cases, punishment could have been easily explained through Triver’s reciprocal altruism, since co-operators would have punished having in mind that this would be a temporary personal cost and would lead to further gains in the future. The researchers concluded that this form of altruistic punishment is exercised even at a personal cost because people want to uphold cooperation in society. This clearly refers to utilitarian goals.

In another variation of the ultimatum game, Xiao and Houser (2005) found that when participants were allowed to express their blame for unfair offers (by writing on cards), they would accept more unfair offers in the end, in contrast with the control group that was not allowed to express any blame. In more detail, participants were grouped in pairs of two; a proposer and a responder. Proposer and responder were placed into different rooms, with the experimenters carrying their messages to one another. The proposer was given 20 euros and instructed to suggest a split to the responder. If the responder agreed to the proposed amount, then both participants could keep the money. All the pairs of responders and proposers were assigned into one of two experimental conditions. In the first condition, responders were allowed to send a message to proposers along with their answer on accepting/rejecting the
offer. The experimenter explained to responders that they could write anything they want on the message, as long as they did not use rude expressions. On the other hand, responders in the second condition did not have this option. The results showed that most of the messages in the first condition comprised of expressions of blaming the proposer for an unfair offer, and also that responders in the first condition accepted more unfair offers compared to responders in the second condition.

The experimenters suggested three different explanations to account for these results. They argued that perhaps respondents who were allowed to express blame felt better by doing so and this resulted in them accepting more unfair offers; the second explanation was that expressing blame amounted to an alternative form of punishment. The third alternative was that responders who accepted unfair offers would feel that they had an inferior position compared to the proposer, but that allowing them to express blame mitigated this perception.

As we saw, the debate on moral reciprocity revolves around whether people engage in reciprocal actions to advance their self-interest or because they enjoy being ethical and cherish the importance of cooperation. In this context, punishment and blame are exercised accordingly. People might punish/blame because they want to advance their self-interest, or because they want to maintain social cooperation. Nevertheless, both punitive attitudes are forward-looking, and we can label them as utilitarian (in the sense that a psychologist would use the term).

So far in section 2.4, we have examined ideas that link the motivation behind punishment to utilitarian concerns. The purpose of punishment is to maintain peace and social cooperation and this might be due to self-interest or a genuine concern about justice. However, the motivation behind punishment can be also linked to retribution which can in its own right be grounded on moral reciprocity. We saw earlier that for Becker (1990), Gouldner (1960) and Blau (1986), reciprocity is mainly a positive concept. It involves returning good done, and helps in the development of interpersonal trust. However, if we take Mill’s ideas into account, processes of exchange need not be only of positive nature (e.g., gratitude/returning favours), but can also have a negative meaning, in terms of retaliating to harm.

2.4.2. Reciprocity, Punishment, Blame and Retributive Considerations

An alternative interpretation of the experiments we examined in section 2.4.1 is that they may provide evidence which attests that blame and punishment can be understood within a retributive framework. Participants accepted more unfair offers when allowed to blame because blame itself allowed them to punish the proposer. Since the proposer’s offer was
judged to be unfair, then by blaming him participants felt that at least some justice had been done, and therefore they need not reject the unfair offer. In turn, when stating that *some justice had been done* we are essentially saying that *some bad* was returned to the proposer since he/she *deserves* to be punished by the expression of blame. The only way that participants could return some *evil* to the proposer was through expressing blame. On the other hand, for participants who were not allowed to express blame, the only way to punish the proposer would be to reject the offer. This brings us back to the descriptive notion of retribution as explained earlier when discussing Mill’s views on blame and punishment. On this line of thought, moral reciprocity involves the idea of just deserts and it forms a reciprocal exchange based on the natural sentiments of sympathy and retaliation (i.e., good should be exchanged with good and bad with bad). According to Mackie (1982) these natural sentiments have societal counterparts in the form of prescriptive rules (i.e., that one *should* return good for good done and evil with evil done).

This idea of blame as retribution is compatible with existing models of the ways people ascribe blame. These models typically involve the study of intentional action (Lagnado & Channon 2008), causality and consequences (Cushman 2008; Cushman et.al 2012). For example, Alicke’s (2000) Culpable Control Model suggests that the primary factor in blame attributions is personal control. Personal control is comprised of three elements; Firstly, a mental element (accounting for intentions to perform a morally inappropriate act, and that the act was freely chosen rather than coerced), secondly a behavioural element (acting upon the intentions), and thirdly a consequential element (what was the outcome of the act). Alicke (ibid) had argued that judgments of blameworthiness are influenced by spontaneous evaluations of the mental, behavioural and consequence elements. Any explanations for blaming are based on post hoc justifications of spontaneous and unconscious decisions. Spontaneous decisions are also based upon several other external characteristics, such as assumptions about a perpetrator’s character, race, social status etc. Alicke had argued that spontaneous evaluations can also evoke biased judgments.

For example, in a relevant experiment Alicke et al (1994) divided participants into two groups who read two different versions of a vignette. In the positive outcome version, a home owner shot somebody who was presumed to be an intruder. The intruder was described as a violent criminal who was responsible for many burglaries in the neighbourhood. In the negative outcome condition, the other group of participants read that the person who was assumed to be an intruder was the boyfriend of the homeowner’s daughter. Participants were then asked to identify the importance of several casual factors that may have affected the home owner’s
actions. For instance, they were asked to rate the causal importance of the fact that the home owner had two beers before the shooting took place. The results showed that in the negative outcome version participants attributed more causal importance to the beer, compared to the positive outcome scenario. It is evident that in the positive outcome scenario participants had justified the homeowner’s action despite the fact that he had personal control over his action (since in this scenario they judged the consumption of beer did not play an important role) and since their spontaneous decision was based on the evaluation of the victim’s character. On the other hand, when the spontaneous evaluation of character was not negative, as in the negative outcome scenario, participants chose to attribute the homeowner’s act on alcohol consumption rather than personal control. The experimenters had argued that participant’s judgments are based on spontaneous evaluations, and their ascriptions of personal control reflect post hoc justifications of these evaluations. Other experiments have also assessed the relationship between character evaluations and blame ascriptions.

For example, in an experiment (Cushman et al 2012), participants were presented with two scenarios. In the first (harm condition), a financial manager invests in bonds that would be profitable if an earthquake happens in a third world country in the next two years. In the second version of the scenario the manager invested in bonds that would be profitable if an earthquake did not strike a third world country in the next two years. Participants were then asked for an evaluation of the manager’s moral character (do you think that he is a morally good/bad person? From 1 mainly a bad person to 9 mainly a good person), and deserved moral blame (how much blame does he deserve for his action? From 1=no blame to 9=very much). As expected, subjects judged the manager to have a bad character, and deserving more blame in the harm rather than the no harm condition. Moreover, the results showed that judgements about character and blameworthiness correlated. The experimenters concluded that judgments of blameworthiness may depend sometimes only on evaluating an agent’s character. It is clear in this example, that the predicted outcome alone rather than the intentions of the agent, or the fact that the outcome was beyond the agent’s control, led the participants to judge character and blameworthiness. This is because according to the experimenters the predicted negative outcome was linked to the agent’s wicked desires. Indeed, perhaps subjects imagined that the manager wished that an earthquake does occur, so that he can gain profit, and this made them to think that he is a bad character and hence blameworthy. This experiment follows up on the famous ‘Knobe effect’ which states that people tend to think that a bad side effect is brought about intentionally whereas a god side effect unintentionally.
The above studies are worthy in their own merit because they provide us with an in-depth insight into the underlying mechanisms of blame ascriptions in terms of assessing consequences, intentions and causal events. Here, we are more interested in cases where we can be certain that blameworthiness is taken as given. Moreover, these studies are not against the notion of blame and punishment as retribution therefore they should not be perceived as competing explanations, but rather have a different scope.

To recapitulate, we have examined ideas that link moral reciprocity to both utilitarian and retributivist concerns behind punishment. This leads us to consider the first and second central research questions of this thesis: To what extent are retributive considerations the main motivation behind lay attributions of blame and punishment? And to what extent are utilitarian/future-oriented considerations the main motivation behind lay attributions of blame and punishment? In other words, do people blame and punish in order to maintain social cooperation (be it due to the evolution of reciprocity, or out of self-interest), or because they want the party to which punishment applies to receive what they deserve?

2.5. Empirical Studies in the Psychology of Punishment

We shall now examine other experiments and theories from psychology but outside the context of evolutionary psychology. These investigate whether people think more in terms of retribution or deterrence (a utilitarian/consequentialist motive for punishment) when having to make decisions about punishment.

Empirical studies in psychology that investigated what motivates lay people to punish offenders have produced conflicting results. Some researchers have found evidence that people are retributivists when it comes to punishment, and that their decisions are based upon the seriousness of the crime (Carlsmith 2006; Carlsmith, Darley & Robinson 2002; Darley, Carlsmith & Robinson 2000; Hogarth 1971; Mc Fatter 1978, 1982,). On the other hand, other studies have found evidence that people may have a deterrence mind set, and be sensitive to general societal threat imposed by crime (Tyler et al. 1997; Vidmar & Miller 1980; Orth 2003; Rucker et al. 2004).

2.5.1. Studies Supporting Retributive Considerations

We shall now discuss some empirical studies which indicate that lay people think in ways consistent with retributive reasoning when asked to ascribe punishment to perpetrators. In one such study Darley, Carlsmith & Robinson (2000) contrasted incapacitation (i.e., a utilitarian strategy) and retribution, as the main motivation behind people wanting to punish criminals.
The researchers assumed that retributivist punishment is evident when participants punish according to the severity of the crime, and that incapacitation as a motivation behind punishment would be evident when people punish according to information relevant to recidivism (i.e., chances that the offender will repeat the crime in the future). In a classic 2x2 design participants were presented with ten scenarios that described various crimes from minor (e.g., stealing CDs from a store) to severe (e.g., political assassination); thus, severity of crime was the first factor. The other factor in this design was incapacitation information (e.g., the likelihood of the offender committing future offences). Here the offender was described as either having no history of prior convictions or as having committed crimes in the past. The dependent variable was recommended length of sentencing. Results showed that only the severity of crime had a significant effect on decisions regarding length of sentencing while incapacitation information did not have an effect at all, with people ignoring the likelihood of future offence in informing their sentencing decisions. The experimenters concluded that retribution information was a far more important determinant of punitive attributions than incapacitation information, and that giving criminals their ‘just deserts’ in proportion to severity of crime was the only factor relevant to why people want to punish.

In another study that corroborates the above findings, —Carlsmith (2006) investigated the effect of retribution and deterrence/prevention information in lay attributions of punishment. In a series of experiments, he found that people found retribution information more influential and useful in making decisions about punishment. In more detail, participants were presented with various crime scenarios, and had to view nine cards pertaining to these, with information related to retribution (magnitude of harm/intent/extenuating circumstances), deterrence (frequency of crime/detection rate/publicity), and incapacitation (likelihood of violence/prior record/self-control). The last two relate to deterrence. Participants were asked to imagine that they would have to punish a convicted criminal, and then had to rate each of these nine patterns of information on a relevance scale from one to five, with one being the least and five the most relevant information in deciding punishment. The results showed that subjects chose retributive considerations as much more relevant in deciding punishment, than considerations relating to prevention/deterrence.

Similarly, Sunstein et al. (2000) provided people with information on deterrence while asking them to assign punishment in cases of wrong-doing. They found that increasing or decreasing detection rates for crimes did not matter at all to peoples’ punitive judgements.
2.5.2. Studies Supporting Utilitarian Considerations

While the above studies provide evidence for the importance of retributive thinking for making decisions about punitive action, it also seems that people may prefer general deterrence as the goal of punishment. However, this occurs when they take into account considerations that involve crime in general, rather than assessing a specific crime. In an experiment that corroborates this, Carlsmith et al. (2002) asked participants to take part in a resource allocation task. For this experiment, participants were asked to allocate city resources for either the capture of criminals that committed certain crimes (i.e., a retributive choice), or for the general deterrence and prevention of crime (i.e., a utilitarian choice). The majority of participants opted to allocate resources for preventing crime in general, rather than catching specific criminals that committed this type of crime. The experimenters argued these results demonstrate that people may endorse utilitarian concerns as a general aim of punishment when they think about the general purpose of punishment.

Other psychologists have found evidence for the importance of deterrence, and hence utilitarian concerns as the main motivation behind lay punitive motivations. Miller and Vidmar (1981) and Hogan & Emler (1981) argued that people punish both because they want to punish the violation of rules that glue society together and maintain general cohesiveness, and to set an example for others in order to achieve general deterrence rather than personal deterrence. For example, Tyler & Boeckmann (1996) examined whether people want to punish because of instrumental/self-interest reasons (e.g., because of fear that a crime may happen to them) or to maintain social cohesion, and found the latter to be more important. Moreover, Vidmar (1974) found that 63 per cent of his participants supported the death penalty as a means of setting an example and achieving deterrence, and only 37 per cent supported it due to deservingness. By the same token, Ellsworth & Gross (1994) showed that people may support the death penalty on the macro level, but are unwilling to support it when they are asked to do so for individual cases. As was discussed in sections 2.2 and 2.3 deservingness relates to a perpetrator receiving their just deserts in proportion to the magnitude of harm that he/she caused. Therefore, the above study illustrates that when people do not consider the punishment of specific crimes but focus on more abstract notions (such as the use of the death penalty); they are more motivated by utilitarian considerations in their decisions.

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6 This relates to our earlier discussion of moral reciprocity (section 2.4). There we noticed that there is a debate among philosophers and psychologists on whether reciprocal altruism (and the punitive motivations which stem from this concept) occurs due to self-interest or a genuine concern about fairness and maintaining cooperation.
2.5.3. Studies Supporting Mixed Considerations

Other studies also support the importance of utilitarian elements in lay decisions about punishment, but also show that retributive elements are involved too, and can be linked to maintaining social order and general deterrence strategies (e.g., Oswald et.al 2002; Rucker et.al 2004). For example, Rucker et al. (2004) showed that when people feel that the social order is threatened, they behave more punitively thus providing evidence for the importance of utilitarian considerations in making decisions about punishment. They demonstrated this effect by asking participants to assess crime vignettes with varied crime severity (atm theft/carjacking) as the first independent variable and threat to social order as the second. In the high threat to social order condition, participants were told that the conviction rate of criminals for this crime is 8%, while in the low threat to social order condition they were told it is 92%. Punitiveness was measured by aggregating the scores on single Likert type items (for example suggested time in prison). Results showed that both severity and perceived threat to social order had independent effects on punitiveness. People punished the perpetrators more when the crimes had been more severe, and they were also more punitive when the perceived social threat was higher. Therefore, people took into consideration both retributive (severity), and utilitarian factors (perceived social threat) when making decisions about punishment.

Vidmar & Miller (1981), argue that people may be motivated to exact punishment mainly due to two different concerns: a future orientated one (to deter the offence from being repeated), and a past orientated one (to redress the balance for something that was committed in the past). Punitive acts often involve both of these concerns simultaneously. The first concern is a more considered purpose of punishment, and pertains to punishment’s practical purposes, such as to control behaviour and prevent others from violating rules and norms. The second concern pertains to psychological processes relevant to the notion of retaliation and the perpetrator getting what they deserve. This view holds that retributive and utilitarian considerations are equally important in making decisions about punishment, and that people employ both simultaneously.

However, other researchers allow that people understand punishment in retributive terms, but argue that they are motivated in doing so by a utilitarian consideration, which is to uphold social norms. On this line of thought, Tyler et al. (1997) suggested that people are punitive or endorse punishment in order to maintain social rules and norms. Retribution does exactly that: it supports norms for social harmony. In other words, people believe it is important to react to rule breaking through vengeance or retribution but this is because doing so will produce good consequences. This descriptive view may have a normative equivalent in rule utilitarianism.
which was discussed at the beginning of the literature review. As discussed earlier, rule utilitarians (e.g., Brandt 1959, Rawls 1955) suggested that the rules that we ought to follow are those that were they adopted, would increase overall welfare. The view of Tyler et.al (1997) can be also consistent with some empirical evidence found in the study by Rucker et.al mentioned earlier.

In a subsequent experiment, Rucker et.al (2004) added a second dependent variable to their design. The design was similar to the first experiment but this time they also introduced motives for punishment as a new dependent variable; participants were therefore asked whether their decisions were based upon factors that the experimenters considered to be related to retribution (i.e. to what extent their punishment is grounded upon the desire to make the perpetrator pay for what they did to others-measured as ratings on a Likert scale), and forms of deterrence (e.g. to what extent is the desire to discourage the carjacker from committing this crime again in the future, or to discourage others by using the perpetrator as an example-measured as ratings on a Likert scale). The findings showed that threat to social order had an effect on motives for punishment. People in the high threat condition were found to opt for retribution as opposed to deterrence compared to people in the low threat condition. Moreover, desires for retribution correlated with punishment attributions (i.e., the more desire for retribution, the more punitive was the participant), when perceived threat to social order was controlled for. Finally, there was no effect of social threat on punitive attributions when retributive motives were controlled for. The experimenters concluded that retributive motives have a mediating role between perceived social threat and punitive attributions. This conclusion can be viewed in line with Tyler’s et.al (1997) assertions: a high level of social threat resulted in opting for retributive motives because this can produce good consequences (i.e., reduce the level of threat).

To recapitulate, we have examined some studies that support retribution as the main motivation behind punishment (e.g., Darley et al. 2002; Carlsmith 2006; Sunstein 2000), and others that support general deterrence and the maintenance of social rules and norms (e.g., Tyler & Boeckmann 1996). We have also examined some mixed views which suggest that retribution is important for punitive attributions, but it is ultimately employed under utilitarian premises. Moreover, we have seen that the use of retributive or utilitarian considerations can depend on whether people are asked to assess specific crimes, or address more abstract issues such as the use of the death penalty (Vidmar 1974; Ellsworth & Gross 1994). It can be concluded that researchers are divided as to whether lay people think more about social cohesion and general deterrence, or about perpetrators getting their just deserts when deciding
about punishment. Some support the former, others the latter, while many others support a combination of both strategies. The question that follows from this discussion is whether there is some form of primacy of retributive or utilitarian considerations at least when people have to assess punishment and blame for specific crimes. Hence the first and second central research questions of this thesis relate to the extent to which utilitarian or retributive considerations are the main motivation behind lay attributions of blame and punishment.

There are some subsidiary research questions stemming out of these two central research questions. In relation to utilitarianism, this thesis is asking whether the inability of an offender to commit future crimes (i.e., incapacitation), or whether having information about crime rate, can influence decisions about blame and punishment. In other words, does future-oriented information about crime influence attributions of blame and punishment? We have seen that in the Rucker et.al (2004) study, information about crime rate increased the participants’ degree of punitiveness. This thesis will employ a similar design (Experiment Eight), in order to further examine whether this might be the case. Moreover, this thesis asks whether information on a perpetrator’s incapacitation (i.e., knowing that a perpetrator will be unable to repeat an offence in the future), can influence decisions about blame and punishment (Experiment Seven).

In relation to retribution, this thesis is asking whether the severity of a crime, the absence or presence of an act of fateful punishment or an act of revenge, and good versus cruel prison treatment can influence attributions of blame and punishment. Moreover, this thesis is asking whether an act of revenge can be perceived as justifiable. This study does not investigate punitive goals by asking participants to decide whether retributive or utilitarian information is more relevant in making punitive decisions (e.g., Carlsmith 2002), or by directly asking people to state which sentencing goals they may have in mind (e.g., Rucker et.al 2004). Rather, this thesis focuses on the reciprocal nature of retribution as explained in section 2.4.2. In other words, this thesis aims to investigate whether the factors mentioned above might be taken to influence the amount of punishment given by participants. If retribution is about giving perpetrators their just deserts, and therefore aiming to equalize the severity of the crime with the severity of the punishment, then other factors too might play a part in this equalization process.

In the next section, we are going to examine another dimension of retribution specifically: this is the way it relates to revenge and fateful punishment. Throughout the following section, we shall also discuss the claim that retribution aims at equalizing pleasure and pain, through the perpetrator receiving their just deserts, and that ascribing punishment through revenge or
fateful acts may also entail feelings of satisfaction. As mentioned above, revenge and fateful punishment relate to two certain subsidiary research questions of this thesis which pertain to examining the extent to which retributive considerations can be the main motivation behind lay attributions of blame and punishment.

2.6. The Relationship between Retribution, Revenge, and Fateful Punishment

Philosopher Robert Nozick (1981) argued that retribution and revenge differ in several ways. First, retribution may be exacted by a third party such as a judge while revenge is personal. Secondly, retribution is about punishing on account of the violation of rules, while revenge may be exacted purely based upon harm suffered. Thirdly, retribution is proportionate, while revenge may be disproportionate to the offence committed. Fourthly, retribution involves pleasure at ‘justice being done’ while revenge involves pleasure at the suffering of another.

On the other hand, Vidmar (2001) argued that far as psychological analysis goes, retribution and revenge should be treated in a similar manner as they both refer to retaliatory practices: the only thing that differs is that retribution implies the dispensation of punishment by a third party. Moreover, proportionality (i.e., the degree of punishment) may differ both in revenge and in legal proceedings, but the principle of retaliation is the same for both revenge and retribution. In other words, both practices require some form of retaliation for an injury.

Retribution, according to Vidmar, is about restoring balance for the victim by reducing negative emotions and cognitions which were caused by the offender, essentially leading to homeostasis. On the other hand, according to Vidmar, revenge involves the same principle of achieving homeostasis, but it also involves delivering a message to the offender making him/her fully aware of the reasons that punishment is exacted upon him/her.

Indeed, research shows (e.g., Austin 1979) that retribution is about processes of equalisation and restoring balance/achieving homeostasis. For example, Austin investigated proportional punishment in terms of the just deserts principle by utilizing acts of fateful punishment. In a series of three experiments, Austin asked three different groups of participants to assign sentencing (i.e., prison time) for different crimes. The first group read a scenario involving purse snatching, the second robbery, and the third rape. One of his independent variables was

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7 The principle of retaliation here refers to retaliating to harm done by punishing the offender in proportion to the severity of his/her offence. As explained in section 2.1 philosophers developed both normative (e.g. Kant 1991[1797]) and descriptive accounts of this principle (e.g. Mill 1868/2001). Essentially, the principle of retaliation can be used interchangeably with the notion of just deserts since they both refer to retaliating in kind to a perpetration but with the severity of punishment being somehow equal to the severity of the offence.

8 The term homeostasis will also be used this thesis to define the achievement of a sense of proportionality between the severity of a perpetration and the severity of the subsequent punishment, in the sense that a perpetrator did indeed receive what he/she deserved as punishment.
the level of perpetrators suffering through fateful punishment (none, moderate and severe). For example, the perpetrator would suffer minor scratches in the moderate condition but would be left needing to use a wheelchair after an accident following the crime in the severe suffering condition. Results showed that the level of suffering mitigated punitive sentences for all of the experiments. Participants perceived fateful punishment as an amount of punishment given to the perpetrator. Therefore at least some of his ‘debt’ was paid and this resulted in them ascribing a lesser amount of punishment compared to participants that were not presented with any information on fateful punishment. However, only severe suffering and not moderate suffering mitigated punitive attributions for serious crimes (i.e., a rape case in experiment 3). This shows how just deserts are influenced by a sense of proportionality. In other words, the group who were not given information on fateful punishment ascribed punishment in proportion to the severity of the perpetration. On the other hand, the other group ascribed punishment in proportion to the severity and deducted a proportion of punishment that was ‘paid’ by suffering an act of fate. These results may also be consistent with Vidmar’s (2001) earlier claim in which he stated that retribution is about restoring balance, and that people follow an equity principle when deciding about punishment. Following this equity principle is a matter of ascribing the deserved amount of punishment in line with the severity of the crime. Hence, ascribing just deserts is about achieving a sense of equity or homeostasis between a crime and the subsequent amount of punishment. This proportional aspect of punishment seems to be crucial for understanding retributive considerations in lay attributions of blame and punishment. Austin’s study is unique in the literature in terms of investigating the relationship between fateful acts of punishment and lay attributions of punishment, and it has motivated the current thesis in also examining this relationship. In other words, this thesis also examines whether acts of fateful punishment influence attributions of both blame and punishment. This is done primarily in order to investigate retribution’s proportional aspects and secondarily to look for evidence that might corroborate Austin’s study.

Acts of fateful punishment have been also investigated by psychologists in the context of revenge (Gollwitzer & Denzler 2009, Gollwitzer et al. 2010). These psychologists have suggested that revenge is not about restoring balance between the victim and perpetrator, but only about delivering a message to an offender. However, the results obtained in these studies showed that people understand both fateful punishment and revenge as restoring balance, but that revenge is also understood as delivering a message to the offender. In an experiment that may corroborate this claim (which was not the experimenters’ original claim) Gollwitzer et al. (2010) initially argued that fateful punishment can have an effect on punitive attributions only when participants are observers of an offence, as in the Austin (1979) study described earlier;
however, this effect would diminish when participants are victims themselves. The researchers argued that in this case, participants would be more interested in delivering a message to the perpetrator, which is the purpose of revenge. In this experiment, they used an essay evaluation task where all participants had an ostensible partner that would rate their essays, and in turn they would do the same. Participants would win certain sums of money from their partners according to their partner’s evaluation. For example, a participant’s essay rated as very good would be awarded 3 euros, while an essay rated as deficient would be awarded no money. In cases where participants’ essays were marked as deficient by the ostensible partner, they were given the chance to also participate in a subsequent lottery, with the lots chosen affecting only their partner and not them. Four types of lots were used (win, lose, blank, power), and participants were assigned to conditions according to the lots they had picked: if they drew a winning lot their partner would win 2 euros; if they drew a losing lot the partner would lose 2 euros; if they drew a blank lot nothing would occur; and finally, if they drew a power lot, they had the ability to choose whether their partner would lose, win, or that nothing would happen. Participants were assigned to three conditions: those that drew losing lots were all assigned to the ‘fate’ condition. Those that drew power lots comprised the other two conditions according to the way they decided to use the lots. Those that decided to use the power lots for revenge (i.e., to cause their partner to lose 2 euros) comprised the ‘revenge’ condition, and the rest that drew power lots but decided not to use them for this purpose, comprised the ‘no revenge’ condition.

Following this, half of the participants in the ‘fate’ and ‘revenge’ conditions were informed that they could write a message to their partner on a sheet of paper. Subsequently, the experimenters took this sheet of paper, and returned with a message from the ostensible partner saying ‘Too bad for me, but this is the price I have to pay for being so mean to you’. The remaining participants including those in the ‘no revenge’ condition were not given the opportunity to write or receive a message. The dependent variable was satisfaction/deservingness and was measured with three Likert type items: ‘In the end everyone got what they deserved’; ‘I feel satisfied’; ‘everything turned out to be satisfactory for me’. The effect of the independent variable with three conditions (revenge/fate/no revenge) on the dependent variable (satisfaction/deservingness) was examined through analysis of variance, and results showed that participants in the ‘fate’ and ‘revenge’ conditions were more satisfied with the outcome, compared to participants in the ‘no revenge’ condition. However, no differences were noted between the revenge and fate conditions. These results do not confirm the experimenters’ initial hypothesis that when people are victims of an offence, punishment by fate should not play a role in mitigating punitive attributions, or in this case in
increasing satisfaction with a punitive outcome. The experimenters also conducted a subsequent analysis of variance by using a 2 (fate/revenge) x 2 (sent message yes/no), factorial design. They found that there were no main effects of either factor on the central dependent variable (satisfaction/deservingness), but that there was a significant interaction effect such that participants in the ‘revenge’ condition who sent/received a message were more satisfied compared to those that did not send/receive one. On the other hand, in the fate condition satisfaction levels did not differ depending on whether a message was sent or not.

Experimenters concluded that the results also support the view that revenge is understood as restoring balance and achieving homeostasis. However, since satisfaction was higher in the revenge/message group, they argued that the purpose of revenge is more about delivering a message to the perpetrator, and less about balancing the suffering incurred.

We have seen so far that the just deserts/equity principle/restoring balance, and delivering a message to an offender, might both be important aspects of revenge and fateful punishment. Moreover, we have seen that both revenge and fateful punishment are considered as acts that restore a sense of equilibrium between a victim and an offender (when revenge regards personal experiences), and a sense of equilibrium between the severity of a crime and the severity of the subsequent act of punishment. The questions that follow from this understanding of revenge and fateful punishment are whether the presence or absence of an act of revenge, and whether the presence of absence of an act of fateful punishment, can influence attributions of blame and punishment. In other words, will people take into account the presence of an act of revenge or fateful punishment in making decisions about the deserved amount of blame and punishment following a perpetration? And is this due to retributive thinking? These two research questions are subsidiary questions stemming from the first central research question and are addressed by experiments Four, Five, and Six. The experiments that were discussed earlier indicate that revenge and fateful punishment can be understood in terms of achieving equity between a victim and a perpetrator, and equity between the severity of a crime and the severity of the subsequent punishment.

Apart from investigating the above research questions, the current thesis also asks whether an act of revenge can be perceived as justifiable. If an act of revenge is found to be justifiable then we can argue that both revenge and retribution are similar in aiming to achieve a state of homeostasis between crime and punishment as Vidmar (2001) had suggested. In other words, if an act of revenge is found by participants to be justifiable, then it follows that it is found to be ‘just’ or ‘fair’. Thus, revenge can be viewed as an act of retributive justice. It is essential to note that from our discussion so far, retribution is understood as a punitive practice which aims
to restore a sense of equilibrium/equity/homeostasis between a victim and an offender, and between the magnitude of a crime, and the magnitude of its subsequent punishment.

Other accounts, however, stress the importance of not only the equity principle but also utilitarian concerns in understanding revenge. According to Heider (1958) retribution and revenge are not only about getting even. Moreover, they are not exclusively emotionally governed, but also have a cognitive aspect. The causing of suffering on this account is not an end in itself but rather a means of changing the recipient’s belief system. Hence, people use expressions such as ‘I will teach him/her a lesson’ or ‘She has to learn that she cannot do that again’. The purpose here is not merely to deliver a message to the offender, or to bring moral balance between offender and victim, but to change his/her belief system with the aim being to uphold societal norms and values.

It seems that Heider is suggesting a process of equalisation when it comes to retribution or revenge, but maintains that this occurs for maintaining rule cohesion within a given community. Other theorists in previous sections have offered similar explanations for retribution as a process of dispensed just deserts with the purpose of maintaining moral norms (Tyler et al. 1997). The most important of these moral norms is the norm of reciprocity which was discussed in a previous section of this chapter.

2.7. The Relationship between Punishment and Repentance

We are now going to discuss the way in which an expression of repentance on the part of the perpetrator might influence attributions of punishment and blame. Investigating the role of repentance is a subsidiary research question concerning the influence of utilitarian considerations in attributions of blame and punishment. This is because repentance provides some reassurance that a perpetrator is not intending to reoffend at a future time. Proeve and Tudor (2016) have sought to combine the wide range of research concerning repentance into a more precise and well-developed characterization of the concept, and have summarized their discussion to create the following formulation: ‘Repentance may be defined as a distressing emotion that arises from acceptance of personal responsibility for an act of harm against another person. Often, with further reflection, the remorseful individual may desire that the act had never occurred at all and wish to make restitution toward the victim (Proeve & Tudor 2016: 7).

As mentioned above, repentance can be understood in utilitarian terms, but it can also be understood in retributive terms. The philosopher Jeffrey Murphy (2012) argued that punishment and blame are usually justified upon retributive grounds; that is, based on what the
perpetrators or wrongdoers deserve for their misdeeds. Overcoming reactive attitudes and emotions such as blame/resentment and anger—which Murphy labels vindictive passions—can only be achieved through forgiveness. In turn, the fundamental precondition for forgiveness is for the perpetrator to show signs of repentance.

Now, according to Murphy, the way that repentance works in order to assuage reactive emotions is by attempting to re-establish moral equality between the injured party and the transgressor. In other words, repentance involves the perpetrator joining the injured party in repudiating his/her actions, thereby allowing the injured party to relate to him/her—or as Murphy puts it his/her ‘new self’—as an equal. Murphy defines repentance as ‘the remorseful acceptance for one’s wrongful and harmful actions, the repudiation of the aspects of one’s character that generated the action, the resolve to do one’s best to extirpate those aspects of one’s character, and the resolve to atone or make amends for the harm one has done’ (Murphy 2012:130).

Murphy notes that the absence of repentance further aggravates our reactive emotions, and leads us to judge the perpetrator’s character as malignant in nature. Murphy also cited many hearings from American court cases in which punishment was exacerbated due to the perpetrator’s lack of repentance. Murphy argues that the repentant criminal deserves less punishment than the unrepentant. But does repentance influence attributions of blame and punishment? Some studies show that this may be the case.

Felson and Ribner (1981) investigated how offenders attributed responsibility for their crimes in cases of manslaughter and murder. These attributions included many excuses, such as being under the influence of alcohol or drugs, anger, and self-defence. However, a proportion of perpetrators (17%) fully denied their responsibility. Results showed that offenders that denied their responsibility received four to five more years in prison compared to the ones that had admitted their guilt. Denial of guilt was perceived by the authors as implying a lack of repentance, and this according to them, was what led to more punitive responses by judges and juries.

In a similar study, Romanowski (1988) examined the sentencing of 159 non-violent offences in relation to the repentance shown by the offenders. Contrition was measured after the offenders were convicted, and while they were awaiting sentencing. Contrition was measured with a scale that the experimenter developed and it comprised items that assessed for example, sympathy for the victim, sincerity, humility and acceptance of responsibility. Results showed that the greater the contrition shown by offenders, the smaller sentence they received.
In another study, Schwartz et al. (1978) examined similar questions and found that expressions of repentance may reduce punitiveness, as well as attributions of intentionality, and perceived aggression. In this study, participants were presented with a vignette of two boys tying up a little girl for fun; in a 2x2 design, the experimenters examined the effect of two independent variables—namely the severity of harm done to the girl (slight /high), and the expression of pleasure while doing the act, or of repentance afterwards. They found that both factors had significant effects on the dependent variables (perceived aggression/intentionality/punitiveness), and that repentance reduced all attributions. Similar results were obtained when participants in another study had to attribute punishment to a rapist. Again, repentance significantly reduced these attributions (Kleinke et al. 1992). Other studies found similar effects for apology and retaliatory aggression and demonstrated that when a harm-doer apologises rather than not, the victim’s level of aggression is reduced (Ohbuchi et al. 1989).

In another study, Maclin et al. (2009) demonstrated that participants who acted as a ‘mock jury’ were more likely to give a ‘manslaughter’ rather than a ‘second degree’ murder verdict, when they were presented with a photo of the perpetrator’s face that looked ‘remorseful’, in comparison to looking ‘angry’. Also, Rumsey (1976) showed that people recommended shorter sentences for a perpetrator whose negligent drunk-driving resulted in homicide, when he appeared remorseful rather than when he did not. However, another study related to drunk driving did not find similar effects. In particular, Taylor & Kleinke(1992) found no effects of repentance in attributions of punishment. In their experiment, participants read scenarios about a drunk driver. Factors included severity of crime (death/monetary damage), history of drunk driving, repentance (expressed repentance or not), and intent (denied or not whether he was drunk before driving). Then participants’ responses were assessed in terms of ascribing responsibility, character traits, blame and punishment to the perpetrator. The only factor that had an effect on punishment was severity of crime. Some of the studies above illustrate the importance of repentance in making decisions about punishment, while others do not. This thesis will further investigate the role of repentance in Experiment Nine. Experiment Nine investigates whether repentance influences attributions of blame and punishment. There, we shall also discuss whether an effect of repentance can be explained by retributive or utilitarian considerations.

2.8. The Relationship between Blame and Punishment

So far in this chapter we have been using the notions of blame and punishment as taken to mean the same thing. In other words, blame has been understood as a form of punishment.
However, there is some disagreement among philosophers on whether this is the case. A peripheral research question that this thesis addresses is whether blame is a punitive emotion. This will be done by examining the behaviour of blame and punishment in the experimental chapters of this thesis. In section 2.3, we have discussed Mill’s ideas on the relationship between blame and punishment. According to Mill, blame is a form of sanction expressed through our negative opinions about an act that we perceive to be immoral. However, other philosophers do not view blame in the same light.

According to Wallace (1994) and Scanlon (2008) people blame because it is an appropriate behavioural response that follows the violation of moral rules and expectations. To hold someone morally responsible is at the same time to hold him/her susceptible to the reactive emotions of blame or resentment. Therefore, if someone violates our moral expectations it is only appropriate that we express blame since the violation of moral expectations/obligations triggers reactive emotions. Moreover, there is another account that also takes the reasons for blaming to lie with violating moral expectations. This view has been put forward by George Sher (2005). Sher asserts that the act of blaming bears striking similarities with having an unsatisfied desire. According to Sher, when we are blaming, we are exhibiting anger, hostile behaviour, and reproach. By the same token, an unsatisfied desire is characterised by the disposition to feel angry that we are not getting what we want and the need to express that disposition through hostile behaviour and reproach. (Sher gives an example of a child that is angry with and does not talk to her parents for not taking her to the playground.) Sher suggests that blame behaves in a similar manner to a frustrated desire, because we desire that a person should behave according to the dictates of moral rules and expectations. Consequently, blame is the result of a frustrated desire.

On the other hand, Hieronymi (2004) argues that it is wrong to perceive blame as the assessment of someone’s behaviour against a moral standard. According to her, to blame someone is not to think that he/she failed to achieve a certain moral expectation, but to communicate that he/she showed disregard to another person. By the same token, we feel gratitude not because a person performed a nice human action, but because he/she chose to benefit us in particular. Hieronymi does not discuss cases that fall outside the sphere of our personal relations. However, I take it that she would suggest that in such cases people assess the disregard that the perpetrator showed to the victim.

We have seen above that, different theorists take the reasons behind blaming to lie with appropriateness (violation of moral rules), frustrated desire, and disregard. If this is the case then blame and punishment may behave significantly differently. Therefore, when lay people
are asked to make decisions about blame and punishment, they may perceive these two concepts to be different, and in turn this may influence the way in which they attribute blame and punishment. Similarities and differences in the behaviour of blame in relation to punishment will be discussed by referring to the relevant philosophical debate. This thesis is not aiming to fully investigate the relationship between these notions, but only to use experimental results in order to provide some preliminary findings and ideas relating to the specific philosophical debate. Hence, this is a peripheral aim of the thesis, and not a central one (see Diagram 1).

Throughout Chapter Two, we have examined key topics that relate to the first and second central research questions of this thesis. We have discussed ideas from both philosophy and psychology, which relate to whether people are motivated by utilitarian or retributive concerns when making decisions about blame and punishment.

In the next chapter, we shall examine the relationship between punishment and feelings of malicious satisfaction and feelings of ressentiment. As we shall see, other philosophers, especially Nietzsche, treat the process of punishment not as a process of equalisation, or retribution, but retributive considerations are a pretext to experience feelings of malicious satisfaction which can be further exacerbated by feelings of ressentiment. According to Nietzsche, these are the most important corollaries in the study of punishment.
Chapter Three-Punishment, Malicious Satisfaction and Ressentiment

3.1. Nietzsche, Punishment, and Malicious Satisfaction

We shall begin this chapter by exploring Nietzsche’s (1887) views about the complex relationship between punishment and cruelty which leads to feelings of malicious satisfaction. Following that we shall draw some links between Nietzsche’s claims and psychoanalysis. This will be useful since many of Nietzsche’s claims about cruelty have links with the concept of sadism. Following this, we will examine some experiments in psychology which investigate whether cruelty is a human proclivity. This chapter addresses the third and fourth central research questions of this thesis. These relate to the extent that lay attributions of blame and punishment are motivated by malicious satisfaction and ressentiment.

In order to fully understand Nietzsche’s complex account of punishment, it is required that we first understand this philosopher’s conception of lay morality. Regarding the origin of conscience, Nietzsche asserts that conscience originates in the ability of human beings to set their own standards of value, and for Nietzsche the most important standard of value that human beings cherish is to keep promises and to be reliable in this respect. In his own words:

This is simply the long history of the origin of responsibility. That task of breeding an animal which can make promises includes, as we have already grasped, as its condition and preliminary, the more immediate task of first making man to a certain extent, necessitated, uniform, like among his like. The ‘free man’, the owner of a long unbreakable will, finds in this possession his standard of value: looking out from himself among upon the others, he honours or he despises...The proud knowledge of the extraordinary privilege of responsibility, the consciousness of this rare freedom, of this power over himself and over fate, has sunk down the innermost depths, and has become an instinct. The sovereign man calls it his conscience. (Nietzsche, 1887[2003]: 36)

How does the above notion of responsibility relate to the development of the concept of punishment? Nietzsche tells us the assessment of responsibility or of extenuating circumstances when deciding upon someone’s punishment were late addenda during humanity’s history:

Throughout the longest period of human history, punishment was never based on the responsibility of the evil doer for his action and was consequently not based on the
hypothesis that only the guilty should be punished; on the contrary, punishment was inflicted in those days for the same reason that parents punish their children even nowadays, out of anger at an injury, and anger which vents itself mechanically on the author of the injury—but this anger is kept in bounds and modified through the idea that every injury has somehow its equivalent price, and can be really paid off, even though it be by pain to the author. Whence is it that this ancient deep rooted and perhaps ineradicable idea has drawn its strength, this idea of equivalency between injury and pain? I have already revealed its origin, in the contractual relationship between creditor and owner, which is as old as the existence of legal rights, and in its turn points back to the primary forms of purchase, sale, barter, and trade (Nietzsche, 1887[2003]: 39).

3.1.2. Nietzsche, Power and the Infliction of Suffering as Satisfaction

At the same time, Nietzsche asserted that punishment’s main psychological corollary is power. Power is deeply entwined with the concept and practice of punishment. According to Nietzsche, this is evinced in the relationship between creditor and debtor, since the creditor is given the opportunity to inflict pain on the body of the debtor, and this gives the creditor the opportunity to feel a sentiment of malicious satisfaction and enjoyment. Specifically, Nietzsche gives examples of ancient Egyptian and Roman laws, according to which creditors were able to physically punish debtors for not paying their debts by cutting off certain parts of their bodies (Nietzsche, 1887[2003]: 5). This sentiment of satisfaction in inflicting pain which uses punishment as its vehicle, or as an excuse, manifests in the enjoyment of another’s suffering and torture. ‘Let us make this process of equalisation clear; Instead of an advantage directly compensatory for his injury, the creditor is granted by way of repayment and compensation a certain sensation of satisfaction—the satisfaction of being able to vent, without any trouble, his power on one who is powerless’ (Nietzsche, 1887[2003]: 40).

This sensation of satisfaction that Nietzsche describes might lead us to think of the notion of sadism. And indeed, Nietzsche himself wondered how the infliction of punishment suffering can be a satisfaction at all: ‘to ask it again: to what extent can suffering balance debts or guilt? To the extent that to make suffer was in the highest degree pleasurable, to the extent that the injured party exchanged for the loss he had sustained, including the displeasure caused by the loss, an extraordinary counterbalancing pleasure: that of making suffer—a genuine festival’ (Nietzsche, 1887[2003]: 65).

But why would we feel malicious satisfaction? Is it not enough to feel satisfaction at justice being done, rather than malicious satisfaction? And to repeat Nietzsche’s question, how can the infliction of suffering be a satisfaction at all? We have already seen in section 2.6 that both
Retribution and revenge aim to achieve a sense of homeostasis/equity between the severity of a perpetration and the severity of the subsequent punishment. However, according to Nietzsche, processes of retribution or revenge are accompanied by a sensation of satisfaction at the suffering of the perpetrator. This leads us to the third central research question of this thesis which relates to the extent to which attributions of blame and punishment are motivated by malicious satisfaction.

3.1.3. Nietzsche and the Origins of Malicious Satisfaction in Punishment

Nietzsche tells us that the reason why people experience feelings of malicious satisfaction when they are given the chance to punish is to be found in our relationship with cruelty. Cruelty, he argues, constituted the great joy and delight of ancient man. Essentially, the ‘owing’ in punishment is paid by suffering, and this infliction of suffering is a ‘real feast’ to use Nietzsche’s own term. Moreover, Nietzsche argued that while cruelty was explicitly enjoyed for thousands of years, cruel practices were beginning to be proscribed in Europe during his time, meaning that the craving for cruelty was becoming more subtle and had been transferred to the realm of imagination (Nietzsche, 1887[2003]: 68).

Nietzsche was also very sceptical of the claim that retribution or deterrence are the final ends or motivations behind punishment and was indeed very critical of utilitarian philosophers. Retribution and deterrence have been explained in previous chapters as descriptive theories of the motivation behind punishment, as well as normative philosophical theories of how we should exercise punishment. With regards to their descriptive versions, Nietzsche is adamant that they do not provide us with deep insight into the lay psychology of punishment:

A word more on punishment: Our moral genealogists found out some ‘end’ in punishment; for instance, revenge or deterrence, and then in all innocence set this end as the beginning, as the causa fiendi of punishment—and they have done the trick. The origin of the existence of a thing and its final utility, its practical application and incorporation in a system of ends, are opposed to each other. The most perfect comprehension of the utility of a thing, like a physiological organ, or a legal institution, or a custom, does not for a minute explain its origin (Nietzsche, 1887[2003]: 40).

Then Nietzsche introduces the concept of the will to power as the fundamental drive that constitutes human nature, and of which cruelty is a part: ‘Life itself has been defined by internal adaptations to external circumstances. This definition fails to realise the real essence of life, its will to power. It fails to appreciate the paramount superiority enjoyed by the forces
of spontaneity, aggression, and encroachment, to the operation of which adaptation is only a
natural corollary’ (Nietzsche, 1887[2003]: 52).

We can extrapolate from Nietzsche’s assertions so far that the will to power as a fundamental
drive is characterised by the need to experience a sentiment of superiority, to vent spontaneous
aggression, and to dominate over others. Nietzsche did not provide us with a clear causal
sequence, however. For example, is aggression the result of a natural instinct of wanting to
feel powerful? Or is it an instinct in its own right? We will not delve into a speculative
analysis here, but what is useful to remember is that, according to Nietzsche, the will to power
is characterised by cruel/aggressive tendencies, and the need to feel superior. Punishment
offers a way for these tendencies to be vented and experienced as malicious satisfaction. Now
if cruel tendencies are part of the human condition as Nietzsche suggests, then it might be
argued that cruel forms of punishment might increase feelings of malicious satisfaction. This is
a subsidiary research question stemming from the third central research question explained
earlier in the previous section, and is addressed by the Experiments One and Two.

3.2. Ree, Revenge and Satisfaction in the Suffering of Another

As we saw in section 2.6 there is some disagreement over whether retribution and revenge
correspond to the same principles. Nozick (1986) has suggested that the two notions have
significant differences, while Vidmar (2001) has suggested that, at least for psychological
analysis, they should be treated as the same. Moreover, in relation to malicious satisfaction,
Nietzsche did not distinguish between retribution and revenge but the philosopher Paul Ree
(1877/2003) argued that malicious satisfaction can only be experienced in cases of personal
revenge and not in cases of retribution. Ree argued that revenge satisfaction is the most
significant aspect of revenge. He argues not only that there is some sort of satisfaction in
revenge, but also that this is malicious satisfaction. Ree distinguishes between two types of
malicious pleasure—one related to ascertaining our fortunate position, and the other related to
feelings of superiority. In the first case, he gives the example of someone who observes a boat
shipwrecked on the sea and feels satisfied at his own safety. Here we can think of other
examples too, such as when someone stumbles and falls in full view of others, and some of us
are satisfied that we were not in his/her position. In the second case, Ree gives the example of
a rider falling off his/her horse during a competition. This may cause another rider to feel
superior and confident of his/her skills, while at the same time the fallen rider contemplates
his/her inferiority. In our stumbling pedestrian example, this aspect of malicious pleasure may
be evinced if we also start to laugh at the poor pedestrian. Another example of this is when
people pick on others with disabilities of any kind, or even when people win debates in
conversations. We can often notice the excitement aroused around debates on public television, both in the audience and the participants, and indeed we can observe that sometimes debates lose their point. Rather, participants come up with pompous expressions and clever rhetoric to defeat their adversaries and win the praise of the audience. When this occurs, the audience is usually ecstatic in witnessing a fierce competition full of clever and subtle derogatory remarks, and completely forgets the importance of the debate. The point here is that the interlocutors as well as the audience focus on power relations and the satisfaction these bring along, rather than the topic of the conversation as such. Revenge, argues Ree, is wholly concerned with feelings of malicious pleasure.

However, no matter how appealing the above thought may be, Ree says that there is no resemblance between revenge and the feeling of justice/retribution:

The feeling of justice must not be confused with the desire for vengeance. In virtue of this feeling, we demand that the person who has acted badly should undergo suffering as retribution whether his wickedness has been directed against us or against others: It is right that punishment should fall on him. In contrast, we revenge ourselves only on those who have harmed us, or those close to us and what drives us is not the feeling of justice but as we have said, the desire to make our strength and superiority felt. (Ree, 2003 [1877], 145)

There are no studies in the psychological literature which specifically investigate Ree’s proposition but we can offer some thoughts based on some studies on revenge. Gollwitzer’s et.al (2010) study (see section 2.6) showed that it does not matter whether revenge is exacted by the victim or a third party (i.e., fateful punishment) for participants to be satisfied by the punitive outcome. However, participants in this study were even more satisfied when revenge was exacted by the victim. It is hard to define whether this is because of the difference in satisfaction in ‘justice being done’ (i.e., retribution) or malicious satisfaction (i.e., in the case of revenge being exacted by the victim). The experimenters in this study did not define the latter though malicious satisfaction but rather stressed the importance of the victim delivering a message to the perpetrator. Moreover, Gollwitzer (2007) investigated the goals of revenge through a questionnaire study and found that making the offender suffer was judged as relatively unimportant compared to other goals such as preventing future harm or inducing guilt. On the other hand, it can be argued that the questions in this study were straightforward and participants (due to social desirability bias) would not openly admit that they are aiming to make the offender suffer. As we saw earlier Nietzsche argued that malicious satisfaction is experienced at the subconscious level and it is something that one would hesitate to openly
admit. Nevertheless, there are no studies in the third-party literature which have specifically investigated Ree’s claim and more research is needed towards this direction. At the same time while Ree distinguishes between revenge and retribution other philosophers do not. Robert Solomon (1999) argued that we can find parallels between revenge and retribution even in the context of legal proceedings. For example, according to Solomon one of the goals of legal punishment is to ‘fit the crime’ and this he argues is a goal closer to vengeance because it involves considering the amount of suffering that a perpetrator deserves in proportion to the gravity of his/her offence.

While Ree is concerned with the interplay between power and revenge, perhaps it can also be theorised those similar workings are at play even outside the personal context of revenge. For example, people may feel malicious satisfaction when they hear of a criminal receiving punishment, not because he/she threatened their own power directly, but because he/she assumed a superior position to society as a whole, of which the observer is a member. Nevertheless, the current thesis addresses the third central research question, not for cases of personal revenge, but for cases relating to making attributions of blame and punishment for crimes which are outside the sphere of our personal experiences. The results of this thesis can be helpful in informing this philosophical debate between Ree and Nietzsche on whether malicious satisfaction can be experienced only in cases of personal revenge, or also in cases when one has to attribute punishment to crime scenarios.

3.3. Nietzsche, Punishment, and Ressentiment

Nietzsche also introduced the concept of ‘ressentiment’ (a combination of spite, malice, and envy) in order to explain some social consequences of the will to power. He argued that Christianity –had brought about a transfiguration of moral values, by stamping aristocratic values as ‘bad’ and plebeian values as ‘good’.

As discussed earlier, Nietzsche argues that throughout human history and until the rise of Christianity, the idea of good was encapsulated in aristocracy and nobleness. The aristocratic classes embodied the Greek virtues (arêtes) of excellence, courage, prudence and the like. On the other hand, the commoners belonging to lower classes, or being slaves, embodied anything that was ‘bad’, such as being pitiful, vulgar, faint-hearted, wretched, and the like (Nietzsche, 1887[2003]: 23).

As we can see from this, cruelty and aggression form a positive nexus of aristocratic moral values. In describing ressentiment Nietzsche argued that the slaves, feeling oppressed by and resentful of their masters, developed a special type of hatred that he named ressentiment.
Christianity offered the vehicle upon which all slaves\(^9\) could finally channel their hatred and envy accumulated from centuries of oppression towards their masters. Christianity therefore offered a vision of an afterlife in which all the oppressed would supposedly go to heaven and their masters, the representatives of all aristocracy, to hell. Therefore, the slaves constantly envisioned a sort of imaginary revenge, which God himself would take for them by eternally punishing their masters (Nietzsche, 1887[2003]: 19).

Hence, revenge in this case is not a process of equalisation, but allows slaves to replace their masters, and become masters themselves for an eternity to come. This explanation is also congruent with what was discussed earlier; that revenge does not explain punishment, but rather that both punishment and revenge originate from the need to feel superior or powerful over somebody else. Elsewhere in *Human all too human*, Nietzsche (1878/2008) argued that a master-slave type of morality carried on during human history despite political transformations that have changed the identity of ruling clans and castes. In this line of thought the development of classes may represent the fundamental human need to ‘feel’ superior and exert power over others. For Nietzsche the will to power is the most important constituent of human nature and the most important goal of living. This will to power manifests itself in all aspects of human interaction and civilization. Even people that feel pitied by others for instance (e.g., beggars or homeless people) enjoy at least momentarily exercising power over others:

> The pity that the spectators then express consoles the weak and suffering, in as much as they see that, despite all their weaknesses, they still have at least one power—the power to hurt. When expressions of pity make the unfortunate man aware of his feeling of superiority, he gets a pleasure from it; he is still important enough to inflict pain on the world. Thus, the thirst of pity is a thirst for self-enjoyment, at the expense of one’s fellow men (Nietzsche, 1878[2008]: 54).

Even social conversations and interactions express the will to power. Nietzsche speculated that three quarters of all social exchanges are framed in order to hurt the participants a little bit and feel superior, hence powerful, by inflicting pain on others even in this subtle way. At the same time Nietzsche precludes the possibility of any humans admitting to being overwhelmed by a sense of superciliousness, or the need to feel superior over others: ‘But will there be many people enough to admit that it is a pleasure to inflict pain? That frequently one amuses himself by offending other men at least in thought?’ (Nietzsche, 1878[2008]: 45).

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\(^9\) Nietzsche specifically talks about slaves during the Roman times and the emergence of Christianity, but he uses the slaves during these times as a representative example of all commoners and low-class people up until his time.
Belittlement of other people, even in thought, is necessary to maintain self-respect. Every occasion of teasing someone is, according to Nietzsche, an opportunity to vent our power over the other person and experience a feeling of superiority: the only reason that people nowadays only engage in subtle and to a degree ‘careful’ way of enjoying the feeling of superiority is because of fear of requital, revenge, and the consequences that their actions may have. If it was not for the modern rules and regulations that govern contemporary civilised society, then people would still be prone, for instance, to enjoy spectacles like the Roman arenas, or to use a more modern example, the beheadings conducted and posted online by groups such as ISIS. Of course, remarks such as the above invite us to wonder whether this enjoyment in inflicting pain and the accommodating feeling of superiority are part of our human nature or rather aberrations of it. This is a question beyond the scope of this thesis.

Nietzsche was famous for his polemical style of writing which is very different to the Anglophone analytical tradition. Therefore, most of the claims he made, and the theories that he enunciated, have stirred debate among contemporary philosophers and raised issues of interpretation. For the purpose of this research, I have quoted some passages that offer explanations of the origin of punishment, and its relation to power and ressentiment. There are other passages, however, that allude to different and more positive interpretations of the will to power.10 As mentioned earlier there is great debate among philosophers about how to interpret Nietzsche’s assertions.

To recapitulate, we have so far examined punishment through the connections with cruelty/malicious pleasure, power, and ressentiment. We have seen that punishment of perpetrators of any kind (be it criminals, or people that have been disrespectful to us) is, according to Nietzsche, more about asserting power and feeling malicious pleasure. Moreover, the degree of wanting to use punishment as an ‘excuse’ for asserting power is pertinent to our own self-perceived power. We have seen the kind of malicious spite that led slaves to want to punish their masters, according to Nietzsche. But can this extreme master-slave distinction have relevance to contemporary society? Do modern power differences in terms of class, for instance, bias punitive attributions? These concepts led to the fourth central research question of this thesis which regards the extent to which lay attributions of blame and punishment are influenced by ressentiment. More specifically, the subsidiary research question that stems from the fourth central research question is whether a victim’s social class can influence attributions.

10 For example, Clarke (1990) explains the will to power as our sense of ‘effectiveness’ in the world, rather as domination over other people. In other words, Clarke argues that people do not really have a first order desire power as such, while they may have other first order desires (e.g., money, success, status etc.), with power being their sense of effectiveness in achieving these things and thereby a second order desire. On the other hand, Reginster (2007) interprets the will to power as the ability to be creative and overcome resistance.
of blame and punishment for the perpetrator, and whether this is due to the notion of ressentiment. In the next section, we will examine ressentiment in more detail, and see why it should not be conflated with ordinary envy.

3.3.1. Wallace, Ressentiment, and Relative Standing

Contemporary philosophers argue that for ressentiment to be a useful concept, we would need a framework that explains it by appealing to fundamental human dispositions. Wallace (2007) contends that with the emergence of Christianity, Nietzsche’s slaves\(^\text{11}\) found a new evaluative moral framework that they could use to make sense of the world. In discussing Nietzsche’s concept of ressentiment, Wallace argues that ressentiment should not be understood as envy in the ordinary sense. Envy (in its ordinary sense) is a negative attitude to a state of affairs because, in that state of affairs, some people have few goods relative to others, and hence may well be mitigated should they feel that they have finally acquired those goods.

By contrast, Wallace argues that ressentiment is nothing like ordinary envy because it is not about the relative disparity in goods or in power/status but is directed at the actual people who are in an advantageous position. This is when envy is conjoined with the malice and spite characteristic of ressentiment. Wallace notes that Nietzsche did not give a description of the process of normal envy turning into ressentiment. His own assertion is that this has to do with our social nature:

> The process through which ordinary envy turns into the kind of personal animus cannot be traced to any further emotion or complex of ideas. It seems to me a primitive mechanism, one that can perhaps be understood to reflect our deeply social nature, our deeply obsessive concern for our relative standing within local and less local communities (Wallace, 2007: 117 my italics).

Wallace also recognises the fact that ressentiment is actually contrary to Christian values and wonders how people could seek self-vindication through such a process. Wallace suggests that people show remarkable alacrity in providing rationalisations and justifications for their behaviour and attitudes. The struggle to win over their masters provides self-assertion and justification for their actions. Essentially, the will to power (manifested as a struggle against the masters) leads them to construe their actions as fully justified, despite their actions being contrary to their original beliefs. The concept of relative standing that Wallace emphasizes here can also be found in contemporary psychology within the ambits of social comparison.

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\(^{11}\) Wallace is not referring to specific historical events regarding the emergence of Christianity. In his article, he offers an interpretation of Nietzsche’s account, and his own views of ressentiment as a deep psychological process which has existed throughout humanity’s history.
theory (Festinger 1954). Festinger argued that any sort of competitive behaviour stems from a fundamental drive of self-evaluation. For self-evaluation to occur, it is necessary that the person compares him/her self to other people in his/her social context. As is indeed evident from our discussion of Nietzsche so far, we cannot be sure whether he refers to cruelty, sadism, aggression, or power as a fundamental part of the human condition. He may refer to any of these or a combination of all of them. We can debate whether cruelty, aggression, the will to power, and sadism should be conflated. However, for the purposes of this thesis these concepts are taken to refer to the instinct of cruelty. This is because Nietzsche himself uses all these concepts to mean the same thing, or at least to stem from the instinct of cruelty. According to Nietzsche, the will to power, aggression, malicious satisfaction in punishment, and sadistic tendencies are all by-products of the instinct of cruelty. Feelings of ressentiment are also a by-product of the instinct of cruelty combined with one’s relative standing within his/her community.

Both Wallace and Nietzsche have argued that ressentiment involves spite, malice, and cruelty. However, Nietzsche tells us that cruelty is a fundamental aspect of the human condition, while Wallace locates cruel and aggressive tendencies in the social character of the human condition, and in particular in our obsession with our relative standing.

3.4. The Origins of Cruelty and Individual Differences in Cruel Tendencies

If cruel instincts are constituents of human nature and inextricably linked with the notion of punishment, then it is crucial for the purpose of this discussion to further elucidate the role that cruelty plays in our assessment of punishment. The question here is whether some of these traits have any influence in decisions about the intensity of punishment a perpetrator should receive (i.e., an influence on punitive attributions), and the intensity of punishment satisfaction that one gets when contemplating forms of punishment already exacted. Therefore, punitive attributions can be also influenced by individual differences in relation to the notions that depict cruel tendencies. Since Nietzsche was not very clear on which attributes exactly comprise the will to power, we need to examine these traits separately and in more detail. The need to dominate others has been described in psychoanalysis through Adler’s (1927) concepts of superiority and inferiority complexes rather than as natural propensities; sadism has been explained through instinctual and biological aggression in some cases (Lorenz 1963), and as a product of our interaction with the environment in others (Fromm 1974). On the other hand, cruelty has not only been linked to the lack of empathy (Cohen 2011), but also been viewed as predatory aggression (Nell 2006). Moreover, classic Freudian (1920) psychoanalysis talks of repressed instincts that need to be discharged. If we are to get any understanding of how any of
the above traits influence punitive attributions and malicious satisfaction in punishment, we need to examine them in more detail. We shall begin by drawing some links between Nietzsche and Freud and then proceed to explain the notions of sadism, cruelty and aggression, and examine whether any of these are important for the study of punishment.

3.4.1. Cruelty and Ressentiment: Freudian Views

According to Lehrer (1999), Nietzsche’s relation to Freud is mainly to be found in the concept of ressentiment. Nietzsche’s man of ressentiment, according to Lehrer, is the person that cannot outwardly discharge his will to power, and instead fester with inveterate envy and desires for revenge. In the classic book *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) both Freud and Breuer point out the relationship between traumas caused by distressing experiences (e.g., humiliation, shame, guilt etc.) and precipitating hysterical symptoms. The formation of these traumas is also inextricably linked to the notion of revenge:

The instinct of revenge which is so powerful in the natural man and is disguised rather than repressed by civilization, is nothing whatever but the excitation of a reflex that has not been released. To defend oneself against injury in a fight and in doing so to injure one’s opponent is the adequate and performed physical reflex. If it has been carried out insufficiently or not at all, it is constantly released again by recollection of the instinct of revenge (Freud & Breuer 1895[1955]: 205).

Lehrer (1999) takes the above passage to resemble some of Nietzsche’s thoughts in *The Genealogy of Morals*. On Nietzsche’s account, the slave is not able to act against his master and therefore is not given the opportunity to release the instinct of revenge, and consequently compensates himself with an imaginary revenge, and with all the concomitants of ressentiment. Therefore, repressed instincts, such as the instinct of revenge, may need to be released. How can this be linked to punishment? Suppose that someone has some repressed revenge instincts which he/she did not have the chance to release. By experiencing malicious satisfaction when observing the punishment of others, he/she may find a way to release these instincts, it might be suggested.

A full discussion of Freudian and Nietzschean claims, along with their similarities and differences, is beyond the scope of this chapter, but what is useful to keep in mind here is the possibility that non-discharged instincts, such as the instinct of revenge for Freud, or the will to power/cruelty for Nietzsche, may play a crucial role in influencing lay attributions of punishment. Indeed, it might be suggested that punishment of others in a direct or a vicarious way (e.g., when we are expressing blame about other parties or transgressions, we may hear
happening on social media etc.) is the vehicle that unconsciously expresses resentment and aims at its partial outward discharge.

### 3.4.2. Cruelty and Inferiority: Adlerian Views

While the will to power, which has cruelty as its main corollary, and the instinct of revenge\(^\text{12}\) have been characterised as natural instincts, other psycho analysts, such as Alfred Adler asserted that the need to feel powerful or dominate over others is not a natural instinct, but rather a compensatory reaction to feelings of inferiority. According to Adler, we develop these feelings mainly due to psychosocial factors such as a sense of inadequacy during infancy and childhood, which is usually accompanied by a desire to compel attention and achieve recognition.

According to Adler, social development has its starting point in the weakness of the individual, and the overcoming of this weakness plays a central role in the development of character and personality. He also argued that, to a certain extent, all people have their own imaginary feelings of inferiority, but should these feelings become too overbearing, they will lead to social maladjustment. For example, this is evident in children who usually prefer to play with younger or weaker children, as this makes them feel powerful and compensates for their own feeling of inferiority. Adler was very exuberant in giving specific examples of people suffering extreme inferiority complexes. He mentioned some cases of people who suffer from depression who demand the attention of others and insist that others should live in accordance with their own needs. Another example is people who are obsessed with cleanliness. In contemporary society we may think of people who are obsessed with healthy eating who continually criticize and judge others for not acting like them and having the same attitude as them. This, Adler argued, is their way of feeling superior, by rendering others inferior:

One must remember that every child occupies an inferior position in life, if it was not for family, he would be incapable of independent existence. One realises that the beginning of every life is fraught with a more or less deep feeling of inferiority, when one sees the weakness and helplessness of every child. Since every child must grow up in an environment of adults, he is predisposed to consider himself weak; he does not trust himself to do those simple tasks that one thinks him capable of doing; without mistakes errors or clumsiness. Most of our errors in education begin at this point. In demanding more than the child can do, the idea of his own helplessness is thrown into his face (Adler 2010[1927]: 70).

\(^\text{12}\) Freud also talked about many other natural human instincts such as the sexual instinct that comprise the ID; for a full discussion of these see Freud’s (1923/1989) ‘The Ego and the ID’.
Adler argued that the ridicule or humiliation of children in any explicit or implicit way can have deleterious effects upon the child throughout his/her lifetime. Even as an adult, a child who has been extensively subjected to humiliation will try to compensate for the feeling of inferiority that has existed in his psyche since childhood. Vanity, money, and envy, among other things, are all signs of inferiority complexes at work. Even everyday positive terms such as ‘ambition’, ‘industry’, being ‘energetic’ are expressions that cloak a degree of vanity and masked inferiority complexes.

The longing for power and domination/distinction over others is therefore a constituent of the human psyche, according to Adler. However, in contrast to Nietzsche, Adler does not take it to exist as a fundamental drive or instinct, but as an outcome of feelings of inferiority developed during childhood. Adler’s view may bear some semblance to Wallace’s remarks on relative standing mentioned earlier, but the crucial question is how all the above relate to punishment. Adler does not specifically touch on this question, but if we agree with Nietzsche that punishment and blame are an ‘excuse’ for the exercise of power over others, then we may tentatively assert that the degree of inferiority feelings may correlate with a degree of punitiveness, and that people with more of these feelings would tend to be more punitive overall.

3.4.2.1. Experiments in Psychology Supporting Adlerian Views

The feeling of superiority can be experienced in many subtle ways and need not necessarily be explicit. This can be evident in the psychology of insults which can take the form of ‘innocent’ jokes, or in even what Gabriel (1998) termed as ‘obliteration of identity details’. Gabriel conducted longitudinal qualitative research to identify the several types of insults in organisations and reveal their implicit nature, along with their relation to positions of power. For instance, one of the participants reported that the manager in the company which hired him as a student trainee, pretended to misspell his name, as part of what Gabriel defined a ‘ritual humiliation’.

Experiments in psychology show the link between self-perceived power and punishment. Tracy and Robins (2003) suggested, in line with Adler, that individuals assign blame for their own failures to others in order to protect themselves from feelings of inferiority. Also influenced by Adlerian thought, Rotter (1966) developed the locus of control scale which measures the extent to which people perceive either personal factors (e.g., their own ability, skill, etc.), or external factors (e.g., luck, other people, etc.) to be determinant of events in their life. Adler himself noted that individuals with inferiority complexes would most likely
attribute their failures to fate or others, rather than assuming responsibility themselves (Adler 2010[1927]: 193).

Supporting this idea, Bugental et al. (1999) conducted a study to investigate punitiveness in relation to self-power perceptions. In particular, the experimenters examined this relation by asking adult participants to take part in an experiment involving teaching sessions. Participants were divided into three groups. The first group was told that they would be evaluating a child; the second group that a child would be evaluating them; and the third were not given any information on evaluation at all. The last condition was designed to create uncertain conditions about the actual authority that participants would have over children. After the subsequent training sessions, participants, regardless of condition, were given a device (a dynamometer) which when pressed would display a happy or angry face on a computer screen, which was supposedly visible to the child trainee. The level of pressure required to activate the dynamometer was only 1/3 lb. Results showed that participants with low self-perceived power especially when assigned to the third group (where their authority was ambiguous) used a remarkable level of force (12lb), when giving negative feedback to children with poor performance. Unfortunately, the studies that look into punitiveness within the context of power are limited, and experiments in the psychology of punishment have focused more on lay perceptions of punishment as retribution or deterrence (see previous chapter).

The experiment above may give some insight to the role of power and/or inferiority complexes and show that there may be a relationship between self-perceived power and punitiveness. On the other hand, cruel and sadistic tendencies have not been examined in the context of punishment, and in most cases, they are taken by psychologists to be solely pertinent to aggression. In the context of this thesis the possible role of self-perceived power in attributions of punishment is examined through correlational exploratory research. Investigating whether individual differences, based on self-perceived power, influence attributions of blame and punishment is one of the secondary aims of this thesis.

3.4.3. Cruelty and Powerlessness: Fromm’s Views

Cruel tendencies have also been explained through psychoanalysis by referring to the study of aggression. In the classic book *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1974), Fromm argued that human aggression and cruelty do not stem from evolution and are not bequeathed to us by our ancestors (Lorenz’s (1963) classic view), nor do they stem from social conditioning; rather, they pertain to our reactions to the sense of powerlessness experienced since birth. Like Adler, Fromm argued that human personality and character begin to form during childhood
from a position of powerlessness. Therefore, the development of an identity is inextricably
interwoven with the development of a sense of ‘effect’ (I am because I effect):

The child’s tantrums, his cries, his stubbornness, the different ways in which he tries to
battle adults, are among the most visible manifestations of his attempt to have an effect,
to move, to effect, to express his will. The child is usually defeated by the superior
strength of the adult, but the defeat does not remain without consequences; it would
seem to activate a tendency to overcome the defeat by doing actively what one was
enforced to endure passively: to rule when one had to obey, to beat when one was
beaten; in short to do what one was forced to suffer, or to do what one was forbidden to
do (Fromm 1974: 234).

In turn, the adult has similar needs, according to Fromm: he/she needs to assert his/her sense
of effectiveness, by work, creativity, intellectual endeavours. But the same need may be
satisfied by exerting power over others, and by experiencing their fear, or subordination.

Fromm distinguishes between two types of aggression: benign aggression and malignant
aggression. The first type is similar to both humans and animals and relates to defensive acts
of aggression (for example when one is physically attacked), while the second type is
exclusive to humans and is to be found in punishment, revenge, the exercise of power, and
sadistic tendencies. The reason for the second type’s exclusivity to human beings is that,
because of our ability to form our own characters, our behaviour and attitudes are not
dependent only upon instincts as is the case with animals. However, the development of
character, according to Fromm, has also triggered the development of human passions, such as
envy, and pride, of which malignant aggression is one (Fromm 1974: 266).

These tendencies, of course, are not to be found in the same proportion in every individual,
and Fromm gives many examples of this. To understand this, we can think of a rapist or a
murderer (experiencing the victim’s anguish) at one end of the extreme, and someone who
exercises power in more subtle ways (for example a person with a managerial position in a
company) at the other. Other examples, which Fromm discussed especially in relation to
Freudian theory, were those of sexual sadism and masochism. However, he did not assent to
the Freudian view that all forms of sadism stem from the libido (i.e. sexual desires), but he
contested that sadism’s essence is about the control that one has over other living beings
(humans or animals), and pleasure in asserting this. Sadism is ‘the transformation of impotence
into the experience of omnipotence’ (Fromm 1974: 290). Sadistic tendencies exist in all
people, but not all people can be characterised as sadists, argues Fromm. Those who have
developed and find satisfaction in what he named life-furthering tendencies (e.g., creativity, work accomplishments, artistry), cannot be characterised as sadists despite the fact that they have these tendencies; those people have the ability to identify such tendencies, and have developed a repugnance towards them (Fromm 1974: 296).

Fromm also argued that vengeful and punitive reactions comprise the field of malignant aggression, since they are not immediate reactions to threat (as with benign aggression), occur after the threat, and are usually disproportionate to the initial offence (Fromm 1974: 272).

Sadistic tendencies constitute yet another factor that may potentially affect attributions of punishment, and is also taken into account by this thesis, as another individual differences factor to be examined. We shall now continue our discussion on cruelty, by considering whether it is socially learned, or whether it is a product of evolution.

3.4.4. Cruelty and Predatory Aggression: Nell’s Views

Nell (2006) defines cruelty as the deliberate infliction of physical or psychological pain on another living creature, either indifferently but more often with delight. Nell argues that cruelty is a by-product of predatory behaviour that took place during the evolution of human species and that it developed because of the specific benefits it had in increasing survival, reproduction and overall fitness for the human species. Nell also argues that the study of cruelty is something that researchers tend to avoid because this may have implications for the maintenance of social rules and the concept of moral responsibility: ‘The study of cruelty is dangerous because rooting cruelty in the human evolutionary path appears to naturalise it, absolving perpetrators and their audiences of moral responsibility’ (Nell, 2006:212).

Most importantly Nell argues that punishment can be characterized as cruel when its sole purpose is the infliction of pain. According to Nell, cruelty evolved from competitive aggression first between individuals, and later between tribes. Competitive aggression occurred for reasons of self-preservation, protection of the young, and claiming resources. Later with the development of more organised social groups, cruelty was concerned with dominance over whole groups and nations. Be it group, or individual level, cruelty causes a certain level of physiological or psychological arousal, which results from the inflictor of cruelty having the advantage of greater status than his/her victim. Nell gives many examples that, according to him, prove that people may indulge themselves in cruel practices even by virtue of observation and spectacle (for example Roman arenas, modern bull fights, MMA etc.). However, tendencies to enjoy cruelty run in a continuum, argues Nell:
The actualisation of this universal potential to enjoy cruelty may vary along a continuum from low to high readiness. At the low readiness end are those who passively enjoy media cruelty but refrain from cruel acts; moving along the continuum are those who respond to situational cues, inflicting pain, if social inhibitions are removed and role triggers are present, and following a pathway into affective cruelty (Nell, 2006: 223).

In contrast to Nell’s views, proponents of social construction theories, like Zimbardo and Bandura, argue that cruelty and aggression are either triggered by situational factors (see Zimbardo 2004) or learned from the environment (Bandura 1973; 1990). Other theorists such as Cohen (2011) define cruelty as a lack of empathy, and contest that it exists in a continuum in human beings; at one end of this continuum, we find people with positive attributes, such as kindness and compassion, and at the other end those with narcissistic or psychotic personality disorders.

On the other hand, Tremblay and Nagin (2005) argued that children’s aggression cannot be explained in terms of exposure to violent films and the like, which are factors that influence adolescents. Rather, it relates to competitions for objects of desire. Children physically aggress in order to show frustration pertinent to unsatisfied wishes, or to possess certain objects. However, physical aggression declines by the end of the second year when children learn to live with others and begin to internalise these behaviours due to their understanding of rules. Nevertheless, aggressive proclivities remain, but take the form of nonphysical aggression such as taunting and teasing. Upon examining all the relevant literature, the authors concluded that aggression in children is not affected by environmental cues but is rather a natural behaviour that by analogy bears similarities to eating, sleeping, being hungry, and other primary natural behaviours of human beings.

We have so far examined the concepts of cruelty and ressentiment in relation to Wallace’s claims about relative standing, Adler’s inferiority complex, Fromm’s explanation of sadism, and Nell’s definition of cruelty. We have also seen that cruelty might exist due to situational factors (Bandura 1990), or due to the lack of empathy (Cohen 2011). These authors disagree on whether cruelty is a natural aspect of the human condition (as Nell and Nietzsche have suggested), or whether it depends on other aspects which relate to self-perceived power (which we define through our perception of our relative standing, and inferiority complexes). Nevertheless, all these authors agree that cruelty has varying degrees in different human beings. This leads us to ask whether these varying degrees of cruel tendencies (which indicate that there are individual differences in cruel tendencies) can also influence the way that we make lay attributions of blame and punishment. In other words, can individual characteristics
such as sadistic tendencies, inferiority complexes, empathic concern, and our perception of our relative standing influence attributions of blame and punishment? This is the second peripheral research question of this thesis and will be addressed by exploratory correlational research.

3.5. Concluding Remarks

This literature review, as covered in this and the previous chapter, has depicted the complexity of the many different accounts of the lay motivation behind punishment. In Chapter Two, we have seen those different accounts of the lay motivation behind punishment appeal to a range of different factors, including both utilitarian and retributive concerns, and make different claims about the ways that these concerns are linked together. We have understood the workings of both utilitarian and retributive concerns as lay motivations behind punishment. We have also examined the notion of just deserts, and how it aims to achieve a sense of proportionality between crime and deserved punishment. Moreover, we have examined the relationship between retribution and revenge, and whether blame is a punitive feeling. Finally, we have discussed the importance of repentance in shaping attributions of punishment. We have also depicted the central and subsidiary research questions that stemmed from our discussion. To recapitulate, the two central research questions that followed this discussion relate to the extent that retributive or utilitarian considerations motivate attributions of blame and punishment. In addition, we depicted a peripheral research questions which considers whether blame is a punitive emotion.

In Chapter Three, we examined punishment through the spectrum of malicious satisfaction, ressentiment and cruelty and focused more on Nietzsche’s views on these questions. We have also examined the relationship between cruelty, ressentiment and inferiority complexes, sadistic tendencies, and aggression. We have identified two central research questions that stemmed from our discussion; these consider the extent to which attributions of blame and punishment are influenced by malicious satisfaction and ressentiment. A peripheral research question that was also discussed is whether individual differences can also influence attributions of blame and punishment.

We shall now proceed with this thesis’s experimental chapters. Chapter Four explains the general methodological approach taken by this thesis, while Chapters Five, Six, and Seven discuss the relevant experimental results and the way that they can be discussed in light of the central, peripheral, and subsidiary research questions.
Chapter Four- Methodology

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I shall discuss the general methodological approach taken in the empirical work undertaken for this thesis, explaining the methods used, and justifying the broader design choices made. The discussion will firstly focus on experimental philosophy, since the thesis’s predictions rely heavily on philosophical assertions, and part of the methods employed here bear some similarities to an experimental philosophy approach. Following this, I shall discuss good practice and problems that can arise from using internet mediated research, as well as ethical considerations that also need to be taken into account. Continuing, I shall discuss the importance of achieving statistical power, and of also avoiding type one and type two errors. Finally, I shall explain the various questionnaires that were employed in this thesis and finish with a section on parametric assumptions.

4.2. Experimental Philosophy

The methodological approach employed in this thesis bears some similarities with a relatively new trend in philosophy, namely that of ‘experimental philosophy’. As explained earlier in the general introduction, experimental philosophy is a branch of philosophy that tests philosophical propositions through the empirical methods used by psychologists (Nichols & Knobe 2008). The methodological arsenal of experimental philosophers is comprised of methods borrowed from the social sciences. Of course, the experimental philosophy paradigm does not apply to all forms of philosophical inquiry where logical expertise and conceptual analysis are necessary to draw any useful conclusions. In this case, Nichols & Knobe (2008), argue that folk intuitions cannot really inform philosophical knowledge, since by analogy a physicist or a biologist does not need to consult folk intuitions to enrich their knowledge about a specific topic in that field of inquiry. On the other hand, there are some areas in philosophy that can be informed and further developed with the help of folk intuitions. These range from the problem of free will (e.g. Knobe and Nichols 2007), and attributions of moral responsibility/blame (e.g. Woolfolk et al. 2005; Alicke et al. 1994; Cushman et al. 2012), to attributions of causality (Knobe & Fraser 2008).

Initially, experimental philosophers used experimental results to develop accounts of the psychological factors that influence folk intuitions of morality, causality, moral responsibility, and so on. They would usually assign participants to different philosophical doctrines, for example, classifying them as compatibilists or incompatibilists, in virtue of their beliefs about the relationship between free will and moral responsibility. This classification is based on their
responses to questions, often relating to vignettes. In this way, they tested whether certain philosophical claims about folk intuitions were valid.

More recently, experimental philosophy has shifted towards the psychology paradigm and employed its traditional methodology for investigating causal relationships between variables. In this way, experimental philosophers have examined the factors that influence folk intuitions. An example of this can be found in the ‘Knobe effect’ which is an observation about folk intuitions relating to intentional action (Knobe 2003).13

As explained in the general introduction experimental philosophy research has been divided into three different programs (Nichols & Knobe 2017). As also noted in the general introduction this thesis is best understood as a contribution to the third program which aims to enrich our knowledge of people’s intuitions which relate to various philosophical theories.

4.3. Online Research Methods

4.3.1. Gathering Online Data
Gathering research data through internet mediated research (IMR) is a technique which has become increasingly popular since its original starting point during the 90s. Generally, IMR employs a variety of different methods, which have been termed either obtrusive (surveys, experiments, interviews), or unobtrusive (text analysis, observation) (see Hewson et al. 2016). The main online platforms employed in this study were Amazon’s Mechanical Turk which was helpful in terms of recruiting participants and Qualtrics online platform which was helpful in terms of designing and enabling the online implementation of the experiments.

4.3.2. Sampling Approach
While participants for experiments one, four, six, seven and nine were obtained through social networks and acquaintances, participants for the remaining experiments were obtained through Amazon’s mechanical turk (MTurk). MTurk was originally designed as an online tool for human computation tasks that cannot be performed by computers (for example audio transcription). Companies would find and pay workers through MTurk in order to perform these tasks. However, gradually Amazon increased MTurk’s potential by allowing companies to allocate simpler tasks to paid workers (for example completing market surveys). Today MTurk is also being used for conducting online research by many researchers from a variety of scientific fields ranging from economics (Hossain & Morgan 2006) to psychology (Birnbaum 2001; Nosek 2007). Mason & Suri (2012) highlighted three main advantages for using MTurk:

13 The Knobe effect regards the folk intuition that an action’s bad side effect is viewed as intentional, whereas an action’s good side effect is regarded as unintentional.
subject pool access, subject pool diversity, and low cost. The first refers to the great availability of participants, which in other circumstances can be very hard to find. The process of posting advertisements, using social media, or distributing questionnaires in person is very time consuming and the number of participants obtained can be limited. On the other hand, MTurk offers quick access to participants and in greater numbers.

Subject diversity relates to participants coming from a variety of countries, and socio-economic backgrounds which can facilitate international cross-cultural research. Finally, participants come at a very low cost. For instance, for this study each participant was paid 50 pence for their participation in four experiments.

Another issue that needs to be discussed is that the same participants did more than one of the experiments and whether this might have affected the results. Firstly, this was done for economy and for reducing the costs of financial compensations. Finding a high number of participants for each experiment would have been very hard and costly. Moreover, the experiments were unrelated to each other and this allows for a certain degree of confidence in not having within subjects’ effects in the results. The participants took part in experiments that were independent, so it was not anticipated that there would be any influence of participating in one, on the others. Additionally, any experiments that had the intention of being follow up studies were allocated to a different group of participants.

4.3.3. Participants’ Financial Compensation
While the funds offered to participants in MTurk are relatively low (ranging from 10 cents at the lowest with 50 cents being usually the highest), Mason & Suri (2012) have argued that unlike normal employment, the MTurk worker chooses his/hers working conditions/hours and has no direct obligation to complete a certain task. Moreover, Ipeirotis (2010) found that the vast majority of MTurk workers do not rely on MTurk wages for meeting their living necessities. For this study I have chosen to offer MTurk participants 50 pence; taking into account that the completion of the survey should not have taken more than 15 minutes, that is arguably a reasonable amount to offer. This confirms that I had no intention of any form of financial exploitation.

4.4. Validity & Reliability
Apart from subject pool access and diversity which make IMR suitable for cross cultural research, IMR has been found to be particularly advantageous for reducing social desirability biases and providing high levels of self-disclosure (Joinson & Paine 2007). This can be particularly beneficial for the study of sensitive topics (Hessler et al. 2003). On the other hand,
key objections to IMR include reduced levels of researchers’ control, and lack of
generalizability of results due to internet sampling being biased (Schmidt 1997). As Hewson et
al. (2016) have argued these objections can be overridden since numerous studies have now
demonstrated valid and reliable data (e.g., Knoll, Uther and Costall, 2011). However, the
problem of sample representativeness may be more relevant to quantitative than qualitative
studies. In relation to the studies conducted for this thesis, it would be hard to claim a high
degree of external validity since this research did not draw a representative sample from a
known population and hence cannot generalise broadly to a known population. On the other
hand, as Hewson et al. (2016) argue, in experimental designs that aim to uncover cause-effect
relationships, we may sacrifice external validity for internal validity; here, the important goal
is to be able to discover valid cause-effect relationships (see also Mook 1983).

Because of non-representative samples, MTurk results may not be replicated if experiments
are conducted on other online platforms, or by using conventional methods. However, Zwaan
et al. (2017) tested the reproducibility of nine experiments from cognitive psychology by using
MTurk. They found that findings obtained from online environments did not deviate from
laboratory findings for all nine experiments. Moreover, participants were asked to undertake
the experiments twice, and even prior knowledge did not have an effect on the results.

Other studies have shown that sampling in MTurk does not differ greatly to normal population
sampling (e.g., Buhrmester, Kwang & Gosling 2011; Levay, Freese, & Druckmann 2016).
More recently, Levay, Freese, & Druckman (2016) investigated differences between MTurk
and normal population samples. In their research they compared MTurk and random
probability population-based samples by replicating items from the American National
Election Studies (ANES 2012) which was a survey concerned with political preferences and
orientations. The experimenters found that MTurk respondents did not differ from their
population-based counterparts, in terms of both demographic and political concerned items.

Generally, it can be argued that acquiring participants through MTurk and other online
platforms can be particularly advantageous for psychological studies, where traditional sample
are in many cases undergraduate students.

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14 **External validity** represents the generalisability of a study. In other words, external validity applies to whether
we can use our study’s sample to make inferences about the general population. **Internal validity** regards the
extent to whether we can assume that a study’s results are caused by our experimental manipulations and not by
other confounding variables. In other words, internal validity refers to the extent of the effect that our independent
variable has on a dependent variable. It also refers to whether an instrument measures what it was designed to
measure (Field 2005/2011). **Internal reliability**, or internal consistency, regards the degree to which the items
that comprise a test measure the psychometric properties that they were designed. This is typically measured by
Cronbach’s alpha value. As a general rule of thumb statisticians have suggested that a value between 0.7 – 0.8, is
an acceptable alpha value for a test to have internal consistency.
4.5. Ethical Considerations for Internet Mediated Research

Before elaborating on ethical considerations for IMR, it is also worth noting that this study gained approval by the Open University’s Ethics Committee following the submission of a relevant application. As a general guideline for experimental research the British Psychological Society (Ethics Guidelines for Internet-Mediated Research 2017) stresses the importance of several ethical considerations. These are: the respect for the autonomy and dignity of persons; scientific value; social responsibility; maximizing benefits and minimizing harm. These principles apply to both offline and online research. These considerations need to also be adhered to and adjusted for online research. I shall briefly discuss four main issues that concern maintaining respect for the autonomy and dignity of participants. These issues arise because IMR differs in the ways a researcher deals with issues of consent, withdrawal, debriefing and confidentiality.

First, gaining informed consent may be problematic for IMR, due to lack of direct proximal contact with participants by the experimenter. As a result, an experimenter cannot verify whether participants have read and agreed to all consent requirements, or that a participant meets the required age criteria. Hewson (2015) suggests various good practice strategies for coming to terms with these problems. As she argues, consent forms for IMR should be succinct and explicit, and they should be presented with various check boxes that ensure participants have read and understood consent statements. Additionally, according to Hewson check boxes should not only present a simple ‘yes’ response, but offer both ‘yes’ and ‘no’ options. She also recommends the use of a final check box at the end of the survey, which requires the explicit consent of participants. Finally, age considerations can be particularly pressing when a survey is of sensitive nature. In this case, the BPS (2017) suggests asking age before anything else and allowing participants to continue or redirect the page according to this criterion, in order that underage participants are directed away from the study where appropriate, and unable to return and take part.

Another problem for IMR is ensuring the withdrawal and debriefing of participants. This can be problematic in IMR since by exiting the browser, for instance, participants cannot view and read the relevant page with debriefing information. The best way to deal with this issue would be to include a withdrawal button for all the items presented in the survey (Hewson 2015). Future withdrawal, after having completed the study, can also be a pressing issue with IMR. Suppose that a participant changes their mind and wants to withdraw their responses at a later time. Due to the need to maintain anonymity as a general ethical principle, an experimenter would not be able to find a particular set of responses within a data set. One effective solution
to this problem is to provide an option where participants can provide a password in order to enable the experimenter to identify their specific set of responses and delete them should this be demanded by a participant.

Ensuring anonymity and confidentiality of data is another factor that needs taking into account when conducting online research. Additional complications can arise in an online context. Ensuring anonymity is especially crucial when data may potentially be accessed by third parties. When it comes to the use of online platforms such as Survey Monkey and Qualtrics, a key issue that may threaten data anonymity and confidentiality may be the recording of IP addresses. There is an option of not recording IP addresses in Survey Monkey, but the same option is not provided by Qualtrics, which is the platform used for this thesis. The Qualtrics platform was preferred because of the collaboration it shares with the Open University. In order to address this issue, I immediately erased all of the IP addresses from the data set upon downloading the data, and informed Qualtrics customer services department that the option of not recording IP addresses was not provided, and that they should attend to this.

This thesis has taken all the above considerations into account, in line with both BPS (2017) guidelines concerning ethical issues and experts on the field of online research methods (see Hewson 2015; 2016). For instance, various check boxes were presented to participants regarding informed consent, their ability to withdraw, debrief, and ensuring anonymity. In line with suggestions discussed earlier, participants were given the options both to agree and to disagree to consent based items and were given a very explicit description of the study along with reassurance of anonymity and confidentiality. A final consent-related item was also presented at the end of the survey informing participants that their data once analysed and aggregated may be used for academic purposes and presented at conferences. Participants were also informed about their right to withdraw at any time by exiting their browser, and their right to either withdraw in the future, or ask for further debriefing by providing a password that would enable the identification of their set of responses by the experimenter at a future time. The only earlier suggestion that could not be followed was that of including a withdrawal button for each of the items presented in the survey: this is because Qualtrics did not have such an option. Overall, this thesis strived to be in compliance with all of the relevant ethical guidelines in order to ensure the respect and dignity of all participants involved. Moreover, the OU ethics committee only grants approval once they are convinced all ethical procedures are in place.

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15 A relevant message was sent by the experimenter to Qualtrics customer service department informing them of this issue, but they could not take immediate action.
4.6. Null Hypothesis Significance Testing

This study employs null hypotheses significance testing (NHST) to assess whether any of the results were due to chance or whether there was a genuine effect of our experimental manipulation on the dependent variables. NHST involves developing two hypotheses: a null hypothesis (denoted by HO) which states that our prediction is wrong and the predicted effect does not exist, and an alternative hypothesis (denoted by H1), which states that an effect is present. As Field (2011) notes the reason that we need to develop a null hypothesis is because the use of statistical tests, does not allow us to prove an alternative/experimental hypothesis, but it does allow us to gather evidence that can lead to the rejection of a null hypothesis. Of course, we cannot fully reject the null hypothesis when we test against an alternative hypothesis, but we can reject the null with a certain degree of confidence. Psychologists normally use Fischer’s (1925/1991) p value (usually p=0.05 or less), as a measure of gaining confidence in rejecting the null hypothesis. In other words, we may be confident in rejecting the null hypotheses, when we know that the probability of obtaining those results or a more extreme outcome under the null hypothesis is 5% or less (Goodman 2008).

More recently, the concepts of power and effect size have become especially important, and straightforward reporting of p values with comments about significance, or otherwise (as has been traditionally accepted practice), is considered poor practice in being able to draw conclusions and make convincing inferences from statistical analyses. The following section explains these concepts and demonstrates why they should be used in conjunction with p values.

4.7. Statistical Power and Effect Size

Statistical power refers to the power of a statistical test to detect an effect. Generally, there are three factors that can influence the statistical power of an experimental manipulation: sample size, effect size and the test used. I shall now briefly explain these considerations, and the strategy that the current study employed when taking them into account.

Any type of test statistic (for example a t value or an f value), is an indication of whether there is an effect of our experimental manipulations in the population of interest. However, there are certain types of errors that can occur in investigating possible effects. These are the type one and type two errors (Field 2005; 2011). A type one error occurs when we believe that there is a genuine effect of our manipulation in the population when in fact there is none. Fisher (1925) suggested that the probability of a type one error should not exceed the 5 % level (or 0.05). This level of probability is also known as α- level probability. This means that if we collect 100 samples, we would only expect to find evidence for a real effect, when in fact there is
none, in five of them. The opposite type of error that we may encounter is the type two error. This occurs when we believe that there is no genuine effect in the population when in fact there is. Cohen (1992) suggested that the probability for the occurrence of a type two error should not exceed the 20% level (or 0.2). In other words, if we collect data from 100 different samples in the population where a genuine effect exists, we would fail to find an effect in 20 of them. Cohen’s probability value is also known as the β-level of probability.

Another important factor in drawing conclusions when using probability sampling is assessing effect size. For example, a test statistic may be significant, but the magnitude of the strength of an observed relationship between variables may be minimal. Here we may think of a very weak correlation between variables that turns out to be significant. Effect size is a way of measuring the strength/size of an observed effect between variables. For example, Pearson’s r value can indicate small, medium or large effect sizes. According to Cohen (1988), an r=0.10 indicates a small effect size, an r=0.30 a medium effect size, and an r=0.50 a large effect size. The relevant effect size measure for factorial designs is the η^2 value or the partial η^2 value. The partial η^2 value was calculated for all nine experiments conducted for this thesis. Of course, we use a sample’s effect size in order to estimate an effect size in the population. According to Field (2005; 2011) the effect size in a population relates to the sample size on which the sample effect size is observed, the α-level of significance that we discussed earlier (i.e., the probability that an effect occurred by chance), and a test’s statistical power (i.e., the ability of a test to find an effect of that size).

The power of a test lies in its ability to avoid a type two error. As we discussed earlier, the probability of a type two error is β, and as Cohen (1992) suggested that this value should be 0.2. Therefore, the probability of detecting a genuine effect in the population while reducing the likelihood of a type two error is 1-β=0.8. In order to be confident that we have sufficient power to detect genuine effects in the population, the commonly accepted guideline (Field 2011) is that we should have an 80% probability of detecting an effect if it genuinely exists. Anything more than 0.8 of probability value, argues Field, should increase our level of confidence.

Appropriate sample sizes for achieving the desired power levels are straightforward to calculate. For this study, I used an online power calculator (G*Power 3.1) to calculate an appropriate sample size for a two-way independent Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) that tests main and interaction effects for two independent variables. For this type of design, Cohen (1969) argued that a small effect size is roughly f=0.1, a medium effect size f=0.25, and a large effect size f=0.40. The parameters I had inputted were the α-level=0.05, a medium effect size
f=0.25, and acceptable statistical power (1-β=0.8). The output from G*Power 3.1, indicated that in order to achieve a statistical power of 0.8, we would need a sample size of 269 people. Indeed, all nine experiments conducted for this study achieved this recommended sample size. Since out measure of effect size is partial $\eta^2$, Cohen (1969) would suggest that a small effect size would equal a value up to 0.0099, a medium effect size a value of 0.0588, and a large effect size a value of 0.1379. There is a debate among statisticians and researchers on whether researchers should use partial $\eta^2$ or $\eta^2$ as a measure of effect size in a two-way ANOVA with some not being clear as to which of the two is best to use (e.g., Field 2011; Kline 2009), and others either advocating the use of $\eta^2$ (e.g., Levine 2002), or the use of partial $\eta^2$ (e.g., Bakeman 2006). For this study, we shall use partial $\eta^2$ as the measure of effect size which is more extensively used by researchers in psychology and other fields (Richardson 2010).

We have seen how statistical power is determined by sample size, effect size, and the type of test used, including the alpha level set by the researcher. However, there are other issues that also need to be addressed to avoid experimenters’ interventions that can lead to type one errors. In an interesting article, Simmons, Nelson & Simonsohn (2011) presented computer simulations and two relevant experiments that demonstrated the ease with which experiments can lead to false positives typical of type one errors. For instance, a problem that they reported was that many researchers choose their sample size in an interim manner: in other words, an experimenter may increase his/her sample size until he/she reaches appropriate significance levels and then stop gathering responses. Moreover, he/she may delete responses that may have played a role in relationships between variables and not report this to a publisher. In the first case, the authors showed, by using computer simulations, that it is wrong to stop collecting responses once significance is achieved, since larger samples may reduce significance levels, contrary to the popular belief that if an effect is found in a small sample, then it would necessarily be significant in a larger sample.

Drawing conclusions from their own research Simmons, Nelson & Simonsohn (2011), suggested six different requirements for experimenters to avoid false positives and type one errors. I shall now explain them and show that the current thesis took them all into account. The first requirement is that authors should decide when to terminate data collection and report this in their published research reports. In relation to this thesis, the termination of data collection occurred when the sample size was equal to or slightly exceeded the recommended sample size provided by power analysis which was conducted in advance. Moreover, I did not analyse any data prior to the full collection of responses by participants. The second requirement states that experimenters should collect more than 20 responses per cell, in order
for tests to be powerful enough to detect genuine effects in the population. This study utilised more than 50 responses per cell, and thus also meets this requirement. The third requirement is for researchers to provide a list of the variables involved in the study. This thesis provides the reader with a full list of all the variables used for this study (including demographic information). The fourth requirement states that experimenters should report all experimental manipulations, including those that failed to produce desired effects. The current study reports all the relevant manipulations, and also provides a discussion for failed manipulations (i.e. those that turned out to not be significant). The fifth requirement asks researchers to report results in cases where some of the responses were deliberately omitted by the experimenter. It was not necessary to do this in the current study, as no responses needed to be omitted, thus this requirement was met. Finally, the sixth requirement notes that if a covariate has been used in an analysis, then results should also be reported without the use of the particular covariate. This was not necessary in this study, since covariate analysis was not employed. Overall, the paper by Simmons et al. was very useful in informing this study on issues that can lead to biased results, and false positives, and in helping with the avoidance of type one error.

4.8. Parametric Assumptions

As Field (2011) suggests, any researcher should avoid particular biases that pertain to violating certain assumptions about parametric data. If these assumptions hold, then relevant test statistics and p values can be taken at face value and be interpreted accordingly. On the other hand, if assumptions are violated, then test statistics and p values can lead us to draw wrong conclusions about the interpretation of our data. One of the most basic and important assumptions to be met for parametric data, is the assumption of normality. This means that the sampling distribution of any variable that is being tested should be a normal distribution. Field points out that many researchers have the misconception that data should be normally distributed. However, the assumption of normality concerns only the sampling distribution of a certain parameter.

Now as Field explains, we can usually assume normality of the sampling distribution, regardless of the shape of our data, due to the central limit theorem, which states that the sampling distribution of sample means approaches normality, as the sample size gets larger. He argues that the assumption of normality may be important in small samples (fewer than 30) but we do not need to worry about this when our sample is big enough. The samples used for this study meet these criteria since they are quite large, and thus normality should not be a major concern.
The other assumption that should be taken into account is that of homoscedasticity/homogeneity of variance. This means that the variability of scores in each of the conditions should be the same. For example, it would be very difficult to make comparisons between scores that range between 10 to 15 in one condition, and scores that range from 0 to 100 in another. Moreover, as Hayes & Cai (2007) have pointed out, unequal variances can create biases in calculating the standard errors relating to parameter estimates in a sample, because the standard errors are used to also calculate confidence intervals and p values. On the other hand, Field argues that problems with homogeneity of variance should not be a concern when our sample is large, such as is the case with this study.

The final assumption that needs to be taken into account is that of independence. That means that the responses of behaviour of one participant should not influence the behaviour or responses of another. This can be ensured by the online character of this research, which does not allow participants to come into contact with one another, or their responses to be influenced by any sort of interaction. This is further ensured by the fully between-subjects design of this study.

4.9. Questionnaires

While the main body of predictions and hypotheses for this study was derived from philosophical theories and tested through experimental manipulations, the questionnaires below were used as exploratory instruments in a correlation approach. Thus, some tentative thoughts and predictions are made, but did not assume the form of formal hypotheses. The discussion in section 3.4 inspired the use these questionnaires, which relate to one of the peripheral research questions of this thesis. This is to examine whether there are individual differences in lay attributions of blame and punishment. Generally, the questionnaires were added with an exploratory aim, in order to set the ground for further future research. Below, I shall explain the rationale for employing them and report other researchers’ as well as my own internal consistency scores obtained through reliability analysis.

4.9.1. CAST Sadism

The CAST sadism scale (Buckels & Paulhus 2014) was used to measure participants’ sadistic tendencies. The rationale for using the scale relates to investigating any possible correlations between punitive and sadistic tendencies. This is based upon Nietzsche’s claim, that punishment is a vehicle for experiencing cruelty, which is in turn deeply ingrained in the human psyche. The scale consists of 18 Likert type items and assesses three distinct areas of sadistic tendencies: direct verbal (e.g., ‘I enjoy making jokes at the expense of others’), direct physical (e.g., ‘I enjoy hurting people’), and vicarious sadism (e.g., ‘in video games I like the
realistic blood spurts’). Responses to statements are obtained by expressing agreement or disagreement with the items (i.e., 1=strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). The scale was tested for reliability (by Buckels & Paulhus) by using a sample acquired through Amazon’s ‘Mechanical Turk’ online platform (N=345). The overall Cronbach alpha for the scale was α=0.89 (Buckels & Paulhus 2014). In one of the studies for which it was used, the scale was found to positively correlate with psychopathy and Machiavellianism (Buckels et al. 2014). For the current study, I have used only the direct verbal and vicarious varieties of sadistic tendencies (13 items). I avoided questions relating to physical forms of sadism due to ethical concerns, since some of the questions may have been too upsetting for the participants. Reliability analysis conducted for this questionnaire in this study showed that the scale had good internal reliability/consistency with α=0.807 (experiments 1-5), and α=0.859 (experiments 6-9).

Moreover, the current study also added five more items that were used to offset any negativity provoked by this type of question (e.g., I have ambitions to make the world a better place). This scale was used in both experimental stages (experiments 1-9).

4.9.2 Social Comparison Scale

The scale was developed by Allan and Gilbert (1995) to measure personal reflections on one’s social rank and relative social standing. The rationale behind this was that feelings of inferiority may increase punitive tendencies, since according to Adler and Fromm, individuals with feelings of inferiority will try to compensate for their lack of power, and according to Nietzsche punishment – as well as being concerned with experiencing cruel feelings, is also concerned with the experience of asserting one’s superiority and dominance over others. This scale comprises of 11 items that require participants to rank the way they perceive themselves in relation to others on a superiority-inferiority spectrum that ranges from 1 to 10 (for example ‘in relation to others I feel’: incompetent 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 competent). Low scores on the scale indicate feelings of inferiority. The scale has a very good reliability rating with Cronbach α =0.90. This was obtained by using a sample of students (N=263) (Allan & Gilbert 1995). The scale was used for experiments 1 to 5, in order to investigate possible relationships between feelings of inferiority and the intensity of punitive attributions. Reliability analysis conducted for this questionnaire in this study showed that the scale had good internal reliability/consistency with α=0.877.

4.9.3 Empathic Concern Scale

This is a subscale used for this study, which consists of 7 Likert type items and was taken from Davis’s (1980) interpersonal reactivity index (IRI) which consists of 28 items. The rationale
for using this subscale was to investigate whether punitive attributions can be influenced by the degree of empathic concern participants may display. For example, the more someone is characterised by empathic tendencies, the more sympathy they may show to a perpetrator and the less punitive they may be. Of course, this may also have the opposite effect. One may empathize more with a victim of crime and hence demand more punishment for a perpetrator. On the other hand, Cohen (2011) defined cruelty as a lack of empathy and we may expect in line with Nietzschean claims that if punishment and cruelty are related and empathy is indeed the lack of cruelty, then the more empathic someone is, the less punitive tendencies they will display. This is because, according to Nietzsche (see section 3.2); the purpose of punishment is to experience the joy of cruelty and feelings powerful over others.

This scale is designed to measure sympathy and concern for other people who are in distress. It pertains to the emotional aspects of empathy. According to Davis, the cognitive aspects of empathy relate to perspective taking (which also forms another subscale in the original IRI). Participants had to respond to statements by ticking a response relevant to what describes them best (1= does not describe me well to 5= describes me very well). An example of a statement is: ‘I often have tender concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me’. Davis (1980) tested for reliability for all of his subscales by using a group of first year psychology students (N=572) and found that the empathic concern subscale obtained very good internal reliability ratings for both male (a=0.72), and female (a=0.70) participants. These reliability findings were also replicated by later studies. For example, De Corte et al. (2007) tested the questionnaire in a sample of Belgian participants (N=651) and found the empathic concern subscale to have a reliability score of a= 0.73. Reliability analysis conducted for this questionnaire in this study showed that the scale had good internal reliability/consistency with $\alpha=0.738$ for the seven items that were employed by this study.

**4.9.4 General Belief in a Just World Scale**

This scale was developed by Dalbert, Montada & Schmidt (1987), and consists of 6 Likert type statements (e.g., ‘I believe that, by and large, people get what they deserve’) that assess the degree of one’s belief that the world is a fair and just place and that everyone gets what they deserve. The rationale for using the scale for the current study lies in the fact that strong belief in a just world may influence the intensity of punitive attributions. This is because individuals with high beliefs in a just world may believe more in harsh punishment thinking that everyone should get what they deserve (in line with retribution), but the underlying motivation is to uphold the belief that the world is a just and safe place which is a utilitarian
concern. This reflects Tyler’s et.al (1997) views, and the relevant discussion can be found in section 2.5.3.

Responses are collected by expressing agreement or disagreement with the statements (1=strongly disagree, 6=strongly agree). This questionnaire was found to have good internal reliability/consistency scores with $\alpha=0.63$ (Dalbert, Montada & Schmidt 1987) and has been used in a variety of studies in psychology which range from investigating prosocial behaviour in terms of desert (e.g. Appelbaum 2002) to poverty policies (Appelbaum et. al. 2006), and intergroup relations (e.g., Ruback & Singh 2007). Reliability analysis conducted for this questionnaire in this study showed that the scale had good internal reliability/consistency with $\alpha=0.892$. The idea behind its design lies in Lerner’s (1977; 1980) Just World Hypothesis which states that people cling to a belief that the world is just, and that in the end everyone gets what they deserve, because this gives them hope and trust with which they continue leading normal and secure lives.

4.9.5 Locus of Control Scale

This scale was developed by Rotter (1966) and it was designed to measure individual beliefs about the control people have over events in their lives. Individual with high scores were labelled as having external locus of control (they operate under the assumption that events in their lives are controlled more by others and external circumstances), and individuals with low scores labelled as having internal locus of control (life events are controlled more by themselves and personal decisions). The rationale behind using this scale was that potentially, individuals with external locus of control would be more punitive. This is because, according to Levenson (1974), it was found that individuals with external locus of control perceive themselves as more power disadvantaged, and this may present punishment as an opportunity for empowerment in line with Nietzsche’s assertions.

The scale consists of 29 items, with each item consisting of two statements. Participants have to choose one out of every two statements as the one that they agree more with (e.g., ‘I have often found that what is going to happen will happen’ vs ‘Trusting to fate has never turned out as well for me as making a decision to take a definite course of action’). Studies show that the scale has good reliability scores. For example, Tigemann & Lang (1981), found a Cronbach $\alpha=0.61$. On the other hand, reliability analysis conducted for this questionnaire in this study showed that the scale had not obtained a very good internal reliability/consistency score with $\alpha=0.184$. 
We shall now move on to the first experimental chapter of this study, which addresses the third and fourth central research questions.
Chapter Five- Experiments One to Three

5.1. Introduction and Research Aims

This chapter focuses on the third and fourth central research questions. These pertain to the extent that attributions of blame and punishment are motivated by malicious satisfaction and feelings of ressentiment. Experiments One and Two addressed whether attributions of blame and punishment are motivated by malicious satisfaction, while Experiment Three whether they are motivated by feelings of ressentiment. Additionally, Experiments One and Two also address the first central research question which will be more thoroughly examined in the next chapter; that regards the extent to which retributive (i.e., desert-based) considerations are the main lay motivation behind attributions of blame and punishment. The reason why Experiments One and Two also relate to retributive considerations lies in the fact that while these two experiments were primarily designed with the purpose of investigating the effect of malicious satisfaction on attributions of blame and punishment, their design also allows for results to be interpreted within a deserts-based approach. Indeed, the discussion for the results of Experiments One and Two will revolve around desert-based interpretations, or interpretations based on malicious satisfaction. However, the purpose is not to adjudicate between desert-based interpretations or interpretations based on malicious satisfaction, but to show (in line with Nietzsche’s assertions), that the application of desert-based punishment is the vehicle by which we can experience malicious satisfaction. As discussed in Chapter Two, people may want to punish in line with the notion of just deserts. On this view, a perpetrator should get what they deserve in proportion to the gravity and seriousness of their offence. Mill argued that such responses are based upon the natural sentiments of retaliation and sympathy. Hence, our sentiment of justice derives from the rule of just deserts: if you do good deeds, you deserve good done to you, and if you do bad deeds the opposite. Additionally, J.L. Mackie (1986) argued that the role of these natural sentiments in developing our sentiment of justice has resulted in the use of societal prescriptive rules (i.e., that we should return good with good and evil with evil). What keeps this process in check however, is the proportionate use of punishment. On the other hand, Nietzsche, suggested that this process of ‘equalisation’ which forms the main tenet of retribution (be it as a formal theory or its lay form), only acts as a disguise for experiencing malicious sentiments. In other words, people may think that they punish someone in a fair and just manner (by giving them what they deserve), but this is not the real purpose or motivation behind punishment. The ultimate purpose of any form of punishment is the sort of malicious satisfaction that is elicited when a perpetrator receives their just deserts.
Experiment One

Does cruel vs good prison treatment influence punishment satisfaction, and attributions of deserved punishment/blame/recommended prison time? And is this due to malicious satisfaction?

5.2. Introduction & Rationale

As mentioned in the previous section the broader research questions which are addressed by Experiment One are the first and the third. The first regards the extent to which attributions of blame and punishment are motivated by retributive (i.e., desert based) considerations and the third whether they are motivated by malicious satisfaction. To operationalise the main research questions, we asked whether the type of prison treatment (cruel vs good) could have an effect on punitive and blame attributions, as well as punishment satisfaction (i.e., how satisfied participants were by the type of treatment). In order to examine these claims, an experiment was designed that simultaneously tests whether punitive attributions can be mitigated in line with the just deserts notion (hence people would maintain balance and proportionality in their attributions), and which also examines the role of punishment satisfaction in this process. For the first part, the experiment tested whether cruel prison treatment can mitigate attributions of blame and punishment. For the second part, the experiment tested whether punishment satisfaction can be influenced by the cruel prison treatment of perpetrators. The upcoming discussion focused on whether the results can be better interpreted by retributive considerations, or by the notion of malicious satisfaction.

It was predicted that, in line with the just deserts claim, described cruel treatment in prison should lead participants to offer less punishment and blame than when prison treatment was not described as cruel (but, rather, comfortable). The rationale here is that participants would perceive cruel prison treatment as a form of deserved punishment on top of the fact that the offender has been imprisoned for his/her offence. In this case, it was expected that the degree of punitive and blame attributions should be mitigated, since some degree of punishment has already been dispensed.

It was also predicted that described cruel treatment in prison should lead participants to be more satisfied compared to participants that were informed of good prison treatment. This is because sentiments of malicious satisfaction that can be elicited by the cruel type of treatment. Finally, a peripheral research question which stems from the first central research question and which is addressed by all the experiments regards the extent to which the severity of a perpetration can influence attributions of blame and punishment. This question appears in all
nine experiments. Here, it was predicted that participants in the high severity condition would attribute more blame and punishment compared to participants in the low severity condition. This is because of the proportional nature of retributive thinking; the amount of deserved punishment should be in proportion to the gravity of the offence.

5.3. Method

Design

This experiment used an independent measures (2x2) factorial design. There were four conditions corresponding to the two levels of each independent variable. The first independent variable was prison treatment (good prison treatment vs cruel prison treatment), and the second severity of crime (low vs high severity). Each participant was presented with a vignette describing a crime and participated only in one of the four conditions. The independent variables were manipulated by using different vignette versions (further details of these versions are provided in table 5.1). Participants then provided scores on the dependent variables which were rating scales that required respondents to attribute deserved punishment (i.e. how much punishment does the perpetrator deserve for his actions: measured on a rating scale ranging from 1=none at all, to 7= extremely severe); deserved blame (i.e. how severely does he deserve to be blamed for his action: measured on a rating scale ranging from 1=no blame to 7=extremely severely); punishment satisfaction (i.e. how satisfied are you with the perpetrator’s punishment: measured on a rating scale ranging from 1=not at all satisfied to 7= extremely satisfied); and recommended prison time (i.e. how much time should the perpetrator spend in prison? : measured on a rating scale ranging from 1=none to 10= death penalty). All the scales of the dependent variables were treated as parametric; hence the main effects of the two independent variables on the four dependent variables were examined by conducting a 2x2 analysis of variance (ANOVA) for each dependent variable.

Other measures: The experiment also utilised three scales for exploratory correlational analysis. A social comparison scale (Allan & Gilbert 1995), which comprised 8 items and assessed how superior or inferior one feels in comparison to others; the CAST Sadism scale (Buckels & Paulhus 2014) which comprises 18 items and assesses sadistic tendencies; and an empathy concern scale (Davis 1998) which comprises 8 items and assesses tendencies towards being empathic (details of these scales can be found in the methodology chapter). The first two scales were chosen because of their pertinence to our discussion about punishment, relative standing, and sadism, while the second was chosen because of Cohen’s (2011) claim that

16 The death penalty was used instead of life imprisonment, to fully represent retribution as a desert-based theory. For example, in Kant’s version of retribution if someone takes a life, he/she deserves to be punished by the death penalty.
sadism is solely pertinent to the lack of empathy. Overall, the scales were picked in order to assess any interesting correlations with the dependent variables and especially deserved punishment ratings.

**Apparatus/Materials**

The only material utilised for this study was an online questionnaire that was designed and disseminated through the Qualtrics platform which is an online platform dedicated to the design and administration of surveys. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four different conditions in line with the combination of the two independent variables: severity of crime and prison treatment. The vignette for the low severity type of crime described a perpetrator who stole a woman’s purse by hitting her. Participants were also informed that the perpetrator was arrested and will spend 8 months in prison. Participants that came across a high severity type of crime vignette were presented with a scenario in which the perpetrator rapes and murders a woman. They were also informed that the perpetrator was arrested and will receive a sentence of 9 years in prison. The other independent variable described two different versions of prison treatment. Participants were either informed that the perpetrator will spend his time in a prison where conditions are good (i.e., own cell, good food, internet facilities etc.), or cruel (i.e., the perpetrator will be constantly beaten by other inmates, living in fear, crowded/dirty cells etc.) A full description of the vignettes used for this experiment is provided in table 5.1.

**Table 5.1 Vignettes used in Experiment One**

<table>
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<th>Vignettes</th>
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<td><strong>Low severity/Good Prison Treatment</strong></td>
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<td>‘Mary was walking down the road after finishing work and was suddenly attacked by a man who hit her and then stole her purse. He was later apprehended by police. The man had to spend 8 months in jail for this action. While in jail he had his own room and spent most of his time exercising, watching television, and socializing with other inmates. In general, the conditions for inmates in the particular prison were very good with inmates having their own cells and many other facilities such as internet, televisions, good food and spacious cells’.</td>
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<th><strong>High Severity/Good Prison Treatment</strong></th>
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‘Mary was walking down the road after finishing work and was suddenly attacked by a man who abducted her. After driving her to an isolated location he raped and then killed her by stabbing her. The rapist was arrested and spent 9 years in jail. While in jail he spent most of his time exercising, reading books, and socializing with other inmates. In general, the conditions for inmates in the particular prison were very good with inmates having their own cells and many other facilities such as internet, televisions, good food and spacious cells’.

**Low Severity/Cruel Prison Treatment**

‘Mary was walking down the road after finishing work and was suddenly attacked by a man who hit her and then stole her purse. He was later apprehended by police. The man had to spend 8 months in jail for this action. While in jail the attacker was beaten up by other inmates and spent most of his time in jail in fear of further attacks. In general, the conditions in this particular prison were not very good for inmates, since the cells were crowded and prisoners did not enjoy many facilities offered by other prisons (such as internet, good food, own cells, television etc.).’

**High Severity/Cruel Prison Treatment**

‘Mary was walking down the road after finishing work and was suddenly attacked by a man who abducted her. After driving her to an isolated location he raped her and then killed her by stabbing her. The rapist was arrested and spent 9 years in jail. While in jail the rapist was apprehended by other inmates who found out about his crime and was severely battered and subjected to torture by them multiple times while doing his prison term. Prison staff had to intervene many times since his life was in danger from the attacks conducted by other inmates. In general, the rapist/murderer spent most of his time in prison in fear of further attacks by other inmates. In addition, the conditions in this particular prison were not very good for inmates, since the cells were crowded and prisoners did not enjoy many facilities offered by other prisons (such as internet, own cells, personal television etc.).’

**Participants**

Participants comprised of a sample (N= 323), that was acquired through acquaintances and social websites where the link for the study was posted. The initial recorded responses were N=380, but due to technical problems with the Qualtrics platform there were 57 missing responses. Out of 323 participants 196 (52.4%) were male and 176 (47.6%), were female. Most participants were between the ages of 18-24(n=128, 27.7%), and 25-34(n=110, 23.8%), followed by those between the age of 35-44 (n= 92, 19.9%), 45-54(n=36, 7.8%), 55-64(n=6, ...
and 65-74 (n=2, 0.4%). Additionally, 6 participants preferred not to answer. Most participants did not have any religious affiliation (n=226, 59.5%), while some were Christians (n=68, 15.3%), agnostic (n=51, 13.4%), of other religious preference (n=20, 5.3%), one was Buddhist (n=1, 0.3%), and 14 (3.7%) had preferred not to provide an answer. Participants’ education varied with 83 (20.8%) having completed up to secondary education (high school/GCSE), 23 of them had technical/vocational education training (6.1%), 84 attended College (22.1%), 73 had been awarded a Bachelor’s Degree (19.2%), 86 a Master’s Degree (22.6%), 19 a PhD (5%), and 12 preferred not to answer (3.2%). In regards to race/ethnicity most participants described themselves as White/Caucasian (n=345, 90.8%), followed by Hispanic/Latinos (n=4, 1.1%), Black (n=2, 0.5%), Asian (n=7, 1.8%), other/not included (n=10, 2.6%), and 12 preferred not to answer (3.2%). Appropriate sample sizes for achieving the desired power levels are straightforward to calculate. For this study, I used an online power calculator (G*Power 3.1) to calculate an appropriate sample size for a two-way independent Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) that tests main and interaction effects for two independent variables. For this type of design, Cohen (1969) argued that a small effect size is roughly \( f=0.1 \), a medium effect size \( f=0.25 \), and a large effect size \( f=0.40 \). The parameters I had inputted were the \( \alpha \)-level=0.05, a medium effect size \( f=0.25 \), and acceptable statistical power (1-\( \beta \)=0.8). The output from G*Power 3.1, indicated that in order to achieve a statistical power of 0.8, we would need a sample size of 269 people. Indeed, all nine experiments conducted for this study achieved this recommended sample size.

**Procedure**

After opening the survey’s link, participants were presented with a consent form which succinctly explained the purpose of the study and noted the relevant ethical considerations. Participants were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of the study and were also provided with ways of contacting the experimenter should they want to withdraw their responses at any time, or if they wanted to check the results of this study. Following that, participants were asked to confirm that they are more than 18 years of age and are freely willing to participate in this study. After giving their consent participants were presented with demographic questions and were asked to provide their gender, age, level of education, and religious affiliation. Following this, participants were presented with one of the four vignettes that created the experimental conditions, to which they were randomly assigned by the online survey software. After the presentation of the vignette participants were asked to attribute deserved punishment, blame, and recommended time in prison for the perpetrator using the rating scales as described earlier. In addition, they were asked to express their degree of
satisfaction with the perpetrator’s punishment. Finally, they were asked to complete the sadism, empathy and social comparison scales, and were thanked for their participation.

5.4. Results and Discussion

5.4.1. Attributed Punishment

A two-way factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to consider the main effects of the two independent variables (severity and prison treatment), and the interaction effect between prison treatment and severity on the dependent variable (i.e., attributed punishment). The main effect of severity was the only statistically significant effect $F(1, 319) = 162.2, p<0.001$, partial $\eta^2=0.337$, while there was no main effect of prison treatment $F(1, 319) = 0.65, p=0.418$, partial $\eta^2=0.002$, or an interaction effect between the two independent variables $F(1, 319) = 0.55, p=0.456$, partial $\eta^2=0.002$.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Severity</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$N$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>76</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Murder/Rape</td>
<td>6.03</td>
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<td>88</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruel prison treatment</td>
<td>Attack/Theft</td>
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<td>1.02</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Murder/Rape</td>
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<td>80</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>Attack/Theft</td>
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<td>155</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Murder/Rape</td>
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<td>1.345</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>1.476</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2 Mean attributed punishment ratings as a function of severity of crime and conditions in prison.
The findings indicate that severity of crime had an effect on punitive attributions with severe crimes being punished significantly more than low severity crimes for both levels of prison treatment. This can be seen by examining differences in mean ratings for attributed punishment. The mean attributed punishment for the good prison treatment/low severity condition ($M=4.22$, $95\%\text{CIs}=3.95, 4.49$, $SD=1.04$, $n=76$) is much lower compared to that for the good prison treatment/high severity condition ($M=6.03$, $95\%\text{CIs}=5.78, 6.28$, $SD=1.19$, $n=88$). Similarly, the mean rating for attributed punishment in the cruel prison treatment/low severity condition ($M=4.21$, $95\%\text{CIs}=3.94, 4.48$, $SD=1.02$, $n=79$) is lower if compared to the cruel prison treatment/high severity condition ($M=5.82$, $95\%\text{CIs}=5.56, 6.09$, $SD=1.49$, $n=80$).

It can be concluded from these results that participants’ decisions about punishment were not influenced by whether or not a criminal faces cruel circumstances in prison, but only by the severity of the criminal’s actions. Table 5.2 and Figure 5.1 show the mean differences of

**Figure 5.1** Mean attributed punishment rating for each type of prison treatment by the level of severity.

**Discussion**

The findings indicate that severity of crime had an effect on punitive attributions with severe crimes being punished significantly more than low severity crimes for both levels of prison treatment. This can be seen by examining differences in mean ratings for attributed punishment. The mean attributed punishment for the good prison treatment/low severity condition ($M=4.22$, $95\%\text{CIs}=3.95, 4.49$, $SD=1.04$, $n=76$) is much lower compared to that for the good prison treatment/high severity condition ($M=6.03$, $95\%\text{CIs}=5.78, 6.28$, $SD=1.19$, $n=88$). Similarly, the mean rating for attributed punishment in the cruel prison treatment/low severity condition ($M=4.21$, $95\%\text{CIs}=3.94, 4.48$, $SD=1.02$, $n=79$) is lower if compared to the cruel prison treatment/high severity condition ($M=5.82$, $95\%\text{CIs}=5.56, 6.09$, $SD=1.49$, $n=80$). It can be concluded from these results that participants’ decisions about punishment were not influenced by whether or not a criminal faces cruel circumstances in prison, but only by the severity of the criminal’s actions. Table 5.2 and Figure 5.1 show the mean differences of
attributed punishment ratings for all the experimental conditions along with the total marginal means.

According to the predictions that were made earlier we expected that participants who were given information about cruel prison treatment would attribute less punishment compared to those that received information about good prison treatment. We also predicted that participants would punish in proportion to the severity of the perpetration. The results supported only the latter prediction.

The findings certainly corroborate the just deserts claim in terms of participants punishing in proportion to the severity of crime, but do not corroborate the same claim when it comes to cruel prison treatment. It seems that participants neglected the fact that the perpetrator was subjected to what are considered nowadays cruel and inhumane prison conditions. It may be argued that the outrageousness of the crime especially in the high severity condition (murder/rape) caused participants to neglect the inhumane prison condition as a mitigating factor for their punitive attributions. However, if this were the case, we could expect a significant effect for the low severity type of crime instead; yet this was not observed. How can it be explained that participants’ punishment attributions were observed to be insensitive to information relating to inhumane and cruel practices?

One possible explanation for the results may be that in line with Nietzsche’s earlier assertions, cruel treatment elicits malicious satisfaction in punishment. The satisfaction felt when a perpetrator suffers in inhumane conditions does not allow the principles of just deserts and retribution to work as they would normally do. That is to say that inhumane prison treatment was not taken to be a form of punishment in a way that the perpetrator ‘paid’ at least some of his ‘debt’ for his offence. We shall come back and examine these explanations in more detail when discussing the results of the ‘punishment satisfaction’ dependent variable.

Continuing, exploratory correlational research was also conducted to investigate any interesting links between attributed punishment, sadism, inferiority complexes and empathy. Results showed that none of the scales correlated with punishment attributions. This may suggest that deciding about punishment may be irrelevant to certain aspects of one’s character (how empathic one is, one’s self-perception of status, or whether one has sadistic tendencies). The correlation matrix is shown in table 5.3.
Correlations

<table>
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<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>2. Empath</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>26.68</td>
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<td>271</td>
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<td>3. Sadism</td>
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<td>-.46**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>42.44</td>
<td>12.54</td>
<td>286</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Social/Comp</td>
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<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td></td>
<td>63.02</td>
<td>15.68</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01

Table 5.3 Inter item correlations between attributed punishment, empathic concern, sadistic tendencies, and self-perceived status.

The only significant correlation found was a negative correlation between empathy and sadism $r=-0.46$, $n=271$, $p<.01$ suggesting that the more empathic one is the less sadistic tendencies they will display. There are no correlations between the variable of interest (punishment attributions) and any other variables. These results may tentatively suggest that attributing punishment for crime scenarios for which the information is given with the form of vignettes is not linked with feelings of inferiority, sadistic tendencies, or empathic concern.

I did not find specific official paper regarding published norms for the scales. I found other studies and compared the current’s study’s scores with them. Moreover, some papers calculated scores differently (i.e., they used the mean of accumulated item scores rather than the accumulation of scores for each item). Where this occurred, I recalculated this study’s scores by dividing the result with the number of items in each scale. The results of the CAST sadism scale were slightly positively skewed while they were slightly higher to that of standard published norms of other studies; for example, Min et al. (2019) reported $M=2.20$, $N=624$, $SD=0.97$. The score for this study was $M=42.43$ because I did not use the mean of accumulative scores. The recomputed score is $M=3.20$ which is slightly higher to Min et al. The results of the empathic concern scale were slightly negatively skewed and the results were higher to published norms; for example, De Corte et.al (2007) reported $M=18.05$, $SD=4.23$, $N=651$. The results fort the Social Comparison scale were slightly negatively skewed and were close to the norms of the original study (Allen and Gilbert 1995). Allen and Gilbert reported $M=64.67$, $SD=11.65$ in a sample of $N=180$.

5.4.2. Attributed Blame

A two-way factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to compare the main effects of the two independent variables (i.e., severity and prison treatment), and the interaction effect between prison treatment and severity on the dependent variable (i.e., attributed blame). The main effect of severity was the only statistically significant effect $F(1, 319) =87.2$, $p<0.01$, partial $\eta^2 =0.215$, while there were no main effects of prison treatment $F$
(1, 319) = 0.054, \( p=0.817 \), partial \( \eta^2=0.000 \) or an interaction effect \( F (1, 319) = 1.58, p=0.209 \), partial \( \eta^2=0.005 \) between the two independent variables.

<table>
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<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>4.68</td>
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<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Murder/Rape</td>
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<td>1.02</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.45</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>164</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cruel Prison Treatment</td>
<td>Attack/Theft</td>
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<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Murder/Rape</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.37</td>
<td>1.43</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Attack/Theft</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Murder/Rape</td>
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<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>1.36</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.4 Mean deserved blame ratings as a function of severity of crime and conditions in prison.
Figure 5.2 Mean attributed blame ratings for each type of prison treatment by the level of severity.

Discussion

The findings suggest that decisions about deserved blame were mainly made based on the severity of crime with severe crimes being attributed with more blame ($M = 6.01$, $SD = 1.24$), than low severity crimes ($M = 4.75$, $SD = 1.24$) in terms of total mean scores. Similar mean differences can be observed when looking into all the conditions. The mean score for the good prison treatment/low severity condition ($M = 4.68$, $95\% CI s = 4.41, 4.95$, $SD = 1.15$, $n = 76$) is lower compared to the good prison treatment/high severity condition ($M = 6.11$, $95\% CI s = 5.86, 6.36$, $SD = 1.02$, $n = 88$). Similarly, the mean score for attributed blame in the cruel prison treatment/low severity condition ($M = 4.82$, $95\% CI s = 4.55, 5.09$, $SD = 1.32$, $n = 79$) is lower compared to the mean score for the cruel prison treatment/high severity condition ($M = 5.91$, $SD = 1.32$, $95\% CI s = 5.64, 6.17$, $n = 80$). Differences in mean scores as along with the total mean scores for each of the two independent variables can be viewed in table 5.4 and figure 5.2.

As with the previous experiment with the attribution of punishment, only the prediction that the severity of crime would have an effect on attributions of blame has been supported. It can be concluded from these results that participants’ decisions about deserved blame were not influenced by whether or not a criminal faces cruel circumstances in prison, but only by the severity of the criminal’s actions. Again, the results can be interpreted in like manner to attributions of punishment; cruel prison treatment was not perceived as an amount of blame that should be ‘deducted’ from the overall deserved amount of blame. The results here also indicate that blame does behave like punishment and provide some support for the view that it is punitive in nature. However, in order to make such a claim we need to show that there is consistency in terms of both concepts behaving similarly across all nine experiments. I shall be making some comments on the behaviour of attributions of punishment in relation to attributions of blame within each experiment, but this peripheral research question (i.e., whether blame is a punitive feeling) will be more thoroughly discussed in Chapter Eight.
Correlations

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>4</th>
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<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
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<td>12.53</td>
<td>286</td>
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<td>3.Social/Comparison</td>
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<td>0.08</td>
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<td></td>
<td>63.01</td>
<td>15.67</td>
<td>284</td>
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<td>4.Empathy</td>
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<td>4.66</td>
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</table>

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01

Table 5.5 Inter item correlations between attributed blame, sadism, social comparison, and empathic concern scales.

Similarly, to when the dependent variable was punishment attributions the only significant Pearson’s correlation here was a negative correlation between empathy and sadism r=-0.46, p<.01, suggesting that the more empathic one is, the less sadistic tendencies one shows. However, there are no significant correlations with respect to our variable of interest, in this case deserved blame.

5.4.3. Recommended Prison Time

A two-way factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to compare the main effects of the two independent variables (i.e., severity and prison treatment), and the interaction effect between prison treatment and severity on the dependent variable (i.e., recommended prison time). The main effect of severity was the only statistically significant effect $F (1, 319) =932.1, p<.01$, partial $\eta^2 =0.745$, while there were no main effects of prison treatment $F (1, 319) = 1.33, p=0.25$, partial $\eta^2= 0.004$ or an interaction effect $F (1,319) =0.331, p=0.565$, partial $\eta^2= 0.01$ between the two independent variables.

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</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Murder/Rape</td>
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<td>88</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>164</td>
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<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Murder/Rape</td>
<td>8.12</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Attack/Theft</td>
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<td>Murder/Rape</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.86</td>
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<td>323</td>
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Table 5.6 Mean recommended prison time ratings as a function of severity of crime and conditions in prison.

![Graph showing mean attributed recommended prison time for each type of prison treatment by the level of severity.](image)

**Figure 5.3** Mean attributed recommended prison time for each type of prison treatment by the level of severity.

**Discussion**

The findings suggest that decisions about recommended prison time were mainly made based on the severity of crime with severe crimes being attributed more prison time ($M=8.17$, $SD=1.6$), than low severity crimes ($M=3.36$, $SD=1.16$) in terms of their total mean scores. Similarly, mean ratings for all the four conditions indicate the recommended attributed time was lower for low severity type of crimes. The mean recommended prison time rating for the good prison treatment/low severity condition ($M=3.50$, $95\%CIs=3.18$, $3.81$, $SD=1.01$, $n=76$) was lower than the mean rating for the good prison treatment/high severity condition ($M=8.21$, $95\%CIs=7.92$, $8.51$, $SD=1.21$, $n=88$). Similarly, the mean recommended prison time rating for cruel prison treatment/low severity condition ($M=3.22$, $95\%CIs=2.91$, $3.54$, $SD=1.95$, $n=79$) was lower compared to the mean rating for the cruel prison treatment/high severity condition ($M=8.12$, $95\%CIs=7.81$, $8.43$, $SD=1.95$, $n=80$). These mean ratings
along with marginal mean ratings can be viewed in table 5.6 and figure 5.3. It can be concluded from these results that participants’ decisions about recommended prison time were not influenced by whether or not a criminal faces cruel circumstances in prison, but only by the severity of the criminal’s actions. Therefore, similarly to attributed punishment and blame, these results supported the prediction that participants would attribute prison time in proportion to the severity of the perpetration. On the other hand, in like manner to attributions of punishment and blame, the results did not support the prediction that cruel prison treatment would mitigate attributions of recommended prison time.

**Correlations**

<table>
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Note: *p<.05, **p<.01

**Table 5.7** Inter item correlations between recommended prison time ratings, sadism, empathic concern, and social comparison scales.

As we can observe in Table 5.7 there is a significant negative correlation between sadism and prison time but the effect size is really small with r=-0.12 p<.05. This is surprising since it would mean that the more sadistic tendencies someone has, the less recommended prison time he/she would suggest for the perpetrator. On the other hand, the effect size is really small, suggesting that further investigation by conducting regression analysis is not really necessary. Moreover, a correlation between empathy and sadism is also evident here again due to the same participants having responded to the same variables17.

**5.4.4. Punishment Satisfaction**

A two-way factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to compare the main effects of the two independent variables (i.e., severity and prison treatment), and the interaction effect between prison treatment and severity on the dependent variable (i.e., punishment satisfaction). The results revealed that there were significant main effects of both prison treatment $F(1, 319) = 9.99, p<.01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.03$, and severity $F(1, 319) = 16.34, p<.01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.049$, as well as an interaction effect (see Figure 5.4) between prison treatment and severity $F(1, 319) = 4.95, p<.05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.015$.

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17 While participants were presented with different manipulations of the IVs, the scales on sadism, social comparison and empathy were completed by all. Thus, correlation between these scales remained the same across all the other dependent variables (punishment, blame, time and punishment satisfaction).
Figure 5.4: Plot showing the interaction between severity of crime and prison treatment on punishment satisfaction.

A simple effects analysis was conducted to further investigate the interaction effect between prison treatment and severity of crime (the effect can be seen in Figure 5.1). The analysis revealed that the effect of the variable prison treatment is only significant for the high severity conditions $F (1, 319) = 15.10, p < .001$, and not for the low severity conditions $F (1, 319) = 0.42, p = 0.516$. 
<table>
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<th>N</th>
</tr>
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<td>1.40</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High (Murder/Rape)</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>88</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruel Prison Treatment</td>
<td>Low (Attack/Theft)</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High (Murder/Rape)</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Low (Attack/Theft)</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High (Murder/Rape)</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.8 Mean punishment satisfaction ratings as a function of severity and prison treatment.

![Graph showing mean punishment satisfaction ratings](image)

**Figure 5.5** Mean attributed punishment satisfaction ratings for each type of prison treatment by the level of severity.
Discussion

Indeed, while overall punishment satisfaction was greater when the offender received cruel prison treatment ($M=3.91, SD=1.61$) than good prison treatment ($M=3.3, SD=1.69$), this effect was only evident for the high severity type of crime than the low severity crime (see mean values in Table 5.8 and Figure 5.5)

These findings show that participants were more satisfied with cruel prison conditions when the crime was more severe. It may be argued that the outrageousness of the crime in the high severity conditions caused this increase in punishment satisfaction. The simple effects analysis shows that participants were significantly more satisfied with cruel prison conditions only when the type of crime was of high severity. Table 5.8 shows the differences in mean ratings.

Overall, these results indicate that people do experience more satisfaction in punishment when they know that a perpetrator has suffered cruel and inhumane conditions in prison, and as the simple effects analysis has revealed this is significant only for the high severity type of crime. This only partially supports our initial prediction which was that participants will be more satisfied with cruel prison treatment overall. The interaction effect suggests that punishment satisfaction may relate to the severity of the perpetration.

Results therefore may indeed tentatively support Nietzsche’s original claims that there is a link between punishment and experiencing malicious satisfaction but only when the severity of crime is high rather than low. The term malicious satisfaction is pertinent here because we would not have expected participants to be more pleased when they know that perpetrators will experience inhumane/cruel treatment. After all, most people would agree that subjecting someone to such treatment is wrong and inhumane. A possible explanation for this effect not being significant for a low severity type of crime is that the nature of the crime did not elicit the necessary emotional state of anger or disgust that may have provided a basis upon which malicious satisfaction could be experienced. In other words, cruel treatment for low severity type of crimes seems over-harsh and does not trigger feelings of malicious satisfaction.

The higher level of satisfaction with inhumane conditions in prison offers some support for Nietzsche’s ideas. It may also be suggested that the purpose of punishment is to make the perpetrator suffer and, in this case, cruel prison conditions provide the means for this suffering to be realized. It is exactly because punishment is perceived as causing one to suffer, that it has a malicious element. In addition, as Nietzsche would have argued, this enjoyment in the suffering of others (in this case the perpetrator), puts us in a superior position in relation to
him/her. Thus, there is satisfaction both in the suffering of the perpetrator, and in the fact that cruel prison treatment ‘humiliates’ them. And to humiliate someone, is to put them in a lower position of power compared to another.

On the other hand, these results can also be interpreted through the notion of just deserts. On this view, participants simply expressed their satisfaction in that the perpetrator received what he ‘deserved’ and in the form of cruel treatment. Arguably, though, accepting cruel treatment as a form of deserved punishment is more congruent with experiencing malicious satisfaction, rather than satisfaction in just deserts because of the element of condoning cruel punitive practices. This explanation fits with Nietzsche’s assertion that people perceive punishment through desert-based considerations, but these are only but the vehicle to experience malicious satisfaction. In other words, expressing satisfaction in ‘he/she got what he/she deserved’ is only but a guise of malicious feelings. Therefore, it is not necessary for these results to be explained by either a desert-based or a malicious satisfaction interpretation alone but they can be accounted simultaneously be taking Nietzsche’s ideas into account.

Continuing, correlational analysis has not revealed any interesting correlations between punishment satisfaction and any of the scales that were utilized for this experiment. It could perhaps have been expected that sadism would have correlated with punishment satisfaction, but this was not the case. It can only be speculated here, that malicious satisfaction occurs independently of sadistic tendencies, and that it is a normal corollary of thinking about punishment in most people. The relevant correlations can be viewed in Table 5.9.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
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<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Punishment/Satisfaction</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>1.70</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sadism</td>
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<td>12.54</td>
<td>286</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>26.68</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>271</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Social/Comparison</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>63.02</td>
<td>15.68</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01

Table 5.9 Inter-item correlations between punishment satisfaction ratings, sadistic tendencies, empathic concern, and social comparison scales.

It has to be noted that although the results regarding the effect of severity were in line with the initial predictions, they may have been also influenced by a design limitation. The actual prison time was provided to participants in the description of the vignette (8 months for the low severity crime -and 9 years for the high severity crime). This may have acted as a
confound to the results. This possible limitation presented the need to design a follow up experiment (Experiment Two) with the aim of clarifying the results of the current experiment.

**Experiment Two**

**Does cruel vs good prison treatment influence punishment satisfaction, and attributions of deserved punishment/blame/recommended prison time? And is this due to malicious satisfaction?**

5.5. Introduction

Experiment Two is similar in design to Experiment One, but with three alterations. The first difference between this experiment and the first was that participants were asked to imagine that they were the victims of the perpetration, in an attempt to make this story more personal to the participants. The purpose was to examine whether more personal scenarios could produce different results compared to those of Experiment One. Moreover, this experiment addressed the design limitation identified in the previous experiment. As explained in the previous section, participants in the previous experiment were given information on the sentencing of the perpetrators for both the low severity (8 months), and high severity type of crimes (9 years). This information may have affected the results of the effects of severity on the dependent variables and this presented the need for these results to be clarified. Thus, the second difference between this and the previous experiment was that no such information on sentencing time was provided to the participants. The third alteration is that the high severity scenario was changed to theft/stabbing, from rape/murder. In these ways Experiment Two, while being very similar to the previous experiment, is not an exact replication.

All the research questions and predictions are identical to those in Experiment One. The first central research question regards the extent to which attributions of blame and punishment are motivated by retributive (i.e., desert based) considerations and the third whether they are motivated by malicious satisfaction. We predicted that due to retributive considerations that there will be a main effect of the severity of the perpetration on attributions of blame and punishment. We also predicted that information on cruel prison treatment will mitigate attributions of blame and punishment. This is again due to retributive considerations. Participants in the cruel prison treatment condition should attribute less blame and punishment compared to participants in the good prison treatment condition; because they will consider that by being subjected to cruel prison treatment a perpetrator has ‘paid’ some amount of his ‘debt’. Although there was no evidence for this in Experiment One, here the participant is asked to imagine they are the victim, and this was the crucial new element it was thought
might provoke the predicted effect. We have also predicted that there will be a main effect of prison treatment on punishment satisfaction, with participants expressing more satisfaction with cruel prison treatment, rather than good prison treatment as was partially supported by Experiment One.

5.6. Method

Design

As with Experiment One, the design for this experiment was an independent measures (2x2) factorial design. There were four conditions corresponding to the two levels of each independent variable. The first independent variable was prison treatment (good prison treatment vs cruel prison treatment), and the second severity of crime (low vs high severity). Each participant was presented with a vignette describing a crime and participated only in one of the four conditions. Unlike Experiment One, there was no information given on prison time and participants were asked to imagine that they were the victims of the perpetration. Thus, the vignettes used for Experiment Two did not describe any time frame for a given sentence but only informed participants that the perpetrator was arrested and will spend time in prison. In this way the confound present in Experiment One (information on prison time) was removed. Participants then provided scores on the dependent variables, which were the same rating scales utilized in the first experiment which required respondents to attribute deserved punishment, deserved blame and punishment satisfaction. Recommended prison time was excluded from the analysis due to problems in coding data (participants were asked to type in years and months but most only gave a single number).

Other Measures: the scales utilised were the CAST Sadism scale mentioned above; a just world scale (Dalbert et al. 2014), which comprises of 7 items and assesses the degree to which one believes that the world is a fair place and justice prevails; and a locus of control scale (Rotter 1966) that assesses whether one is more characterised by internal locus of control (i.e. that one feels more responsible for the outcomes in one’s life and more inclined to view them as determined by one’s actions) or an external locus of control (i.e. that fate or significant others influence one’s life more than one’s own decisions). The locus of control scale was used under the assumption that individuals with internal locus of control will have inferiority complexes in line with Adler’s assertions and therefore may be more punitive. The just world scale was used under the assumption that individuals with a high belief that the world is a just place where everyone gets what they deserve; may be more punitive in order to uphold this belief.
Participants

Participants comprised of an online sample (N=268), that was acquired through Amazon’s Mechanical Turk, which is an online platform for finding participants for any type of survey. Out of this sample 158 (59%) participants were male and 109(40.7%) were female. One participant had preferred not to answer. The most common age range was between 25 and 34 (n=124, 46.3%), followed by those between 35 to 44 (n=54, 20.1%), 18-24 (n=39, 14.6%), 45-54 (n=24, 9%), 55-64 (n=19, 7.1%), 65-74 (n=7, 2.6%), and one participant preferred not to answer (n=1, 0.4%). Most participants described themselves as being White/Caucasian (n=196, 69.4%), followed by Black (n=24, 9%), Asian (n=38, 14.2%), Hispanic/Latino (n=15, 5.6%), other (n=3, 1.1%), and 2 preferred not to answer (0.7%). The majority of participants possessed a Bachelor’s degree (n=105, 39.2%), followed by those who completed high school (n=67, 25%), those with a Master’s Degree (n=33, 12.3%), those with technical/vocational training (n=17, 6.3%), and those with a PhD (n=3, 1.1%). One of the participants preferred not to answer. Finally, many of the participants reported that they are Christians (n=103, 39.6%), followed by those that did not adhere to any religion (n=60, 22.4%), or being agnostic (n=52, 19.4%). A minority reported being Muslim (n=4, 1.5%), Buddhist (n=3, 1.1%), other religion (n=35, 13.1%), and 8 participants did not give any information on their faith (3%). Appropriate sample sizes for achieving the desired power levels are straightforward to calculate. For this study, I used an online power calculator (G*Power 3.1) to calculate an appropriate sample size for a two-way independent Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) that tests main and interaction effects for two independent variables. For this type of design, Cohen (1969) argued that a small effect size is roughly $f=0.1$, a medium effect size $f=0.25$, and a large effect size $f=0.40$. The parameters I had inputted were the $\alpha$-level=0.05, a medium effect size $f=0.25$, and acceptable statistical power ($1-\beta=0.8$). The output from G*Power 3.1, indicated that in order to achieve a statistical power of 0.8, we would need a sample size of 269 people. Indeed, all nine experiments conducted for this study achieved this recommended sample size.

Apparatus/Materials

As in all of the experiments the only material utilised for this study was an online questionnaire that was designed and disseminated through the Qualtrics platform which is an online platform dedicated to the design and administration of surveys. Participants were assigned to one of four different conditions in line with the combination of the two independent variables; severity of crime and prison treatment. Essentially, the vignettes for Experiment Two were very similar to those used for Experiment One. In the low severity
condition participants were presented with a vignette that stated that the perpetrator attacked them and stole their wallet, while the high severity condition informed them that someone stabbed them and stole their wallet. The stabbing resulted in serious injuries and victims would have to be hospitalised for several weeks. The good vs cruel prison conditions were as described for experiment one. A full description of the vignettes used for Experiment Two is provided in Table 10.

**Table 5.8** Vignettes used in Experiment Two.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vignettes</th>
<th>Low severity/Good prison treatment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Imagine that you were walking down the road after finishing work and a man attacked you, hit you and stole your wallet. Fortunately, you did not suffer any major injuries. Your attacker was later apprehended by police and will serve time in prison. You find out that your attacker will be spending time in a prison where conditions are very good with inmates having their own cells and many other facilities such as internet, television, good food and spacious cells’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low severity/Cruel prison treatment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Imagine that you were walking down the road after finishing work and a man attacked you, hit you and stole your wallet. Fortunately, you did not suffer any major injuries. Your attacker was later apprehended by police and will serve time in prison. You find out that your attacker will be spending time in a prison where conditions are very bad with cells being really dirty and crowded and no facilities offered to prisoners (such as internet, television etc.). Moreover, the prison has high levels of violence, and prisoners are often assaulted and physically abused’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High severity/Good prison treatment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Imagine that you were walking down the road after finishing work and a man attacked you, stabbed you and stole your wallet. You suffered serious injuries and had to be hospitalized for several weeks. Your attacker was later apprehended by police and will serve time in prison. You find out that your attacker will be spending time in a prison where conditions are really good with inmates having their own cells and many other facilities such as internet, television, good food and spacious cells’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High severity/cruel prison treatment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
‘Imagine that you were walking down the road after finishing work and a man attacked you, stabbed you and stole your wallet. You had suffered serious injuries and had to be hospitalized for several weeks. Your attacker was later apprehended by police and will serve time in prison. You find out that your attacker will be spending time in a prison where conditions are very bad with cells being really dirty and crowded and no facilities offered to prisoners (such as internet, television etc.). Moreover, the prison has high levels of violence, and prisoners are often assaulted and physically abused’.

Procedure

Participants were presented with the same consent form and demographic questions as in the first experiment, and then presented with a vignette. After reading the vignette participants had to attribute ratings for deserved punishment, deserved blame, and punishment satisfaction. Following that, the participants were asked to complete the sadism, locus of control and just world scales, and were thanked for their participation. At the end for the survey, they also received the necessary code in order to receive pecuniary compensation for their participation. The value of this compensation was £0.50.

5.7. Results and Discussion

5.7.1 Attributed Punishment

A two-way factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to compare the main effects of the two independent variables (i.e., severity and prison treatment), and the interaction effect between prison treatment and severity on the dependent variable (i.e., attributed punishment). The main effect of severity was the only statistically significant effect $F (1, 264) = 43.03, p<0.01$, partial $\eta^2 =0.14$, while there were no main effects of prison treatment or an interaction effect $F (1, 264) = 0.004, p= 0.952$, partial $\eta^2= 0.000$ between the two independent variables. However, the effect of prison treatment approached significance with $F (1, 264) = 3.576, p=0.060$, partial $\eta^2 =0.013$. These effects can also be identified by comparing the mean ratings presented in Table 5.11 and Figure 5.6.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prison Treatment</th>
<th>Severity</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good Prison Treatment</td>
<td>Low Severity (Theft)</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity (Stabbing)</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.37</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruel Prison Treatment</td>
<td>Low Severity (Theft)</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity (Stabbing)</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Low Severity (Theft)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity (Stabbing)</td>
<td>5.69</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5.9** Mean Recommended punishment ratings as a function of severity of crime and conditions in prison.

**Figure 5.6** Mean attributed punishment ratings for each type of prison treatment by the level of severity.
Discussion

As predicted, and line with findings in the previous experiment, participants attributed more punishment for the severe type of crime. However, contrary to the prediction made in the introduction, prison treatment did not mitigate punitive attributions, although in this experiment the effect of prison treatment did approach a significant level. Indeed, table 5.11 shows that the participants attributed slightly less punishment when prison conditions were cruel. The mean rating for attributed punishment in the cruel prison treatment/low severity condition ($M= 4.67, 95\% CI_{s} = 4.40, 4.94, SD= 1.27, n= 65$) is lower than the mean rating for the good prison treatment/low severity condition ($M= 4.92, 95\% CI_{s} = 4.65, 5.19, SD= 1.10, n= 67$). Similarly, the mean rating for attributed punishment in the cruel prison treatment/high severity condition ($M= 5.55, 95\% CI_{s}= 5.29, 5.82, SD= 1.09, n= 68$) is less compared to the mean rating for the good prison treatment/high severity condition ($M= 5.82, 95\% CI_{s} = 5.55, 6.08, SD= 0.94, n= 68$).

This can potentially be attributed to the fact that having no information about the duration of a sentence may have caused participants to attribute punishment in line with the just deserts notion. However, this interpretation is tentative since the effect of prison treatment only approached a significant level. Overall, these results show the importance of retributive considerations on attributions of punishment. This is because the participants attributed punishment in proportion to the severity of the crime, but we also observed an almost significant effect of prison treatment.

Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$N$</th>
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<td>2 Sadism</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Just World Scale</td>
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<td>0.19**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Locus Of Control</td>
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</table>

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01

Table 5.10 Inter item correlations between punishment ratings, sadism, belief in a just world, and locus of control scales.

Continuing, correlational analysis did not show any significant relationships between attributed punishment and the scales that were utilized. There was a significant positive correlation $r=0.19, p<0.01$ between the just world scale and the CAST scale which measured
sadistic tendencies, indicating that the more one believes that the world is a just place where everyone gets what they deserve, the more sadistic tendencies they may have. The results of the CAST sadism scale were slightly positively skewed while they were slightly lower to that of standard norms of other studies; for example, Min et al. (2019) reported $M=2.20$, $N=624$, $SD=0.97$. The score for this study was $M=22.02$ because I did not use the mean of accumulative scores. The recomputed score is $M=1.69$ which is slightly lower to Min et al. The results of the locus of control scale were slightly negatively skewed and they were very close to other standard norms; for example, Tong and Wang (2006) reported $M=9.30$, $SD=4.13$, $N=306$. This study reported $M=34.01$ but this was because the response values of 1 and 2 were used as the standard while other studies used the values of 0 and 1. By adjusting this study’s results to these values we acquire a $M=11.01$ which is close to the Tong and Wang (2006) results. The results of the general belief in a just world scale were slightly negatively skewed and were higher to published norms; for example, Dalbert (1999) reported $M=2.65$, $SD=0.93$, $N=214$. The results for this study (recomputed to produce the mean of cumulative scores) are $M=3.55$.

5.7.2 Attributed Blame

A two-way factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to compare the main effects of the two independent variables (i.e., severity and prison treatment), and the interaction effect between condition and severity on the dependent variable (i.e., attributed blame). Both the effects of severity (low/high) $F(1, 264) = 16.597$, $p<.01$ partial $\eta^2 = 0.059$, and condition (good/cruel prison treatment) $F(1, 264) = 6.15$, $p<0.05$ partial $\eta^2 = 0.023$, were significant, while there was no interaction effect between the two $F(1,264) = 0.020$, $p=0.888$, partial $\eta^2= 0.000$. Differences in mean ratings are presented in Table 5.13 and Figure 5.7.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prison Treatment</th>
<th>Severity</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$N$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good Prison Treatment</td>
<td>Low Severity (Theft)</td>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity (Stabbing)</td>
<td>6.23</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.94</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruel Prison Treatment</td>
<td>Low Severity (Theft)</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity (Stabbing)</td>
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<td>1.17</td>
<td>68</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.57</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>133</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Low Severity (Theft)</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>132</td>
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<td></td>
<td>High Severity (Stabbing)</td>
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<td>136</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.11 Mean attributed blame ratings as a function of prison conditions and severity of crime.

![Graph showing mean attributed blame ratings for each type of prison treatment by the level of severity.](Image)

Figure 5.7 Mean attributed blame ratings for each type of prison treatment by the level of severity.
Discussion

It can be seen that attributed blame was lower for the low severity type of crime \((M= 5.44, SD= 1.34)\), compared to a high severity type of crime \((M= 6.05 SD= 1.13)\). At the same time participants attributed more blame to perpetrators when they received good prison treatment \((M= 5.94 SD= 1.15)\), compared to when they received cruel prison treatment \((M= 5.57 SD= 1.37)\). Mean scores of attributed blame were lower when the prison treatment was cruel for both high and low severity type of crimes; the mean score in the cruel prison treatment/low severity condition \((M= 5.24, 95\%CIs= 4.94, 5.54, SD= 1.17, n=65)\) was lower than the one for the good prison treatment/low severity condition \((M= 5.64, 95\%CIs = 5.34, 5.93, SD= 1.17, n= 67)\). In addition, the mean score for attributed punishment was lower in the cruel prison treatment/high severity \((M= 5.88, 95\%CIs= 5.58, 6.17, SD= 1.17, n=68)\), compared to the score in the good prison treatment/high severity: \((M= 6.23, 95\%CIs= 5.94, 6.53, SD= 1.06, n= 68)\). Cruel treatment, therefore, mitigated blame attributions. These results are consistent with the initial prediction that attributions of blame will be mitigated due to desert-based considerations. The results are also consistent with the prediction that participants would attribute blame in proportion with the severity of the perpetration.

Similar results, to a certain extent, were observed for attributions of punishment with findings being very close to being significant. This consistency between blame and punishment attributions may also support the view that blame is a punitive emotion as suggested by some philosophers discussed in Chapter Three. However, we have to be very careful in identifying any consistency in the results for both blame and punishment since the results for punishment showed that the effect of prison treatment only approached significance, rather than being significant. The findings for both blame and punishment, may also suggest that in line with earlier assertions cruel prison treatment can indeed mitigate blame and punitive attributions in line with the just deserts notion. Here, we need to acknowledge that the scenarios in this experiment were made personal, and this could have also influenced the results. Nevertheless, future replications of this experiment are necessary in order to investigate any similarities in punitive and blame attributions.

Finally, correlational research revealed a negative correlation between sadism and blame, but with a very small effect size \(r = -.020 p<.01\) (see Table 5.14). This correlation is quite surprising as it would suggest that the more sadistic tendencies one has the less blame they
would ascribe to a criminal. On the other hand, the effect size is so small and does not allow for such a claim to be substantiated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Blame</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>1.27</td>
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<td>Sadism</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0.19**</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>22.02</td>
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<td>JustWorldScale</td>
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<td>6.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>LocusOfControl</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
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<td>34.01</td>
<td>2.43</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01

Table 5. 12 Inter item correlations between blame ratings, and sadism, belief in a just world and locus of control scales.

5.7.3 Punishment Satisfaction

A two-way factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to compare the main effects of the two independent variables (i.e., severity and prison treatment), and the interaction effect between prison treatment and severity on the dependent variable (punishment satisfaction). Results showed that there was a significant effect of prison treatment $F(1, 264) = 88.386, p<.01$, partial $\eta^2 = .251$, and an interaction effect (see Figure 5. 7) between severity and prison treatment $F = (1, 264) = 7.05, p<.01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.026$. However, there was no statistically significant main effect of severity when the dependent variable was punishment satisfaction $F (1, 264) = 0.001, p= 0.978$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.000$. 

![Estimated Marginal Means of Punishment Satisfaction](image)
Figure 5. 8 Plot showing the interaction between severity of crime and prison treatment on punishment satisfaction.

A simple effect analysis of the main interaction effect indicated that differences in mean punishment satisfaction scores across the two levels of prison treatment were significant both in the low severity $F (1, 264) = 22.41, p<.001$, and high severity $F (1, 264) = 73.80 p<.001$ type of crime. On the other hand, differences in mean scores show that the effect is more pronounced for the high severity type of crimes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prison Treatment</th>
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<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$N$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Good Prison Treatment</td>
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<td>1.70</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity (Stabbing)</td>
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<td>1.74</td>
<td>68</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruel Prison Treatment</td>
<td>Low Severity (Theft)</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity (Stabbing)</td>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Low Severity (Theft)</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>132</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity (Stabbing)</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01

Table 5. 13 Mean punishment satisfaction ratings as a function of severity of crime and conditions in prison
Discussion

As it can be seen by comparing the mean differences in scores, the participants in the prison treatment group had much higher punishment satisfaction ($M = 4.91$, $SD = 1.51$) when compared to the participants in the good prison treatment group with $M = 3.05$, and $SD = 1.73$. Mean ratings of punishment satisfaction were significantly greater in the cruel prison treatment/low severity condition ($M = 4.64$, 95% CI $= 4.25$, 5.04, $SD = 1.50$, $n = 65$) compared to the mean ratings of punishment satisfaction in the good prison treatment/low severity condition ($M = 3.31$, 95% CI $= 2.92$, 3.70, $SD = 1.70$, $n = 67$). Similarly, mean scores for punishment satisfaction were significantly greater in the cruel prison treatment/high severity condition ($M = 5.17$, 95% CI $= 4.79$, 5.56, $SD = 1.49$, $n = 68$) when compared to the good prison treatment/high severity condition ($M = 2.79$, 95% CI $= 2.40$, 3.18, $SD = 1.74$, $n = 68$).

These results confirm the initial prediction that participants would have been more satisfied with cruel compared to good prison treatment. Unlike the first experiment, this satisfaction is
evident both for the low and the high severity type of crimes. This difference in the results may be due to the change in the victim status. More personal scenarios might have triggered punishment satisfaction also for the low severity type of crime.

As shown earlier both attributions of punishment (approaching significance) and blame were mitigated when the prison treatment had been cruel. This certainly makes sense in light of the just deserts principle that stresses proportional punishment. On the other hand, when punishment satisfaction was the dependent variable participants had higher ratings when the prison conditions were cruel. How are we to account for these results?

One way to interpret them would be through the just deserts principle. Participants considered that cruel prison conditions acted as a form of punishment, and that the perpetrator received more punishment in the cruel conditions compared to when the prison conditions had been good. Thus, the criminal deserves to be blamed and punished less, since he ‘paid’ some of his ‘debt’ by having to put up with inhumane conditions. This led participants also to be more satisfied with the cruel conditions since the perpetrator in the cruel prison treatment condition got what he deserved to a greater extent than the perpetrator in the good prison treatment condition. If we look at the results in this way – that is, only through the just deserts notion – then punishment satisfaction relates to the satisfaction felt by participants at the perpetrator having got what he/she deserved. This does not make it the kind of malicious satisfaction described earlier.

Another way to interpret the results of this experiment is through the notion of cruelty. Participants may have ascribed less blame and punishment to the perpetrator because of desert-based considerations, but they were more satisfied with cruel prison conditions as a form of punishment. This of course presents a contradiction in their thinking. Punishing and blaming less because one thinks that cruel prison treatment is less deserved and then being more satisfied when it occurs certainly does not make sense. Nevertheless, the fact remains, that they were much more satisfied with cruel prison treatment. And we would not normally expect people in general to value such forms of punishment. If so, these findings might be taken to support some of Nietzsche’s assertions: people may condone cruel prison practices due to experiencing feelings of malicious satisfaction. Moreover, people may also adhere to the just deserts notion when they believe that even cruel practices can be ‘deserved’, ‘fair’, and justified’. This is why Nietzsche asserted that people think about punishment in terms of the principles of deserts and retribution, but that retribution is only a vehicle for people to experience malicious satisfaction.
### Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Punishment Satisfaction</th>
<th>2 Sadism</th>
<th>3 Just World Scale</th>
<th>4 Locus Of Control</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Punishment Satisfaction</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Sadism</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Just World Scale</td>
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<td>Locus Of Control</td>
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<td>.05</td>
<td>-.06</td>
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<tr>
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<td>22.03</td>
<td>21.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>SD</strong></td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>15.66</td>
<td>6.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>268</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01

**Table 5.14** Inter item correlations between punishment satisfaction ratings, sadism, belief in a just world and locus of control scales.

As table 5.16 illustrates there is a significant correlation between the just world scale and sadism $r = 0.19$ $p < .01$ suggesting that the more one believes that the world is a just place the more sadistic tendencies one will display.

Exploratory correlational research thus far has indicated that there are no relationships between punitive and blame attributions and individual difference factors. This may potentially indicate that decisions about punishment are not influenced by factors examined here (locus of control, sadism, belief in a just world, empathic concern, inferiority complexes).
Experiment Three
Does the social class of the victim influence attributions of deserved blame and punishment for the perpetrator? And is this due to ressentiment?

5.8. Introduction
This experiment was designed to investigate the fourth central research question which regards the extent to which attributions of blame and punishment are influenced by ressentiment. To operationalise this research question, we asked whether a victim’s social class can influence attributions of blame and punishment for the perpetrator. Experiment Three addressed this question. It was predicted that the social class of the victim would have an effect on both attributions of blame and punishment. The discussion of this experiment will revolve around Nietzsche’s notion of ressentiment and whether it can account for the results. Moreover, the experiment will also examine the effect of severity of on attributions of blame and punishment. This pertains to the first central research question (i.e., the extent to which attributions of blame and punishment are motivated by retributive considerations) which will be thoroughly examined by the next chapter. It was predicted that participants would attribute blame and punishment in line with the severity of the perpetration.

As was discussed earlier in Chapter Three, Nietzsche’s concept of ressentiment concerned the interaction between masters and slaves especially within the context of Roman history and the emergence of Christianity and argued that this concept is universal and it can apply to any time in history. Wallace (2007) has argued that ordinary envy pertains to relative deprivation of goods, and thus should dissipate when those goods have been acquired. On the other hand, Wallace argues, the object of ressentiment is not the difference of power or status, but the person who has greater power or status.

According to Wallace, this is when ordinary envy turns into ressentiment. Wallace also argues that a possible explanation for ressentiment may be found in a deeply ingrained primitive mechanism that monitors our relative standing within our communities. But can all the above influence our punitive attributions? Would it make a difference, for example, if a victim of a perpetration was of low or high social status when we decide the punishment of an offender? In other words, would we punish an offender less if the victim of a perpetration was of high social status? If this proves to be the case then the results would better be accounted by ressentiment, and not ordinary envy. Ordinary envy would not suffice to explain why people attribute less punishment to a perpetrator when the victim is of high status, and especially for serious types of crimes that involve physical violence. On the other hand, ressentiment may provide a better explanation for such results, since it is directed a person, and includes spite and malice as its corollaries. In other words, while ordinary envy is aimed at acquiring the
same goods or status with the person who is envied, ressentiment is aimed at belittling the person who is envied and at acquiring a position of superiority in relation to them.

5.9. Method Section

Design

The design was a 2x2 independent measures design. There were four conditions corresponding to the two levels of each independent variable. The first independent variable was victim social status (working class vs high upper class) and crime severity (low vs high). Each participant was presented with a vignette describing a crime and participated only in one of the four conditions. Participants then provided scores on the dependent variables, which as in the previous experiments were rating scale questions that required respondents to attribute deserved punishment, deserved blame and punishment satisfaction.

Other Measures: As in the previous experiment the scales utilised here for exploratory correlational research were the CAST Sadism scale, the Just world scale (Dalbert et al. 2014), and the locus of control scale (Rotter 1966).

Participants

Participants were comprised of an online sample (N=268) that was acquired through Amazon’s Mechanical Turk, which is an online platform for finding participants for any type of survey. The sample used for this experiment was the same sample used in the previous experiment. Since this experiment was a distinct experiment which was designed and analysed separately, it was decided to use the same participants for economy and efficiency reasons. This was because acquiring this number of participants would have been hard again due to the lack of funds and resources. Appropriate sample sizes for achieving the desired power levels are straightforward to calculate. For this study, I used an online power calculator (G*Power 3.1) to calculate an appropriate sample size for a two-way independent Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) that tests main and interaction effects for two independent variables. For this type of design, Cohen (1969) argued that a small effect size is roughly $f=0.1$, a medium effect size $f=0.25$, and a large effect size $f=0.40$. The parameters I had inputted were the $\alpha$-level=0.05, a medium effect size $f=0.25$, and acceptable statistical power ($1-\beta=0.8$). The output from G*Power 3.1, indicated that in order to achieve a statistical power of 0.8, we would need a sample size of 269 people. Indeed, all nine experiments conducted for this study achieved this recommended sample size.

Apparatus/Materials
As in all the experiments the only material utilised for this study was an online questionnaire that was designed and disseminated through the Qualtrics platform which is an online platform dedicated to the design and administration of surveys. Participants were assigned to four different conditions in line with the combination of the two independent variables; severity of crime and the victim’s social status. Vignettes were used to implement the manipulation of the two independent variables. Participants in the low severity type of crime group read a vignette in which a perpetrator hits someone and steals their wallet. The victim suffered no injuries. In the high severity version of the vignette the perpetrator brutally assaults the victim and steals their wallet. The physical assault results in the victim suffering severe injuries and having to be hospitalised for several weeks. The other independent variable referred to the social class of the victim. In the working-class victim condition the victim was a cashier at a local supermarket, while in the high upper class condition the victim was a chief executive for a successful financial firm. A full description of the vignettes is provided in Table 5-17.

Table 5.15 Vignettes used in Experiment Three.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vignettes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low Severity/Working Class Victim</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘John was working as a cashier for a local supermarket in his area. One day after finishing work, and while on his way to pick up his car from the car park, he was attacked by a man who hit him and took his wallet. Fortunately, he did not suffer any major injuries.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Low Severity/ High/Upper Class Victim**    |
| ‘John was a chief executive for a successful financial firm. One day after finishing work, and while on his way to pick up his car from the car park, he was attacked by a man who hit him and took his wallet. Fortunately, he did not suffer any major injuries. |

| **High Severity/Working Class Victim**       |
| ‘John was working as a cashier for a local supermarket in his area. One day after finishing work, and while on his way to pick up his car from the car park, he was suddenly attacked by a man who severely battered him and stole his wallet. John was hospitalized for several weeks with severe injuries. |

| **High Severity/High/Upper Class Victim**    |

105
John was a chief executive for a successful financial firm. One day after finishing work, and while on his way to pick up his car from the car park, he was suddenly attacked by a man who severely battered him and stole his wallet. John was hospitalized for several weeks with severe injuries.

**Procedure**

In Experiment Three participants followed the same procedure as with experiment Two. They were allocated into one of four different conditions in line with the manipulation of the two independent variables. After reading the vignette participants were asked to attribute deserved punishment, deserved blame, and punishment satisfaction by using identical rating scales to the previous experiments. Finally, they were asked to complete the sadism, locus of control, and just world scales, and were thanked for their participation.

**5.10 Results and Discussion**

**5.10.1 Attributed Punishment**

The analysis of variance showed that the main effect of the victim’s social status was significant with $F(1, 264) = 7.537$, $p<.01, \eta^2 = 0.028$. The main effect of severity was also significant with $F(1, 264) = 15.045$, $p<.01, \eta^2 = 0.054$. Moreover, the interaction effect was not significant $F(1, 264) = 3.397, p=0.066$, partial $\eta^2=0.013$, but it did approach significant levels. The mean differences can be viewed in Table 5.18 and Figure 5.10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Status</th>
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<th>$N$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity (assault/serious injuries)</td>
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<td>.90</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High upper-class victim</td>
<td>Low Severity (theft)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>1.33</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5.16** Mean attributed punishment ratings as a function of severity and the victim’s social class.
Discussion

As we can see, participants who read the vignette where the victim was a member of the upper class attributed less punishment to the perpetrator ($M = 4.91$, $SD = 1.51$), if compared to participants in the group where the victim was a member of the working class ($M = 5.34$, $SD = 1.10$). This mean difference was especially large for the high severity type of crime with mean punishment for the working class/high severity condition ($M = 5.79$, $95\% CIs = 5.48, 6.10$, $SD = 0.90$, $n = 68$) being greater compared to the upper class/high severity condition ($M = 5.07$, $95\% CIs = 4.76, 5.38$, $SD = 1.66$, $n = 68$). Similarly, the mean score for the working class/low severity condition ($M = 4.89$, $95\% CIs = 4.58, 5.20$, $SD = 1.11$, $n = 67$) was higher compared to the mean score for the upper class/low severity condition ($M = 4.75$, $95\% CIs = 4.44, 5.06$, $SD = 1.32$, $n = 65$).

The results support both of our initial predictions. Firstly, the victim’s social class influenced attributions of punishment. The participants attributed less punishment to the perpetrator when the victim was of high social standing, compared to when the victim was of low social standing. Secondly, the results showed that participants punished in proportion to the severity
of the offence which shows the importance of retributive considerations. But to return to the fourth central research question we need to discuss whether the results are consistent with the concept of ressentiment.

The results may allow for some tentative claims to be made in relation to the effect of ressentiment on punitive attributions. Firstly, there is an effect of social status on punitive attributions, as the results clearly indicate. Participants chose to punish a perpetrator less when the victim of crime was of high social and financial status compared to being a member of the working class. Moreover, this effect was more pronounced for the high severity type of crime (however, the interaction effect approached significance). It can be tentatively suggested that the effect of social class here may be explained less by ordinary envy and more by ressentiment. As was discussed in the introduction of this experiment, ordinary envy concerns the relative deprivation of goods as Wallace suggested, and ressentiment is more focused on a kind of personal animosity regarding the person that we envy and accommodates spite and malicious feelings. It logically follows that, when we are motivated by ressentiment rather than ordinary envy, we would be spiteful towards the subject to whom our envy is directed. Hence ressentiment could explain why punitive attributions were mitigated when the victim was of high social status.

### Correlations

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<th>SD</th>
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</table>

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01

### Table 5.17

Inter item correlations between punishment ratings, sadism, belief in a just world, and locus of control scales.

As table 5.19 shows there is a significant positive correlation between the just world scale scores and attributed punishment ratings $r = 0.12$, $p<.05$, and also a significant positive correlation between the just world scale and sadism $r = 0.187$, $p< .01$. These correlations suggest that the more one believes in a just world, the more punitive one is, and the more one displays sadistic tendencies. The results of the CAST sadism scale were slightly positively skewed while they were slightly lower to that of standard norms of other studies; for example, Min et al. (2019) reported $M= 2.20$ $N=624$, $SD=0.97$. The score for this study was $M=22.02$
because I did not use the mean of accumulative scores. The recomputed score is $M = 1.69$ which is slightly lower to Min et al. The results of the locus of control scale were slightly negatively skewed and they were very close to other standard norms; for example, Tong and Wang (2006) reported $M = 9.30$, $SD = 4.13$, $N = 306$. This study reported $M = 34.01$ but this was because the response values of 1 and 2 were used as the standard while other studies used the values of 0 and 1. By adjusting this study’s results to these values we acquire a $M = 11.01$ which is close to the Tong and Wang (2006) results. The results of the general belief in a just world scale were slightly negatively skewed and were higher to published norms; for example, Dalbert (1999) reported $M = 2.65$, $SD = 0.93$, $N = 214$. The results for this study (recomputed to produce the mean of cumulative scores) are $M = 3.55$.

5.10.2 Attributed Blame

A two-way factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to consider the main effects of the two independent variables (severity and victim social class), and the interaction effect between victim social class and severity on the dependent variable (i.e., attributed blame). Results showed that the main effect of severity was statistically significant $F(1, 264) = 9.54$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.02$. The main effect of victim social class was also significant with $F = (1, 264) = 17.65$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.063$. However, there was no significant interaction effect $F(1, 264) = 0.787$, $p = 0.376$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.003$. Differences in mean scores can be viewed in table 5.20 and Figure 5.11.
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working class victim</td>
<td>Low Severity (theft)</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity (assault injuries)</td>
<td>6.08</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>68</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High upper-class victim</td>
<td>Low Severity (theft)</td>
<td>5.03</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity (assault/serious</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>injuries)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Low Severity (theft)</td>
<td>5.30</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>132</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity (assault/serious</td>
<td>5.67</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>injuries)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.49</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5.18** Mean attributed blame ratings as a function of victim social class and severity.

**Figure 5.11** Mean attributed blame ratings for each type of the victim's social status by the level of severity.
Discussion

As can be seen, total attributed blame is lower when the victim was a member of the higher social class ($M = 5.15, SD = 1.51$), compared to when the victim was a member of the low social class ($M= 5.82, SD = 1.13$). These results indicate that blame follows punishment in terms of the overall effect that the social status of the victim had on the results. Mean attributed blame ratings in the working class/high severity condition ($M= 6.08, 95\%CI = 5.77, 6.40, SD = 1.06, n = 68$) is higher than in the upper class/high severity condition ($M= 5.26, 95\%CI = 4.94, 5.58, SD = 1.62, n = 68$). Similarly, mean attributed blame ratings are higher in the working class/low severity condition ($M= 5.56, 95\%CI = 5.24, 5.88, SD = 1.62, n = 67$), if compared to the upper class/low severity condition ($M= 5.03, 95\%CI = 4.70, 5.35$), $SD= 1.62, n= 65$).

These results indicate that attributions of blame follow the same pattern as punishment attributions in terms of the overall effect of the social status of the victim and the severity of the crime on the results. Therefore, the results support both initial predictions. Firstly, the social status of the victim had an effect on attributions of blame. Secondly, participants attributed blame in proportion to the severity of the perpetration. The results further illustrate those feelings of resentiment can influence these attributions.

Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1.</th>
<th>2.</th>
<th>3.</th>
<th>4.</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$N$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Locus Of Control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>34.01</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>268.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Just World Scale</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21.34</td>
<td>6.42</td>
<td>268.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Sadism</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.19**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22.03</td>
<td>15.67</td>
<td>268.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Blame</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>-0.13*</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.49</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>268.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.19 Inter item correlations between attributed blame ratings, sadism, belief in a just world, and locus of control scales.

Table 5.21 shows that there is a positive correlation between sadism and the just world scale $r= 0.19, p<.01$, and a negative correlation between sadism and blame $r= -0.013 p<.05$. 

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5.11. General Discussion

It would be difficult for any type of research to examine concepts as that of malicious satisfaction in punishment, firstly because they are purely theoretical, and secondly because, if they exist, they would be disguised. To add to this, not many people would readily admit that Nietzsche’s ideas have some real basis, since he paints a very dire picture of human nature. This thesis has attempted a step in the right direction. Therefore, these experiments do not claim to have established that Nietzsche’s assertions are correct, but have merely aspired to provide a new addendum in the study of punishment, and to investigate it in light of some propositions that have never been examined before in an experimental fashion. While not having established that Nietzsche’s ideas are accurate, these findings can be said to be consistent with some of Nietzsche’s claims, providing a motivation for further inquiry, and allowing for some tentative claims to be made.

Experiment One related to the first and third research questions. In regards to the first central research question (i.e., the extent to which attributions of blame and punishment are motivated by retributive considerations), the results showed that punishment, blame, and recommended prison time ratings are influenced only by the severity of the crime committed in line with the notion of just deserts. Overall, participants ascribed less blame and punishment for the low severity type of crimes compared to the high severity crimes. The power of the effect of severity was also substantially large for all the dependent variables (punishment/partial $\eta^2 = 0.33$, blame/partial $\eta^2 = 0.215$, time/ partial $\eta^2 = 0.745$). On the other hand, prison treatment did not influence these attributions. Participants were indifferent to whether the prison treatment was cruel or good. The results confirmed the initial prediction that participants would punish in proportion to the severity of the offence, but did not support the prediction that cruel prison treatment would result in less attributed blame and punishment compared to good prison treatment. Therefore, retributive considerations are important when the deciding factor was the severity of the crime, but not when the deciding factor was the type of prison treatment.

The third central research question (i.e., the extent to which attributions of blame and punishment are motivated by malicious satisfaction) was relevant when the dependent variable was punishment satisfaction. Our initial prediction (i.e., participants would be more satisfied with cruel, compared to good prison treatment) was partially supported. Punishment satisfaction was influenced by both prison treatment and severity of crime. An interaction effect revealed that participants were satisfied with cruel treatment when the crime’s severity was high. These results show some consistency with both the just deserts claim (in terms of the
effect of severity), and Nietzsche’s assertions that punishment involves malicious satisfaction in the suffering of perpetrators. On the other hand, the effect sizes of prison treatment (partial $\eta^2=0.03$), severity (partial $\eta^2=0.049$), and of the interaction effect (partial $\eta^2=0.015$), were small suggesting that the differences that occurred were not substantial despite being significant. Thus, results need to be treated with caution, and follow up work would be valuable in exploring further, to aim to corroborate these small effects observed here.

Experiment Two introduced a more ‘personal’ set of scenarios (also addressed the design limitation in the first experiment), and demonstrated that the effect of prison treatment on punishment satisfaction was both significant and had a substantial effect size (partial $\eta^2=0.251$). This time the effect size is of prison treatment was much larger compared to the effect size found in Experiment One. This can be attributed to the ‘personal’ nature of the scenarios described in the vignettes. Moreover, a simple effects analysis of the interaction effect between prison treatment, and severity showed that the participants were more satisfied with cruel prison treatment across both conditions of severity. This further concurs with the claim that punishment has an element of malicious satisfaction.

Moreover, unlike experiment one, attributions of blame were affected by both severity and prison treatment, while attributions of punishment were only affected by severity (although the effect of prison treatment approached significance). Participants ascribed less blame and punishment when the prison treatment was cruel. On the other hand, these effects were not of a substantial size for blame (partial $\eta^2=0.023$), or punishment (partial $\eta^2=0.013$). These small effect sizes may suggest that cruel prison treatment had some impact in mitigating blame and punishment attributions but not a large one.

Experiment Three related to the fourth central research question (i.e. the extent to which attributions of blame and punishment are influenced by feelings of ressentiment), and the results were consistent with the initial prediction (i.e. that the victim’s social class will have an effect on attributions of blame and punishment) and with the claim that ressentiment is what drives people’s punitive attributions, since this could plausibly explain why participants were observed to punish a perpetrator less when the victim of crime was a member of the high upper class. Only ressentiment would lead to this effect; envy would not be expected to. This is because ordinary envy does not suffice to change punitive and blame attributions, since it is only directed at the deprivation of goods and not at the person possessing those goods. If so, punishment should not have been influenced by the status of the victim. After all, he was the victim, and we would expect punishment to focus mainly on the perpetrator, and the nature/seriousness of the perpetration. On the contrary, the results showed that people do take
into account the social and financial status of the victim and their punitiveness levels
decreased even more when the victim was physically injured (high severity). On the other
hand, while the results may be consistent with Nietzsche’s assertions, it should be noted that
the effect sizes of victim social class and severity were not substantial, and further inquiry is
necessary to confirm this interpretation. The effect size for victim social class on punishment
was partial $\eta^2=0.028$, and for blame partial $\eta^2=0.02$.

Finally, exploratory correlational research in all three experiments has shown that other factors
that were discussed (i.e., sadistic tendencies, inferiority complexes, empathic concern, locus of
control, and the belief that the world is a fair place where everyone gets what they deserve); do
not seem to correlate with punitive attributions. This may be because the perception of
punishment is more or less independent of such factors, and more intertwined with the just
deserts notion and retributive elements, potentially along with malicious satisfaction.

Overall, some of the results of this set of experiments were consistent with some of
Nietzsche’s assertions regarding the existence of a malicious satisfaction element in punitive
practises, and the effect of ressentiment on attributions of blame and punishment. On the other
hand, further inquiry is necessary to provide more evidence and establish stronger claims. The
coming chapter will examine the just deserts notion further in the context of punitive practises
(i.e., deterrence/incapacitation/retribution, and revenge).
Chapter Six-Experiments Four to Six

6.1. Introduction and Research Aims

This chapter focuses on the first central research question. This regards the extent to which attributions of blame and punishment are motivated by retributive considerations. This idea was also tested in the previous chapter by testing the effects of severity and prison treatment; however, this time we shall use different variables in order to examine the importance of retributive considerations on attributions of blame and punishment. These are revenge, and fateful punishment. The severity of the perpetration will also remain an important factor, and it is also present in this series of experiments. Essentially, this chapter aims at looking into more ways that can support that lay attributions of blame and punishment follow a retributive/just deserts model.

Three experiments were designed to investigate whether the exaction of revenge or fateful punishment can influence respective attributions of blame and punishment. The overall aim of these experiments was to test the hypothesis that attributions of blame and punishment in these cases are best explained in the light of notions of retribution and just deserts. In other words, the aim here was to examine whether participants perceive blame and punishment as a means of achieving equilibrium between the severity of an offence and the severity of punishment. In order to achieve this equilibrium, retributive theories of justice suggest that perpetrators should be punished in proportion to the severity of the offence committed. In this way, perpetrators would be punished according to what they deserve, and punishment would be just (i.e., they will get their just deserts). If this conception of punishment is also what underlies lay perceptions, then an amount of punishment given to a perpetrator by an act of fate, or by an act of revenge, may have an impact on punitive and blame attributions by lay people (here the participants taking part in the experiments). In other words, a lay decision about the amount of punishment that a perpetrator deserves will be affected when the lay person is, in addition to the information about the offence, given the information that the perpetrator has suffered a fateful accident or was subjected to an act of revenge by his/her victim.

This is because in attempting to ascribe proportionate punishment in line with retributive thinking, an individual may take into account that ‘some amount’ of punishment has already been dispensed by a fateful act or by an act of revenge. Therefore, an individual presented with such additional information may dispense significantly less punishment and blame (i.e. lower, if they are taking into account the punishment that has already been 'dispensed'), compared to an individual presented only with information regarding the severity of the offence. This claim is tested by Experiments Five and Six.
Another factor which might further attest to the fact that lay thinking about punishment is in line with retribution, was that of justifying acts of revenge. If acts of revenge are found to be justified, then that would mean that participants do not perceive such acts as morally wrong, but as acts that aid the dispensation of just deserts. In this way, the justification of acts of revenge can attest to the importance of retributive considerations; revenge is just another mean of attributing justice. Experiment Four tests whether acts of revenge are perceived as justified, and whether participants would attribute lenient punishment and blame to such acts.

Overall, all the experiments examined whether the notion of proportionate punishment (i.e. punishing someone according to what he/she deserves), which is the main tenet of retribution, can be influenced by revenge and fateful punishment along with the severity of crime committed. While punishing according to the severity of crime may be an obvious and expected attitude, this series of experiments investigate whether other factors can play an important role in making decisions about blame and punishment.
Experiment Four

Justifying revenge and punishing the avenger: Is a perpetration more justified and less punishable, if it is an act of revenge?

6.2. Introduction

This experiment addresses the first central research question, and is concerned with examining the idea that lay attributions of blame and punishment are motivated by retributive considerations. To operationalise the central research question, Experiment Four focused on whether the exaction of revenge can be a justifiable act, and if so to what extent. In this experiment, participants were presented with vignettes that described a crime followed by an act of revenge exacted upon the perpetrator of this crime by the avenger.

The rationale behind this experiment was that if participants find an act of revenge to be justified even if this act is atrocious, then that would mean that they perceive such an act as an act of justice, and not as a sole perpetration. By this token, revenge can be viewed as the vehicle through which just deserts can be dispensed on the perpetrator and can thereby be in line with the perception that the main motivation behind punishment is retribution. As was explained in Chapter Two, some philosophers (e.g., Nozick 1980) have pointed out some differences between revenge and retribution, such as the fact that revenge is personal and retribution impersonal. However, Vidmar (2001) argued that, for psychological analysis, they should be treated the same, since they are both characterised by the employment of the principle of retaliation, and the only thing that differs is the party that delivers the revenge (a third party in retributive punishment and the victim in revenge).

Unlike the experiments presented in the previous chapter, participants were asked to assess how justified the act of revenge was and to ascribe blame, punishment and recommended prison time for the act of revenge. Thus, the perpetrator whom participants were asked to make judgements about was the person exacting revenge on behalf of a victim of an earlier perpetration, rather than the perpetrator who committed the original offence. The aim of this experiment was twofold: First, to examine if an act of revenge can be perceived as a justifiable perpetration, and second to examine whether there will be an effect of the level of the severity of the revenge act (low/high) and the level of severity of the initial perpetration (low/high), on attributions of justification, blame, punishment, and recommended prison time.

It was predicted that the level of severity of the act of revenge would have an effect on the degree of justification participants offered for the act of revenge as well as having an effect on attributions of punishment/blame and recommended prison time. A similar prediction was not
made for the severity of the initial perpetration for the above attributions, because of an experimental manipulation in the design which aimed to make the revenge scenarios more realistic, which did not allow for such prediction to be made. This is explained in the design section of this experiment. Thus, attributions of justification, punishment/blame, and recommended prison time were expected to remain unchanged, when it came to the severity of the initial perpetration. Moreover, it was predicted that participants will find acts of revenge to be at least a little justified rather than not justified or slightly justified.

6.3. Method

Design

This experiment used an independent measures (2x2) factorial design. There were four conditions corresponding to the two levels of each independent variable. The first independent variable was level of revenge (low vs high), and the second severity of crime (low vs high severity). Each participant was presented with a vignette describing a crime and participated in only one of the four conditions. The independent variables were manipulated by using different vignette versions. Further details of these versions are provided in the apparatus section. Participants then provided scores on the dependent variables, which were rating scales that required respondents to attribute deserved punishment (i.e. how much punishment does the perpetrator (i.e. the avenger) deserve for his actions: measured on a rating scale ranging from 1=none at all, to 7= extremely severe), deserved blame (i.e. how severely does he deserve to be blamed for his action: measured on a rating scale ranging from 1=no blame to 7=extremely severely), and recommended prison time (i.e. how much time should the perpetrator spend in prison : measured on a rating scale ranging from 1=none to 10= death penalty). An additional dependent variable used for this experiment was the degree that the perpetrator (i.e., the avenger) was justified in exacting some sort of revenge upon the victim (i.e., how justified was the perpetrator in carrying out his act: ranging from 1= not at all justified to 7=extremely justified).

Other measures: The experiment also utilised three scales for exploratory correlational analysis. These were the social comparison scale (Allan & Gilbert 1995), the CAST Sadism scale (Buckels & Paulhus 2014), and an empathy concern scale (Davis 1998). These scales are the same as utilised in experiments one and two in Chapter Five (For further details see Chapter Five and the chapter on methods).

Apparatus/Materials
The only material utilised for this study was an online questionnaire that was designed and disseminated through the Qualtrics platform, which is an online platform dedicated to the design and administration of surveys. Participants were assigned to one of four different conditions in line with the combination of the two independent variables; severity of crime and level of revenge. The vignette for the low severity type of crime described a mugging, while the vignette corresponding to the high severity type of crime described a murder/rape scenario. The two other vignette versions corresponded to the second independent variable which was the level of revenge. Participants assigned to the low revenge version read that the victim’s father either slapped or punched the perpetrator during the court proceedings, while participants in the high revenge condition read that the victim’s father either severely battered the perpetrator, or that he stabbed him during the court proceedings. A full description of the vignettes is provided in table 6-1. A lack of control in this experiment was that the revenge actions described in the scenarios (the low/high levels of revenge) were not kept the same across the two conditions that depicted the severity of the initial perpetration (low/high severity of crime). In the low revenge/low severity condition the act of revenge was a slap, while in the low revenge/high severity condition it was a punch. In contrast, in the high revenge/low severity condition the act of revenge was battery, while in the high revenge/high severity condition it was an act of stabbing. This was done to render the scenarios more realistic, plausible, and meaningful to participants, as it would have been unrealistic to have minimum revenge for more serious crimes, or severe revenge acts for less serious crimes. An alternative design would have been to keep the low and high revenge acts constant across the levels of crime severity, such that a 'slap' and a 'battery' were used as the revenge acts for both the low severity crime (mugging) and the high severity crime (rape/murder). As stated, since the aim was to provide participants with meaningful and plausible scenarios, the former design in which revenge acts that seemed more appropriate to the crime severity level was preferred for this experiment, as it was considered that this would generate more useful data.

Accordingly, it is important to remain mindful of this lack of control relating to the described 'revenge acts' across the different levels of crime severity and take this into account when interpreting the results. Moreover, because of this manipulation we cannot predict an effect of the severity of the initial perpetration (that provoked the act of revenge) on the related dependent variables (justification/punishment/blame/time). This is because in trying to bring some balance between the severity of the act of revenge, and the severity of the initial perpetration, we have made it harder to discover an effect of the later. On the other hand, an effect may be evident if participants do not perceive the difference between a slap and a punch, or between battery and stabbing, to be that important. Therefore, on the one hand, no
predictions were made about an effect of severity of the initial perpetration, but on the other hand, results should be interpreted with an open mind if an effect is found, and the effect of this manipulation proves to be slight. Follow-up studies can then serve to explore tentative conclusions in more depth.

Table 6.1 Vignettes used in Experiment Four.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vignettes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low Revenge (Slap)/ Low Severity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark’s daughter was mugged by John while walking down the road; John hit her and stole her purse. John was later apprehended by the police. While in court, Mark walked near John and before police could act managed to give him a slap. Mark admitted that his action was intentionally planned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low Revenge (Punch)/High Severity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark’s daughter was brutally raped and killed by John who was apprehended by the police. While in court Mark could not stand the sight of his daughter’s rapist, walked near him and before police could act managed to give him a punch. Mark admitted that his action was intentionally planned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High Revenge (Battery)/Low Severity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark’s daughter was mugged by John while walking down the road; John hit her and stole her purse but later was apprehended by the police. While in court Mark walked near John and before police could act, he managed to severely batter him, which resulted in John suffering from serious injuries. Mark admitted that his action was intentionally planned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High Revenge (Stabbing)/High Severity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark’s daughter was brutally raped and killed by John who was apprehended by police. While in court Mark could not stand the sight of his daughter’s rapist and murderer. At a moment when the police were distracted Mark walked over him and stabbed him in the chest. The rapist was hospitalized but survived the attack. Mark admitted that his act was intentionally planned and his purpose was to kill John.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants

Participants comprised of a sample (N=323), that was acquired through acquaintances and social media websites where the link for the study was posted. This is the same group of participants that was used for Experiment One in the previous chapter. The missing values for this experiment were (n=30), thus the final responses were (N=293). Appropriate sample sizes for achieving the desired power levels are straightforward to calculate. For this study, I used an online power calculator (G*Power 3.1) to calculate an appropriate sample size for a two-way independent Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) that tests main and interaction effects for two independent variables. For this type of design, Cohen (1969) argued that a small effect size is roughly \( f=0.1 \), a medium effect size \( f=0.25 \), and a large effect size \( f=0.40 \). The parameters I had inputted were the \( \alpha \)-level=0.05, a medium effect size \( f=0.25 \), and acceptable statistical power (1-\( \beta \)=0.8). The output from G*Power 3.1, indicated that in order to achieve a statistical power of 0.8, we would need a sample size of 269 people. Indeed, all nine experiments conducted for this study achieved this recommended sample size.

Procedure

The procedure for this experiment was identical to the procedure followed in previous experiments (see Chapter Five) and further details can be found in that section. After reading the vignettes, participants gave their responses on the three dependent variables which were attributed punishment, deserved blame, recommended prison time and level of justification for the act of revenge. Finally, they were asked to complete the sadism, empathy and social comparison scales, and were thanked for their participation.
6.4. Results and Discussion

6.4.1. Justification

A two-way factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to consider the main effects of the two independent variables (severity level of revenge and crime severity), and the interaction effect between these two factors on the dependent variable (degree of justification for the perpetrator’s act). The results showed that there was a statistically significant main effect of the level of revenge $F(1, 289) = 4.75$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.016$, and of crime severity $F(1, 289) = 27.58$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.087$, while there was no significant interaction effect between the two $F(1, 289) = 0.18$, $p = 0.66$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Revenge</th>
<th>Severity</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$N$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Revenge</td>
<td>Low Severity</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Revenge</td>
<td>Low Severity</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Low Severity</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 6.2* Mean revenge justification ratings as a function of level of revenge and severity.
An examination of the differences in marginal means for each main effect shows that participants found the perpetrator to be more justified in carrying out an act of revenge when the level of revenge was low (M=4.28, SD=2.03), compared to high (M=3.75, SD=1.93). Moreover, participants found revenge to be more justified if the initial perpetration (the one that the avenger exacted revenge for) was of high (M=4.56, SD=2.04) compared to low severity (M=3.38 SD=1.71).

Participants in the low level of revenge / low severity condition found the perpetrator to be more justified for the act of revenge (M= 3.58 95%CIs= 3.12, 4.04, SD= 1.7, n= 65) compared to those in the high level of revenge/ low severity condition (M= 3.19 95%CIs= SD= 1.7, n= 71). Similarly, participants in the low level of revenge/ high severity condition found the perpetrator’s act of revenge to be more justified (M= 4.83 95%CIs= 4.42, 5.25, SD= 2.11, n= 81) compared to those in the high level of revenge/ high severity condition (M= 4.26 95%CIs= 3.83, 4.68 SD= 1.93, n= 76). Differences in mean scores can be viewed in Table 6.2 and Figure 6.1.
Discussion

These results confirm our initial prediction, which was that the level of revenge will affect attributions of justification. The participants attributed levels of justification in proportion to the severity of the act of revenge. This shows that the justification of an act of revenge was made by taking retributive considerations into account. The second initial prediction was that participants would find the acts of revenge at least ‘a little justified’. The results also supported this prediction; the participants awarded the highest scores when the level of revenge was low and the level of crime was severe. In this case the mean score (M=4.83) fell between 4 and 5 and leaning towards 5. This score falls between the labels of ‘moderately justified’, and ‘justified’. Next in order was the high revenge/high severity condition. In this case the mean score (M=4.26) fell between 4 and 5 leaning towards 4 (i.e., moderately justified). Next in order was the low revenge/low severity condition. In this case the score (M=3.58) fell between 3 and 4. These labels represent 3= ‘a little justified’ to 4= moderately justified’. The lowest scores were given to the high revenge/low severity condition (M=3.19). In this case the scores fell between 3 and 4 and were leaning towards 3 (i.e., a little justified). Overall, these mean scores indicate that none of the revenge acts were found to be not justified or even only slightly justified, and that even when the revenge was very disproportionate, as in the high revenge (battery)/low severity (mugging) condition, the act of revenge was found to be at least ‘a little justified’.

These decisions, along with the lenient punishment and deserved blame ascriptions that will be discussed later, may be explained by the fact that people regard revenge and retribution as necessary to restore the balance of power between victims and perpetrators, and bring about a sense of equilibrium. This experiment demonstrated that people may indeed think in terms of retribution and the notion of just deserts so that they strive to restore a sense of equilibrium between the gravity of an offence and its subsequent punishment. What is more important is that this experiment supports the idea that revenge and retribution are accepted ways of achieving this equilibrium. This is further stressed by the fact that participants found revenge to be ‘moderately justified’, or ‘justified’ at least for the high severity type of crimes. On the other hand, mean scores even for the low severity type of crimes exceeded the score of three which corresponded to ‘a little justified’. This shows that revenge can also be regarded as to some extent justified even when the initial perpetration was of low severity.
Correlations

<table>
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<td>-0.46**</td>
<td>42.44</td>
<td>12.54</td>
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</table>

Table 6.3 Inter item correlations between justification ratings, and sadism, empathic concern, and social comparison scales.

An interesting significant positive correlation was found here between empathy and the level of revenge justification suggesting that the more empathic one is, the more one is willing to justify an act of revenge. I did not find specific official paper regarding published norms for the scales. I found other studies and compared the current’s study’s scores with them. Moreover, some papers calculated scores differently (i.e., they used the mean of accumulated item scores rather than the accumulation of scores for each item). Where this occurred, I recalculated this study’s scores by dividing the result with the number of items in each scale. The results of the CAST sadism scale were slightly positively skewed while they were slightly higher to that of standard published norms of other studies; for example, Min et al. (2019) reported M= 2.20 N=624, SD=0.97. The score for this study was M=42.43 because I did not use the mean of accumulative scores. The recomputed score is M= 3.20 which is slightly higher to Min et al. The results of the empathic concern scale were slightly negatively skewed and the results were higher to published norms; for example, De Corte et.al (2007) reported M=18.05, SD= 4.23, N=651. The results fort the Social Comparison scale were slightly negatively skewed and were close to the norms of the original study (Allen and Gilbert 1995). Allen and Gilbert reported M= 64.67, SD = 11.65 in a sample of N=180.

6.4.2. Attributed Punishment

A two-way factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to consider the main effects of the two independent variables (level of severity of revenge and crime severity) and the interaction effect between level of revenge and severity on the dependent variable (i.e., attributed punishment). There was a main effect of the level of revenge $F(1, 289) = 57.85$, $p<.001$, partial $\eta^2=0.167$, while there was no main effect of severity $F(1,289)=0.008$, $p=0.93$, partial $\eta^2=0.00$, nor an interaction effect $F(1, 289) = 0.934$, $p=0.335$, partial $\eta^2=0.003$. 
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>1.56</td>
<td>293</td>
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</table>

Table 6.4 Mean attributed punishment ratings as a function of level of revenge and severity.

Figure 6.2 Mean attributed punishment for each level of revenge by the severity of the initial perpetration.

Error bars: 95% CI
An examination of the differences in marginal means for the main effect of the level of revenge shows that participants punished the perpetrator less when the level of revenge was low (M=2.46, SD=1.49), compared to when it was high (M=3.83, SD=1.46). Differences in mean scores show that participants punished the perpetrator less in the low revenge condition across both conditions of severity. The mean attributed punishment rating for the low revenge/low severity condition (M= 2.64, 95% CIs =2.29, 2.99, SD=1.25, n=65), was lower compared to the high revenge/low severity rating (M=3.76, 95%CIs= 3.42, 4.09, SD=1.28, n=71). Similarly, the mean attributed punishment rating was lower in the low revenge/high severity condition (M=2.46, 95%CIs= 2.15, 2.78, SD=1.49, n=81), compared to the high revenge/high severity condition (M= 3.90, 95%CIs= 3.58, 4.23, SD=1.62, n=76). These results can be viewed in Table 6.4 and Figure 6.2.

Discussion

The results support our initial prediction that the level of the severity of the act of revenge would have an effect on attributions of punishment, and provide evidence that retributive considerations are crucial in making such attributions.

These results show that participants did indeed punish in line with the just deserts notion across both conditions of severity. The perpetrator (the person that exacted the revenge) was punished in proportion to the level of revenge he exacted. On the other hand, the severity of the initial perpetration did not play a role in determining punitive attributions. In other words, participants focused primarily on achieving equivalence in proportion to the type of revenge that was exacted (low revenge/high revenge). As explained in the design section a prediction in relation to a main effect of the severity of the initial perpetration was not made here due to the way that the vignettes were designed (aiming to achieve balance between the severity of the revenge acts and the severity of the initial perpetraions).

An interesting fact is that the average mean score for punishment in this experiment ranges between the values of 2.46 to 3.90. These scores indicate that participants’ decisions about punishment ranged between very little to moderate punishment. Thus, despite the fact that some of the acts especially in the high revenge condition were atrocious (battery and stabbing), the maximum punishment that participants had opted for was a moderate form of punishment, rather than severe or very severe. This suggests that while participants punished in proportion
to the level of revenge, they had at the same time provided some level of justification to the actual act of revenge.

**Correlations**

<table>
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<td>-0.46**</td>
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</table>

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01

**Table 6.5** Inter item correlations between punishment ratings and the empathic concern, social comparison and sadism scales.

Correlational exploratory research shows the same relationship that was discussed in the previous chapter (since the same participants were used) between sadism and empathy, but also reveals a significant negative correlation between empathic tendencies and punitive attributions suggesting that the more empathic concerns one shows the less punitive one is.

**6.4.3. Attributed Blame**

A two-way factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to consider the main effects of the two independent variables (level of revenge and severity), and the interaction effect between level of revenge and severity on the dependent variable (i.e., attributed blame). There was a statistically significant main effect of the level of revenge $F(1, 288) = 57.141, p<.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.166$, and severity $F(1,288) = 10.14, p<.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.034$, while there was no main interaction effect between the two $F(1.288) = 0.43, p = 0.51$, partial $\eta^2= 0.002$. 
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<td>146</td>
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</table>

*Table 6.6* Mean attributed blame ratings as a function of level of revenge and severity.
Figure 6.3 Mean attributed blame ratings for each level of revenge by the severity of the initial perpetration.

An examination of the differences in marginal means for each main effect shows that participants blamed the perpetrator less when the revenge act was of low severity (M=2.67, SD=1.58), compared to high severity (M=4.17, SD=1.71). Moreover, participants blamed the avenger less when the initial crime (the crime for which revenge was exacted by the avenger) was of high severity (M=3.09, SD=1.83), compared to when the initial crime was of low severity (M=3.76, SD=1.71).

Participants in the low level of revenge/low severity condition blamed the perpetrator (i.e., the person that exacted the revenge in this case) less (M=2.93, 95% CIs=2.54, 3.33, SD=1.59, n=65), compared to those in the high level of revenge/low severity condition (M=4.50, 95% CIs=4.12, 4.88, SD=1.45, n=71). Similarly, participants in the low level of revenge/high severity condition blamed the perpetrator less ((M=2.45 95% CIs=2.10, 2.81, SD=1.54, n=81), compared to those in the high level of revenge/high severity condition (M= 3.77, 95% CIs=3.40, 4.14, SD=1.86, n=75). Table 6.6 and Figure 6.3 show the mean differences.
Discussion

As was the case with attributed punishment, the results support the initial prediction that the level of severity of the act of revenge would influence attributions of blame. These results show that in a similar fashion to punishment, participants ascribed less blame for the low revenge acts compared to high, but unlike the results on attributed punishment there was a main effect of the severity of the initial perpetration which provoked the act of revenge. In other words, an atrocious act such as murder and rape may have caused participants to be more lenient in blaming the perpetrator, compared to an act of mugging. Participants blamed the perpetrator less when the initial perpetration was of high severity. This makes sense since given the high severity of the initial perpetration revenge was found to be more justified. On the other hand, the size of the effect was small partial $\eta^2 = 0.034$ compared to the size of the effect of the level of revenge partial $\eta^2 = 0.166$. This shows that participants did take into account the severity of the initial perpetration in making decisions about blame, but the factor that had more influence in their decisions was the level of revenge, rather than the level of severity of the initial crime.

Therefore, the severity of the initial perpetration also influenced decisions about blame, and participants chose to ignore the difference between a slap and a punch, and the difference between battery and stabbing. In this respect, these results might indicate that blame and punishment behave differently. When it came to punishment, participants did not take into account of the severity of the initial crime, but in the case of blame they did. The reason for this is not very clear.

What is also really interesting about these results is that if we examine the total marginal means in terms of the labels they represent, we find that revenge acts of low severity can be located between the scores of 2 (‘very little blameworthy’), and 3 (‘a little blameworthy’). Moreover, even when revenge acts were of high severity (battery/stabbing), they gathered around the score of 4 (since the marginal mean was 4.13), which represents that the act of revenge was ‘moderately blameworthy’. These results are consistent with the idea that revenge can indeed be perceived as an accepted form of punishment, and that an act of revenge can be perceived at least as ‘a little justified’, even when the acts of revenge are atrocious and of high severity.
Table 6.7 Inter-item correlations between attributed blame ratings, empathic concern, sadism, and social comparison scales.

Table 6.7 shows that there are no significant correlations between blame and any of the other variables of interest.

6.4.4. Recommended Prison Time

A two-way factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to consider the main effects of the two independent variables (level of revenge and severity), and the interaction effect between level of revenge and severity on the dependent variable (i.e., recommended prison time). Results showed that there was a statistically significant main effect of the level of revenge $F(1, 289) = 61.28, p<.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.175$, a main effect of severity $F(1, 289) = 19.36, p<.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.063$, as well as an interaction effect between the level of revenge and severity $F(1, 289) = 6.5, p<.05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.022$. 
A simple effects analysis of the interaction effect revealed that the effect of severity is significant only in the high level of revenge condition $F(1,319) = 24.37, p<001$. An examination of the differences in marginal means for each main effect shows that participants ascribed less prison time when the act of revenge was of low severity ($M=1.58, 1.6$), compared to high severity ($M=3.21, 2.06$). Moreover, participants ascribed less prison time when the initial crime (which provoked the act of revenge) was of low severity ($M=1.94, 1.24$), compared to high severity ($M=1.80, SD=2.43$). This difference was more pronounced when the level of revenge was high which explains the interaction effect. The interaction effect can be viewed in Figure 6.4.

**Figure 6.4** Plot showing the interaction effect between the level of revenge and the level of severity.
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**Table 6. 8** Mean attributed recommended prison time as a function of level of revenge and severity.

**Figure 6. 5** Mean recommended prison time ratings for each level of revenge by the severity of the initial perpetration.
The examination of mean differences in recommended prison time showed that participants in the low level of revenge/low severity condition recommended less time in prison \((M= 1.36, 95\% CIs=[0.93, 1.80], SD= 0.74, n= 65)\) compared those in the high level of revenge/low severity condition \((M= 2.46, 95\% CIs=[2.05, 2.87], SD= 1.37, n= 71)\). Similarly, participants in the low level of revenge/high severity condition recommended less prison time \((M= 1.75, 95\% CIs=[1.36, 2.14], SD= 2.02, n= 81)\) compared to those in the high level of revenge/high severity condition \((M= 3.90, 95\% CIs=[3.50, 4.30], SD= 2.33, n= 76)\). An examination of the interaction effect in terms of differences in mean scores shows that the effect of revenge was more pronounced for the high severity type of crimes. Table 6.8 and Figure 6.5 show these differences.

**Discussion**

Firstly, the results support the initial prediction that the level of the severity of revenge would influence attributions of recommended prison time. Participants attributed recommended prison time in proportion the severity of the act of revenge. As was the case with attributions of punishment and blame, the results support the view that retributive considerations are very important in making such attributions. Predictions were not made with respect to the effect of the severity of the initial perpetration (due to reasons explained in the design section), but it is still of interest discuss these results in comparison to those observed for attributed blame.

The results show that with respect to the main effect of the severity of the initial perpetration, attributions of time in prison behaved differently to attributions of blame. While in both cases there was a main effect of the severity of the initial perpetration, participants ascribed more prison time to the perpetrator when the initial crime was of high severity, and this was more pronounced when the level of the act of revenge was also of high severity. In contrast, participants blamed the perpetrator less when the initial crime was of high severity. One possible explanation for this difference could be that some utilitarian thinking may have been employed by participants, when they were making decisions about recommended prison time. Participants may have considered that acts of revenge should be deterred in the future, and hence decided to recommend more prison time when the initial perpetration (which provoked the act of revenge) was of high severity compared to when it was of low severity. This might be because in cases of high severity revenge can be more tempting. Therefore, utilitarian and not only retributive elements may have been involved in their decisions. Chapter Seven further investigates the role of utilitarian thinking in making decisions about blame and punishment.
Another possible explanation for these results may be that the lack of control in the scenarios might have caused participants to recommend prison time in line with retribution, but only in terms of the severity of the act of revenge. An examination of the mean scores across all the conditions shows that participants attributed more prison time for the act of stabbing followed by the acts of battery, punching, and finally slapping. This contradicts the results observed for punishment justification and blame. Retributive thinking here focuses only on the severity of the act of revenge, and not in justifying the perpetrator for this act by ascribing less time especially when the initial crime is of high severity (as was the case with blame). In other words, even though the participants could excuse the father who stabbed the criminal to some extent – nevertheless, stabbing is such a serious crime that they attributed more time in prison. This is still retributive thinking, but it does not fit with the traditional view of retribution which would also take into account the wickedness of the act of the initial perpetrator.

Nevertheless, if the results are examined in terms of the labels that they represent, as was previously done for blame and punishment, we can see that scores for recommended prison time for high severity revenge acts gather around 3 (M=3.21). This score represents prison time that is between six months and one year in prison. This further illustrates how justifiable an act of revenge is perceived to be. Participants were willing to punish an act of battery/stabbing with a minimal recommended prison time. This further illustrates those retributive concerns are important enough to lead participants to ascribe prison time with great leniency. This is probably because an act of revenge, even if it is of high severity, is perceived as an act that carries justice.

**Correlations**

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**Table 6.9** Inter item correlations between recommended prison time ratings, sadism, empathic concern, and social comparison scales.

Table 6.9 shows that like blame, there are no significant correlations between time and any of the scales.
An important point that might be made in regards to Experiment Four is that it would have been more useful to compare a no revenge to a revenge condition (rather than low/high revenge) in order to test whether the revenge condition is perceived as being more justifiable. However, this was not possible since it would have precluded the question of justification being presented to all the groups across all the conditions. In other words, we would not have been able to ask whether an act of revenge is justifiable in a scenario when there is no revenge taking place. Experiment Four aimed mainly at examining the effect of the level of the severity of revenge on justification both statistically and in terms of interpreting the relevant labels that corresponded to marginal mean scores. Examining these labels showed that participants are generally willing to justify acts of revenge and ascribe minimal punishment, blame and prison time, even when these acts were of high severity and can be described as atrocious.

In contrast, the next experiment examines whether the presence or absence of an act of revenge can influence attributions of blame and punishment regarding the initial perpetration, rather than the act of revenge as was the case in this experiment.

Experiment Five

**Does the presence or absence of an act of revenge influence attributions of blame and punishment? And is this better explained by retributivist thinking?**

6.5. Introduction

Experiment Four showed that participants found revenge to be a justifiable act, and some explanations were provided on why this is in line with retributive thinking. Experiment Five also addresses the first central research question by employing the notion of revenge but in a different design. While the key motivation behind Experiment Four was to examine whether revenge is viewed as justified, and how this justification can influence punitive attributions, Experiment Five aims to examine the effect of the presence or absence of revenge on punitive and blame attributions when these are directed to the person that carried out the initial perpetration. The rationale behind this experiment is that the exaction of any form of revenge could be seen as a form of punishment, and in aiming to achieve equilibrium between the seriousness of the perpetration and punishment, people may suppose that some proportion of punishment was dispensed through revenge and hence that some proportion of justice has been done.

It was predicted that if proportionate punishment (that is, giving the right amount of deserved punishment to a perpetrator in order to achieve moral equivalency) is the main goal of all punishment then the presence or absence of revenge would influence the intensity of attributed
blame and punishment. It was also predicted that there will be an effect of the severity of the crime on attributions of blame and punishment.

6.6. Method

Design

This experiment used an independent measures (2x2) factorial design. There were four conditions corresponding to the two levels of each independent variable. The first independent variable was the presence of revenge (no revenge exacted / revenge exacted), and the second severity of crime (low vs high severity). Each participant was presented with a vignette describing a crime, and participated only in one of the four conditions. The independent variables were manipulated by using different vignette versions. (Further details of these versions are provided below). Participants then provided scores on the dependent variables, which were rating scales that required respondents to attribute deserved punishment (i.e. how much punishment does the perpetrator deserve for his actions: measured on a rating scale ranging from 1=none at all, to 7=extremely severe), and deserved blame (i.e. how severely does he deserve to be blamed for his action: measured on a rating scale ranging from 1=no blame to 7=extremely severely).

Other measures: Participants also gave their responses to the CAST sadism scale, the just world scale, and the locus of control scale, which were also used for experiment two (see Chapter Five for details).

Participants

Participants comprised of an online sample (N=268), that was acquired through Amazon’s Mechanical Turk. This was the same sample used for Experiment Two (see Chapter Five for further details). Appropriate sample sizes for achieving the desired power levels are straightforward to calculate. For this study, I used an online power calculator (G*Power 3.1) to calculate an appropriate sample size for a two-way independent Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) that tests main and interaction effects for two independent variables. For this type of design, Cohen (1969) argued that a small effect size is roughly $f=0.1$, a medium effect size $f=0.25$, and a large effect size $f=0.40$. The parameters I had inputted were the $\alpha$-level=0.05, a medium effect size $f=0.25$, and acceptable statistical power (1-$\beta$=0.8). The output from G*Power 3.1, indicated that in order to achieve a statistical power of 0.8, we would need a sample size of 269 people. Indeed, all nine experiments conducted for this study achieved this recommended sample size.

Apparatus/Materials
As in all the other experiments the only material utilised for this study was an online questionnaire that was designed and disseminated through the Qualtrics platform. This is an online platform dedicated to the design and administration of surveys. Participants were assigned to one of four different conditions in line with the combination of the two independent variables; severity of crime and the presence of revenge. Participants in the low severity condition read a vignette describing a street mugging, while those in the high severity condition read a vignette describing a mugging followed by battery. The other independent variable presented participants with a vignette which did not include a revenge scenario (no revenge), or a scenario in which the victim met his attacker at a later time and punched him (revenge exacted). A full description of these vignettes is provided in table 6-9.

**Table 6.10 Vignettes used in Experiment Five**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vignettes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No Revenge/Low Severity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John was walking down the road after finishing work and was suddenly attacked by a man who hit him and then stole his wallet. Fortunately, he did not suffer any major injuries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Revenge Exacted/Low Severity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John was walking down the road after finishing work and was suddenly attacked by a man who hit him and then stole his wallet. Fortunately, he did not suffer any major injuries. The next day John met his attacker by chance and punched him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No Revenge/High Severity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John was walking down the road after finishing work and was suddenly attacked by a man who severely battered him and stole his wallet. John was hospitalized for several weeks with severe injuries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Revenge/High Severity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John was walking down the road after finishing work and was suddenly attacked by a man who severely battered him and stole his wallet. John was hospitalized for several weeks with severe injuries. One day after being discharged from hospital John met his attacker by chance and punched him.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Procedure

Participants were presented with the same consent form and demographic questions as in the first experiment, and then presented with a vignette. After reading the vignette participants had to attribute ratings for deserved punishment, and deserved blame. Following that, participants were asked to complete the sadism, locus of control and just world scales, and were thanked for their participation. At the end for the survey, they also received the necessary code in order to receive pecuniary compensation for their participation. The value of this compensation was £0.50.

6.7. Results and Discussion

6.7.1. Attributed Punishment

A two-way factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to consider the main effects of the two independent variables (revenge and severity), and the interaction effect between revenge and severity on the dependent variable (i.e., attributed punishment). Results showed that there was a significant main effect of severity \( F(1, 264) = 27.82, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.095, \) while there was no main effect of revenge \( F(1, 264) = 0.03, p = 0.96, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.000, \) nor an interaction effect between the two \( F(1, 264) = 2.37, p = 0.12, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.009. \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenge</th>
<th>Severity</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Revenge</td>
<td>Low Severity</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity</td>
<td>5.66</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenge</td>
<td>Low Severity</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Low Severity</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 6.11* Mean attributed punishment ratings as a function of revenge and severity.
An examination of the differences in marginal means for the main effect of severity shows that participants punished the perpetrator less when the crime was of low severity (M=4.82, SD=1.12), than when the crime was of high severity (M=5.55, SD=1.15). Participants in the no revenge/ low severity condition attributed less punishment (M= 4.71, 95%CIs= 4.44, 4.98, SD= 0.99, n=67), compared to those in the no revenge/ high severity condition (M=5.66, 95%CIs= 5.39, 5.93, SD= 0.92, n=68). Similarly, participants in the revenge/low severity condition attributed less punishment (M= 4.92, 95%CIs= 4.64, 5.2, SD= 1.22, n= 65) compared to those in the revenge/high severity condition (M= 5.44, 95%CIs= 5.17, 5.71, SD= 1.34, n= 68). Differences in mean scores can be viewed in Table 6.11 and Figure 6.6.
Discussion

The results supported the prediction that participants would punish in proportion to the severity of the offence. On the other hand, the results showed that whether an act of revenge was exacted or not did not influence attributions of punishment. Therefore, the results did not support the initial prediction that the presence or absence of revenge would have an effect on attributions of punishment. In light of the first central research question, the results undermine the importance of retributive considerations in making attributions of punishment. The results can be explained either by supposing that revenge is not treated as a tool for achieving equilibrium between crime and punishment, or by arguing that a punch was not enough to count as significant punishment for the perpetrations that were committed. Perhaps, sacrificing some lack of control over the revenge conditions would have unveiled the main effect here. A punch may be perceived as plausible punishment for the low severity type of crime, but it cannot realistically correspond to the high severity type of crime.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Punishment</td>
<td>1.</td>
<td>-0.15*</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>268.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadism</td>
<td>-0.15*</td>
<td>1.</td>
<td>0.19**</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>22.03</td>
<td>15.67</td>
<td>268.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JustWorldScale</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>0.19**</td>
<td>1.</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>21.34</td>
<td>6.42</td>
<td>268.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LocusOfControl</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>1.</td>
<td>34.01</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>268.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.12 shows a significant negative correlation between sadism and punishment which suggests that the more sadistic tendencies someone has, the less punitive they are. This correlation is interesting, but it does not really make sense since we would have expected the opposite to be true. On the other hand, a significant correlation between the just world scale and sadism shows that the more one believes that the world is a fair place and everyone gets what they deserve, the more sadistic tendencies one has. This correlation makes more sense if compared to the previous one since belief in a just world has been linked to being an authoritarian personality. The results of the CAST sadism scale were slightly positively skewed while they were slightly lower to that of standard norms of other studies; for example, Min et al. (2019) reported M= 2.20 N=624, SD=0.97. The score for this study was M=22.02 because I did not use the mean of accumulative scores. The recomputed score is M= 1.69 which is slightly lower to Min et al. The results of the locus of control scale were slightly negatively skewed and they were very close to other standard norms; for example, Tong and
Wang (2006) reported M= 9.30, SD=4.13, N=306. This study reported M= 34.01 but this was because the response values of 1 and 2 were used as the standard while other studies used the values of 0 and 1. By adjusting this study’s results to these values we acquire a M= 11.01 which is close to the Tong and Wang (2006) results. The results of the general belief in a just world scale were slightly negatively skewed and were higher to published norms; for example, Dalbert (1999) reported M=2.65, SD=0.93, N=214. The results for this study (recomputed to produce the mean of cumulative scores) are M=3.55.

6.7.2. Attributed Blame

A two-way factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to consider the main effects of the two independent variables (revenge and severity), and the interaction effect between revenge and severity on the dependent variable (i.e., attributed blame). Results showed that there was a statistically significant main effect of severity $F (1, 264) = 9.05$, $p<.01$, partial $\eta^2= 0.033$, while there was no effect of revenge $F (1, 264) = 3.34$, $p= 0.069$, partial $\eta^2= 0.013$ nor an interaction effect between the two $F (1, 264) = 0.31$, $p= 0.578$, partial $\eta^2= 0.001$.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenge</th>
<th>Severity</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$N$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Revenge</td>
<td>Low Severity</td>
<td>5.63</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity</td>
<td>6.18</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.90</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenge</td>
<td>Low Severity</td>
<td>5.43</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.62</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Low Severity</td>
<td>5.53</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity</td>
<td>5.99</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.76</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.13 Mean attributed blame ratings as a function of revenge and severity.
Figure 6.7 Mean attributed blame ratings for each level of revenge by the level of severity.

Error bars: 95% CI
An examination of the differences in marginal means for the main effect of severity shows that participants blamed the perpetrator less (M= 5.53, SD= 1.21) when the crime was of low severity, compared to when the crime was of high severity (M=5.99, SD=1.21). Participants in the no revenge/low severity condition attributed less blame (M= 5.62, 95%CI= 5.32, 5.93, SD= 1.17, n= 67) compared to those in the no revenge/high severity condition (M= 6.17, 95%CI= 5.87, 6.47 SD= 1.006, n=68). By the same token, participants in the revenge/low severity condition attributed less blame (M= 5.43, 95%CI= 5.12, 5.73, SD= 1.44, n= 65) compared to those in the revenge/high severity condition (M= 5.80, 95%CI= 5.50, 6.11, SD= 1.37, n=68). Mean differences can be viewed in Table 6.13 and Figure 6.7.

**Discussion**

The results support the initial prediction that the severity of the crime would have an effect on attributions of blame. On the other hand, they do not support the prediction that the presence or absence of revenge would have an effect on these attributions. Like punishment, blame was not influenced by the exaction of revenge but only by the severity of the crime. However, the effect here did approach significance at p= 0.069. Again perhaps, sacrificing some control in terms of the act of the revenge being realistic (a punch may have been perceived as a minor form of punishment to reduce blame attributions in the high severity condition) may have uncovered the effect of revenge on blame here.

**Correlations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Blame/Revenge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.76</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Sadism</td>
<td>-0.22**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22.03</td>
<td>15.67</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 JustWorldScale</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21.34</td>
<td>6.42</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 LocusOfControl</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td></td>
<td>34.01</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. 14 Inter item correlations between attributed blame ratings, sadism, just world, and locus of control scales.

Table 6.14 shows a significant negative correlation between blame and sadism, which suggests that the less sadistic one is the more blame one will ascribe for a perpetration.

Overall, Experiment Five did not present us with any clear evidence that the absence or presence of revenge can influence punitive attributions and attributions of blame. This may have been due to the small level of revenge exacted especially in the high severity conditions. Thus, this experiment signified the possible benefits of sacrificing some control over the
independent variable here in favour of realistic scenarios that can reveal an effect. This idea will be tested by the next experiment. Rather than acts of revenge, Experiment Six will investigate whether fateful acts can have an effect on attributions of blame and punishment. The design here is similar to Experiment Five, and the aim is to examine whether the presence or absence of fateful acts of punishment can influence attributions of blame and punishment.

Experiment Six
Does the presence or absence of fateful punishment influence attributions of blame and punishment? And is this better explained by retributivist thinking?

6.8. Introduction

Experiment Six also addresses the first central research question. This experiment investigated whether acts of fateful punishment can be perceived in terms of retributive considerations. This is because fateful punishments give the perpetrator at least some of his/her deserved punishment, and help to restore the balance of power between victim and perpetrator, and to achieve equilibrium between the magnitude of harm and the amount of deserved punishment. Austin (1979) showed that fateful acts of punishment can indeed mitigate the intensity of punitive attributions. Moreover, he showed that for severe crimes such as rape, the amount of fateful punishment had to be severe (e.g., the perpetrator ending up in a wheel chair), rather than moderate for the effect to take place. Austin followed the vignette technique and his participants read vignettes with crimes and were asked to attribute punishment.

While his study produced evidence supporting the notion of just deserts and the notion that punishment is about restoring the balance between victim and perpetrator, it has not been replicated since (at least to the current author’s knowledge). Thus, the aim of this experiment is to see if Austin’s results can be further corroborated, and to provide further evidence about the importance of retribution.

If we take into account the Austin’s research it can be predicted that fateful punishment will have an effect on attributions of blame, punishment and recommended prison time. As was the case with all of the experiments so far, we also predicted that the severity of the perpetration would have an effect on attributions of blame, punishment, and recommended time in prison. Although the design is not exactly the same as Austin’s, the main idea behind it is. Some lack of control of the independent variable in this experiment was that the type of fateful punishment differed across conditions of severity of crime (low/high). Fateful punishment for

18 See Chapter Two of the literature review for a detailed description of Austin’s study.
the low severity type of crime (mugging), was that the perpetrator accidentally broke his legs and suffered severe head injuries, while for the high severity crime (stabbing resulting in serious injuries for the victim) the perpetrator’s fateful punishment was to have been stabbed himself and suffered serious injuries after quarrelling with a random individual. (See apparatus section for detailed description of the vignettes). Some lack of control may be helpful in revealing the effect of fateful punishment, since breaking legs and suffering severe head injuries may have been perceived as insignificant, compared to the high severity crime, and it would not influence attributions, whereas using a more ‘fitting’ fateful punishment that might be considered a suitable just reward for such a serious crime would allow any effects to be shown up.

6.9. Design

This experiment used an independent measures (2x2) factorial design. There were four conditions corresponding to the two levels of each independent variable. The first independent variable was fateful punishment (no fateful punishment vs fateful punishment) and the second severity of crime (low vs high severity). Each participant was presented with a vignette describing a crime and participated only in one of the four conditions. The independent variables were manipulated by using different vignette versions (further details of these versions are provided below). Participants then provided scores on the dependent variables, which were rating scales that required respondents to attribute deserved punishment (i.e. how much punishment does the perpetrator deserve for his actions: measured on a rating scale ranging from 1=none at all, to 7= extremely severe), deserved blame (i.e. how severely does he deserve to be blamed for his action: measured on a rating scale ranging from 1=no blame to 7=extremely severely), and recommended prison time (i.e. how much time should the perpetrator spend in prison? : measured on a rating scale ranging from 1=none to 10= death penalty).

Other measures: The experiment also utilised three scales for exploratory correlational analysis. These were the social comparison scale (Allan & Gilbert 1995), the CAST Sadism scale (Buckels & Paulhus 2014), and an empathy concern scale (Davis 1998). These scales are the same utilised in Experiments One and Two in Chapter Five (for further details see Chapter Five or the chapter on methods).

Apparatus/materials

The only material utilised for this study was an online questionnaire that was designed and disseminated through the Qualtrics platform. This is an online platform dedicated to the design
and administration of surveys. Participants were assigned to one of four different conditions in line with the combination of the two independent variables; severity of crime and fateful punishment. Vignettes regarding the first independent variable either described a mugging (low severity), or a mugging followed by stabbing (high severity). Participants also read vignettes that included or excluded fateful punishment. In the fateful punishment condition, the perpetrator suffered severe injuries from accidents that took place sometime after the crime. Details of these vignettes are presented in table 6.15.

Table 6.15 Vignettes used in Experiment Six.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vignettes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Fateful Punishment/Low Severity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary was walking down the road after finishing work and was suddenly attacked by a man who hit her and then stole her purse. Fortunately, she did not suffer any major injuries. Mary reported the incident to the police but no sign of the thief was ever found. Mary lost a considerable amount of money and all her credit cards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Fateful Punishment/High Severity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary was returning home after work; while she was walking through a park near her house a thief threatened her with a knife and demanded her wallet. Mary refused and the thief stabbed her, took her wallet and left. Fortunately, Mary survived after being hospitalized for a couple of months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fateful Punishment/Low Severity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary was walking down the road after finishing work and was suddenly attacked by a man who hit her and then stole her purse. Fortunately, she did not suffer any major injuries. Mary reported the incident to the police but no sign of the thief was ever found. Mary lost a considerable amount of money and all her credit cards. A couple of weeks later the thief was driving on the highway and was a victim of an accident which resulted in him breaking both of his legs and suffering severe head injuries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fateful Punishment/High Severity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary was returning home after work; while she was walking through a park near her house a thief threatened her with a knife and demanded her wallet. Mary refused and the thief stabbed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
her, took her wallet and left. Fortunately, Mary survived after being hospitalized for a couple of months. In the meantime, the thief by coincidence was himself stabbed while quarrelling with another individual. He was severely wounded and had to be hospitalized for a couple of months.

Participants

Participants comprised of a sample (N= 323), that was acquired through acquaintances and social websites where the link for the study was posted. The sample had 11 missing values; thus, final responses were (N=312). Participants gave their responses on attributed punishment, deserved blame, and recommended prison time, and then proceeded to answer to the three scales explained earlier. This is the same sample utilised for Experiment One. Appropriate sample sizes for achieving the desired power levels are straightforward to calculate. For this study, I used an online power calculator (G*Power 3.1) to calculate an appropriate sample size for a two-way independent Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) that tests main and interaction effects for two independent variables. For this type of design, Cohen (1969) argued that a small effect size is roughly $f=0.1$, a medium effect size $f=0.25$, and a large effect size $f=0.40$. The parameters I had inputted were the $\alpha$-level=0.05, a medium effect size $f=0.25$, and acceptable statistical power (1-$\beta$=0.8). The output from G*Power 3.1, indicated that in order to achieve a statistical power of 0.8, we would need a sample size of 269 people. Indeed, all nine experiments conducted for this study achieved this recommended sample size.

Procedure

Participants were presented with the same consent form and demographic questions as in the first experiment, and then presented with a vignette. After reading the vignettes participants had to attribute ratings for deserved punishment, and deserved blame. Following that, participants were asked to complete the sadism, locus of control and just world scales, and were thanked for their participation.
6.10. Results and Discussion

6.10.1. Attributed Punishment

A two-way factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to consider the main effects of the two independent variables (fateful punishment and severity) and the interaction effect between fateful punishment and severity on the dependent variable (i.e. attributed punishment). Results showed that there was a main effect of fateful punishment $F(1, 308) = 10.362, p<0.01$, partial $\eta^2= 0.033$, and a main effect of severity $F(1, 308) = 52.309, p<.001$, partial $\eta^2= 0.145$. There was no significant interaction effect between fateful punishment and severity $F(1, 308) = 1.37, p= 0.24$, partial $\eta^2= 0.004$.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fateful punishment</th>
<th>Severity</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$N$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No fateful punishment</td>
<td>Low Severity</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity</td>
<td>5.46</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.97</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fateful punishment</td>
<td>Low Severity</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
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Table 6.16 Mean attributed punishment ratings as a function of fateful punishment and severity.

An examination of the differences in marginal means for each main effect shows that participants attributed less punishment when fateful punishment was present ($M= 4.52$, $SD= 1.29$), compared to when it was absent ($M= 5.46$, $SD= 0.93$). Moreover, participants attributed less punishment when the crime was of low severity ($M=4.25$, $SD= 1.15$), than when it was of high severity ($M=5.19$, $SD=1.14$).
Figure 6.8 Mean attributed punishment ratings for each level of fateful punishment by the level of severity.
Mean attributed punishment ratings show that participants in the fateful punishment/low severity condition attributed less punishment ($M = 4.12, 95\% CI = 3.86, 4.38 SD = 1.16, n = 74$) compared to those in the no fateful punishment/low severity condition ($M = 4.38, 95\% CI = SD = 1.12, n = 73$). By the same token, participants in the fateful punishment/high severity condition attributed less punishment ($M = 4.89, 95\% CI = 4.64, 5.14 SD = 1.28, n = 78$) compared to those in the no fateful punishment/high severity condition ($M = 5.45, 95\% CI = 5.22, 5.69 SD = 0.92, n = 87$). Mean differences can be viewed in Table 6.16 and Figure 6.8.

Discussion

The results confirmed both the initial predictions; fateful punishment and the severity of crime had an effect on attributions of punishment. These results suggest that somehow people take into account fateful punishment as a mitigating factor for their attributions. Results corroborate Austin’s (1979) findings, and may be taken as evidence that people do somehow perceive punishment as a conscious effort to achieve moral equivalency or homeostasis between the seriousness of a crime and the corresponding proportion of punishment. In this way these results provide further evidence on the importance of retributive considerations.

It can be argued that punishment is seen as a quantifiable and measurable element. Perpetrators need to pay a debt stemming from their perpetration. The amount of the debt depends upon the seriousness of the perpetration. Society is the creditor and the perpetrator the debtor. When this debt is fully paid, then some form of balance has been restored. This is the main tenet of retribution and retributive thinking in general.

Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>1.</th>
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<th>3.</th>
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<td>-.03</td>
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<td>286.</td>
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</table>

Table 6.17 Inter item correlations between attributed punishment ratings and empathic concern, social comparison, and sadism scales.

Table 6.17 shows that no significant correlations were found between punishment and any of the other scales. I did not find specific official paper regarding published norms for the scales. I found other studies and compared the current’s study’s scores with them. Moreover, some papers calculated scores differently (i.e., they used the mean of accumulated item scores rather
than the accumulation of scores for each item). Where this occurred, I recalculated this study’s scores by dividing the result with the number of items in each scale. The results of the CAST sadism scale were slightly positively skewed while they were slightly higher to that of standard published norms of other studies; for example, Min et al. (2019) reported M=2.20 N=624, SD=0.97. The score for this study was M=42.43 because I did not use the mean of accumulative scores. The recomputed score is M=3.20 which is slightly higher to Min et al. The results of the empathic concern scale were slightly negatively skewed and the results were higher to published norms; for example, De Corte et al. (2007) reported M=18.05, SD=4.23, N=651. The results for the Social Comparison scale were slightly negatively skewed and were close to the norms of the original study (Allen and Gilbert 1995). Allen and Gilbert reported M=64.67, SD=11.65 in a sample of N=180.

6.10.2. Attributed Blame

A two-way factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to consider the main effects of the two independent variables (fateful punishment and severity), and the interaction effect between fateful punishment and severity on the dependent variable (i.e., attributed blame). Results showed that there was a significant main effect of severity $F(1, 308) = 18.907, p<.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.058$, while there was no main effect of fateful punishment $F(1, 308) = 0.434, p= 0.511$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.001$, nor an interaction effect between severity and fateful punishment $F(1, 308) = 1.16, p= 0.281$, partial $\eta^2 = .004$. 

<table>
<thead>
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<th>$N$</th>
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Table 6.18 Mean attributed blame scores as a function of fateful punishment and severity.
An examination of the differences in marginal means for the main effect of severity shows that participants blamed the perpetrator less when the crime was of low severity ($M=4.80$, $SD=1.27$), compared to when the crime was of high severity ($M=5.39$, $SD=1.13$).

Differences in mean deserved blame ratings showed that participants in the no fateful punishment/low severity condition, attributed less blame ($M=4.76$, 95%CI$=4.49$, 5.04, $SD=1.23$, $n=73$) compared to those in the no fateful punishment/high severity condition ($M=5.50$, 95%CI$=5.25$, 5.75, $SD=0.97$, $n=87$). By the same token, participants in the fateful punishment/low severity condition attributed less blame ($M=4.82$, 95%CI$=4.55$, 5.09, $SD=1.31$, $n=74$) compared to the fateful punishment/high severity condition ($M=5.26$, 95%CI$=5.002$, 5.53, $SD=1.27$, $n=78$). Differences in mean scores can be viewed in Table 6.18 and Figure 6.9.

**Discussion**

The results support the initial prediction the severity of the perpetration would have an effect on attributions of blame. As was expected the participants attributed punishment in proportion
to the severity of the perpetration. On the other hand, the results did not confirm the prediction that fateful punishment would have an effect on attributions of blame. Blame did not follow the same pattern as punishment this time and was not affected by fateful punishment. This does not support the idea that fateful punishment can be perceived through retributive concerns when ascribing blame. This may have been due to the fact that participants in this experiment did not perceive blame to be a form or a measure of punishment, but to be a question of moral responsibility. How much one is responsible for a perpetration cannot vary due to fateful punishment, since the perpetrator is morally responsible for his action regardless.

**Correlations**

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</table>

Table 6.19 Inter item correlations between attributed blame ratings and, empathic concern, social comparison and sadism scales.

Table 6.19 shows no significant correlations between blame and any of the scales that were utilized.
6.10.3. Recommended Prison Time

A two-way factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to consider the main effects of the two independent variables (fateful punishment and severity), and the interaction effect between fateful punishment and severity on the dependent variable (i.e., recommended prison time). Results showed that there was a statistically significant main effect of both fateful punishment \( F (1, 308) = 15.36, p<.001, \text{ partial } \eta^2 = 0.048, \) and severity \( F (1, 308) = 322.46, p<.001, \text{ partial } \eta^2 = 0.511, \) while there was no interaction effect between the two \( F (1, 308) = 2.44, p= 0.11, \text{ partial } \eta^2 = .008. \)

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<td></td>
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<td>2.17</td>
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Table 6.20 Mean recommended prison time ratings as a function of fateful punishment and severity.
An examination of the differences in marginal means for each main effect shows that participants recommended less prison time for the perpetrator when fateful punishment occurred (M=4.64, SD=2.09), rather than when it did not (M= 5.42, SD= 2.19). Additionally, participants recommended less prison time for the low severity type of crime (M= 3.41, SD=1.24), compared to the high severity type of crime (M= 6.49, SD=1.76).

Differences in mean prison time ratings show that participants in the fateful punishment/low severity condition ascribed less prison time (M= 3.21, 95%CIs = 2.87, 3.55, SD= 1.19, n=74) compared to those in the no fateful punishment/low severity condition (M= 3.61, 95%CIs= SD= 1.25, n= 73). By the same token, participants in the fateful punishment/high severity condition ascribed less prison time (M= 6.00, 95%CIs= 5.66, 6.33, SD= 1.83, n= 78) compared to those in the no fateful punishment/high severity condition (M=6.93, 95%CIs= 6.61, 7.24, SD= 1.56, n=87). Differences in mean scores can be viewed in Table 6.20. Results showed that time and punishment followed a similar pattern in terms of the effect of fateful punishment.
Discussion

The results support both the initial predictions. The presence or absence of fateful punishment had an effect on attributions of recommended prison time, along with the severity of the perpetration. Fateful punishment mitigated attributions of prison time, which suggests that it was perceived as an amount of punishment that had to be taken into account along with the severity of the perpetration, in order to attribute prison time proportionately. This demonstrates that retributive considerations were the main factor behind the participants’ decisions.

Correlations

<table>
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<td>- .08</td>
<td>-0.46**</td>
<td>42.44</td>
<td>12.54</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.21 Inter item correlations between recommended prison time ratings, empathic concern, social comparison and sadism scales.

Table 6.21 shows that there were no significant correlations between recommended prison time and any of the scales.
6.11. General Discussion

The main aim of this series of experiments was to examine the extent to which people’s judgements about blame and punishment accord with the principles of retribution and the notion of just deserts. This was done by examining acts of revenge and fateful punishment. Overall, the three experiments that were conducted presented interesting results. Some are easier to interpret and others (such as the behaviour of blame in Experiment Six) are harder to understand.

Experiment Four examined the degree to which revenge is justifiable and showed that most participants found it moderately justifiable to justifiable for the low severity type of revenge, and that they still found it to be a little justified even when the act of revenge was of high severity (battery). The results suggest that people may regard revenge as an act of justice that helps to achieve moral equivalence between the initial perpetration and the magnitude of harm caused by it. This experiment also demonstrated that the level of severity of an act of revenge did have an effect on punitive attributions and that this effect had a substantial size (partial $\eta^2=0.167$). In line with thinking in retributive terms, participants punished the perpetrator (in this case the person exacting revenge upon another person) less when his act of revenge was of low severity compared to his act being of high severity. In contrast to blame and justification the severity of the initial perpetration did not influence punitive attributions. No predictions were made regarding the effect of the severity of the initial perpetration due to the way it was designed (see the relevant design section).

The results also showed that the levels of punishment were relatively low with moderate punishment scores being the average score even when the acts of revenge were battery and stabbing. This can potentially corroborate the claim that people show leniency when a perpetration is an act of revenge. Thus, people may have shown leniency because retributive thinking is deeply ingrained in their psyche and comprises their own idea of what justice really is. In this respect, Experiment Four may have provided some evidence in favour of retribution being one of the main goals and priorities of punitive practices. Similar results were observed for blame and recommended prison time with the difference that the severity of the initial crime did also influence blame and prison time attributions. Both the effect of the level of the severity of revenge on blame and time were of substantial size (partial $\eta^2 = 0.166$ and partial $\eta^2= 0.175$ respectively).
The severity of the initial perpetration affected attributions of blame. Blame on the avenger decreased for the high severity type of crime compared to the low severity type of crime. In other words, participants blamed the perpetrator less when the initial crime was of high severity. This may have been due to the fact, that in line with retributive thinking, participants took the act of revenge to be more justified when the initial perpetration was of high severity. On the other hand, participants ascribed more prison time when the initial perpetration was of high severity compared to low severity. A potential explanation for this contradiction was, that decisions about recommended prison time might have involved future-oriented concerns, or that the lack of control within the vignettes elicited a form of retributivist thinking that focused on harm done rather than the blameworthiness of the avenger (as it may have been the case for attributions of blame).

Experiment Five, examined whether the presence or absence of revenge can influence attributions of blame and punishment but, in contrast to Experiment Four, judgements were made about the perpetrator of the original crime, not the avenger. This experiment showed that only the severity of crime affected attributions of blame and punishment. The presence or absence of revenge did not influence decisions about blame and punishment. This might be explained by the fact that the act of revenge for both conditions of severity was minor in magnitude, and hence participants did not take into account the fact that some form of punishment had been dispensed. It was suggested that the act of revenge should have been more severe in order to reveal the expected effect. This is because potentially a punch would not suffice to reduce attributions of blame and punishment especially for a high severity crime. The fact that the effect of revenge on blame did approach significance may reinforce this suggestion. For this reason, Experiment Six sacrificed some control in terms of varying the levels of fateful punishment.

Experiment Six focused on retribution through ‘fateful punishment’. Attributions of punishment and recommended prison time were affected by ‘fateful punishment’ although the effect sizes were not very substantial (partial \( \eta^2 = 0.033 \) for punishment and partial \( \eta^2 = 0.048 \) for recommended prison time). These results suggest that people may calculate the amount of deserved punishment in proportion to the severity of the offence, but are also sensitive to take into account other factors which should be calculated and that are less obvious than the severity of the offence. This demonstrates that retributive considerations are crucial in assessing punitive measures and can also be more complex than solely relying on the severity of the perpetration. As Cottingham (1979) argued, retribution mainly relates to criminals ‘paying back’ a debt to society. The process of paying back a debt through punishment
restores some sort of equilibrium between the criminal and the victim, or between the criminal and society as a whole. What is really interesting here is that perhaps for participants some part of this ‘debt’ was paid through fateful punishment, and this is why the intensity of their punitive attributions diminished to a certain extent.

Finally, blame in this experiment was not influenced by fateful punishment as were the other two dependent variables. A potential explanation for this is that blame was solely perceived as the degree of moral responsibility of the perpetrator and not as a form of punishment per se. Moral responsibility would not have been reduced in these cases, since this is usually only affected by extenuating circumstances (e.g., the perpetrator having caused the crime accidentally). On the other hand, it seems that the relationship between blame and punishment is rather complicated and only tentative claims can be made at the moment, given that there are no studies in the literature that investigate it empirically. This relationship has only been examined by philosophers. For example, Mill suggested that blame is a punitive emotion, while Wallace claims that it is an appropriate behavioural response to the violation of a moral rule and not a form of punishment. This discussion on the relationship between blame and punishment will be addressed in Chapter Eight, and it regards a peripheral aim of this thesis. There we shall examine similarities and differences in the behaviour of blame and punishment across the nine experiments.

Overall, the experiments presented in this chapter provided some evidence which supports the view that retributive considerations have an important influence on peoples’ judgements about punishment. To further assess this claim, retribution needs to be compared with another set of factors that might be thought to influence punitive motivations – that is, utilitarian considerations. Indeed, some of the psychologists mentioned in this chapter have argued that punishment also reflects utilitarian concerns. We shall now move onto the next and final experimental chapter, where the discussion will focus on the relationship between utility and retribution.
Chapter Seven-Experiments Seven to Nine

7.1. Introduction and Research Aims

In the previous chapter we discussed the importance of retributive thinking in making attributions of blame and punishment. We saw that ‘deservingness’ may indeed be a very important factor in making such decisions. As was discussed, retributive thinking is ‘past oriented’, and solely concerns punishing offenders in line with what they deserve so that the amount of punishment is proportionate to the magnitude of harm that they have caused (Cottingham 1979; Carrabine et al. 2009). This chapter addresses the second central research question which regards the extent to which utilitarian/future-oriented considerations are the main motivation behind lay attributions of blame and punishment. To operationalise this research question, we examined factors that relate to future-oriented considerations about punishment. These were incapacitation, societal crime rate, and repentance.

As was discussed in Chapter Two of the literature review, some theorists have argued that utilitarian, or ‘future oriented’ concerns are the most prominent motivations behind punitive attributions. Some theorists have argued that the main motivation behind punishment lies in maintaining cooperation and societal norms, which are certainly utilitarian concerns (e.g., Frank 1988, Gintis et al. 2008). Philosophers like Hobbes (1651), and Ree (1875), have argued that punishment and justice were invented to maintain order and peace. Otherwise, these authors concluded, people would start snatching property from each other and the world would be in a perpetual state of war due to a conflict of selfish interests. Hence, Ree argued that the original purpose of punishment was to deter people from committing further crime. This original purpose of punishment, he claims, has been forgotten and nowadays people think that the purpose of punishment is retribution. According to Hogan and Emler (1981), the main motivation behind punishment is to deter others from offending by ‘setting an example’. In this way people essentially protect the rules that glue society together. Be it from a genuine concern for social order and the maintenance of cooperation, or stemming from selfish motives, the accounts above stress the importance of utilitarian rather than retributive concerns in punitive practices.

As we saw in Chapter Two of the literature review some experiments provide evidence in support of retributive thinking (e.g., Carlsmith 2006; Carlsmith, Darley & Robinson 2002; Darley, Carlsmith & Robinson 2000, Sunstein et al. 2000), while others support utilitarian claims (e.g. Vidmar 1974), or at least show that retribution is employed under utilitarian premises (e.g. Rucker et al. 2004; Oswald et al. 2002). For instance, Rucker et al. (2004) showed that while perceived social threat increased the degree of punitiveness, people would
opt for retributive rather than utilitarian motives to justify their decisions about punishment, especially for serious rather than low severity crimes. Oswald et al. (2002) showed that retribution is related not only to harsh punishment but also to the social exclusion of the offender, which is a utilitarian concern. Experiments such as the above typically ask participants to report their sentencing goals, be it just desert or utilitarian goals such as social exclusion. On the other hand, the experiments performed for this thesis have tried to employ more indirect ways of drawing conclusions about punitive strategies and the motivations behind them.

Experiment Seven will examine whether knowing that a perpetrator does not a pose a threat for society can have an effect on attributions of blame and punishment. Experiment Eight will investigate whether having information about the crime rate within a society can have an effect on attributions of blame and punishment. Finally, Experiment Nine will examine whether the sincere repentance of a perpetrator can have an effect on attributions of blame and punishment. The general aim behind these experiments is to investigate if having future-oriented information about an offender (which reflects utilitarian thinking), can have an effect in decisions about blame and punishment.

**Experiment Seven**

**The effect of incapacitation information on attributions of blame and punishment.**

**7.2. Introduction**

This experiment focused on the second central research question which addresses whether information concerning utilitarian and hence future-oriented concerns can have an impact on attributions of blame and punishment. More specifically, this experiment examines whether information about whether a perpetrator poses a continuing threat to society can have an effect on attributions of blame, punishment, and recommended prison time. In order to establish that a perpetrator no longer poses a threat to society, participants were informed that the perpetrator has been permanently incapacitated, and cannot commit a crime even if this were his/her intention. The rationale behind this experiment was that information on incapacitation may trigger future-oriented concerns about punishment. Since people may also think in terms of utilitarian processes, and not only retributive ones, it was predicted that this kind of information might influence their punitive attributions, along with severity of crime. Additionally, as was the case with all the previous experiments it was predicted that there will be a main effect of the severity of the crime on attributions of punishment.
7.3. Method

Design

As in the previous experiments, this experiment used an independent measures (2x2) factorial design. There were four conditions corresponding to the two levels of each independent variable. The first independent variable was incapacitation (no incapacitation vs incapacitation), and the second severity of crime (low vs high severity). Each participant was presented with a vignette describing a crime and participated only in one of the four conditions. The independent variables were manipulated by using different vignette versions (further details of these versions are provided in the coming sections). Participants then provided scores on the dependent variables, which were rating scales that required respondents to attribute deserved punishment (i.e. how much punishment does the perpetrator deserve for his actions: measured on a rating scale ranging from 1=none at all, to 7= extremely severe), deserved blame (i.e. how severely does he deserve to be blamed for his action: measured on a rating scale ranging from 1=no blame to 7=extremely severely), and recommended prison time (i.e. how much time should the perpetrator spend in prison? : measured on a rating scale ranging from 1=none to 10= death penalty).

Other measures: The experiment also utilised three scales for exploratory correlational analysis. These were the social comparison scale (Allan & Gilbert 1995), the CAST Sadism scale (Buckels & Paulhus 2014), and an empathy concern scale (Davis 1998). These scales are the same as utilised in Experiments One and Two in Chapter Five (for further details see Chapter Five or the chapter on methods).

Apparatus/materials

The only material utilised for this study was an online questionnaire that was designed and disseminated through the Qualtrics platform which is an online platform dedicated to the design and administration of surveys. Participants were assigned to one of four different conditions in line with the combination of the two independent variables; severity of crime and incapacitation. Vignettes regarding the first independent variable either described an act of drink/driving (low severity), or an act of rape (high severity). Participants assigned to the incapacitation condition read that the perpetrator would be permanently incapacitated rendering him unable to commit a crime in the future (incapacitation) or were given no information (no incapacitation). The table below provides a full description of the relevant vignettes.
Table 7.1 Vignettes used in Experiment Seven

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vignettes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Incapacitation/Low Severity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill usually drinks alcohol before driving and this can pose a risk for both himself and other drivers’ safety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Incapacitation/High Severity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill committed an act of rape.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incapacitation/Low Severity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill usually drinks alcohol before driving and this can pose a risk for both himself and other drivers’ safety. However, he was never caught by police. Recently he was diagnosed with a serious eye disease and was told that his license would be suspended and would never be allowed to drive again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incapacitation/High Severity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill committed an act of rape. Some months later and while waiting for his normal health check-up in hospital he was told that he was diagnosed with a very rare disease, and would not be able to have sex ever again. The change was permanent and non-curable. Under these circumstances Bill would be unable to commit another act of rape ever again, and therefore does not pose any further threat to society.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants

Participants comprised of a sample (N=323), that was acquired through acquaintances and social websites where the link for the study was posted. The sample had 11 missing values; thus, final responses were (N=312). Participants gave their responses on attributed punishment, deserved blame, and recommended prison time, and then proceeded to answer to the three scales explained earlier. This is the same sample utilised for Experiment One. Appropriate sample sizes for achieving the desired power levels are straightforward to calculate. For this study, I used an online power calculator (G*Power 3.1) to calculate an appropriate sample size for a two-way independent Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) that tests main and interaction effects for two independent variables. For this type of design, Cohen (1969) argued that a small effect size is roughly $f=0.1$, a medium effect size $f=0.25$, and a large effect size $f=0.40$. The parameters I had inputted were the $\alpha$-level=0.05, a medium effect size
f=0.25, and acceptable statistical power (1-β=0.8). The output from G*Power 3.1, indicated that in order to achieve a statistical power of 0.8, we would need a sample size of 269 people. Indeed, all nine experiments conducted for this study achieved this recommended sample size.

Procedure

Participants were presented with the same consent form and demographic questions as in the first experiment, and then presented with a vignette. After reading the vignettes participants had to attribute ratings for deserved punishment, and deserved blame. Following that, participants were asked to complete the sadism, locus of control and just world scales, and were thanked for their participation.

7.4. Results and Discussion

7.4.1. Attributed Punishment

A two-way factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to consider the main effects of the two independent variables (incapacitation and severity), and the interaction effect between incapacitation and severity on the dependent variable (i.e. attributed punishment). Results showed that there was a significant main effect of severity $F(1, 294) = 7.92, p<.005$ partial $\eta^2=0.026$, while there was no main effect of incapacitation $F(1, 294) = 2.136, p=0.145$, partial $\eta^2=.007$, or an interaction effect $F(1, 294) = 1.008, p= 0.316$, partial $\eta^2= .003$.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incapacitation</th>
<th>Severity</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$N$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No incapacitation</td>
<td>Low Severity</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.54</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incapacitation</td>
<td>Low Severity</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Low Severity</td>
<td>5.18</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity</td>
<td>5.62</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.2 Mean attributed punishment ratings as a function of incapacitation and severity.
Differences in total marginal means show that participants ascribed less punishment to the perpetrator when the crime was of low severity ($M=5.18$, $SD=1.48$), compared to when it was of high severity ($M=5.62$, $SD=1.21$). Mean differences in punishment ratings show that participants in the no incapacitation/low severity condition attributed less punishment ($M=5.21$, $95\% CIs=4.88, 5.53$, $SD=1.31$, $n=66$) compared to participants in the no incapacitation/high severity condition ($M=5.8$, $95\% CIs=5.51, 6.09$, $SD=0.95$, $n=83$). Similarly, participants in the incapacitation/low severity condition attributed less punishment ($M=5.14$, $95\% CIs=4.82, 5.45$, $SD=1.63$, $n=71$) compared to those in the incapacitation/high severity condition ($M=5.42$, $95\% CIs=5.12, 5.72$, $SD=1.4$, $n=78$). Differences in mean scores can be viewed in Table 7.2 and Figure 7.1.

**Discussion**

These results do not confirm the prediction that having information on whether a perpetrator poses a future threat for society can influence attributions of punishment. This might be interpreted as suggesting that participants were not interested in whether the perpetrator would
commit further crime in the future and hence were committed to punishing the offender only in proportion to the seriousness of his crime. Indeed, the results supported the second initial prediction which was that the severity of the crime would have an effect on punitive attributions. Therefore, these results suggest that participants took more account of retributive than utilitarian concerns when making attributions of punishment. If utilitarian concerns were the main consideration behind their decisions, then one should expect an effect of information on incapacitation, since participants are reassured that the perpetrator will not be able to commit a crime in the future.

One concern that might be raised here is that this experiment may bear some resemblance to Experiment Six. The scenarios that were discussed there focused on ‘fateful punishment’ as a factor that could influence attributions of punishment and this manipulation also involved incapacitation of the offender (e.g., breaking his legs). However, the significant difference between this experiment and Experiment Six is that the scenarios on incapacitation here stressed the information that the perpetrator will not re-offend in the future. Additionally, the scenarios in Experiment Six did not describe incapacitation as having a permanent effect as they did in this experiment. Moreover, the fact that the results of Experiment Seven showed that there was no main effect of incapacitation on attributions of punishment (unlike Experiment Six where fateful punishment had a main effect) suggests that participants focused their attention on the intended aspect of the vignettes (re-occurrence in the future). Thus, this comparison with Experiment Six may further attest to the fact that the participants did not find utilitarian considerations to be that important in making their decisions.

We also have to consider a possible confound for this experiment since there was no harm caused in the low severity scenarios. Thus, rather than low/high severity the independent variable can be perceived as no harm/harm.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Punishment</td>
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<td>1.36</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>SocialComparison</td>
<td>-.1</td>
<td>63.02</td>
<td>15.68</td>
<td>284</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>26.68</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>271</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sadism</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.46**</td>
<td>42.44</td>
<td>12.54</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.3 Inter item correlations between attributed punishment ratings, empathic concern, social comparison and sadism scales.
Exploratory correlational research shows a significant correlation between empathy and sadism that was discussed earlier (due to the use of the same participants). However, no significant correlations were found between punishment and any of the scales that were utilised. I did not find specific official paper regarding published norms for the scales. I found other studies and compared the current’s study’s scores with them. Moreover, some papers calculated scores differently (i.e., they used the mean of accumulated item scores rather than the accumulation of scores for each item). Where this occurred, I recalculated this study’s scores by dividing the result with the number of items in each scale. The results of the CAST sadism scale were slightly positively skewed while they were slightly higher to that of standard published norms of other studies; for example, Min et al. (2019) reported M= 2.20 N=624, SD=0.97. The score for this study was M=42.43 because I did not use the mean of accumulative scores. The recomputed score is M= 3.20 which is slightly higher to Min et al. The results of the empathic concern scale were slightly negatively skewed and the results were higher to published norms; for example, De Corte et.al (2007) reported M=18.05, SD= 4.23, N=651. The results for the Social Comparison scale were slightly negatively skewed and were close to the norms of the original study (Allen and Gilbert 1995). Allen and Gilbert reported M= 64.67, SD = 11.65 in a sample of N=180.

7.4.2. Attributed Blame

A two-way factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to consider the main effects of the two independent variables (incapacitation and severity), and the interaction effect between incapacitation and severity on the dependent variable (i.e., attributed blame). Results showed that there were no statistically significant main effects of incapacitation $F(1, 294) = 0.116, p= 0.73$, partial $\eta^2= 0.000$, or severity $F(1, 294) = 0.78, p= 0.37$, partial $\eta^2= .003$. Moreover, there was no interaction main effect between the two $F(1, 294) = 3.55, p=.06$, partial $\eta^2= 0.012$, but this did approach significance. A simple effects analysis conducted for the near-significant interaction showed that there was no effect of incapacitation for either the low $F (1, 294) = 1.104, p= .294$, or the high severity conditions $F (1, 294) = 2.697, p= .102$. Mean differences can be viewed in Table 7.4 and figure 7.2.
Incapacitation | Severity     | $M$     | $SD$   | $N$  \\
---|-------------|--------|--------|-----
No incapacitation | Low Severity | 5.50   | 1.38   | 66  \\
                 | High Severity | 5.89   | 0.99   | 83  \\
                 | Total        | 5.72   | 1.19   | 149 \\
Incapacitation    | Low Severity | 5.72   | 1.21   | 71  \\
                 | High Severity | 5.58   | 1.28   | 78  \\
                 | Total        | 5.64   | 1.25   | 149 \\
Total              | Low Severity | 5.61   | 1.30   | 137 \\
                 | High Severity | 5.74   | 1.15   | 161 \\
                 | Total        | 5.68   | 1.22   | 298 \\

Table 7.4 Mean attributed blame ratings as a function of incapacitation and severity.

Figure 7.2 Mean attributed blame ratings for each level of severity by the level of incapacitation.
Discussion

The results did not support the two initial predictions. These results suggest that participants ignored both the information on incapacitation, and information on the severity of crime. While these results are consistent with the previous results on punishment in regards to the effect of incapacitation, we would need to account for why there was no effect of severity. Indeed, the marginal means for high (M=5.74) and low severity type of perpetration do not differ substantially (M=5.61). A possible explanation for this is that drink/driving causes an almost equal amount of outrage to an act of rape since numerous campaigns have been launched against it, and numerous accidents have occurred because of it. However, this explanation is not consistent with previous results on attributed punishment. Perhaps, a better explanation is that blame was not perceived as a punitive feeling, but regarded more as an ascription of moral responsibility. In other words, participants might have taken the question on how much blame the perpetrator deserves, to mean how responsible he was for the perpetration. The description of the vignettes did not allow any doubts about the moral responsibility the offender across all the scenarios, and therefore the ratings on blame were not influenced by the severity of the perpetration. This different behaviour of blame to punishment will be further discussed in Chapter Eight, since it relates to a peripheral research question.

Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Blame</td>
<td>5.68</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 SocialComparison</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.46**</td>
<td>42.44</td>
<td>12.54</td>
<td>286</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Empathy</td>
<td>26.68</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>271</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Sadism</td>
<td>42.44</td>
<td>12.54</td>
<td>286</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.5 Inter item correlations between attributed blame ratings, empathic concern, social comparison, and sadism scales.

As it can be seen in table 7.5, like in the case of punishment, no significant correlations were found between blame and any of the scales.

7.4.3. Recommended Prison Time

A two-way factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to consider the main effects of the two independent variables (incapacitation and severity), and the interaction effect between incapacitation and severity on the dependent variable (recommended prison time). Results showed that there were significant main effects of both incapacitation $F (1, 294) =$
12.54, \( p < .001 \), partial \( \eta^2 = 0.041 \), and severity \( F(1, 294) = 268.37, p < .001 \), partial \( \eta^2 = 0.477 \), while there was no interaction effect between the two \( F(1, 294) = 2.511, p = .114 \), partial \( \eta^2 = .008 \).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incapacitation</th>
<th>Severity</th>
<th>( M )</th>
<th>( SD )</th>
<th>( N )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No incapacitation</td>
<td>Low Severity</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity</td>
<td>7.52</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.76</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incapacitation</td>
<td>Low Severity</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity</td>
<td>6.38</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Low Severity</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity</td>
<td>6.97</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.6 Mean recommended prison time scores as a function of incapacitation and severity.

![Figure 7.3](image)

Figure 7.3 Mean recommended prison time ratings for each level of incapacitation by the level of severity.
Differences in total marginal means show that participants ascribed less prison time when they were given information on incapacitation (M=4.83, SD=2.66), than when they were not presented with such information (M=5.76, SD=2.60). Moreover, participants ascribed less prison time when the crime was of low severity (M= 3.32, SD=1.88), than when it was of high severity (M=6.97, SD=2.0).

An examination of differences in mean recommended prison time ratings across all of the conditions, shows that participants in the incapacitation/low severity condition ascribed less prison time to the perpetrator (M= 3.11, 95%CIs= 2.66, 3.55, SD= 1.76, n= 71) compared to those in the no incapacitation/ low severity condition (M= 3.54, 95%CIs= 3.08, 4.006, SD= 1.97, n= 66). By the same token, participants in the incapacitation/high severity condition ascribed less prison time (M= 6.38, 95%CIs= 5.96, 6.80, SD= 2.35, n= 78) compared to those participants assigned in the no incapacitation/ high severity condition (M= 7.51, 95%CIs= 7.1, 7.92, SD= 1.40, n=83). Mean differences can be viewed in Table 7.6 and Figure 7.3.

**Discussion**

The results supported both initial predictions. Firstly, information on incapacitation had a significant effect on attributions of prison time, and secondly the severity of the perpetration had a significant effect on these attributions. These results contradict the results on blame and punishment and suggest that participants had both utilitarian and retributive concerns in mind when they were making decisions about prison time. Indeed, participants ascribed less prison time when they were given the information that the perpetrator would be permanently incapacitated, and therefore would not pose any future threat (compared to when they were not presented with this information). This indicates that participants did take into account forward-looking considerations in making their decisions. On the one hand, they also took into account retributive considerations, since they ascribed prison time in proportion to the severity of the perpetration. These results support views which state that people employ both retributive and utilitarian consideration when making decisions about punishment (e.g., Tyler et.al 1997).
### Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Prison Time</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>SocialComparison</td>
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<td>63.02</td>
<td>15.68</td>
<td>284</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>26.68</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>271</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sadism</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>-0.46**</td>
<td>42.44</td>
<td>12.54</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 7.7** Inter item correlations between recommended prison time, empathic concern, social comparison and sadism scales.

Table 7.7 illustrates that as it was the case for both blame and punishment no significant correlations were found between prison time and any of the scales.
Experiment Eight
The effect of information on crime rate on attributions of blame and punishment.

7.5. Introduction

Experiment Eight addressed the second central research question. This was done by manipulating information which related to utilitarian/future-oriented considerations about punishment. The factor that was utilised for this experiment was societal crime rate. Studies have provided conflicting evidence on the importance of future-oriented information relating to crime rate in making attributions of punishment. Some found that information on crime rate increases punitiveness (e.g., Rucker et.al 2004), while other studies showed that information on crime detection rate did not have an effect on the intensity of attributions of punishment (e.g., Sunstein et.al 2000).¹⁹

Experiment Eight investigated whether information on low or high crime rate can have an effect on attributions of blame and punishment. It also examined whether the severity of the perpetration would influence attributions of blame and punishment. Crime rate was not presented to participants in terms of percentages, but in terms of a depiction of a certain social context. Participants had to imagine either that they live in a society where people have little motivation to commit crime and living standards are high, or that they live in a society where crime is on the rise and living standards are quite poor.

It was predicted that information on crime rate/social context would have an effect on attributions of blame and punishment. It was also predicted that the severity of the crime would have an effect on attributions of blame and punishment.

¹⁹ Information on crime rate, and information on crime detection rate do not refer to the same thing, but they relate to each other because they both refer to future-oriented information about crime.
7.6. Method

Design

As in the previous experiment, this experiment used an independent measures (2x2) factorial design. There were four conditions corresponding to the two levels of each independent variable. The first independent variable was societal crime level (low crime rate vs high crime rate) and the second severity of crime (low vs high severity). Each participant was presented with a vignette describing a crime, and participated only in one of the four conditions. The independent variables were manipulated by using different vignette versions (further details of these versions are provided below). Participants then provided scores on the dependent variables, which were rating scales that required them to attribute deserved punishment (i.e. how much punishment does the perpetrator deserve for his actions: measured on a rating scale ranging from 1=none at all, to 7= extremely severe), and deserved blame (i.e. how severely does he deserve to be blamed for his action: measured on a rating scale ranging from 1=no blame to 7=extremely severely). Recommended prison time was not used as a dependent variable for this experiment because it was decided that the format used for presenting this variable to participants in the Qualtrics platform was not ideal. This is because the time scores were presented as time intervals on a rating scale ranging from 1=none, 2=1-6 months, 3= 6months-1 year, 4=1-2 years, 5= 2-4 years, 6= 4-8 years, 7=8-12 years, 8=12-18 years, 9= lifetime, to 10= death penalty. It is questionable whether this format is comprised of equal intervals. However, for the purpose of the analysis scores were interpreted as parametric (ranging from 1 to 10). I did attempt to solve this problem in other experiments but unfortunately the Qualtrics platform did not allow the design of a box by which participants could scroll down and make a choice for both months and years. Because this was not possible, I used an open text question where participants could have written the recommended prison time as text. However, the majority skipped this question and I did not have data upon which to conduct an analysis.

Other measures: Participants also gave their responses to the CAST sadism scale, the Just world scale, and the Locus of control scale, which were also used for experiment two (see for details).
Participants

Participants were comprised of an online sample (N=268), that was acquired through Amazon’s mechanical Turk. This was the same sample used for Experiment Two (see Chapter Five for further details). Appropriate sample sizes for achieving the desired power levels are straightforward to calculate. For this study, I used an online power calculator (G*Power 3.1) to calculate an appropriate sample size for a two-way independent Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) that tests main and interaction effects for two independent variables. For this type of design, Cohen (1969) argued that a small effect size is roughly $f=0.1$, a medium effect size $f=0.25$, and a large effect size $f=0.40$. The parameters I had inputted were the $\alpha$-level=0.05, a medium effect size $f=0.25$, and acceptable statistical power ($1 - \beta=0.8$). The output from G*Power 3.1, indicated that in order to achieve a statistical power of 0.8, we would need a sample size of 269 people. Indeed, all nine experiments conducted for this study achieved this recommended sample size.

Apparatus/Materials

As in all of the other experiments, the only material utilised for this study was an online questionnaire that was designed and disseminated through the Qualtrics platform which is an online platform dedicated to the design and administration of surveys. Participants were assigned to four different conditions in line with the combination of the two independent variables; severity of crime and societal crime rate. Participants in the low severity condition read a vignette describing a street mugging, while those in the high severity condition read a vignette describing a mugging followed by stabbing. Moreover, participants assigned to the low crime rate condition were presented with a vignette asking them to imagine that they live in a society with good living standards and low crime rate, while participants in the high crime rate condition were given the opposite information.

Table 7.8 Vignettes used in Experiment Eight

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vignettes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low Crime Rates/Low Severity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagine that you live in a society where people have little motivation to commit crimes and living standards are quite high. Also imagine that you hear about the following incident: 'John was walking down the road after finishing work and was suddenly attacked by a man who hit him and then stole his wallet. Fortunately, he did not suffer any major injuries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High Crime Rate/Low Severity</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Imagine that you live in a society where crime is on the rise and living standards are quite poor. Also imagine that you hear of the following incident: ‘John was walking down the road after finishing work and was suddenly attacked by a man who hit him and then stole his wallet. Fortunately, he did not suffer any major injuries.

**Low Crime Rate/High Severity**

Imagine that you live in a society where people have little motivation to commit crimes and living standards are quite high. Also imagine that you hear about the following incident: ‘John was walking down the road after finishing work and was suddenly attacked by a man who stabbed him on the chest and stole his wallet. John was hospitalized for several weeks with severe injuries.

**High Crime Rate/High Severity**

Imagine that you live in a society where crime is on the rise and living standards are quite poor. Also imagine that you hear about the following incident: ‘John was walking down the road after finishing work and was suddenly attacked by a man who stabbed him in the chest and stole his wallet. John was hospitalized for several weeks with severe injuries.

**Procedure**

The procedure followed here was exactly the same as in Experiment Seven. Participants attributed blame and punishment, and then gave their responses to the three questionnaires.

**7.7. Results and Discussion**

**7.7.1. Attributed Punishment**

A two-way factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to consider the main effects of the two independent variables (crime rate and severity), and the interaction effect between incapacitation and severity on the dependent variable (i.e., attributed punishment). Results showed that there was a significant main effect of crime rate $F(1, 264) = 4.103, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .015$, and a main effect of severity $F(1, 264) = 25.55, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.088$ on the dependent variable. No interaction effect between the two was found $F(1, 264) = .072, p = .789$, partial $\eta^2 = .000$. 
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Societal Crime Rate</th>
<th>Severity</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$N$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low crime rate</td>
<td>Low Severity</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>67</td>
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<td></td>
<td>High Severity</td>
<td>5.69</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High crime rate</td>
<td>Low Severity</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity</td>
<td>5.37</td>
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<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.04</td>
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<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Low Severity</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity</td>
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<td>1.16</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.18</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.9 Mean attributed punishment ratings as a function of societal rate of crime and severity.

![Figure 7.4](image.png)

**Figure 7.4** Mean attributed punishment ratings for each level of societal crime rate by the level of severity.

Differences in total marginal mean scores show that participants ascribed less punishment ($M=4.82$, $SD=1.16$) when the perpetration was of low severity, compared to when it was of high severity ($M=5.37$, $SD=1.30$). Moreover, participants ascribed less punishment when they were
informed that the crime rate was high (M=5.04, SD=1.31), compared to when they were informed that the crime rate was low (M=5.32, SD=1.09).

Differences in mean scores showed that participants in the high crime rate/low severity condition attributed less punishment (M= 4.69, 95%CIs= 4.41, 4.97, SD= 1.23, n= 65) compared to those in the low crime rate / low severity condition (M= 4.94, 95%CIs= 4.66, 5.21, SD= 1.07, n= 67). Similarly, participants in the high crime rate/high severity condition attributed less punishment (M= 5.36, 95%CIs= 5.09, 5.64, SD= 1.3, n= 68) compared to those in the low crime rate/high severity condition (M= 5.69, 95%CIs= 5.41, 5.96 SD= 0.98, n=68). Differences in mean scores can be viewed in Table 7.9 and Figure 7.4.

Discussion

These results show that participants punished the perpetrator less when they knew that the crime rate was high and that living standards are poor, compared to when the crime rate was low and standards were high across both conditions of severity. This confirms the initial prediction in light of the second research question, which was that there would be a main effect of information on societal crime rate on attributions of punishment. However, the results confirmed that the initial prediction is significant but not in the expected direction. The reasons for this surprising effect are discussed later. Additionally, the results also confirmed the other initial prediction which was that there would be a main effect of the severity of the crime. In light of the second central research question, the results suggest that participants did take future-oriented concerns into account when making decisions about punishment, since societal crime rate which is a utilitarian concern did influence their decisions.

These results are very interesting because as the Rucker et al. (2004) study has shown, people become more punitive when the crime rate is high. However, the current experiment observed the opposite effect. Participants were less punitive when the crime rate was high, rather than low. Perhaps, they ignored information on crime rate, and focused their attention on the description of the society they were asked to imagine being members of. Imagining living in a poor society makes crime less surprising due to the circumstances of this society. If so, participants may have decided that perpetrators in such a society are more likely to commit crime, and strictly sentencing them would not solve the problem. Rather, participants may have reasoned that rather than becoming more punitive, they would have to address the problems related to a society being poor.

On the other hand, they punished perpetrators more when the crime rate was low and the society was marked by good living standards, as it would be much more unexpected and
unjustifiable for a perpetrator to commit crime in such a society (since it provides opportunities and conditions for someone to not want to commit an offence). These results are very interesting indeed because they suggest that even if participants have some utilitarian concerns; these may not be focused on crime rate alone.

However, we can also view these results from a retributive perspective. The fact that participants decreased their degree of punitiveness when the society was poor might be explained by the fact that they regarded perpetrators as less blameworthy or more easily excused than when the society was marked by good living standards. If so, they were thinking more in retributive terms, because they might have been assessing how much punishment the perpetrator deserves in light of the circumstances, and not because of utilitarian concerns.

### Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Sadism</td>
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<td>15.67</td>
<td>268</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>JustWorldScale</td>
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<td>0.19**</td>
<td>21.34</td>
<td>6.42</td>
<td>268</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>LocusOfControl</td>
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<td>-.06</td>
<td>34.01</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>268</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 7.10** Inter item correlations between attributed punishment ratings and sadism, just world, and locus of control scales.

Correlational exploratory research shows a significant correlation between the just world scale and punishment, which suggests that the more one believes that the world is a just place where everyone gets what they deserve, the more punitive one is. Moreover, the more one believes that the world is a just place, the more sadistic tendencies one has. The results of the CAST sadism scale were slightly positively skewed while they were slightly lower to that of standard norms of other studies; for example, Min et al. (2019) reported M= 2.20, N=624, SD=0.97. The score for this study was M=22.02 because I did not use the mean of accumulative scores. The recomputed score is M=1.69 which is slightly lower to Min et al. The results of the locus of control scale were slightly negatively skewed and they were very close to other standard norms; for example, Tong and Wang (2006) reported M= 9.30, SD=4.13, N=306. This study reported M=34.01 but this was because the response values of 1 and 2 were used as the standard while other studies used the values of 0 and 1. By adjusting this study’s results to these values we acquire a M= 11.01 which is close to the Tong and Wang (2006) results. The results of the general belief in a just world scale were slightly negatively skewed and were
higher to published norms; for example, Dalbert (1999) reported $M=2.65$, $SD=0.93$, $N=214$. The results for this study (recomputed to produce the mean of cumulative scores) are $M=3.55$.

### 7.7.2. Attributed Blame

A two-way factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to consider the main effects of the two independent variables (crime rate and severity), and the interaction effect between incapacitation and severity on the dependent variable (i.e., attributed blame). Results showed that there was a significant main effect of societal crime rate $F(1, 264) = 8.38$, $p<.01$, partial $\eta^2= .031$, and a significant main effect of severity $F(1, 264) = 14.79$, $p<.001$, partial $\eta^2= .053$. There was no significant interaction effect between the two $F(1, 264) = .239$, $p=.625$, partial $\eta^2= .001$.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Societal Crime Rate</th>
<th>Severity</th>
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<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$N$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low crime rate</td>
<td>Low Severity</td>
<td>5.45</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity</td>
<td>6.09</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.77</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High crime rate</td>
<td>Low Severity</td>
<td>5.09</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity</td>
<td>5.59</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Low Severity</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity</td>
<td>5.84</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.11 Mean attributed blame ratings as a function of societal crime rate and severity.
Figure 7.5 Mean attributed blame ratings for each level of societal crime rate by the level of severity.

Differences in total marginal mean scores show that participants ascribed more blame when the crime rate was low (M=5.77, SD=1.17), compared to when it was high (M=5.35, SD=1.31). Moreover, participants ascribed less blame when the perpetration was of high severity (M=5.84, SD=1.14), compared to when it was of low severity (M=5.27, SD=1.31).

Mean attributed blame ratings across all of the four conditions show that participants in the high crime rate/low severity condition attributed less blame (M=5.09, 95% CIs = 4.79, 5.38, SD=1.36, n=65) compared to those in the low crime rate/low severity condition (M=5.44, 95% CIs = 5.15, 5.73, SD=1.23, n=67). Similarly, participants in the high crime rate/high severity condition attributed less blame (M=5.58, 95% CIs = 5.3, 5.87, SD=1.21, n=68) compared to those in the low crime rate/high severity condition (M=6.08, 95% CIs = 5.8, 6.37, SD=1.003, n=68). Differences in mean scores are presented in Table 7.11.
Discussion

Similarly, to attributed punishment the results confirmed that our predictions were significant but not in the expected direction. Societal crime rate influenced attributions of blame, along with the severity of the perpetration. These results demonstrate that blame behaved similarly to punishment. Therefore, the conclusions here would be similar to the previous ones for punishment. However, this was not the case in other experiments, and as was remarked at times, this relationship between blame and punishment will be discussed in Chapter Eight.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Blame</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>268</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sadism</td>
<td>-0.17**</td>
<td></td>
<td>22.03</td>
<td>15.67</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Just World Scale</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>21.34</td>
<td>6.42</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Locus Of Control</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>34.01</td>
<td>2.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.12 Inter item correlations between attributed blame ratings, sadism, just world, and locus of control scales.

Table 7.12 shows a significant negative correlation between blame and sadism suggesting that the less sadistic tendencies one has the less blame they would ascribe.

We shall now move on to Experiment Nine which shows whether repentance in a perpetrator is an important concern for attributions of blame and punishment. If it is, it suggests that attributions of blame and punishment can be in part explained by future-oriented considerations. This is because if someone knows that a perpetrator expressed repentance for his/her actions, then that would decrease the possibility of re-offending in the future, which in terms of the broader research question would support utilitarian perspectives.
Experiment Nine

Does the presence or absence of repentance influence attributions of blame and punishment? And is this better explained by utilitarian thinking?

7.8. Introduction

This Experiment addresses the second central research question. The factor that will be examined in relation to utilitarian concerns about punishment is repentance. The rationale for utilising this factor is that knowing that a perpetrator has expressed repentance may suggest that he/she is not likely to re-offend on the future.

Some of the empirical studies presented in Chapter Two showed that repentance is very important in mitigating punitive attributions (e.g., Romanowski 1989, Felson & Ribner 1985, Kleinke et al. 1992, Maclin et al. 2009). The purpose of Experiment Nine is to further investigate the importance of repentance in making punitive attributions in light of the second research question. It was predicted that repentance would have an effect on attributions of blame, punishment, and recommended prison time.

7.9. Method

Design

This experiment used an independent measures (2x2) factorial design. There were four conditions corresponding to the two levels of each independent variable. The first independent variable was repentance (no repentance vs repentance), and the second severity of crime (low vs high severity). Each participant was presented with a vignette describing a crime, and participated only in one of the four conditions. The independent variables were manipulated by using different vignette versions. (Further details of these versions are provided in the coming sections). Participants then provided scores on the dependent variables, which were rating scales that required respondents to attribute deserved punishment (i.e. how much punishment does the perpetrator deserve for his actions: measured on a rating scale ranging from 1=none at all, to 7= extremely severe), deserved blame (i.e. how severely does he deserve to be blamed for his action: measured on a rating scale ranging from 1=no blame to 7=extremely severely), and recommended prison time (i.e. how much time should the perpetrator spend in prison? : measured on a rating scale ranging from 1=none to 10= death penalty).

Other measures: The experiment also utilised three scales for exploratory correlational analysis. These were the social comparison scale (Allan & Gilbert 1995), the CAST Sadism scale (Buckels & Paulhus 2014), and an empathy concern scale (Davis 1998). These scales are
the same utilised in Experiments One and Two in Chapter Five (for further details see Chapter Five or the chapter on methods).

**Apparatus/Materials**

The only material utilised for this study was an online questionnaire that was designed and disseminated through the Qualtrics platform which is an online platform dedicated to the design and administration of surveys. Participants were assigned to four different conditions in line with the combination of the two independent variables; severity of crime and repentance. The vignette for the low severity type of crime described a mugging, while the vignette corresponding to the high severity type of crime described a stabbing. In addition, participants in the no repentance condition were not presented with further information on the crime, while those in the repentance condition were informed that the perpetrator had expressed his sincere repentance for his actions. A full description of the vignettes is provided in table 7.13.

**Table 7.13** Vignettes used in Experiment Nine.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vignettes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No Repent/Low Severity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary was walking down the road after finishing work and was suddenly attacked by a man who hit her and then stole her purse. Fortunately, she did not suffer any major injuries. Mary reported the incident to the police but no sign of the thief was ever found. Mary lost a considerable amount of money and all of her credit cards. The thief did not regret his act and was planning his next theft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No Repent/High Severity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary was returning home after work; while she was walking through a park near her house a thief threatened her with a knife and demanded her wallet. Mary refused and the thief stabbed her, took her wallet and left. Fortunately, Mary survived after being hospitalized for a couple of months. The attacker did not regret his act and was planning his next attack.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Repent/Low Severity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary was walking down the road after finishing work and was suddenly attacked by a man who hit her and then stole her purse. Fortunately, she did not suffer any major injuries. Mary reported the incident to the police but no sign of the thief was ever found. Mary lost a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
considerable amount of money and all of her credit cards. The thief sincerely regretted his crime and decided to give himself up to the police. He also returned everything he stole from Mary, and expressed his sincere apology, while he recognized that he deserved to be punished for his action.

**Repent/High Severity**

Mary was returning home after work; while she was walking through a park near her house a thief threatened her with a knife and demanded her wallet. Mary refused and the thief stabbed her, took her wallet and left. Fortunately, Mary survived after being hospitalized for a couple of months. In the meantime, the person that did this to Mary had sincerely regretted his acts and was tormented by guilt. He realized that what he did was terrible and that he would not do such a thing ever again. He also gave himself in to the police and recognized that he should be punished harshly for what he did.

**Participants**

Participants were comprised of a sample (N= 323), that was acquired through acquaintances and social websites where the link for the study was posted. The sample had 24 missing values; thus, final responses were (N=299). Participants gave their responses on attributed punishment, deserved blame, and recommended prison time, and then proceeded to answer to the three scales explained earlier. This is the same sample utilised for Experiment One. Appropriate sample sizes for achieving the desired power levels are straightforward to calculate. For this study, I used an online power calculator (G*Power 3.1) to calculate an appropriate sample size for a two-way independent Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) that tests main and interaction effects for two independent variables. For this type of design, Cohen (1969) argued that a small effect size is roughly \(f=0.1\), a medium effect size \(f=0.25\), and a large effect size \(f=0.40\). The parameters I had inputted were the \(\alpha\)-level=0.05, a medium effect size \(f=0.25\), and acceptable statistical power (1-\(\beta\)=0.8). The output from G*Power 3.1, indicated that in order to achieve a statistical power of 0.8, we would need a sample size of 269 people. Indeed, all nine experiments conducted for this study achieved this recommended sample size.

**Procedure**

Participants were presented with the same consent form and demographic questions as in the first experiment, and then presented with a vignette. After reading the vignettes participants had to attribute ratings for deserved punishment, and deserved blame. Following that,
participants were asked to complete the sadism, locus of control and just world scales, and were thanked for their participation.

7.10. Results and Discussion

7.10.1. Attributed Punishment

A two-way factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to consider the main effects of the two independent variables (repentance and severity), and the interaction effect between repentance and severity on the dependent variable (attributed punishment). Results showed that there were significant main effects of both repentance $F (1, 295) = 135.94, p<.001$, partial $\eta^2=.315$, and severity $F (1, 295) = 58.63, p<.001$, partial $\eta^2=.166$, while there was no interaction effect between the two $F (1, 295) = 0.209, p=0.648$, partial $\eta^2=.001$.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repentance</th>
<th>Severity</th>
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<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No repentance</td>
<td>Low Severity</td>
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<td>66</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Low Severity</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.59</td>
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</table>

Table 7.14 Mean attributed punishment ratings as a function of repentance and severity
Differences in total marginal means showed that participants attributed less punishment when the perpetrator expressed repentance (M=3.79, SD=1.38), compared to when he did not (M=5.39, SD=1.38). Moreover, participants ascribed more punishment when the crime was of high severity (M=5.09, SD=1.37), compared to low severity (M=4, SD=1.43). Differences in mean attributed punishment ratings show that participants in the repentance/low severity condition attributed less punishment (M=3.21, 95%CIs=2.94, 3.48, SD=1.21, n=71) compared to those in the no repentance/low severity condition (M=4.84, 95%CIs=4.56, 5.13, SD=1.14, n=66). By the same token, participants in the repentance/high severity condition attributed less punishment (M=4.30, 95%CIs=4.04, 4.56, SD=1.32, n=78) compared to those in the no repentance/high severity condition (M=5.82, 95%CIs=5.57, 6.07, SD=0.95, n=84). Differences in mean scores can be viewed in Table 7.14 and Figure 7.6.

**Discussion**

The results confirmed both of initial predictions; there was an effect of both repentance, and severity on attributions of punishment. These results showed that participants punished the
perpetrator less when he showed repentance across both conditions of severity. Moreover, the effect sizes were very big (partial $\eta^2 = .315$), and in this case even bigger than the effect of severity’s (partial $\eta^2 = .166$). This shows that repentance is indeed a very important factor for attributions of punishment. But to reflect on the second central research question: Are these results better explained by utilitarian thinking?

The answer is that the results can be interpreted by both the utilitarian and retributive models. One possibility is that repentance can be exclusively viewed through the lenses of utility. Knowing that someone has repented reassures people that they will not offend again in the future. This thought can be extended if we think of Experiment Seven. Repentance can be viewed as a kind of incapacitation, which reassures the participants that the perpetrator will not re-offend again in the future. This is the utilitarian explanation of the results. However as was discussed earlier, the results of Experiment Seven did not conclusively establish that information about incapacitation has an effect on attributions of punishment, since the effect was only evident for recommended prison time, and not for punishment and blame.

Another way to view repentance would be through the lenses of retribution and the goal of achieving moral equality after the power differential between perpetrator and victim has been disturbed. Earlier, we discussed this notion of achieving moral equality or homeostasis as a fundamental part of retribution. But how does this fit the context of repentance? Murphy (2012) argued that remorse assuages retributive emotions because it opens the road to forgiveness. Murphy defines repentance as ‘the remorseful acceptance for one’s wrongful and harmful actions, the repudiation of the aspects of one’s character that generated the action, the resolve to do one’s best to extirpate those aspects of one’s character, and the resolve to atone or make amends for the harm one has done’ (Murphy 2012:130). The thought would be that punitive emotions are mitigated because the perpetrator is willing to make amends as Murphy argued. Making amends can be seen as partially paying a debt for the offence, and also as restoring or being willing to restore the moral equilibrium between offender and victim. Willingness to make amends and the acceptance of responsibility can also be seen as an acknowledgement of the rule of just deserts by the perpetrator. Moreover, repentance can also indicate that the perpetrator is feeling really awful for their act, and thereby punishing him/her self at least on an emotional level. Feeling guilty, can be seen as a way in which the perpetrator has already started to pay for their deeds so that less punishment needed, than if they had not repented.

On this line of thought, repentance can be viewed in a similar manner to ‘fateful punishment’ that was discussed in Experiment Six; in the sense that participants felt that at least some
amount of punishment was given to the perpetrator. Hence, the results do show the importance of repentance in making punitive attributions, but they do not really determine whether this importance is due to utilitarian or retributive considerations. Some potential explanations were offered above, but future studies would be useful to interrogate these possible explanations further.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Punishment</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>301</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>63.02</td>
<td>15.68</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
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<td>-0.03</td>
<td>26.68</td>
<td>4.66</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sadism</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>-0.46**</td>
<td>42.44</td>
<td>12.54</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.15 Inter item correlations between attributed punishment ratings, empathic concern, social comparison and sadism scales.

Table 7.15 shows that there are no significant correlations here between punishment and any of the scales. I did not find an official paper regarding published norms for the scales. I found other studies and compared the current’s study’s scores with them. Moreover, some papers calculated scores differently (i.e., they used the mean of accumulated item scores rather than the accumulation of scores for each item). Where this occurred, I recalculated this study’s scores by dividing the result with the number of items in each scale. The results of the CAST sadism scale were slightly positively skewed while they were slightly higher to that of standard published norms of other studies; for example, Min et al. (2019) reported M= 2.20 N=624, SD=0.97. The score for this study was M=42.43 because I did not use the mean of accumulative scores. The recomputed score is M= 3.20 which is slightly higher to Min et al. The results of the empathic concern scale were slightly negatively skewed and the results were higher to published norms; for example, De Corte et.al (2007) reported M=18.05, SD= 4.23, N=651. The results for the Social Comparison scale were slightly negatively skewed and were close to the norms of the original study (Allen and Gilbert 1995). Allen and Gilbert reported M= 64.67, SD = 11.65 in a sample of N=180.
As mentioned, a two-way factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to consider the main effects of the two independent variables (repentance and severity), and the interaction effect between repentance and severity on the dependent variable (i.e., attributed blame). Results showed that there was a significant main effect of repentance $F(1, 295) = 56.69$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .161$, and severity $F(1, 295) = 30.93$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .095$, while there was no interaction effect between the two $F(1, 295) = 0.905$, $p = .342$, partial $\eta^2 = .003$.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repentance</th>
<th>Severity</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$N$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No repentance</td>
<td>Low Severity</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity</td>
<td>5.98</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repentance</td>
<td>Low Severity</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity</td>
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<td>1.39</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Low Severity</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>137</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>162</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 7.16* Mean attributed blame ratings as a function of repentance and severity.
Figure 7.7 Mean attributed blame ratings for each level of repentance by the level of severity.

Differences in total marginal means show that participants attributed less blame when they knew that the perpetrator showed repentance (M= 4.38, SD= 1.48), compared to when he did not (M= 5.55, SD=1.21). Moreover, participants ascribed more blame when the crime was of high severity (M= 5.36, SD=1.35), compared to when it was of low severity (M= 4.49, SD=1.48).

Differences in mean attributed blame ratings across all of the four conditions show that participants in the repentance/low severity condition attributed less blame (M= 4.01, 95%CI= 3.71, 4.31, SD= 1.50, n= 71) compared to those in the no repentance/low severity condition (M=5.0, 95%CI= 4.68, 5.31, SD= 1.27, n= 66). Similarly, participants in the repentance/high severity condition attributed less blame (M= 4.70, 95%CI= 4.41, 4.99, SD= 1.38, n= 78) compared to those in the no repentance/ high severity condition (M= 5.97 95%CI= 5.69, 6.25, SD= 0.96, n= 84). Differences in mean scores are presented in Table 7.16 and Figure 7.7.

Discussion

These results confirmed both initial predictions. As expected, the presence or absence of repentance had an effect on attributions of blame and so did the severity of the perpetration.
The participants attributed less blame when they had the information that the perpetrator had expressed repentance for his actions. The results also showed that blame behaved as did punishment. Therefore, we can interpret them in similar fashion to punishment. The participants blamed the perpetrator less when he expressed repentance because they might have thought that he is not likely to commit an offence in the future (i.e., a utilitarian consideration), or that some amount of punishment has been dispensed upon him through his feelings of guilt (i.e., a retributive consideration).

<table>
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<th>Correlations</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 Blame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 SocialComparison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Sadism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.17 Inter item correlations between attributed blame ratings, empathic concern, social comparison and sadism scales.

Table 7.17 demonstrates that as was the case for punishment no significant correlations were found between blame and any of the other measures.

7.10.3. Recommended Prison Time

A two-way factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to consider the main effects of the two independent variables (repentance and severity), and the interaction effect between incapacitation and severity on the dependent variable (i.e., recommended prison time). Results showed that there was a significant main effect of repentance \( F(1, 295) = 163.15, p<.001, \text{partial } \eta^2= .356 \), and of severity \( F(1, 295) = 272.64, p<.001, \text{partial } \eta^2= .480 \), as well as an interaction effect between repentance and severity of crime \( F(1, 295) = 7.851, p<.05, \text{partial } \eta^2= 0.026 \).
Figure 7.8 Plot showing the interaction effect between the repentance and the level of severity on attributions of recommended prison time.

A simple effect analysis conducted for the interaction effect revealed that the effect of repentance is significant for both the low severity $F(1, 295) = 45.87, p<.001$, and high severity type of crime $F(1, 295) = 132.35, p<.001$. An examination of Figure 7.8 which illustrates the interaction effect shows that the effect of repentance is even more pronounced for the high severity type of crimes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repentance</th>
<th>Severity</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$N$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No repentance</td>
<td>Low Severity</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity</td>
<td>7.60</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6.05</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repentance</td>
<td>Low Severity</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity</td>
<td>4.77</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>78</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Low Severity</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Severity</td>
<td>6.23</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>162</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.18 Mean recommended prison time ratings as a function of repentance and severity.

![Bar chart](image)

**Figure 7.9** Mean recommended prison time ratings for each level of repentance by the level of severity.
Differences in total marginal mean scores showed that participants recommended less prison time when the perpetrator showed repentance (M= 3.58, SD= 2.09), compared to when he did not (M= 6.05, SD= 2.25). Moreover, participants ascribed less recommended prison time when the crime was of low severity (M= 3.15, SD= 1.53), compared to when it was of high severity (M= 6.23, SD= 2.28).

An examination of the differences in mean recommended prison time ratings showed that participants in the repentance/low severity condition ascribed less prison time (M= 2.28, 95%CI = 1.91, 2.64, SD = 1.16, n=71) compared to those in the no repentance/low severity condition (M= 4.09, 95%CI = 3.71, 4.46, SD = 1.30, n= 66). By the same token, participants in the repentance/high severity condition ascribed less prison time (M= 4.76, 95%CI = 4.42, 5.11, SD = 2.05, n= 78) compared to those in the no repentance/high severity condition (M= 7.59, 95%CI = 7.26, 7.93, SD = 1.51, n=84). Differences in mean scores are presented in Table 7.18 and Figure 7.9.

**Discussion**

In like manner to blame and punishment, the results confirmed both initial predictions; there was an effect of both repentance and severity on attributions of recommended prison time. These results show that recommended prison time was also influenced by repentance in a similar way as to blame and punishment. Moreover, the effect was more pronounced for the high severity type of crimes (which is what the interaction effect revealed), but nevertheless the participants ascribed less time to the perpetrator when he showed repentance than when he did not, across both levels of severity. As was the case with blame and punishment, the results can be interpreted by both the utilitarian and the retributive models. The participants ascribed less time when repentance was present, because they thought that either the perpetrator will not commit a crime in the future, or that he already accepted some amount of punishment by feeling guilty.

The consistent results for all of the dependent variables and the large effect sizes indicate the gravity that repentance has in making decisions about punishment. We might conclude that the next step to be taken into researching repentance is examining why this effect is so important, and how exactly people think over it.
Table 7.19 Inter item correlations between recommended prison time, empathic concern, social comparison, and sadism scales.

Table 7.19 illustrates that there were no significant correlations between recommended prison time and any of the scales that were utilised for exploratory correlational research.

### 7.11. General Discussion

This set of experiments aimed at testing the hypothesis that utilitarian concerns also play a role in determining attributions of blame and punishment. In order to do this, we employed factors that relate to utilitarian considerations, and examined their effect on attributions of blame, punishment, and recommended prison time. The results of Experiment Seven may suggest that it is more likely that utilitarian thoughts did not play a large role in attributions of punishment/blame/prison time since the effect of incapacitation was significant only for recommended prison time and not for blame and punishment. In other words, participants ignored the fact that perpetrators did not present any future threat and did not punish/blame them less for their offences. However, because there was an effect of incapacitation information on recommended prison time, further research is necessary in order to investigate the role of utilitarian considerations. As was suggested thinking about prison time might have caused participants to think more reflectively and incorporate utilitarian elements in their decision making.

Experiment Eight demonstrated that participants may think of crime rate and living conditions as important factors in making punitive attributions. The experiment showed that participants punished and blamed perpetrators more when a society has a low crime rate and good living conditions, compared to when it is characterised by high crime rate and bad living conditions. This was in contrast to other studies (Rucker et al. 2004; Sunstein 2000) and the results were surprising. The results may be explained by the fact that participants found crime in a poor society to be more ‘excusable’ and thought that perpetrators belonging to a society as such deserve to be punished less -since they are less morally responsible, compared to perpetrators that live in a society with good living conditions. If so, these results might be explained better.
in retributive terms. Nevertheless, the experiment also indicated the importance of this variable in deciding punishment and blame, and can inform future research towards the direction of mitigating social circumstances and attributions of punishment.

Experiment Nine stressed the importance of repentance in the study of blame and punitive attributions and verified earlier studies that demonstrated that repentance can mitigate them (e.g., Romanowski 1989, Felson & Ribner 1985, Kleinke et al. 1992, Maclin et al. 2009). Repentance was found to be a very important factor in ascribing blame and punishment. This was revealed by the large effect sizes that were observed on all three dependent variables. These sizes even exceeded the effects of severity of crime which was found to be a constant important factor for all the experiments presented in this thesis. Repentance consistently mitigated attributions of blame, punishment and recommended prison time. It remains unclear whether repentance should be explained in retributive or utilitarian terms, and future studies should investigate repentance in terms of this question.

Overall, it can be suggested that some of the results in this chapter can be better interpreted in line with theories that support retribution. However, other results such as the ones for recommended prison time in Experiment Seven are more consistent with utilitarian interpretations. Because the evidence is rather mixed, future research is necessary to reveal the relationship between both utilitarian and retributivist considerations in attributions of blame and punishment.
Chapter Eight-General Discussion

8.1. Introduction

Overall, this thesis has examined a range of factors in order to discover whether, and how, they influence attributions of blame and punishment. The thesis was inspired by ideas grounded in philosophical and psychological ideas on lay morality. Each of the three experimental chapters examined different factors and focused on different research questions and aims. This discussion will reflect on these research questions and aims in relation to the findings and will also set some directions for future studies.

The central research question examined in Chapter Five was whether there is a link between punishment attributions and malicious satisfaction. In addition, we discussed whether ressentiment is a factor that may influence attributions of blame and punishment. Chapter Six examined whether the exaction of revenge can be a justifiable act for lay people, and whether the presence or absence of revenge or fateful punishment can have an effect on attributions of blame and punishment. The main aim of that chapter was to investigate whether attributions of blame and punishment in these cases are best explained in light of the notions of retribution and just deserts. Chapter Seven juxtaposed retribution and utilitarianism as motivations behind punishment. The main aim was to investigate whether having future-oriented information about an offender (i.e., the offender’s ability to reoffend which reflects utilitarian thinking) may influence attributions of blame and punishment. We are now in a position to draw all our findings together. In what follows, I shall discuss all of the research questions and aims addressed by this thesis.

8.2. Does cruel vs good prison treatment influence punishment satisfaction, and attributions of deserved punishment/blame/recommended prison time? And is this due to malicious satisfaction?

Experiment One looked at the effect of prison treatment and crime severity on punishment satisfaction, attributions of deserved punishment, deserved blame and recommended prison time. The main aim of this experiment was to investigate whether there is a link between punishment and malicious satisfaction. The reason for examining this link was grounded upon Nietzsche’s original proposition that punishment as retribution is only an excuse to experience feelings of cruelty. In order to address the research question, the experiment examined the effect of prison treatment (cruel vs good) on punishment satisfaction. Another aim of Experiment One was to investigate whether participants would perceive the type of prison treatment in terms of the ‘just deserts’ notion. This was addressed by examining the effect of
prison treatment and crime severity on attributions of punishment, deserved blame and recommended prison time.

The results showed that participants punished the perpetrator in proportion the severity of the crime; this supports the importance of retributive considerations. Moreover, the results from this experiment demonstrated that participants who had been presented with vignettes describing cruel prison treatment were more satisfied than those presented with vignettes describing good prison treatment. This effect was more pronounced for the high severity type of crime (due to an interaction effect between prison treatment and crime severity). Now does this mean that participants were driven by malicious satisfaction? Before discussing this we also need to be aware of the results relating to the effect of prison treatment on the other dependent variables. The results relating to attributions of deserved blame, punishment, and recommended prison time showed that prison treatment did not influence these attributions in Experiment One. People ignored whether a perpetrator had been subjected to cruel or good prison treatment, and only punished/blamed the perpetrator according to the severity of the crime committed. On the face of it, these results tell us that people punished/blamed in proportion to the severity of the crime, which is in line with retributive thinking. On the other hand, this does not explain why prison treatment did not influence attributions of blame, punishment and prison time. If participants were influenced only by considerations of just deserts, we might have expected that the perpetrator who received the cruel prison treatment, would have been punished and blamed less since ‘some of the debt’ he owed had been ‘paid back’, compared to the perpetrator in the good prison treatment condition.

There are two ways in which we can account for this pattern of results. The first is through the notion of just deserts and the second through the notion of cruelty. On the first interpretation, participants expressed more satisfaction at cruel prison treatment (compared to those that attributed satisfaction ratings for the good prison treatment condition) because they thought that it was ‘just’ and the perpetrator was given what he ‘deserved’. But if we adopt this interpretation, how can we explain why the type of prison treatment had no effect on ascriptions of punishment, blame and recommended prison time? This seems to go against retributive concerns because being subjected to cruel prison treatment compared to good prison treatment was not regarded by participants as a reason to dispense a lesser amount of punishment/blame/recommended prison time. One possible explanation for this apparent inconsistency, when thinking in terms of just deserts, is that participants perceived a contradiction between expressing more satisfaction at cruel prison treatment, and at the same time reducing the amount of punishment/blame/prison time given to the perpetrator – given
that they had just expressed satisfaction for the way the perpetrator was treated. In other words, participants may have experienced an inconsistency between expressing more satisfaction and at the same time reducing the intensity of their punitive attributions.

Another way to interpret these results is through the notion of cruelty. Here the issue is not the amount of punishment that the perpetrator deserved but the kind of punishment that he was given. Participants in the cruelty condition had been made aware that the perpetrator would certainly suffer and experience cruel prison treatment. The fact that they expressed more satisfaction at cruel prison treatment compared to participants in the good prison treatment condition might be taken to suggest that they were motivated to punish the perpetrator as a way of inflicting suffering rather than exacting retribution. If so, Nietzsche would have termed this malicious satisfaction because it is predicated on the infliction of suffering. Nietzsche argued that retribution is only an excuse to experience a sensation of satisfaction at venting power on one who is powerless. This is due to the existence of cruel instincts that are a fundamental constituent of human nature.

On this second view therefore, the satisfaction at cruel prison treatment is not satisfaction at the fact that justice was dispensed, but satisfaction derived from knowing that the perpetrator would be suffering by being subjected to cruel and inhumane prison conditions. Thus, condoning cruel practises as a form of punishment may arguably reveal that satisfaction at making the perpetrator suffer –to use Nietzsche’s (1887) words– is the most important purpose of punishment.

Experiment Two addressed the same research questions but was modified to address a possible design limitation that was observed in Experiment One. There, since crime severity was confounded with prison sentence it was not possible to determine which of these factors might have been instrumental in producing the observed effect. Though it is quite plausible that crime severity likely had an effect, considering the results of the previous experiments showing this to be the case; In Experiment Two, participants only read information about the type of prison treatment, and no information was given on length of sentencing. The results showed that participants punished the perpetrator in proportion the severity of the crime; this supports the importance of retributive considerations Results also showed that participants were more satisfied when informed that the perpetrator would be subjected to cruel, rather than good, prison treatment. In Experiment Two the results showed that (unlike Experiment One) the type of prison treatment had an effect on blame attributions. This change may have been due to changes in the design of the experiment. While, similar in many aspects with Experiment One, the scenarios in Experiment Two were made to be more personal. However,
they did not influence attributions of punishment (although they did approach significance levels). The results for blame in Experiment Two showed that people ascribed less deserved blame to the perpetrator when the prison treatment was cruel. The results for blame for Experiment Two point to the possibility that participants ascribed deserved blame in line with the just deserts notion. Less blame was ascribed to the perpetrator when the prison treatment was cruel because he had ‘paid’ more of his ‘debt’ compared to the perpetrator allocated to the good prison treatment condition, and therefore deserved to be blamed less.

As was the case with the previous experiment, the results for deserved blame and punishment satisfaction can also be explained through the notion of deserts or the notion of cruelty. In the first case, participants blamed the perpetrator who was subjected to cruel prison treatment in line with the ‘just deserts’ notion, and then expressed their satisfaction at their decisions. Another way to interpret the results of Experiment Two is through the notion of cruelty. The suggestion would be that participants ascribed less blame, thinking that cruel prison practices are wrong and inhumane (rather than because they felt that some amount of punishment had been already dispensed), but then expressed their satisfaction at cruel prison practices being employed. The apparent contradiction between these two attitudes fits well with the Nietzschean approach to punishment. According to him, employing the rule of proportional punishment through just deserts is only a guise for experiencing feelings of malicious satisfaction. On this interpretation, then, the participants ascribed blame in accordance with the rule of just deserts, but nevertheless, expressed their satisfaction at cruel practices, in line with Nietzsche’s proposition.

Future studies therefore should further investigate this relationship between punishment and malicious satisfaction. Perhaps, participants might be asked to clarify why they felt more satisfied with cruel prison practices, and whether they morally condone them. A good way to reveal any contradiction in lay thinking regarding the relationship between punishment and malicious satisfaction would be to ask whether they morally condone such practices after providing satisfaction ratings. The design should also not allow participants to change previous answers provided on satisfaction ratings.

**8.3. Does the social class of the victim influence attributions of deserved blame and punishment for the perpetrator? And is this due to ressentiment?**

In Chapter Five we also discussed whether ressentiment might influence attributions of blame and punishment. Experiment Three tested whether the social class of the victim (high/low) and the severity of the perpetration can influence attributions of blame and punishment. The results
showed that participants ascribed less blame and punishment to a perpetrator when the victim was of high social standing as opposed to low social standing. This effect was even more pronounced when the perpetration was of high severity. Moreover, participants ascribed less blame and punishment when the crime was of low compared to high severity. As discussed in the literature review, ‘ressentiment’ is a Nietzschean term that refers to the deep hatred of the slaves for the masters. This distinction between slaves and masters should not be taken literally, but it refers to the deep hatred of people of lower social status for those of higher social status. According to Wallace (2007), this concept is very different to envy because ressentiment is not directed to material possessions that another may have; rather, the object of hatred is the person that possesses these goods.

These results are very interesting, but how might they bear on the research question? Did participants ascribe less blame and punishment because they experienced some sort of ressentiment with respect to people of higher social standing?

The fact that the effect of social class was even more pronounced for the high severity type of crime may be consistent with the claim that the effect of social class on attributions of blame and punishment can be explained through ressentiment experienced towards people of high social standing. We might expect that attributions of punishment for high severity crimes would not be affected by the social class of the victim. This is because we would have expected that the severity of the perpetration would be sufficient to render all victims equally worth the same reaction. Also, the high severity crime involved violence, not just the loss of property, so it affected both victims in the same way.

We also need to discuss the main effect of social standing in terms of the comparison of ressentiment to ordinary envy. If people are only envious of material things, as is the case with ordinary envy, then we should not expect a difference in their punitive attributions when they are presented with information on the social class of victims especially when the crime involves violence, and not just depriving the person of material goods. On the other hand, if ressentiment exists and is directed at people, and not only their possessions, then these results make more sense, since participants decided to punish and blame the perpetrator less when the victim was of low social standing as opposed to high social standing. Therefore, the results are consistent with ressentiment influencing people’s judgements.

Future designs might also ask the participants’ social standing and thus introduce a third independent variable in a 3x2 factorial design. This would further help us to understand

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20 This was due to the interaction effect which approached significance, and thus conclusions are tentative - see the mean differences in Table 5.18.
whether belonging to a certain social class can have an influence on how resentful people are towards those belonging to higher social classes. We may find, for example, that participants with high social standing may not be influenced by the social class of the victim in making decisions about the perpetrator’s punishment. Nonetheless, these data are consistent with the claim that resentment is a real phenomenon and can influence attributions of blame and punishment.

8.4. Is the exaction of revenge a justifiable act? And is this due to retributive thinking?

Chapter Six investigated the role of retribution in relation to making judgements about deserved blame and punishment. The main research question pertained to whether the exaction of revenge can be viewed as justified, and whether this can best be explained in terms of retributive considerations.

Experiment Four examined whether acts of revenge are perceived to be justified and to what extent. This experiment also investigated whether the severity of an act of revenge (low vs high) along with the severity of the initial perpetration (i.e., the act that provoked the act of revenge) had an effect on attributions of blame, punishment and recommended prison time directed to the perpetrator that carried out the acts of revenge (i.e., the avenger).

Experiment Four showed that participants found acts of revenge involving low harm (a punch) to be justifiable and those involving high harm (battery) to be at least a little justified. Moreover, the results showed that there was an effect of the level of revenge on attributions of punishment, but there was no effect of the level of severity of the initial perpetration on these attributions. (No predictions were made about the effect of the severity of the initial perpetration, due to the design of the experiment-see design section for Experiment Four). Participants ascribed more punishment to the avenger when the act of revenge was of high severity, compared to being of low severity.

There was also an effect of the level of severity of the revenge act, and the severity of the initial perpetration on attributed blame. Participants ascribed less blame to the avenger when the act of revenge was of low severity and also attributed less blame when the initial perpetration was of high severity. This effect of the severity of the initial perpetration on blame may be explained by the outrageousness of the initial high severity crime. Participants might have felt that the avenger deserved less blame for his reaction because the initial perpetration that provoked the act of revenge was of high severity and this may have caused
them to sympathise more with the avenger. However, the effect did not occur in a similar way in the case of recommended prison time.

In a similar fashion to blame, there was an effect of both the severity of the revenge act and the severity of the initial perpetration on recommended prison time, but this time participants ascribed more prison time to the avenger when the initial perpetration was of high severity. This contradicted the results on blame. A possible explanation is that participants had utilitarian considerations in mind when ascribing prison time and were aiming at deterring future acts of revenge; the thought would be that in cases where the initial perpetration is severe, there is more temptation to commit an action of revenge, and so a greater need for deterrence. At the same time, the fact that they ascribed less blame suggested that they felt that the act of revenge could be justified or excused, and that they felt sympathy for the avenger. In any case, this contradiction between the results for blame and recommended prison time with regards to the effect of the severity of the initial perpetration is not very clear, and future research is necessary in order to further decipher it.

The results also demonstrated that even when the act of revenge was of high severity, people were very lenient in the way that they ascribed blame, punishment and recommended prison time to the avenger. For example, punishment scores ranged from 2.46 to 3.9 (on a scale which ranged from 1=no punishment to 7= extreme punishment), which represented values that called for very little deserved punishment to moderate deserved punishment.

But are these results due to retributive thinking? While the contradiction between blame and recommended prison time discussed earlier might suggest that ascriptions of recommended prison time can be explained by utilitarian considerations, all the other results on attributions of justification, punishment, and blame suggest that retributive considerations are in play. Acts of revenge might be thought to provide evidence for the view that retributive thinking is the main lay motivation behind punishment. This is because, according to Vidmar (2001), revenge and retribution follow the same psychological principle of retaliation. Overall, the results here are consistent with the claim that acts of revenge are perceived as to some degree justifiable, and to some degree deserving less blame and punishment. Therefore, it can be argued that participants recognised the importance of revenge in redressing the balance between harm done and the deserved punishment. Thus, revenge may be viewed as a vehicle which brings balance to the scales of justice.

Following up on the previous experiment, Experiment Five examined whether the presence or the absence of an act of revenge can influence attributions of blame and punishment to the
perpetrator of the original crime. Here, the purpose was to investigate whether an act of revenge can be perceived as a form of retribution. In other words, it was hypothesized that people may ascribe less punishment/blame when they knew that a perpetrator was subjected to an act of revenge, compared to when this was not the case. Unlike the previous experiment, participants had to provide their attributions for the perpetrator who committed the initial perpetration, and not for the avenger. It was expected that participants would think that a perpetrator deserves less punishment when they have been subjected to an act of revenge, since ‘some amount’ of punishment has already been dispensed. Results showed that this was not the case, but it was argued that the severity of the act of revenge (a punch) did not suffice to reveal any effects. On the other hand, as we shall see in the next section Experiment Six did demonstrate some evidence that people think in terms of just deserts when it comes to making attributions of blame and punishment.

8.5. Does the presence or absence of fateful punishment influence attributions of blame and punishment? And is this better explained by retributivist thinking?

Experiment Six examined whether the presence or absence of fateful punishment can influence attributions of blame and punishment along with the severity of the crime. The results showed that the participants punished in proportion to the severity of the offence. The results also demonstrated that information about the presence or absence of fateful punishment did influence attributions of punishment and recommended prison time, but not attributions of blame. People ascribed less punishment and prison time to a perpetrator when they were aware that he had an accident compared to when they did not have such information. Additionally, as was the case with all the experiments in this thesis, there was an effect of severity on all of the dependent variables. Participants ascribed less punishment for the low severity crimes compared to high severity crimes. These results are consistent with Austin’s (1979) original study, which also demonstrated that the presence of fateful punishment mitigates the intensity of punitive attributions (i.e., magnitude of sentencing). In his study, Austin found that for the effect of fateful punishment to be present, the severity of the fateful act of punishment had to be in proportion to the severity of the perpetration committed. For example, the magnitude of sentencing for serious crimes such as rape was only mitigated when the act of fateful punishment was severe (i.e., the perpetrator ending up in a wheelchair after an accident), rather than being of moderate severity. Therefore, Austin’s study showed that there had to be a sense of proportionality between the seriousness of the crime and the severity of the fateful act of punishment in order for people to mitigate the intensity of their punitive attributions. As I
pointed out many times throughout this thesis, this notion of proportionality reflects retributive punishment and thinking in line with the notion of just deserts.

For this reason, Experiment Six manipulated the severity of fateful punishment in proportion to the severity of crime that was committed (i.e., the perpetrator broke his legs for the low severity crime and was stabbed for the high severity type of crime). The results showed that this manipulation was important and that participants’ attributions of both punishment and recommended prison time were mitigated by the presence of fateful punishment. The importance of this manipulation can be further emphasized if we look at the results from Experiment Five. There, the act of revenge (a punch) was kept constant for both the high and low severity type of crime. Thus, it is possible that the severity of the act of revenge (a punch) was not strong enough to mitigate attributions of punishment and blame.

Finally, the fact that similar effects in Experiment Five were not observed for attributions of deserved blame may suggest that the participants perceived blame solely through the lenses of moral responsibility. In other words, the attributions of blame were not mitigated because they were concerned with the blameworthiness of the perpetration, and this could not have been reduced by fateful punishment. In this way, a perpetrator can be equally blameworthy regardless of whether he/she received fateful punishment, since here the assessment of blame concerns the assessment and emotional reaction to moral responsibility. Thus, blame is not viewed as a punitive emotion that should have different degrees of intensity as was the case with punishment and recommended prison time. However, this behaviour of blame is not constant across all the experiments and this issue will be further examined later in this discussion.

8.6. Can future-oriented information about an offender influence attribution of blame and punishment?

Experiments Seven and Eight investigated whether having future-oriented information about an offender can influence attributions of blame, punishment, and recommended prison time. Future-oriented information reflects utilitarian thinking and therefore it is significant in investigating whether utilitarian concerns are also important in making decisions about punishment, blame and recommended prison time for an offender. In common with all the other experiments, we also examined the effect of the severity of the perpetration. Experiment Seven examined whether having the information that a perpetrator is permanently incapacitated (i.e., hence does not pose a future threat) can influence attributions of blame, punishment and recommended prison time. The results showed that there was no effect of incapacitation information on attributions of blame and punishment, but there was an effect of
incapacitation on recommended prison time. Moreover, as was the case with all of the experiments there was an effect of the severity of the crime on attributions of blame, punishment, and recommended prison time. Participants punished, blamed, and ascribed less prison time, when the crime was of low compared to being of high severity.

Some philosophers (e.g., Mill 1868; Mackie 1986) and psychology researchers (e.g., Carlsmith 2006; Carlsmith, Darley & Robinson 2002; Darley, Carlsmith & Robinson 2000) take retributive thinking to be the main motivation behind punishment, while other philosophers (e.g., Ree 1875; Frank 1988) and researchers (e.g., Rucker et al. 2004; Hogan & Emler 1981 Tyler & Boeckmann 1996) take utilitarian considerations to play this role. Other theorists argue that people have both utilitarian and retributive concerns, depending on the nature of the subject that they are asked to assess. When they think about broader issues related to justice, such as the death penalty, they think more in utilitarian terms, but when they are asked to assess the punishment for a specific case and hence are thinking about responsibility, intentionality and magnitude of harm, they think more in retributive terms (Tyler et al. 1997).

Researchers have showed that utilitarian motivations for punishment, such as deterrence, may be as important as retribution. Typically, some of these studies ask participants for their sentencing goals and present both retributive and utilitarian goals among which participants can make a choice. In this way, some studies did indeed find a prevalence of utilitarian over retributive concerns as the main goals of punishment (e.g., Rucker et al. 2004, Tyler & Boeckmann 1996). Other studies showed that both retributive and utilitarian concerns play a role in punitive judgements (Oswald et al. 2002). The aim of Experiments Seven and Eight was to contribute to this debate and investigate which of the two concerns are more important when assessing specific crimes. One worry about the studies above is that there may be a mismatch between people’s stated goals and the factors that do, in fact, influence their attributions. Hence, Experiments Seven and Eight were designed in a way that would not require participants to state their specific goals for punishment as was the case with some of the studies mentioned above, but to assess the importance of utilitarian considerations in a more indirect manner that would not allow participants to be influenced by ad hoc rationalisations (e.g. stating that deterrence was the main principle behind their decisions whilst this was not really the case). This is not to deny that ad hoc explanations can be valuable in designing future studies, but this should be conducted having in mind that potential mismatches may arise.

Continuing, if the main motivation behind punishment is provided by utilitarian considerations, then we should have expected all the dependent variables to have been
mitigated. In other words, if the purpose of punishment is solely to protect society and prevent future crime, then having information that a perpetrator does not pose a future threat should lead one to ascribe less punishment to the perpetrator compared to when one is not presented with such information. However, Experiment Seven showed that while this was the case with recommended prison time, it was not the case with punishment and blame. We may argue that the results for blame and punishment indicate that utilitarian considerations did not trump retributive considerations when participants were making judgements about blame and punishment. On the contrary, people attributed blame and punishment only in line with the severity of the crime that was committed and ignored future-oriented information. Hence, these results were also consistent with the claim that retribution is the main motivation behind punishment. Participants wanted to punish the perpetrator in line with what they deserve, and did not take into account whether he poses a future threat to society. However, the same was not the case for recommended prison time, where future-oriented information did have a mitigating effect. In other words, participants ascribed less prison time when they were aware that the perpetrator does not pose a future threat, compared to participants that did not have this information. Further research is necessary to decipher this inconsistency between prison time and the remaining variables.

Experiment Eight was designed in a similar fashion to the previous experiment. This time, the future-oriented information concerned crime rate and social context. The results showed that participants did take account of information about crime rate and living conditions within a society in order to make judgements about blame and punishment. Additionally, there was an effect of severity of the crime with participants ascribing less blame and punishment for the low compared to the high severity type of crime. Participants who were given information that a society has good living conditions and low crime rate punished and blamed perpetrators less, compared to when they were presented with information that described a society with poor living conditions and high crime rate. These results contradict results from other studies which showed that information on high crime rates within a society increases punitiveness (Rucker et al. 2004; Sunstein 2000). For Experiment Eight, this may have been due to the fact that along with information about crime rates, participants were also given information on living conditions. A high crime rate in a poor society may have been found to be less surprising and to a certain degree more excused. On the other hand, crime in a society with a low crime rate and high living standards may have been found to be less excused, since perpetrators would have had more opportunities to find work and fewer opportunities to see crime as a viable alternative. However, in order to fully corroborate this reasoning, a future study should either make use of open-ended statements, or provide an attribution list, in order to uncover possible
reasons behind participants’ judgements. Another way to decipher these results would be to conduct two different experiments based on the same design. The first would include information only on crime rate, and the second only on living conditions and social context.

Nevertheless, if the living conditions were the main consideration that grounded participants’ judgements, these results are more consistent with retributive thinking. Participants ignored information on crime rate which reflected utilitarian concerns and focused on living conditions within a society. As a result, they ascribed blame and punishment in line with what perpetrators ‘deserve’. In other words, they assumed that perpetrators living in a poor society deserve less punishment and blame compared to perpetrators living in a society where the living standards are high because their crimes are less excusable.

8.7. Can repentance influence attributions of blame and punishment? And is this due to utilitarian or retributive thinking?

Experiment Nine examined whether repentance can have an effect on attributions of blame, punishment and recommended prison time. Of particular interest was whether, if found to be the case, this might be due to utilitarian or retributive considerations. The results demonstrated that repentance is a very important factor in making judgements about blame, punishment, and recommended prison time. Participants punished and blamed the perpetrators less when they were given the information that they repented for their crimes, compared to participants that were not given this information. Moreover, there was an effect of severity of the crime, which was similar across all nine experiments.

While this experiment demonstrated the influence of repentance in making judgements about blame and punishment, it does not really tell us whether repentance should be thought of in line with retributive, utilitarian, or Nietzschean considerations. At first glance, we may view repentance as a future-oriented concern, since it reassures us that the perpetrator is not going to repeat an offence in the future. On the other hand, repentance may also relate to retributive concerns. As Murphy (2012) argued, repentance shows a willingness to make amends for the harm one has done. Hence, a remorseful person shows their willingness to restore the balance of power between them and their victim. They initially assumed a superior position by committing a crime and now they are willing to shift this balance of power to the victim’s favour. Perhaps, repentance also incorporates an acknowledgment by the perpetrator that they ‘deserve’ to be punished for what they did. Also, repentance involves suffering, so can be seen as a self-inflicted punishment in itself. In this way, a perpetrator recognises their just deserts and invokes merciful feelings on behalf of the victim or the party that he/she is being judged by. This explanation is also consistent with Nietzsche’s proposition that retribution is
intertwined with feelings of power. We may be angered (and hence more punitive) when someone does not express repentance, because they do not acknowledge that they should now be in an inferior position to the victim and society. Nevertheless, these are only tentative claims and further research is necessary to reveal whether repentance should be perceived through utilitarian or retributive considerations and whether these also involve relations of power. A possible design that may be able to shed some light as to whether repentance is perceived through utilitarian or retributive considerations should keep utilitarian information constant across conditions of an independent variable. Specifically, I am suggesting a 3x2 independent measures design. The first independent variable will be Repentance Information with three conditions (Expressive Repentance/Punitive Repentance/Self-harm Repentance). In the ‘expressive repentance condition’ participants will read a vignette where a perpetrator expresses his/her sincere repentance for his/her perpetration. In the ‘punitive repentance’ condition the perpetrator expresses his/her sincere repentance but also his/her willingness to be severely punished for the committed crime and his/her deservingness of being punished. Finally, in the self-harm condition the perpetrator expresses his sincere repentance but also commits and act of self-harm as a form of self-punishment for his/her perpetration. In all of the vignettes that make up the three conditions the participants will also read that at a later date the perpetrator was assessed by a committee of expert psychologists who came to the conclusion that with a high degree of certainty, the perpetrator does not pose a future threat for any members of society. The second independent variable will be severity of crime (low/high). After reading the vignettes the participants will be asked to attribute blame and punishment to the perpetrator. The thinking here is that if utilitarian considerations are important, we should not observe any differences across the three conditions of the repentance information variable in terms of blame and punishment ascriptions since they will all be given the same forward-looking information (i.e., that the perpetrator does not pose a future threat. On the other hand, if retributive information is more important, we should expect variations in blame and punishment scores. For example, less punishment may be attributed to the perpetrator who harmed him/her self. The study can also ask participants to state the goals of repentance in an attribution check list after completing the attributions of punishment and blame. Participants can be asked to prioritise different goals (e.g., Please tick the boxes in order of importance-The most important goal of repentance is that a) it shows the perpetrator’s willingness to pay for what they did, b) it shows the perpetrator’s willingness to become equal to other members of society c) it shows that the perpetrator is no longer a threat to other members of society).
8.8. Is blame a punitive emotion?

At the beginning of the literature review we examined some philosophical views according to which blame is not a punitive emotion, but only an appropriate emotional response that follows the violation of moral expectations (Wallace 1994; Scanlon 2005). On the other hand, other philosophers described blame as punishing through our opinion and emotional reactions (Mill 1868). To blame, argued Mill, is to view someone as an object of punishment. Of course, we are not going to resolve this debate here, and answering this question has only been a secondary or peripheral aim of this thesis. Nevertheless, we may be able to provide the reader with some remarks on the behaviour of these two notions within this thesis.

For the most part, blame and punishment displayed similar behaviour. In other words, the independent variables in this study had similar effects for both blame and punishment. This is consistent with the view that blame is indeed punitive in its nature. If blame were concerned purely with the assessment of moral responsibility and the violation of certain moral expectations and rules, then it should not have been influenced by the same principles that guide punishment.

There were however, two notable exceptions: blame and punishment behaved differently to each other in Experiments Two (prison treatment) and Six (fateful punishment). In Experiment Two participants attributed less blame when they were given information that a perpetrator was subjected to cruel prison treatment, compared to good prison treatment. On the other hand, a similar effect was not observed for attributions of punishment. (However, the effect for punishment did approach significance levels). In Experiment Six, participants ascribed less punishment to a perpetrator when they read that he was punished by fate, compared to when not. On the other hand, a similar effect was not found for attributions of blame. I shall comment only on Experiment Six, since in Experiment Two the effect of prison treatment on blame was found to be significant, and the effect on punishment approached significance levels. Thus, this may be more indicative of a similar pattern of behaviour between attributions of blame and attributions of punishment. Experiment Six however, showed that there was an effect of the presence or absence of fateful punishment on punishment, but not on blame. As was discussed earlier, it may have been the case that blame was not mitigated by fateful punishment because participants understood it only as an ascription of moral responsibility. Fateful punishment cannot pose in any way as an extenuating circumstance that may mitigate someone’s moral responsibility for an action.

On the other hand, in other experiments, the independent variables may have given reason to participants to ascribe less blame along with less punishment because they may have been
perceived as extenuating circumstances that mitigated the degree of moral responsibility. For example, in Experiment Eight participants may have ascribed less blame because they thought that a perpetrator who lives in a poor society is less responsible for committing a crime, compared to a perpetrator who lives in a society with a high standard of living. If so, the distinction to be made here is between scenarios that may involve extenuating circumstances that cause a reduction in moral responsibility, and scenarios that do not involve extenuating circumstances. If this is correct, then the results of these experiments do not necessarily provide support for the view that blame is a punitive emotion. Future enquiries should focus on designs that address this distinction and compare the behaviour of attributions of blame within scenarios that involve or do not involve extenuating circumstances and hence ascriptions of moral responsibility.

8.9. Individual differences in attributions of blame and punishment

Another question of interest within this thesis was whether individual differences factors can influence attributions of blame and punishment. The locus of control and social comparison scales were used because of their involvement in the study of power and relative standing. These two scales were used in order to examine whether individuals with low self-perceived power and low relative standing in relation to others would be more punitive (for detailed explanations and descriptions of the scales see the chapter on methods). The rationale behind using these scales derived from the suggestion, by Adler (1934), and Fromm (1976) that feelings of inferiority may lead one to develop more punitive tendencies. In other words, we wanted to investigate whether feelings of inferiority can exacerbate punitive attributions. An empathic concern scale was used in order to examine the effect of empathic tendencies on attributions of blame and punishment. The CAST sadism scale which measures sadistic tendencies was used to examine whether these play a role in influencing attributions of blame and punishment. Since we had been discussing malicious satisfaction, the scale was used to investigate whether sadistic tendencies can further exacerbate such feelings. Finally, the just world scale was used in order to draw some links to retribution and desert. The scale measures whether people believe that the world is a just place where people always get what they deserve. The line of thought here was that the more one believes in a just world, the more punitive one will tend to be in order to maintain this belief.

The results showed that individual differences did not have much effect on attributions of blame, punishment, and prison time. No significant correlations were found between any of the scales and punishment/blame/prison time in Experiments Nine, Seven, and Six, and only a
limited number of significant correlations were found in the remaining experiments. Below, we will examine these correlations in relation to each of the scales/

**Locus of control and Social Comparison scales**

These two scales have not correlated with any other variables across all nine experiments. This suggests that attributions of punishment, blame and recommended prison time are not related to how inferior or superior one feels in relation to others, and to whether one believes that one’s fate is decided by one’s own decisions or by external factors.

**Cast Sadism scale**

Experiment One found a significant correlation between sadism scale scores and prison time \( r = 0.12 \), suggesting that the more sadistic tendencies one has the more prison time one would ascribe for a crime. Experiment Two produced a negative significant correlation between sadism and blame \( r = -0.02 \), but it was very weak. Similarly, Experiment Three produced a significant negative correlation between sadism and blame \( r = -0.013 \) though this was also very weak, as it was in Experiment Two. Experiment Five found a significant negative correlation between sadism and punishment \( r = -0.15 \), which suggests that the more sadistic tendencies one has, the less punitive one will be. A similar pattern was also found between sadism and blame \( r = -0.22 \). These two correlations are puzzling — but two of the same kind (though weak) were observed between sadism and blame in Experiments Two and Three, and another similar and stronger negative correlation, between sadism and prison time was produced by Experiment One. It seems that there is a pattern of a negative correlation between sadism and variables of interest in three experiments. Finally, there was another significant negative correlation between sadism and blame \( r = -0.17 \) in Experiment Eight. The Cast Sadism scale produced more correlations with the variables of interest, compared to any other scales, and perhaps despite most of them being weak and negative, they should be further investigated. Perhaps, people with sadistic tendencies sympathise with perpetrators and find their actions easier to excuse. Therefore, they would tend to blame/punish them less.

**Just World scale**

Experiment Three produced a significant positive correlation between the just world scale and punishment \( r = 0.12 \), suggesting that the more one believes in a just world the more punitive one
is. In addition, we found a significant correlation between the just world scale and punishment in Experiment Eight $r=0.14$, suggesting that the more one believes in a just world the more punitive one will be. On the other hand this correlational pattern appeared only twice, and this cannot suffice to prompt further investigation.

**Empathic Concern scale**

Experiment Four produced a significant positive correlation between empathy and the justification of punishment $r=0.15$, suggesting that the more empathic tendencies someone has, the more they would find an act of revenge to be justified. The same experiment found a significant negative correlation between empathy and punishment $r=-0.17$, suggesting that the more empathic tendencies one has the less punitive one is towards the avenger. These two correlations make sense in terms of earlier comments which pointed out that participants may have also sympathised with the avenger in this experiment. Therefore, empathic concern did not play a major role in attributions of blame, punishment, and recommended prison time, but it was important in influencing participants’ attitudes towards an act of revenge and in reducing the punishment ascribed to an avenger.

**Correlations between the scales**

Finally, the only correlations found between the scales themselves were a significant negative correlation between empathy and sadism $r=-0.46$, suggesting that the more empathic tendencies one has, the fewer sadistic tendencies one will display, and between the just world scale and sadism $r=0.19$ suggesting that the more one believes in a just world the fewer sadistic tendencies one has.

Results showed that the most frequent correlational pattern across all nine experiments is the negative one between sadism and blame. Perhaps, it may be worth further investigation. However, the results overall suggest that individual differences were not a major factor in determining attributions of blame, punishment and recommended prison time.

**8.10. Final Remarks**

Overall, the results presented in the thesis have been more consistent with the claim that retributive considerations (the first central research question) are the main lay motivation behind punishment than the claim that utilitarian considerations (the second central research question) play this role. Additionally, this thesis has presented some results which are consistent with the claim that, while retribution may be the vehicle by which punishment is dispensed, this process can also involve the feelings of malicious satisfaction (the third central
research question). Experiments One and Two provided strong evidence that participants had been satisfied with cruel and inhumane prison practices. However, further research is necessary in order to decipher whether this was due to thinking in terms of deserts, or whether retributive thinking had been employed as an excuse to experience sentiments of malicious satisfaction. Experiment Three provided strong evidence which showed that a victim’s social class influences attributions of blame and punishment. Future research is necessary to strengthen the claim that this was due to feelings of ressentiment (the fourth central research question).

Experiment Four provided strong evidence which indicates that an act of revenge is perceived as to some extent justifiable even if it is of high severity. These results may be also taken to suggest that retributive considerations are the most important motivation behind ascriptions of blame and punishment. On other hand, Experiment Five did not provide any evidence that the absence or presence of an act of revenge can influence attributions of blame and punishment. As argued above the results of this experiment may be explained by a limitation in its design. On the other hand, Experiment Six did provide some evidence that an act of fateful punishment can mitigate attributions of punishment and recommended prison time in line with the notion of just deserts, but this was not the case with blame. Therefore, we cannot claim the presence of strong evidence, since we would have expected all the variables to have been affected by fateful punishment. The same was the case with Experiment Seven, which did not demonstrate strong evidence for the importance of utilitarian considerations in attributing blame/punishment/prison time since the only variable which was influenced by incapacitation information was recommended prison time. On the other hand, information on crime rate and living standards did influence ascription of punishment and deserved blame, but in the opposite way expected. Finally, Experiment Nine demonstrated that repentance is a very important factor in making decisions about blame and punishment, as well as recommended prison time. Whether repentance is perceived through retributive or utilitarian considerations however, is the subject of future research.
References


Rawls, J. (1955). Two concepts of rules. The Philosophical review 64 pp. 3-32


Appendices

Appendix A: Consent Form

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study. If you decide to take part you will be presented with an experiment designed to examine judgements about punishment. The experimenter is a PhD student at the Open University in the United Kingdom and this research has been approved by the University’s ethics committee. Participation in the study will take less than 10 minutes. You will be presented with some vignettes that describe a crime, and then asked to ascribe punishment to a perpetrator. This will be done by giving your response to relevant questions (e.g. how much punishment does X deserve for act Z?). You will also be given the option of expressing any thoughts on alternate forms of punishments that perpetrators deserve should you wish to by responding to open ended questions. Following that you will also be asked some questions about yourself. It is very important to provide honest and sincere answers.

All data will be treated anonymously and will not be able to be identified with you personally. Data will be held by the experimenter for two years and then destroyed. Moreover, you can withdraw at any time during the experiment, should you not wish to continue, by exiting your browser. The results of this experiment will be published in a PhD thesis and presented at academic conferences and seminars. Finally, please be advised that the experiment does not involve any deception, and will not pose any risk to participants.

If you have any further questions about this study, or wish to be informed about the results you can contact the experimenter at Georgios.Kourdounoulis@open.ac.uk.
Appendix B: The CAST Sadism Scale

COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT OF SADISTIC TENDENCIES (CAST)

Buckels & Paulhus (2014)

7-point scales with anchors: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree

Direct - Verbal
1. I was purposely mean to some people in high school.
2. I enjoy making jokes at the expense of others.
3. I have purposely tricked someone and laughed when they looked foolish.
4. When making fun of someone, it is especially amusing if they realize what I'm doing.
5. Perhaps I shouldn’t have, but I never got tired of mocking certain classmates.
6. I would never purposely humiliate someone. (R)

Direct - Physical
1. I enjoy physically hurting people.
2. I enjoy tormenting people.
3. I have the right to push certain people around.
4. I have dominated others using fear.
5. I enjoy hurting my partner during sex (or pretending to).

Vicarious
1. In video games, I like the realistic blood spurts.
2. I love to watch YouTube clips of people fighting.
3. I enjoy watching cage fighting (or MMA), where there is no escape.
4. I sometimes replay my favorite scenes from gory slasher films.
5. There’s way too much violence in sports. (R)
6. I enjoy playing the villain in games and torturing other characters.
7. In professional car-racing, it’s the accidents that I enjoy most.

Fillers can be intermixed to offset negativity.

I’m considered to be a kind person.
By staying strong, one can better help others.
I’d do anything – even break the law – for those I love.
I go out of my way to help family members.
I have ambitions to make the world a better place.
My goal is to be a missionary and help others.
I give money to poor people on the street.
I’m worried that we have already seriously damaged the Earth.
I want to spend my life helping sick children.
I have had some really good friends.
I am a religious person.
### Norms for the CAST subscales

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<td>Direct Sadism – Verbal</td>
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<td>0.80</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicarious Sadism</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Norms are derived from a sample of 345 participants on Mechanical Turk.

Overall alpha is .89. Mean age = 34.4, SD = 12.7.
Appendix C: General Belief in a Just World Scale

Below you will find various statements. Most likely, you will strongly agree with some statements, and strongly disagree with others. Sometimes you may feel more neutral. Read each statement carefully and decide to what extent you personally agree or disagree with it. Circle the number which corresponds to this judgment. Make sure you circle a number for every statement.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I think basically the world is a just place.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I believe that, by and large, people get what they deserve.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I am confident that justice always prevails over injustice.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I am convinced that in the long run people will be compensated for injustices.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I firmly believe that injustices in all areas of life</td>
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(e.g., professional, family, politic) are the exception rather than the rule.

I think people try to be fair when making important decisions.

Appendix D: Interpersonal Reactivity Index

The following statements inquire about your thoughts and feelings in a variety of situations. For each item, indicate how well it describes you by choosing the appropriate letter on the scale at the top of the page: A, B, C, D, or E. When you have decided on your answer, fill in the letter on the answer sheet next to the item number. READ EACH ITEM CAREFULLY BEFORE RESPONDING. Answer as honestly as you can. Thank you.

**ANSWER SCALE:**

A                   B               C               D               E

DOES NOT DESCRIBES ME
DESCRIBE ME VERY WELL
WELL

1. I daydream and fantasize, with some regularity, about things that might happen to me. (FS)
2. I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me. (EC)
3. I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the "other guy's" point of view. (PT) (-)
4. Sometimes I don't feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems. (EC) (-)
5. I really get involved with the feelings of the characters in a novel. (FS)
6. In emergency situations, I feel apprehensive and ill-at-ease. (PD)
7. I am usually objective when I watch a movie or play, and I don't often get completely caught up in it. (FS) (-)
8. I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision. (PT)
9. When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards them. (EC)
10. I sometimes feel helpless when I am in the middle of a very emotional situation. (PD)
11. I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective. (PT)

12. Becoming extremely involved in a good book or movie is somewhat rare for me. (FS) (-)

13. When I see someone get hurt, I tend to remain calm. (PD) (-)

14. Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal. (EC) (-)

15. If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments. (PT) (-)

16. After seeing a play or movie, I have felt as though I were one of the characters. (FS)

17. Being in a tense emotional situation scares me. (PD)

18. When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them. (EC) (-)

19. I am usually pretty effective in dealing with emergencies. (PD) (-)

20. I am often quite touched by things that I see happen. (EC)

21. I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both. (PT)

22. I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person. (EC)

23. When I watch a good movie, I can very easily put myself in the place of a leading character. (FS)

24. I tend to lose control during emergencies. (PD)

25. When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in his shoes" for a while. (PT)

26. When I am reading an interesting story or novel, I imagine how I would feel if the events in the story were happening to me. (FS)

27. When I see someone who badly needs help in an emergency, I go to pieces. (PD)

28. Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place. (PT)

NOTE: (-) denotes item to be scored in reverse fashion
PT = perspective-taking scale
FS = fantasy scale
EC = empathic concern scale
PD = personal distress scale

A = 0
B = 1
C = 2
Appendix E: Social Comparison Scale

Please circle a number at a point which best describes the way in which you see yourself in comparison to others.

For example:

Short  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  Tall

If you put a mark at 3 this means you see yourself as shorter than others; if you put a mark at 5 (middle) about average; and a mark at 7 somewhat taller.

If you understand the above instructions please proceed. Circle one number on each line according to how you see yourself in relationship to others.

In relationship to others I feel:

Inferior  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
Superior

Incompetent  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
More competent

Unlikeable  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
More likeable
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<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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<th>9</th>
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<td>Accepted</td>
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<td>More talented</td>
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<td>Stronger</td>
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<td>More confident</td>
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<td>Undesirable</td>
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<td>More desirable</td>
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<td>Unattractive</td>
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<td>More attractive</td>
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<td>An outsider</td>
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<td>insider</td>
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SCORING

Scoring, add up all items.

Sometimes it is useful to look at the 3 items of feeling left out, different and an outsider as a measure of group fit or belongingness.
Appendix F: Locus of Control Scale

This is a questionnaire to find out the way in which certain important events in our society affect different people. Each item consists of a pair of alternatives lettered a or b. Please select the one statement of each pair (and only one) which you more strongly believe to be the case as far as you're concerned. Be sure to select the one you actually believe to be more true rather than the one you think you should choose or the one you would like to be true. This is a measure of personal belief: obviously there are no right or wrong answers.

Please answer these items carefully but do not spend too much time on any one item. Be sure to find an answer for every choice. In some instances you may discover that you believe both statements or neither one. In such cases, be sure to select the one you more strongly believe to be the case as far as you're concerned. Also try to respond to each item independently when making your choice; do not be influenced by your previous choices.

1. a. Children get into trouble because their parents punish them too much.  
b. The trouble with most children nowadays is that their parents are too easy with them.

2. a. Many of the unhappy things in people's lives are partly due to bad luck.  
b. People's misfortunes result from the mistakes they make.

3. a. One of the major reasons why we have wars is because people don't take enough interest in politics.  
b. There will always be wars, no matter how hard people try to prevent them.

4. a. In the long run people get the respect they deserve in this world  
b. Unfortunately, an individual's worth often passes unrecognized no matter how
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. a. The idea that teachers are unfair to students is nonsense.</th>
<th>b. Most students don't realize the extent to which their grades are influenced by accidental happenings.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. a. Without the right breaks one cannot be an effective leader.</td>
<td>b. Capable people who fail to become leaders have not taken advantage of their opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. a. No matter how hard you try some people just don't like you.</td>
<td>b. People who can't get others to like them don't understand how to get along with others.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Heredity plays the major role in determining one's personality</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>a. I have often found that what is going to happen will happen.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>a. In the case of the well prepared student there is rarely if ever such a thing as an unfair test.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>a. Becoming a success is a matter of hard work, luck has little or nothing to do with it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>a. The average citizen can have an influence in government decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>a. When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>a. There are certain people who are just no good.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. a.</td>
<td>In my case getting what I want has little or nothing to do with luck.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. a.</td>
<td>Who gets to be the boss often depends on who was lucky enough to be in the right place first.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. a.</td>
<td>As far as world affairs are concerned, most of us are the victims of forces we can neither understand, nor control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. a.</td>
<td>Most people don't realize the extent to which their lives are controlled by accidental happenings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. a.</td>
<td>One should always be willing to admit mistakes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. It is hard to know whether or not a person really likes you.</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>a. In the long run the bad things that happen to us are balanced by the good ones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>a. With enough effort we can wipe out political corruption.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>a. Sometimes I can't understand how teachers arrive at the grades they give.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>a. A good leader expects people to decide for themselves what they should do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>a. Many times I feel that I have little influence over the things that happen to me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>a. People are lonely because they don't try to be friendly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>27. a. There is too much emphasis on athletics in high school.</td>
<td>b. Team sports are an excellent way to build character.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. a. What happens to me is my own doing.</td>
<td>b. Sometimes I feel that I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. a. Most of the time I can't understand why politicians behave the way they do.</td>
<td>b. In the long run the people are responsible for bad government on a national as well as on a local level.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>