

The London School of Economics and Political Science

**A Dual-Process Motivational Model of Punitive Attitudes:  
The effects of Right-Wing Authoritarianism and Social Dominance  
Orientation on Public Punitiveness**

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of the London School of Economics and Political Science  
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As the candidate's supervisor I hereby confirm the extent of the candidate's contribution to the joint-authored papers as indicated in the preface below.

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Dr. Jonathan Jackson

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It was 1996 and I was assigned to present on the death penalty with a group of friends in high school. I was thirteen years old and I thought that the death penalty was a barbaric and irrational response to crime problems. I remember reading about the causes of people's preferences regarding the death penalty. One argument caught my attention: the type of society people wanted to live in shaped their retributive desires. Little could I know back then that the relationship between punitive attitudes and ideology would become the topic of my doctoral dissertation. Sixteen years later I find myself completing this long and difficult journey. I would not have been able to do so without the support of countless people over the last years in London. Probably the best part of completing this dissertation is having the opportunity to thank them.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Why do people support the harsh punishment of criminal offenders? This dissertation starts from the premise that views about punishment go far beyond concerns about crime and security. Punishment is a central component of the social order and a means by which social order is produced. It follows that ideological preferences will be crucial in understanding people's punitive reactions. People who have a preference for collective security might support punishment to restore order and cohesion. Yet, by committing crime, offenders also seem to gain power in society and punishment can restore the status quo. Punishment might therefore have positive value for people motivated to achieve social order (people high in right-wing authoritarianism, RWA) as well as for people motivated to achieve power and dominance (people high in social dominance orientation, SDO). In this dissertation I build on criminological and social-psychological research to propose a dual-motivational model of punitive attitudes. I examine whether the effects of RWA and SDO are mediated by different beliefs about crime and symbolic motives of punishment (Paper 1) and whether they predict different retributive goals of punishment (Paper 2). Finally, I explore the circumstances under which RWA and SDO predict punitive attitudes (Papers 3 and 4). The four papers presented in this dissertation suggest that there are, indeed, two ideological antecedents to punitive attitudes. High RWA individuals favoured harsh punishment to restore collective security, maintain hierarchies and avoid powerful criminals disrupting social order. High SDO's did so to establish and maintain power and status hierarchies in society. However, the effect of SDO was limited to situations where crime was associated with a competitive situation. Punitiveness seems to be related to a group-based competition for status and power with criminal offenders. Yet, high SDO individuals are not predisposed to think of criminal offenders as threats to hierarchies.

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## **PREFACE**

This document constitutes my PhD submission to the London School of Economics and Political Science. The PhD programme at the Methodology Institute allows a paper based format that differs from the usual dissertation format. A paper based thesis unavoidably entails some repetition of the concepts and theory in each paper. The introductory chapter of this document outlines the main argument and contribution of this dissertation, presents research questions and a brief overview of the empirical component. The conceptual and theoretical chapter discusses how punitive attitudes have been defined and measured, and outlines different models that have been proposed to explain people's support for punitive responses to law-breakers. A social-psychological perspective of punitive attitudes is then proposed to build on previous research. The dual-process motivational model of ideological attitudes, right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation are described and discussed in the context of punitive attitudes. The fourth chapter starts with a summary and presents hypotheses of the different empirical papers in this dissertation. Four papers are then presented. The second paper ('Retribution as revenge and just deserts: On the relationship between two dimensions of retribution, ideological dispositions and the harsh treatment of criminal offenders') is a joint-authored paper (with Jonathan Jackson), for which I contributed 80 per cent of the work. The other three papers are my own. The final section summarises the findings, discusses the limitations of the presented studies and future avenues for research.

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Ideology and punitive attitudes**

People differ in their beliefs, theories and expectations of how society should be structured and the ways in which people and institutions ought to behave. Some people have a preference for stability, cohesion and tradition; they believe that the role of society and its institutions is to assure order and security. Others value diversity, change and freedom; they believe that society should work to facilitate human growth (Tomkins, in Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003). Different ideological beliefs about the proper moral and political order of society serve as guidelines for social judgment, and shape the value that people assign to groups, social practices and institutions (Pratto, 1999). For example, those who have a preference for social cohesion and stability might find comfort in strong institutions that can help to ensure order, security and moral alignment in society.

One such institution is the criminal justice system. The core function of the criminal justice system is to maintain social order by preventing crime and punishing criminal offenders. Crucially, however, crime prevention policies do not only work to reduce crime, but also “address some of the deeper emotional or affective dimensions of crime and its place in society” (Freiberg, 2001, p. 265). Highlighting the expressive and symbolic function of crime and punishment in society, Durkheim (1964, 1973) argued that crime threatens the normative order, and that punishment can help clarifying moral boundaries and bringing back order and security to society. The punishment of rule-breakers is thus a central component of any social order, and people’s ideological preferences of how social order should be achieved are key in understanding their beliefs about the proper role of judicial institutions and their support for crime and punishment policies. Those who have ideological preferences to live in highly cohesive and stable societies may favour punitive policies because strong punishment can be perceived as reinforcing social order.

Ideological attitudes have been argued to affect people's views about criminals, their theories about the causes of crime, and their beliefs about appropriate institutional reactions to rule-breaking (Carroll, Perkowitz, Lurigio, & Weaver, 1987). Carroll et al. (1987) explain this association in terms of resonances between ideological beliefs, beliefs about the causes of crime, and attitudes towards punishment. The conservative political right, on the one hand, believes that crime is committed by those who lack moral conscience and self-control, and that harsh punishment can bring offenders back on the right track. The liberal political left, on the other hand, thinks that the causes of crime can be found in structural economical inequalities and problems of discrimination, with the solution lying in reforming the system and rehabilitating offenders. Consistent with this argument, the support for harsh sentencing of criminal offenders seems to be a right-wing phenomenon: conservatives tend to be more punitive towards offenders than liberals (Baron & Hartnagel, 1996; Carroll et al., 1987; Hogan, Chiricos, & Gertz, 2005; Johnson, 2009; King & Maruna, 2009; Tetlock et al., 2007; Tyler & Boeckmann, 1997; Unnever & Cullen, 2010). Unnever et al. (2007, p. 313) even suggest that punitive attitudes and political conservatism are "two peas in the same pod".

This dissertation lies precisely at the intersection between ideological preferences and attitudes towards punitive policies. Punitive attitudes – that is, people's preferences for assigning harsh punitive measures to criminal offenders – seem to be deeply ideological in nature. Yet, how exactly does ideology affect the endorsement of harsh sentencing? Criminological research has observed that conservative people tend to favour harsh sentencing, but conservatism is often considered as a background variable (e.g. King & Maruna, 2009). Research in social and political psychology, on the other hand, has proposed models to explain the relationship between ideological attitudes, and a range of attitudes towards inter-group violence (e.g. military action, Cohrs, Moschner, Maes, & Kielmann, 2005) and prejudice (e.g. Duckitt, 2001; Duckitt, Wagner, du Plessis, & Birum, 2002). Thus far, however, less attention has been paid to understanding the mechanisms by which ideology affects people's desire for harsh punishment.

Understanding people's support for institutional reactions to rule breaking is important not the least because people's support for punitive stances shape penal policies in an era where penal policies are determined based just as much on public as on expert's opinion (Garland, 2001a). Roberts and Hough (2002, p. 34) state: "Simply

put, politicians are reluctant to create, and judges slow to impose, community punishments if the general public is perceived to be hostile”. Taken to an extreme, many (e.g. Pratt, 2007; Roberts & Hough, 2005) have referred to a phenomenon called ‘penal populism’, that is, a situation where penal policies are determined to win votes rather than to promote justice.

Penal populism becomes particularly relevant in a context where the public demands stronger sentences for criminal offences. In Europe, in all 26 countries considered by the European Social Survey (ESS Round 5: European Social Survey Round 5 Data, 2010), more than 40% of those questioned agreed with the use of stiffer sentences for law-breakers. In the United Kingdom, 77% favoured harsher sentences, and this number was even higher in countries such as Hungary and Bulgaria (85 and 88%, respectively). In line with public attitudes, the implementation of punitive measures has become more widespread during the last decades. Imprisonment rates have increased all over the world, despite the fact that crime rates have been decreasing (Lacey, 2008; see also Garland, 2001b).

## **1.2 This dissertation: a social psychological approach to punitive attitudes**

The aim of this dissertation is to propose a social psychological perspective to account for the public’s support for the use of harsh sentences for criminal offenders. In a series of studies, this dissertation draws upon criminological, political psychological and social psychological research to explore the role that ideological attitudes have in shaping people’s demands for tougher sentences from the justice system, as well as their beliefs about the goals punishment should achieve. Drawing on a motivated social cognition perspective, I argue that the key to understanding why ideology affects public attitudes towards punishment lies in the goals that lead people to adopt different ideological beliefs in the first place. A motivated social-cognition perspective (Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009; Jost et al., 2003) understands ideologies as being driven by psychological needs and motivations, with people’s motivational goals affecting the endorsement of certain ideologies, as these help satisfying psychological needs (Jost et al., 2009, 2003). Motivationally driven ideologies, in turn, lead people to assign positive or negative value to punishment, to the extent that it is perceived as sustaining or detracting a specific goal in society.

Tetlock and his collaborators (Tetlock, 2002; Tetlock et al., 2007; see also Goldberg, Lerner, & Tetlock, 1999; Lerner, Goldberg, & Tetlock, 1998; Rucker, Polifroni, Tetlock, & Scott, 2004) have proposed a motivated approach to punitiveness. The authors argue that people internalise the normative order, and will defend rules and support harsh punishment. They do so in particular when they are ideologically predisposed or are situationally induced to believe that the normative order is being threatened. From a motivated social cognition perspective, then, conservatives might favour harsh punishment to restore values and collective security. This is in part consistent with a value restoration motive of punishment (Vidmar & Miller, 1980). Value restoration is concerned with the extent to which offences damage shared values and challenge the legitimacy of social bonds and consensus, disturbing social order (Wenzel & Thielmann, 2006). Harsh punishment symbolically labels the offence as wrong, restoring people's faith in shared values (Okimoto & Wenzel, 2008; Rucker et al., 2004; Vidmar, 2002; Vidmar & Miller, 1980).

Yet, crime not only affects value consensus. Breaking the rules symbolises power as offenders seem to be free to behave the way they like (Van Kleef, Homan, Finkenauer, Gündemir, & Stamkou, 2011; see also Miller, 2001). Criminal offenders committing crime can be perceived in terms of zero-sum beliefs: the more power and resources criminal offenders gain, the less power and resources there remain for the rest of society. Consistent with a status and power restoration motive of punishment, harsh sentences can be perceived as a way of enhancing status differentials by degrading the offender's status and power (Vidmar, 2002; Vidmar & Miller, 1980; Wenzel & Thielmann, 2006). This is particularly relevant if one considers that the criminal justice system is more likely to apply harsh punishment against people in subordinate social groups (Garland, 2001b; Green, Thomsen, Sidanius & Pratto, 2001; Sidanius, Staerklé, & Potanina, 2009; Mitchell & Sidanius, 1995; Sidanius, Mitchell, & Navarrete, 2006). This perceived status and power restoration function of punishment suggests that punishment might have positive value not only for people motivated to achieve social order and value consensus, but also for those who are ideologically motivated to achieve power and dominance and have a preference to live in highly unequal societies. It is therefore important to consider both motivational goals when exploring people's punitive reactions, and this is where a dual-motivational model of ideological attitudes (Duckitt, 2001) comes in.

### **1.2.1 A dual-motivational model of punitive attitudes**

Harsh punitive policies can be perceived as communicating two different messages in society. On the one hand, crime threatens stability, social order and shared values, while harsh punishment communicates that the offence was wrong and restores people's faith in shared values (value restoration). On the other hand, by committing crime, criminal offenders seem to gain power over society and one way of restoring the status quo is by degrading the offender's status and power (status and power restoration). Therefore, while ideological beliefs might be important to understand people's preferences for harsh punitive policies, more than one ideological attitude might play a role.

In line with a dual-motivational model of ideological attitudes (Duckitt, 2001) two conservative ideologies may be relevant to punitive attitudes: right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) and social dominance orientation (SDO). RWA and SDO are argued to be ideological expressions of different motivational goals, which are made salient by different social worldviews and predisposed by different personalities and socialisations (see for a review Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). It follows that even if they will both predict the support for harsh sentencing they will do so for different reasons. Duckitt (2009) has argued that high RWA individuals value collective security and in-group conformity and they are likely to favour harsh punitive policies to restore social order, values and security in society. This is consistent with a value restoration motive of punishment, with the exception that Duckitt's approach considers security issues in addition to value consensus. High SDO individuals, on the other hand, value power and dominance over out-groups and they should support stiffer sentences to restore status and power relationships in society.

In this dissertation I explore the role of ideological attitudes in shaping people's support for harsh punishment of criminal offenders. Given that two conservative ideological attitudes seem to be relevant to punitiveness, I focus on examining the different reasons and circumstances under which RWA and SDO predict punitive attitudes. In the following pages I briefly discuss each ideology (longer discussions are presented in the conceptual review of this dissertation), their relationships with punitive attitudes, as well as questions that remain unsolved. I then move on to describe the research questions and contributions, as well as to give an overview of the empirical component of this dissertation.



### **1.2.2 Right-wing authoritarianism and punitive attitudes**

People high in RWA are motivated to achieve collective security and in-group conformity and will assign positive value to policies and institutions that can help to control social threats and assure order and security in society (Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). Duckitt (2009; see also Tam, Leung, & Chiu, 2008) has argued that people high in RWA should favour punitive measures to uphold the social order, security and in-group conformity. High RWA individuals are also submissive towards authorities and should be more likely to endorse harsh punishment of criminal offenders to the extent that it is undertaken by legal authorities. This is, people high in RWA should favour harsh punishment both in terms of the role that punishment is perceived to play in society (maintain social order) and the institution in charge of carrying it out (authorities).

Research has consistently found an association between RWA and punitive and retributive reactions to criminal offences (e.g. Altemeyer, 1981, 1998; Capps, 2002; Carroll et al., 1987; Feather, 1998; Funke, 2005; Lerner et al., 1998; Unnever & Cullen, 2010), including the support for the death penalty (Tyler & Weber, 1982; Unnever & Cullen, 2010). People high in RWA consider crimes to be more serious (e.g. Altemeyer, 1981, 1998; Feather, 1996) allegedly because crime constitutes a threat to security and order, as well as a violation to legitimate social norms that are sanctioned by authorities (Feather, 1996). They are also more likely to support mandatory sentences (Feather & Souter, 2002). But people high in RWA are not always punitive: some research has shown that people high in RWA are concerned about respectable groups being victimised while they are accepting of illegal acts committed by the government (Altemeyer, 1998). Similarly, Feather (1998) found that people high in RWA considered an offence as more serious than people low in RWA when it was committed by a protester. But the relationship was inversed when the offender was a police officer.

While there is agreement in that high RWA individuals are highly punitive, some questions remain open. First, the reasons why RWA predicts punitive attitudes are underexplored. Duckitt (2009) has argued that people high in RWA will support punitive policies to restore social order and in-group conformity. Yet, no research to my knowledge has tested whether a motive to restore collective security actually mediates the effect of RWA on punitive attitudes.

Second, little is known about how social circumstances activate the effect of RWA on punitive attitudes. As argued by Duckitt and Sibley (2010) in relation to

prejudice, RWA should be a stronger predictor when the in-group's collective security, stability and cohesion are threatened by an out-group. It follows that they should be especially punitive towards criminal offenders perceived to deviate from common norms and values, or when the social circumstances are perceived to be dangerous. Stenner (2005; see also Feldman & Stenner, 1997) showed that people's authoritarian predispositions interacted with perceptions of threat to the normative order in affecting the support for harsh punishment. This is consistent with a wide body of research on the relationship between social threat and authoritarianism (see Cohrs & Ibler, 2009). Yet, the mechanism by which social threat strengthens the relationship between authoritarianism and punitive attitudes is less clear. Does threat activate authoritarianism in general or does it increase the salience of crime as disturbing social order and value consensus?

Third, harsh punitive policies might have conflicting meaning for high RWA individuals. On the one hand, they are likely to endorse punishment because they feel that crime disturbs social order and because it is undertaken by legal authorities. But legal authorities are usually also committed to following legal and fair procedures, which should limit the harshness of punishment. Research so far has shown that people high in RWA endorse a wide range of different –and often inconsistent– goals of punishment: they favour retributive reactions to criminal offences (e.g. Carroll et al., 1987), the restoration of moral balance (Colémont, Van Hiel, & Cornelis, 2011), deterrence and incapacitation, but not personal revenge (McKee & Feather, 2008). More research is required to examine under what circumstances high RWA individuals will endorse different goals of punishment.

Last but not least, most RWA scales (Altemeyer, 1998; Duckitt, Bizumic, Krauss, & Heled, 2010) include items that refer either explicitly (e.g. 'Being kind to loafers or criminals will only encourage them to take advantage of your weakness, so it's best to use a firm, tough hand when dealing with them', Duckitt et al., 2010) or implicitly (e.g. 'We should smash all the negative elements that are causing trouble in our society', Duckitt et al., 2010) to crime and punishment issues. Importantly, it is often difficult to distinguish conceptually and practically between authoritarian aggression and punitive reactions. More research is needed to evaluate whether RWA remains a significant predictor of punitiveness when these items are excluded from its measurement.

Overall, ideological views about the role of authorities in society seem to be key in explaining punitive reactions. People high in RWA are concerned about maintaining collective security and in-group conformity and they arguably will support harsh punishment to restore value consensus and security. Yet, more research is required to understand the mechanisms by which RWA affects punitiveness.

### **1.2.3 Social dominance orientation and punitive attitudes**

People might favour harsh punishment to restore values and security threatened by crime. In addition, by committing crime offenders show disrespect and assume superiority over the victim and society (Miller, 2001; Van Kleef et al., 2011). Ideological preferences to live in unequal societies can therefore also play a role in explaining punitive attitudes. People high in SDO are motivated to achieve power and dominance and favour policies and institutions that are perceived as helping to establish and maintain inequalities and social hierarchies (Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). They are likely to perceive criminal offenders as competing for power and resources and crime as a threat to hierarchical relationships in society. Furthermore, they might perceive the offenders' gain in power in terms of zero-sum beliefs: the more power and resources gained by the offender, the less power and resources that remain for superior groups (Okimoto, Wenzel, & Feather, 2011). High SDO individuals should favour punishment to restore status and power relationships (Duckitt, 2009). Since they also lack empathy, they should be less caring for the wellbeing of criminal offenders (Duckitt, 2009)<sup>1</sup>.

At a societal macro-level the relationship between punishment and inequality has been widely discussed in the literature. According to a Marxist tradition (for a review see Garland, 1990) punishment is a social artefact that serves the function of maintaining the power of dominant groups. For this tradition, punishment goes beyond the control of crime to the control of disadvantaged classes. It is thus embedded in the class struggle between rich and poor and serves the interests of only one part of society. In this context, punishment is understood as a class domination instrument through

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<sup>1</sup> This is in line with Unnever and Cullen's (2009) argument that conservatives are punitive precisely because they lack empathy towards criminals. The authors summarize an extensive body of literature showing the link between empathy and punitiveness. They reason that people who are able to empathically identify with offenders are less supportive of harsh sentencing because -among other reasons- they are more inclined to understand the offender and imagine the suffering that punishment would exert over them.

which dominant classes protect their property. In words of Sidanius et al. (2006, p. 436) “the use of harsh criminal sanctions, including the death penalty and severe torture, is not only a means of maintaining social order, but also a means of maintaining the hierarchical nature of this social order”.

Punishment serves a hierarchy enhancing function in that the criminal justice system is more likely to apply harsh punishment against people of subordinate social groups (Green et al., 2009; Mitchell & Sidanius, 1995; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001; Sidanius et al., 2006)<sup>2</sup>. This is so widespread that “one can easily identify which social groups are subordinate within a social system by simply noting which groups are overrepresented in that society’s prisons, dungeons, or execution chambers” (Sidanius et al., 2006, p. 435). According to Sidanius and Pratto (2001) the criminal justice system protects the privileges of dominant groups. There are, according to the authors, five principles of discrimination within the criminal justice system: (a) the criminal justice system assigns disproportionately high negative sanctions to people from subordinate groups, (b) the criminal justice system applies particularly tough sentences to people from subordinate groups committing crime against people from dominant groups (see Farrell & Swigert, 1978 for individual level data on this relationship), (c) hierarchy enhancing actors within the criminal justice system (e.g. police) should display high levels of social dominance orientation, while those actors that attenuate hierarchies (e.g. public defenders) should display low levels of social dominance orientation; (d) the abuse of power from security forces (in particular against people from subordinate groups) will receive small negative sanctions or even be rewarded; and (e) the extent to which the criminal justice system applies terror to maintain hierarchies will depend on the degree of social hierarchy in a given context (see also Mitchell & Sidanius, 1995).

Western (2006) has studied the link between punishment and inequality in the United States and has shown the immense class inequalities in imprisonment rates (see also for a review, Sidanius & Pratto, 2001). One striking figure is that at the end of the 1990s, a thirty year old black man had a higher chance to have been to prison than to have finished a four-year degree in college. But punishment is not only unequally distributed, the penal system also increases the levels of inequality by reducing the chances of disadvantaged groups even further. Former inmates have a hard time finding

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<sup>2</sup> At the same time, it can also be argued that the justice system increases status differentials by choosing to penalise crimes that are associated to low-class criminals, although no research to my knowledge has tested this proposition.

a job and earn lower wages. Incarceration also affects marital relations and the family as a whole, increasing the risk of violence within the family. Consistent with the argued macro-level relationship between social inequalities and punishment, Mitchell and Sidanius (1995) found that the social hierarchy of U.S. states (measured as an index of class, race, income and political inequalities) was associated with a greater number of executions, controlling for a range of variables.

At an individual level of analysis, ideological preferences for group-based dominance (as expressed by SDO) have also been found to predict the support for harsh criminal sanctions (Sidanius et al., 2006), vengeance (McKee & Feather, 2008), general punitiveness (Capps, 2002), law and order policies, painful executions and the belief in retribution (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). In line with research on prejudice (Duckitt & Sibley, 2010), however, high SDO individuals should express negative attitudes towards low status out-groups or out-groups perceived to compete for dominance. It follows that SDO should predict the support of harsh punishment of low-status criminals, but should not relate to punitiveness towards high-status criminals, such as white collar offenders. Consistent with this argument, Kimmelmeier (2005) conducted a mock-jury study and found that SDO moderated the Black sentencing bias. Remarkably, this interaction was qualified by two opposing biases: Respondents high in SDO were found to be more likely to assign harsher sentences to Black defendants while respondents low in SDO did so to White defendants. Low SDO individuals are sensitive towards social inequalities and sought to attenuate inequalities annulling unfair advantages for White defendants. High SDO individuals, on the other hand, sought to enhance inequalities by being harsher on Black defendants. Interestingly, Green et al. (2009) found that SDO was positively related to perceptions of negativity, prototypicality and extremity of an offender portrayed as being part of an out-group (Arab offender), but not when he was portrayed as being part of the in-group (Swiss offender). The latter provides evidence that punishment can be used as a hierarchy-enhancing strategy.

The mentioned research suggests a strong link between SDO and punitive attitudes: People high in SDO seem to favour harsh punishment to maintain group-based hierarchies. Yet, again, a number of issues remain unsolved. First, most studies that have found effects of SDO have failed to control for RWA. Furthermore, there are inconsistent findings on whether SDO predicts punitiveness over and above the effect of RWA. Only three studies to my knowledge have looked at the joint effects of RWA and

SDO on punitive attitudes. Two of these studies (Colémont et al., 2011; McKee & Feather, 2008) found that SDO became a non-significant predictor of punitiveness after RWA was controlled for, while the third study (Capps, 2002) found a significant effect of SDO even after controlling for RWA. As discussed above, RWA scales often include items on crime and punishment and this might enhance its effect. It thus remains to be seen whether SDO predicts punitiveness controlling for a measure of RWA that excludes items on punishment.

Second, Jost and Thompson (2000) have provided evidence that SDO measures two different concepts: groups-based dominance (GBD) and opposition to equality (OEQ). OEQ is described as a general preference for inequality, while GBD is concerned specifically with the desire to see one's in-group dominating over outgroups (see also Ho et al., 2012; Kugler, Cooper, & Nosek, 2010). Importantly, GBD and OEQ have been found to relate in different ways to justice attitudes (McKee & Feather, 2008): only GBD predicted harsh punitive reactions (Ho et al., 2012; Okimoto et al., 2011) and capital punishment (McKee & Feather, 2008). OEQ, on the other hand, was negatively related to rehabilitation (McKee & Feather, 2008) and restorative justice (Okimoto et al., 2011). These findings suggest that people high in SDO favour harsh punishment to establish a position of dominance over criminal offenders more than to justify inequalities more broadly. Therefore, combining GBD and OEQ might blur their distinctive effects. Further research is required to evaluate when one or the other will be relevant to punitive attitudes.

Third, little is known about the mechanisms by which SDO affects punitiveness. Research in other areas has shown that high SDO individuals support violent measures because of a lack of concern for the wellbeing of others (see for research on the support for war, McFarland, 2005), while the effect of SDO on attitudes towards out-groups is mediated by perceptions of competition towards these groups (Duckitt, 2006). Yet, no study has looked at the reasons why high SDO individuals support harsh punishment<sup>3</sup>. Even less is known about the social circumstances under which SDO predicts punitiveness. SDO should become a stronger predictor of attitudes when the social conditions are perceived to be competitive (Duckitt & Sibley, 2010). Some research in other areas has supported this claim. For example, research has shown that SDO

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<sup>3</sup> There is one study conducted by Sidanius et al. (2006) that found that beliefs about retribution and deterrence mediated the effect of SDO on harsh punishment. These mediators, however, were presented as legitimising beliefs and do little to explain the reasons why people high in SDO favour punishment.

becomes a stronger predictor of intergroup attitudes when the in-group status is attacked (Pratto & Shih, 2000) or when status differentials or status concerns are salient (Pratto, 1999). At a country level, SDO is a stronger predictor of attitudes towards immigrants in countries where immigrants have a higher relative unemployment rate (Cohrs & Stelzl, 2010). However, none of these studies have examined the social conditions under which SDO predicts punitiveness.

Fourth, little research has examined the goals of punishment that people high in SDO support. Specifically, SDO has been found to predict personal vengeance (McKee & Feather, 2008), while evidence on its relationship with retribution and deterrence are mixed (Colémont et al., 2011; Sidanius et al., 2006). One particular question is whether high SDO individuals will only support using violence against offences that have personal implications or if they will also support state-sponsored responses to get even with criminal offenders in general.

Overall, ideological preferences for power and dominance over out-groups seem to play a role in shaping people's sentencing preferences. Crucially, punishment can be argued to serve a hierarchy enhancing function by reducing the opportunities of subordinate groups even further. High SDO individuals, favouring unequal social relations, might value an institution such as the criminal justice system to the extent that it helps establishing and maintaining hierarchical social relations. However, little research has tested this proposition so far.

### **1.3 Research questions and contribution**

The following pages give a general overview of the main research questions of this dissertation and its contribution to the current literature. Chapter 2 defines the main concepts and theoretical perspectives that will then allow specifying more detailed hypotheses about the relationships between ideological preferences and punitive attitudes. Chapter 3 starts by summarising the empirical component of this dissertation and describes each hypothesis in detail.

The purpose of this doctoral dissertation is to look at the relationship between ideological preferences and the support for harsh sentencing of criminal offenders. An extensive body of research has developed in political psychology and criminology on the link between ideology and punitive attitudes (Baron & Hartnagel, 1996; Carroll et al., 1987; Hogan et al., 2005; Johnson, 2009; King & Maruna, 2009; Miller, 1973;

Tetlock et al., 2007; Tyler & Boeckmann, 1997; Unnever & Cullen, 2010). However, less attention has been paid to the processes by which ideological beliefs affect people's support for harsh sentencing.

This doctoral dissertation draws on a motivated social-cognition perspective to extend research on the social-psychological basis of punitive attitudes. From this perspective, people assign positive or negative value to punishment to the extent that it is perceived as sustaining or detracting a specific motivation that is relevant to their ideological views. Two such motivations have been discussed to be important to understand punitiveness. First, punishment can have positive value for people who are motivated to achieve collective security and in-group conformity (this is, people high in RWA) as strong punitive responses can be perceived to restore common values and order in society. Second, punishment can also be thought of as a means by which social inequalities are maintained. It follows that those who are motivated to achieve power and dominance over out-groups (this is, people high in SDO) will also see punishment in a positive light. Therefore, and in line with a dual-motivational perspective (Duckitt, 2001), this dissertation explores whether both RWA and SDO predict punitive attitudes and whether they do so for different reasons and under different circumstances. This dissertation will address the following overarching research question:

*Q. How do right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation relate to the endorsement of harsh punishment?*

In particular, this research seeks to address a number of issues that remain unexplained in the literature on the relationship between RWA, SDO and punitive attitudes. First, while both RWA (e.g. Altemeyer, 1981, 1998) and SDO (e.g. Sidanius et al., 2006) have been shown to predict punitiveness, there is less clarity about whether they are important predictors after controlling for each other. It is of particular interest to examine the effect of RWA when items on the punishment of criminal offenders are excluded from its measurement. At the same time, it remains to be seen whether both subscales of SDO – GBD and OEQ – are relevant to punitive attitudes. Therefore, the first question of this dissertation is as follows:

*Q1. Do RWA and SDO predict unique variance in punitive attitudes?*



Second, there is also little research into the different mechanisms by which RWA and SDO affect the endorsement of punitive attitudes. In line with a dual-motivational perspective of punitive attitudes (Duckitt, 2009), while both RWA and SDO should predict attitudes they should do so for different reasons and under different circumstances. Three hypotheses have been suggested to evaluate the dual-motivational model (Duckitt & Sibley, 2009): the differential mediation hypothesis, the differential effects hypothesis and the differential moderation hypothesis. The remaining research questions seek to address each of these hypotheses in turn.

According to the differential mediation hypothesis, RWA and SDO should predict attitudes for different reasons and different mediations should therefore be observed. While an important number of studies have looked at the different reasons why RWA and SDO predict intergroup attitudes (e.g. Duckitt, 2006; McFarland, 2005), little research has examined possible mediators of the effects of RWA and SDO on the support for punitive policies<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, the second question of this research is the following:

*Q2. Why do people high in RWA and SDO endorse the harsh sentencing of criminal offenders?*

In line with the differential effects hypothesis, while RWA and SDO should both affect attitudes in general, they should also clearly predict different specific outcomes. For example, Duckitt and Sibley (2007) found that RWA predicted prejudice towards dangerous groups, only SDO predicted prejudice towards derogated groups and both predicted prejudice towards dissident groups. In this dissertation, I examine whether RWA and SDO predict the support for different retributive goals of punishment and attitudes towards the treatment of criminal offenders. In particular, I distinguish between retribution as just deserts and revenge and examine their relationships with ideological dispositions (RWA and SDO) and attitudes towards the treatment of criminal offenders (harsh sentences and the denial of fair sentencing processes). While there is some previous research on the relationship between RWA, SDO and

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<sup>4</sup> There is one study of Feather (1996) that shows that high RWA's tend to perceive offences as more serious than low's. In addition, Sidanius et al. (2006) showed that beliefs about retribution and deterrence mediated the effect of SDO on harsh punishment. These mediators, however, do little to explain why people high in RWA and SDO support harsh punishment and how these motives differ.

punishment goals, results are conflicting (Colémont et al., 2011; Sidanius et al., 2006). The third question of this dissertation is as follows:

*Q3. Do people high in RWA and SDO support different retributive goals of punishment and attitudes towards the treatment of criminal offenders?*

Finally, the differential moderation hypothesis states that the effects of RWA and SDO should be moderated by different conditions. Previous research has shown that RWA and SDO interact with certain conditions in predicting attitudes (e.g. Thomsen, Green, & Sidanius, 2008). Yet, no research so far has looked at the differential conditions that activate the effects of RWA and SDO on punitive attitudes. This dissertation explores whether the salience of different worldviews (dangerous and competitive) and of different social categories (social attitudes in general or criminal offenders as a group) activate the effects of RWA and SDO on punitive attitudes. The fourth and final question of this dissertation is:

*Q4. Under what circumstances do RWA and SDO predict punitiveness?*

By addressing these issues, this doctoral dissertation expects to contribute to two fields of research. First, it seeks to contribute to the criminological debate on the public support for the use of harsh sentences with criminal offenders. Previous research has looked at the role of perceptions of moral decline and social anxieties in predicting punitive reactions (e.g. King & Maruna, 2009; Tyler & Boeckmann, 1997; Unnever & Cullen, 2010). However, less research has looked at the individual differences that lead people to worry about moral decline and social anxieties in the first place. This dissertation explores people's perceptions about the threats posed by crime. But it extends this research by looking at the ideological preferences that make people more sensitive towards specific threats and more likely to endorse punitive measures. Second, this dissertation seeks to contribute to the field of political psychology. The dual-motivational model of ideological attitudes (Duckitt, 2001) has been found useful for explaining different interpersonal processes, such as prejudice, attitudes towards violence, among others (see for a review Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). But until now it has only been suggested as a framework to research punitive attitudes (Duckitt, 2009). This

research will produce empirical data to test the application of this model to crime and justice issues.

#### **1.4 Summary and brief overview of the empirical component**

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the public's views about the punishment that criminal offenders should receive. Public attitudes towards the sentencing of criminal offenders are important because an increasingly punitive public can result in the decision to increase the harshness of penal policies. In this introduction I have started from the premise that views about punishment go far beyond concerns about crime and security. The punishment of criminal offenders can be considered as central to the social order: it is an instrument used to secure order and stability, as well as to maintain in-group conformity and cohesive social bonds.

Given the central role that punishment plays in structuring social order, it is only natural that people's views about the proper role of institutions in society will affect their beliefs about how society should deal with law-breakers. In this dissertation I adopt a social-psychological framework to study how ideological views shape people's support for harsh punitive measures. Applying a dual-motivational model to the study of punitive attitudes (Duckitt, 2009) I explore the differential roles of two ideological attitudes: right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation. I argue that people high in RWA will support punitive policies to restore in-group conformity and security that have been disturbed by crime. Those high in SDO, on the other hand, should support harsh punishment to avoid criminal offenders gaining power over the victim and society and restoring status and power hierarchies.

While there seems to be agreement that RWA (e.g. Altemeyer, 1981, 1998) and SDO (e.g. Sidanius et al., 2006) relate to punitive attitudes, little research has looked at the mechanisms why which they affect punitiveness. The empirical component of this dissertation consists of four papers that explore the relationships between RWA, SDO and punitive attitudes. The different papers examine different propositions of the dual-motivational model: whether RWA and SDO predict attitudes for different reasons ('differential mediation hypothesis'), whether they predict different retributive punishment goals ('differential effects hypothesis') and whether they predict attitudes under different circumstances ('differential moderation hypothesis'). In the following I

will briefly summarise the issues covered in each paper. A longer summary of the papers and their hypotheses are presented in Chapter 3.

Paper 1 of this dissertation starts examining the most central proposition which is that RWA and SDO will have joint effects on punitive attitudes. In addition, it evaluates the different reasons why RWA and SDO predict the support for harsh sentencing. It does so by examining whether the effects of RWA and SDO on punitive attitudes are mediated by different beliefs about crime and criminals, as well as different symbolic motives of punishment. Paper 2 looks at whether RWA and SDO predict the support of punishment to achieve different retributive goals of punishment and whether they endorse different attitudes towards the harsh treatment of criminal offenders. Finally, Papers 3 and 4 explore the social conditions under which RWA and SDO become stronger predictors of punitive attitudes are different. In Paper 3, conditions are experimentally primed to be dangerous or competitive and the extent to which RWA and SDO predict punitive attitudes are observed. Paper 4, on the other hand, draws on criticism from social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and self-categorisation (Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994) theories to examine the role of measuring RWA and SDO when respondents have criminal offenders in mind when completing the survey.

The next chapter presents and discusses the main concepts and theoretical perspectives applied in this dissertation. I start by defining punitive attitudes and describing the findings so far. I then present the concept of ideology and its definition from a motivated social cognition perspective. I finish by describing a dual motivational perspective of ideological attitudes, as well as introducing the ideological attitudes of right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation and their relationships with punitive attitudes. Chapter 3 starts with a general overview and summarises the hypotheses of the papers in this dissertation

## CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL REVIEW

Public punitiveness – that is, people’s support of harsh sentences for criminal offenders – is an important phenomenon with a number of social and political implications, shaping, for example, penal policies (Garland, 1990; Roberts & Hough, 2002). It is therefore not surprising that an extensive body of research in social psychology, sociology, law, criminology and political science has addressed the issue. Given the scope of this dissertation, however, only one of these perspectives is examined in detail: a social psychological perspective that focuses on the role of ideological attitudes.

A number of studies have adopted other approaches to the study of punitiveness. First, studies have focused on the role of social insecurities and concerns about moral decline (Costelloe, Chiricos, & Gertz, 2009; King, 2008; King & Maruna, 2009; Maruna, Matravers, & King, 2004; Tyler & Boeckmann, 1997; Unnever & Cullen, 2010). Second, research has looked at characteristics of crime and criminals that induce stronger punitive reactions. For example, perceiving the offender to be responsible for a crime leads to higher perceptions of seriousness and deservingness, which in turn influences people’s desire for harsh punishment (Feather, 1996). Related to the latter, attributing crime to dispositional and controllable causes increases perceptions of responsibility and blameworthiness, as well as punitive reactions (see on the link between causal attributions and punitive attitudes, Carroll et al., 1987; Cullen, Clark, Cullen, & Mathers, 1985; Hogan, Chiricos, & Gertz, 2005; Maruna & King, 2009; Sargent, 2004; Weiner, Graham, & Reyna, 1997). An ideological perspective on punitive attitudes departs from the latter research in that it does not focus on characteristics of the social order, the offence or the offender. Instead, it is concerned with the ideological beliefs that predispose people to believe that the social order is under threat in the first place, that criminal offenders are to blame and that crime disrupts social order. Importantly, in this dissertation I examine how people’s ideological dispositions interact with perceptions of social threat to affect beliefs that harsh punishment is required to bring back security and value consensus. At the same

time I examine how ideological dispositions influence people's perceptions of threat and hereby affect punitive reactions.

The following conceptual and theoretical review examines the concept of punitive attitudes and the main perspectives that have sought to explain why people agree with the harsh punishment of criminal offenders. The theoretical framework adopted in this dissertation is then presented. The concept of ideology is discussed, particularly in terms of its motivational underpinnings; the dual-motivational model of ideological attitudes (Duckitt, 2001) is introduced, and right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation are described. Other social-psychological theories (social identity theory, Tajfel and Turner, (1979); and instrumental models of group conflict, e.g. Esses, Dovidio, Jackson & Armstrong (2001), among others) are referenced in the papers when relevant. Their contribution to the current and further research is then discussed in the conclusions of this dissertation.

## **2.1. Punitive Attitudes**

### **2.1.1. What are punitive attitudes?**

It is important to start by clarifying what I understand by punishment and punitive attitudes. Punishment can be understood as “a negative sanction intentionally applied to someone perceived to have violated a law, rule, norm, or expectation” (Vidmar & Miller, 1980, p. 568) or more specifically as the “legal process whereby violators of the criminal law are condemned and sanctioned in accordance with specified legal categories and procedures” (Garland, 1990, p. 17). While there seems to be certain agreement about the definition of punishment, attitudes towards the punishment of criminal offenders remain under-defined (Matthews, 2005).

According to Stalans (2009), punitiveness is a complex concept with a number of different facets. One aspect is a diffuse desire to punish criminals. A second aspect relates to people's attitudes towards sentencing and the extent to which they think that the courts are being too lenient towards criminals (and may also encompass their evaluation of the punitive system as a whole). Most research has focused on the latter of these (Garland, 2001a; Hough & Roberts, 1999). More generally, Matthews (2005, p. 179) has defined punitiveness as the “pursuit of punishment over and above that which is necessary or appropriate”, while Capps (2002, p. 263) defines it as “choosing harsh

rather than lenient treatment of individuals”. These definitions are vague, however, since they requires consensus in what can be considered to be a ‘necessary’ or ‘harsh’ punishment.

There is also disagreement in the way punitive attitudes should be measured, probably due to the same lack of conceptual clarity. Agreeing on the measurement of punitive attitudes is central to research, not least because different measurements lead to different conclusions about the public’s support for harsh sentences (Cullen, Fisher, & Applegate, 2000; Sprott, 1999; Stalans, 2009). The first aspect to consider is the operationalisation of the concept. Measurements go from broad questions about the leniency of the courts (e.g. Brown, 2006; Gelb, 2006), to asking people to assign sentences to vignettes describing specific cases (e.g. Carlsmith, Darley, & Robinson, 2002; Payne, Gainey, Triplett, & Danner, 2004). Some studies have constructed more complex measurements of support for punitive policies (e.g. Costelloe, Chiricos, & Gertz, 2009; Hogan et al., 2005; Johnson, 2009; King & Maruna, 2009; Sidanius et al., 2006), general attitudes towards sentencing (Cullen, Clark, Cullen, & Mathers, 1985) or general punitiveness (Capps, 2002).

While asking about the leniency of sentences shows a widely and consistently punitive public (for a review see Gelb, 2006), research has shown that the public tends to be less punitive when confronted with cases of specific offenders (for a review see Cullen et al., 2000; Sprott, 1999; Stalans, 2009) and with more detailed information (Doob & Roberts, in Gelb, 2006). On the other hand, when the question includes a range of alternative sentences, people do consider less harsh sentences (for a review see Cullen et al., 2000; Gelb, 2006; Roberts & Hough, 2005) and even rehabilitation (Cullen, Cullen, & Wozniak, 1988; Cullen et al., 2000; Hutton, 2005). Cullen et al (1988) get to the point of arguing that the punitive public is only a myth.

A second factor is related to the method used to gather the data. Many argue that surveys tend to exaggerate people’s support for punishment (Cullen et al., 1988, 2000; Gelb, 2006; Hough & Roberts, 1999; Hutton, 2005; Matthews, 2005), while focus groups, deliberative polls and other methods show more moderate, complex and contradictory attitudes (Hutton, 2005). In general terms, giving people more information seems to reduce punitive responses, as shown by De Keijser and Elffers (2009). In their study, participants were more punitive when basing their decisions on newspaper articles as compared to detailed information about the case.

Measurement problems seem to go even deeper than this. Studies have shown that different conclusions about the motivations for punishment can be drawn depending on the way the questions are asked. People are not aware of the motivations for their behaviour, giving different reasons for punishment than the ones they actually used to assign punishment (Carlsmith, 2008). Clearly, more methodological research on the measurement of people's attitudes towards punishment is needed.

Throughout this dissertation, punitive attitudes are conceptualised as people's support for the use of harsh sentences for criminal offenders, evidenced by their endorsement of popular statements such as 'offences against laws and norms in our society should be punished as severely as possible' or 'law-breakers should be given stiffer sentences'. Answers to such questions tap into not only the desire to punish law-breakers (a general preference for harsh retributive sentencing as opposed to rehabilitative programmes for example) but also people's beliefs about the right and proper role of institutions of justice. Reflecting the complex nature of public attitudes towards punishment, 'punitive attitudes' signify a broad range of public beliefs about crime, the goals and functions of punishment, and the criminal justice system. This definition of punitive attitudes is thus very broad and does not refer to any particular type of crime. Instead, people respond to such statements in terms of the type of crime they have in mind (which is usually violent crime, Roberts & Doob, 1990; Stalans, 2009). While this approach to understanding punitive attitudes might be less specific, it is arguably of interest given that it is in this way that the media and politicians discuss the topic and the public often expresses its punitive desires. It can also be expected to be the most 'ideological' expression of attitudes towards crime and punishment. However, special care should be taken to avoid extrapolating responses from these types of measures to other measurement (such as sentencing decisions for particular scenarios).

### **2.1.2. Why do people endorse punitive attitudes?**

Numerous studies have attempted to explain people's support for punitive attitudes. Most studies can be broadly classified in two (Carlsmith et al., 2002; Darley & Pittman, 2003; Tyler & Boeckmann, 1997; Vidmar & Miller, 1980; Wenzel & Thielmann, 2006). For the purpose of this review, these approaches will be referred to as the instrumental and the retributive perspectives. These approaches are closely



related to punishment goals, this is, to the purpose people think punishment should achieve in society. The main punishment goals discussed in the literature are deterrence and incapacitation (instrumental goals), and retribution (retributive goal)<sup>1</sup>. Punishment goals will be discussed in the context of each perspective.

While instrumental and retributive perspectives are not of central interest for this dissertation, they provide important antecedents to understanding the importance of considering factors that go beyond crime control when it comes to people's attitudes towards punishment. Also, Paper 2 of this dissertation deals with retribution in particular and it is important to describe the main issues regarding the differences between punishment goals.

#### **a. Instrumental perspective**

According to an instrumental perspective, people want to punish because punishment reduces the likelihood of future harms, be it in terms of incapacitating the offender (imprisonment) or by deterring possible offenders of committing crimes (Carlsmith & Darley, 2008; Carlsmith et al., 2002; Darley & Pittman, 2003; Vidmar & Miller, 1980). This perspective goes back to Bentham who argued that punishment should be assessed in terms of the potential harm or benefit to society (see Carlsmith & Darley, 2008). Punishment works under the assumption that offenders and citizens are rational actors; punishment should be just sufficient to control the offender's behaviour (Carlsmith et al., 2002). The critical component is the likelihood of recidivism (Carlsmith & Darley, 2008) while the focus is on reducing crime in the future (Weiner, Graham, & Reyna, 1997).

If people are thinking about the punishment of law-breakers to control the behaviour of criminal offenders, then their desire for punishment should be driven by concern about safety, high crime rates, fear of crime and victimisation experiences (King, 2008; Maruna, Matravers, & King, 2004). The relevance given to victimisation experiences in explaining tough stances towards crime is best exemplified by the "mugging thesis" (Unnever et al., 2007; see also King & Maruna, 2009): people become

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<sup>1</sup> Other research has focused on the goals of rehabilitation (e.g. Cullen, Cullen, & Wozniak, 1988), general positive prevention (e.g. Oswald, Hupfeld, Klug, & Gabriel, 2002) and restoration (e.g. Okimoto, Wenzel, & Feather, 2009). The current research centers around reasons for punitive attitudes and therefore only considers those goals that predict higher support for harsh punishment.

conservative and support conservative views on crime after they experience the reality of being criminally victimised.

There is some evidence supporting the role of crime concerns on punitiveness. Support for the death penalty has been found to be associated with deterrence beliefs (Thomas, 1977; Thomas & Foster, 1975; Thomas & Howard, 1977) and with the belief in its deterring effects (Steele & Wilcox, 2003), while fear of crime, (Costelloe et al., 2009; De Keijser & Elffers, 2009; Hogan et al., 2005), concerns about crime (Costelloe et al., 2009; Hogan et al., 2005) and perceptions of increased crime rates (De Keijser & Elffers, 2009; Unnever et al., 2010) have been found to predict punitive stances. At a macro level, Jacobs and Carmichel (2004) found that states with higher violent crime rates had applied larger numbers of death sentences.

However, other studies have failed to find an effect of victimisation experiences (Baron & Hartnagel, 1996; Costelloe et al., 2009; Cullen et al., 1985; Hough & Roberts, 1999; King & Maruna, 2009), personal fear of crime (Baron & Hartnagel, 1996; Sprott, 1999) and crime concerns (Cullen et al., 1985; King & Maruna, 2009) on punitiveness. These findings suggest that the social function of punishment – at least in the public imagination – lies beyond mere crime control (Garland, 1990).

#### **b. Retributive perspective**

A second perspective is concerned with retaliating a past wrong rather than preventing future crimes (Carlsmith & Darley, 2008; Carlsmith et al., 2002; Darley & Pittman, 2003; Vidmar & Miller, 1980; Weiner et al., 1997). This approach goes back to Kant who argued that offenders deserve a proportional punishment that does not derive from future consequences (see Carlsmith & Darley, 2008). For Durkheim (1964, 1973) punishment goes far beyond penology. He considered punishment to be a moral phenomenon. Crime is argued to violate the moral order in society, while punishment reaffirms social bonds. Punishment thus serves the role of expressing and restoring society's values and can be considered as the embodiment of moral order and social cohesion. Under this approach, punishment is an end in itself and consequences are not relevant (Carlsmith, 2006).

According to this line of thinking, punishment has less to do with the rational control of crime and more with the extent to which crime damages something that is sacred to society (Garland, 1990). Two different symbolic motives might be relevant to

people's desire to punish to restore balance: value restoration and status/power restoration (Vidmar & Miller, 1980; Wenzel & Thielmann, 2006). Value restoration is concerned with the extent to which offences damage shared values and challenge the legitimacy of social bonds and consensus, disturbing social order. Harsh punishment symbolically labels the offence as wrong, restoring people's faith in shared values (Carlsmith et al., 2002; Goldberg et al., 1999; Okimoto & Wenzel, 2008; Rucker et al., 2004; Vidmar, 2002; Vidmar & Miller, 1980). This symbolic motive also resembles a general positive prevention perspective according to which punishment seeks to restore norms and values, as well as to increase the public's awareness of the law and their trust in justice (see Orth, 2003; Oswald, Hupfeld, Klug, & Gabriel, 2002). Value restoration is especially relevant when dealing with in-group offenders, since crime threatens identity-defining group values (Okimoto & Wenzel, 2010).

A second issue is concerned with restoring status and power relations in society. By committing crime, the offender shows disrespect and assumes power over the victim and society (Miller, 2001; Van Kleef et al., 2011). One way of restoring balance is by degrading the offender's status and power (Vidmar, 2002; Vidmar & Miller, 1980; Wenzel & Thielmann, 2006). Thus, punishment (actually and symbolically) removes power and demeans the status of the offender, returning proportionality to the situation (Okimoto & Wenzel, 2008, 2010). Status and power restoration is especially relevant when dealing with out-group offenders, since the out-group criminal can gain power over the in-group (Okimoto & Wenzel, 2010).

A considerable amount of literature has looked at the expressive and symbolic aspects of punishment. Research has consistently found that punishment serves moral and justice related motives more than behaviour control motives (Carlsmith, 2008; Carlsmith, 2006, 2006; Carlsmith & Darley, 2008; Darley, 2002; Darley, Carlsmith, & Robinson, 2000; Darley & Pittman, 2003; King & Maruna, 2009; Maruna et al., 2004; Rucker et al., 2004; Tetlock et al., 2007; Tyler & Boeckmann, 1997).

First, punitive attitudes are related to retributive goals more than to instrumental goals. Darley et al. (2000) found that people determined sentencing more in terms of the severity of the offence than in terms of the likelihood of recidivism, while severity was mediated by the moral outrage and seriousness of the offence. Carlsmith and Darley (2008) also showed that people consider less information about the utilitarian aspects of punishment and more in line with a retributive perspective when assigning sentences to offenders (Carlsmith, 2006; Darley et al., 2000). Punitiveness is also predicted by the

moral outrage brought about by the offence (Darley, 2009; Darley & Pittman, 2003; Fiske & Tetlock, 1997; Goldberg et al., 1999; Lerner et al., 1998) and by people's anger towards crime in general (Johnson, 2009).

Second, punitiveness has also been linked to concerns about societal cohesion, perceptions of moral decline, and other social anxieties. The key study was conducted by Tyler and Boeckmann (1997), who argued that punishment has less to do with perception of fear of crime and more with the extent to which deviance threatens groups' values, norms and cohesion. The authors found that harsher punitiveness was associated with concerns about social cohesion and the deterioration of the moral structure of society rather than concerns about crime. Similarly, Unnever and Cullen (2010) showed that perceptions of moral decline were significantly related to support for the death penalty, even after controlling for conservatism. In the same line, King and Maruna (2009) found that generational and economic anxieties were better predictors of punitiveness than crime related concerns (see also on the role of economic anxiety, Costelloe et al., 2009).

### **c. Two dimensions of retribution**

Retribution is often treated in the literature as the repayment of wrongful acts (Finckenauer, 1988). Yet, retribution often captures a wide range of different non-instrumental aspects of punishment, including concerns about proportionality, justice, morality, social cohesion, deservingness and retaliation of wrongdoing. It is also often measured as a mixture between these concepts (e.g. Okimoto et al., 2011; Orth, 2003; Tam et al., 2008; Wenzel, Okimoto, & Cameron, 2012). Some authors have tried to clarify the components of retribution. Von Hirsch (1976; see also Finckenauer, 1988; Weiner et al., 1997) proposes that two dimensions of retribution should be distinguished: retribution as just deserts and retribution as revenge. In retribution as just deserts, the offender is allowed to compensate for the harm done and justice is restored through a proportional and fair process. This is, people who commit morally wrong actions should get what they deserve, that is should be punished proportionally to the moral wrongdoing (Carlsmith, 2006; Carlsmith & Darley, 2008; Carlsmith et al., 2002; Darley, 2002; Darley & Pittman, 2003). In retribution as revenge society seeks to get even and this desire is not constrained by proportionality and a fair process. It involves an emotional pleasure of seeing the offender suffer (Ho, ForsterLee, ForsterLee, &

Crofts, 2002; Weiner et al., 1997) and is often described as a personal matter (Gollwitzer & Denzler, 2009; Ho et al., 2002; Stuckless & Goranson, 1992).

Some research has supported the claim that retribution comprises two different dimensions. For example De Keijser, Van Der Leeden and Jackson (2002) asked Dutch judges to evaluate a number of punishment goals and they found two different factors: just desert (what I here call revenge) and moral balance (what I we here call just deserts). The first factor included items on deservingness, suffering and vengeance, while the second one considered items on restoring legal and moral order in society, as well as beliefs that the offender should compensate society for the harm done. McKee and Feather (2008), on the other hand, distinguished between desires for personal revenge and legitimate retributive punishment. The authors found a positive relationship between vengeance attitudes and retribution and a negative relationship with the goal of rehabilitation. They concluded that: "At least some component of support for capital punishment does have a basis in attitudes related to vengeance" (McKee & Feather, 2008, p. 159). Finally, using factor analysis, Ho et al., (2002) distinguished between what they call vengeance- and justice-oriented decisions. The authors highlighted as main aspects of vengeance the role of emotions and the intensity of the response, while justice was measured as preferences for a fair and legal response.

Crucially for this research, retribution as revenge and just deserts might communicate different messages to criminal offenders and community more broadly. A just deserts perspective, on the one hand, assumes some commitment to fair procedures and might be better suited when the aim is to restore values and collective security in society. It follows that high RWA individuals might favour such an approach to punitive reactions. A vengeful perspective, on the other hand, might be better suited to restoring status and power relationships: making the offender suffer can be demeaning and less constructive. The aims of a revenge perspective might therefore be closely related to those of people high in SDO.

### **2.1.3. Procedural fairness**

People's support for harsh punitive responses and their beliefs about the goals punishment should achieve are two dimensions of attitudes towards punishment. A third -and less explored- dimension of punishment is the extent to which criminal offenders

deserve a fair sentencing process and to be treated with dignity and respect. The group-value model (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler, 1990) provides a framework to understand why people might not agree that criminal offenders deserve a fair and respectful sentencing process. This model highlights the importance of the process by which outcomes are determined, more than the outcomes themselves. Crucially, people derive identity-relevant information on their status within a group or on the status of their in-group from the quality of the treatment they receive when interacting with group authorities.

Unfair treatment communicates to the observer that he is not respected within the group. The same reasoning can be applied to whether people believe that others deserve fair treatment. This is people should agree to provide fair treatment when the object of this treatment is a valued member of society. It follows that denying procedural fairness to criminal offenders can communicate that they are not considered members of the in-group (Tyler & Boeckmann, 1997) or at least that they are considered to be low in status within the group. Boeckmann and Tyler (1997) have shown that people are willing to deny fair procedures to criminal offenders when they perceive them to be a threat to common values (symbolic model), or to physical or financial security (instrumental model).

Research on procedural fairness provides further evidence that the attitudes people hold about crime and punishment issues are far removed from security issues. Instead, the way the sentencing process is conducted and criminal offenders are punished communicates information on the importance of certain values in society. In this dissertation, beliefs about whether criminal offenders deserve fair treatment are considered as an additional measure of harsh treatment of criminal offenders. One of the main arguments of this dissertation is that people assign harsh punishment in part because this is perceived as an instrument to restore status and power relationships in society. Yet, status and power restoration can be achieved not only by assigning harsh punishment or seeking revenge. Denying criminal offenders of a fair and respectful sentencing procedure might also demean their status.

#### **2.1.4. The role of ideology**

Research so far has provided consistent evidence that people are punitive not so much because of concerns about security, but because they worry about a lack of social cohesion and expect punishment to reassert social bonds and moral alignment. However, less attention has been paid to the reasons why people worry about threats to the social order in the first place. People differ in their beliefs about the proper structure of society and the extent to which they worry about threats to the social order. Crucially, ideological beliefs are argued to affect people's perceptions of society as lacking social and moral cohesion and also their preferences for institutional reactions to rule-breaking.

A number of authors have proposed social-psychological approaches to the study of punitive attitudes (notably, Carroll et al., 1987; Tetlock et al., 2007; Vidmar & Miller, 1980). Importantly, studies have found a close link between individual differences in ideology and people's preferences for harsh punitive policies (e.g. Altemeyer, 1998; Capps, 2002; Carroll et al., 1987; Tetlock et al., 2007; Tyler & Boeckmann, 1997; Unnever & Cullen, 2010).

The focus of this dissertation is precisely the role that ideological attitudes play in shaping people's preferences for harsh punitive responses. Drawing on a motivated social cognition perspective, ideology is understood as being rooted in psychological goals and motivations. Motivationally driven ideologies define the value people attach to punitive measures, to the extent that punishment is perceived as sustaining or detracting goals that are relevant for each person. A dual-motivational perspective, in particular, looks at the role of two ideological attitudes that seem to be important to punitive attitudes: right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation. This dissertation builds on previous research on the ideological basis of punitive attitudes in a number of ways. First, it highlights the importance of considering a social psychological perspective to explain the link between ideology and punitive attitudes in terms of the motivational underpinnings of ideology. Second, it applies a dual-motivational model to the study of punitiveness and proposes a comprehensive model to explain why and when conservative people will favour harsh punishment. Unlike previous research, two reasons are argued to be relevant to the goals of conservative individuals. First, punishment can help restoring in-group conformity threatened by crime (which should be relevant to individuals high in RWA). Second, punishment can

also be perceived as a way of enhancing status boundaries in society (which should be relevant to individuals high in SDO).

The next section reviews the concept of ideology from a motivated social cognition perspective, and describes the main concepts and theories of this dissertation: a dual-motivational model, right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation.

## **2.2. Ideology: A Dual-Process Motivational Perspective**

### **2.2.1 Defining Ideology**

To understand how ideological attitudes affect punitive attitudes, it is important to clarify what is meant by ideology. Ideology can be understood as a network of beliefs, opinion and values (Jost et al., 2009), which are usually shared among a group of people (Rokeach in Jost, 2006). More specifically, (political) ideology has been defined as a “set of beliefs about the proper order of society and how it can be achieved” (Erikson, Luttbeg, & Tedin, 1988, p. 74) and as “consensually shared beliefs about how people ought (and ought not) to behave” (Pratto, 1999, p. 199). Ideology can serve to define guidelines for the judgement and for the legitimisation or de-legitimisation of persons, groups and social practices (Pratto, 1999).

Broadly speaking, authors agree in defining ideology as a set of shared beliefs about how society should be structured and about the accepted means to achieve this order. There are, however, at least two contested issues that are relevant for understanding the effect of ideology on punitive attitudes. First, what shapes people’s ideological attitudes? Second, what is the structure and dimensionality of ideology? These two issues will be discussed, emphasising how a motivated social-cognition perspective and – more specifically – a dual-motivational model of ideological attitudes helps to respond to these questions.

### **2.2.2 Ideology: a motivated social-cognition perspective**

In this section I start by describing how ideology is understood from a motivated social cognition perspective. I then describe what I understand by goals and motivations and how ideology can help dealing with them. With these definitions in mind, I move on to describing how a motivated perspective on ideology can help clarifying the link



between ideological attitudes and the endorsement of harsh sentences for criminal offenders.

Jost et al. (2009) have argued that when trying to understand people's endorsement of specific ideologies, political scientists have focused on how elites construct and disseminate discourses that shape people's political attitudes, while psychologists have favoured explanations that look at the function of psychological needs and motives. The authors reason that both a top-down (discursive superstructure) and a bottom-up process (motivational substructure) are relevant when explaining ideological outcomes. The discursive superstructure refers to "socially constructed attitudes, values, and beliefs bound up with a particular ideological position at a particular time and place", while the motivational substructure refers to the "ensemble of social and psychological needs, goals, and motives that drive the political interests of ordinary citizens in a bottom-up fashion and are served by the discursive contents of ideology" (Jost et al., 2009, p. 315). While both perspectives may be relevant in predicting ideological outcomes, the present dissertation will focus on the second of these.

From a motivated social-cognition approach (e.g. Jost et al., 2009, 2003), people's motivational goals affect the endorsement of certain attitudes, beliefs and ideologies, as these help satisfying psychological needs. In words of Jost et al. (2003, p. 341) "a kind of matching process takes place whereby people adopt ideological belief systems (...) that are most likely to satisfy their psychological needs and motives". This process is described as an elective affinity between motivations, on the one hand, and ideologies, beliefs and attitudes, on the other.

Ideologies are argued to be rooted in psychological goals and motivations. Motivations can be understood as "any wish, desire, or preference that concerns the outcome of a given reasoning task" (Kunda, 1990, p. 480) and they are "experienced as a desire or wish, followed by a feeling of satisfaction if the desire is fulfilled or a sense of frustration if it is not" (D'Andrade, 1992, pp. 23–24). This striving for a goal was defined by Murray (as cited in D'Andrade, 1992) as a need (such as the needs for affiliation, autonomy or order). Motivations are thought to originate from a discrepancy between actual and desired states (Gollwitzer & Moskowitz, 1996). When a discrepancy is perceived between an existing and a desired state a tension is created. This tension will be greater, the greater the desirability of the goal (Gollwitzer & Moskowitz, 1996).

The argument that goals and motivations shape people's reasoning and their endorsement of specific attitudes and beliefs has long been discussed in social psychology (see for a review Jost et al., 2003; Kunda, 1990). Kunda (1990) argues that motivation affects attitudes and beliefs through the reliance on biased cognitive processes. Motivations can affect various stages of cognitive processing (Kruglanski, 2001), such as the quantity of cognitive processing used to assess information (Ditto & Lopez, 1992; Kruglanski, 1980), the generation and evaluation of hypotheses (Pyszczynski & Greenberg, 1987) the reliance on dispositional and situational causal attributions (Kruglanski, 1980) and the formation or accessibility of cognitive categories (Kruglanski, 2001). Most relevant to this research, motivations seem to affect social cognition in everyday life, shaping the ways in which people construe the social world (Gollwitzer & Moskowitz, 1996). Needs and motivations determine the valence of objects, actions or outcomes and can lead people to assign positive or negative valence to institutions and social policies (Feather, 1998).

The affinity between psychological needs to manage uncertainty and threat and the adoption of these attitudes and beliefs has found consistent evidence, especially regarding the motivated endorsement of political conservatism (see Jost et al., 2003). Conservative ideologies – conceptualised by Jost et al. (2007) and Jost, Nosek & Gosling (2008) as resistance to change and acceptance of inequality – serve the needs to reduce uncertainty and threat, since they allow justifying the status quo and reject social change<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> The function of ideology in dealing with psychological needs has been widely recognised by different theories. According to terror management theory, people have an existential insecurity brought about by the awareness of their own mortality. Cultural worldviews (or ideologies) allow them to symbolically transcend this threat by providing meaning and value to themselves (e.g. Greenberg et al., 1990; Rosenblatt, Greenberg, Solomon, Pyszczynski, & Lyon, 1989). Similarly, just world theory (Lerner, 1980; Lerner & Miller, 1978; see also Furnham, 2003; Hafer & Bègue, 2005) argues that people are in general motivated to believe that the world is just and predictable to be able to live their lives with trust and confidence in the future. This basic psychological need could lead people to adopt certain ideologies that allow them to explain and rationalise the way things are or how things should be (Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009). Jost and his collaborators (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003) draw on dissonance and just world theories to argue that people are in general motivated to justify the status quo, adopting ideologies that exaggerate the fairness and legitimacy of the system (Jost, Federico, et al., 2009; Jost & Hunyady, 2005). They refer to this process as system justification, which can be defined as the tendency to “justify and rationalise the way things are, so that existing social, economic and political arrangements tend to be perceived as fair and legitimate” (Jost & Hunyady, 2005, p. 260) and which can occur even at the expenses of personal and group interests (Jost & Banaji, 1994). The theory proposes that people have the motivation to justify the legitimacy of the system and that they will rely on different psychological processes to do so (Jost, Kay, & Thorisdottir, 2009). Examples of system justifying ideologies are the protestant work ethic, belief in a just world, and political conservatism, among others (Jost & Hunyady, 2005).

Understanding ideological attitudes from a motivated social cognition perspective might shed some light on why beliefs people hold about how society should be structured affect their support of harsh punitive measures. Crucially, ideologies are thought of as expressing needs and motivations, while people's needs can affect the value they assign to the criminal justice system and punitive policies. People can be expected to assign positive value to punishment to the extent that it is perceived as helping to deal with their needs.

### **2.2.3 Punitive attitudes: a motivated social cognition perspective**

From a motivated social cognition perspective, then, motivationally driven ideologies shape the value people assign to harsh punitive policies. The crucial element here is whether punishment is perceived as helping to achieve goals that are relevant to people with different ideological views.

Tetlock and his collaborators (Tetlock, 2002; Tetlock et al., 2007; see also Goldberg et al., 1999; Lerner et al., 1998; Rucker et al., 2004) have proposed a motivated approach to punishment that focuses on the order generating function of punishment. People internalise the normative order and will defend rules and regimes, thus behaving like intuitive prosecutors. They adopt a prosecutorial mindset, which is characterised by “a heightened likelihood of causal attributions holding norm violators culpable, of moral outrage, of endorsing retribution and general deterrence as goals of punishment, and of punishing both violators and those who fail to punish violators” (Tetlock et al., 2007, p. 196). This mindset should be more accessible to people who are “ideologically predisposed to believe that the normative order is at risk and it is therefore prudent to set low thresholds for attributing intentionality to norm violators” (Tetlock, 2002, p. 462). It is also more accessible when people are induced to believe that the social order is threatened and that norm violations are widespread<sup>3</sup>. Meanwhile, people are argued to disengage from the prosecutorial mindset when norm violations have been punished. Interestingly, Tetlock et al. (2007) understand the prosecutorial mindset as a case of motivated reasoning that can bias people's inferences towards more internal attributions and the belief that criminal offenders deserve punishment.

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<sup>3</sup> See also Fischer, Greitemeyer, Kastenmüller, Frey and Oßwald (2007) on the role of terror salience in increasing punitive attitudes.

A series of studies (Goldberg et al., 1999; Lerner et al., 1998; Rucker et al., 2004; Tetlock et al., 2007) have experimentally manipulated social threat (operationalised as high crime and low punishment rates) and observed that it increases people's preferences for punishment. For example, Rucker et al. (2004) found that threats to social order increased punitiveness, especially for moderately to highly severe crimes. Goldberg et al. (1999) showed evidence for a carry-over effect in that respondents' anger in relation to an injustice increased punitive judgments of an unrelated transgression (see also Lerner et al., 1998). Exploring the situational and dispositional antecedents of the support of harsh sentences, Tetlock et al. (2007) found that ideological conservatism and induced threat (high crime rates and low punishment rates) lead people to support harsher sentences and to be less concerned about protecting innocent people.

From a motivated social cognition perspective, conservatives will be dispositionally more likely to perceive the world as a dangerous place and to be motivated to uphold the social order. In addition, situationally induced perceptions of the world as lacking social order can also lead people to support harsh crime policies. Conservatives might favour harsh punishment to restore values and collective security. However, and as has been discussed before, crime not only affects value consensus and security. By committing crime, offenders also communicate that they have gained power over the victim and society (Miller, 2001; Van Kleef et al., 2011) and degrading the offender's status and power can restore the status quo (Vidmar, 2002; Vidmar & Miller, 1980; Wenzel & Thielmann, 2006). Since punishment can be perceived as a means to establish and maintain social hierarchies in society, it might also have a positive value for those who are motivated to achieve power and dominance and a preference to live in highly unequal societies. A dual-motivational model of punitive attitudes (Duckitt, 2009) incorporates this second motivational goal and will be the focus of the next section.

#### **2.2.4 The dimensionality of ideology: a dual-process model**

From a motivated social-cognition perspective, ideologies are rooted in psychological needs and motivations and this motivational basis helps explaining the link between ideological and punitive attitudes. A second issue refers to the

dimensionality of ideology. This is, is there a single (left-right) dimension or are there multiple dimensions of ideology? There seems to be agreement that ideology considers at least two aspects: resistance to change and acceptance of inequalities (Jost, Federico, et al., 2009; Jost et al., 2003). One of these dual-process perspectives is the dual-motivational model of ideological attitudes (Duckitt, 2001).

Duckitt (2001) proposed an individual differences approach to prejudice that distinguished between two relatively orthogonal dimensions: one dimension corresponds to authoritarianism, social conservatism or traditionalism as opposed to autonomy, openness and liberalism. The second dimension pertains to economic conservatism, preferences for power and inequalities as opposed to egalitarianism, humanitarianism and social welfare. The dual-process motivational model proposes that these two ideological attitude dimensions have independent causal effects on prejudice and ethnocentric attitudes. Duckitt's (2001) model links socialization, personality, worldviews, ideology and prejudice through the concept of motivational goal-schema. His model predicts that personality dispositions and socialisation experiences form the basis of social worldviews, which in turn activate goals. Motivational goals are then expressed in ideological beliefs and values, as well as people's disposition to adopt certain types of social identities and intergroup categorisation schemas.

The dual-motivational model distinguishes between two ideological attitudes: right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) and social dominance orientation (SDO). By doing so, it differentiates the cultural (resistance to change) and economic aspect (acceptance of inequality) of conservatism (e.g. Van Hiel, Pandelaere, & Duriez, 2004). RWA and SDO are argued to be ideological expressions of different motivational goals, which are made salient by different social worldviews and predisposed by different personalities and socialisations (see for a review Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). Given their differential motivational basis, even if they predict similar outcomes, they are argued do so for different reasons (Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). This model has found consistent support in research about prejudice, attitudes towards war and immigrants, among others (see for a review, Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). Research has shown that the reasons why high RWA and high SDO individuals endorse attitudes are different (e.g. Duckitt, 2006). Thus, merging them together would blur their predictive capacity.

Given the relevance of a dual-motivational model in explaining a range of social and political attitudes (see Duckitt & Sibley, 2009), this dissertation seeks to apply these concepts to the study of public punitiveness. The argument is that both RWA and SDO

are relevant to punitiveness, although for different reasons. In the following, both ideologies are described in detail, and previous research on their link with punitive attitudes is discussed.

### **2.2.5 Right-wing authoritarianism**

#### **a. The development of authoritarianism**

Research on authoritarianism began more than 60 years ago with “The Authoritarian Personality” of Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, and Sanford (1950; see for a review on the history of authoritarianism, Stellmacher & Petzel, 2005). It was first proposed as a personality explanation of people’s susceptibility to right-wing fascist ideologies, anti-semitism, ethnocentrism and prejudice, with the F-scale being the measure of it. Based on psychoanalytic theory, it was proposed that rigid and authoritarian child-rearing practices resulted in a displacement from the hostility towards parental authority to societal out-groups (Stenner, 2005).

However, since then there has been an important controversy about the conceptualisation and measurement of authoritarianism (for a discussion see Duckitt, 1989). According to Duckitt and his collaborators (Duckitt, 1989; Duckitt et al., 2010) the main problem of Adorno et al.’s (1950) approach was a lack of conceptual definition of what authoritarianism actually was supposed to mean and methodological issues such as its susceptibility to acquiescence (given that all items were positively phrased) and the subscales not correlating properly. And while Adorno et al. (1950) viewed authoritarianism as a personality dimension, it has been noted that authoritarian items were measures of social attitudes of ideological nature more than personality trait items (Duckitt, 1989). Furthermore, the F scale did not predict what it was supposed to predict. All these problems resulted in the concept “... becoming more or less relegated to obscurity” (Duckitt, 1989, p. 64; see also Feldman, 2003) until Altemeyer’s (1981) reconceptualisation of authoritarianism.

Altemeyer (1981) constructed the Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale (RWA). Testing a large number of items he focused on deriving reliable scales more than in defining the concept of authoritarianism (Stenner, 2005). He defined right-wing authoritarianism as the covariation of three attitudinal clusters: authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression and conventionalism. Authoritarian submission refers to

people's submission to and trust in established and legitimate authorities; authoritarian aggression is concerned with the use of aggression against people to preserve established authorities; lastly, conventionalism is the endorsement of social conventions that are sanctioned by society and authorities (Altemeyer, 1981). Altemeyer (1981, 1988) adopted a social learning perspective according to which people learn this bundle of attitudes through socialisation (religious orientation, rewards and punishment, among others). The new scale has shown stronger reliability and unidimensionality, and also solved the acquiescence problem by including positive and negative statements (Feldman, 2003). One of the problems with Altemeyer's scale, however, is that most of its items resemble relevant outcome variables (such as prejudice against specific groups and punitive attitudes) (Feldman, 2003; Stenner, 2005).

#### **b. New conceptualisation of right-wing authoritarianism**

There have been many attempts to reconceptualise right-wing authoritarianism after Altemeyer's research (e.g. Duckitt, 1989; Feldman, 2003; Kreindler, 2005; Stenner, 2005). Notably, Duckitt (1989) sought to clarify the underlying construct that made authoritarian submission, aggression and conventionalism covary. He proposed a group model of authoritarianism that focuses on the appropriate balance between group uniformity and individual autonomy and diversity. The main question here is the degree to which personal autonomy should be subordinated to group uniformity and cohesion. Authoritarianism, at one extreme, implies that personal needs and values should be completely subordinated to group cohesion. Libertarianism, on the other extreme, expects group requirements to be completely subordinated to the autonomy of the individual. According to his model, each of the components of Altemeyer's conceptualisation can be considered as expressions of an insecure identification with the in-group and a demand for group cohesion. The greater the identification with the group, the greater will be the importance given to (a) the obedience and respect of in-group leaders (authoritarian submission), (b) the conformity to the group's norms and conventions (conventionalism) and (c) the need to aggress against those who do not conform to group values and norms (authoritarian aggression).

One interesting proposition of Duckitt's (1989) model is that authoritarian beliefs are activated when highly identified people perceive a threat to group identification (see also Stellmacher & Petzel, 2005). Stellmacher and Petzel (2005)

provided empirical evidence in favour of Duckitt's model of group authoritarianism: they found that authoritarian beliefs were a product of the interaction between an authoritarian disposition, high identification and high threat.

In future developments of the concept of right-wing authoritarianism, Duckitt (2001) defined it as the ideological expression of the motivational goal of social control, conformity and security (which was later referred to as 'collective security', e.g. Duckitt & Sibley, 2009; Jugert & Duckitt, 2009) as opposed to individual freedom and autonomy. According to this motivational model, authoritarianism is predisposed by a personality high in social conformity and is made salient by the perception that the world is a dangerous and threatening place (Duckitt, 2009; Duckitt & Fisher, 2003; Duckitt et al., 2002; Sibley, Wilson, & Duckitt, 2007). Being exposed to social situations that are perceived as highly dangerous will also increase people's dangerous worldview and their need for collective security (Duckitt, 2006).

Other models of authoritarianism have highlighted the importance of relative priorities between group conformity as opposed to individual autonomy in defining authoritarianism (Feldman, 2003; Feldman & Stenner, 1997; Kreindler, 2005; Stenner, 2005). According to Feldman (2003), the most important threat to social conformity is diversity: people who value social conformity will support obedience to authority, commit to norms and conventions, and will also be willing to support the government's actions to suppress diversity and restrict civil liberties.

### **c. Authoritarianism and threat**

An extensive body of research has looked at the relationship between right-wing authoritarianism and social threat, and the empirical evidence suggests a number of ways in which these variables affect each other and interact in affecting outcome variables. First, social threat has been found to increase levels of expressed authoritarianism at an individual (e.g. Duckitt & Fisher, 2003; Perrin, 2005; Rickert, 1998; Sales & Friend, 1973; Sibley et al., 2007) and societal level (Doty, Peterson, & Winter, 1991; Sales, 1972). Second, high RWA individuals are also more likely to interpret a situation as threatening social order than those low in RWA. For example, Lavine, Lodge, Polichak and Taber (2002) found that people high in RWA were quicker in responding to threatening words, compared to low authoritarians, concluding that they are especially sensitive to threat. Third, social threat has been found to activate



authoritarian dispositions. In her book “The authoritarian dynamic” Stenner (2005; see also Feldmann & Stenner, 1997) proposed that there is a relatively stable authoritarian predisposition that becomes activated in moments of collective, normative threat. She defines normative threat as threats to oneness and sameness, common values and authority (e.g. lack of consensus in group norms and values or disrespect to authorities). Providing support for her model, in a number of surveys and experiments, she found that authoritarian predispositions interacted with normative threats to predict a range of variables, including punitive attitudes.

Finally, in one interesting paper, Cohrs and Ibler (2009) provided greater clarity into the ways in which threat and RWA interact in affecting prejudice. In two experimental studies, the authors manipulated threat from Turks (using a threatening argument), and measured the extent to which respondents perceived the manipulation as threatening and also whether they experienced actual threat from Turks after reading the argument. They found that people high in RWA were more likely than people low in RWA to perceive an argument as threatening, although this happened regardless of the threatening content of the argument. Interestingly, perceiving the argument as threatening affected the perception of actual threat only for high RWA individuals. This is, high RWA individuals seemed to be more likely to be influenced by a threatening argument. Finally, RWA also moderated the effect of actual threat on negative (but not positive) emotions towards Turks (although results were weaker here). That is, perceptions of threat seemed to be more relevant for those high in RWA to determine their levels of prejudice. Overall, the findings of this study suggest that people high in RWA are more likely than people low in RWA to sway their perception of actual threat in the light of threatening information and to react more negatively to perceived actual threat.

#### **d. Current debates**

Two main questions are still being debated (for a review, see Duckitt et al., 2010). The first question is whether authoritarianism should be considered a personality measure as first described by Adorno et al. (1950) or rather a social attitude and value measure, as argued by many (e.g. Duckitt et al., 2010). Duckitt et al. (2010) argue that RWA tends to correlate better with values than with personality dimensions. At the same time, given its high sensitivity to situational factors, it is difficult to conceive it as

a stable personality measure (see Duckitt, 2009; Duckitt et al., 2010). Notably, there seems to be more and more agreement in the literature in treating authoritarianism as an ideological attitude (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008).

The second question is whether the subscales of authoritarian aggression, authoritarian submission and conventionalism can be considered as part of one overarching concept or if they should be treated as distinctive concepts. Duckitt et al. (2010) recently made the case for conceptualising and measuring RWA as a set of three attitudinal dimensions. The authors refer to these as three different authoritarian attitude dimensions that can all help achieving the motivational goal of collective security: authoritarianism (authoritarian aggression), conservatism (authoritarian submission) and traditionalism (conventionalism). Meanwhile, Funke (2005; see also Mavor, Louis, & Sibley, 2010) found a better fit using three factors compared to using a one-factor solution. Duckitt et al. (2010) found discriminative validity for this, in that the three dimensions were related to the support for different policies.

**e. Correlates of right-wing authoritarianism**

Altemeyer (1981, 1998) studied the characteristics of people high in RWA and concluded that they have a strong religious background, attend church and are inclined to be religious fundamentalists. They are also more likely to come from lower social classes, to have lower levels of education and to be slightly older than people low in authoritarianism.

Because of their motivation to achieve order and security, people high in RWA dislike anything that relates to disorder, change, novelty and autonomy (Duckitt, 2009). They are generally more likely to dislike groups perceived as threatening social order (Duckitt & Sibley, 2009), such as social deviants or minority groups (Altemeyer, 1981; Duckitt, 2006). In contrast, they like everything that symbolises order, social cohesion, tradition, and stability (Duckitt, 2009) and will favour situations and policies that can control social threats and bring back order and security (Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). They are thus willing to restrict civil liberties (Cohrs, Kielmann, Maes, & Moschner, 2005; Cohrs, Moschner, et al., 2005; Crowson, 2009; Crowson, DeBacker, & Thoma, 2005), and human rights (Crowson et al., 2005; McFarland & Mathews, 2005), as well as support surveillance measures (Cohrs, Kielmann, et al., 2005), military action (Cohrs,

Moschner, et al., 2005; Crowson, 2009; Crowson et al., 2005; McFarland, 2005) and harsh interrogation (Anderson, Roberts, & Struck, 2009).

**f. RWA and punitive attitudes**

High RWA individuals seek to achieve in-group conformity and collective security. As they are motivated to support institutions that help assuring order and controlling social threat, it follows that they will be the first to support tough crime control policies. In line with Duckitt (2009; see also Tam et al., 2008) I have argued that individuals high in RWA will favour punitive measures to restore social order, security and in-group conformity perceived to be disrupted by crime, and also because punishment is exerted by legal authorities which should be obeyed. Recall that a number of studies have linked authoritarian dispositions to punitive reactions to criminal offences (e.g. Altemeyer, 1981, 1998; Capps, 2002; Carroll et al., 1987; Feather, 1998; Feather & Souter, 2002; Funke, 2005; Lerner et al., 1998; Tam et al., 2008; Unnever & Cullen, 2010), in particular when punishment is applied against people perceived as disrupting social order (Feather, 1998). However, while RWA seems to be a key variable in explaining punitiveness, I have also argued that a number of questions remain open. In particular, more research is needed on the reasons why high RWA individuals support punitive measures and the circumstances under which they will do so. It is also not clear whether RWA will predict harsh punishment above and beyond the commitment they should have to fair and legal procedures. Finally, research is needed on the role of RWA on punitive attitudes when items on crime and punishment are excluded from its measurement.

**2.2.6 Social dominance orientation**

**a. Social dominance theory**

Right-wing authoritarianism is the most widely used ideological attitude to predict beliefs about the proper punishment of criminal offenders. Nevertheless, some research has shown that social dominance orientation might also be relevant to punitive attitudes (Sidanius et al., 2006). In the following I will describe social dominance theory and briefly recapitulate the relationship between SDO and punitive attitudes.

Social dominance theory (SDT; Pratto et al., 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001; Sidanius, Pratto, & Mitchell, 1994) starts from the observation that surplus-producing societies tend to organise themselves in group-based hierarchical structures. Two social groups can be distinguished in these societies: a dominant group that enjoys high degree of positive social value (e.g. power or wealth), and one or more subordinate groups that enjoy a high degree of negative social value (e.g. death sentences). Different legitimising beliefs are used to preserve existing hierarchies in society, prevent change to the social order and stabilise oppression (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001). The authors refer to these as hierarchy-legitimizing myths because they imply that some people should have less positive social value because they are not as good as others (e.g. social Darwinism). SDT posits that there are three factors that help maintaining social hierarchies: behavioural asymmetry, individual discrimination and institutional discrimination. Importantly in the context of this dissertation, institutional discrimination means that institutions assign more negative social value to subordinate groups' members and more positive social value to dominant groups' members. Hierarchy-enhancing institutions work to produce different outcomes for dominant and subordinate groups and help to maintain unequal relationships. One of such institutions is the criminal justice system (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001). Hierarchy-attenuating institutions and myths, on the other hand, seek to promote social equality by defending the interests of the wealthy (e.g. welfare organisations).

#### **b. Social Dominance Orientation**

SDT proposed a measure of individual differences, social dominance orientation, which has been defined as a “general attitudinal orientation toward intergroup relations, reflecting whether one generally prefers such relations to be equal, versus hierarchical” and “the extent to which one desires that one’s ingroup dominate and be superior to outgroups” (Pratto et al., 1994, p.742). People high in SDO show a desire for the superiority and domination of their in-group and a preference for hierarchical relationships. High SDO individuals will therefore prefer hierarchy-enhancing, compared to hierarchy-attenuating, ideologies such as racial prejudice and in-group favouritism. They are more likely to view society in terms of zero-sum beliefs that gains for one group mean losses for the others: Sidanius et al. (2004) found that zero-sum beliefs mediated the effect of SDO on attitudes towards immigration.

Jost and Thompson (2000) have argued that SDO actually measures two different concepts: group-based dominance (GBD) and opposition to equality (OEQ). While OEQ can be thought of as a general preference for inequality, GBD is argued to relate specifically to one's in-group and its dominance over out-groups (see also Ho et al., 2012; Kugler et al., 2010). Other research, however, has suggested that differences between these two subscales are due to wording issues (Xin & Chi, 2010).

Duckitt (2001) has argued that social dominance orientation is the ideological expression of the motivational goal of power, dominance and superiority over others as opposed to egalitarian and altruistic concerns for others. According to this model, SDO is predisposed by a tough-minded personality and is made salient by the perception that the world is a competitive place (Duckitt, 2006, 2009; Duckitt & Sibley, 2007, 2009; Duckitt et al., 2002). Being exposed to social situations that are perceived as highly unequal and competitive also increases people's competitive worldview and their preference for hierarchies and power (Duckitt, 2006).

### **c. Correlates of Social Dominance Orientation**

In contrast to RWA, people high in SDO do not tend to be religious and there is no relation with income levels. Men do, however, show higher levels of SDO than women (Altemeyer, 1998). High SDO individuals do not feel constrained by morality, showing high scores in Altemeyer's Exploitive Manipulative Amoral Dishonesty Scale (Altemeyer, 1998). Neurobiological research has related SDO to neural functioning within the brain regions that are linked to the ability to share and feel concern for other's pain (Chiao, Mathur, Harada, & Lipke, 2009). People high on SDO are also less empathic, altruistic, expressive and agreeable (see Cohrs, Moschner et al., 2005).

The SDO scale has been shown to be a powerful predictor of a wide range of social and political attitudes, such as prejudice and ethnocentrism (Pratto et al., 1994; Sidanius et al., 1994). Because of their motivation to achieve power and dominance, people high in SDO will assign negative value to anything that symbolises egalitarianism, altruistic social concerns and helping others (Duckitt, 2009). They tend to dislike groups that compete for relative dominance or that are of low status or power (Duckitt, 2006). In contrast, they like everything that reflects hierarchies and inequalities and will support situations and policies that are perceived as helping to establish and maintain inequality and social hierarchies (Duckitt & Sibley, 2009), such

as a lack of commitment to human rights (Crowson, 2009; Crowson et al., 2005; Crowson, Debacker, & Thoma, 2006; McFarland & Mathews, 2005), the restriction of civil liberties (Cohrs, Kielmann et al., 2005), and the support for harsh interrogation of suspects (Anderson et al., 2009) and military actions (Cohrs, Moschner, et al., 2005; Crowson et al., 2006; Heaven, Organ, Supavadeeprasit, & Leeson, 2006; McFarland, 2005; Pratto et al., 1994). But since they are no supporters of equality and helping others, they will not support the war if the purpose is humanitarian (McFarland & Mathews, 2005; Pratto et al., 1994).

#### **d. Social dominance orientation and punitive attitudes**

High SDO individuals seek to achieve in-group superiority and dominance over out-groups. As they are motivated to support institutions that maintain and legitimise social inequalities, it follows that they will be more likely to endorse actions undertaken by a justice system that promotes unequal outcomes. In line with Duckitt (2009) I have argued that individuals high in SDO might perceive criminal offenders as gaining power and favour harsh punishment to restore status and power hierarchies in society. While there are reasons to believe that SDO should be related to punitive attitudes, and a number of studies have confirmed this assumption (Green et al., 2009; Kimmelmeier, 2005; Sidanius et al., 2006), a number of issues remain to be evaluated. First, there is conflicting evidence on whether SDO predicts punitiveness above and beyond RWA. Two studies that have controlled for RWA found no effect of SDO (Colémont et al., 2011; McKee & Feather, 2008), while in one study (Capps, 2002) SDO remained a significant predictor after controlling for RWA. Second, more research is required on the role of the subscales of SDO (GBD and OEQ). Third, little research has examined the reasons why SDO predicts punitiveness and the social conditions under which it will do so. Finally, there is mixed evidence on whether SDO predicts retributive goals of punishment or if it only predicts the desire for personal vengeance.

#### **2.2.7 The relationship between RWA and SDO**

A note is required on the relationship between RWA and SDO. Importantly, because RWA and SDO can be considered as two aspects of conservatism, it is not surprising to observe that they predict similar outcomes, such as prejudice, (for a review

see Duckitt & Sibley, 2009) and attitudes toward restriction of civil liberties (Cohrs, Kielmann, et al., 2005; Crowson et al., 2005; Crowson et al., 2006). Nevertheless, it should be noted that despite their similar effects, RWA and SDO tend to correlate only moderately (see Crowson et al., 2005) and they are argued to correspond to distinct dimensions with different motivational bases (Duckitt, 2001; Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). There are four main reasons that support the argument that RWA and SDO correspond to different dimensions. First, high RWA and high SDO individuals tend to come from very different backgrounds. While people high in RWA are highly religious and dogmatic, people high in SDO lack a religious background (Altemeyer, 1998, 2004). Similarly, while RWA is related to lower social classes (Altemeyer, 1998) and lower levels of education (Altemeyer, 1981), no such relationship has been found with SDO.

Second, RWA and SDO are related to different personalities, worldviews and motivational bases. High RWA individuals, on the one hand, tend to be high in social conformity, belief that the world is a dangerous place and are motivated to achieve collective security. High SDO individuals, on the other hand, tend to be high in a tough-minded personality, belief that the world is a competitive place and are motivated to achieve power and dominance (Duckitt, 2001; Duckitt et al., 2002).

Third, the level of correlation between these variables varies across countries (Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). Roccato and Ricolfi (2005) conducted a meta-analysis of the correlation between RWA and SDO in different countries. The authors showed that, as hypothesised by Duckitt (2001), correlations are higher in countries with strong ideological polarisations (such as Western European countries) than in countries with weak ideological contrasts (such as the United States and Canada). This suggests that the degree to which RWA and SDO differ from each other will depend on different historical or cultural backgrounds. At an individual level, Mirisola, Sibley, Boca and Duckitt (2007; see also Duriez, Van Hiel, & Kossowska, 2005) found that people with higher levels of political identification (both measured and primed) displayed stronger correlations between RWA and SDO.

Fourth, despite the important overlap, RWA and SDO explain unique variance of different outcome variables (e.g. Altemeyer, 1998; Crowson et al., 2005; Duckitt, 2001; Duriez & Van Hiel, 2002). What's more, there seem to be reasons to argue that the mechanisms through which RWA and SDO affect outcome variables are different. Duckitt & Sibley (2009) have summarised research showing that RWA and SDO

predict different specific outcomes, and that their effects are differently mediated and moderated.

Interestingly, however, Altemeyer (2003, 2004) proposed that “double-highs”, this is people who are high in both RWA and SDO, combine the worst aspects of each dimension: religious ethnocentrism and dogmatism, on the one hand, and manipulative tendencies and power-hunger, on the other. While Altemeyer (2003) found that “double-highs” were more likely to declare war in a global futures simulation, Cohrs, Kielmann et al. (2005) found no interaction effect between RWA and SDO predicting attitudes towards the restriction of civil liberties (see also Sibley, Robertson, & Wilson, 2006 for a lack of interaction effects)<sup>4</sup>.

This dissertation examines the joint effects of RWA and SDO and the different reasons why they predict punitiveness. Given that they are often correlated to some degree, special attention is placed in controlling for each other’s effect in all analyses. Furthermore, given their closeness, I avoid implying that people are either authoritarians or social dominators. In this dissertation I refer to people as being high in RWA or high in SDO, which assumes that respondents could be high in both ideologies.

### **2.3. A dual-motivational model of punitive attitudes: different hypotheses**

A dual-motivational model of punitive attitudes (Duckitt, 2009) predicts that both RWA and SDO will affect punitive attitudes. Given their different motivational basis, however, they should predict punitive attitudes for different reasons and under different circumstances. I have argued (in line with Duckitt, 2009) that while high RWA individuals should favour punishment to restore collective security, high SDO individuals should do so to restore status and power relationships. Duckitt and Sibley (2009) suggest testing the dual-motivational model through three hypotheses: the differential mediation hypothesis, the differential effects hypothesis and the differential moderation hypothesis. In the following, these three hypotheses will be described and findings supporting each will be discussed. I will then outline predictions of each hypothesis in relation to punitive attitudes.

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<sup>4</sup> Interaction effects between RWA and SDO were tested in all studies of this dissertation. Since no significant effects were found, however, these analyses were omitted from further consideration.



### **2.3.1 The differential mediation hypothesis**

The differential mediation hypothesis states that, even if RWA and SDO predict the same outcome, their effects should occur for different reasons, and different mediations should be observed. In terms of prejudice, the effect of RWA should be mediated by the perceived threat posed by the out-group, while the effect of SDO should be mediated by perceived competitiveness over power and dominance. Duckitt (2006) found that the effect of RWA on attitudes towards out-groups was mediated by perceived threat, while the effect of SDO was mediated by competitiveness towards these groups. McFarland (2005) showed that even though high RWA and high SDO students supported the war on Iraq, they did so for different reasons. The effect of authoritarianism was mediated by the threat posed by Iraq, while the effect of social dominance orientation was mediated by a lack of concern for the human costs of the war.

The effect of RWA on attitudes has been found to be mediated by perceptions of threat, while the effect of SDO seems to be driven by perceptions of competition and a lack of concern for others. The same is expected in the case of punitive attitudes. High RWA individuals should be more likely to perceive crime as disrupting social order and seek punishment to restore it. High SDO individuals, on the other hand, should be more likely to interpret crime in terms of criminal offenders gaining power in society and support punishment to restore social hierarchies. They should also be more likely to be unempathic towards criminal offenders, which should also mediate their desires to punish.

### **2.3.2 The differential effects hypothesis**

One prediction of the dual-motivational model is that the effects of RWA and SDO on punitive attitudes will be differently mediated. A second prediction is that even if RWA and SDO predict similar outcomes, they should also clearly predict different specific outcomes, such as disliking different groups and endorsing different policies and legitimising myths. This hypothesis has been tested in the case of prejudice towards different groups (see for a review, Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). RWA and SDO both predict prejudice, however, people high on RWA dislike groups perceived as threatening social order and security (such as deviant groups and people with different cultural and ethnic

backgrounds), while high SDO's dislike social groups perceived as belonging to lower social classes and groups who compete for status and power. For high SDO's, being prejudiced against people of lower status can help legitimising superiority over them. Similarly, Duckitt and Sibley (2007) found that only RWA was related to attitudes towards dangerous groups, only SDO was related to attitudes towards derogated groups and both predicted attitudes towards dissident groups. This model fits Altemeyer's (2004) argument about SDO's prejudice being driven by their desire to dominate, while RWA's prejudice is more related to fear and self-righteousness. Another study tested the effect of RWA and SDO on men's sexism toward women and found that RWA was a stronger predictor of benevolent sexism and SDO was a better predictor of hostile sexism (Sibley et al., 2007).

In other studies, the effects have been found to be separable only to some extent. Cohrs, Moschner et al. (2005) tested the effect of RWA and SDO on attitudes in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. They found that RWA was the main predictor of threat-related attitudes toward Islam, while both RWA and SDO were related to the concern for negative consequences of the military action. Heaven et al. (2006) found that SDO was a strong predictor of pro-war attitudes, while both SDO and RWA predicted negative attitudes towards people from the Middle East. Only RWA was related to perceptions of threat from terrorism, while both RWA and SDO predicted a lack of support for Saddam Hussein (Crowson et al., 2005).

RWA and SDO seem to predict different specific outcomes, although only to some extent. In this dissertation I examine two dimensions of retribution -as revenge and just deserts- and explore whether they are differentially predicted by RWA and SDO. Retribution as revenge refers to a desire to retaliate a past wrong and make the offender suffer. Given the harsh and excluding nature of revenge, it is likely to communicate to the offender that people have low regard for him. It might thus be perceived as a means to restore status and power relationships and be the preferred goal of people high in SDO. Just deserts, on the other hand, allows the offender to compensate for the harm done and restores justice through proportionality and a fair process. A proportional compensation from the offender assumes some commitment to legal and fair procedures and is likely to be seen as a means to restore moral balance. It might thus be preferred by high RWA individuals. Given the tendency of high RWA's to support actions undertaken by legal authorities, RWA might be relevant to both types of retribution.

### **2.3.3 The differential moderation hypothesis**

RWA and SDO are expected to predict punitive attitudes for different reasons and to relate to the support of different retributive punishment goals. The last hypothesis states that the effects of RWA and SDO should also be moderated by different social environments, this is, that the social conditions under which these ideologies will correlate with outcome variables are different. High RWA and SDO individuals will be more or less reactive to social processes if these are perceived as a threat to collective security or competition and dominance, respectively. This perspective resembles Lavine and colleague's (Lavine, Lodge, & Freitas, 2005; Lavine et al., 2002) interactionist view, according to which the effect of personality on political variables does not occur in a vacuum. Political or social environments activate the effect of different dispositions on key variables. When dispositions are salient or relevant, their correlations with outcome variables –social and political attitudes and preferences- will be strengthened. In other words, when a certain motivation is salient, people will behave more in line with this motivation.

Several studies have been carried out to test for the context-specificity of RWA and SDO. Extensive research has focused on how authoritarian predispositions become activated under the presence of different types of threat (Cohrs & Ibler, 2009; Feldman & Stenner, 1997; Greenberg et al., 1990; Lavine et al., 2005, 2002; Rickert, 1998). Other studies have looked at how depicting certain social groups as being threatening or competitive (Cohrs & Asbrock, 2009; see also Duckitt & Sibley, 2009) or as wanting to assimilate to the dominant culture or not (Thomsen et al., 2008) changed the effect of RWA and SDO on different types of attitudes. Furthermore, the relationships between RWA, SDO and attitudes have been found to vary across countries (Cohrs & Stelzl, 2010). For example, the relationship between RWA and attitudes towards equality was positive in Russia and negative in the United States (McFarland, Ageyev, & Abalakina-Paap, 1992), while SDO was positively related to support of violence toward the Middle East in the United States and it negatively predicted support of violence toward the West in Lebanon (Henry, Sidanius, Levin, & Pratto, 2005).

A second, more critical, perspective on the differential moderations of the effects of RWA and SDO on attitudes comes from social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and self-categorisation (Turner et al., 1994) theories. Crucially, studies have shown that the ways in which respondents complete RWA and SDO scales and the extent to which they

predict outcome variables depends on the social categories that are salient (Dru, 2007; Lehmiller & Schmitt, 2006; Reynolds, Turner, Haslam, & Ryan, 2001; Schmitt, Branscombe, & Kappen, 2003).

It is possible to expect that the extent to which RWA and SDO predict punitive attitudes will depend both on the social conditions that are salient and the social categories respondents have in mind – in particular, whether they think about criminal offenders when completing the scales. In this dissertation, I explore whether RWA and SDO are stronger predictors of harsh sentencing when dangerous and competitive world conditions, respectively, are salient. I also evaluate whether they predict punitive attitudes to different degrees depending on whether respondents are induced to think about criminal offenders prior to completing the scales.

The three hypotheses discussed provide a guide to evaluate the application of a dual-motivational model to the study of punitive attitudes. However, it should be noted that in some cases it is difficult to distinguish between them in a clear way. For example, is it really different to show that high RWA's are prejudiced against dangerous out-groups ('differential effects hypothesis') than to present evidence that they are prejudiced to out-groups when they are being portrayed as being dangerous ('differential moderation hypothesis')? Probably not. Similarly, in this dissertation, while punishment goals are considered as different specific outcomes ('differential effects hypothesis'), they are also used as mediators of people's support for harsh punishment ('differential mediation hypothesis'). It is thus not always clear whether a specific analysis is providing evidence for one or the other hypothesis. These hypotheses should thus be used as guidelines for possible tests to be conducted more than a list of requirements to be ticked.

## **2.4. Summary**

In this section I have defined the main concepts of this dissertation. I have described punitive attitudes as people's preferences for the assignment of harsh punitive sentences for criminal offenders. Different models to explain punitive attitudes have been discussed. In particular, I have highlighted the importance of considering factors that are unrelated to crime issues. I have also sought to motivate the importance of considering the role of ideological attitudes, and, specifically, ideologies as being rooted in psychological needs and motivations. I have finished by outlining a dual-motivational

model, right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation. Crucially, both ideologies seem to be related to the endorsement of harsh punitive measures. Yet, because they differ in their motivational antecedents, they have been argued to affect punitive attitudes for different reasons and under different circumstances: high RWA's should favour harsh punishment to restore collective security and high SDO's should do so to restore status and power relationships in society. Three hypotheses have been described as guidelines to evaluate the application of a dual-motivational model to the study of punitive attitudes: the differential mediation hypothesis, the differential effects hypothesis and the differential moderation hypothesis.

The next section presents the empirical component of this dissertation. Now that all the concepts have been defined, it is possible to describe the papers in more detail. The next chapter thus starts with a description of the papers in this dissertation and the hypotheses tested in each. Then, the four papers of this dissertation are presented. This dissertation finishes with a fourth chapter that aims at discussing the findings in the light of the theories adopted in this framework as well as other theories in the realm of social psychology.

## CHAPTER 3: EMPIRICAL STUDIES

### 3.1 Overview of the empirical component

The current research explores the different reasons and circumstances under which RWA and SDO predict the endorsement of harsh sentencing of criminal offenders. Four papers are presented to explore the relationship between RWA, SDO and punitive attitudes. Each paper examines whether different predictions made by the dual-motivational model of ideological attitudes (Duckitt & Sibley, 2009) apply to the case of attitudes towards the punishment of criminal offenders. This overview will introduce these papers and relate them to the aims of the thesis. Hypotheses are presented and general findings are discussed. Hypotheses are presented in a summarised way, corresponding to the numbering in each paper. Findings are only briefly discussed in this section, and more in depth discussions of the findings are presented in the individual papers and the conclusions of this dissertation.

The first component of this thesis looks at the joint effects of RWA and SDO on punitive attitudes. The first paper, '*A dual-motivational model of punitive attitudes: RWA and SDO predict the support of harsh punishment for different reasons*', draws upon two online studies from the United States (n=191 & n=167, respectively) to examine the most crucial hypothesis of a dual-motivational model: that RWA and SDO will predict unique variance of punitive attitudes. Previous findings have found a strong and consistent effect of RWA. However, findings on the role of SDO are conflicting. While many studies have found a strong effect of SDO (e.g. Sidanius et al., 2006), two studies that control for RWA found no effect at all (Colémont et al., 2011; McKee & Feather, 2008) and only one study found an effect of SDO after controlling for RWA (Capps, 2002). Two possible reasons for these inconsistent findings are discussed: the inclusion of items on crime and punishment as part of the authoritarian aggression subscale of RWA and the different roles of the subscales of SDO. First, the inclusion of items on crime and punishment as part of the measurement of RWA is likely to reduce the effect of SDO on punitiveness. It is expected that RWA and SDO will predict unique variance of punitive attitudes once authoritarian aggression is excluded from the measurement of RWA. Second, and in line with previous research (Ho et al., 2012;

McKee & Feather, 2008; Okimoto et al., 2011), people high in SDO might favour harsh punishment to establish a position of dominance over criminal offenders (group-based dominance) more than to justify inequalities more broadly (opposition to equality). This paper explores possible reasons for the inconsistent findings by looking at the relationship between punitive attitudes and the subscales of RWA and SDO. All RWA subscales are expected to be relevant to punitive attitudes: punishment is in itself an aggressive response to threatening groups (authoritarian aggression), it symbolises the endorsement of traditional values (conventionalism) and the need to obey authorities (authoritarian submission). However, only GBD -and not OEQ- is expected to predict punitive attitudes<sup>1</sup>. It is hypothesised that:

- H<sub>1.1</sub>: RWA and SDO will predict unique variance in punitive attitudes once authoritarian aggression is excluded from the measurement of RWA*
- H<sub>1.2</sub>: Authoritarian aggression, conventionalism and authoritarian submission will be associated with punitive attitudes*
- H<sub>1.3</sub>: GBD but not OEQ will be related to punitive attitudes*

A second under-theorised issue –and the second component of this dissertation– are the different reasons why people high in RWA and SDO support harsh punishment. From a dual-motivational perspective, RWA and SDO are rooted in different motivations and predict social attitudes for different reasons and through different mechanisms. People high in RWA value collective security; they will be especially sensitive towards threats to the social order; they will assign positive value to punishment as it can help to control perceived social threats. People high in SDO, on the other hand, are motivated to achieve power and dominance; they will be especially sensitive towards threats to social hierarchies; they will favour punitive policies to establish and maintain in-group dominance and inequalities. They also lack empathy and will be less caring for the wellbeing of criminal offenders. The first paper of this dissertation examines whether the effects of RWA and SDO on punitive attitudes are mediated by different beliefs about crime and criminals and different symbolic motives

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<sup>1</sup> While only GBD is expected to predict punitive attitudes, all studies of this dissertation start by evaluating the separate effects of GBD and OEQ. SDO as a whole or only GBD are considered in each study depending on the particular effects of GBD and OEQ. To simplify, however, all hypotheses are phrased in relation to SDO as a whole.

of punishment ('differential mediation hypothesis', Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). It is hypothesised that:

*H<sub>1.4</sub>: The effect of RWA on punitive attitudes will be mediated by perceiving crime as a threat to collective security and punishment as a means to restore it*

*H<sub>1.5</sub>: The effect of SDO on punitive attitudes will be mediated by perceiving crime as a threat to hierarchies, by a lack of care for the wellbeing of criminal offenders and by the belief that punishment can help restore status and power relationships in society*

The findings of Paper 1 provide partial support for a dual-motivational model of punitive attitudes. RWA and SDO explained unique variance of punitive attitudes in both studies, although this was the case when authoritarian aggression items were included and excluded from the measurement of RWA (H<sub>1.1</sub>). All subscales of RWA were related to punitive attitudes (H<sub>1.2</sub>). However, the findings are inconclusive in relation to the role of the subscales of SDO (H<sub>1.3</sub>): in Study 1, both GBD and OEQ predicted punitiveness over and above the effect of RWA, while in Study 2 only GBD was significant.

In line with a dual-motivational perspective of punitive attitudes the effects of RWA and SDO (and GBD in Study 2) were mediated by different beliefs about crime and criminals (Study 1), and symbolic motives of punishment (Study 2). People high in RWA perceived crime as a threat to collective security and favoured punishment to restore collective security (H<sub>1.4</sub>). People high in SDO, on the other hand, perceived crime as a threat to hierarchies and endorsed punishment as a way to restore status and power relationships (H<sub>1.5</sub>). SDO (H<sub>1.5</sub>), and unexpectedly RWA, predicted a lack of concern for the wellbeing of criminal offenders and this effect partially mediated their effects on punitive attitudes. Furthermore, RWA also predicted perceptions of crime threatening hierarchies and the motive to restore status and power relationships in society. This finding is not completely unexpected if one considers that high RWA's also have a preference for hierarchies and submission to authorities. In addition, criminal offenders gaining power over society can also be perceived as a threat to stability and order (as argued in relation to prejudice by Cohrs & Asbrock, 2009). This paper finishes by discussing the system justifying function of punishment. Harsh



sentences are argued to serve the status quo by reducing the potential for change in the normative and hierarchical structures of society.

The third component of this thesis explores the differential effects of RWA and SDO on retributive punishment goals ('differential effects hypothesis', Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). The second paper, '*Retribution as revenge and just deserts: On the relationships between two dimensions of retribution, ideological dispositions and the harsh treatment of criminal offenders*' (co-authored with Jonathan Jackson) employs an online survey (n=176) to distinguish between two dimensions of retribution (see Finckenauer, 1988; Ho et al., 2002; Von Hirsch, 1976), and to explore how these relate to different ideological and motivational factors, as well as to the support of different attitudes towards the treatment of criminal offenders. I argue that retribution as revenge refers to a desire to punish to retaliate a past wrong by making the offender suffer. Retribution as just deserts, on the other hand, refers to a more constructive support of punishment to restore a sense of justice through proportional compensation from the offender and a fair process. I hypothesise that:

*H<sub>2.1</sub>: One dimension of retribution will capture preferences for getting back at the offender and making him suffer (retribution as revenge) while the other dimension will comprise elements of proportionality and compensation (retribution as just deserts).*

This paper also explores the ideological and motivational antecedents of both dimensions of retribution. I argue that status and power restoration might be particularly important to a revenge perspective, as the harsh and excluding nature of revenge is likely to communicate to the offender that people have low regard for him. Similarly, people high in SDO are motivated to achieve dominance over out-groups and should endorse punitive attitudes to restore status hierarchies. Again, vengeance might be better suited to demean the offender's status and high SDO individuals are thus predicted to endorse retribution as revenge. Value restoration, on the other hand, is argued to be relevant to a just deserts perspective in that a proportional compensation from the offender is more likely to restore moral balance. As high RWA individuals seek to maintain in-group conformity, they are likely to endorse value restoration motives. However, since they tend to support actions undertaken by legal authorities, I predict that RWA will be associated to both types of retribution. It is hypothesised that:

- H<sub>2.2</sub>: Status and power restoration will be positively associated to retribution as revenge*
- H<sub>2.3</sub>: Value restoration will be positively associated to retribution as just deserts*
- H<sub>2.4</sub>: RWA will be positively related to retribution as just deserts and revenge, and its effect will be mediated by a value restoration motive*
- H<sub>2.5</sub>: SDO will be positively related to retribution as revenge and its effect will be mediated by a status and power restoration motive*

To finish, I explore the relationship between retributive dimensions and people's willingness to assign harsh punishment and deny procedural fairness to criminal offenders. I argue that retribution as revenge and just deserts should differ in their association with the support for harsh punishment and the denial of respect and fair procedures to criminal offenders. Retribution as just deserts, on the one hand, seeks to restore values and assumes some basic commitment with fair legal procedures. It should thus predict the support for punishment, but not necessarily harsh punishment: the harshness of punishment should be constrained by the seriousness of the crime. Revenge, on the other hand, seeks to punish to make the offender suffer and should not be constrained by the seriousness of the crime. Those who endorse retribution as revenge should therefore support harsh punitive measures, while there is less clarity about the relationship between just deserts and harsh punishment. I hypothesise that:

- H<sub>2.6</sub>: The support for harsh punishment will be positively related to retribution as revenge*

I draw on procedural fairness theory (Lind & Tyler, 1988) to understand the role of denying procedural fairness to criminal offenders. According to this perspective, denying procedural justice is used to communicate low status to a group or to a person within the group (Tyler & Blader, 2003). It follows that denying procedural fairness can be perceived as a way of enforcing status boundaries with criminal offenders: denying respect and neutral process to criminal offenders communicates low status to their group (for criminal offenders perceived to be part of an out-group) or to their status within the group (for criminal offenders perceived to be part of the in-group). Since retribution as revenge is arguably concerned with restoring status and power relationships in society, those who favour revenge are likely to agree to denying procedural fairness to criminal

offenders. Retribution as just deserts, on the other hand, seeks to restore values and it is thus likely to be related to the support for fair procedures. It is hypothesised that:

*H<sub>2.7</sub>: Denial of procedural fairness will be positively related to retribution as revenge and negatively related to retribution as just deserts*

The findings of the second paper provided evidence into the distinction between retribution as revenge and just deserts: a two-factor model of retribution showed a better fit than a one-factor model (H<sub>2.1</sub>). Getting even and making the offender suffer loaded on the same second order factor (retribution as revenge), while compensation and proportionality loaded on another second order factor (retribution as just deserts). Furthermore, retribution as revenge and just deserts differed in their relationship with preferences for the treatment of criminal offenders and ideological and motivational antecedents. Retribution as revenge was found to be rooted in ideological preferences for group-based dominance (but not opposition to equality, H<sub>2.5</sub>) and the motivation to enforce status boundaries with criminal offenders (H<sub>2.2</sub>). It was a strong predictor of preferences for harsh punishment (H<sub>2.6</sub>) and the denial of procedural fairness (H<sub>2.7</sub>). Retribution as just deserts, on the other hand, was found to stem from the motivation to restore values (H<sub>2.3</sub>) and RWA (H<sub>2.4</sub>). Once revenge was controlled for, it predicted a strong commitment to the use of fair and neutral procedures (H<sub>2.7</sub>). Notably, beliefs about proportionality and compensation were found to reduce the negative effect of revenge on the denial of procedural fairness towards offenders. This is, at any given level of vengefulness, concerns about proportionality and compensation worked as a buffer of the desires to deny due process and respect criminal offenders. This paper finishes with a discussion on the relevance of considering the identification with criminal offenders in determining whether people high in RWA and SDO will prefer a vengeful or just deserts perspective of retribution.

The fourth component of this dissertation pertains to the circumstances under which RWA and SDO predict punitive attitudes. Findings consistently show that RWA and SDO are highly sensitive to social conditions (e.g. Sibley et al., 2007) and interact with social conditions in predicting attitudes (see Cohrs & Stelzl, 2010 for country-specific effects of RWA and SDO on attitudes towards immigrants). This context-sensitivity of the effects of RWA and SDO can be interpreted in two different ways. First, in line with an interactionist view (Lavine et al., 2005, 2002), social conditions are

expected to activate the effect of RWA and SDO. The effect of RWA is argued to be strongest under a dangerous world condition, while the effect of SDO is predicted to increase under a competitive world condition (Duckitt et al., 2002). A second –and more critical- perspective on the context-specificity of the effects of RWA and SDO comes from social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and self-categorisation (Turner et al., 1994) theories. From these perspectives, the context does not only affect, but rather determine, the extent to which RWA and SDO predict attitudes. Crucially, the social categories that are salient define the way in which respondents interpret and answer RWA and SDO scales (Lehmiller & Schmitt, 2006; Schmitt et al., 2003). This dissertation explores both perspectives in Papers 3 and 4, respectively.

Paper 3, *‘On the interplay between disposition and situation: The effects of priming dangerous and competitive worldviews on the relationship between RWA, SDO and punitive attitudes’*, draws on an experimental study to examine the different social conditions under which RWA and SDO become stronger predictors of punitiveness (‘differential moderation hypothesis’, Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). An online experiment (n=246) with a scrambled sentence exercise is used to prime dangerous and competitive worldviews and to evaluate whether these activate the effects of RWA and SDO on the support of harsh punishment and the mediation through symbolic motives of punishment. As in Paper 1, RWA is expected to predict punitive attitudes and its effect should be mediated by the motive to restore collective security in society. When the social conditions are primed to be dangerous, RWA should become a stronger predictor of punitive attitudes and a collective security restoration motive. SDO should predict punitiveness in general and its effect should be mediated by a status and power restoration motive. When the conditions are primed to be competitive, SDO should become a stronger predictor of punitiveness and status and power. To summarise, it is hypothesised that:

- H<sub>3.1</sub>: RWA will predict punitive attitudes overall and its effect will be stronger when the social conditions are primed to be dangerous*
- H<sub>3.2</sub>: The effect of RWA on punitive attitudes will be mediated by the motivation to restore values and security in society and this relationship will be stronger when the social conditions are primed to be dangerous*
- H<sub>3.3</sub>: SDO will predict punitive attitudes overall and its effect will be stronger when the social conditions are primed to be competitive*

*H<sub>3.4</sub>: The effect of SDO on punitive attitudes will be mediated by the motivation to restore status and power hierarchies in society and this relationship will be stronger when the social conditions are primed to be competitive*

Unlike predicted, the results of this study showed that RWA had a consistent effect on punitive attitudes (H<sub>3.1</sub>) and this effect was mediated by collective security restoration across experimental conditions (H<sub>3.2</sub>). Against expectations, again, the effect of RWA was also mediated by status and power restoration, particularly when the social conditions were primed to be dangerous. As in Paper 1, criminal offenders gaining power and status in society can also be perceived as a threat to social order and stability. However, the fact that RWA predicted status and power concerns mainly in the dangerous world condition suggests that restoring status hierarchies might be one route adopted by people high in RWA to secure order and value consensus. This is, unlike SDO, it does not seem to be led by competitive motivations. In relation to SDO, in the overall sample only GBD –and not OEQ– was a significant predictor after controlling for RWA. In relation to the experimental conditions, only when the social conditions were primed to be competitive did GBD predict punitiveness (H<sub>3.3</sub>). Also, under a competitive world condition, GBD was the strongest predictor of a status and power restoration motive (H<sub>3.4</sub>). This paper concludes by discussing that people high in RWA might be chronically inclined to perceive the world as a dangerous place and to perceive punishment as a way to increase collective security, while people high in SDO do not seem to be readily predisposed to think of criminals as threats to the hierarchical structure of society. Only when the conditions are perceived to be competitive do high SDO's become punitive.

The last paper, *'Right-wing authoritarianism, social dominance orientation and punitive attitudes: An evaluation of the context-specificity of their relationships'*, addresses the debate stemming from social identity and self-categorisation theories on whether RWA and SDO measure general attitudes or attitudes that are specific to the social group that is salient when completing the scales. Unlike other studies, however, this paper does not seek to examine the generality of RWA and SDO measures. Rather, and in line with Sibley and Liu's (2010) argument, RWA and SDO are assumed to measure general or context-specific attitudes depending on the context in which they are measured. The aim then is to examine whether general measures of RWA and SDO predict punitive attitudes or if they do so only when people have criminal offenders in

mind when completing the scale. This is particularly relevant given the inconsistent findings in the literature regarding the effect of SDO on punitive attitudes and the fact that surveys vary in whether they prime (intentionally or not) criminal offenders before respondents complete RWA and SDO scales. The first study (n=78) consists of an experiment where social attitudes in general or criminal offenders are made salient to participants before they complete RWA and SDO scales. Comparing the effects of RWA and SDO across conditions provides relevant information on the generality of their effects on support for punishment. In the second study (n=106) participants filled out a criminal offender-specific measure of SDO, as well as general RWA and SDO scales. Here, I examine whether general measures of RWA and SDO predict punitiveness over and above a criminal offenders-specific measure of SDO. Given the close proximity between RWA items and crime and punishment issues, the extent to which RWA predicts punitive attitudes should not vary greatly whether general attitudes or criminal offenders are primed when completing RWA items. SDO items, in contrast, are not easily linked to crime and punishment issues and respondents are likely to have other social groups in mind when completing SDO items. The effect of SDO should be stronger when people have criminal offenders in mind. However, a general measure of SDO is still expected to predict attitudes above and beyond criminal offender specific attitudes towards inequality (in line with findings on prejudice from Sibley & Liu, 2010). Furthermore, criminal offender-specific SDO should mediate the effect of SDO on punitiveness. It is hypothesised that:

- H<sub>4.1</sub>: The relationship between RWA and punitive attitudes will be significant regardless of whether respondents are primed to think about social attitudes or criminal offenders when completing the scale*
- H<sub>4.2</sub>: The relationship between SDO and punitive attitudes will be stronger when respondents are primed to think about criminal offenders when completing the scale*
- H<sub>4.3</sub>: A general measure of SDO will predict punitive attitudes over and above a criminal offender-specific measure of SDO*
- H<sub>4.4</sub>: A criminal offender-specific measure of SDO will mediate the effect of SDO on punitive attitudes*

As in Paper 3, the findings of Paper 4 showed a consistent and strong effect of RWA across experimental conditions and after controlling for a criminal offender-specific measure of SDO (H<sub>4.1</sub>). The effects of SDO –and particularly of GBD– on punitive attitudes were stronger when participants had criminal offenders in mind when completing the SDO scale (H<sub>4.2</sub>). A criminal offender-specific measure of SDO had a strong effect on punitiveness, but a general measure of SDO remained a significant predictor after controlling for the context-specific attitude (H<sub>4.3</sub>). Finally, the effect of SDO on punitive attitudes was mediated by a criminal-offender specific measure of SDO (H<sub>4.4</sub>). These findings show that SDO exerted both general and specific effects on punitive attitudes.

Findings of Papers 3 and 4 suggest that crime and punishment issues are accessible to people when completing RWA items, but they are far removed from SDO items. The support of harsh punitive measures seems to be related to a competition for power with criminal offenders, yet people high in SDO do not seem to be predisposed to think about crime and punishment in terms of hierarchical relationships. However, once respondents are lead to think about crime and punishment in the context of competition (Paper 3) or to complete SDO items in the context of criminal offenders (Paper 4), SDO becomes a strong predictor of punitive reactions.

### **3.2 Papers**

In four papers, this research explores different predictions made by the dual-motivational model of ideological attitudes (Duckitt, 2001). Specifically, the papers test whether RWA and SDO predict unique variance of punitive attitudes (Paper 1); whether their effects are mediated by different beliefs about crime and symbolic motives of punishment (Paper 1); whether they predict different retributive punishment goals (Paper 2); whether their effects are differentially activated by dangerous and competitive worldviews (Paper 3); and if the extent to which they predict punitiveness depends on whether respondents think about criminal offenders when completing RWA and SDO scales (Paper 4).

The four papers of this dissertation are presented in the following pages. With the purpose of linking the papers, short interludes are presented between the papers.

## **PAPER 1**

### **A dual-motivational model of punitive attitudes: RWA and SDO predict the support of harsh punishment for different reasons**

Monica M. Gerber

#### **Abstract**

This paper applies the dual-process motivational model (Duckitt, 2001) to the study of attitudes towards criminal punishment. Right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) and social dominance orientation (SDO) are hypothesised to predict punitive attitudes. But given their different motivational bases, they are expected to be important for different reasons. Findings from two online studies ( $n_1=191$ ,  $n_2=167$ ) provide partial support for a dual-motivational model of punitive attitudes. RWA and SDO predicted punitive attitudes and their effects were mediated by different beliefs about crime and criminals (Study 1), and symbolic motives of punishment (Study 2). The effect of RWA was mediated by the perception that crime threatens collective security and punishment can help restoring value consensus and security in society. The effect of SDO was mediated by perceiving crime as a threat to social hierarchies and punishment as a way to restore status and power relationships in society. An effect of RWA on perceptions of crime threatening hierarchies and the motive to restore status and power relationships was also found and discussed. While previous research has found a consistent effect of RWA on punitive attitudes, findings concerning SDO are conflicting. This paper finishes by discussing possible reasons for the inconsistent findings in the literature.

*Keywords:* Punitive attitudes, Ideologies, Right-Wing Authoritarianism, Social Dominance Orientation



There is more to the punishment of criminal offenders than a rational attempt to control crime and increase security. Institutional reactions to rule-breaking not only work to prevent crime, they also “address some of the deeper emotional or affective dimensions of crime and its place in society” (Freiberg, 2001, p. 265; see also Garland, 1990). Recognising the expressive and symbolic meaning of crime and punishment, Durkheim (1973) argued that while crime damages the normative order in society, punishment embodies moral order and social cohesion and can help to clarify moral boundaries to observers. Punishment symbolises the endorsement of authority, value consensus and order. It follows that those who have ideological preferences to live in tight and cohesive societies will assign a positive value to punishment and favour punitive policies. In line with this argument, a number of studies have shown a close link between punitive attitudes and conservative ideologies (e.g. Baron & Hartnagel, 1996; Boeckmann & Tyler, 1997; Capps, 2002; Carroll, Perkowitz, Lurigio, & Weaver, 1987; Hogan, Chiricos, & Gertz, 2005; Johnson, 2009; King & Maruna, 2009; Miller, 1973; Tetlock et al., 2007).

This paper explores the social-psychological underpinnings of one core aspect of political order: the punishment of criminal offenders. Applying the dual-motivational model of ideological attitudes (Duckitt, 2001) to the study of punitive attitudes (see Duckitt, 2009), I explore the role of two conservative ideologies: right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) and social dominance orientation (SDO). Duckitt (2009) argued that RWA and SDO should both predict punitiveness towards criminals, but that they should do so for different reasons. People high in RWA will support punitive attitudes to maintain collective security and value consensus. People high in SDO, on the other hand, will favour punitive measures because punishment can help establishing and maintaining power hierarchies in society and because they lack of empathy and will show low concern for the wellbeing of criminal offenders.

Consistent with this model, previous research has found that both RWA (e.g. Altemeyer, 1988) and SDO (e.g. Ho et al., 2012; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994; Sidanius, Mitchell, & Navarrete, 2006) predict punitiveness. Yet, little research has looked at the joint effects of RWA and SDO on punitive attitudes and at the different reasons why people high in RWA and SDO support harsh sentencing. Moreover, the few studies that have looked at their joint effects have found conflicting results on the effect of SDO after controlling for RWA (Capps, 2002; Colémont, Van Hiel, & Cornelis, 2011; McKee & Feather, 2008). This paper draws on two online

samples ( $n_1=191$ ,  $n_2=167$ ) to examine whether RWA and SDO predict unique variance of punitive attitudes and discuss possible reasons for the inconsistent findings in the literature. It then explores whether the effects of RWA and SDO on punitiveness are mediated by different beliefs about crime and criminals (Study 1) and symbolic motives of punishment (Study 2). It finishes by discussing possible reasons for the inconsistent findings in the literature.

### **Punitive attitudes and ideology: A dual-motivational perspective**

Ideology refers to the beliefs that people hold about the proper structure of society and the ways in which people and institutions ought to behave. (Political) ideology has been defined as a “set of beliefs about the proper order of society and how it can be achieved” (Erikson, Luttbeg, & Tedin, 1988, p. 74) and as “consensually shared beliefs about how people ought (and ought not) to behave” (Pratto, 1999, p. 199). From a motivated social-cognition perspective (e.g. Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009; Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003) ideologies are rooted in psychological needs and motivations. In the words of Jost et al. (2003, p. 341) “a kind of matching process takes place whereby people adopt ideological belief systems (...) that are most likely to satisfy their psychological needs and motives”. People’s motivational goals affect the endorsement of ideologies, which in turn lead to downstream consequences (e.g. intergroup attitudes, Jost et al., 2009). Motivationally driven ideologies serve as guidelines for social judgment and shape the value that people assign to groups, social practices and institutions (Pratto, 1999).

The same reasoning can be applied to public attitudes towards the punishment of criminal offenders: punishment may have positive value for people to the extent that it is perceived as sustaining a specific goal in society. If punishment is perceived as symbolising the endorsement of order and security, for example, it will have positive value for those who have a psychological need for collective security and a preference for highly stable and cohesive societies. Punishment may also be perceived as a means to establish and maintain social hierarchies in society, having a positive value among those individuals who are motivated to achieve power and dominance and a preference to live in highly unequal societies. It follows that two ideological expressions of motivational goals will be relevant to punitive attitudes: right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) and social dominance orientation (SDO). RWA and SDO express different

motivational goals that are made salient by different social worldviews and predisposed by different personalities and socialisations (for a review, see Duckitt & Sibley, 2009).

Right-wing authoritarianism has been defined by Altemeyer (1981, 1988) as the covariation of three attitudinal clusters: authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression and conventionalism. Authoritarianism is predisposed by a personality high in social conformity, and is made salient by the perception of the world being a dangerous and threatening place (Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). People high in RWA are motivated to achieve collective security and will assign negative value to anything that hints towards disorder, change, novelty and autonomy, such as groups and situations perceived as threatening social order. They are more likely to favour policies that can control social threats and bring back order and security, such as the restriction of civil liberties (Cohrs, Kielmann, Maes, & Moschner, 2005; Cohrs, Moschner, Maes, & Kielmann, 2005; Crowson, DeBacker, & Thoma, 2005), and military action (Cohrs, Moschner, et al., 2005; McFarland, 2005).

Social Dominance Orientation, on the other hand, has been defined as a “general attitudinal orientation toward intergroup relations, reflecting whether one generally prefers such relations to be equal, versus hierarchical” and “the extent to which one desires that one’s in-group dominate and be superior to out-groups” (Pratto et al., 1994, p. 742). SDO is predisposed by a tough-minded personality and made salient by the perception that the world is a competitive place (Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). People high in SDO are motivated to achieve power and dominance and dislike groups that compete for relative dominance. They will support situations and policies that are perceived as helping to establish and maintain inequality and social hierarchies (Duckitt & Sibley, 2009), such as military actions (Cohrs, Moschner, et al., 2005; McFarland, 2005) and the restriction of civil liberties (Cohrs, Kielmann, et al., 2005). Jost and Thompson (2000) have argued that SDO measures two different concepts: group-based dominance (GBD) and opposition to equality (OEQ). While OEQ can be thought of as a general preference for inequality, GBD is argued to relate specifically to one’s in-group and its dominance over out-groups (see also Kugler, Cooper, & Nosek, 2010). Other research, however, has suggested that differences between these two subscales are due to wording issues (Xin & Chi, 2010).

Research so far has found associations between punitive attitudes and each of these ideologies taken separately. People high in RWA are more punitive (Altemeyer, 1981, 1988; Capps, 2002); show retributive reactions to criminal offences (Carroll et al.,

1987; Feather, 1998; Funke, 2005; Lerner, Goldberg, & Tetlock, 1998); perceive offences as being more serious (Feather, 1996); and believe that punishment is efficient in reforming the criminal (Altemeyer, 1981). But the link between SDO and punitive attitudes is less clear. At a macro-level, the relationship between punishment and inequality has been widely discussed in the literature. This perspective goes back to the Marxist tradition (for a review, see Garland, 1990), in which punishment is a social artefact that serves the function of maintaining the power of dominant groups. Western (2006) has shown that punishment is both unequally distributed (see also Mitchell & Sidanius, 1995; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001) and increases the levels of inequality by reducing the chances of disadvantaged groups even further. Sidanius et al. (2006) have moved this discussion to an individual level of analysis by arguing that given the close link between criminal sanctions and social inequalities, people's endorsement of unequal institutions will be associated to attitudes towards punishment. Punishment is argued to serve a legitimising function in that the criminal justice system is more likely to apply harsh punishment against people of subordinate social groups (see also Green, Thomsen, Sidanius, Staerklé, & Potanina, 2009; Mitchell & Sidanius, 1995). SDO has been found to be positively related to the support for law and order policies, to painful executions, the belief in retribution (Pratto et al., 1994), the support for harsh criminal sanctions (Sidanius, et al., 2006), general punitiveness (Capps, 2002) and vengeance (McKee & Feather, 2008).

While these studies suggest a strong link between SDO and punitive attitudes, there are inconsistent findings on whether SDO remains a significant predictor after controlling for RWA. Only three studies (to my knowledge) have evaluated the joint effects of RWA and SDO. While one study (Capps, 2002) found a significant effect of SDO after controlling for RWA, two studies found a non-significant effect of SDO after controlling for RWA. McKee and Feather (2008) found that support for capital punishment was predicted by RWA and vengeance attitudes. SDO was only linked to vengeance attitudes and not to the support for capital punishment, suggesting that while people high in RWA favour the use of harsh punishment by legal authorities, people high in SDO do not necessarily rely on authorities to achieve retribution. A second study (Colémont et al., 2011) used RWA and SDO to predict three different punishment goals (harsh treatment, moral balance and social constructiveness). Again, only RWA was a significant predictor.

### **The present research**

The aim of this paper is to apply the dual-process motivational model to the study of punitive attitudes. For the dual-motivational model to hold, RWA and SDO should predict unique variance of punitive attitudes. Yet, there is conflicting evidence in the literature regarding the role of SDO. In the first section I explore whether RWA and SDO have joint effects on punitive attitudes and discuss two possible reasons for the inconsistent findings in the literature. First, controlling for RWA might render the effect of SDO non-significant because RWA scales usually include items on crime and punishment as part of the authoritarian aggression subscale. It is hypothesised that RWA and SDO will explain unique variance of punitive attitudes once authoritarian aggression is excluded from the measurement of RWA ( $H_1$ ). Second, previous research has suggested that the subscales of RWA and SDO relate in different ways to justice attitudes (McKee & Feather, 2008) and it is thus relevant to look at their separate effects. A strong link has been found between retribution and authoritarian aggression and submission, although the link with conventionalism is weaker (Funke, 2005; McKee & Feather, 2008). All RWA subscales are hypothesised to affect punitive attitudes: punishment is in itself an aggressive response to threatening groups (authoritarian aggression,  $H_{2a}$ ), it symbolises the endorsement of traditional values (conventionalism,  $H_{2b}$ ) and the need to obey authorities (submission,  $H_{2c}$ ). In relation to SDO, only GBD predicted harsh punishment (Ho et al., 2012; Okimoto, Wenzel, & Feather, 2011) and capital punishment (McKee & Feather, 2008), while OEQ negatively predicted rehabilitation (McKee & Feather, 2008) and restorative justice (Okimoto et al., 2011). It is thus hypothesised that GBD ( $H_{3a}$ ) but not OEQ ( $H_{3b}$ ) will be related to punitive attitudes.

A second under-researched topic is whether the reasons why people high in RWA and SDO endorse punitive attitudes are different ('differential mediation hypothesis', Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). Duckitt and Sibley (2009) have argued that the effects of RWA and SDO should be mediated by perceptions of social threat and intergroup competitiveness over group dominance, respectively. This hypothesis has found support in research on attitudes towards out-groups (Duckitt, 2006) and the support for the war in Iraq (McFarland, 2005). The same is expected in the case of punitive attitudes. People high in RWA are motivated to achieve collective security; they should dislike crime as it endangers their sense of order and security; and they are expected to favour punitive policies, because punishment symbolises authority, order

and value consensus. This goal is partly consistent with a value restoration motive, according to which crime threatens the legitimacy of social bonds and punishment helps to restore people's faith in shared values (Okimoto & Wenzel, 2008; Vidmar & Miller, 1980; Wenzel & Thielmann, 2006). However, according to Duckitt and Sibley (2009) it is not only value concerns that drive the attitudes of people high in RWA. Rather, RWA is motivated by the goal of establishing and maintaining collective security, which comprises the search for value consensus, as well as order, security and stability. People high in RWA should be particularly sensitive to crime, as it represents a threat in terms of both danger and deviation to common norms and values (as discussed for prejudice by Cohrs & Asbrock, 2009). The effect of RWA on punitive attitudes is thus predicted to be mediated by perceiving crime as a threat to collective security ( $H_{4a}$ ) and by the motive to restore collective security in society ( $H_{4b}$ ).

People high in SDO, on the other hand, are motivated to achieve power and dominance; they should perceive crime as a threat to power and status hierarchies in society; and favour punitive policies to maintain inequalities and social hierarchies in society. They also lack empathy (see Cohrs, Moschner, et al., 2005) and are expected to be less caring for criminals when deciding on the right amount of punishment. Breaking the law signals power, as norm violators seem to be free to behave the way they like (Van Kleef, Homan, Finkenauer, Gündemir, & Stamkou, 2011; see also Miller, 2001). This goal is consistent with a status and power restoration motive (Vidmar & Miller, 1980; Wenzel & Thielmann, 2006): by committing crime offenders gain power over the victim and society and one way of restoring hierarchies is by degrading the offender's status and power. The effect of SDO on punitive attitudes is predicted to be mediated by perceiving crime as a threat to hierarchies in society ( $H_{5a}$ ), by a lack of care for criminal offenders ( $H_{5b}$ ) and by the motive to restore status and power relationships in society ( $H_{5c}$ ).

### **Study 1**

The two studies presented in this paper explore the joint effects of RWA and SDO on attitudes towards the punishment of criminal offenders. Study 1 draws upon an online sample from the United States to evaluate whether RWA and SDO predict unique variance of punitive attitudes. Particular attention is placed in exploring the inconsistent findings in the literature regarding the role of SDO. A second aim of this

study is to test whether the effects of RWA and SDO are mediated by different perceptions about the threats posed by crime and criminals.

## Method

### Sample

237 persons from the United States completed an online survey posted on Amazon's Mechanical Turk<sup>1</sup>. 46 respondents (19%) were excluded for failing to respond correctly to an instructional manipulation check (32 respondents; Oppenheimer, Meyvis, & Davidenko, 2009) or a validation question embedded at the end of the study (14 respondents). The reported results correspond to 191 respondents. The sample was diverse in terms of gender (63% female), age ( $Min=18$ ,  $Max=71$ ,  $M=36$ ,  $SD=13.0$ ), occupation (52% worked, 15% students, 15% did housework) and ideology (51% leaning left, 25% centre, 24% leaning right), but less diverse in terms of ethnicity (81% white). Respondents read and agreed to a consent form and then completed a questionnaire that measured RWA, SDO, punitive attitudes, perceptions of threat posed by crime and criminal offenders, care for criminal offenders and socio-demographic variables (age, gender, ethnicity, education, occupation and political ideology). They were debriefed at the end of the study and paid 0.60 USD for participating.

### Measures

*Punitive attitudes* were measured using four items. Two items were positively phrased: 'People who break the law should be given harsher sentences' and 'With most offenders, we need to 'condemn more and understand less''. Two items were negatively phrased: 'The use of harsh punishment should be avoided whenever possible' and 'If prison has to be used, it should be used sparingly and only as a last option'.

*Right-wing authoritarianism* was measured using eighteen items, six for each subscale, balancing negative and positive items. Authoritarian submission and conventionalism were measured using Duckitt, Bizumic, Krauss and Heled's (2010) adaptation of Altemeyer's (1988) right-wing authoritarianism items which allow a clear distinction between the subscales (e.g. 'Obedience and respect for authority are the most

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<sup>1</sup> Data collected through Amazon's Mechanical Turk has been shown to be as reliable as data collected through other means while also providing a more diverse sample (Buhrmester, Kwang & Gosling, 2011; Paolacci, Chandler & Ipeirotis, 2010).

important virtues children should learn’ and ‘Everyone should have their own lifestyle, religious beliefs, and sexual preferences, even if it makes them different to everyone else, (R)’). Most authoritarian aggression items refer to crime and punishment issues. For this study, items were selected that did at least not refer explicitly to crime and punishment. Only four items from Duckitt et al.’s (2010) authoritarian aggression scale fulfilled this requirement (e.g. ‘We should smash all the negative elements that are causing trouble in our society’). These four items were complemented by two items drawn from Dunwoody, Hsuing and Funke’s (2009) authoritarian aggression subscale (e.g. ‘Using force against people is wrong even if done so by those in authority (R)’). Two different RWA scales were constructed to evaluate whether including items on authoritarian aggression explains the strong effect of RWA on punitiveness: one including and one excluding authoritarian aggression.

*Social dominance orientation* was assessed using twelve items from Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth and Malle (1994). Six items measured dominance, e.g. ‘It’s probably a good thing that certain groups are at the top and other groups are at the bottom’; and six items measured equality, e.g. ‘We should do what we can to equalize conditions for different groups (R)’.

The following measures were designed specifically for this survey to be used as mediators:

- *Crime as a threat to collective security* was measured using three items: ‘Crime is a threat to everything I feel is good, normal and decent in society’, ‘Crime seriously threatens order, security and stability in society’, and ‘I am afraid that crime makes society more dangerous for ordinary people’.
- *Crime as a threat to hierarchies* was measured using three items: ‘Through crime, people of lower social groups take away resources and power from people of higher social groups’, ‘By committing crime, criminal offenders try to communicate that they are superior to the rest of society’ and ‘Through crime, people of lower social groups try to dominate over people of higher social groups’.
- *Care for criminals* was measured using four items: ‘I am concerned about the wellbeing of criminal offenders’, ‘The human rights and wellbeing of criminal offenders should be respected’, ‘I care for the wellbeing of criminal offenders’ and ‘I condemn the offense but show respect for the offender as a person’.



Table 1

*Descriptive statistics and correlations between punitive attitudes, RWA, SDO and perceptions of crime and criminals (Study 1, n=191)*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 Punitive attitudes	-								
2 RWA Submission	.58**	-							
3 RWA Conventionalism	.44**	.67**	-						
4 RWA Aggression	.65**	.73**	.49**	-					
5 SDO GBD	.32**	.24**	.19*	.38**	-				
6 SDO OEQ	.30**	.13	.26**	.14*	.63**	-			
7 Threat collective security	.47**	.34**	.41**	.30**	-.01	.07	-		
8 Threat hierarchies	.45**	.35**	.26**	.40**	.37**	.28**	.31**	-	
9 Care for criminal offenders	-.60**	-.39**	-.29**	-.44**	-.34**	-.27**	-.37**	-.29**	-
M	3.89	4.00	3.78	3.48	2.56	2.37	5.43	3.45	4.46
SD	1.28	1.31	1.31	1.13	1.15	1.18	1.06	1.25	1.36
$\alpha$	0.81	0.89	0.86	0.82	0.87	0.91	0.84	0.74	0.91

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

All items were measured using 7-point likert scales (1=disagree strongly, 7=agree strongly). Descriptive and reliability statistics are presented in Table 1.

## **Results**

### **Correlational analyses**

Punitive attitudes correlated positively and significantly with all RWA subscales ( $rs > .44$ ,  $ps < .01$ ) and particularly with authoritarian aggression ( $r = .65$ ,  $p < .01$ ). They were also positively correlated with both SDO subscales ( $rs > .30$ ,  $ps < .01$ ). Perceptions of threat to collective security correlated with punitive attitudes ( $r = .47$ ,  $p < .01$ ), all RWA subscales ( $rs > .30$ ,  $ps < .01$ ), but not with SDO subscales ( $ps > .05$ ). Perceptions of threat to hierarchies correlated with punitive attitudes ( $r = .45$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and all RWA and SDO subscales ( $rs > .26$ ,  $ps < .01$ ). Finally, caring for criminal offenders correlated negatively with punitive attitudes ( $r = -.60$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and all RWA and SDO subscales ( $rs > -.29$ ,  $ps < .01$ ).

### **The joint effects of RWA and SDO on punitive attitudes**

Table 2 presents the results of four regression models on the role of RWA and SDO on punitive attitudes. The first two models use overall scales of RWA and SDO, including (Model 1) and excluding (Model 2) authoritarian aggression as part of the measurement of RWA. Models 3 and 4 show the effects of the subscales of SDO, controlling for RWA (excluding items on authoritarian aggression). In Model 1, both RWA ( $b = .69$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and SDO ( $b = .22$ ,  $p < .01$ ) significantly predicted punitive attitudes and accounted for 44% of its variance. When authoritarian aggression items were excluded from the measurement of RWA, RWA had a somewhat smaller effect ( $b = .54$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and SDO had a somewhat larger effect ( $b = .26$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The percentage of variance explained decreased to 36%. Models 3 and 4 show that both GBD ( $b = .23$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and OEQ ( $b = .20$ ,  $p < .01$ ) significantly predicted punitive attitudes after controlling for RWA. Both models account for 35% of the variance of punitive attitudes.

Table 2

*Linear regression coefficients for RWA and SDO on punitive attitudes (Study 1, n=191)*

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>
<i>Model 1</i>				
RWA - with authoritarian aggression	.69	.07	10.29**	.44
SDO	.22	.07	3.10**	
<i>Model 2</i>				
RWA - without authoritarian aggression	.54	.06	8.42**	.36
SDO	.26	.07	3.60**	
<i>Model 3</i>				
RWA - without authoritarian aggression	.55	.07	8.52**	.35
SDO - GBD	.23	.07	3.37**	
<i>Model 4</i>				
RWA - without authoritarian aggression	.56	.07	8.66**	.35
SDO – OEQ	.20	.07	3.05**	

*Note.* Unstandardised coefficients are presented\**p*<.05, \*\**p*<.01

### Differential mediations of the effects of RWA and SDO on punitive attitudes

Figure 1 shows the results of a structural equation model with latent variables evaluating whether different beliefs about crime and criminals mediate the effects of RWA and SDO on punitiveness. First, a totally mediated model was constructed. A direct effect from RWA to punitive attitudes was then added to improve the fit of the model. Given the clear overlap between the measurement of authoritarian aggression and the punishment of criminal offenders, authoritarian aggression items were excluded from the RWA scale. RWA and SDO scales were each represented by two parcels of items representing their subscales (authoritarian submission and conventionalism; group-based dominance and opposition to equality). The use of item parcels has been shown to provide more stable solutions when the sample size is small and has been recommended for studies –such as this– where the aim is to explore relationships between latent variables and not factor structures (see Little, Cunningham, Shahar, &

Widaman, 2002). The final model shows a relatively good fit according to Hu and Bentler's (1999) criteria (Model fit:  $\chi^2_{(123)} = 213.42$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\chi^2/df < 2$ ; CFI = 0.95; SRMR = 0.06).

Perceptions of crime threatening collective security ( $\beta = .19$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and hierarchies ( $\beta = .19$ ,  $p < .01$ ) were both positively related to punitive attitudes. Caring for criminals, on the other hand, had a negative effect on the support for harsh sentencing ( $\beta = -.33$ ,  $p < .01$ ). People high in RWA believed that crime threatens collective security ( $\beta = .43$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and hierarchies ( $\beta = .31$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and were also less likely to care for the wellbeing of criminal offenders ( $\beta = -.34$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The effect of RWA was partially mediated by perceptions of threat to collective security ( $\beta = .08$ ,  $p < .01$ ), hierarchies ( $\beta = .06$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and by a lack of care for criminal offenders ( $\beta = .11$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The strongest effect of RWA, however, was a direct effect ( $\beta = .41$ ,  $p < .01$ ). People high in SDO, on the other hand, believed that crime threatens hierarchies in society ( $\beta = .40$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and did not care for the wellbeing of criminal offenders ( $\beta = -.33$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The effect of SDO was completely mediated by perceptions of threat to hierarchies ( $\beta = .08$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and a lack of care for criminal offenders ( $\beta = .11$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This model explained 70.7% of the variance of punitive attitudes.

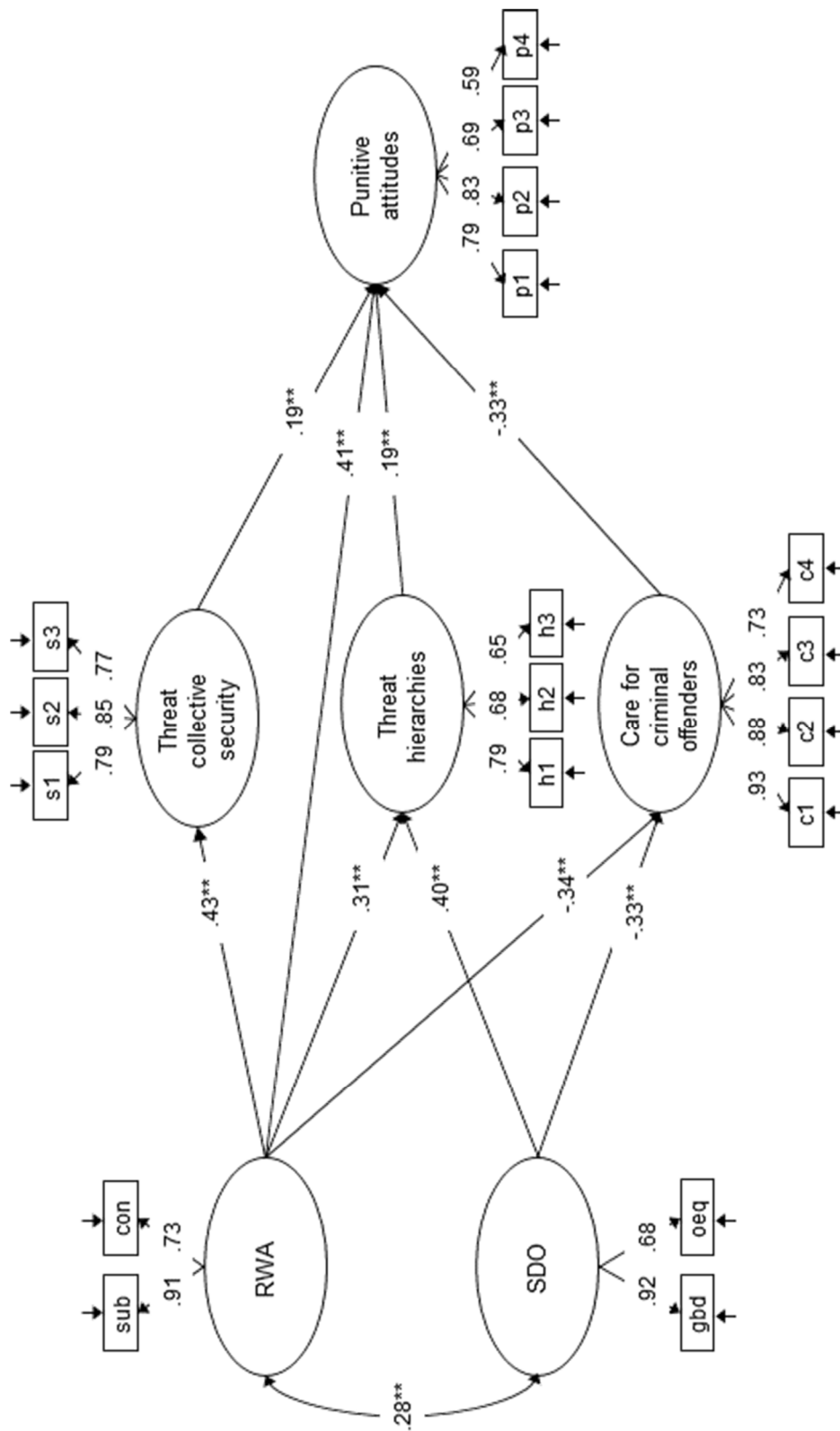


Figure 1. Structural equation model of the differential mediation of the effects of RWA and SDO on punitive attitudes (Study 1,  $n=191$ )

Notes. Standardised maximum likelihood coefficients are shown. Model fit:  $\chi^2_{(123)} = 213.42$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\chi^2/df < 2$ ; CFI = 0.95; SRMR = 0.06. All factor loadings are significant,  $p < .01$ . Error covariance between threat to collective security and hierarchies ( $p < .01$ ) and between threat to collective security and care for criminals offenders ( $p < .01$ ) were added but are not shown in the model. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

## Discussion

The findings show a clear and strong relationship between RWA, all of its subscales, and punitive attitudes. Harsh punishment was linked to a preference for traditional values, the submission to authorities and an aggressive response to threatening groups ( $H_{2a-c}$ ). Yet, the relationship between punitiveness and authoritarian aggression is far from surprising. Most items on authoritarian aggression refer implicitly or explicitly to crime and punishment issues. Crucially for this research, the effect of RWA was stronger when authoritarian aggression was included in its measurement and the effect of SDO was somewhat larger when authoritarian aggression items were excluded. However, unlike expected, SDO predicted the support for harsh punishment both controlling and not controlling for authoritarian aggression ( $H_1$ ). It should be noted that this study included items that referred only implicitly to crime and punishment issues. It is possible that previous studies included items that made explicit reference to crime, and that this was responsible for rendering the effect of SDO non-significant. In relation to the subscales of SDO, unlike previous studies (Ho et al., 2012; McKee & Feather, 2008) in this study both GBD and OEQ were significantly related to the support for harsh punishment ( $H_{3a,b}$ ) even after controlling for RWA.

In relation to the differential mediation hypothesis, the findings show that the reasons why RWA and SDO predict punitive measures are different, at least to some extent. People high in RWA value order and security and were predicted to dislike crime as it damages collective security. In line with the expectations, the effect of RWA on punitive attitudes was found to be mediated by the belief that crime is a threat to collective security ( $H_{4a}$ ). People high in SDO, on the other hand, are motivated to achieve power and dominance and should dislike crime as it can be used by criminals to climb the social ladder and take away power and resources from the rest of society. As expected, the effect of SDO on the support for punitive measures was mediated by perceptions of threat to social hierarchies and group dominance ( $H_{5a}$ ). Against expectations, people high in RWA were also more likely to perceive crime as a threat to hierarchies and these concerns mediated in part its effect on punitive attitudes. This finding will be discussed in conjunction with the findings of Study 2. SDO, and unexpectedly RWA, related to a lack of concern for the wellbeing of criminal offenders and the latter accounted for part of the reasons why they predicted punitiveness ( $H_{5b}$ ). This is consistent with Unnever and Cullen (2009) who argued that conservative people are punitive precisely because they lack empathy towards criminal offenders.

## Study 2

Study 1 provided initial, although partial, evidence for a dual-motivational model of punitive attitudes: RWA and SDO predicted the support for harsh punishment and their effects were partly mediated by perceptions that crime threatens collective security and hierarchies, and by a lack of care for the wellbeing of criminal offenders. Study 2 draws upon a second online sample from the United States to provide further evidence into whether RWA and SDO predict unique variance of punitive attitudes and to extend previous research by considering whether people high in RWA and SDO support punishment to achieve different symbolic motives. Instead of examining the different perceptions of threats posed by crime, this study explores different beliefs about the symbolic messages that punishment should communicate in society and how these might help dealing with the psychological needs related to RWA and SDO.

## Method

### Sample

188 persons from the United States completed an online survey posted on Amazon's Mechanical Turk. 21 respondents (11%) were excluded for failing to respond correctly to at least one out of two validation questions embedded in the study. The reported results correspond to 167 respondents. The sample was diverse in terms of gender (58% female), age ( $Min=18$ ,  $Max=89$ ,  $M=36$ ,  $SD=14.01$ ), occupation (58% worked, 14% students, 13% unemployed) and ideology (46% leaning left, 25% centre, 30% leaning right), but less diverse in terms of ethnicity (80% white). Respondents read and agreed to a consent form and then completed a questionnaire that measured RWA, SDO, punitive attitudes, symbolic motives of punishment and socio-demographic variables (age, gender, ethnicity, education, occupation and political ideology). They were debriefed at the end of the study and paid 0.50 USD for participating.

### Measures

*Punitive attitudes* were measured using three items: 'People who break the law should be given harsher sentences', 'With most offenders, we need to 'condemn more and understand less' and 'We should make sentences more severe for all crimes'.

*Right wing authoritarianism* was measured using ten items from Altemeyer's (1988) scale. Special attention was placed in excluding items that referred to crime and punishment.

*Social dominance orientation* was assessed using ten items from Pratto et al.'s (1994) scale. As before, five items measured group-based dominance and five items measured opposition to equality.

*Collective security restoration motive* was measured using four items. Two items were used to measure the restoration of moral balance and legal norms: 'The punishment of the offender should strengthen the consciousness of legal norms in the public at large' and 'Society should punish to restore the moral balance and justice in society', and two items measured the restoration of order and security: 'We should punish to increase security and order in society' and 'Punishment should protect society avoiding that the offender can do more harm'.

*Status and power restoration motive* was measured using two items. One item was drawn from Okimoto et al.'s (2011) status/power reduction goal scale: 'A just response should communicate to the offender that people have low regard for him'. The second item was designed for this study: 'Punishment should humiliate the offender'.

All items were measured using likert scale items (1=disagree strongly, 7=agree strongly). Descriptive and reliability statistics are presented in Table 3.

## **Results**

### **Correlational analyses**

Table 3 displays the correlations between punitive attitudes, RWA, SDO and symbolic motives of punishment. Punitive attitudes correlated positively and significantly with RWA ( $r=.54$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and both SDO subscales ( $rs>.28$ ,  $ps<.01$ ). Collective security restoration correlated positively with the endorsement of harsh sentencing ( $r=.56$ ,  $p<.01$ ), RWA ( $r=.50$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and to a smaller degree with the SDO subscales ( $rs>.16$ ,  $ps<.05$ ). Status and power restoration was positively related to punitive attitudes ( $r=.53$ ,  $p<.01$ ), RWA ( $r=.32$ ,  $p<.01$ ), GBD ( $r=.31$ ,  $p<.01$ ) but not OEQ ( $r=.14$ ,  $p<.01$ ).



Table 3

*Descriptive statistics and correlations between punitive attitudes, RWA, SDO and symbolic motives of punishment (Study 2, n=176)*

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Punitive attitudes	-					
2 RWA	.54**	-				
3 SDO – GBD	.29**	.28**	-			
4 SDO – OEQ	.28**	.40**	.52**	-		
5 Collective security restoration	.56**	.50**	.21**	.16*	-	
6 Status and power restoration	.53**	.32**	.31**	.14	.48**	-
Mean	4.05	3.29	2.81	2.63	5.22	3.97
SD	1.41	1.26	1.30	1.40	1.02	1.61
$\alpha$	0.82	0.90	0.82	0.92	0.80	0.79

\*p < .05. \*\*p < .01.

Table 4

*Linear regression coefficients for RWA and SDO on punitive attitudes (Study 2, n=176)*

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>
<i>Model 1</i>				
RWA	.55	.08	6.92**	.31
SDO	.16	.08	1.91†	
<i>Model 2</i>				
RWA	.56	.08	7.39**	.31
GBD	.16	.07	2.23*	
<i>Model 3</i>				
RWA	.57	.08	7.18**	.30
OEQ	.08	.07	1.05	

† p < .10, \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01

### **The joint effects of RWA and SDO on punitive attitudes**

Table 4 presents the results of three linear regression models of the effects of RWA and SDO on punitive attitudes. In Model 1 punitive attitudes are regressed on RWA and SDO scales. In Models 2 and 3 the subscales of SDO (GBD and OEQ) are used instead to evaluate whether they both predict punitiveness after controlling for RWA. RWA was a significant predictor in all three models ( $bs > .55$ ,  $ps < .01$ ). After controlling for RWA, SDO had only a marginally significant effect ( $b = .16$ ,  $p < .10$ ), OEQ had no effect at all ( $b = .08$ ,  $p > .05$ ), and GBD remained significant ( $b = .16$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

### **Differential mediations of the effects of RWA and SDO on punitive attitudes**

Figure 2 shows the results of a structural equation model with latent variables evaluating whether different symbolic motives of punishment mediate the effects of RWA and SDO on punitiveness. GBD was entered into the model given that only this subscale remained a significant predictor of punitiveness after controlling for RWA. Again, RWA and GBD scales were each represented by two parcels of items. Since Altemeyer's (1988) RWA scale does not allow categorising the items clearly into subscales, items were randomly assigned to one of the two parcels. The same was done with GBD items. The model showed a relatively good model fit ( $\chi^2_{(57)} = 94.21$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\chi^2/df < 2$ ; CFI = 0.97; SRMR = 0.05).

Collective security ( $\beta = .26$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and status and power ( $\beta = .33$ ,  $p < .01$ ) restoration motives both predicted punitive attitudes. As predicted, people high in GBD were more likely to endorse a status and power restoration motive than those low in GBD ( $\beta = .28$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and the latter mediated the effect of GBD on punitive attitudes ( $\beta = .09$ ,  $p < .05$ ). People high in RWA, on the other hand, were more likely to endorse both a collective security ( $\beta = .58$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and a status and power ( $\beta = .30$ ,  $p < .01$ ) restoration motive. Furthermore, RWA had indirect effects on the support for harsh punishment via collective security ( $\beta = .15$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and status and power restoration ( $\beta = .10$ ,  $p < .05$ ). As before, the strongest effect of RWA was a direct effect ( $\beta = .34$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This model explained 57.6% of the variance in punitive attitudes.

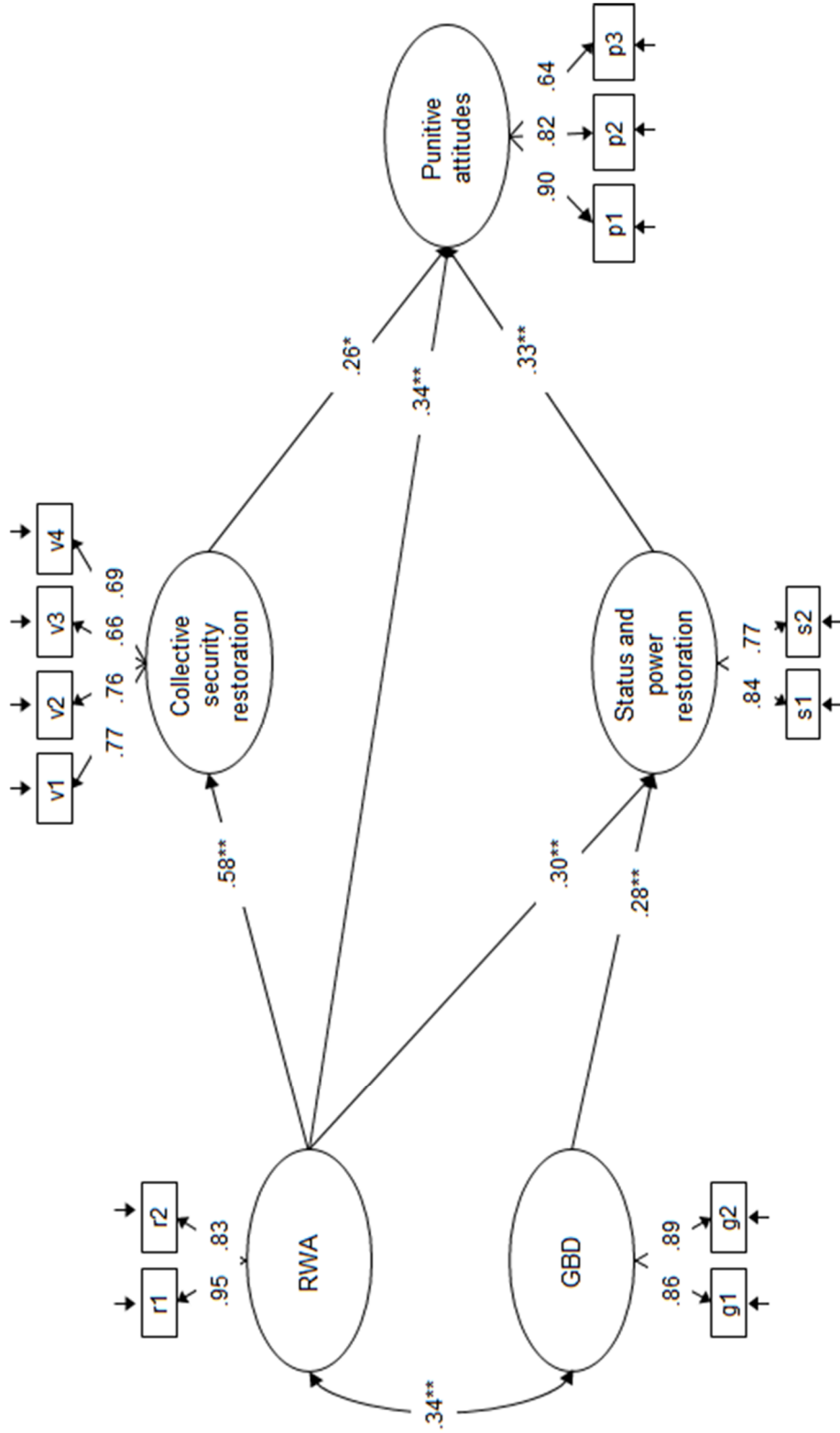


Figure 2. Structural equation model of the differential mediation of the effects of RWA and SDO on punitive attitudes (Study 2,  $n=176$ )

Notes. Standardized maximum likelihood coefficients are shown. Model fit:  $\chi^2_{(57)} = 94.21$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\chi^2/df < 2$ ; CFI = 0.97; SRMR = 0.05. All factor loadings are significant,  $p < .01$ . Error covariance between value/security and power/status restoration was added ( $p < .01$ ) but is not shown in the model.

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

## Discussion

As in Study 1, RWA had a strong effect on punitive attitudes. Unlike Study 1, however, only GBD but not OEQ predicted punitive attitudes after controlling for RWA. This inconsistent finding might be due to the different RWA scales used in both studies (Duckitt et al.'s (2010) items in Study 1 and Altemeyer's (1988) items in Study 2). However, this is unlikely given the similarity of the content of both scales. The findings of this study are consistent with previous research (Ho et al., 2012; McKee & Feather, 2008) that found a significant effect of GBD on harsh punishment, but no effect of OEQ. The latter might be related to the harsher and negative nature of the GBD compared to the OEQ items. But it might also relate to the different aspects that have been argued to be captured by both subscales. Crucially, those who support harsh punishment can be argued to do so more to establish and maintain a position of dominance over criminal offenders than to justify overall inequalities in society. In-group dominance seems to be especially relevant in the case of criminal offenders, where the distinction between 'us' and 'them' might be very salient and clear-cut. Furthermore, high GBD individuals might perceive crime as a zero-sum situation: the more power gained by criminal offenders, the less power remains for law-abiding citizens. Harsh punishment might be one measure used by high GBD individuals to reduce power from criminal offenders.

However, given the lack of consistency between both studies, further research should evaluate whether and under what conditions OEQ predicts punitiveness. One possibility pertains to the extent to which respondents think about criminal offenders when completing OEQ items. While general desires for group-based dominance might be somewhat related to competition for dominance with criminal offenders, justifying inequalities more broadly might be far removed from crime issues. Yet, justifying inequalities between law-abiding citizens and criminal offenders might be related to the endorsement of harsh punishment. This is consistent with findings from social identity theorists (Lehmiller & Schmitt, 2007; Schmitt, Branscombe, & Kappen, 2003) who have shown that people respond in different ways to RWA and SDO items depending on the social group they have in mind. Further research should examine how GBD and OEQ relate to punitiveness when people have different social groups in mind when completing the scales.

In relation to the differential mediation hypothesis, the findings show that the reasons why people high in RWA and GBD favour punitive measures are different to

some extent. People high in GBD were more likely to support punishment to restore status and power relationships in society ( $H_{4c}$ ), while people high in RWA did so to restore collective security ( $H_{4b}$ ). But contrary to prediction, and consistent with Study 1, the effect of RWA was also mediated by concerns about status and power hierarchies in society.

### **General Discussion**

Overall, the findings provide an initial –albeit partial– support for a dual-motivational model of punitive attitudes: RWA was a strong predictor in both studies, while SDO (in Study 1) and GBD (in Study 2) explained unique variance of punitive attitudes after controlling for RWA. Two reasons were argued to have blurred the effect of SDO on punitive attitudes in previous research: the inclusion of the authoritarian aggression subscale in the measurement of RWA; and the combination of GBD and OEQ subscales in the measurement of SDO. While the inclusion of authoritarian aggression as part of the measurement of RWA decreased the effect of SDO to some extent, SDO remained a significant predictor in Study 1. Nonetheless, future studies on the support for harsh sentences should avoid including RWA items that are somehow linked to crime and punishment issues (or even remove authoritarian aggression as a whole). In relation to the role of the subscales of SDO, this paper found conflicting results. In Study 1, GBD and OEQ predicted punitive attitudes after controlling for RWA. In Study 2, on the other hand, OEQ became non-significant after controlling for RWA. More research is required to understand under what conditions OEQ will predict punitive attitudes.

Most interestingly, the findings support to some extent Duckitt's (2009) argument that people high in RWA and SDO favour punitive measures for different reasons. People high in RWA are motivated to achieve collective security and support punishment to maintain order, security and value consensus. Consistently, the effect of RWA on punitive attitudes was found to be mediated by the belief that crime is a threat to collective security and by the motive to restore values and security in society. People high in SDO, on the other hand, are motivated to achieve power and dominance and should favour punishment to take away power from criminal offenders and restore hierarchies in society. As expected, the effect of SDO on the support for punitive measures was mediated by perceptions of threat to social hierarchies and the effect of GBD was mediated by the goal of restoring status and power relationships. RWA and

SDO were both related to a lack of concern for the wellbeing of criminal offenders and the latter accounted for part of the reasons why these two variables predicted punitiveness.

Unlike predicted, however, part of the reasons why RWA predicted punitive desires were also related to concerns about status and power relationships in society: people high in RWA were inclined to perceive crime as a threat to hierarchies and punishment as a means to restore status and power relationships in society. These results suggest that people high in RWA are highly motivated to support harsh punishment and will agree with all possible justifications for its use. Furthermore, these findings are consistent with other research that has found that the effects of RWA and SDO are separable only to some extent. As in other studies, while RWA seems to have a clear effect on threat-driven variables, it seems to be more difficult to find unique mediators or effects for SDO. For example, Cohrs, Moschner et al. (2005) tested the effect of RWA and SDO on attitudes in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. They found that RWA was the main predictor of threat-related attitudes toward Islam, while both RWA and SDO were related to the concern for negative consequences of the military action. Similarly, only RWA was related to perceptions of threat from terrorism, while both RWA and SDO predicted a lack of support for Saddam Hussein (Crowson et al., 2005).

Furthermore, these findings are not completely out of expectation if one considers that people high in RWA value social conformity and will dislike anything that goes against traditional set-ups of society (such as criminals being at the bottom of society). Threats to social inequality can thus also be perceived as damaging social stability, cohesion and order (Duckitt & Sibley, 2007). Criminals taking away power and status from wealthy groups can also threaten their sense of stability and order, particularly because subordinate groups can use this influence to disrupt social order (see in relation to prejudice, Cohrs & Asbrock, 2009). Overall, people high in RWA also have a preference for hierarchies and the submission to authorities. Unlike SDO, however, RWA's concerns for maintaining status inequalities might originate from security rather than competitive motivations.

The common effect of RWA and SDO on status and power restoration might also stem from the fact that they are both conservative and system-justifying ideologies. The punishment of criminal offenders can be argued to serve the status quo, as it reduces the potential for change, both in the normative and hierarchical structures of society. The latter suggests that the effect of RWA can be more widespread than the

effect of SDO. While people high in RWA care both about the normative and hierarchical order in society, people high in SDO do not seem to care about security and value issues, and their system justification tendencies are only related to maintaining unequal social structures. Future research might look at the relationship between system justification and punitive attitudes, and at whether punishment might reduce moral outrage and serve a palliative function in society.

As argued by Duckitt (2006), RWA and SDO do not always predict negative attitudes towards the same social groups. Ethnic minorities are often low in power and also deviate from common values and norms and prejudice towards them will be related to both RWA and SDO. The findings of this paper suggest that criminal offenders are also perceived as threatening to both dimensions: by committing crime criminal offenders try to gain power over society and threaten security and common norms and values.

### **Conclusions**

The aim of this paper was to apply the dual-motivational model of ideological attitudes to the study of punitive attitudes (Duckitt, 2009). Previous research has found that both RWA (e.g. Altemeyer, 1988) and SDO (e.g. Pratto et al., 1994; Sidanius et al., 2006) predict punitive attitudes. Yet, little research so far had evaluated the joint effects of RWA and SDO on attitudes towards punishment, nor examined the different reasons why people high in RWA and SDO support punitive attitudes. Consistent with a dual-motivational model of punitive attitudes people high in RWA endorsed harsh punishment to maintain order, security and value consensus, as well as power and status relationships in society. People high in SDO, on the other hand, were punitive to establish a position of dominance over criminal offenders.

While in this research both RWA and SDO predicted punitive attitudes, one might expect to find situations where only one or the other was a relevant predictor. Research in other areas has shown that the relationships between RWA, SDO and social attitudes depend on whether the objects activate a specific need in a specific context. Cohrs and Stelzl (2010) looked at cross-national differences in the effect of RWA and SDO on anti-immigrant attitudes and showed that RWA was a stronger predictor in countries where people perceived immigrants as increasing crime rates and as being bad for economy. SDO, on the other hand, was a stronger predictor in counties where immigrants had a higher relative unemployment rate. Other studies have even found

different directions of effects depending on the social context. One study conducted by McFarland, Ageyev and Abalakina-Paap (1992) found that the relationship between RWA and attitudes towards equality was positive in Russia and negative in the United States: people high in RWA supported equality to the extent that it is status quo. Meanwhile, Henry, Sidanius, Levin & Pratto (2005) found that SDO correlated positively with the support for violence towards the Middle East in the United States and negatively predicted support for violence towards the West in Lebanon. The latter suggests that people high in SDO support the use of violence only if it can help superior groups to gain more power. In the same line, crime and punishment will not always have the same meaning for people high in RWA and SDO. In a context where the target of punishment is perceived as both dangerous and of lower class both variables might be relevant. But the results could be completely different when talking about white-collar crime, or crime committed by authorities (see Feather, 1998). More research is needed to understand the social conditions under which RWA and SDO will be more important predictors of punitiveness.



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## INTERLUDE 1

Paper 1 of this dissertation provided initial support for the argument that two ideological and motivational antecedents are at the root of punitive attitudes. On the one hand, high RWA individuals are particularly sensitive to signs in the environment that suggest a lack of normative order. They are likely to agree with the use of harsh sentences because they think that punishing criminal offenders can send a message to the community that law-breaking behaviours will not be tolerated. On the other hand, high SDO individuals (and in particular those high in group-based dominance) perceive crime as threatening to status hierarchies and endorse harsh sentences to send a message to criminal offenders that people have low regard for them. Interestingly, and against expectations, people high in RWA also worry about criminal offenders gaining power in society. However, the motives behind status concerns are likely to be different: keeping criminal offenders in ‘their place in society’ assures that they will not have the power to disrupt social and normative order.

The findings of this paper are in accordance with a ‘differential mediation hypothesis’ (Duckitt & Sibley, 2009), at least in part. Crucially, harsh punishment is justified in terms of re-establishing normative order as well as maintaining the hierarchical structure in society. Nonetheless, while both of these symbolic motives are related to the support for punitive measures, they can be expected to predict different views on the goals that punishment should achieve. Harsh treatment, vindictiveness and the denial of respect might be perceived to be necessary to degrade the offender’s status, but not to restore values. Paper 2 examines a ‘differential effects hypothesis’ by evaluating whether RWA, SDO and symbolic motives of punishment relate in different ways to two different dimensions of retribution: retribution as revenge and retribution as just deserts.

## **PAPER 2**

### **Retribution as revenge and retribution as just deserts: On the relationships between two dimensions of retribution, ideological dispositions and the harsh treatment of criminal offenders**

Monica M. Gerber  
Jonathan Jackson

#### **Abstract**

Public attitudes towards law-breakers shape the tone and tenor of crime-control policy. The desire for retribution seems to be the main motivation underpinning punitive attitudes towards sentencing, yet there is some confusion in the research literature over what retribution really means. In this paper we distinguish between retribution as revenge (as the desire to punish criminal offenders to retaliate a past wrong by making the offender suffer) and retribution as just deserts (as the preference to restore justice through proportional compensation from the offender). Results from an online survey (n=176) provide evidence of two distinct dimensions of retribution, but we also show that these two dimensions have different ideological and motivational antecedents, and have different consequences in terms of the treatment of criminal offender. We find that retribution as revenge is associated with the motivation to enforce status boundaries with criminal offenders, as well as ideological preferences for power and dominance (as expressed by social dominance orientation) and in-group conformity (as expressed by right-wing authoritarianism). Endorsement of retribution as revenge also predicts the support of harsh punishment and the willingness to deny fair procedures. By contrast, retribution as just deserts is mainly predicted by a value restoration motive and by right-wing authoritarianism. After controlling for revenge, retribution as just deserts predicts support for procedural justice in the criminal courts. We conclude with the idea that beliefs about proportionality and compensation work as a buffer against the negative effects of revenge.

*Keywords:* retribution, revenge, just deserts, right-wing authoritarianism, social dominance orientation



Why do people call for the harsh punishment of criminal offenders? According to the available empirical evidence, the guiding motivation seems to be a desire for retribution (e.g. Carlsmith, Darley, & Robinson, 2002; Weiner, Graham, & Reyna, 1997), which is defined *inter alia* as the support of punishment to restore justice and balance in society, or as a preference for retaliation and an expression of vindictiveness. Yet, thus far there has been little clarity over what retribution actually means. The first of three contributions in this paper is to provide conceptual and methodological refinement to the central psychological motivation to punish law-breakers.

Going back to an old distinction (Finckenauer, 1988; Von Hirsch, 1976), we argue that there are two dimensions to retribution. One is concerned with allowing the offender to compensate for the harm done and restoring a sense of justice through proportional punishment (retribution as just deserts). The other comprises a less constructive use of punishment to get back at the offender and make him suffer (retribution as revenge). Von Hirsch (1976) and Finckenauer (1988) first proposed the need to distinguish between both dimensions but provided no evidence on whether they are indeed empirically different<sup>1</sup>. Other studies have distinguished between a vengeful deservingness perspective and a more constructive moral or justice restoration motive (De Keijser, Van Der Leeden, & Jackson, 2002; Ho, ForsterLee, ForsterLee, & Crofts, 2002; McKee & Feather, 2008), but have combined in their measurements items on the goals of punishment with the sentencing process (Ho et al., 2002) and the message that punishment seeks to communicate (De Keijser et al., 2002).

We provide further clarity on the distinction between these two dimensions of retribution. We clarify the meaning of retribution as revenge and just deserts, develop scales to measure each retributive perspective and disentangle the goals of punishment from the process by which punishment is assigned. We then examine whether these two dimensions have different motivational antecedents and whether they relate in different ways to beliefs about how criminal offenders should be treated (e.g. that they should be denied procedural justice in court and they should be given a harsh and punitive sentence if convicted). Presenting findings from an online survey (n=176) we provide evidence that retribution as revenge and retribution as just deserts are better conceptualised as being two distinct concepts. On the one hand, retribution as revenge is found to stem from ideological preferences for group-based dominance (as captured by

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<sup>1</sup> Finckenauer (1988) proposed scales to measure both concepts and some of his items are used for the current research.

social dominance orientation, SDO) and collective security (as captured by right-wing authoritarianism, RWA). Harsh treatment of criminal offenders – both in terms of the process of assigning punishment and punishment itself – is positively related to the support of retribution as revenge. On the other hand, retribution as just desert is found to be predicted only by RWA; after controlling for revenge, retribution as just desert is related to the endorsement of fair treatment of criminal offenders.

### **Punishment goals**

Punishment goals are people's views on the purpose of punishment, and they are typically divided into instrumental goals and retributive goals. Instrumental goals justify punishment in terms of future benefits for society (Carlsmith, 2006; Carlsmith & Darley, 2008; Carlsmith et al., 2002; Darley & Pittman, 2003), reducing the likelihood of future harm by means of incapacitation, deterrence or rehabilitation. An instrumental mindset works under the assumption of rational choice: offenders are expected to stop committing crime to avoid punishment, so citizens should determine their punitive reactions in terms of the likelihood of recidivism (Carlsmith & Darley, 2008). Some research has found support for such an utilitarian perspective in that crime related concerns predict punitive attitudes (e.g. Costelloe, Chiricos, & Gertz, 2009; De Keijser & Elffers, 2009; Hogan, Chiricos, & Gertz, 2005), yet most research has failed to find effects of victimisation experiences (e.g. Baron & Hartnagel, 1996; Cullen, Clark, Cullen, & Mathers, 1985; Hough & Roberts, 1999; King & Maruna, 2009), personal fear of crime (Baron & Hartnagel, 1996) and crime concerns (Cullen et al., 1985; King & Maruna, 2009) on the support for harsh sentencing.

By contrast, support for punitive responses has been more robustly linked to a range of non-crime related factors. Moral outrage (Darley, 2009; Darley & Pittman, 2003; Fiske & Tetlock, 1997; Goldberg, Lerner, & Tetlock, 1999; Lerner, Goldberg, & Tetlock, 1998), concerns about social cohesion and moral decline (Tyler & Boeckmann, 1997; Unnever & Cullen, 2010), and generational and economic anxieties (King & Maruna, 2009) are better predictors of the support for punitive responses than instrumental crime concern variables. Studies also show that people determine sentencing more in terms of moral (e.g. severity of the offense or intention) than utilitarian factors (e.g. likelihood of recidivism) (Carlsmith, 2006; Carlsmith & Darley, 2008; Carlsmith et al., 2002; Darley, Carlsmith, & Robinson, 2000), even though they might not be aware of their own reasons to support punishment (Carlsmith, 2008).

Intriguingly, people tend to support capital punishment even after being provided with evidence that deterrence is not efficient in reducing crime (see Carlsmith et al., 2002).

A retributive goal of punishment is concerned with retaliating a wrong more than preventing future crimes (Carlsmith et al., 2002; Darley & Pittman, 2003; Vidmar & Miller, 1980; Weiner et al., 1997). Retribution is usually defined as the belief that criminal offenders deserve to be punished for the violation of society's rules, and that this punishment should be proportional to the wrong committed (Banks, 2008; Carlsmith, 2006; Carlsmith & Darley, 2008; Carlsmith et al., 2002; Finckenauer, 1988).<sup>2</sup> Punishment is considered an end in itself, and should be determined by the perceived seriousness of the offence and the intention and responsibility of the offender (Carlsmith, 2006; Feather, 1996; Vidmar, 2000). Yet, while retribution seems to relate to the repayment of wrongful acts (Finckenauer, 1988), it also captures a rather unstructured range of different non-instrumental aspects of punishment, including concerns about justice, proportionality, morality, social cohesion, deservingness and the retaliation of wrongdoing. Consistent with this, retribution is often measured as a mix of items capturing some of these dimensions (e.g. Okimoto, Wenzel, & Feather, 2012; Orth, 2003; Tam, Leung, & Chiu, 2008; Wenzel, Okimoto, & Cameron, 2012).

This reflects a lack of clarity in the definition of retribution. But importantly, there have been a few attempts to bring structure to the research within this field. Von Hirsch (1976; see also Finckenauer, 1988; Weiner et al., 1997) argues for two dimensions to retribution: retribution as just deserts and retribution as revenge. In retribution as just deserts, the criminal offender pays back for the harm done and justice is restored through proportionality and fair process. By paying a debt, positive and negative experiences are distributed and social balance is restored (Weiner et al., 1997). In retribution as revenge, people want to punish to get even and retaliate, and this is not constrained by a proportional, fair and due process. According to Banks (2008), criminologists thought of retribution as revenge until the 1970s and in the 1980s, a theory of just deserts became more relevant. Ho et al., (2002), on the other hand, argue that revenge and justice motivations are often confused, and that the state justifies the harshest punishments by referring to needs for 'justice'.

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<sup>2</sup> There are parallels here to Durkheim's (1964, 1973) argument that punishment should be considered a moral phenomenon: while crime violates the moral order in society, punishment serves an expressive role of reaffirming social bonds and defining the boundaries of social groups.

Retribution as just deserts seeks to restore equity through a rational assignment of punishment that is proportional to the severity of the crime. To achieve justice, the process by which the offender is sentenced needs to be just and fair, and legal guidelines need to be followed. Crucially, both the process to allocate punishment and the severity of the sentence need to be fair (Ho et al., 2002). In retribution as just deserts, the seriousness of the offense sets a limit for the harshness of the punishment. Revenge –by contrast– knows no limit (Nozick in Banks, 2008; see also Stuckless & Goranson, 1992). Unlike just desert motivations, the desire for vengeance does not seek to restore equity or justice: vengeance involves the emotional pleasure of seeing the offender suffer (Nozick in Banks, 2008; Ho et al., 2002; Weiner et al., 1997); and while revenge is often considered to be a personal matter, in retribution as just deserts there may be no tie to the victim (Nozick, in Banks, 2008; Gollwitzer & Denzler, 2009; Ho et al., 2002; Stuckless & Goranson, 1992).

There are, then, some important arguments that retribution comprises at least two separate dimensions. Empirical studies also support this claim. For example De Keijser et al. (2002) asked Dutch judges to evaluate a range of items on punishment goals. Using factor analysis, they found two factors for retribution: just desert (what we here call revenge) and moral balance (what we here call just deserts). The first one considered items on deservingness, suffering and vengeance, while the second one included items on restoring legal and moral order in society, as well as beliefs that the offender should compensate society for the harm done. Similarly McKee & Feather (2008) distinguish between a legitimate desire for retributive punishment and personal revenge, finding that vengeance attitudes were positively related to retribution and incapacitation and negatively to the goal of rehabilitation. They concluded that: “At least some component of support for capital punishment does have a basis in attitudes related to vengeance” (McKee & Feather, 2008, p. 159). Finally Ho et al. (2002) used factor analysis to clarify the distinction between what they call vengeance-oriented and justice-oriented decisions. The authors highlight as main aspects of vengeance the role of emotions and the intensity of the response, while justice is measured as preferences for a fair and legal response. They developed a Justice-Vengeance Scale, which distinguished between two components of vengeance (emotionality and intensity of response) and two components of justice (fairness and legality of response).

### **Three objectives to the study**

One might thus argue that there are two dimensions to retribution: one pertaining to the restoration of a sense of justice through proportional compensation from the offender (retribution as just deserts); the other comprising a less constructive use of punishment to retaliate a past wrong by making the offender suffer (retribution as revenge) (von Hirsch, 1976; see also Finckenauer, 1988; Ho et al., 2002). Yet, previous studies have either provided no empirical evidence of their distinction (e.g. von Hirsch, 1976; Finckenauer, 1988) or combined in their measurement characteristics of punishment with the message that punishment seeks to communicate (De Keijser et al., 2002) and the process by which sentences are assigned (Ho et al., 2002). In our study, we seek to disentangle what we understand as the core components of each retributive perspective (get even/suffer; compensation/proportionality) from the message punishment should send to society (e.g. restore moral balance) and the characteristics of the sentencing process (e.g. whether offenders should be treated harshly and denied procedural fairness). We build on previous research by considering both dimensions of retribution, as well as measures on the symbolic motives of punishment and the ways in which criminal offenders should be treated (harshness of punishment and sentencing decisions).

The aims of this paper are threefold. First, we provide further evidence into the distinction between retribution as revenge and just deserts, developing measures that capture the core aspects of retribution. Second, we explore the motivational antecedents of both dimensions of retribution by looking at their relationship with ideological preferences and symbolic motives of punishment. Third, we examine the consequences of retribution as revenge and just deserts by looking at their relationship with preferences for harsh punishment and the denial of procedural fairness. In this paper we build on previous studies by proposing an encompassing model that describes the different motives that lie behind each retribution dimension, as well as the different consequences they carry in terms of beliefs about how criminal offenders should be treated.

Figure 1 shows the theoretical model. Importantly, the directional arrows are not meant to suggest causality, reflecting plausible layers of ordered direct and indirect statistical effects, from ideological positions on the left to preferences on the treatment of law-breakers by the criminal courts.

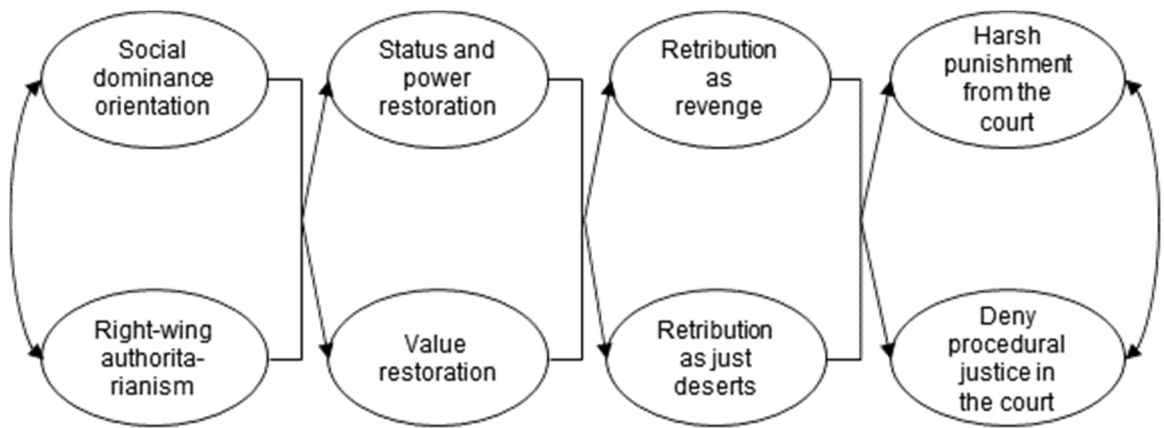


Figure 1. Theoretical framework

### Objective 1: Defining and measuring two dimensions of retribution

We start by defining what we understand by retribution as revenge and just deserts, testing whether they measure different concepts. Based on von Hirsch's (1976; see also Finckenauer, 1988) distinction, we define retribution as revenge as the desire to get even with criminal offenders by making them suffer. Following De Keijser et al. (2002), to measure retribution as revenge we consider the aim of harming the offender and the desire to get even and retaliate a past wrong. This is also consistent with Finckenauer's (1988) argument that in retribution as revenge it is society that evens the score with the offender and not the offender who compensates for the wrong done. Unlike Ho et al., (2002) we do not consider measures on the role of emotions in the decision process or the strength of the response as part of the measurement of retributive punishment. Rather, we consider separate measures on the fairness of procedures by which criminal offenders are punished (in terms of neutrality and whether emotions should play a role, as well as respecting the offender during the sentencing process) and the harshness of punishment.

We define retribution as just deserts as the desire to restore justice by allowing the offender to compensate society proportionally to the harm he has done. Following von Hirsch's (1976; see also Finckenauer, 1988; De Keijser et al., 2002) point that in retribution as just desert, the offender pays back for the harm he has done, we also consider a dimension on punishment as a way in which the offender compensates for his wrongdoing. We highlight two dimensions of retribution as just deserts: proportionality and compensation. Note, however, that we have left out from this definition the restoration of moral balance in society. While communicative theories of punishment

are often classified as part of retribution (e.g. De Keijser et al., 2002), we consider the restoration of moral balance as not being part of the core concept of just deserts, but rather a symbolic motive of punishment. Crucially, moral balance might be relevant to both types of retribution and we seek to explore this relationship by separating conceptually and practically between goals and symbolic motives of punishment. We hypothesise that:

*H<sub>1</sub>: One dimension of retribution will capture preferences for getting back at the offender and making him suffer (retribution as revenge) while the other dimension will comprise elements of proportionality and compensation (retribution as just deserts).*

Vidmar (2000) argues that regardless of differences in intensity and personal involvement between retribution and revenge, the social and psychological mechanisms that underlie both punishment goals are the same. In our study, we argue that different ideological preferences lie behind retribution as just deserts and revenge.

## **Objective 2: Antecedents of retribution**

We hypothesise two layers of antecedents: symbolic motives of punishment (because different goals of punishment might communicate different messages to the community) and ideological positions (because people's preferences for how society should be structured may drive how people perceive crime and appropriate institutional response to law-breaking).

**Symbolic motives of punishment.** Two symbolic justice-related motives of punishment are often named in the literature: the first is status and power and the second is value restoration (Okimoto, Wenzel, & Feather, 2011; Vidmar, 2000; Vidmar & Miller, 1980; Wenzel, Okimoto, Feather, & Platow, 2008; Wenzel & Thielmann, 2006). First, through crime, criminal offenders take advantage, assume superiority, and show disrespect for the victim and society (Miller, 2001; Van Kleef, Homan, Finkenauer, Gündemir, & Stamkou, 2011). Harsh punishment can degrade the offender's status, empower the victim and society, and hereby restore the status quo in society (Okimoto & Wenzel, 2008, 2010; Vidmar, 2000; Vidmar & Miller, 1980; Wenzel et al., 2008; Wenzel & Thielmann, 2006).

Second, crime threatens common rules and values in society. Punishment symbolically labels the offence as wrong, thereby restoring people's faith in shared values (Okimoto & Wenzel, 2008; Rucker, Polifroni, Tetlock, & Scott, 2004; Vidmar & Miller, 1980; Wenzel & Thielmann, 2006). Importantly, Wenzel and collaborators (Wenzel et al., 2008, 2012; Wenzel & Thielmann, 2006) and Okimoto et al. (2011) have provided consistent evidence that status/power restoration motives are related to a retributive response to crime, while value restoration motives relate to a restorative perspective of punishment. However, retribution might also be related to value restoration motives (Vidmar, 2000; Wenzel et al., 2012) because harsh punishment can communicate to the community that crimes are unacceptable. Interestingly, Okimoto et al. (2011) found a relationship between value restoration directed at the community and retribution, concluding that harsh punishment can help restoring the values of the community.

In our study, we argue that status/power restoration motives are particularly relevant to a revenge perspective on retribution. Retaliating a past wrong by making the offender suffer demeans the status of the offender and returns power to victim and society. Retribution as revenge implies low commitment to procedural fairness and might thus be better suited to communicate to the offender that he is not part of the community and that people have low regard for him. Value restoration, in contrast, is argued to be relevant to a just deserts perspective on retribution: moral balance can be restored in society by assigning a punishment that allows the offender to compensate in proportion to the harm that he has done. We hypothesise that:

*H<sub>2</sub>: Status and power restoration will be positively associated with retribution as revenge*

*H<sub>3</sub>: Value restoration will be positively associated with retribution as just deserts*

**Ideological dispositions.** Ideological attitudes are relevant to punishment goals, in that they are linked to different viewpoints about the causes of crime and the ways in which society should deal with it (Carroll, Perkowitz, Lurigio, & Weaver, 1987). Carroll and colleagues showed that conservative ideologies relate to the belief that crime is committed by people who lack self-control and moral conscience and that harsh punishment is appropriate to bring offenders back on the right track. Liberal ideologies, on the other hand, are associated with the belief that crime is caused by structural



economical inequalities and problems of discrimination, and that rehabilitation and system reformation are appropriate to solve the crime problem. Two ideological dispositions have consistently been found to predict attitudes towards the punishment of criminal offenders: right-wing authoritarianism (RWA, Altemeyer, 1981, 1988) and social dominance orientation (SDO; Sidanius, Mitchell, & Navarrete, 2006). However in line with a dual-motivational model (Duckitt, 2001) –and given that RWA and SDO have different motivational antecedents– they should predict punitive attitudes for different reasons and under different circumstances. Part of the contribution of this research is to examine whether RWA and SDO predict different retributive goals of punishment.

Right-wing authoritarianism has been defined as the covariation of three attitudinal clusters: authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression and conventionalism (Altemeyer, 1981). Capturing the motivational goal of collective security, RWA is thought to be rooted in a personality high in social conformity and made salient by social situations perceived to be dangerous. People high in RWA are motivated to achieve collective security and in-group conformity and should support punitive attitudes to restore value consensus (Duckitt, 2009). Linked to the support of harsh punishment (Altemeyer, 1981, 1988; Capps, 2002; Colémont, Van Hiel, & Cornelis, 2011; McKee & Feather, 2008) and to retributive reactions to criminal offences (Carroll et al., 1987; Feather, 1998; Funke, 2005; Lerner et al., 1998), RWA is also associated with moral balance, social constructiveness (Colémont et al., 2011), deterrence and incapacitation, but not with personal vengeance (McKee & Feather, 2008). Overall, people high in RWA seem to be more likely to support punishment if it is conducted by legal authorities, but not if the victim seeks personal revenge (McKee & Feather, 2008). People high in RWA protect legitimised authorities, which seems to be more important than punishment itself. Feather (1998) showed that people high in RWA were more punitive towards someone who challenged authorities but less when it came to punishing a police officer.

RWA has been shown to predict punishment undertaken by legal authorities and not to achieve personal vengeance. We argue that people high in RWA reject personal vengeance not so much because of concerns for its harshness (recall that RWA has been related to the support for harsh punishment and retribution, Altemeyer, 1981, 1988), but because it is not sanctioned by legal authorities. Then the question is what happens with state-sponsored revenge. We hypothesise that people high in RWA will be more likely

to endorse retribution as revenge to the extent that it is undertaken by authorities. RWA should thus be positively associated with both dimensions of retribution.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, high RWA individuals seek to maintain in-group conformity ('in-group conformity hypothesis', Thomsen, Green, & Sidanius, 2008) and they should favour harsh punishment to restore people's faith in shared values. The effect of RWA on punitiveness should be mediated by a symbolic motive to restore values. We hypothesise that:

*H<sub>4</sub>: RWA will be positively related to retribution as just deserts and revenge, and its effect will be mediated by a value restoration motive*

Social dominance orientation has been defined as a preference for hierarchical relations between social groups as well as for in-group domination over out-groups (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). SDO captures the motivational goal of group dominance, power and superiority. SDO is predisposed by a tough-minded personality and made salient by the view that society is a competitive place (Duckitt, 2001). SDO captures two dimensions: a general preference for inequality, expressed by the subscale of opposition to equality (OEQ), and a preference for one's in-group dominating over out-groups, expressed by group-based dominance (GBD, Jost & Thompson, 2000; see also Ho et al., 2012; Kugler, Cooper, & Nosek, 2010). Group-based dominance reflects an active preference for overtly hierarchical relationships of dominance over subordinate groups, and it has been found to be related to aggressive intergroup attitudes (Ho et al., 2012). Opposition to equality, on the other hand, reflects a more subtle preference for unequal relationships, and has been found to predict conservatism and the opposition to policies of redistribution (Ho et al., 2012). Justice attitudes have also been found to relate in different ways to GBD and OEQ (McKee & Feather, 2008) and it is thus important to distinguish between these two subscales.

People high in SDO have been shown to endorse attitudes that allow reinforcing status boundaries (Thomsen et al., 2008) and are predicted to support punitive attitudes to take away power and status from criminal offenders and to justify inequalities more broadly (status and power restoration motive). In fact, SDO has been linked to support

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<sup>3</sup> While it is also possible to evaluate the separate role of the sub-dimensions of RWA (conventionalism and submission to authorities), preliminary analyses of our data suggest that they relate in similar ways to punitive attitudes and we thus consider them together.

for harsh criminal sanctions (Sidanius et al., 2006), general punitiveness (Capps, 2002), retribution (Pratto et al., 1994) and personal vengeance (McKee & Feather, 2008). McKee and Feather (2008) hypothesised and provided evidence that SDO and vengeful attitudes achieve common goals, namely, the goals of power and dominance over others, and a lack of concern for equality and welfare. Crucially, the authors argued that people who value power would be motivated to get even when they perceive a threat to their own personal power and social position.

Nonetheless, few studies have evaluated the effect of SDO controlling for RWA. While one study found a significant effect of SDO after controlling for RWA (Capps, 2002), two studies found no relationship between SDO and punitive attitudes after controlling for RWA (Colémont et al., 2011; McKee & Feather, 2008). First, Colémont et al. (2011) found no effect of SDO on moral balance, harsh punishment (a combination of instrumental and retributive goals) and social constructiveness. Second, McKee and Feather (2008) found no effect of SDO on support for capital punishment, after controlling for personal vengeance and RWA. These inconsistent findings might be due to the confounding of different punishment goals, the fact that they controlled for RWA and authoritarian aggression (which usually includes items on the harsh punishment of criminal offenders) and the fact that they have considered SDO as a whole, while only GBD has been found to predict punitive attitudes.

In relation to the subscales of SDO, Okimoto et al. (2011) found a link between GBD and retribution and concluded that people high in GBD compete with criminal offenders for status and power. OEQ had a negative relationship with the support for rehabilitation, but no relationship with retribution. In this study we evaluate the effects of GBD and OEQ separately, excluding items on authoritarian aggression from the RWA scale. Knowing that SDO –and in particular, GBD– predicts preferences for personal revenge, we evaluate whether it also predicts state-sponsored revenge in cases where there is no personal involvement. In line with McKee and Feather's (2008) finding on personal revenge, we expect SDO to be especially relevant to retribution as revenge because both seek the goal of power and dominance over others. Group-based competition for power and status is likely to lead to a vengeful response to crime because revenge is especially demeaning to criminal offenders and might help to reinforce status boundaries. A just deserts response, on the other hand, implies a minimum respect for the offender and will not help restoring power and status relationships. Thus, we do not expect SDO to be a relevant predictor of just deserts.

This is, unlike RWA, only retribution as revenge will satisfy the needs of those high in SDO to see the offender excluded from society and restore status boundaries. We hypothesise that:

*H<sub>5</sub>: SDO will be positively related to retribution as revenge and its effect will be mediated by a status and power restoration motive*

### **Objective 3: Treatment of criminal offenders**

What are some of the consequences of different retribution beliefs? We examine the relationship between retributive dimensions and the beliefs people hold about how criminal offenders should be treated, both doing court proceedings and in the sentencing. Previous research has shown a close relationship between retributive perspectives of punishment, harsh punitive responses (Oswald, Hupfeld, Klug, & Gabriel, 2002) and the denial of voice and respect to criminal offenders (Okimoto et al., 2011). Yet, we expect different preferences for the treatment of criminal offenders depending on people's beliefs about the goals of punishment.

We rely on procedural justice theory to provide an explanation on the relationship between theories of punishment and the treatment of criminal offenders. Procedural justice highlights the importance of the process by which outcomes are determined, more than the outcomes themselves (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler, 1990). According to the group value theory (Lind & Tyler, 1988), people care about being treated fairly because fair treatment communicates group status and membership. Crucially, people derive information on their social identities and whether they are respected within the group based on the ways in which they are treated (Boeckmann & Tyler, 1997). It follows that denying procedural fairness to criminal offenders communicates that they are not considered as members of the in-group (Boeckmann & Tyler, 1997) or at least that they are considered to be low in status. Boeckmann & Tyler (1997) argued and provided evidence that people are willing to deny procedural fairness to criminal offenders when they are perceived as a physical or financial threat (instrumental model) or when they threaten common values (symbolic model). This is, offenders perceived to be different from or outsiders to the community are likely to be denied procedural protections. To deny procedural justice in court is to communicate low status to people being tried for a crime.

Harsh treatment of criminal offenders and the denial of procedural fairness to people being prosecuted for a crime are thus likely to go hand in hand with the motivation to restore status and power relationships in society. The motivation to get even and retaliate a past wrong has been argued to allow reinforcing status boundaries with criminal offenders: applying harsh punishment and denying procedural fairness demeans the offender's status. It is thus argued that those who favour retribution to achieve revenge will be more likely to support harsh punishment and deny procedural fairness to criminal offenders. A just deserts perspective, on the other hand, assumes some level of commitment with legal and fair processes and should thus be negatively related to the denial of procedural fairness. Given its focus on proportionality, the extent to which a just deserts perspective relates to preferences for harsh punishment should depend on the severity of the crime. Since we are measuring punishment goals in general, we do not specify a hypothesis about the relationship between just deserts and harsh punishment. We hypothesise that:

*H<sub>6</sub>: The support for harsh punishment will be positively related to retribution as revenge*

*H<sub>7</sub>: Denial of procedural fairness will be positively related to retribution as revenge and negatively related to retribution as just deserts*

### **Type of crime**

On a final note, respondents may favour different types of retribution depending upon the type of crime, or depending upon characteristics of criminals that come to mind when completing the survey. Previous research has shown that people are more willing to deny procedural fairness to suspects with prior records (McClosky & Brill, 1983). Similarly, violent crime might elicit harsher responses and lower concerns for the wellbeing of criminal offenders. In this study, we asked respondents the type of crime they had in mind when completing the survey and used this as a control variable. Again, we do not make any predictions in relation to the role of the type of crime.

## Method

### Participants

211 persons from the US participated in an online study posted on Amazon's Mechanical Turk.<sup>4</sup> 35 participants (17%) were excluded for failing to respond correctly to at least one out of two validation questions embedded in the study. The reported results correspond to 176 participants. The sample was diverse in terms of gender (50% female), age ( $Min=17$ ,  $Max=72$ ,  $M=34$ ,  $SD=13.3$ ), occupation (52% worked, 22% students, 14% unemployed) and ideology (56% leaning to the left, 21% centre, 24% leaning to the right); although less diverse in terms of ethnicity (86% white).

### Procedure

Participants were invited to take part in a study on crime and punishment. They were paid 0.50 US dollars for their participation and requested to give informed consent. Before taking part in the study, an instructional manipulation check (Oppenheimer, Meyvis, & Davidenko, 2009) was used to make sure that participants were reading the instructions. Participants were requested to skip rather than answer a question and only participants who did not answer the question were able to participate in the study. This manipulation was used to screen out people who do random clicking and to increase attention of the remaining participants (Oppenheimer et al., 2009). Participants were then asked to answer a questionnaire measuring background socio-demographic questions, RWA, SDO, punishment goals, symbolic motives of punishment and attitudes towards due process. Finally, respondents were asked to provide information on the type of crime they had in mind when completing the survey, and debriefed.

### Measures

**Retribution.** Scales of retribution were reviewed (De Keijser et al., 2002; Finckenauer, 1988; Ho et al., 2002; Okimoto et al., 2011) and items were adapted to measure retribution as revenge and retribution as just deserts. Retribution as revenge has been defined as the use of harsh punishment to get even with the offender, and is

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<sup>4</sup> Studies on the use of Amazon's Mechanical Turk to collect data have concluded that not only is the data as reliable as data collected through other means, but participants are also more diverse in terms of socio-demographic variables (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011).

hypothesised to go hand in hand with the thought that punishment should make the offender suffer. Two subscales were designed to capture retribution as revenge: suffering and getting even. Retribution as just deserts, on the other hand, has been defined as a desire to restore justice by allowing the offender to compensate to society proportionally to the harm he has done. It was measured using two subscales: proportionality and compensation. Table 1 displays the items of each subscale and descriptive statistics. 7-point likert scales were used for these and all other measures in the survey.

Table 1

*Items on retribution as revenge and retribution as just deserts (n=176)*

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b>Retribution as revenge</b>		
<i>Suffer</i>		
Infliction of suffering should be an explicit element in every sanction	3.38	1.63
Punishment without an element of suffering is no punishment	4.13	1.60
Punishment is deserved suffering	4.30	1.64
<i>Get even</i>		
We should punish to get even with the offender	3.00	1.63
Society should punish to get back at criminal offenders	3.50	1.72
Society has the right to take revenge on criminal offenders	3.52	1.75
<b>Retribution as just deserts</b>		
<i>Proportionality</i>		
The severity of the punishment should be proportional to the harm done	5.69	1.10
Criminals should be punished proportionally to the harm done to society	5.53	1.18
The severity of the punishment should fit the severity of the crime	5.72	1.18
<i>Compensation</i>		
By undergoing punishment, a criminal pays off his debt to society	4.76	1.54
Justice is restored when an offender pays back for the harm he has caused	4.86	1.46
By means of punishment the criminal offender compensates for the harm he caused to society	4.73	1.55

**Ideological attitudes.** RWA was measured using 12 items from Duckitt, Bizumic, Krauss, & Heled's (2010) adaptation of Altemeyer's (1998) items. Six items measured conventionalism and six items measured authoritarian submission. Half of the items of each scale were reverse coded to control for acquiescence response bias. Authoritarian aggression items usually refer to crime and punishment issues either explicitly (e.g. 'Being kind to loafers or criminals will only encourage them to take advantage of your weakness, so it's best to use a firm, tough hand when dealing with them', Duckitt et al., 2010) or implicitly (e.g. 'We should smash all the negative elements that are causing trouble in our society', Duckitt et al., 2010). While these items might be useful in predicting prejudice and other intergroup attitudes, including them in our study would lead to tautological conclusions of aggression against criminal offenders predicting the support for their harsh punishment. In our study we thus excluded items on authoritarian aggression. SDO was measured using 12 items from Pratto et al. (1994), six for group-based dominance and six for opposition to equality.

**Symbolic motives of punishment.** *Value restoration* was measured using two items adapted from Okimoto et al.'s (2011) other-value restoration scale: 'Punishment should reinforce for others the values that the offender's behavior undermined' and 'Punishment should express to others that the offender's behavior violated the values we should all share'. *Status and power restoration motive* was measured using two items. One item was adapted from Okimoto et al.'s (2011) status/power reduction goal scale: 'Punishment should communicate to the offender that people have low regard for him'. The second item was designed for this study: 'Punishment should humiliate the offender'.

**Treatment of criminal offenders.** Two scales were developed to measure people's beliefs about how criminal offenders should be treated: harsh punishment and denial of procedural fairness (see Appendix). Four items – two positively phrased and two negatively phrased – measured the support for harsh punitive measures (e.g. 'People who break the law should be given harsher sentences'). Based on procedural fairness literature (e.g. Tyler, 1990) two dimensions were considered to measure denial of procedural fairness: whether the criminal offender should be treated with respect (3 items) and whether the sentencing process should be neutral or allow emotional sentencing (6 items). In this way, items on emotional sentencing (Ho et al., 2002) were considered as part of a belief that the courts should not have to follow neutral



procedures when deciding on the appropriate punishment. Descriptive statistics and correlations are presented in Table 3.

**Type of crime.** Finally, we asked respondents to report the type of crime they had primarily in mind when completing the survey. The options were: property crimes (e.g. theft or burglary), violent crime (e.g. assault or murder), sexual crime (e.g. rape), drug offences, fraud, vandalism and other. Most respondents chose violent crime (64.2%), followed by property crimes (11.9%) and drug offences (11.4%). This measure was recoded into a dummy variable, with 1 corresponding to violent or sexual crime and 0 to the rest.

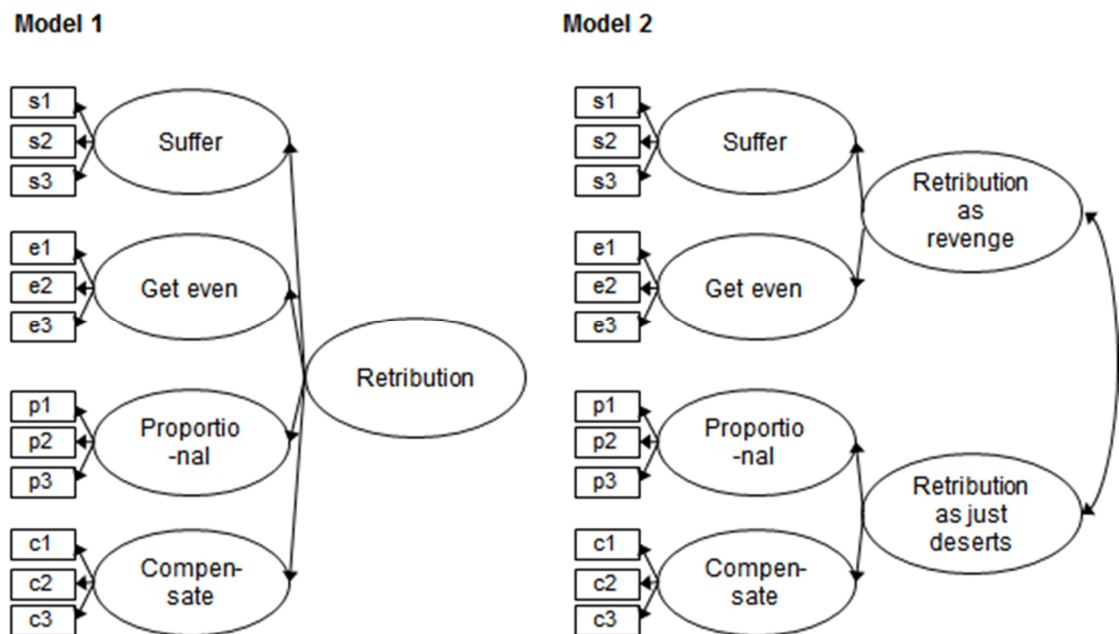


Figure 2. Baseline models for retributive justice

## Analysis

The first aim of this paper was to evaluate whether retribution as vengeance and retribution as just deserts in fact measured two different concepts. Confirmatory factor analysis with MPLUS was carried out to model the dimensions specified above (suffer, getting even, proportionality, and compensation). A model where all dimensions loaded on one higher order factor (Figure 1, Model 1) was compared to a model where suffering and getting even loaded on one higher order factor ('retribution as revenge') and proportionality and compensation loaded on a second higher order factor

(‘retribution as just deserts’, Figure 1, Model 2). Fit statistics were then used to compare the adequacy of both models. In a second stage structural equation modeling was used to examine the relationship between retribution, ideology, symbolic motives of punishment and attitudes towards the treatment of criminal offenders.

## Results

### The dimensionality of retribution

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to compare the fit of a one-factor and a two-factor model of retribution. Figure 2 shows the models tested and Table 2 presents the fit statistics for both models. Model 1 predicts that the four sub-dimensions (getting even, suffer, proportionality and compensation) are part of a second order factor called retribution. Model 2, on the other hand, predicts that two dimensions capture the relationship between the sub-dimensions: retribution as revenge (getting even and making the offender suffer) and retribution as just deserts (proportionality and compensation). Second order factors were used given that different dimensions are hypothesised to underlie both retribution types.

Table 2

*Fit statistics for one- and two-factor models (n=176)*

<i>Model</i>	$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>SRMR</i>	<i>CFI</i>
1 factor	89.0	50	0.001	0.07	0.96
2 factors	70.3	49	0.025	0.05	0.98

The two-factor model showed a very good fit according to Hu and Bentler’s (1999) criteria (Model 2:  $\chi^2(49)=70.3$ ,  $p=.025$ ; CFI=0.98; SRMR=0.05). The fit of the one-factor model was slightly worse (Model 1:  $\chi^2(50)=89.0$ ,  $p=.001$ ; CFI=0.96; SRMR=0.07), although its fit was still close to conventional levels. While one could reasonably argue in favour of both models, we explore the two-factor option as it provides a slightly better fit. It is also of theoretical interest to evaluate whether these two dimensions of retribution are differentially related to ideological preferences and

the treatment of criminal offenders. Figure 3 presents the factor loadings for the first and second order factors. Note that while a two factor model fits the data better, retribution as revenge and just deserts are still highly correlated ( $r=.61$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and special caution was placed in the remaining analyses to rule out multicollinearity issues.

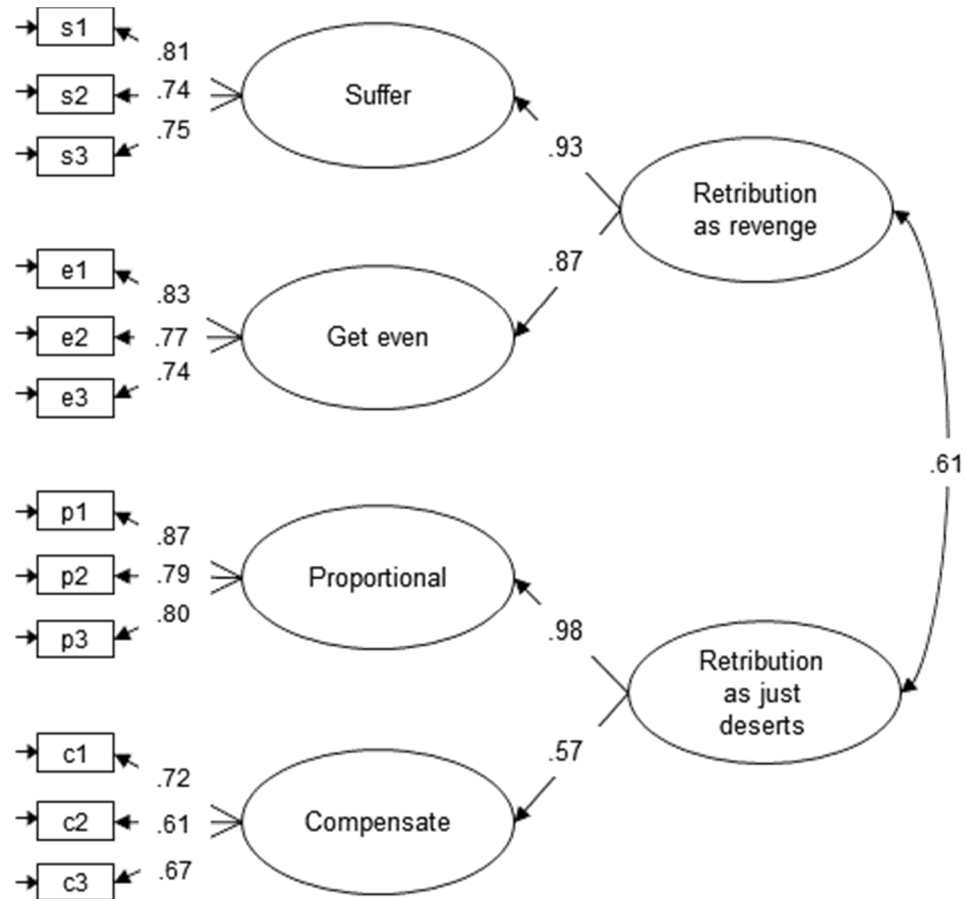


Figure 3. Confirmatory factor analysis of a two-factor model of retribution (n=176)  
Notes. Standardised coefficients are shown. For all coefficients  $p<.01$ .

### Ideological and motivational antecedents of retribution as revenge and just deserts

We start by exploring the relationship between retribution as revenge, just deserts, ideological dispositions and symbolic motives of punishment. Table 3 presents the bivariate correlations between all variables in the study. Factor scores derived from Model 2 (Figure 3) were used for retribution as revenge and just deserts. Means were used for all other variables.

Table 3

*Descriptive statistics and correlations between retribution as revenge, retribution as just deserts, ideological dispositions and the treatment of criminal offenders (n=176)*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 Retribution as revenge	-									
2 Retribution as just deserts	.70**	-								
3 RWA	.46**	.41**	-							
4 SDO GBD	.32**	.13	.23**	-						
5 SDO OEQ	.18*	.03	.25**	.59**	-					
6 Value restoration	.35**	.43**	.37**	-.07	.02	-				
7 Status restoration	.64**	.45**	.27**	.41**	.27**	.38**	-			
8 Harsh punishment	.59**	.51**	.60**	.23**	.17*	.35**	.45**	-		
9 Deny fair process	.54**	.20**	.28**	.39**	.26**	.07	.50**	.54**	-	
10 Violent crime	.27**	.21**	.16*	.11	.13	.04	.26**	.37**	.29**	-
Mean	0.00	0.00	3.61	2.62	2.44	5.52	3.64	3.87	2.93	0.67
SD	1.10	0.86	1.28	1.21	1.17	1.14	1.58	1.41	0.89	0.47
$\alpha$	0.87	0.80	0.93	0.89	0.91	0.87	0.78	0.87	0.83	-

\*p < .05. \*\*p < .01

Retribution as revenge was positively and significantly correlated with RWA, GBD ( $r=.32, p<.01$ ) and value restoration ( $r=.35, p<.01$ ), and particularly with status and power restoration ( $r=.64, p<.01$ ), harsh punishment ( $r=.59, p<.01$ ) and the denial of fair process ( $r=.54, p<.01$ ). The correlation with opposition to equality was very modest ( $r=.18, p<.05$ ). Retribution as just deserts, on the other hand, was positively and significantly correlated with RWA, values and status restoration, harsh punishment ( $rs>.41, ps<.01$ ), but not with the subscales of SDO ( $ps>.05$ ). The association with the denial of fair process was positive but rather small ( $r=.20, p<.01$ ).

Structural equation modeling was then used to model the relationship between retribution, treatment of criminal offenders, ideological dispositions and symbolic motives of punishment. Given that opposition to equality showed only a modest statistical effect on both retribution as revenge and just deserts, we decided to exclude it from the structural equation model. To avoid complicating the model by using second order factors, derived factor scores were used for the sub-dimensions of retribution. Parcels were also used to measure RWA, GBD, and the denial of procedural fairness. To maintain the dimensions of RWA, one parcel was constructed to measure authoritarian submission and the other one to measure conventionalism. In relation to GBD, items were randomly assigned to one of two parcels. Finally, two dimensions were used as parcels for the denial of procedural fairness: respect and neutrality of procedures. The use of item parcels has been shown to improve model fit and provide more stable solutions when the sample size is small (see Little, Cunningham, Shahar, & Widaman, 2002). Also, Little et al. (2002) recommend this approach for studies –such as this– where the aim is to explore relationships between latent variables and not factor structures.<sup>5</sup>

First, a model was fitted where GBD and RWA predicted symbolic motives of punishment and these, in turn, predicted vengeance and deserts. Vengeance and deserts, on the other hand, were modeled to predict harsh punishment and denial of procedural fairness.<sup>6</sup> This model, however, did not fit the data very well. Modification indices

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<sup>5</sup> Given the high correlation between the fitted factor scores for retribution as revenge and just deserts ( $r=.70, p<.01$ ) we first tested for multicollinearity. Variance inflation factors (VIF) were all below 3.1, which suggests that despite the high correlation, multicollinearity problems were only moderate.

<sup>6</sup> We should note, however, that we do not wish to imply a causal path from ideological dispositions to symbolic motives of punishment, retributive justice and the treatment of criminal offenders. Our use of structural equation model seeks to organise and disentangle variables and their relationships more than proposing that some variables are temporally prior to others. While it may be possible to argue that RWA and SDO are prior to attitudes towards punishment and criminal offenders, respondents are likely

recommended adding direct effects from RWA to retribution as revenge and just deserts, as well as harsh punishment and due process. Also, a direct effect from status/power restoration to denying due process was added. Figure 4 displays the final model, which had a good overall fit:  $\chi^2(127)=196.74$ ,  $\chi^2/df=1.55$ ; CFI=0.97; SRMR=0.06.

The findings showed that status and power restoration was predicted by GBD ( $\beta=.42$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and to a lesser degree by RWA ( $\beta=.20$ ,  $p<.05$ ). The model predicted 30.9% of the variance of status restoration. Value restoration, on the other hand, was positively predicted by RWA ( $\beta=.49$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and negatively predicted by GBD ( $\beta=-.21$ ,  $p<.01$ ). RWA and GBD explained 23.3% of the variance in value restoration.

Status and power restoration was the main predictor of retribution as revenge ( $\beta=.62$ ,  $p<.01$ ), followed by RWA ( $\beta=.27$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Interestingly, both GBD ( $\beta=.26$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and, to a lesser degree, RWA ( $\beta=.12$ ,  $p<.05$ ) had indirect effects on revenge mediated by the restoration of status and power. The model explained 57.7% of the variance in retribution as revenge. Retribution as just deserts, on the other hand, was predicted by value restoration ( $\beta=.29$ ,  $p<.01$ ), status restoration ( $\beta=.24$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and RWA ( $\beta=.26$ ,  $p<.01$ ). RWA had also indirect effects via value restoration ( $\beta=.14$ ,  $p<.01$ ). GBD, on the other hand, had both a positive indirect effect on just deserts mediated by status restoration ( $\beta=.10$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and a negative indirect effect mediated by value restoration ( $\beta=-.06$ ,  $p<.05$ ). However, the total effect of GBD on just deserts was non-significant. This model predicted 39.5% of the variance of retribution as just deserts.

It should be noted that the presented model controlled for the type of crime respondents were thinking about when completing the survey. A dummy for type of crime (1=violent) was added as a predictor of symbolic motives of punishment, retribution and the treatment of criminal offenders. Only status restoration ( $\beta=.22$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and harsh punishment ( $\beta=.22$ ,  $p<.01$ ) were affected by the type of crime: Respondents who had violent or sexual crime in mind when completing the survey were more likely to seek punishment to restore status and power relationships in society and were more supportive of applying harsh punitive measures.

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to think of symbolic motives, retribution and the treatment of criminal offenders as dimensions of the same attitude.



Finally, harsh punishment was predicted by retribution as revenge ( $\beta=.34$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and RWA ( $\beta=.52$ ,  $p<.01$ ). After controlling for revenge and RWA, just deserts had no effect on the support for stiff sentences. These variables explained 62.8% of the variance in harsh punishment. Denial of procedural fairness, on the other hand, was strongly and positively predicted by revenge ( $\beta=.66$ ,  $p<.01$ ), status restoration ( $\beta=.44$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and RWA ( $\beta=.23$ ,  $p<.05$ ). After controlling for these variables, just deserts became a negative predictor of denying procedural fairness ( $\beta=-.47$ ,  $p<.01$ ), and so did value restoration ( $\beta=-.28$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Taken together these variables explained 75.3% of the variance in procedural fairness.

It is also worth noting that RWA had both positive and negative indirect effects on the denial of procedural fairness. On the one hand, it had positive indirect effects through revenge ( $\beta=.18$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and status restoration ( $\beta=.09$ ,  $p<.10$ ). On the other hand, it had negative indirect effects through just deserts ( $\beta=-.12$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and value restoration ( $\beta=-.14$ ,  $p<.05$ ). This is, people high in RWA seek to avenge crimes to restore status relationships, but they are also concerned about values and proportionality. Overall, these indirect effects cancelled each other out and the only significant effect was its positive direct effect on the denial of procedural fairness ( $\beta=.23$ ,  $p<.05$ ). GBD, on the other hand, had a positive indirect effect on the denial of procedural fairness, through the desire to restore status relationships ( $\beta=.39$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Both RWA ( $\beta=.14$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and GBD ( $\beta=.09$ ,  $p<.01$ ) had positive indirect effects on harsh punishment, mediated by revenge and status restoration.

## Discussion

Based on the arguments of Von Hirsch (1976) and Finckenauer (1988), and previous research that have tested this distinction empirically (Ho et al., 2002; De Keijster et al., 2002), in this paper we proposed new measures of retribution that sought to capture their core components. Crucially, we sought to disentangle punishment goals from the message punishment should communicate and characteristics of the sentencing process. The findings presented in this paper show further evidence for the utility of distinguishing between retribution as revenge and just deserts, especially when linking beliefs about the purpose of punishment to people's preferences for the treatment of law-breakers. First, as predicted ( $H_1$ ) a two-factor model of retribution showed a better fit than a one-factor model. One dimension (retribution as revenge) involved dimensions



of getting even and making the offender suffer, while the second dimension (retribution as just deserts) comprised dimensions of compensation and proportionality.

Second, and perhaps most interestingly, retribution as revenge and just deserts differed in their motivational antecedents and preferences for the treatment of criminal offenders. Our findings suggest that the desires to get even and make the offender suffer are rooted in the motivation to endorse status boundaries with criminal offenders: both a status restoration motive ( $H_2$ ) and the desire to dominate over out-groups (as expressed by GBD,  $H_5$ ) predicted retribution as revenge. Also, as predicted ( $H_4$ ) those high in RWA were also more likely to endorse revenge to the extent that it was conducted by authorities. Consistent with the motivation to communicate low status to criminal offenders, revenge predicted the support for harsh punitive measures ( $H_6$ ) as well as the denial of procedural fairness ( $H_7$ ). That is, revenge, harsh punishment and the denial of procedural fairness seem to be the preferred means to re-establish a position of dominance over criminal offenders and communicate that people have low regard for them.

Retribution as just deserts, on the other hand, was rooted in right-wing authoritarianism ( $H_4$ ), and the motivations to restore values ( $H_3$ ) and, unlike predicted, status and power. That is, unlike revenge, just deserts was also motivated by a more constructive desire to communicate good moral values to society. In terms of its relationship with the treatment of criminal offenders, just deserts had positive correlations with harsh punishment and the denial of procedural fairness (although the latter was very small). However, once revenge was controlled for, the effect of just deserts on harsh punishment became non-significant and the effect on the denial of procedural fairness became negative ( $H_7$ ). The high correlation between just deserts and revenge shows that people who support punishment to achieve just deserts tend to support punishment to achieve revenge as well. However, at any given level of vengefulness, concerns about proportionality and compensation may actually reduce people's desires to deny due process and respect to criminal offenders.

The present research also provides interesting information on the differential reasons why people high in SDO and RWA support punitive policies. Previous research has shown that people high in SDO seek to clarify status boundaries by persecuting immigrants who seek to assimilate to the host culture (Thomsen et al., 2008). This status boundary enforcement hypothesis is consistent with our findings that people high in GBD endorsed a status and power restoration motive of punishment and that this motive

mediated its effect on retribution as vengeance ( $H_5$ ). This is, individuals high in GBD might perceive a negative interdependence with criminal offenders and seek harsh punishment to dominate over them. Past research showed that GBD predicts personal revenge (McKee and Feather, 2008). The present study provides evidence that high GBD individuals will also support state-sponsored punishment to get even with the offender, even if there is no personal involvement. The common factor here seems to be the desire to take away status and power from criminal offenders, regardless of who is in charge of the punishment. The latter suggests that people high in GBD do not only respond to personal threats to their power and position in society; they might also perceive crime as a threat to general hierarchies and power relationships in society.

The effect of RWA was more widespread. High RWA individuals sought to restore values in society and the latter mediated their preferences for retribution as just deserts ( $H_4$ ). This is consistent with an in-group conformity hypothesis (Thomsen et al., 2008) according to which people high in RWA will express negative attitudes to people who deviate from common norms and values. However, RWA also predicted status and power restoration motives and revenge. This result is inconsistent with findings on the lack of relationship between RWA and personal vengeance (McKee & Feather, 2008). Overall, people high in RWA seem to support punishment to the extent that it is undertaken by legitimised authorities, but not when an individual seeks personal revenge. Interestingly, while the crucial factor for GBD seems to be the content (get even and reduce the offender's status), the crucial factor for RWA appears to be the form (punishment conducted by legal authorities). The effect of RWA on status restoration is consistent with the argument that criminal offenders gaining influence can also disrupt order and security in society (see Cohrs & Asbrock, 2009 for a discussion on prejudice).

Revenge and just deserts might correspond to two different strategies used by high RWA individuals to restore in-group conformity: reforming the criminal offender and including him back into society (which might be achieved by restoring values, compensation and a proportional punishment) or excluding the offender from society and protect the identity of the group (which might be achieved through status restoration and vengeance). The preference for one or the other strategy might depend on whether the criminal offender is perceived to be part of the in-group or to belong to an out-group. People are likely to choose revenge and the exclusion of the criminal offender when they do not feel identified with the offender and when he is perceived to be part of

an out-group. In this case, exclusion can help protect the identity of the group. This is also consistent with a negative bias towards out-group members, as proposed by social identity theory (Feather & Souter, 2002; see also Boeckmann & Tyler, 1997 for research on denying procedural fairness). On the other hand, people are likely to show a positive bias towards in-group members and favour just deserts and the restoration of values when they identify with the criminal offender. Consistent with this argument, previous research (Wenzel & Thielmann, 2006; see also Okimoto & Wenzel, 2010) has found that just deserts was a stronger predictor of punitive decisions when respondents had low identification with the nation, while alternative punishment and the desire to restore values was relevant when respondents were highly identified. However, the opposite might also be true: according to the ‘black sheep effect’ devaluing the offender might help to protect the identity of the group (Marques, 1990; Okimoto & Wenzel, 2010). Indeed, Marques (1990) showed that reactions to norm violations tend to be stronger when the offender is part of the in-group. The perceived social identity of the offender might also interact with dispositional variables. Kimmelmeier (2005), for example, found stronger support for the punishment of Black defendants among high SDO individuals, while low SDO individuals were more punitive towards White defendants. This is, perceiving the offender as part of a disadvantaged out-group might lead people high in SDO to support punishment as a way of enhancing inequalities. On the contrary, egalitarian people may want to compensate for discrimination that is usually directed at minority groups (see also Green, Thomsen, Sidanius, Staerklé, & Potanina, 2009). More research is required on the interaction between identification with the criminal offender, ideological dispositions and retributive reactions to crime.

### **Conclusions and study limitations**

In this paper we have sought to provide further evidence into the distinction between two types of retribution: retribution as revenge and retribution as just deserts. We have argued that these two dimensions are better conceptualised as being two distinct –albeit empirically associated– concepts, and we have shown that they differ (at least to some extent) in their ideological antecedents and consequences in terms of the treatment of criminal offenders. Retribution as revenge was defined as a desire to get even with the offender by making him suffer. It was found to be rooted in ideological preferences for group-based dominance as well as goals to restore status and power relationships in society. It strongly predicted preferences for harsh punishment and the

denial of procedural fairness. Retribution as just deserts, on the other hand, has been defined as the desire to restore justice by allowing the perpetrator to compensate proportionally to the harm done. It was found to stem from ideological preferences for collective security, order and value consensus, as well as a desire to restore status and power relationships. Crucially, once revenge was controlled for, retribution as just deserts predicted the belief that criminal offenders deserve respect and due process.

The main limitation of this study is that punishment goals were measured directly. Ellsworth and Ross (1983) have shown that respondents tend to agree with all possible justifications that are consistent with their position on capital punishment. The authors concluded that justifications do not drive respondent's positions on punishment, but positions drive their justifications. Similarly, Carlsmith (2008) has shown a discrepancy between people's preferences for utilitarian and retributive goals and the actual way in which they assign punishment. Crucially, while people endorse utilitarian views, they assign punishment in line with retributive factors. To deal with this problem, Carlsmith et al. (2002) have designed vignettes that refer to factors that are relevant only to one goal of punishment (e.g. seriousness of the offence or likelihood of recidivism). Yet, in our study the distinction between retribution as revenge and just deserts lies in characteristic of punishment more than characteristics of the crime. Such approach might thus not be possible. Future research might, however, design descriptions of punishments that are consistent with revenge and just deserts perspectives and ask participants to rate their appropriateness.

A second limitation of this study refers to the generality of talking about 'crime in general'. Studies have shown that when asked to think about crime, people usually think of violent crime (Roberts & Doob, 1990; Stalans, 2009). People's preferences for revenge or just deserts might thus depend on the type of crime, with more serious crimes evoking stronger support for revenge. In our study we asked participant the type of crime they had in mind when completing the scales and were able to control for this. However, future research could measure punishment goals in relation to particular crimes types and examine whether the patterns of relationships change. Finally, short scales were used to measure retribution as just deserts and revenge and the treatment of criminal offenders. It is for future research to provide further evidence using longer and more reliable scales.

It should also be noted that the distinction between retribution as revenge and just deserts is just one of a number of possible dimensions of punishment goals. For

example, Vidmar and Miller (1980; see also Orth, 2003; Oswald et al., 2002) differentiate punishment goals regarding whether they focus on a micro (offender and victim) or macro (society) perspective. It can be argued that retribution as revenge is concerned with the relationship between victim and offender while just deserts refers to concerns about restoring balance in society as a whole. More research is required to evaluate how different dimensions of retribution relate to the objects of punishment.

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## Appendix

### Items on the treatment of criminal offenders

#### *Harsh punishment*

- People who break the law should be given harsher sentences
- The use of harsh punishment should be avoided whenever possible
- We should make sentences more severe for all crimes
- If prison has to be used, it should be used sparingly and only as a last option

#### *Procedural justice: respect*

- After committing an offense, criminal offenders lose the right to be treated with respect
- Despite what has happened, criminal offenders are entitled to treatment with respect and politeness
- Criminal offenders deserve to be treated with dignity and respect

#### *Procedural justice: neutral sentencing*

- When deciding on the appropriate punishment, criminal offenders do not deserve to be treated according to fair rules and procedures
- It is essential to ensure fairness and consistency when deciding on the appropriate punishment of criminal offenders
- In deciding a criminal case, it is important to be objective when considering the evidence
- In deciding a criminal case, it is okay to allow emotions to influence judgements
- In deciding a criminal case, it is alright to allow anger toward the defendant to play a part in the decision
- In deciding a criminal case, the decision should be based in part, on subjective, personal feelings

## INTERLUDE 2

High RWA and high SDO individuals differ in the reasons why they call for harsher sentences. Paper 2 provides further evidence that they also differ –at least to some extent– in their views about the purpose of punishment in society. People high in SDO are concerned about maintaining status boundaries with criminal offenders and seek for revenge, harsh punishment and a disrespectful treatment of criminal offenders to achieve this. Importantly, denying a fair sentencing process to criminal offenders has been argued to communicate that people have low regard for them. As in Paper 1, the effect of RWA was more widespread. People high in RWA sought to restore values, as well as status and power relationships, and they were in favour of assigning punishment to achieve revenge as well as just deserts.

Papers 1 and 2 presented correlational evidence into the different reasons why high RWA and high SDO individuals seek to punish, as well as their views on the appropriate role of punishment in society. These findings show that there are two underlying motives of punishment: to restore collective security, on the one hand, and power and status relationships, on the other. It remains to be seen under what conditions each of these motives will be relevant in predicting punitive reactions. Paper 3 and 4 present findings from experimental research on the role of the social and experimental context in shaping the relationships between RWA, SDO and punitive attitudes.

## **PAPER 3**

### **On the interplay between disposition and situation: The effects of priming dangerous and competitive worldviews on the relationship between ideology and punitive attitudes**

Monica M. Gerber

#### **Abstract**

This paper looks at the ways in which different social worldviews activate the effects of ideological dispositions on attitudes towards the punishment of criminal offenders. Applying Duckitt's (2001) dual-motivational model and Duckitt and Sibley's (2009) differential moderation hypothesis, dangerous and competitive world conditions are predicted to moderate the effects of right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) and social dominance orientation (SDO) on punitive attitudes and symbolic motives of punishment. In an online experiment (n=246) dangerous and competitive worldviews were primed using a scramble sentence exercise. Results showed that only when the social condition was primed to be competitive did people high in group-based dominance (GBD) support the harsh sentencing of criminal offenders; moreover, this effect was in part mediated by increasing support for a status and power restoration motive. RWA, on the other hand, had a consistent effect across experimental conditions: it predicted punitive attitudes, and this effect was mediated by motivations to restore both collective security, and power and status in society. The paper concludes that people high in RWA are chronically inclined to perceive the world as a dangerous place and to perceive criminal offenders as threatening collective security, while people high in SDO do not seem to be readily predisposed to think of criminals as threats to the hierarchical structure of society.

*Keywords:* punitive attitudes, right-wing authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, social conditions, dangerous worldview, competitive worldview

An ideological perspective of attitudes towards the punishment of criminal offenders understands these as being rooted in different views about the proper order of society and how people and institutions ought to behave. Consistent with a dual-motivational model of ideological attitudes (Duckitt, 2001; Duckitt, Wagner, du Plessis, & Birum, 2002), two conservative ideological attitudes have been found to predict the support for harsh sentencing: right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) and social dominance orientation (SDO). People high in RWA show retributive reactions (Carroll, Perkowitz, Lurigio, & Weaver, 1987; Feather, 1998; Funke, 2005; Lerner, Goldberg, & Tetlock, 1998), general punitiveness (Capps, 2002), and support the use of harsher punishment towards criminal offenders (Altemeyer, 1981, 1998). Similarly, people high in SDO support harsh criminal sanctions (Sidanius, Mitchell, Haley, & Navarrete, 2006), general punitiveness (Capps, 2002), the use of painful executions, retribution (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994) and vengeance (McKee & Feather, 2008). However, given their differential motivational basis, these ideologies can be argued to predict punitive attitudes for different reasons and through different mechanisms (see Duckitt, 2009). People high in RWA are motivated to achieve collective security and should favour punishment to restore security and in-group conformity threatened by crime. This is in part consistent with a value restoration motive of punishment, according to which punishment can help restoring people's faith in social bonds and shared values that have been threatened by crime (Okimoto & Wenzel, 2008; Vidmar & Miller, 1980; Wenzel & Thielmann, 2006). People high in SDO, on the other hand, are motivated to achieve power and dominance and they should favour harsh sentencing to restore power and status relationships in society, and to enforce status boundaries with low-class criminal offenders (see also Sidanius et al., 2006). This motive resembles a status and power restoration motive (Vidmar & Miller, 1980; Wenzel & Thielmann, 2006), according to which by committing crime offenders show disrespect towards and assume superiority over the victim and society (Miller, 2001; Van Kleef, Homan, Finkenauer, Gündemir, & Stamkou, 2011) and punishment degrades the offender's status and power restoring hierarchies.

Applying the dual-motivational model of ideological attitudes (Duckitt, 2001) to the study of punitive attitudes (see Duckitt, 2009), high RWA and SDO individuals are expected to favour harsh sentencing for different reasons and through different mechanisms. One prediction made by the dual-motivational model is that the social conditions under which RWA and SDO will predict punitive attitudes are different



(‘differential moderation hypothesis’, Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). Consistent with an interactionist view (Lavine, Lodge, & Freitas, 2005; Lavine, Lodge, Polichak, & Taber, 2002) this paper examines whether priming dangerous and competitive worldviews activates the effects of RWA and SDO on punitive attitudes.

Past research has looked at how social situations characterised by threats to social order increase people’s desire for harsh sentencing. In a study conducted by Rucker, Polifroni, Tetlock and Scott (2004) people became more punitive of moderately severe crimes when the social order was threatened (see also Tetlock et al., 2007). Similarly, Fischer et al. (2007) primed terror salience and observed an increase in punitive attitudes towards unrelated crimes. Interestingly, however, an extensive body of research suggests that social situations have an interactive rather than direct effect on social attitudes. For example, Stenner (2005) hypothesises and presents evidence that people’s authoritarian predispositions interact with perceptions of normative threat in affecting social attitudes (see also Cohrs & Ibler, 2009; Feldman & Stenner, 1997), including the support for harsh punishment.

Yet, thus far there have been no studies on the differential social conditions that activate the effects of RWA and SDO on punitive attitudes. This paper presents findings of an online experiment (n=246) priming dangerous and competitive worldviews and examining their moderating role on the support for harsh sentencing and symbolic motives of punishment. By examining whether the effects of RWA and SDO are mediated by different symbolic motives of punishment, this study also provides further evidence on the different reasons why people high in RWA and SDO endorse harsh sentences for criminal offenders.

### **Right-wing authoritarianism, social dominance orientation and social conditions**

A dual-motivational model of ideological attitudes (Duckitt, 2001) provides a framework to understand the combined effects of RWA and SDO on the support for harsh punishment of criminal offenders. According to this model, RWA and SDO are conservative ideologies that tend to predict similar social outcomes. But they represent expressions of different motivational goals; they are predisposed by different personalities; and most importantly for this research, they are made salient by different social worldviews.

Altemeyer (1981) defined right-wing authoritarianism as the covariation of three attitudinal clusters: authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression and

conventionalism. Conceptualised by Duckitt and collaborators (Duckitt, 2006; Duckitt et al., 2002) as the goal of collective security and in-group conformity as opposed to autonomy and personal freedom, RWA is thought to stem from a personality high in social conformity and to be made salient by the view that society is a dangerous place where the values and way of life of good people are threatened by bad people. People high in RWA seek to preserve the social order and defend policies that can help controlling social threats and bring back order and security, such as military action (Cohrs, Moschner, Maes, & Kielmann, 2005; McFarland, 2005) and the restriction of civil liberties (Cohrs, Kielmann, Maes, & Moschner, 2005; Cohrs, Moschner, et al., 2005; Crowson, DeBacker, & Thoma, 2005).

Social dominance orientation, on the other hand, represents a preference for one's in-group domination over out-groups, as well as a general preference for hierarchical relations between social groups (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). Duckitt (2001, 2006) conceptualised SDO as measuring the motivational goal of group dominance, power and superiority as opposed to an egalitarian and altruistic goal of helping others. It is predisposed by a tough-minded personality and made salient by the view that society is a competitive jungle where people struggle for power and resources. Jost and Thompson (2000) have shown that SDO measures two different concepts: groups-based dominance (GBD) and opposition to equality (OEQ). OEQ can be understood as a general preference for inequality, while GBD is concerned specifically with the desire to see one's in-group dominating over outgroups (see also Ho et al., 2012; Kugler, Cooper, & Nosek, 2010)<sup>1</sup>. People high in SDO favour policies that can help establishing and maintaining social hierarchies, such as military actions (Cohrs, Moschner, et al., 2005; McFarland, 2005) and the restriction of civil liberties (Cohrs, Kielmann, et al., 2005).

While some authors have conceptualised RWA and SDO as stable personality traits (e.g. Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, and Sanford, 1950; Altemeyer, 1998), there seems to be more and more agreement in the literature in treating them as ideological attitudes instead (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008). Duckitt (2001) reconceptualised RWA and SDO as ideological attitudes and as expressing motivational goals that are made chronically salient by the individuals' personalities and social worldviews. Sibley

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that previous research has found that only one of the subscales of SDO (group-based dominance and not opposition to equality) is relevant to punitive attitudes (e.g. McKee & Feather, 2008). To simplify, in this research hypotheses are stated in reference to SDO as a whole. However, this paper starts by evaluating the separate effects of GBD and OEQ on punitiveness.

and Duckitt (2008) summarised three arguments against treating RWA and SDO as personality measures. First, the items in the RWA and SDO scales refer to social attitudes and values more than behavioural dispositions. Second, RWA and SDO correlate more strongly with social attitudes than with personality measures. Third, and most relevant for this research, RWA and SDO are highly sensitive to situational factors.

Empirical findings show that RWA (Doty, Peterson, & Winter, 1991; Duckitt & Fisher, 2003; Perrin, 2005; Sales, 1972; Sibley, Wilson, & Duckitt, 2007) and SDO (Sibley et al., 2007) vary according to social contexts. Duckitt (2006) has argued that dangerous and threatening social situations should increase levels of authoritarianism, while highly unequal and competitive situations should increase people's social dominance orientation. Consistently, Sibley et al. (2007) found that competitive and dangerous worldviews, respectively, predicted RWA and SDO over a five-month period.

Yet, social conditions might not only shift the levels of dispositional variables, they might also interact with dispositions in affecting different social outcomes. Lavine et al. (2005, 2002) proposed an interactionist view according to which situational variables increase the relevance of dispositions, and strengthen the link between these and attitudinal consequences. Similarly, in line with a cultural analysis of motives, accessible schema-driven interpretations of reality –worldviews– have the capacity to make motivational goals salient (see Duckitt, 2001). Social conditions can thus affect outcome variables by impacting on individuals' worldviews and hereby activating different ideological dispositions. Stenner (2005), at the same time, proposes that authoritarian predispositions exert their effect on attitudes when they are activated by conditions of normative threat. Consistent with these arguments, authoritarian predispositions have been shown to become activated under the presence of different types of threat (Cohrs & Ibler, 2009; Feldman & Stenner, 1997; Lavine et al., 2005, 2002; Rickert, 1998; Stellmacher & Petzel, 2005; Stenner, 2005; Cohrs, Kielmann et al., 2005). Interestingly, though, Stenner (2005) reasons that it is only threats to the normative order – and not mere threats to security or personal threats – that trigger authoritarian dispositions.

Cohrs and Ibler (2009) sought to clarify the different ways in which RWA interacts with threat in affecting prejudice. In two experimental studies in which they manipulated and measured threat from Turks, the authors showed that there were at

least two ways in which threat interacted with RWA. First, people high in RWA were more likely than people low in RWA to sway their perceptions of actual threat in the light of threatening information. Second, they were also more likely to react negatively to perceived actual threat. That is, perceiving threat seemed to be more relevant to the motivational goals of high RWA individuals and to determining their levels of prejudice.

SDO seems to be more difficult to prime, with only a few studies finding an interaction between situational forces and SDO. Pratto and Shih (2000), for example, found that attacking the in-group status increased implicit prejudice only for people high in SDO. Similarly, SDO only predicted intergroup discrimination when status distinctions or intergroup status concerns were salient (Pratto, 1999). Sidanius, Pratto and Mitchell (1994) showed similar findings: SDO predicted intergroup bias only for those who identified with their group in a minimal group experiment, allegedly because intergroup distinctions are salient for high identifiers. One interesting study conducted by Federico (1999) showed that SDO was a stronger predictor of in-group favouritism for the high-status group when intergroup status differentials were believed to be unstable.

The relationship between RWA, SDO and attitudes has also been shown to vary across countries. For example, McFarland, Ageyev and Abalakina-Paap (1992) found a positive relationship between RWA and attitudes towards equality in Russia and a negative relationship in the United States. Similarly, a positive association has been found between SDO and support of violence toward the Middle East in the United States, while the association between SDO and violence toward the West is negative in Lebanon (Henry, Sidanius, Levin, & Pratto, 2005).

Only a few studies have looked at the situational variables that activate RWA and SDO simultaneously. A study conducted by Cohrs and Asbrock (2009) found that depicting an out-group as being threatening moderated the effect of RWA on prejudice. Depicting the out-group as competitive did not, however, moderate the effect of SDO. Duckitt and Sibley (2010) conducted a similar study manipulating the extent to which a bogus immigrants group, the Sandrians, was described as (a) a threat to conventional norms and values, (b) being low in status, (c) economically competitive and (d) non-competitive, non-disadvantaged and non-threatening. RWA predicted opposition to Sandrian migration when they were depicted as threatening to norms and values, as well as when they were described as being economically competitive. SDO, on the other

hand, was a significant predictor when they were described as being disadvantaged or economically competitive. Priming different self-categorisation forms, Dru (2007) found that RWA was a stronger predictor of prejudice when in-group norms were primed (see also Reynolds, Turner, Haslam, & Ryan, 2001) and SDO was a stronger predictor when competitive group memberships were made salient. In a similar vein, Thomsen, Green and Sidanius (2008) presented findings that people high in RWA supported the persecution of immigrants when these were presented as refusing to assimilate into the dominant culture ('in-group conformity hypothesis'), while people high in SDO did so when immigrants were presented as wanting to assimilate ('status boundary enforcement hypothesis') (see also Guimond, De Oliveira, Kamiesjki, & Sidanius, 2010). Finally, Cohrs and Stelzl (2010) looked at cross-national differences in the effect of RWA and SDO on anti-immigrant attitudes. The authors found that RWA was a stronger predictor in countries where immigrants were perceived as increasing crime rates. RWA was a less relevant predictor in countries with high income inequality and where people thought immigrants were beneficial for economy. SDO, on the other hand, was a stronger predictor in countries where immigrants had a higher relative unemployment rate. The authors discuss possible reasons for the different effect sizes of RWA and SDO across countries. First, their effects depend on whether immigrants in a specific country are perceived as threatening to values, norms and collective security, or rather as socially inferior. Second, cultural factors may affect the salience of RWA and SDO, with RWA being more salient in cultures emphasising dangerous worldviews and SDO being more relevant in highly unequal and hierarchical cultures.

Overall, these studies show that RWA is a stronger predictor of attitudes when the context or the out-group is depicted as threatening to social order or when in-group norm preservation is made salient. SDO, on the other hand, is a stronger predictor when competition, status concerns or group distinctions are salient, when the out-group is depicted as competing for resources and power (although there are some mixed findings here) or when status differentials are believed to be unstable.

Notably, an interactive approach focuses on how dispositional attitudes are activated or made salient under certain social conditions. Nonetheless, one could also expect social conditions to affect attitudes directly. An important body of research has shown that people respond supporting harsher punishment when they are either dispositionally inclined or induced to believe that the social order is being threatened (Goldberg, Lerner, & Tetlock, 1999; Lerner, Goldberg, & Tetlock, 1998; Rucker et al.,

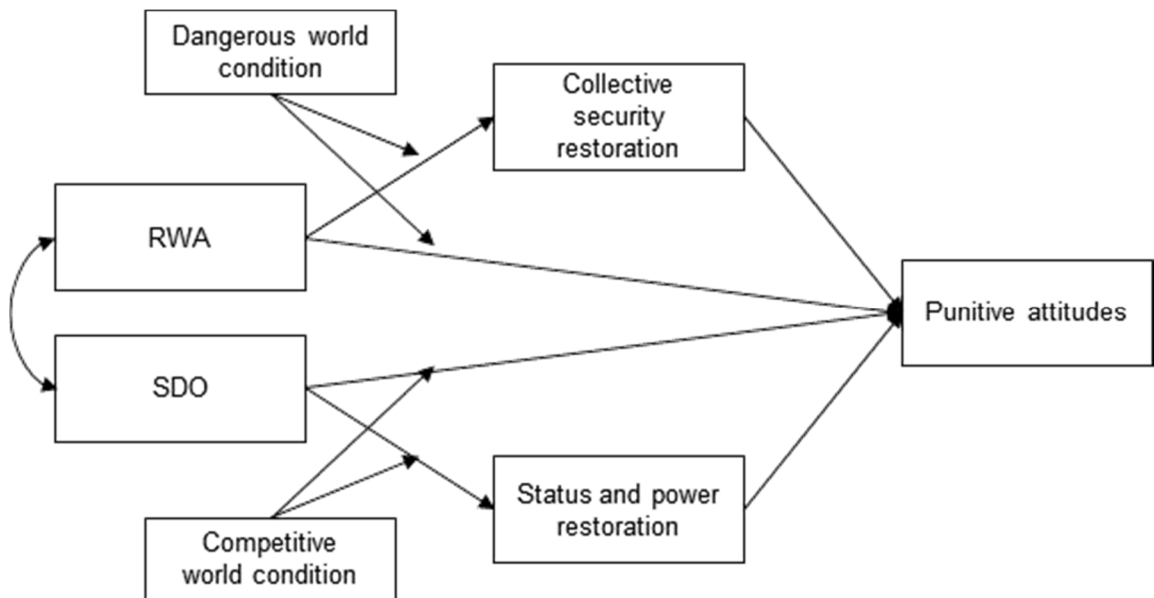
2004; Tetlock, 2002; Tetlock et al., 2007). In addition, in line with the unified instrumental model of group conflict (Esses, Jackson, Dovidio, & Hodson, 2005) perceived material or symbolic competition between groups is argued to lead to negative attitudes towards out-groups and the attempt of reducing the source of competition. Both ideological (e.g. SDO, RWA) and situational (such as resource scarcity and economic instability) factors are argued to increase perceived competition. Consistent with this model, Esses, Jackson and Armstrong (1998) found only additive and not interactive effects of SDO and a competitive immigrants manipulation on attitudes towards immigrants. Sassenberg, Moskowitz, Jacoby and Hansen (2007) found further support for the argument that increased competition affects attitudes towards out-groups. The authors primed competition and observed higher levels of prejudice in an unrelated intergroup context.

### **The present research**

The dual-process motivational model predicts that RWA and SDO are related to similar social and political variables but that the social conditions under which they do so are different (“differential moderation hypothesis”, Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). The aim of this paper is to apply this model to the study of punitive attitudes by exploring whether the effects of RWA and SDO on attitudes towards the punishment of criminal offenders are (a) moderated by different social conditions, and (b) mediated by different symbolic motives of punishment. Duckitt et al. (2002) argue that dangerous and competitive worldviews activate the motivational goals of RWA and SDO, respectively. Social worldviews can be understood as “... a coherent set of beliefs about the nature of the social world, and specifically about what people are like, how they are likely to behave to one, and how they should be responded to and treated.” (Duckitt, 2001, p. 61). Duckitt et al. (2002) describe a dangerous worldview as the belief that the world we live in is a dangerous and threatening place in which bad people threaten the ways of life and values of basically good people. A competitive worldview, on the other hand, is described as the belief that we live in a world that is competitive in which people struggle for power and resources. The aim of this paper, then, is to evaluate whether priming dangerous and competitive worldviews differentially activate the effects of RWA and SDO on punitive attitudes. A complementary aim is to develop an instrument to prime worldviews in the context of survey-based experiments.

RWA ( $H_{1a}$ ) is hypothesised to predict punitive attitudes overall and its effect should be stronger when the social conditions are primed to be dangerous ( $H_{1b}$ ). Overall, people high in RWA are motivated to achieve collective security and in-group conformity and they are expected to support punishment to restore collective security in society ( $H_{2a}$ ), which in turn should mediate their support for harsh sentencing ( $H_{2b}$ ). When the social conditions are primed to be dangerous, people high in RWA are hypothesised to be even more likely to look for punishment as a measure to restore collective security ( $H_{2c}$ ).

SDO, on the other hand, should predict punitiveness ( $H_{3a}$ ) and its effect should be stronger when the social conditions are primed to be competitive ( $H_{3b}$ ). High SDO individuals are motivated to achieve power and dominance and should endorse harsh sentencing to restore status and power relationships in society ( $H_{4a}$ ) and the latter should mediate the effect of SDO on punitive attitudes ( $H_{4b}$ ). When a competitive world is made salient, people high in SDO are hypothesised to be even more likely to look for punishment to restore status and power relationships in society ( $H_{4c}$ ). Figure 1 summarises the predictions of this paper.



*Figure 1.* Hypothesised model: the effects of SDO and RWA on symbolic motives of punishment and punitive attitudes moderated by dangerous and competitive world conditions

Past research suggests that social conditions can by themselves translate into harsher punitive reactions: perceived threats to the social order lead people to endorse harsh sentencing (e.g. Tetlock et al., 2007) and competitive situations affect attitudes towards immigrants (Esses, et al., 1998) and prejudice (Sassenberg et al., 2007). One could thus expect direct effects of social conditions on attitudes towards punishment. However, the focus of this paper is on the extent to which social conditions activate ideological dispositions. No particular hypothesis is thus established in relation to the direct effect of priming dangerous and competitive worldviews on punitive attitudes and punishment goals. Also, given that this paper is interested in the role of priming social conditions on the effect of RWA and SDO, no predictions are made regarding the effects of collective security and status/power restoration motives under the different experimental conditions.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

272 persons from the United States participated in an online study posted on Amazon's Mechanical Turk<sup>2</sup>. 26 participants (10%) were excluded for having solved less than 70% of the scrambled sentence exercises (14 participants, see below), for not having English as a first language (14 participants) or for reporting a suspicion that the sentence scramble exercise had a role in priming certain words (2 participants; as recommended by Bargh & Chartrand, 2000). The reported results correspond to 246 participants. The sample was diverse in terms of gender (62% female), age (*Min*=18, *Max*=82, *M*=35, *SD*=13.8), occupation (51% worked, 20% students, 11% unemployed) and ideology (52% leaning to the left, 26% centre, 21% leaning to the right); although less diverse in terms of ethnicity (81% white). Participants were randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions: dangerous worldview condition (*N*=83), competitive worldview condition (*N*=83) and control group (*N*=80).

### **Materials and Procedure**

**Pretest.** Prior to the experiment, an online study was conducted on Amazon's Mechanical Turk to select the words that would be used to prime dangerous and

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<sup>2</sup> Studies on the use of Amazon's Mechanical Turk to collect data have concluded that not only is the data as reliable as data collected through other means, but participants are also more diverse in terms of socio-demographic variables (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Paolacci, Chandler, & Ipeirotis, 2010).



competitive worldviews. A second aim of this study was to obtain a separate evaluation of whether the words would prime the desired worldviews and avoid including a manipulation check that would make participants read about the opposite worldview. For the pretest 161 native English-speakers from the United States read descriptions of dangerous and competitive worldviews (as defined by Duckitt et al., 2002) and rated the degree to which these were associated to different words. They were paid 0.40 USD for their participation in this study. Each participant was randomly assigned to rate 42 out of 84 words on a 5-point scale (1=not at all associated, 5=extremely associated), yielding an average of 81 evaluations for each word. These ratings were used to choose 14 words for each condition. To avoid overlap between the words corresponding to a dangerous and a competitive worldview, special attention was placed in finding words that had significantly higher ratings in one of the worldviews but not the other ( $p < 0.01$  for all words in both conditions). For the dangerous worldview condition, all chosen words had significantly higher rating on a dangerous worldview ( $M = 4.1$ ,  $SD = 0.73$ ) than a competitive worldview ( $M = 2.6$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ). The chosen words were: unsafe, dangerous, hazard, menace, endangered, bad, wicked, threatening, immoral, degenerate, evil, chaos, warning and terrible. For the competitive worldview condition, all chosen words had a significantly higher rating on a competitive worldview ( $M = 4.2$ ,  $SD = 0.78$ ) than a dangerous worldview ( $M = 2.7$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ ). The chosen words were: contest, competition, championship, winning, challenge, competitive, ranking, status, rival, superior, hierarchy, power, dominance, contenders. For the control condition, words with the lowest rating on a dangerous ( $M = 1.7$ ,  $SD = 0.91$ ) and competitive worldview ( $M = 1.9$ ,  $SD = 0.91$ ) were chose. The chosen words were: park, apple, chairs, table, green, walk, hand, student, friend, boring, meeting, house, car, this.

**Pilot.** 230 persons from the United States participated in a pilot online study posted on Amazon's Mechanical Turk. The pilot was conducted to evaluate the sentence scramble exercise, the cover story and the questionnaire. The main reason for conducting this pilot was to make sure that participants were reading the instructions and would work carefully on the priming exercise. Two validation questions were embedded in the questionnaire. The pilot showed no major problems with the study design. However, it revealed that a number of participants did not pay careful attention when answering the questionnaire: 14% and 16% of participants did not pass the validation questions, respectively. To avoid this from happening, an instructional manipulation check was included in the next study (see below). Regarding the sentence

scramble exercise, 84% of participants completed all exercises, with 96% answering more than 24 out of 28 exercises. Participants were allowed to write a comment at the end of the survey. No relevant problems were observed.

**Procedure.** Participants were invited to take part in two allegedly unrelated studies: one communication study concerned with the ways in which people construct sentences and the second one on social attitudes. They were paid 0.60 USD for their participation. After obtaining informed consent, an instructional manipulation check (Oppenheimer, Meyvis, & Davidenko, 2009) was used to make sure that participants were reading the instructions. In this check, participants were requested to skip rather than answer a question and those participants who answered the question were not able to proceed. Previous studies have shown that confronting participants with a manipulation check increases attention (Oppenheimer et al., 2009). Right after the manipulation check, but before taking part in the study on communication, participants were asked to answer some background socio-demographic questions (age, gender, education, occupation, ethnicity and political ideology), RWA and SDO measures. Participants were debriefed at the end of the study.

**Individual differences.** RWA was measured using ten items from Altemeyer's (1998) Right-Wing Authoritarianism scale. To control for acquiescence response bias, half of the items were reverse coded. Sample items are: 'The "old-fashioned ways" and the "old-fashioned values" still show the best way to live' and 'There is no "ONE right way" to live life; everybody has to create their own way' (R). Questions on authoritarian aggression often refer to the treatment of criminal offenders. In this study, special attention was placed in excluding items that related to crime and punishment. Given the nature of Altemeyer's scale (1998), it is not possible to distinguish between authoritarian submission, conventionalism and aggression, and thus the scale was considered as a whole. SDO was measured using ten items from Pratto et al.'s (1994) measure of Social Dominance Orientation. Five items measured group-based dominance and five items measured opposition to equality. Sample items are: 'Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups' and 'We would have fewer problems if we treated people more equally'. Centred values of RWA and SDO (and its subscales) were used for correlation, regression and path analyses.

**Experimental manipulation.** A scrambled sentence test was used to prime social conditions. This supraliminal conceptual priming is used to activate representations in a specific context and test its influence in an unrelated context (see

Bargh & Chartrand, 2000). Participants were provided with 28 sets of five words and asked to construct grammatically correct sentences using four out of these five words. To prime a dangerous worldview, the 14 words chosen in the pretest for being closely related to a dangerous world were embedded in half of the sentences. The remaining 14 sentences did not refer to any worldview in particular. To increase the effect of the prime, participants were asked to answer four questions adapted from Duckitt et al.'s (2002) dangerous and threatening social world view scale (a sample item is 'It seems that every year there are fewer and fewer truly respectable people, and more and more persons with no morals at all who threaten everyone else'). These questions were included at the beginning of what participants thought was the second study (on social attitudes). For the competitive worldview condition the 14 words chosen in the pretest for being closely related to a competitive world were embedded and participants were asked to answer four questions adapted from Duckitt et al.'s (2002) competitive jungle social world view (a sample item is 'It's a dog-eat-dog world where you have to be ruthless at times'). In the control condition, participants did the same exercise but the embedded words were the words chosen for not being related to dangerous and competitive worldviews. The questions that followed were on the relevance of the Internet in society<sup>3</sup>.

**Dependent variables.** Attitudes towards the harsh sentencing of criminal offenders were measured using six items, four items in favour and two items against applying harsh sentences. Sample items are: 'People who break the law should be given harsher sentences' and 'The use of harsh punishment should be avoided whenever possible'. The symbolic motive of collective security restoration was measured adapting three items from Okimoto, Wenzel and Feather's (2011) others-value restoration scale (sample item is 'Punishment should convey to others that the offender's behavior was wrong') and adding three items on the restoration of security (sample item is 'We should punish to increase security and order in society'). The items on security were added to resemble the goal of restoring collective security as a whole (which considers the need for value consensus, security, and order; Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). The symbolic motive of restoring status and power was measured adapting four items from Okimoto et al.'s (2011) status/power reduction goal scale. Sample item is 'Punishment

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<sup>3</sup> These questions were chosen to keep up with the cover story and because they have been found to be uncorrelated to political ideology in other unreported studies.

should signal to the offender that he is in no way superior'. Seven point likert scales were used for all items (ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree). Table 1 displays descriptive reliability statistics for all variables before being centred.

## **Analysis**

Correlation and regression analyses are conducted separately for each experimental group. Z- and T-tests are used to compare the correlation and regression coefficients across conditions. Given the one-sided nature of the hypotheses of this paper, one-tailed p-values are reported for correlation and regression analyses, as well as for Z- and T-tests. Path analysis is then used to evaluate whether symbolic motives of punishment mediate the effects of RWA and SDO on punitive attitudes and whether these mediations are stronger when the corresponding worldview is salient. To simplify the analysis of looking at the role of three conditions and two mediator variables, Cohrs and Ibler's (2009) approach of using multigroup path analysis to examine moderated mediation is conducted. MPLUS and maximum-likelihood estimation are used to test whether punishment goals mediate the effects of RWA and SDO on punitive attitudes and whether the different paths vary across experimental conditions.

## **Results**

### **Preliminary analyses**

As should be the case, one-way ANOVA did not show significant differences in levels of RWA and SDO between experimental conditions, RWA:  $F(2, 243)=0.23$ ,  $p=0.80$ ; SDO:  $F(2, 243)=0.08$ ,  $p=0.92$ ; nor were there significant differences in levels of punitive attitudes between experimental groups,  $F(2,243)=0.82$ ,  $p=0.44$ . This is, priming dangerous and competitive worldviews did not increase levels of overall punitiveness.

Table 1 presents correlations between all variables in the study for all participants taken together ( $n=246$ ). RWA and SDO were positively correlated with each other ( $r=.43$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and with punitive attitudes (RWA:  $r=0.44$ ,  $p<0.01$ ; SDO:  $r=0.27$ ,  $p<0.01$ ; GBD:  $r=0.28$ ,  $p<0.01$ ; OEQ:  $r=0.20$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Collective security restoration correlated with punitive attitudes ( $r=.58$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), RWA ( $r=.33$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), and GBD ( $r=.23$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). The same was true for status and power restoration (Punitive attitudes:  $r=.59$ ,  $p<0.01$ ; RWA:  $r=.44$ ,  $p<0.01$ ; GBD:  $r=.34$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). A multiple linear

regression analysis was then conducted to evaluate whether RWA and SDO had significant effects after controlling for each other. This analysis was relevant given that previous research had shown that the effect of SDO tends to be significantly decreased when controlling for RWA (Colémont, Van Hiel, & Cornelis, 2011; McKee & Feather, 2008). The same analysis was replicated using GBD and OEQ instead of SDO. RWA remained significantly related to punitive attitudes after controlling for SDO, GBD and OEQ ( $\beta>0.42$ ,  $ps<0.01$ ). However, after controlling for RWA, SDO ( $\beta=0.11$ ,  $p<0.10$ ) had only a marginal effect and OEQ ( $\beta=0.05$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) had no significant effect on punitive attitudes. Only GBD had a significant effect ( $\beta=0.11$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). This is consistent with previous research that has found GBD and not OEQ to be related to punitive attitudes (Okimoto et al., 2011). For all further analyses, GBD was used instead of SDO.

Table 1

*Bivariate correlations and reliability statistics of all variables in the study for all participants (n=246)*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Punitive attitudes	-						
2 RWA	.44**	-					
3 SDO	.27**	.43**	-				
4 GBD	.28**	.41**	.90**	-			
5 OEQ	.20**	.36**	.89**	.60**	-		
6 Collective security restoration	.58**	.33**	.11	.23**	-.02	-	
7 Status and power restoration	.59**	.44**	.25**	.34**	.11	.64**	-
Mean	4.10	3.02	2.66	2.75	2.57	5.15	4.54
SD	1.33	1.26	1.20	1.35	1.33	0.98	1.23
$\alpha$	0.86	0.90	0.91	0.86	0.91	0.84	0.78

\*  $p<0.05$ , \*\*  $p<0.01$

### **Punitive attitudes**

Table 2 presents the zero-order correlations between RWA, GBD and punitive attitudes in the three experimental conditions. Punitive attitudes correlated strongly and significantly with RWA in all conditions ( $rs>0.42$ ;  $ps<0.01$ ) and this correlation did not

differ significantly between conditions ( $z_s < 0.4$ ). The correlation with GBD was strongest in the competitive world condition ( $r = 0.44$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), followed by the dangerous world condition ( $r = 0.25$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and the control condition ( $r = 0.15$ ,  $p < 0.10$ ). The correlation between GBD and punitive attitudes was significantly higher in the competitive condition compared to the control condition ( $z = 2.01$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ) and marginally higher than in the dangerous world condition ( $z = 1.37$ ,  $p = 0.09$ ).

Table 2

*Bivariate correlation between punitive attitudes, RWA and GBD in the three experimental conditions (n=246)*

	Dangerous world condition (N=83)	Competitive world condition (N=83)	Control condition (N=80)
RWA	.47**	.45**	.42**
GBD	.25*	.44**	.15†

†p < .10, \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01

Table 3

*Linear regression coefficients of punitive attitudes on RWA and GBD in the three experimental conditions (n=246)*

	Dangerous world condition (n=83)			Competitive world condition (n=83)			Control condition (n=80)		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>
RWA	.46	.11	4.06**	.36	.13	2.83**	.40	.11	3.74**
GBD	.07	.11	0.65	.31	.12	2.51**	.02	.10	0.17

†p < .10, \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01

Multiple linear regression analyses by experimental groups (Table 3) show that in the dangerous world ( $b = .46$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and control conditions ( $b = .40$ ,  $p < .01$ ) only RWA predicted punitive attitudes. In the competitive world condition both RWA ( $b = .36$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and GBD ( $b = .31$ ,  $p < .01$ ) were significant predictors. T-tests comparing the slopes between conditions showed that the regression coefficients for RWA did not

differ significantly across conditions ( $t_s < 1$ ). Nonetheless, the regression coefficient for GBD was significantly higher in the competitive condition compared to the control condition ( $t(162) = 1.86, p = 0.03$ ) and marginally higher than in the dangerous world condition ( $t(159) = 1.47, p = 0.07$ ).

An analysis regressing punitive attitudes on RWA, GBD, experimental conditions and interaction effects between GBD and experimental conditions revealed a significant interaction between GBD and the competitive world condition (Main GBD effect:  $\beta = .01, p > .05$ ; Main competitive world condition effect:  $\beta = .22, p > 0.05$ ; Interaction between GBD and competitive world condition:  $\beta = .27, p < 0.05$ ), but not with a dangerous world condition (Main dangerous world condition:  $\beta = .28, p > 0.05$ ; Interaction between GBD and dangerous world condition:  $\beta = .08, p > 0.05$ ). Figure 1 presents fitted values of punitive attitudes for  $\pm 1$  standard deviations in GBD, showing that GBD had no effect in the control condition and a small but positive effect in the dangerous world condition. Most importantly, the effect was strongest in the competitive world condition.

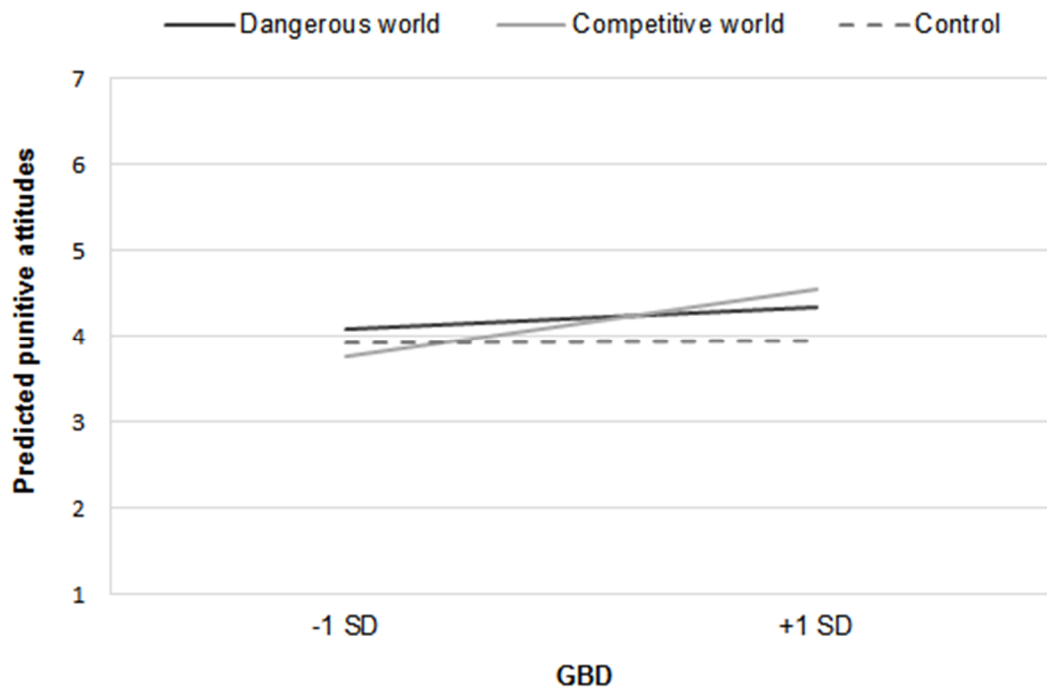


Figure 2. Predicted punitive attitudes as a function of the interaction between GBD and experimental conditions, controlling for RWA ( $n = 246$ )

Note. GBD is centred and results are shown for the range between  $\pm 1$  SD.

### Symbolic motives of punishment

One-way ANOVA did not show significant differences in people's support for the motivation to restore collective security,  $F(2,243) = 0.82$ ,  $p = 0.44$ , and status and power relationships,  $F(2,243) = 0.10$ ,  $p = 0.91$ , across experimental conditions. Considering all conditions ( $n = 246$ ), people high in GBD were more likely to support punishment to restore status and power relationships in society ( $r = 0.34$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), but also to restore collective security ( $r = 0.23$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). People high in RWA were more likely to support punishment to restore collective security ( $r = 0.33$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), but also to restore status and power relationships ( $r = 0.44$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

Table 4

*Linear regression coefficients of symbolic motives of punishment on RWA and GBD in the three experimental conditions ( $n = 246$ )*

	Dangerous world condition (N=83)			Competitive world condition (N=83)			Control condition (N=80)		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>
<i>Value and security restoration</i>									
RWA	.28	.09	3.14**	.16	.10	1.61†	.23	.08	2.73**
GBD	.03	.08	0.33	.16	.10	1.60†	.07	.10	0.90
<i>Status and power restoration</i>									
RWA	.44	.10	4.45**	.19	.12	1.55†	.41	.10	4.37**
GBD	.04	.09	0.46	.32	.12	2.62**	.18	.09	2.09*

†  $p < 0.10$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$

Table 4 presents regression coefficients of collective security restoration as well as status and power restoration on RWA and GBD in the three experimental conditions. After controlling for GBD, RWA predicted value and security restoration in the dangerous world ( $b = 0.28$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and control conditions ( $b = 0.23$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and both



RWA and GBD were marginally significant predictors in the competitive world condition ( $p < 0.10$ ). T-tests comparing the slopes between conditions showed that the regression coefficients for RWA and GBD did not differ across conditions ( $ts < 1$ ). In relation to status and power restoration, after controlling for GBD only RWA was a significant predictor in the dangerous world condition ( $b = 0.44$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). In the competitive world condition, GBD significantly predicted status and power restoration ( $\beta = 0.32$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and RWA had a marginal effect ( $b = 0.19$ ,  $p < 0.10$ ). In the control condition, both RWA ( $b = 0.41$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and GBD ( $b = 0.18$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) predicted the motive to restore status and power. T-tests reported a marginally higher slopes of RWA in the dangerous condition compared to the competitive condition ( $t(162) = 1.60$ ,  $p = 0.06$ ) and a significantly higher slope of GBD in the competitive world compared to the dangerous world condition ( $t(162) = 1.87$ ,  $p = 0.03$ ).

### **Moderated mediation of symbolic motives of punishment**

Multigroup path analysis was then used to evaluate the effect of RWA and GBD on symbolic motives of punishment and their indirect effect on punitive attitudes across different experimental conditions. A model was fitted where punitive attitudes were predicted by symbolic motives, and these were in turn predicted by RWA and GBD. Direct effects of RWA and GBD were added to the model. Only the direct effect from RWA to punitive attitudes was significant and the direct effect of GBD was excluded from the model. First, an unconstrained model was fitted where parameters were allowed to vary from group to group. This model showed a good overall fit according to Hu and Bentler's (1999) criteria ( $\chi^2(3) = 3.00$ ,  $p = 0.39$ , RMSEA = 0.00; CFI = 1.00). Single paths were then constrained one by one to be equal across groups. Differences in CFI and RMSEA were used to evaluate the fit of the constrained model. Following Chen's (2007) recommendations for testing invariance between models, a change of  $\leq -0.005$  in CFI supplemented by a change of  $\geq 0.01$  in RMSEA were considered a significant decrease in the fit of the model. Most paths could be constrained to be equal across groups without a decrease in the model fit ( $\Delta\text{CFI} = 0$ ;  $\Delta\text{RMSEA} = 0$ ). However, constraining the paths from GBD ( $\Delta\text{CFI} = 0.004$ ;  $\Delta\text{RMSEA} = 0.06$ ) and RWA ( $\Delta\text{CFI} = 0.003$ ;  $\Delta\text{RMSEA} = 0.05$ ) to status/power restoration decreased the fit. These paths were allowed to vary between experimental conditions. Note that no particular hypothesis was postulated about the effect of symbolic motives on punitive attitudes varying as a result of experimentally manipulated social conditions. However,

constraining the path from collective security restoration to punitive attitudes decreased the model of the fit ( $\Delta CFI=0.006$ ;  $\Delta RMSEA=0.07$ ) and was thus allowed to vary across groups. The final model fit was very good ( $\chi^2(15)=7.18$ ,  $p=0.95$ ,  $RMSEA=0.00$ ;  $CFI=1.00$ ).

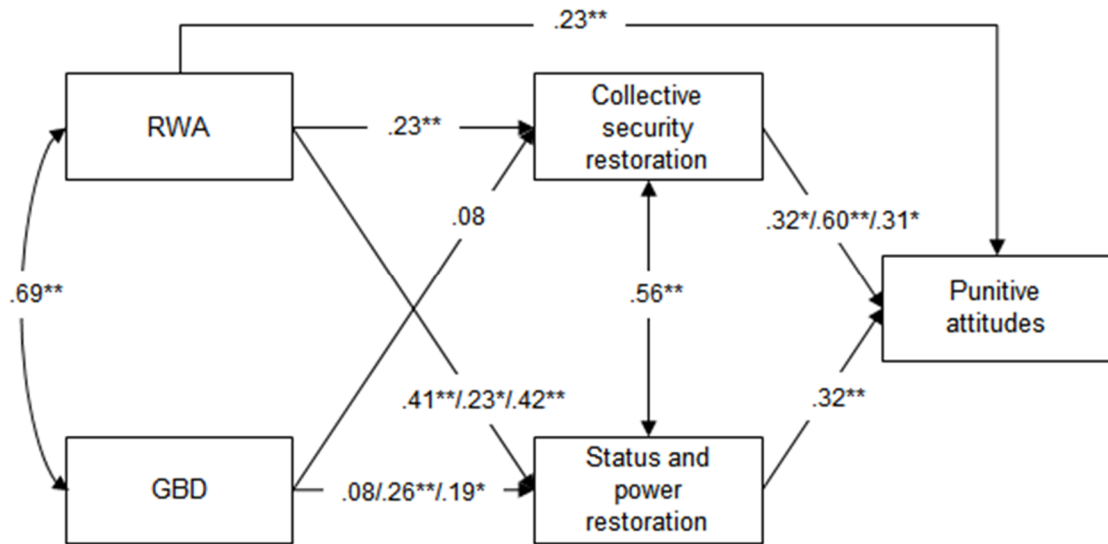


Figure 3. Multigroup path analysis predicting punitive attitudes in terms of punishment goals, GBD and RWA (n=246)

*Note.* Paths showing only one estimate were constrained to be equal across experimental conditions. In paths showing more than one estimate, the first estimate corresponds to the dangerous world condition, the second to the competitive world condition and the third to the control condition. Centred values are used for RWA and GBD. Unstandardised coefficients are shown as standardised coefficients vary across experimental conditions fixed to be equal.

\*  $p<0.05$ , \*\*  $p<0.01$

The fitted model (Figure 3) showed that regardless of the experimental condition, people high in RWA were more likely to support punishment to restore collective security ( $b=.23$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and to endorse punitive attitudes in general ( $b=.23$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). In all experimental conditions, supporting the use of punishment to restore status and power relationships in society predicted punitive attitudes ( $b=.32$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). However, the extent to which GBD and RWA predicted status/power restoration varied across experimental conditions. RWA was the only predictor of status/power restoration in the dangerous world condition ( $b=.41$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and the most relevant predictor in the control condition ( $b=.42$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). GBD, on the other hand, was the strongest predictor in the competitive world condition ( $b=.26$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). It had a smaller, but still significant effect in the control condition ( $b=.19$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and a non-significant effect in the dangerous world condition ( $b=.08$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). While collective security restoration

predicted punitive attitudes in all conditions, the strongest effect was observed under the competitive world condition ( $b=.60, p<0.01$ ). This unexpected effect could be an artefact of decreasing the indirect effect of RWA via power and status restoration in a context where GBD became a strong predictor. In terms of indirect effects, in all three conditions the effect of RWA was mediated by status and power restoration (Dangerous:  $b=.13, p<0.01$ ; Competitive:  $b=.07, p<0.05$ ; Control:  $b=.14, p<0.01$ ) and collective security restoration motives (Dangerous:  $b=.07, p<0.05$ ; Competitive:  $b=.14, p<0.01$ ; Control:  $b=.07, p<0.05$ ). The effect of GBD was mediated by status and power restoration in the competitive ( $b=.09, p<0.05$ ) and control conditions ( $b=.06, p<0.05$ ).

### Discussion

The results of this study provide partial support for a dual-motivational model of punitive attitudes: while RWA had a consistent and strong effect on punitive attitudes even after controlling for SDO ( $H_{1a}$ ), only group-based dominance (and not SDO as a whole or opposition to equality) was a relevant predictor after controlling for RWA ( $H_{3a}$ ). These findings are in agreement with previous research that has found group-based dominance to be more important than opposition to equality in predicting the support for justice attitudes (McKee & Feather, 2008); and suggest that people high in SDO do not perceive punishment as a way of maintaining and justifying inequalities in general, but as an issue of competition for dominance with criminal offenders.

Against expectations, this study did not find significant differences between experimental conditions in the effect of RWA on punitive attitudes ( $H_{1b}$ ). On the contrary, the results showed an effect of RWA on punitive attitudes that was consistent and strong across situational primes. People high in RWA were more likely to endorse the symbolic motive of collective security restoration in society ( $H_{2a}$ ) and this effect partly mediated the effect of RWA on punitive attitudes ( $H_{2b}$ ). But against expectations, RWA predicted value and security restoration regardless of experimental condition ( $H_{2c}$ ). In contrast to other research (Cohrs & Asbrock, 2009; Dru, 2007; Feldman & Stenner, 1997; Stenner, 2005; Thomsen et al., 2008), in this study priming threat to the social order did not activate the effect of RWA on social attitudes. This result may be explained by a number of different factors.

First, it may be argued that RWA is indeed independent of context and that it resembles a personality trait more than an ideological attitude. This is unlikely given the strong evidence for situational variability in RWA (see Sibley & Duckitt, 2008).

Second, people high in RWA may be chronically primed to perceive the world as dangerous place that lacks in-group conformity, and criminal offenders as being dangerous and deviating from common norms and values. Previous research has shown that authoritarians are more likely to perceive a situation as threatening to social order. Lavine et al. (2002), for example, showed that high authoritarians were quicker in responding to threatening words compared to low authoritarians. That people high in RWA may be already primed to perceive criminal offenders as dangerous does not mean that RWA is context-independent, only that the situational prime used in this study did not add anything new to the link between RWA, perceptions of crime, and punitive attitudes. Third, as argued and shown by Stenner (2005), it is normative threat more than threats to security that activates authoritarian predisposition. While the dangerous world condition was designed to capture both a perception that the world is insecure and lacks social consensus, it might have been that the words and statements used in this study related to a greater extent to security issues.

Another unanticipated finding was the strong link between RWA and status and power restoration motive. In the control condition both RWA and GBD predicted the goal of power and status restoration. However, when one of the ideologies was activated by its corresponding worldview, a trade-off was observed: RWA was the only significant predictor when a dangerous world was made salient and GBD was the only significant predictor when a competitive world was made salient. A possible explanation for this might be that criminals gaining power and status can also be perceived as disrupting the social order and stability in society (see for research on prejudice, Cohrs & Asbrock, 2009), particularly if social inequalities are status quo. Overall, both RWA and GBD are conservative ideologies that favour hierarchies in society, be it in terms of increasing the submission of criminal offenders or the domination of the rest of society.

Although RWA and SDO are both related to a preference for hierarchical social relations, the more specific meaning is quite different. For people high in RWA, criminal offenders gaining power in society may represent a lack of submission towards authorities and a disruption of social order and stability. For those high in SDO, on the other hand, criminal offenders may be perceived as competing for dominance in society. This difference is evidenced in the fact that RWA became a stronger predictor of status and power restoration when the conditions were primed to be dangerous, suggesting

motivations to restore status and power that are different from competitive motivations<sup>4</sup>. Further work needs to be done to establish whether and how these two motives differ.

GBD predicted punitive measures in the sample as a whole (H<sub>3a</sub>). The most interesting finding of this study, however, was that people high in GBD were especially likely to support harsh punishment when the social conditions were primed to be competitive (H<sub>3b</sub>). Overall, people high in GBD supported the use of punishment to restore status and power relationship in society (H<sub>4a</sub>). GBD was a stronger predictor of status and power restoration when the social conditions were primed to be competitive (H<sub>4c</sub>). Interestingly, in the competitive and control conditions, the motive of power and status restoration mediated the effect of GBD on punitive attitudes (H<sub>4b</sub>). These findings can be interpreted in two ways. First, priming competition might have activated desires for group-based dominance. This supports previous research on how competitive social conditions or increased salience of competition against particular out-groups increase the effect of SDO on different social attitudes (Dru, 2007; Pratto & Shih, 2000; Thomsen et al., 2008). Second, priming competition might also have changed the meaning of crime and punishment items. While people can be argued to have security issues in mind when completing crime and punishment items, the competitive world prime might have lead respondents to think about dominance issues and the competition for resources and power with criminal offenders. People high in GBD do not seem to be predisposed to perceive crime as a threat to hierarchies in society and punishment as a way of restoring status positions in society. Only when the social conditions were primed to be competitive, did people high in GBD support harsh sentencing and the use of punishment to restore status and power in society.

Interestingly, however, there were no direct effects of worldviews on punitive attitudes. Unlike previous research, threats to social order (e.g. Tetlock et al., 2007) and competition (Esses et al., 1998, Sassenberg et al., 2007) did not affect attitudes in general. Priming a competitive worldview activated intergroup competition over superiority and dominance only for those people who had a disposition to favour group-based dominance over outgroups. Whilst these findings support an interactive effect of social conditions, it is also possible that the current priming was not strong enough to shift people's views about the world. The implicit priming of a competitive worldview might have been enough to activate concerns about dominance for those people who are

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<sup>4</sup> Although it is also possible that the effect of RWA was stronger in the dangerous world condition because here GBD was not as relevant.

already concerned about power and dominance issues. Low SDO individuals, on the other hand, might not be sensitive enough towards competitive issues and will have failed to respond to the prime. Further research should replicate these findings using a more explicit prime.

On a separate note, while the findings of this study showed that high SDO's were more punitive when the social conditions were primed to be competitive, more research is required on the particular processes by which competition moderates the effect of SDO. Cohrs and Ibler's (2009) approach to testing the different ways in which threat and authoritarianism interact in predicting prejudice could be extended to understanding the interaction between SDO and competition. Importantly, it remains to be seen whether high SDO individuals are more likely to perceive competition or whether perceiving competition is more relevant for them to determine negative attitudes towards criminal offenders.

### **Conclusions**

The purpose of the current paper was to apply the dual-motivational model to the study of punitive attitudes. According to this perspective, while people high in RWA and SDO should both be inclined to support harsh sentencing of criminal offenders, the reasons why they do so are predicted to be different. This paper examined whether the effects of RWA and SDO were (a) moderated by different social conditions, and (b) mediated by different symbolic motives of punishment. The findings showed a consistent and strong effect of RWA across experimental conditions and symbolic motives. The effect of SDO, nevertheless, was more modest: only group-based dominance was relevant to punitive attitudes and its effect was restricted to competitive social conditions and to the motivation to restore status and power hierarchies in society. While part of punitiveness seems to be related to a group-based competition for status and power with criminal offenders, people high in SDO are not necessarily predisposed to perceive criminals as a threat to the hierarchical structure of society. Also, the lack of relevance of opposition to equality suggests that punishment is not so much perceived as a way of justifying social inequalities. Rather, it seems to be an issue of competition for dominance with criminal offenders. Crucially, high GBD individuals are likely to perceive the relationship with criminal offenders as a zero-sum situation: the more power and influence gained by criminal offenders, the less power and

influence remains for the rest of society. An aggressive pursuit of domination might be the chosen mean to avoid criminal offenders assuming superiority over society.

Furthermore, the overlap between RWA and SDO in the motivations for status and power restoration generates doubts about whether the reasons why these two ideologies predict punitive attitudes are in fact different. As argued above, however, the underlying motivations to take away power and status from criminal offenders are likely to be different. People high in RWA might want to restore status and power relationships to bring back social order and stability, while people high in SDO might do so to restore social hierarchies. Further research should look at whether these two motivations are indeed different.

As a side goal, this paper developed an instrument that can be used to prime dangerous and competitive worldviews in the context of survey-based experiments. However, some limitations should be addressed. The study reported in this paper used an online experiment to prime different worldviews. While special attention was placed in making sure that participants followed instructions and in detecting suspicion in relation to the experimental design, online studies inevitably involve the risk of participants getting distracted. It is thus possible that the dangerous world prime was not strong enough to activate authoritarian dispositions or to produce a direct effect on punitive attitudes. Further research might explore whether conducting the experiment in a controlled setting activates the effect of RWA on punitive attitudes. Also, the words and statements used to prime a dangerous world in this paper were more related to perceptions of threat to security than to threats to the normative order. More research is required to evaluate whether using words and statements that are more in line with threats to the normative aspect of a dangerous world is able to activate the effect of RWA on punitive attitudes.

Finally, priming dangerous and competitive worlds might also have activated related values. Previous research has shown that priming certain values might also have indirect effects on related values (Maio, Pakizesh, Cheung, & Rees, 2009). The current study did not include a manipulation check (to avoid overlap between the conditions) and was thus unable to confirm that undesired worldviews were primed. Future research is needed to evaluate whether the priming method used in this study primed different concepts than it was intended to prime.

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## Appendix

### Items on punitive attitudes, collective security and status and power restoration

#### *Punitive attitudes*

- People who break the law should be given harsher sentences
- With most offenders, we need to 'condemn more and understand less'
- The use of harsh punishment should be avoided whenever possible
- We should make sentences more severe for all crimes
- I support the death penalty for serious crimes
- If prison has to be used, it should be used sparingly and only as a last option

#### *Collective security restoration*

- Punishment should convey to others that the offender's behavior was wrong
- Punishment should reinforce for others the values that the offender's behavior undermined
- Punishment should restore the 'moral balance' in society disrupted by crime
- We should punish to increase security and order in society
- Punishment should protect society avoiding that the offender can do more harm
- Punishment should restore order and stability in society

#### *Status and power restoration*

- Punishment should signal to the offender that he is in no way superior
- A just response should communicate to the offender that people have low regard for him
- Punishment should humiliate the offender
- Punishment should take away the power that the offender assumed over others

### **INTERLUDE 3**

Paper 3 examined whether the effects of RWA and SDO could be activated by different social contexts. The findings suggested a consistent effect of RWA on punitive attitudes: RWA was a strong predictor of the support for harsh sentences and symbolic motives of punishment across experimental conditions. The effect of SDO, on the other hand, was only significant when the social conditions were primed to be competitive. This is high SDO individuals want to punish criminal offenders but only when they think of them in terms of competitive relationships.

This interactive view (Lavine et al., 2005, 2002) understands the role of the context as activating people's dispositions. Others, however, refer to studies on the context-sensitivity of the effects of RWA and SDO to argue that they capture attitudes towards social inequalities salient in context (see Sibley & Liu, 2010). To evaluate the generality of the effects of RWA and SDO on punitive attitudes, the final paper of this dissertation compares the effects of RWA and SDO in two different experimental contexts: one where participants have criminal offenders in mind when completing the survey and one where they have general attitudes in mind.



## **PAPER 4**

### **Right-wing authoritarianism, social dominance orientation and punitive attitudes: An evaluation of the context-specificity of their relationships**

Monica M. Gerber

#### **Abstract**

There has been an important debate on whether right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) and social dominance orientation (SDO) are general attitudes that predict social outcomes or whether they measure dominance over groups that are salient in context. This paper addresses the context-specificity of the effects of RWA and SDO on punitive attitudes. In two studies I examine whether general measures of RWA and SDO or criminal offender-specific group-based dominance predict the support for harsh punishment. In Study 1 (n=78) participants were primed to think about social attitudes in general or criminal offenders as a group when completing RWA and SDO scales. In Study 2 (n=106) participants filled out general RWA and SDO scales, as well as a criminal offender-specific measure of SDO. The findings show little evidence for context-specific effect of RWA. The effect of SDO, however, varied greatly depending on whether participants had criminal offenders in mind when completing the SDO scale. Part of punitiveness seems to be related to a group-based competition for dominance with criminal offenders, yet people high in SDO do not seem to be readily disposed to think of punishment as a mechanism to maintain hierarchies. This paper finishes discussing implications on the RWA and SDO generality discussion.

*Keywords:* punitive attitudes, right-wing authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, context-specificity

Right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) and social dominance orientation (SDO) are among the individual difference variables most used to predict intergroup attitudes such as prejudice (e.g. Duckitt, 2001), attitudes towards immigrants (e.g. Cohrs & Stelzl, 2010) and the support for harsh sentencing of criminal offenders (e.g. McKee & Feather, 2008). The extent to which they predict social outcomes, however, has been shown to depend on contextual factors: the strengths of associations vary from country to country (e.g. Henry, Sidanius, Levin, & Pratto, 2005; McFarland, Ageyev, & Abalakina-Paap, 1992) and according to contextual country-level factors such as crime rates and income inequality (e.g. Cohrs & Stelzl, 2010). This context-sensitivity has been interpreted by some as evidence of an interactionist view (Lavine, Lodge, & Freitas, 2005; Lavine, Lodge, Polichak, & Taber, 2002) according to which ideological dispositions are activated by the social context, which in turn strengthens the link between these and attitudinal consequences. But others (e.g. Lehmiller & Schmitt, 2007; Reynolds, Turner, Haslam, & Ryan, 2001; Schmitt, Branscombe, & Kappen, 2003) interpret these findings as an important criticism of the generality of RWA and SDO measures. The argument here is that the ways in which people respond to RWA and SDO scales depend on the forms of self-categorisation or group dominations that are salient in context. The extreme version of this argument posits that RWA and SDO are nothing else than attitudes towards specific forms of social inequalities salient in context (see Sibley & Liu, 2010).

In this paper, I examine the extent to which general measures of RWA and SDO predict attitudes towards the punishment of criminal offenders. I start from an empirical observation made in unreported studies that the strength of association between RWA, SDO and punitive attitudes varies depending on whether the studies are introduced as being on social attitudes in general or on crime and punishment. Crucially, people seem to respond in different ways to RWA and SDO items depending on whether they have criminal offenders in mind or not. Unlike other studies, however, I do not seek to evaluate whether RWA and SDO are indeed general ideological views. Rather, and in line with Sibley and Liu's (2010) argument, I assume that RWA and SDO can be made to measure general or context-specific attitudes depending on the context in which they are measured. The question then is whether overall measures of RWA and SDO predict punitive attitudes or whether they predict punitive attitudes only when people have criminal offenders in mind when completing the questionnaire.

RWA has consistently been found to predict the support of harsh sentencing (e.g. Altemeyer, 1981, 1998; Capps, 2002). Findings regarding the role of SDO are conflicting, with a number of studies finding strong effects of SDO (e.g. Capps, 2002; Ho et al., 2012; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994; Sidanius, Mitchell, & Navarrete, 2006) and others finding that after RWA is controlled for, SDO does not predict punitive attitudes (Colémont, Van Hiel, & Cornelis, 2011; McKee & Feather, 2008). Given the closer proximity between attitudes towards authorities, crime and punishment issues, people are hypothesised to think about criminal offenders and deviants to a greater extent when completing the RWA scale. Measures on acceptance of inequality, on the other hand, might not be easily linked to crime and punishment, and people are hypothesised to think less about criminal offenders when completing the SDO scale.

In Study 1 (n=78) participants completed RWA and SDO scales after having read a description of the study as being either on social issues in general or on criminal offenders. I then evaluated whether the effects of RWA and SDO on punitive attitudes were stronger when people had criminal offenders in mind when completing the scales. In Study 2 (n=106) I followed Sibley and Liu's (2010) approach and elaborated a criminal offender-specific measure of SDO. I then examined whether general measures of RWA and SDO predicted punitive attitudes above and beyond criminal offenders-specific SDO. I finish this paper discussing the implications of these studies on the RWA and SDO generality discussion.

### **RWA and SDO: an individual differences approach**

Right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation are often used as measures of individual differences to predict prejudice and other intergroup attitudes. As observed by Altemeyer (1998), RWA and SDO together account for an important amount of variance of a diverse range of social attitudes. Duckitt (2001) has developed a framework to understand the combined effects of RWA and SDO. According to his dual-process motivational model RWA and SDO tend to predict similar social outcomes but given that they express different motivational goals, they predict attitudes for different reasons and through different mechanisms.

Right-wing authoritarianism has been defined by Altemeyer (1981) as the covariation of three attitudinal clusters: conventionalism, authoritarian submission and authoritarian aggression. It has been conceptualised as the ideological expression of the

motivational goal of collective security and in-group conformity in opposition to personal freedom and autonomy (Duckitt, 2006; Duckitt, Wagner, du Plessis, & Birum, 2002). RWA has been shown to stem from a personality high in social conformity and to be made salient by a dangerous worldview. People high in RWA are motivated to maintain order and security in society and will defend policies that can help controlling social threats.

Social dominance orientation, on the other hand, expresses a general preference for hierarchical relations between social groups, as well as preferences for one's in-group to dominate over out-groups (Pratto et al., 1994). According to social dominance theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001), SDO is the mechanism by which social inequalities are maintained. People high in SDO are more likely to endorse hierarchy enhancing legitimising myths that justify unequal social arrangement (Pratto et al., 1994). Duckitt (2001, 2006) conceptualised SDO as being the ideological expression of the motivational goal of group dominance, superiority and power as opposed to an altruistic and egalitarian goal of helping others. SDO has been shown to be predisposed by a tough-minded personality and made salient by a competitive worldview. People high in SDO are motivated to achieve power and dominance and will favour ideologies that can help maintaining social inequality.

RWA and SDO have often been conceptualised as stable personality traits (e.g. Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, and Sanford, 1950; Altemeyer, 1998), but today there seems to be more and more agreement in the literature in treating RWA and SDO as ideological attitudes that are highly sensitive to situational factors (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008). Social conditions have been found to shift levels of RWA and SDO (e.g. Sibley, Wilson, & Duckitt, 2007) and to interact with RWA and SDO in affecting social outcomes (e.g. RWA: Cohrs, Kielmann, Maes, & Moschner, 2005; SDO: Pratto & Shih, 2000). Duckitt (2001) has argued that worldviews increase the salience of motivational goals, while social dominance theorists make the claim that the context affects absolute but not relative levels of SDO (Ho et al., 2012; Sidanius & Pratto, 2003).

An important number of studies have shown that social conditions activate the effects of RWA and SDO on social attitudes. Lavine et al (2005, 2002) proposed an interactionist view on ideological attitudes, according to which situational variables make dispositional factors salient and strengthen the link between these and social attitudes. Stenner (2005; see also Feldman & Stenner, 1997), for example, found that social attitudes (including the support for harsh punishment) were the product of an

interaction between authoritarian predispositions and perceptions of threats to social norms (see also on the interaction effect between threat and authoritarianism, Cohrs & Ibler, 2009). The effects of RWA and SDO on attitudes also vary from country to country. McFarland, Ageyev and Abalakina-Paap (1992), for example, showed that RWA was a positive predictor of attitudes towards equality in Russia and a negative predictor in the United States. Also, while SDO positively predicted support of violence toward the Middle East in the United States, the association between SDO and violence towards the West was negative in Lebanon (Henry et al., 2005). These findings provide evidence that SDO predicts attitudes depending on the particular interests that are at stake. Looking at cross-national differences in the relationships between RWA, SDO and anti-immigrant attitudes, Cohrs and Stelzl (2010) presented evidence that the effects of RWA and SDO varied depending on contextual data. RWA was a stronger predictor in countries where immigrants were perceived as increasing crime rates, but it was less relevant in countries with high income inequality and where people thought immigrants were beneficial for economy. SDO, on the other hand, was a stronger predictor in countries where immigrants had a higher relative unemployment rate.

### **RWA and SDO: a context specific approach**

Research on RWA and SDO often takes the social conditions into account, but RWA and SDO are still hypothesised to be general orientations: RWA being a general preference for in-group conformity and collective security and SDO being a general preference to group-based hierarchies. From a self-categorisation and social identity perspective, however, authors have questioned the generality and causal status of SDO (e.g. Lehmiller & Schmitt, 2007; Schmitt et al., 2003; Turner & Reynolds, 2003) and RWA (Lehmiller & Schmitt, 2007). Schmitt et al. (2003) reason that people are motivated to protect the identity of the social group they belong to and will support attitudes toward inequality to the extent that these help maintaining a positive group identity. Attitudes towards inequality thus depend on the specific interest that inequality serves.

Furthermore, and in accordance with self-categorisation theory, Reynolds et al. (2001) argue that a range of different types of intergroup categorisations are possible and people's preferences for inequality are dependent on the self-categorisation and intergroup comparison that is active. RWA and SDO measures, as well as the relationship between these and prejudice, are argued to vary depending on the salient

context and self-categorisation form. Crucially, correlations will be higher when the salient identity increases people's awareness about ideological tensions and differences between groups. The relevance of the categorisation that is salient is particularly relevant for SDO, since its scale was developed to measure attitudes towards groups that are salient in context and which generate the strongest differences in power within a specific society (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001). While research usually does not prime a specific identity, respondents are likely to think about different forms of intergroup relations when they complete RWA and SDO scales and these will predict support for different forms of intergroup domination (Lehmiller & Schmitt, 2007).

A great amount of research has supported these claims. First, some studies have explored the role of priming the relative position of the in-group in people's levels of acceptance of inequality. Schmitt et al. (2003) manipulated perceptions of the in-group's relative position and observed that participants in the privileged condition were more positive towards inequality than participants in the disadvantaged condition. It should be noted, however, that the authors used only GBD items in their measure of SDO and the latter might have affected the results. In a similar way, Huang and Liu (2005) showed that only when gender was salient were men higher than women in SDO, and only when demographic groups were salient, where people from the dominant Taiwanese group higher in SDO (see also Guimond, Dambrun, Michinov, & Duarte, 2003; Liu, Huang, & McFedries, 2008; Levin in Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Likewise, Rios Morrison and Ybarra (2008) showed that respondents exhibited higher levels of SDO when inequality benefitted their in-group.

Second, studies have shown the extent to which RWA and SDO predict attitudes depends on the social categorisation that is salient when respondents complete RWA and SDO measures. Schmitt et al. (2003) showed that SDO was a stronger predictor of attitudes when participants were primed to think about the social categorisation that is relevant to the specific attitude being considered. For example, SDO was related to racism only when race was salient at the moment of completing SDO items, and it was related to sexism only when gender was salient. Reynolds et al. (2001) found stronger relationships between RWA and prejudice when social identities in terms of gender or age were made salient, as compared to when national identities were salient (see for similar results, Verkuyten & Hagendoorn, 1998). Finally, Huang and Liu (2005) found only moderate ( $r=.48$ ) test-retest stability when comparing SDO across contexts that primed different self-categorisations (race and demographics).

A third group of studies has examined how RWA and SDO interact with different forms of intergroup relations. In one interesting study, Dru (2007) primed different self-categorisation forms and found that RWA was a stronger predictor of prejudice when group values and in-group norms were salient, while SDO was a stronger predictor when competitive group memberships were salient. In another study, Lehmiller and Schmitt (2007) primed different intergroup relations, and evaluated the effects of RWA and SDO on support for military aggression. RWA and SDO were found to be stronger predictors when participants were induced to think about the United States dominating over people of Iraq than when they were primed to think about Saddam Huseein's regime dominating Iraq.

Fourth, other studies have manipulated the ways in which immigrant groups are portrayed and found different effects of RWA and SDO. Thomsen, Green and Sidanius (2008) found that people high in RWA endorsed the persecution of immigrants when these were presented as refusing to assimilate into the dominant culture ('in-group conformity hypothesis'), while people high in SDO did so when immigrants were presented as wanting to assimilate ('status boundary enforcement hypothesis') (see also Guimond, De Oliveira, Kamiesjki, & Sidanius, 2010). Duckitt and Sibley (in Sibley & Liu, 2010) found that RWA predicted prejudice against a fictitious immigrant group when the group was described as morally deviant, while SDO predicted prejudice when it was described as being either economically competitive or disadvantaged. Other research, nevertheless, has not found moderating effects of self-categorisation on SDO (Cohrs & Asbrock, 2009; Heaven & St. Quintin, 2003).

Lehmiller and Schmitt (2007) and Schmitt et al. (2003) conclude from these findings that SDO –and RWA in Lehmiller and Schmitt's studies– capture attitudes towards inequality that are specific to the social group and social-structural position of this group that are salient at the moment of completing the scales. This is, when a particular form of inequality or social categorisation is salient, people seem to answer RWA and SDO items in terms of their attitudes towards that specific form of inequality. Meanwhile, RWA and SDO correlate with attitudes only if these are associated to the form of group domination that was salient when completing the scales. At best, this means that the measurement of RWA and SDO is highly sensitive to the forms of group domination that are salient at the moment of completing their scales. At worst, this means that RWA and SDO are nothing else than attitudes towards specific forms of group domination and social inequality relevant in context: "SDO and RWA scores are

better understood not as general orientations *affecting* support for specific forms of group dominance, but as *measuring* support for the specific forms of group dominance most relevant in context (Lehmiller & Schmitt, 2007; p. 707, italics in original; see also Turner & Reynolds, 2003).

In favour of a causal perspective of SDO, studies have found effects of SDO on discrimination in the context of minimal groups experiments (e.g. Sidanius, Pratto, & Mitchell, 1994). Also, longitudinal designs have provided effects of cross-lagged effects of SDO (Kteily, Sidanius, & Levin, 2011; Sibley & Liu, 2010; Sibley et al., 2007; Thomsen et al., 2010). For example, Sibley et al. (2007) showed that Time 1 SDO predicted hostile sexism at Time 2, after controlling for hostile sexism in Time 1. Similarly, Kteily et al. (2011) found a significant cross-lagged effect of SDO on prejudice in a four year period. The opposite was also true, but the effect was considerably smaller. These findings suggest that while SDO can be considered as both cause and effect of intergroup attitudes.

Also in support of an individual differences approach, Sibley and Liu (2010) argue that SDO is often made to measure something different than it was intended to measure, and that it is also possible to measure general individual differences. To evaluate whether global or group-specific SDOs predicted prejudice, Sibley and Liu (2010) reworded SDO items to capture attitudes towards specific types of inequality (based on ethnicity, gender and age). They found that group-specific SDOs predicted shared but also unique variance in SDO, suggesting that SDO is not equivalent to attitudes towards inequality in any one domain in particular (see also Kteily, Ho, & Sidanius, 2012). Similarly, Perry and Sibley (2011) primed ethnic and personal identities and found stronger relationships between SDO and racism in the ethnic identity condition. Importantly, however, SDO was a significant predictor in both conditions. Longitudinal analyses showed that SDO had a cross-lagged effect on attitudes towards group-specific inequalities, while the reverse was also true. The authors concluded that general attitudes towards inequality seem to shape attitudes to specific social groups, while these in turn feed into general attitudes. Furthermore, overall SDO predicted racism even after controlling for ethnicity-based attitudes towards inequality.

Sibley and Liu (2010) propose understanding SDO as a set of cognitive-motivational ideological attitudes, which contains attitudes that are specific to a particular stratification (such as gender or ethnicity) and a more abstract global



motivation for domination that works across situations and domains. The effect that this global motivation has on prejudice and discrimination will depend on a combination of self-categorisation processes, personality traits and sociocultural characteristics (such as power relations and levels of competition). Situational and self-categorisation processes that highlight competitive group relations can thus moderate the effect of SDO, leading people high in SDO to become even more in favour of hierarchical relationships. The key here is whether self-categorisation and situational processes account for all of the effect of SDO or only part of it. If SDO predicts attitudes above and beyond situational and self-categorisation processes, then it is possible to argue that there are individual differences in preferences for hierarchy that predict attitudes (see also Kteily et al., 2012). Sibley and Liu (2010) conclude that the context in which attitudes towards inequality are assessed must be taken into account as it is possible to change the interpretation of items.

### **This research**

The aim of this paper is to explore whether general measures of RWA and SDO (unrelated to particular groups) predict punitive attitudes or if they predict attitudes only when people have criminal offenders in mind when completing the questionnaire. Previous research has shown that RWA (e.g. Altemeyer, 1981, 1998; Feather, 1998; Funke, 2005) and SDO (e.g. Ho et al., 2012; Pratto et al., 1994; Sidanius et al., 2006) predict the support for harsh sentences. Other studies, however, find that after controlling for RWA, the effect of SDO becomes non-significant (Colémont et al., 2011; McKee & Feather, 2008). One possible reason for these inconsistent findings is the context in which studies measured RWA and SDO. There is a close proximity between RWA items and crime and punishment issues. Actually, most RWA scales refer implicit or explicitly to the harsh treatment of criminal offenders and respondents are likely to have criminal offenders in mind when completing RWA items. As a result, the extent to which RWA predicts punitive attitudes should not vary greatly whether the study is introduced as being on general attitudes or crime and punishment. SDO items, in contrast, are not easily linked to crime and punishment issues and respondents are likely to have other social groups in mind when completing SDO items. Indeed, Schmitt et al. (2003) showed that most people think about ethnic groups when completing SDO scales. In Study 1 (n=89) participants were primed to think about social attitudes, in general, or criminal offenders, specifically, when completing RWA and SDO scales.

Comparing a situation where respondents are induced to think about social attitudes in general to one where they are induced to think about criminal offenders when answering the scales will provide information on whether general or only criminal offender-specific measures of RWA and SDO predict punitive attitudes. It will also give some preliminary indication of whether people think about criminal offenders when answering the scales. Reliability statistics can also be used to examine the consistency of people's responses when completing RWA and SDO measures having one specific group in mind as opposed to having no group in mind. It is hypothesised that:

- H<sub>1</sub>: The relationship between RWA and punitive attitudes will be significant regardless of whether respondents are primed to think about social attitudes or criminal offenders when completing the scale*
- H<sub>2</sub>: The relationship between SDO and punitive attitudes will be stronger when respondents are primed to think about criminal offenders when completing the scale*

The effect of SDO is hypothesised to be stronger when people have criminal offenders in mind. However, and in line with Sibley and Liu's (2010) findings in research on prejudice, a general measure of SDO should predict attitudes above and beyond group-specific attitudes towards inequality. Furthermore, higher levels of SDO should increase desires of dominance towards criminal offenders. In Study 2 (n=125) respondents filled out general measures of RWA and SDO, as well as a criminal offender-specific measure of SDO (adapted from Sibley and Liu, 2012). In line with previous findings it is hypothesised that:

- H<sub>3</sub>: A general measure of SDO will predict punitive attitudes over and above a criminal offender-specific measure of SDO*
- H<sub>4</sub>: A criminal offender-specific measure of SDO will mediate the effect of SDO on punitive attitudes*

## Study 1

### Method

#### Participants

89 persons from the United States participated in an online study posted on Amazon's Mechanical Turk<sup>1</sup>. 11 participants (12%) were excluded for not responding correctly to an instructional manipulation check (Oppenheimer, Meyvis, & Davidenko, 2009) or a validation question embedded at the end of the study (3 participants). The reported results correspond to 78 participants. The sample was diverse in terms of, age ( $Min=17$ ,  $Max=59$ ,  $M=28$ ,  $SD=10.7$ ), occupation (51% worked, 28% students, 10% unemployed) and ideology (64% leaning to the left, 22% centre, 14% leaning to the right); although less diverse in terms of gender (71% men). Participants were randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions: social attitudes condition ( $N=39$ ) or criminal offenders condition ( $N=39$ ).

#### Materials and Procedure

**Procedure.** The aim of the experimental manipulation was to compare a situation where participants were thinking of criminal offenders when responding to the RWA and SDO scales to a situation where participants had no particular social group in mind. As observed in previous unreported research, the simple fact of describing the study as being on social attitudes or criminal offenders seemed to affect the ways in which participants responded to RWA and SDO scales. The study was posted on Amazon's Mechanical Turk as a research on social attitudes but participants were then randomly assigned to read a consent form describing the study as being on attitudes towards social issues or criminal offenders. An instructional manipulation check (Oppenheimer et al., 2009) was then used to increase the strength of the prime, while also working as a manipulation check. In this check participants were requested to respond affirmatively to a statement that basically repeated the information on the topic of the study: 'This survey contains questions about social issues [criminal offenders as a group]'. Only those participants who responded 'true' to this statement were allowed to proceed. Participants were then asked to answer RWA and SDO scales (presented in a

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<sup>1</sup> Data collected through Amazon's Mechanical Turk has been shown to be as reliable as data collected through other means. Furthermore, participants are more diverse in terms of socio-demographic variables than student samples (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Paolacci, Chandler, & Ipeirotis, 2010).

random order to avoid a stronger effect of the prime on one of them) and punitive attitudes. To increase the effect of the prime, the title of the study was repeated in each page. At the end, participants were asked to report background socio-demographic questions (age, gender, occupation and political ideology) and their thoughts about the aim of the study. No participant reported suspicion on the aim of the study. Participants were debriefed at the end of the study and paid 0.40 USD for their participation.

**Individual differences.** Twelve items from Altemeyer's (1998) Right-Wing Authoritarianism scale were used to measure RWA. Half of the items were reverse coded to control for acquiescence response bias. Sample items are: 'The "old-fashioned ways" and the "old-fashioned values" still show the best way to live' and 'There is no "ONE right way" to live life; everybody has to create their own way' (R). Since questions on authoritarian aggression often refer to the treatment of criminal offenders, special attention was placed in excluding crime and punishment related items. Only overall RWA was considered as Altemeyer's items (1998) combine elements from the different subscales. Ten items from Pratto et al.'s (1994) measure of Social Dominance Orientation were used to measure SDO. SDO has been shown to measure two different concepts: opposition to equality (OEQ), measuring a general preference for inequality, and group-based dominance (GBD), measuring a preference for one's in-group dominating over out-groups (Jost & Thompson, 2000; Kugler, Cooper, & Nosek, 2010). Since these two subscales show different relationships with justice attitudes (McKee & Feather, 2008), their effects are examined separately. Five items captured group-based dominance and five items captured opposition to equality. Sample items are: 'Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups' and 'We would have fewer problems if we treated people more equally'.

**Dependent variable.** Punitive attitudes were measured using six items, four items in favour and two items against applying harsh sentences. Sample items are: 'People who break the law should be given harsher sentences' and 'The use of harsh punishment should be avoided whenever possible'.

Seven point likert scales were used for all items (ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree). Descriptive results and reliability statistics are displayed in Table 1.

## **Analysis**

To evaluate the consistency of response under the social issues and criminal offenders conditions, scale reliability indices were obtained for RWA, SDO and

punitive attitudes in each experimental group. Correlation analyses between punitive attitudes, RWA and SDO were conducted for each experimental group and z-tests were used to compare coefficients across conditions. Regression analyses were then carried out to evaluate the joint effects of RWA and SDO on punitive attitudes. T-tests were carried out to compare coefficients across conditions. Given the nature of the hypotheses of this paper and the small sample size, for all analyses one-sided tests were used.

Table 1

*Descriptive and reliability statistics across experimental conditions (Study 1, n=78)*

	Mean	SD	$\alpha$	
			Social issues	Criminal offenders
Punitive attitudes	3.74	1.24	0.80	0.78
RWA	2.72	1.26	0.90	0.96
GBD	3.14	1.36	0.83	0.84
OEQ	2.34	1.09	0.77	0.94

## Results

### Preliminary analyses

No significant differences were observed between experimental groups in measures of punitive attitudes, RWA and SDO ( $F_s < 1.5$ ,  $p > .10$ ). Table 1 reports reliability coefficients for all variables in each experimental condition. Almost no differences in reliability were observed for punitive attitudes and group-based dominance. For RWA the reliability was somewhat higher in the criminal offenders condition. The largest difference was in the opposition to equality scale, with 0.18 points of difference between the social issue and criminal offenders conditions. This is, when respondents had criminal offenders in mind, they were more consistent in completing the OEQ scale. In line with Perry and Sibley's (2011) analysis, it was evaluated whether the manipulation affected the variance of punitive attitudes, RWA and SDO. Variance homogeneity tests showed no significant differences in variance for RWA, GBD and punitive attitudes (*Levene statistic* (1, 76) < 1.2,  $p > .05$ ). There was,

however, a marginally significant difference in the variance of OEQ (*Levene statistic* (1, 76)=3.14,  $p>.10$ ; Social attitudes condition,  $SD=0.83$ ; Criminal offenders condition,  $SD=1.31$ ).

### **RWA, SDO and punitive attitudes**

Table 2 reports bivariate correlations between punitive attitudes, RWA, SDO, GBD and OEQ in both experimental conditions. Fisher's  $z$ -tests comparing the correlation under the criminal offenders and social issues condition are also displayed. The correlation between punitive attitudes and RWA was positive and significant in both experimental conditions. While it was slightly higher in the criminal offenders condition, this difference was not statistically significant ( $z=.53$ ,  $p>.05$ ). SDO, on the other hand, had stronger correlations with the support of harsh punishment in the criminal offenders condition (SDO:  $r=.60$ ,  $p<.01$ ; GBD:  $r=.64$ ,  $p<.01$ ; OEQ:  $r=.42$ ,  $p<.01$ ) compared to the social issues condition (SDO:  $r=.40$ ,  $p<.05$ ; GBD:  $r=.33$ ,  $p<.05$ ; OEQ:  $r=.36$ ,  $p<.05$ ). For GBD, this difference was statistically significant ( $z=1.76$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

Table 2

*Bivariate correlation coefficients between punitive attitudes, RWA and SDO across experimental conditions (Study 1,  $n=78$ )*

	Social issues ( $n=39$ )	Criminal offenders ( $n=39$ )	Fisher's Z-Test
RWA	.56**	.64**	0.53
SDO	.40*	.60**	1.14
GBD	.33*	.64**	1.76*
OEQ	.36*	.42**	0.30

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

Separate linear regression models were then carried out for each experimental group (see Table 3). In Model 1 the endorsement of harsh sentencing was regressed on RWA and SDO. Given the somewhat different findings for GBD and OEQ, Models 2 and 3 show the effects of RWA and each of the subscales of SDO on punitive attitudes.

Table 3

*Effects of RWA and SDO on punitive attitudes across experimental conditions (Study 1, n=78)*

	Social issues			Criminal offenders			T-Test (df=76)
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	
<i>Model 1</i>							
RWA	.54	.17	3.24**	.44	.10	4.43**	-0.51
SDO	.28	.20	1.40	.46	.12	3.87**	0.77
R <sup>2</sup>	.35			.59			
<i>Model 2</i>							
RWA	.58	.17	3.41**	.44	.09	4.68**	-0.51
GBD	.11	.14	0.77	.44	.09	4.62**	1.98*
R <sup>2</sup>	.33			.63			
<i>Model 3</i>							
RWA	.57	.15	3.70**	.51	.11	4.58**	-0.32
OEQ	.35	.20	1.75†	.25	.12	2.09*	-0.43
R <sup>2</sup>	.37			.48			

† $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ 

In Model 1 RWA positively and significantly predicted harsh punishment in both experimental conditions and regression slopes did not differ significantly between groups ( $t(76) = -.51$ ,  $p > .05$ ). The somehow smaller slope of RWA in the criminal offenders condition ( $b = .44$ ,  $p < .01$ ) compared to the social issues condition ( $b = .54$ ,  $p < .01$ ) can be attributed to SDO capturing part of the effect in the criminal offenders condition. Similar results were found for RWA after controlling for GBD and OEQ in Models 2 and 3.

As for SDO, the regression coefficient was higher in the criminal offenders condition ( $b = .46$ ,  $p < .01$ ) than in the social issues condition ( $b = .28$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Furthermore, the effect of SDO was only significant when respondents had criminal offenders in mind when completing the scale. However, probably due to the small sample size, this difference was not statistically significant ( $t(76) = .77$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Similarly, the effect of

GBD was high and significant in the criminal offenders condition ( $b=.44, p>.05$ ) and not in the social issues condition ( $b=.11, p>.05$ ), and this time the difference was statistically significant ( $t(76)=1.98, p<.05$ ). Model 3 shows that the effect of OEQ was higher in the social attitudes condition ( $b=.35, p>.10$ ) than in the criminal offenders condition ( $b=.25, p>.05$ ). However, given the high standard error in the social attitudes condition (which is likely to be related to the lower reliability of the scale), OEQ had a significant effect in the criminal offenders condition and this effect was only marginally significant in the social attitudes condition. RWA and SDO explained a higher proportion of variance in the criminal offenders condition ( $> 48\%$ ) compared to the social issues condition ( $>33\%$ ).

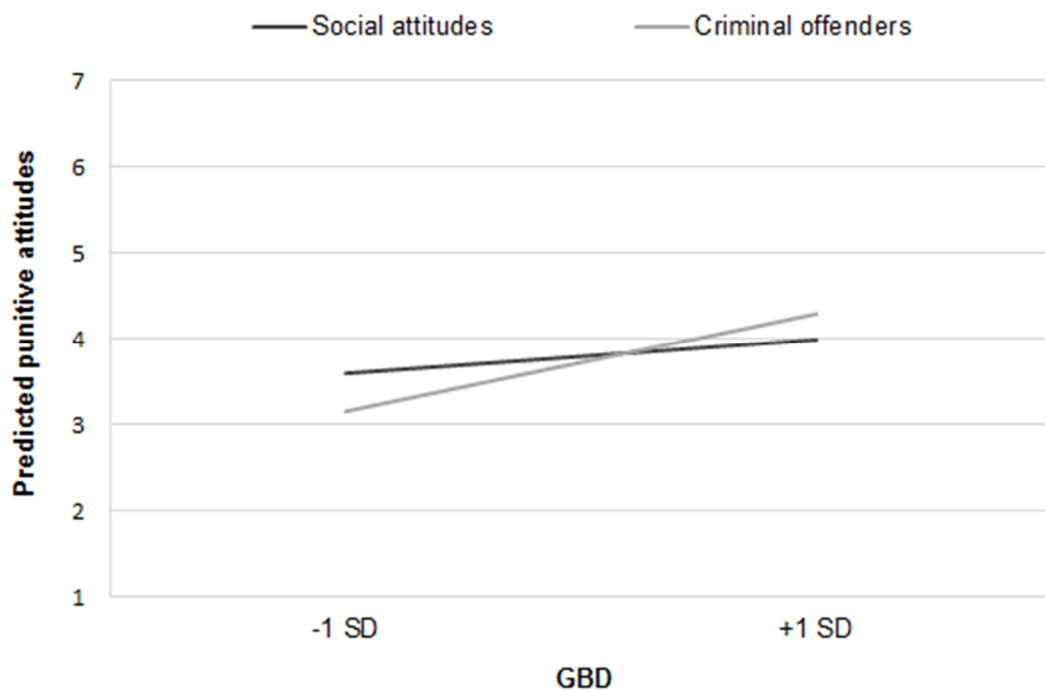


Figure 1. Predicted punitive attitudes as a function of the interaction between GBD and experimental conditions, controlling for RWA (Study 1,  $n=78$ )

Note. GBD is centred and results are shown for the range between  $\pm 1$  SD.

An analysis regressing punitive attitudes on RWA, GBD, experimental condition and an interaction effect between GBD and experimental condition revealed a significant interaction (Main GBD effect:  $\beta=.14, p>0.05$ ; Main experimental condition effect:  $\beta=-.08, p<0.05$ ; Interaction effect between GBD and experimental condition:  $\beta=.28, p<0.05$ ). Figure 1 presents fitted values of punitive attitudes for  $\pm 1$  standard



deviations in GBD, showing that GBD had a stronger effect on punitive attitudes when respondents completed SDO scales having criminal offenders in mind.

### **Discussion**

The findings in Study 1 showed a persistent relationship between RWA and punitive attitudes, regardless of whether participants were led to think about criminal offenders when completing the RWA scale ( $H_1$ ). The effect of RWA was practically insensitive to contextual factors in this study. Two interpretations are possible. First, people high in RWA might be predisposed to think about crime and punishment when answering to RWA items. That is criminal offenders are an accessible social group that threatens motivational goals of in-group conformity and collective security. Thus, reminding people to think about criminal offenders does not change the way in which they respond to RWA items. A second possibility is that while RWA measured different concepts in the social issues and criminal offenders conditions, both a general and a criminal offender-specific measure of RWA were relevant to punitive attitudes.

The most interesting finding of this study was that SDO –and particularly GBD– had a significantly higher effect on punitive attitudes when criminal offenders were salient at the time of responding to SDO questions ( $H_2$ ). After controlling for RWA, overall SDO, GBD and OEQ were only significant predictors of punitive attitudes in the criminal offenders condition. It might be argued that the SDO scale captured different concepts when people were thinking about social attitudes in general compared to when they were thinking about criminal offenders. This is very likely given the lack of specificity of SDO items.

The fact that SDO –and particularly GBD– predicted punitive attitudes only in the criminal offenders condition leads to three conclusions. First, criminal offenders are not an accessible social group that people think about when answering to SDO items. Second, that even though people do not think of criminal offenders when completing the SDO scale, punishment is related to preferences for group-based dominance over criminal offenders. Third, as shown by the variance homogeneity test, respondents varied to a greater extent in their responses to OEQ in the criminal offenders condition compared to the social attitudes condition. In the criminal offenders condition respondents were more likely to categorise themselves as group members than in the general social attitudes condition, and self-categorisation theory (Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994) would predict more uniform responses in the former. The

finding that respondents varied to a greater degree in their OEQ responses in the criminal offenders condition might be due to higher social desirability when talking about inequality in general as compared to criminal offenders: it might be less politically incorrect to express preferences for inequalities between law-abiding citizens and criminal offenders than across other social groups. Stronger effects of OEQ might thus be due to respondents expressing less biased and more varied opinions in the criminal offenders condition. It should be noted, however, that respondents did not express higher levels of SDO or punitive attitudes.

A fourth possibility should also be taken into account. Priming criminal offenders before measuring RWA and SDO might have made intergroup status differences salient. Previous research has found that SDO is a stronger predictor when status distinctions are salient or when status differentials are threatened. Pratto (1999) reported that SDO predicted intergroup discrimination only when status distinctions or intergroup status concerns were salient. Similarly, Pratto and Shih (2000) found that people high in SDO showed higher implicit prejudice when in-group status was attacked. Sidanius et al. (1994) showed similar findings. They found that SDO predicted intergroup bias only when people identified with their group and intergroup distinctions could be argued to be salient. Federico (1999) reported that the effect of SDO on in-group favouritism was stronger when intergroup status differentials were believed to be unstable. In the current study, priming criminal offenders will most likely have led respondents to identify as part of a high-status law abiding in-group, while this might have increased status differentials between them and criminal offenders. A second study was conducted to use a different approach to evaluate the context-specificity of SDO without priming status differentials.

## **Study 2**

Study 1 provided preliminary evidence that the preference for group-dominance over criminal offenders was a better predictor of punitive attitudes than overall group-based dominance. However, it is not clear whether presenting the study as being on criminal offenders primed in-group status differences and hereby increased the relevance of SDO in predicting punitiveness. Study 2 used a different approach to examine whether a general measure of SDO predicted punitive attitudes over and above a criminal offender-specific measure. Drawing on Sibley and Liu's (2010) approach, an

offender-specific measure of SDO was developed and measured in conjunction with a general measure of SDO.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

A survey on social attitudes was posted on Amazon's Mechanical Turk. 125 persons from the United States participated in the study for 0.60 USD. 19 participants (15%) were excluded for not responding correctly to an instructional manipulation check (Oppenheimer et al., 2009) or a validation question embedded in the survey (11 participants). The reported results correspond to 106 participants. The sample was diverse in terms of gender (65% female), age ( $Min=18$ ,  $Max=65$ ,  $M=34.4$ ,  $SD=12.5$ ), occupation (52% worked, 15% students, 14% unemployed) and ideology (49% leaning to the left, 33% centre, 18% leaning to the right); although less diverse in terms of ethnicity (79% white).

### **Materials and Procedure**

Participants were first requested to read and agree to a consent form. Second, an instructional manipulation check was used to increase participant's attention (Oppenheimer et al., 2009). Participants were instructed to respond affirmatively to a statement specifying that the survey contained questions on social issues. RWA and SDO were then measured using the same scales described in Study 1. Dominance over criminal offenders was next assessed using a scale adapted for this study (see Appendix) from Sibley and Liu's (2010) SDO scales for inequality based on ethnicity, gender and age. It should be noted that for all analysis, longer versions of SDO scales were used for the general measure compared to the criminal-offender specific measure. Sibley and Liu (2010) showed that results remained practically the same when using a longer version compared to using the same items for both scales. Punitive attitudes were measured using the same six items as in study 1. At the end, participants were asked to answer background socio-demographic questions (age, gender, ethnicity, occupation and political ideology) and their thoughts about the aims of the study. Participants were debriefed at the end of the study and paid 0.40 USD for their participation.

Seven point likert scales were used for all items (ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree). Table 4 displays descriptive and reliability statistics for all scales in the study.

## Analysis

Correlation analyses were first conducted to compare the correlations between punitive attitudes, RWA, overall SDO, and criminal offender-specific SDO. Replicating Sibley and Liu's (2010) procedure, regression analyses were then conducted regressing punitive attitudes on SDO and criminal offender-specific SDO, while also controlling for RWA. To finish, a mediation analysis was conducted to examine whether criminal offender-specific SDO mediated the effect of SDO on punitive attitudes. For all analyses, one-sided tests were used.

## Results

### Preliminary Analyses

Reliability statistics showed a slightly higher reliability for a criminal offender-specific scale of OEQ compared to a general measure of OEQ (0.06 points of difference), while the opposite was true for GBD (see Table 4). Descriptive results also showed that people were more likely to endorse SDO statements if these referred to criminal offenders instead of 'inferior groups': respondents were more likely to agree that criminal offenders (GBD criminals:  $M=3.87$ ,  $SD=1.39$ ) should stay in their place than they were to agree to the same regarding 'inferior groups' (GBD:  $M=2.74$ ,  $SD=1.30$ ). This difference was statistically significant ( $t(105)=7.79$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Respondents were also more likely to justify unequal conditions of criminal offenders (OEQ criminals:  $M=3.91$ ,  $SD=1.43$ ) than to justify the same for 'inferior groups' (OEQ:  $M=2.33$ ,  $SD=1.14$ ). Again, this difference was statistically significant ( $t(105)=11.65$ ,  $p<.01$ ).

Punitive attitudes correlated positively and significantly with all variables in the study ( $r_s>.31$ ,  $p_s<.01$ ). The correlations were higher with the criminal offender-specific SDO scale ( $r=.50$ ,  $p<.01$ ) than with general SDO scale ( $r=.37$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Similar differences were observed for the subscales of SDO. As before, the largest difference was observed for GBD: the correlation with punitive attitudes was higher for the criminal offender-specific GBD scale ( $r=.50$ ,  $p<.01$ ) than for the general GBD scale ( $r=.36$ ,  $p<.01$ ). The correlations between general SDO scales and criminal offender-specific SDO scales were moderate (around  $r=.40$ ).

Table 4

*Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlation coefficients between punitive attitudes, RWA and SDO (Study 2, n=106)*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Punitive attitudes	-							
2 RWA	.36**	-						
3 SDO	.37**	.25*	-					
4 GBD	.36**	.19*	.91**	-				
5 OEQ	.31**	.26**	.88**	.61**	-			
6 SDO Criminals	.50**	.36**	.42**	.35**	.41**	-		
7 GBD Criminals	.50**	.38**	.40**	.39**	.32**	.92**	-	
8 OEQ Criminals	.42**	.28**	.37**	.26**	.42**	.92**	.69**	-
M	3.65	2.92	2.53	2.74	2.33	3.89	3.87	3.91
SD	1.25	1.25	1.09	1.30	1.14	1.30	1.39	1.43
$\alpha$	.84	.92	.88	.84	.83	.89	.78	.89

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

### **SDO, criminal-specific SDO and punitive attitudes**

Table 5 reports the results of three linear regression models. In Model 1 punitive attitudes are regressed on general SDO. In Model 2, criminal offender-specific SDO is added to the equation. Finally, Model 3 controls for RWA. The results show a strong and positive effect of SDO in Model 1 ( $b = .43$ ,  $p < .01$ ). After controlling for criminal-specific SDO in Model 2, the effect of SDO shrinks importantly but remains significant ( $b = .23$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The strongest effect, however, is exerted by the criminal offender specific measure of SDO ( $b = .40$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Introducing RWA into the regression in Model 3, slightly reduces the effect of SDO ( $b = .20$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and criminal offender-specific SDO ( $b = .35$ ,  $p < .01$ ). However, they both remain significant predictors. Similar results were obtained using GBD and OEQ (and their respective criminal offender specific measures) instead of overall SDO (not shown). In all cases, the effect of SDO and its subscales was reduced but remained significant after controlling for offender specific measures.

Table 5

*Effects of RWA, GBD and criminal offender-specific GBD on punitive attitudes (Study 2, n=106)*

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>
SDO	.43	.10	4.09**	.23	.11	2.16*	.20	.10	1.94*
SDO Criminals				.40	.09	4.53**	.35	.09	3.81**
RWA							.19	.09	2.10*
R <sup>2</sup>		.14			.28			.31	

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

### Mediation analysis

To finish, mediational analyses were conducted to examine whether criminal offender-specific SDO mediated the effect of SDO on punitive attitudes. All analyses controlled for RWA. As expected, a significant mediation was observed (*Sobel's*  $z = 2.75$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The opposite was also true, although to a lesser extent: SDO significantly mediated the effect of criminal offender-specific SDO on punitive attitudes (*Sobel's*  $z = 1.73$ ,  $p < .05$ ). It should be noted, however, that SDO remained a significant predictor after controlling for criminal offender-specific SDO. The same analyses were then conducted with RWA, this time controlling for SDO. As before, the effect of RWA was mediated by criminal offender-specific SDO (*Sobel's*  $z = 2.39$ ,  $p < .01$ ), while RWA also mediated the effect of criminal offender-specific SDO (*Sobel's*  $z = 1.75$ ,  $p < .05$ ). As with SDO, RWA remained a significant predictor after controlling for SDO and group-dominance over criminal offenders.

### Discussion

Group-based dominance over criminal offenders exerted a strong and positive effect on the support for harsh sentencing, above and beyond overall measures of RWA and SDO. This is people who are in favour of group-based dominance over criminal offenders and who justify unequal conditions between law abiding people and criminal offenders are more likely to support the use of harsh punishment. Interestingly, however, overall SDO and RWA remained significant predictors of punitive attitudes

after controlling for group-based dominance over criminal offenders (H<sub>3</sub>). Finally, as expected, the offender-specific measure of SDO mediated the effect of SDO on punitive attitudes (H<sub>4</sub>).

### **General Discussion**

The findings showed a consistent effect of RWA across experimental conditions and after controlling for group-based dominance over criminal offenders. The effect of SDO –and particularly of group-based dominance, GBD- was found to vary to a great extent depending on whether respondents thought of criminal offenders when completing the SDO measure. Still, a general measure of SDO predicted punitive attitudes after controlling for group-based dominance over criminal offenders. In line with Sibley and Liu (2010) the results of this paper suggest that there are both specific and generalised effects of SDO on the support for harsh sentencing.

Furthermore, these results also provide an indication on the conceptual proximity between RWA and SDO items and crime and punishment issues. The fact that the effect of RWA did not vary greatly depending on the social group that was salient suggests crime and punishment are accessible to people high in RWA when responding to the RWA scale. As hypothesised, crime and punishment issues should be less accessible to people high in SDO when answering to the SDO scale. The latter might account for the lower effect of SDO when measured in the context of general social attitudes. Interestingly, however, an offender-specific measure of SDO had a great effect on punitive attitudes. Part of punitiveness seems to be related to a group-based competition with criminal offenders, yet people high in SDO do not seem to be predisposed to think of crime and punishment as a matter of group dominance.

These results suggest that part of the inconsistent findings in the literature regarding the role of SDO might be accounted by whether respondents had criminal offenders in mind when completing the SDO scale. If SDO and punitive attitudes were measured as part of a survey on general social attitudes, and particularly if SDO was measured before items on crime and punishment, then the effect of SDO can be expected to be significantly lower. On the other hand, if SDO items are completed having criminal offenders in mind, or –one might also expect- if crime and punishment are associated to competitive relations for power and status, SDO should be a stronger predictor.

Two other factors may also account for the stronger effect of SDO in the criminal offenders condition. First, as noted in Study 1, respondents seem to be less consistent in completing SDO items when no specific group is salient. Lower consistencies, on the other hand, can translate into lower predictive capacity. Second, in Study 2 respondents were significantly more likely to agree to SDO statements when they referred to criminal offenders compared to when no specific ‘inferior group’ was specified. It might be more socially desirable to agree with the justification of inequality of social groups other than criminal offenders. If this was true, a measure of dominance over criminal offenders might be better able to capture preferences for inequalities and thus become a stronger predictor.

### **Conclusions**

Critics of individual differences approaches (Lehmiller & Schmitt, 2007; Schmitt et al., 2003; Turner & Reynolds, 2003) have argued that the extent to which RWA and SDO predict attitudes depends on the self-categorisation and intergroup comparisons that are salient when respondents complete the scales. Therefore, attitudes towards inequality depend on the specific interests that are served by sustaining unequal relationships. Consistent with this argument, the effects of RWA and SDO have been shown to vary greatly depending on the social group that is salient at the moment of completing the scales (e.g. Lehmiller & Schmitt, 2007; Schmitt et al., 2003). Others (Kteily et al., 2012; Sibley & Liu, 2010) have argued that the context in which attitudes towards inequality are measured need to be taken into account as it is possible to make SDO measure something that is was not intended to measure. Importantly, then, the question is not whether RWA and SDO are general attitudes, but rather whether general measures of RWA and SDO predict outcome variables and behaviours.

The findings of the studies presented in this paper provide evidence into the relevance of general measures of RWA and SDO in the context of attitudes towards the punishment of criminal offenders. RWA had a strong effect on punitive attitudes regardless of whether respondents had criminal offenders in mind when completing the scale, while the effect of SDO was found to be more context-specific. But despite the stronger effect of a criminal offender-specific measure of SDO in predicting punitiveness, RWA and SDO explained unique variance of punitive attitudes.

Sibley and Liu (2010) recommend taking special care to avoid priming a specific group prior to completing an SDO scale. Asking participants to think of groups in



general before completing SDO items should allow capturing a global measure of SDO, although Kteily et al. (2012) found that SDO was a general attitude regardless of this instruction. In this study, criminal offenders were primed by manipulating the description of the study. The important differences found in the effect of SDO suggest that the description of the study is enough to lead participants to change the way in which they respond to the questionnaire, probably due to the expectations they have in relation to the questions that will come. It is thus recommended to take into account the extent to which the title of the study might prime a specific group.

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## **Appendix**

### *Group-based dominance over criminal offenders items*

- Criminal offenders are simply inferior to law-abiding people
- It is OK if law-abiding people have more of a chance in life than criminal offenders
- All groups of people should be given an equal chance in life regardless of whether they are criminal or not
- We should do what we can to equalize conditions between law-abiding people and criminal offenders
- If criminal offenders stayed in their place, we would have fewer problems
- It would be good if criminal offenders and law-abiding people could be equal

## CHAPTER 4: CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purpose of this doctoral dissertation has been to examine the relationship between ideological preferences and public support for harsh sentences for criminal offenders. This dissertation has started with the observation that when people think about the appropriate sentences for criminal offenders, they consider a range of factors that go far beyond concerns about controlling the behaviour of criminal offenders. Instead, people worry about the extent to which crime disturbs the normative order in society and how, by committing crime, offenders show disrespect and assume power over the victim and society. Crucially, then, beliefs about the role of crime and punishment in society are closely linked to views people hold about how social order should be structured and the acceptable means to maintain it.

Given the central role that ideological attitudes have in shaping people's thoughts about crime and their support for punitive policies, it is important to examine the social psychological drives that are at the base of punitive attitudes. In this dissertation I have proposed a social-psychological perspective to the study of public punitiveness. More specifically, I have argued that understanding ideologies from a motivated social cognition perspective provides a useful framework to understand why ideology and punitive attitudes tend to go together. From this perspective, ideologies are argued to be rooted in psychological needs and motivations. Moreover, people's motivationally driven ideologies are expected to lead them to assign positive or negative value to punitive policies, to the extent that they are perceived as helping to deal with a specific goal.

Harsh punishment might thus have positive value for some people, depending on their motivational goals and ideological attitudes. In particular, I have argued that punishment can be perceived as satisfying two main goals in society. First, crime can be recognised as disturbing collective security, this is, perceptions of security, stability, as well as strong bonds and in-group conformity. Harsh sentences are conceived in this context as sending a message to offenders and the community more broadly that collective security is important and that everyone should agree with the group's norms. It is because of this perceived function of punishment that those high in right-wing



authoritarianism (RWA) might find comfort in applying harsher sentences of criminal offenders. Crucially, I have argued (in line with Duckitt, 2009) that high RWA individuals will support punitive measures to restore security and in-group conformity. High RWA individuals are also submissive towards authorities and they should endorse the actions undertaken by the criminal justice system to control crime.

Second, crime can also be perceived as a threat to social hierarchies: by committing crime, criminal offenders communicate that they have power over the victim and society and one way of restoring hierarchies is by degrading their status. Stiff sentences can thus be perceived as a means to enhance status differentials between criminal offenders and the rest of society. Those individuals that have a motivation to achieve power and dominance over out-groups might therefore support harsh punishment as a means by which status and power hierarchies are restored. I have argued in this dissertation that high social dominance orientation (SDO) individuals should be particularly likely to support harsh punishment to avoid criminal offenders gaining power and restore status and power hierarchies.

Evidence in favour of a dual-motivational model of punitive attitudes has shown that both RWA (e.g. Altemeyer, 1981, 1998) and SDO (e.g. Sidanius et al., 2006) relate to punitiveness. But a number of issues have been left unexplained, and this dissertation has sought to address some of them. In four empirical papers, this research has focused on exploring the different reasons why and circumstances under which those individuals high in RWA and SDO will support harsh punitive measures. The papers in this dissertation have examined different hypotheses proposed to evaluate a dual-motivational model (Duckitt & Sibley, 2009): whether RWA and SDO predict attitudes for different reasons ('differential mediation hypothesis'), whether they predict different specific outcomes ('differential effects hypothesis') and whether they predict attitudes under different circumstances ('differential moderation hypothesis'). Using these hypotheses as a starting point, this dissertation has sought to address the following general research question: *How do right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation relate to the endorsement of harsh punishment?* More specifically, it has examined the following questions:

- Q<sub>1</sub>. Do RWA and SDO predict unique variance of punitive attitudes?*
- Q<sub>2</sub>. Why do people high in RWA and SDO endorse the harsh sentencing of criminal offenders?*
- Q<sub>3</sub>. Do people high in RWA and SDO support different retributive goals of punishment and attitudes towards the treatment of criminal offenders?*
- Q<sub>4</sub>. Under what circumstances do RWA and SDO predict punitiveness?*

Four empirical papers were presented on the differential ways in which RWA and SDO predict punitiveness. Paper 1 of this dissertation started by evaluating the most basic proposition of a dual-motivational model which is that RWA and SDO will have separate effects on punitive attitudes (Q<sub>1</sub>). Moreover, it used structural equation modelling to examine whether the statistical effects of RWA and SDO were mediated by different beliefs about crime and criminals, as well as different symbolic motives of punishment (Q<sub>2</sub>). Paper 2 explored the relationship between RWA, SDO, retributive punishment goals and attitudes towards the treatment of criminal offenders. In particular, it looked at whether RWA and SDO predicted different retributive goals of punishment (Q<sub>3</sub>). It also provided evidence on whether the statistical effects of RWA and SDO on the support for harsh punishment were mediated by different symbolic motives and retributive goals of punishment. Papers 3 and 4 examined the conditions under which RWA and SDO predicted punitiveness (Q<sub>4</sub>). In Paper 3, social conditions were experimentally primed to be dangerous or competitive and the extent to which RWA and SDO predicted punitive responses was measured. Paper 3 provided further evidence into the differential mediation of the effects of RWA and SDO on the support for harsh sentences. In Paper 4, participants were led to think about criminal offenders or attitudes in general when completing RWA and SDO scales. This approach allowed testing whether the effects of RWA and SDO were general across social categories salient in context or whether they predicted punitiveness only when measured in the context of crime and criminal offenders.

This conclusion summarises the main findings of the papers in this dissertation in the light of the above mentioned questions and with reference to the particular papers where relevant. It then discusses limitations of the current research and avenues for future research.

#### **4.1. Summary of research questions and findings**

##### **Q1. Do RWA and SDO predict unique variance of punitive attitudes?**

While RWA has consistently been found to predict the support for harsh sentences, there are inconsistent findings in the literature in relation to the role of SDO. Whilst many studies have found a strong effect of SDO on punitiveness (e.g. Sidanius et al., 2006), studies that control for RWA have found conflicting effects. After controlling for RWA, one study (Capps, 2002) found a strong and significant effect of SDO, while two studies found a non-significant effect of SDO (Colémont et al., 2011; McKee & Feather, 2008). Paper 1 of this dissertation explored two different reasons for these inconsistent findings. First, controlling for RWA might reduce the effect of SDO to non-significance because RWA scales usually include items on crime and punishment as part of the authoritarian aggression scale and will thus ‘capture’ all of the predictive capacity. Second, previous research has found that only one of the subscales of SDO, group-based dominance, and not opposition to equality is relevant to punitive attitudes. In line with a dual-motivational model of punitive attitudes Paper 1 hypothesised that RWA and SDO would predict unique variance of punitive attitudes once authoritarian aggression was excluded from the measurement of RWA ( $H_{1.1}$ ), that all subscales of RWA ( $H_{1.2}$ ) and group based dominance (but not opposition to equality,  $H_{1.3}$ ) would be relevant to punitiveness. The findings of Paper 1 provided support for hypotheses 1.1 and 1.2, but only partial support for hypothesis 1.3.

First, consistent with previous research (e.g. Funke, 2005) all subscales of RWA were related to punitive attitudes. That is, harsh punishment is an aggressive response to threatening groups, symbolises the support for traditional conventions and values and the importance of following authorities. Note, however, that given the high correlation between the RWA subscales, only correlations between the subscales of RWA and punitiveness were observed. It is also important to highlight that the close link between authoritarian aggression and punitiveness is far from surprising. It has been argued that most authoritarian aggression items refer either implicitly or explicitly to crime and punishment policies and that punishment is in itself an aggressive response to threatening groups. Excluding such items from the measurement of RWA provided clearer information regarding the extent to which punishment is related to preferences for conventions and beliefs about the importance of authorities.

Second, SDO predicted the support of harsh measures and this was the case regardless of whether authoritarian aggression items were included as part of the measurement of RWA. However, it should be noted that this study only considered items that did implicit –and not explicit- reference to crime and punishment issues. Previous studies might have included items that did explicit reference to crime and punishment issues and this could explain why RWA rendered the effect of SDO non-significant.

Third, the results were inconclusive in relation to the role of the subscales of SDO. In Paper 1, Study 1 found that both GBD and OEQ predicted punitiveness above and beyond the effect of RWA, while in Study 2 only GBD remained significant. Papers 2 and 3 in this dissertation showed stronger effects of GBD than of OEQ. In both cases, only GBD had a significant effect after controlling for RWA. It is clear from this and other research (e.g. McKee & Feather, 2008) that group-based dominance is a more relevant predictor of punitiveness. This is likely to be due to the harshness of the items, but also to different reasons why group-based dominance and opposition to equality can be expected to predict the support of punitive measures. People high in SDO might perceive criminal offenders as competing for resources and support harsh punishment to establish a position of domination over them. It is less clear, however, if punishment is perceived as a way of justifying inequalities more broadly.

Findings from Paper 4 provide further information into the inconsistent findings on the role of opposition to equality. Findings from Study 1 suggest that respondents are less consistent in completing opposition to equality items when they have no social group in mind: the reliability index for OEQ was considerably higher when respondents had criminal offenders in mind compared to social attitudes in general. The latter translated into a higher standard error and a non-significant effect of OEQ (controlling for RWA) even though the coefficient was quite high. The effect of OEQ on punitiveness was smaller but significant in the criminal offenders condition. These findings suggest that, first, general opposition to equality items are to some extent vague and respondents might think of different social groups when completing one or the other item. Second, it seems to be the case that supporting unequal conditions between law-abiding citizens and criminal offenders increases the likelihood to support harsh punishment (or allows justifying it). Yet, attitudes towards inequalities in general seem to be far removed from perceptions about criminal offenders and less able to predict punishment.

SDO was a strong predictor of punitive attitudes when crime and punishment were somehow associated to competitive inter-group relations. However, there is one more issue that should be addressed. It might be argued that the effect of SDO is an artefact due to the harshness of its items. This is some people might answer positively to both SDO and punishment items given their strong nature. While part of the reason why high SDO individuals favour harsh punishment can without a doubt be associated to a harsh view on society and the way people deal with each other, findings that high SDO individuals favoured status and power restoration suggest that its effect cannot be reduced to a harshness factor.

**Q2. Why do people high in RWA and SDO endorse the harsh sentencing of criminal offenders?**

In line with a dual-motivational model of punitive attitudes, RWA and SDO are rooted in different motivations and should predict punitiveness for different reasons. People high in RWA are motivated to achieve collective security and they have been argued to favour punitive policies because punishment symbolises authority and order, and can be perceived as helping to restore value consensus and collective security. People high in SDO, on the other hand, are motivated to achieve power and dominance. They have been argued to favour punitive policies because punishment is an unequal institution and can help maintaining dominance over criminal offenders. Furthermore, they are unempathic and will lack concerns for the wellbeing of criminal offenders.

Papers 1, 2 and 3 addressed the differential mediations of the effects of RWA and SDO on punitive attitudes. Paper 1 examined whether the effects of RWA and SDO on the support for harsh punishment were mediated by different beliefs about crime and criminals, as well as different symbolic motives of punishment (collective security restoration, and status and power restoration). Paper 2 looked at whether different symbolic motives mediated the effects of RWA and SDO on retributive punishment goals. Finally, Paper 3 explored the differential mediation of the effects of RWA and SDO via symbolic motives of punishment, although its aim was to examine whether this mediation became stronger when dangerous and competitive social conditions were primed. It was hypothesised that the effect of RWA on punitive attitudes and retributive goals of punishment would be mediated by perceiving crime as a threat to collective

security and punishment as a means to restore it ( $H_{1.4}$ ,  $H_{2.4}$ ,  $H_{3.2}$ ). The effect of SDO on harsh punishment and retribution, on the other hand, was hypothesised to be mediated by perceiving crime as a threat to hierarchies, by a lack of concern for criminal offenders and the perception that punishment can help restoring status and power relationships ( $H_{1.5}$ ,  $H_{2.5}$ ,  $H_{3.4}$ ).

The findings of Paper 1, 2 and 3 show support in favour of the previously mentioned hypotheses. People high in SDO were found to favour harsh punishment and retribution because they were concerned about status and power hierarchies in society. The effect of SDO (in Paper 1, Study 1) was mediated by the perception that crime posed a threat to hierarchical relationships in society. Furthermore, the effect of GBD (in Paper 1, Study 2 and in Paper 3) was mediated by preferences for punishment to restore status and power relationships in society. Finally, in Paper 2, the effect of GBD on the support for a vengeful perspective on retribution was mediated by a status and power restoration motive. SDO was also related to a lack of concern for the wellbeing of criminal offenders and the latter mediated its effect on punitive attitudes (Paper 1, Study 1). Furthermore, SDO was completely unrelated to concerns about security and in-group conformity: SDO did not predict perceptions of crime threatening collective security and the support of punishment to restore values. This finding suggests that the role of SDO is specific to situations that imply status differentials between criminal offenders and law abiding citizens. It should not predict punitiveness towards high-class offenders or crime that does not affect higher social groups in society. Concerns about status and power are also more distant from issues commonly discussed in relation to punishment, such as perceptions of insecurity, threats to social cohesion and deviation from norms and values. People high in SDO should thus be less likely to perceive a crime situation as threatening to their values and motivations. Given their lack of empathy towards criminal offenders, however, they should have no problem to support the harshest punishment when they perceive an offense as damaging status differentials.

People high in RWA, on the other hand, perceived crime as a threat to collective security and punishment and retribution as ways of restoring in-group conformity and order in society. RWA also predicted a lack of concern for the wellbeing of criminal offenders and the latter mediated its effect on punitiveness. Although only SDO was hypothesised to predict a lack of empathy towards criminal offenders, it is possible that the measure used for concerns about wellbeing of criminal offenders captured a general disliking of criminal offenders and the belief that justice should be tough on them. It is

difficult to distinguish conceptually and empirically between the support of harsh treatment with criminal offenders and a lack of care for their wellbeing. Future research should use a measure of empathy that allows a clearer distinction with harsh treatment.

A second unexpected finding was that people high in RWA were also concerned about crime diffusing status boundaries (Paper 1, Study 1) and supported punishment and retribution to restore them (Paper 1, Study 2; Paper 2; Paper 3). This finding might be due to high RWA individuals also having a preference for living in societies that are structured hierarchically. It has also been argued that the stability and order of society can be threatened if criminal offenders gain influence (see in relation to prejudice, Cohrs & Asbrock, 2009). Importantly, if criminal offenders gain power and status in society, this also disrupts traditional set-ups of society because tradition says that criminal offenders are at the bottom of society. Furthermore, powerful criminals – considered to be dangerous and lacking moral conscience- might use their power to disrupt social order and stability. Basically, high RWA individuals might want to avoid power falling into the “wrong hands”. Harsh sentences, on the other hand, can reduce the potential for change and instability in the normative and hierarchical structures of society. Therefore, while both RWA and SDO predicted preferences for the restoration of power and status relationships, the underlying motives can be argued to be different. The latter was supported by the finding in Paper 3 that RWA became a strong predictor of power and status restoration when the conditions were primed to be dangerous. Thus, high RWA individuals might be motivated to avoid deviant groups gaining power and disrupting social order more than to establish a position of domination as such.

RWA also had strong direct effects on punitiveness (Paper 1, Studies 1 and 2; Paper 2; Paper 3) above and beyond its mediation through concerns about crime and criminals and symbolic motives of punishment. This is people high in RWA endorsed punitiveness for reasons that go beyond the ones considered in these studies. One of these reasons might be the tendency of people high in RWA to support actions undertaken by legal authorities, regardless of the content of these actions. Tyler (2006) has noted that people who are supportive of authorities might give little weight to evidence of distributional unfairness. Similarly, high RWA's might be concerned about proportionality and justice, but defer to the authorities decisions to use harsh punishment nonetheless. One open question is how high RWA individuals would react in a context where authorities and policies are lenient, raising more questions regarding the link between punitivity and confidence in the justice system.

**Q3. Do people high in RWA and SDO support different retributive goals of punishment and attitudes towards the treatment of criminal offenders?**

The dual-motivational model also expects that RWA and SDO should predict different specific outcomes ('differential effects hypothesis', Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). The third question of this dissertation examined whether RWA and SDO predicted different retributive goals of punishment. Paper 2 started by exploring whether two dimensions of retribution could be distinguished. It hypothesised that one dimension captured preferences for getting back at the offender and making him suffer (retribution as revenge) and the other dimension was related to the belief that offenders should be allowed to compensate proportionally to their wrongdoing (retribution as just deserts, H<sub>2.1</sub>). SDO (H<sub>2.5</sub>) and a status restoration motive (H<sub>2.2</sub>) were expected to predict retribution as revenge, as the harsh and demeaning nature of revenge would help enforcing status boundaries with criminal offenders. Value restoration (H<sub>2.3</sub>) and RWA (H<sub>2.4</sub>) were hypothesised to be associated to retribution as just deserts as a proportional compensation of the offender would be more likely to enforce in-group conformity. RWA was also expected to predict retribution as revenge to the extent that punishment was exerted by legal authorities. Only retribution as revenge was expected to have a positive effect on harsh punishment and the denial of procedural fairness (H<sub>2.6</sub>, H<sub>2.7</sub>) as unfair treatment communicates that criminal offenders have low status within the social group (in line with procedural fairness theory, Lind & Tyler, 1988). This effect was predicted to be negative for retribution as just deserts as it assumes some basic commitment with fair procedures.

The findings provided support for a dual-dimensional model of retribution and differential effects of RWA and SDO on punishment goals: a two-factor model had a better fit than a one-factor model. Furthermore, the two dimensions of retribution were predicted by different ideological attitudes and, in turn, predicted different consequences in terms of the treatment of criminal offenders. One dimension, referred to as retribution as revenge, comprised elements of getting even and making the offender suffer. A vengeful perspective on retribution leads to preferences for harsh punishment and the denial of due process for criminal offenders. As expected, the desire to restore status and power relationships in society was the strongest predictor of retribution as revenge, while both RWA and GBD were significant antecedents.



Previous research had found that GBD predicted personal revenge and the current research provided evidence that people high in GBD also favoured revenge undertaken by authorities. The common factor here seems to be the harshness of the response more than who exerts the punishment. While RWA had not been found to predict personal vengeance (McKee & Feather, 2008), it did predict vengeance undertaken by authorities. People high in RWA seem to be more concerned with who undertakes the punishment than with how the punishment is undertaken.

A second dimension, retribution as just deserts, comprised elements of compensation and proportional punishment. As predicted, retribution as just deserts was predicted by the motivation to restore values in society and RWA. Unlike expected, however, status and power restoration also predicted just deserts. Interestingly, once revenge was controlled for, just deserts did not predict harsh punishment and its effect on the denial of fair procedures became negative. This is people who favour just deserts often also favour revenge. But at any one level of revenge, just deserts actually decreases the extent to which people seek to deny fair process and exclude the offender.

The findings of Paper 2 suggest that people high in SDO and RWA support different punishment goals. High SDO individuals seek to clarify status boundaries and supported retribution as revenge to restore status and power hierarchies. High RWA individuals, on the other hand, are motivated to achieve in-group conformity and they were more likely to support punishment to restore values. As in Papers 1 and 3, RWA also predicted status and power restoration motives. It remains to be seen how high RWA and SDO individuals will react to retributive goals depending on how identified they feel with the offender. Previous research has suggested that people react in different ways to crime committed by in-group and out-group members. Even more importantly, identification with the criminal offender has been found to interact with ideological dispositions in predicting punitiveness (e.g. Kimmelmeier, 2005).

As has been noted above, RWA had strong direct effects on both dimensions of retribution, as well as the support for harsh punishment and the denial of procedural fairness. Again, it seems that those high in RWA support harsh treatment to the extent that it is exerted by authorities. Paper 2 also provided some additional and interesting information. Namely, that high RWA individuals are indeed in favour of allowing criminal offenders to compensate proportionally to the harm done, and, hereby, favour the use of fair procedures. However, they also want revenge and support the denial of procedural fairness overall. The latter indicates that high RWA's commitment to actions

undertaken by legal authorities, as well as their anger towards law-breaking, are stronger than their commitment to fair rules and procedures.

Paper 2 finished with a discussion on the implications of considering the identification with the criminal offender. It argued that retribution as revenge might be more relevant to out-group offenders as it seeks to restore status differentials. Retribution as just deserts, on the other hand, is argued to be more important when the offence is committed by an in-group member, as it is more likely to lead to the restoration of values in the community.

#### **Q4. Under what circumstances do RWA and SDO predict punitiveness?**

The final question of this dissertation refers to the circumstances under which RWA and SDO predict preferences for harsh sentencing. Two perspectives were discussed. First, ideological dispositions were argued to interact with social conditions in affecting punitive attitudes. Second, and addressing a criticism posed by social identity and self-categorisation theorists (Lehmiller & Schmitt, 2006; Schmitt et al., 2003), the extent to which RWA and SDO predict punitiveness might also depend on whether respondents have criminal offenders in mind when completing the scales.

Paper 3 addressed the first of these perspectives by priming dangerous and competitive worldviews and evaluating the extent to which RWA and SDO interacted with these in predicting punitiveness. It was hypothesised that under a dangerous world condition RWA would be a stronger predictor of punitive attitudes ( $H_{3.1}$ ) and that this effect would be to a greater extent mediated by the motivation to restore values and security in society ( $H_{3.2}$ ). On the other hand, SDO was hypothesised to become a stronger predictor under a competitive world condition ( $H_{3.3}$ ) and its effect would be mediated to a greater extent by the motivation to restore status and power relationships in society ( $H_{3.4}$ ).

Unlike predicted, RWA had a strong effect on punitiveness and this effect was mediated by the motivation to restore values and security, regardless of the experimental condition. However, and consistent with Paper 1, its effect was also mediated by the motivation to restore status and power, particularly under the dangerous world condition. In contrast to other research (Cohrs & Asbrock, 2009; Dru, 2007; Feldman & Stenner, 1997; Stenner, 2005; Thomsen et al., 2008) priming threat in this

study did not activate the effect of RWA on punitiveness. One possible explanation for this finding is that people high in RWA might be chronically primed to perceive the world and criminal offenders as being dangerous and to favour punishment to restore order and stability. This is consistent with research that has shown that people high in RWA are more likely to perceive a situation as threatening to the social order (e.g. Lavine et al., 2002). Another possibility for the lack of interaction is that the prime used did only activate perceptions of threat to security and not to the normative order. According to Stenner (2005), it is normative threat more than threat to security that activates authoritarian predispositions. This research sought to activate perceptions of the world being insecure as well as lacking social consensus, but it might have activated security more than conformity issues.

In relation to SDO, only GBD and not OEQ was a significant predictor of punitiveness after controlling for RWA. Importantly, GBD predicted punitiveness only when the social conditions were primed to be competitive and its effect was mediated to a greater extent by status and power restoration motives. These findings are consistent with previous research showing that competitive social conditions or increased competition salience increase the effect of SDO on social attitudes (e.g. Pratto & Shih, 2000). The lack of effect of GBD in the dangerous world and control conditions suggests that people high in GBD are not predisposed to perceive crime as threatening hierarchies in society and punishment as a way of restoring status and power relationships. GBD did, however, become an important predictor of punitiveness in the context of competition.

Paper 4, on the other hand, examined the extent to which the effects of RWA and SDO depended on whether respondents had criminal offenders in mind when completing the scales. In Study 1, participants were primed to think about social attitudes in general or criminal offenders in particular before completing RWA and SDO scales. In Study 2, general measures of RWA and SDO, and a criminal offender-specific measure of SDO were obtained. Since RWA items are conceptually more proximate to crime and punishment issues, RWA was hypothesised to predict punitiveness regardless of whether respondents had criminal offenders in mind when completing the scale or not ( $H_{4.1}$ ). In contrast, SDO items are far removed from crime and punishment issues and respondents are likely to think about other social groups when completing the scale. Thus, the effect of SDO –and of GBD, in particular- was hypothesised to be stronger when people completed items having criminal offenders in

mind (H<sub>4.2</sub>). In line with Sibley and Liu's (2010) finding, however, a general measure of SDO was predicted to affect punitive attitudes over and above a criminal offender-specific measure of SDO (H<sub>4.3</sub>). Finally, people high in SDO should be more likely to favour dominance and justify inequality over criminal offenders and the effect of criminal offender-specific SDO was hypothesised to mediate the effect of SDO on punitiveness (H<sub>4.4</sub>).

The findings of Paper 4 showed that RWA had a strong effect on punitive attitudes regardless of whether respondents were primed to think about criminal offenders when completing the scale. This provides indication that people tend to think about crime and punishment issues when completing RWA items. Criminal offenders are an accessible group when thinking about in-group conformity and collective security. However, the effect of SDO –and of GBD in particular- was higher when respondents had criminal offenders in mind when completing the scales. Interestingly, given the lack of specificity of the SDO items, it seems to be easy to prime a specific social group, intentionally or not. A second possible reason why SDO was a weaker predictor in the social attitudes condition was a lack of consistency in people's responses. In relation to OEQ, people were not very consistent in completing the items when they had no social group in mind. Given the increased standard error in the social attitudes condition, its effect was not significant. In the criminal offenders condition, on the other hand, the consistency was higher and the effect of OEQ became significant.

Finally, the inconsistent findings in the literature regarding the effect of SDO might be explained in relation to the social group people had in mind when completing the SDO scale. As showed in this study, the mere fact of describing the study as being on criminal offenders seems to change people's expectations and hereby the way in which they respond to SDO items. The effect of SDO can be expected to be higher when the study has been presented as being on crime and punishment, which also means that special care should be taken to avoid priming certain groups prior to measuring SDO (as argued by Sibley & Liu, 2010).

Taken together, Papers 3 and 4 suggest that SDO and punishment do not naturally go together. This is neither is punishment easily related to inequality nor are SDO items responded having criminal offenders in mind. Importantly, once punishment is perceived in the light of competition, or when SDO items are completed in the light of crime and punishment issues, SDO does predict the support for harsher punitive responses. Interestingly, these findings provide evidence that part of punitiveness relates

to competitive desires to dominate over and justify unequal conditions for criminal offenders.

#### **4.2. Overview of findings**

Overall, the papers presented in this document provide partial support for a dual-motivational model of punitive attitudes. Crucially, two ideological attitudes –RWA and SDO – were found to predict punitive attitudes, but they did so to some degree for different reasons and under different circumstances. The effect of RWA was widespread: its effect was mediated by concerns about collective security as well as status and power hierarchies, it predicted both retribution to achieve revenge and just deserts, and it was a strong predictor across experimental primes. Importantly, there seems to be a clear affinity between RWA and punishment, and high RWA individuals seem to support punishment as it is undertaken by legal authorities. The effect of SDO was more limited. First, only GBD was a consistent predictor and the effect of OEQ was more modest. Second, people high in SDO were concerned about status and power issues and not about collective security. Furthermore, they only sought to punish to take revenge and did not care about proportionality. Finally, a general measure of SDO did not seem to be relevant in predicting punitiveness. However, when crime was associated to competition, SDO predicted punitiveness. The same happened when people completed SDO items thinking about criminal offenders. Overall, preferences to establish domination over criminal offenders were a strong predictor of punitiveness. Yet, people high in SDO were not predisposed to perceive crime and punishment as issues of domination.

A dual-motivational model has proved to be a powerful framework to understand attitudes towards harsh sentences. It has enabled us to disentangle two different routes to harsh punishment: one that seeks to address threats to in-group conformity and collective security and the other that seeks to restore status and power relationships. However, it should be noted that the distinction between these two routes is more ambiguous than one would hope. For example, the moderate to high correlation between RWA and SDO – and between status/power and values/security restoration motives – suggests that these different motivations to punish are often one and the same. Crime and punishment often confound dimensions that relate to status and security issues because criminal offenders are often low in status and also perceived to be

dangerous. This is at least the case for those ‘violent criminals’ that people seem to have in mind when completing surveys on crime and punishment. Furthermore, in hierarchical societies it is very likely that the justice system will penalise crimes committed by low status offenders and attempts to reduce inequalities are likely to be perceived by those high in RWA as a disruption to security and in-group conformity. More research is required to understand exactly when and under what circumstances people high in RWA and SDO will react in similar or different ways towards crime and punishment.

A second issue that should be addressed in relation to the dual-motivational model are the hypotheses proposed by Duckitt and Sibley (2009) to evaluate its adequacy: the differential mediation hypothesis, the differential effects hypothesis and the differential moderation hypothesis. While these hypotheses have been extremely useful to guide the different studies in this dissertation, it should be noted that they often do not allow clear separate evaluations. For example, while punishment goals were used to evaluate a differential effects hypothesis, they could also be used to evaluate different paths to harsh punishment. Notably, the extent to which some evaluations provide evidence in favour of one or the other hypothesis depends on the types of analysis conducted more than on the nature of the variables. As has been argued before, these hypotheses should be used to guide research more than to provide a set of requirements to be achieved.

Overall, however, and despite the overlap in the effects of RWA and SDO, as well as in the propositions made by the different hypothesis, a dual-motivational perspective has provided a useful model to understanding the separate paths that lead high RWA and high SDO individuals to the support of harsh punitive attitudes.

#### **4.3. Limitations**

I should however address some limitations of this research. First, research conducted as part of a doctoral dissertation is often constrained by funding and timing issues. This research has not been the exception. The latter has translated into the use of online surveys and experiments, short versions of scales and the inability to validate new scales before using them. For example, experimental studies in Paper 3 and 4 would have benefitted from a more controlled setting. It thus remains to be seen whether the effects found would be stronger –or just different – in a laboratory setting.

Likewise, many of the scales used in this research (for example, to measure perceptions of crime threatening collective security and hierarchies in Paper 1 and retributive punishment goals in paper 2) were designed specifically for this research. Others (such as symbolic motives of punishment in Papers 1, 2 and 3) were adapted from previous research (e.g. Okimoto et al., 2011) but shorter scales were used. This situation is far from ideal and one could think of ways in which this might have affected the results. In line with John Duckitt's comments to Papers 1 and 3 in this dissertation, it has not been evaluated whether the scales of values, and power and status restoration motives show high discriminatory validity. And indeed, both scales were highly correlated in Papers 1 (Study 2), 2 and 3. It is thus not clear whether RWA predicted the motive of status and power restoration given this lack of discrimination with value restoration.

A second important limitation of the current research is its narrow scope. It has concentrated in a very specific question, which is often unavoidable in PhD research. This research has focused on understanding people's preferences for harsh punishment regardless of the crime committed and specific information about the offender. The studies in this dissertation have measured punitive attitudes in relation to people's agreement to statements such as 'People who break the law should be given harsher sentences'. Whilst it is interesting to understand why people support such statements (and this is often how politicians and the media talk about the issue), it is also true that people react in different ways depending on the type of crime, the amount of information given and the specific situation of the criminal offender. First, previous findings (Roberts & Doob, 1990; Stalans, 2009) and findings of Paper 2 suggest that when asked to think about crime, people usually think of violent crime. Second, previous research has found a more punitive public when a violent crime is involved (Wanner & Caputo, 1987) and less punitive public when more information about the case is given (De Keijser & Elffers, 2009). Similarly, when the questions provide different alternative sentences such as rehabilitation, people do consider less harsh sentences (Cullen et al., 1988, 2000; Gelb, 2006; Hutton, 2005; Roberts & Hough, 2005). The same reduction in punitiveness happens when using focus groups or deliberative polls instead of survey methodology (Hutton, 2005). Third, respondents are less punitive when confronted with cases of specific offenders (for a review see Cullen et al., 2000; Sprott, 1999; Stalans, 2009).

These findings suggest that RWA and SDO will relate in different ways to the support of harsh punishment depending on the type of crime and information about the

criminal offender. People high in RWA seek to maintain collective security and they might be especially sensitive towards violent crime and crime committed by threatening groups or groups perceived as deviating for the in-groups norms and values (such as immigrants). They should be less punitive towards crimes condoned or committed by authorities. Consistent with this argument, Feather (1998) found that people high in right-wing authoritarianism were more punitive towards a green protester but less punitive towards a police officer.

People high in SDO, on the other hand, seek to maintain power and dominance boundaries between groups and they might be especially sensitive towards crime perceived as giving power to lower social groups (such as theft and burglary) but not towards crime committed by higher social groups (such as white collar crime). Similarly, SDO might be a stronger predictor of punitiveness when the offender is perceived to belong to a subordinate group (such as unemployed people). Consistent with this argument, Kimmelmeier (2005) found that high SDO individuals assigned harsher sentences to Black defendants.

Paper 2 in this dissertation addressed the type of crime people think about when completing measures on crime and punishment. Interestingly, controlling for whether respondents thought about violent crime did not change the findings. It did, however, predict people's support for a status and power restoration motive and the support for harsh punishment. However, more research is needed on the ways people with different ideological dispositions react to different types of crimes and offenders belonging to different social groups.

Finally, and most importantly, while the studies in this dissertation present strong evidence of the link between punitive attitudes, RWA and SDO, they provide weaker evidence into the motivational underpinnings of the support for harsh punishment. Papers 1, 2, and 3 link punitive attitudes to the symbolic motives of value and status restoration. The latter, however, are measured as the agreement with statements on the role of punishment and could be considered as justifications more than reflections of underlying motivations. It is not clear, for example, if high RWA's arguing that crime is an important threat to collective security reflects a motivated information processing or rather beliefs that are inherent to authoritarian points of view. Paper 3 provides the strongest evidence into the motivational antecedents of punishment: high SDO individuals –who are motivated to achieve power and dominance in society- become punitive when punishment is presented in the context of



group-competition. More research is needed into the motivational processes that affect high RWA's and high SDO's appraisals of the threats posed by crime and their preferences for harsh punishment.

#### **4.4. Future research**

As is often the case, this research has opened more questions than it has answered. To finish, I would like to address perspectives that have not been the main focus of this dissertation but that might offer some explanation of the findings or propose directions for future research. I will focus on the following perspectives: intuitive moral judgments, social identity and self-categorisation theories, instrumental models of group conflict, just world and system justification theories.

##### **4.4.1 Intuitive moral judgments**

The current research has measured punitive attitudes and punishment goals directly. However, previous research has shown that respondents are not always aware of the reasons why they favour punishment. Carlsmith (2008) showed that while people endorsed utilitarian views, they assigned punishment in line with retributive factors (such as the seriousness of the offence). Furthermore, respondents seemed to agree to all possible justifications of their views on capital punishment (Ellsworth & Ross, 1983)<sup>1</sup>. These findings, added to the importance of moral outrage in predicting people's responses to moral transgressions (e.g. Darley, 2009), suggest that punitive attitudes are intuitive more than completely reasoned (Greene & Haidt, 2002; Haidt, 2001, 2007; Haidt & Joseph, 2004; Robinson & Darley, 2007). People may have an intuition to punish and use the reasoning system to look for information to justify this intuition (Carlsmith & Darley, 2008). Meanwhile, studies have shown that people will be more likely to incur in corrective reasoning if they are intelligent, have high need for cognition, are exposed to statistical thinking (see Kahneman, 2003) or if their first

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<sup>1</sup> Other studies have evidenced problems with self-reported measures in the context of research on fear of crime (Sutton & Farrall, 2005; Sutton, Robinson, & Farrall, 2011). Interestingly, higher levels of social desirability lead men –but not women– to report lower levels of crime (Sutton & Farrall, 2005). The same increase in fear of crime happened when men were instructed to respond questions on fear of crime depicting themselves in a good light (as opposed to answering honestly), while the opposite was true for women (Sutton et al., 2001). As with research on punitive attitudes, a number of factors seem to affect the way people report their attitudes on crime and punishment issues.

judgment is inconsistent with their ideological beliefs (Skitka, Mullen, Griffin, Hutchinson, & Chamberlin, 2002).

These findings also have methodological implications. Arguing that people may show an intuitive desire to punish, while some may correct for this first intuition by using the reasoning system, suggests that two different concepts are at play. While the punitive intuition is a fast and automatic response to moral transgressions, a punitive attitude should consider people's evaluation of whether this intuition is consistent with their beliefs. Oswald & Stucki (2009) proposed a two-process model of punishment, integrating both intuitive and rational processes. The authors suggest that people first make an automatic judgment about a norm violation, which mainly considers the seriousness of the action and which will tend to lead to moral outrage and a retributive response. A reasoned judgment will follow if the person has sufficient cognitive capacity and if he is held accountable for the judgment. They found that being induced to think less about the case and offences with high outcome severity were associated with harsher punishment recommendations. These findings may help explaining differences in punitiveness found using different measurements. For example, asking broad questions about the leniency of the courts or using surveys may lead people to give a fast answer and thus rely on their intuition to punish, while asking to assign sentences to specific cases or using focus groups or deliberative polls –and thus leading people to think more about the case- may increase the accessibility of people's corrective reasoning system.

The role of the intuitive system in punishment allocations suggests that more attention should be placed in understanding the emotional aspects of crime and punishment (De Haan & Loader, 2002; Freiberg, 2001). More research is required on how intuitive and reasoning systems lead people to adopt punitive attitudes and in particular, how they interact with people's ideological dispositions in increasing punitiveness.

#### **4.4.2 Social identity and self-categorisation theories**

One important issue that has been only partly addressed in this dissertation refers to the identity and self-categorisation processes involved in the decision to support harsh punishment of criminal offenders. Crucially, people respond in different ways to

RWA and SDO items depending on the self-categorisation form that is salient and they show different punitive reactions to offenders when they are considered to be part of the in-group or the out-group (e.g. Feather & Souter, 2002). Social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner & Reynolds, 2010) and self-categorisation (Turner et al., 1994) theories provide a useful perspective to understand how identification with criminal offenders can affect the attitudes that high RWA and high SDO individuals hold towards harsh punishment.

Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner & Reynolds, 2010) posits that individuals seek to form and maintain a positive social identity based on their in-group membership. Importantly, when social identities are threatened, people will seek to restore identity by increasing positive differentiation along valued dimensions or by devaluating out-groups. The strength of the effect of social identification is such that the perception of belonging to different groups is enough to trigger intergroup discrimination and no real conflict of interests is necessary (Reicher, Spears, & Haslam, 2010; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Furthermore, self-categorisation theory (Reicher et al., 2010; Turner & Reynolds, 2010; Turner et al., 1994) has shown that people categorise their own self at various levels of abstraction (ranging from personal to social identities). Importantly, self-categorisation processes are flexible and context-dependent. The way in which the self is categorised in a particular instance will affect the way in which people behave in a specific social context. Importantly, when a social identity –in opposition to personal identity- becomes salient, individuals tend to perceive themselves more as representing a specific social category and less in terms of their individual characteristics. It is thus crucial to understand the social-structural realities of how groups relate to each other and these considerations are central to justice research (Okimoto & Wenzel, 2008).

Self-categorisation might be important in at least two aspects. First, as discussed in Paper 4 of this dissertation, the salient self-categorisation affects the ways in which people complete RWA and SDO items and therefore the relevance of dispositional attitudes in predicting punitiveness. From a self-categorisation and social identity perspectives, people respond in different ways to SDO (e.g. Lehmiller & Schmitt, 2006; Schmitt et al., 2003; Turner & Reynolds, 2003) and RWA (Lehmiller & Schmitt, 2006) items depending on the social group they have in mind. Paper 4 of this dissertation applied this argument to the case of criminal offenders. In particular, it evaluated whether people responded in different ways to RWA and SDO items if the survey was

introduced as being on social attitudes in general or criminal offenders, in particular. Results showed that in particular for SDO, stronger effects were found when people responded items having criminal offenders in mind (Study 1). Furthermore, a criminal offender-specific measure of SDO was a stronger predictor of punitiveness than a general measure of SDO.

Second, people also seem to react in different ways depending on whether the offender is perceived to be part of the in-group or an out-group. In-group offenders, on the one hand, are expected to agree with common values and disagreement can undermine the identity of the group. Two solutions are possible to protect the identity of the group: people might show positive bias towards in-group offenders and seek to increase value agreement and rehabilitate the offender, or they might exclude the offender from society (Okimoto & Wenzel, 2010), which is often referred to as ‘the black sheep effect’. Consistent with the latter option, some studies (e.g. Feather & Souter, 2002; Marques, 1990) have found stronger reactions to norm violations committed by in-group members.

Out-group members, on the other hand, can be perceived in terms of a competitive relationship. Since they are not expected to agree with the norms and values of the in-group, it is less important to restore the out-group member’s values, and status and power restoration motives will be more important (Okimoto & Wenzel, 2010; Wenzel, Okimoto, Feather, & Platow, 2010). Consistent with these assumptions, Okimoto and Wenzel (2010) found stronger retributive reactions for out-group members threatening the status and power of the nation (in-group favoritism) and stronger reactions to in-group members threatening common values (‘black sheep effect’). In line with this argument, this dissertation has argued that a vengeance perspective of retribution and the denial of procedural fairness might be especially relevant for out-group offenders, while for in-group offenders just deserts and value restoration perspectives should be more relevant. However, more research is required on the latter.

The perceived social identity of the offender might not only affect punitive reactions directly, it might also interact with dispositional variables. Kimmelmeier (2005) found stronger support for the punishment of Black defendants among high SDO individuals, while low SDO individuals were more punitive towards White defendants. This is perceiving the offender as part of a disadvantaged out-group might lead people high in SDO to support punishment as a way of enhancing inequalities. On the contrary, egalitarian people may want to compensate for discrimination that is usually directed at

minority groups. Similarly, Green et al. (2009) found that high SDO individuals tended to show more negative reactions to an offender portrayed as being part of an out-group (Arab offender), while low SDO individuals had stronger reactions when he was portrayed as being part of the in-group (Swiss offender).

The extent to which respondents categorise themselves in opposition to criminal offenders seems to be crucial in explaining their reactions. It is not always clear, however, whether people will categorise the offender as being part of the in-group or an out-group. This comparison might be straightforward when considering offenders from a minority group (such as immigrant offenders). However, do people consider burglars as being part of the out-group? And what happens with white collar criminals? More research is required to understand the circumstances under which criminal offenders will be categorised as members of an out-group, as well as understanding the impact that this categorisation has on people's preferences to punish.

#### **4.4.3 Instrumental models of group conflict**

The extent to which people favour punitive reactions against criminal offenders might not only depend on whether they are perceived as members of an out-group. It might also depend on whether negative interdependence and conflicting goals are perceived between different groups. Instrumental models emphasise how negative attitudes and behaviours are meant to remove sources of competition by convincing oneself or others that the competition lacks worth or by taking away opportunities and benefits from them (Esses et al., 2001). First, realistic group conflict theory (Campbell, 1965; Jackson, 1993; Sherif, Harvey, Hood, Sherif, & White, 1961) has highlighted how conflicts of interest between groups lead to intergroup conflict. Groups are likely to compete for resources in particular when there is resource scarcity or real or imagined threats to economic interests, status and safety, among others. Second, an extended version of realistic group conflict theory, the unified instrumental model of group conflict (Esses, Jackson, Dovidio, & Hodson, 2005), also posits that group competition for resources, wealth and dominance in society is central to understanding negative attitudes towards out-groups. Consistent with this model Esses and collaborators (Esses et al., 2001; see also Esses, Jackson, & Armstrong, 1998) found more negative attitudes towards immigrants among Canadian respondents in a competitive condition (difficult

job market and highly skilled immigrants) and among respondents high in SDO. Sassenberg, Moskowitz, Jacoby and Hansen (2007) provided further support for the argument that increased competition affects attitudes towards out-groups. The authors primed competition and observed higher levels of prejudice in an unrelated intergroup context, suggesting that competition can also be carried over to an unrelated out-group.

However, according to this instrumental model, the extent to which people perceive competition depends on situational factors (resource scarcity or the salience of competitive out-groups) as well as ideological dispositions (RWA and SDO). Cohrs and Stelzl (2010) highlighted that an instrumental model of group conflict resembles a dual-motivational model of ideological attitudes in arguing that ideological dispositions are key in understanding negative attitudes towards the group and that they interact with competition and threat in predicting attitudes. The authors point out, however, that these approaches differ in that the conceptualisation of Esses et al. (2005) relates to concerns for social conformity, while Duckitt (2001) also considers collective security issues.

Of particular importance for instrumental models of group conflict are zero-sum beliefs, this is the belief that gains of resources or power for one group result in loss for the other (Esses et al., 2001). Zero-sum beliefs can be argued to be important when it comes to crime. Garland (2001) has proposed a zero sum fallacy according to which criminals and crime victims are negatively interlinked: the worse the treatment of criminal offender the more it helps victims. Similarly, zero-sum beliefs might be relevant to explain conflict with criminal offenders, as power and resources gained by criminal offenders can be perceived to take away power and resources from the rest of society. Perceiving criminal offenders as competing for resources and power is likely to lead to negative attitudes and punitive measures. This is particularly important for high SDO individuals who are more likely to hold zero-sum beliefs and perceive out-groups as competing for resources (Sidanius et al., 2004).

This dissertation has provided evidence that part of people's perceptions of crime and punishment relate to issues of competition for power and dominance over criminal offenders, but only for some groups of people and under certain circumstances. Paper 1 (Study 1) showed that high SDO and high RWA individuals were more likely to perceive criminal offenders as trying to gain power and resources over society and the latter mediated the effect of ideological dispositions on punitive attitudes. Similarly, people high in SDO and RWA were also more likely to favour punishment to demean the offender's status and humiliate him (Paper 1, Study 2). Paper 3 provided evidence

that high SDO individuals were especially concerned about group-based dominance over criminal offenders when the social context was primed to be competitive. Paper 4, on the other hand, showed that an adaptation of SDO to measure group-based dominance over criminal offenders was a strong predictor of punitiveness. In line with an instrumental model of group conflict, therefore, perceptions of competition with criminal offenders seem to lead to preferences for harsh sentencing. The current dissertation did not, however, find direct effects of priming competition (Paper 3) and individual differences seemed to be more important. Further research is required to evaluate whether stronger primes of competition and their interaction with dispositional variables predict zero-sum beliefs with criminal offenders and stronger support for harsh criminal sentencing.

A second important question that remains to be addressed is whether people are likely to perceive criminal offenders as competition in the first place. For this to happen, criminal offenders need to be seen as part of an out-group but similar enough to be interested in the same resources and have the power to potentially take away resources from the rest of society (Esses et al., 2001). More research is needed to address the circumstances under which people will perceive criminal offenders as competing for resources and power with the rest of society.

#### **4.4.4 Just world and system justification theories**

Finally, I would like to address possible interpretations of the current research and its findings from the viewpoint of just world and system justification theories. Just world theory (Lerner, 1980; Lerner & Miller, 1978; see also Furnham, 2003; Hafer & Bègue, 2005) maintains that people have a motivation to believe that the world is just and that everyone gets what they deserve. Believing that the world is just enables people to live their lives with confidence and trust in the future. Crucially, people go to great lengths to find evidence that the world is fair and just. When confronted with an innocent victim, people tend to search for ways of restoring justice and will even derogate the victim to convince themselves that misfortune will not happen to them. Importantly, research (Lipkus, Dalbert, & Siegler, 1996; see also Bègue & Bastounis, 2003; Sutton & Douglas, 2005; Sutton & Winnard, 2007) has shown that two different beliefs are at play: the belief that the world is just to others and the belief that the world

is just to the self. On the one hand, believing that the world is just to the self can be understood as a coping strategy and it is associated to higher levels of life satisfaction (Lipkus et al., 1996; Sutton & Douglas, 2005) and confidence in the achievement of goals (Sutton & Winnard, 2007). On the other hand, believing that the world is just to others is a general interpretation of the social world and has been found to be related to harsh attitudes towards the poor (Sutton & Douglas, 2005; Bègue & Bastounis, 2003), higher delinquent intentions and lower confidence in achieving socially legitimate goals (Sutton & Winnard, 2007), among others.

Closely related to just world theory, system justification theory points out that people are in general motivated to believe that the arrangements are legitimate and fair (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost et al., 2003; Jost & Hunyady, 2005). Unlike just world theory, however, system justification focuses on how people adopt ideologies that allow justifying and rationalising the status quo (Jost & Hunyady, 2005). According to Jost and Hunyady (2005), system justification theory departs from just world theory by contemplating a wider range of causes (e.g. situational and dispositional) and consequences (e.g. for intergroup relations and justice) of the belief in the legitimacy of the status quo. One interesting proposition of this theory is that system justification ideologies serve a palliative function of decreasing anxiety, uncertainty and negative affect (Jost & Hunyady, 2005).

The belief in a just world –particularly the belief in a just world to others- and the tendency to justify the system might be relevant to punitive attitudes to the extent that they affect people's attributions of blame and responsibility to victim and offenders. Blaming the victim for their own misfortune and punishing the offender can both be thought of as mechanisms to restore justice in society (in the words of just world theory) and legitimise and rationalise the status quo (in the words of system justification theory). Interestingly, punishing criminal offenders might reduce the discomfort of perceiving the world as unfair. Consistent with this argument, previous research has found associations between the belief in a just world and desires for punishment (Carroll et al., 1987; Bègue & Bastounis, 2003). Goldberg et al. (1999), on the other hand, showed that respondents increased punitive responses of an unrelated crime when a previous injustice elicited anger. In a similar vein, Hafer (2000) measured participant's latencies in responding to different words and showed that they were slower in responding to justice-related words after viewing an innocent victim, but only when the crime went unpunished. She concluded that innocent victims threatened



justice beliefs, and punishment helped restoring justice. These findings are consistent with Tetlock et al.'s (2007) motivational perspective on punitive attitudes, according to which people disengage from a prosecutorial mindset when they perceive that norm violations have been punished.

The findings of this dissertation suggest that supporting harsh punitive measures can help restoring justice and justifying the system. First, punishment can help justifying current values and norms by communicating that the offender's acts were wrong. Paper 1 provided evidence that people favour punitive attitudes because they perceive crime as a threat to moral values and security (Study 1), and because punishment can help restoring consensus (Study 2). Second, punishment could arguably also help justifying social inequalities in that punishing low-status criminal offenders communicates that disadvantaged people that commit crime deserve their place in society. Paper 1 of this dissertation also provided evidence that people favoured harsh punishment because they perceived that criminal offenders were gaining power over society (Study 1) and because punishment could restore status and power relationships (Study 2). In a similar way, harsh punishment can also increase beliefs about the world being just, by communicating that everyone receives what they deserve.

Further research could explore the system justifying function of punishment and evaluate whether supporting punitive attitudes serves a palliative function. Previous research has provided initial –yet indirect- indication that observing a crime being punished can reduce perceptions of injustice (Hafer, 2000) and anger (Goldberg, Lerner, & Tetlock, 1999). More research is needed on whether hearing about a crime being punished decreases negative affect in general and whether it does so for individuals with different motivational goals. Importantly, applying harsh punishment might decrease negative affect for those who value social order and value consensus, but less so for those who are concerned about respecting human rights. Such research would provide further evidence into the motivational antecedents of punishment.

#### **4.5. A final word**

This dissertation has highlighted the importance of considering ideological preferences in understanding people's punitive reactions to criminal offences. Consistent with Tetlock and collaborator's (Tetlock, 2002; Tetlock et al., 2007) prosecutorial mindset, from a motivated social cognition perspective people are

motivated to punish because they seek to uphold the social order and restore collective security. In line with a dual motivational model of punitive attitudes (Duckitt, 2009) I have argued that punishment may also serve a second motivational goal: that of maintaining hierarchies in society assuring that criminal offenders ‘stay in the place where they belong’.

The findings of this dissertation suggest that there are two important drives of people’s support for harsh punishment. First, some people might perceive crime as a threat to social cohesion and security, and criminal offenders as immoral, dangerous and deviant. Here, punitiveness is driven by the motivation to increase social order and in-group conformity. This drive is more typical of those who are motivated to achieve collective security, such as high RWA individuals. Second, crime can also be perceived as a threat to the hierarchical structure of society and criminal offenders as an inferior group that is trying to gain power and influence over superior groups. Punitive attitudes can also be driven by motivations to restore the status quo in status and power hierarchies in society. High SDO individuals are more likely to take this root to punitiveness, although this is likely to be the case only when criminal offenders are perceived as competing for power and resources.

Most criminological research so far has criticised instrumental models of justice from a Durkheimian point of view (1964; 1973). Crucially, crime and punishment are argued to be moral phenomena: criminal offenders threaten social bonds and punishment restores social order and value consensus. In this dissertation I have argued that crime and punishment not only address social order in relation to achieving normative consensus, they also allow maintaining hierarchical structures in society. The criminal justice system can therefore be argued to fulfil two functions in society: it reduces the potential for change in the normative order and helps maintaining hierarchical structures in society.

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