“IT’S EVOLUTION, BABY”: WHY WE SEXUALLY DIFFERENTIATE OUR REACTIONS TO INFANTICIDE

by

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Abstract

Evolutionary research on infanticide has focused on the reasons why a parent would commit infanticide and how this behaviour has increased the fitness of those individuals over evolutionary time. However, there is a lack of research providing insight into the reasons why there is a sexually-differentiated reaction to this behaviour.

A historical analysis of legal policies surrounding infanticide was conducted and a pattern of leniency (for infanticidal mothers) emerged over six centuries of legislation. In addition, 186 participants completed an online survey depicting an infanticide. Qualitative and quantitative results indicated a sexually-differentiated emotionally based moral decision making process.

Evolutionary psychology is provided as an explanatory agent for these results. It is argued that humans possess an evolved psychological adaptation which reacts to the knowledge of infanticide in a sexually-differentiated manner because over evolutionary time this functionally specific adaptation increased the fitness of those who possessed it.

Keywords: evolution; evolutionary psychology; infanticide; psychological adaptation; legal policy; theories of crime

Subject Terms: evolutionary psychology; infanticide; behaviour evolution; law and biology; law history
Dedication

To my mother and father, for what I should hope are obvious reasons. And to my sister Suzanne, there are few people on this planet I'd rather lose to so consistently in the pervasive battle for parental and familial resources.
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I would like to thank all the people who took the time to complete the survey portion of this project and especially to those who provided rich, informative supplemental responses. While reading through them was perhaps the most time-consuming aspect of the project, I was intrigued and fascinated by the responses I received.

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-Evolutionary Joe
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Chapter One

Introduction

Infanticide, the killing of an infant by its parent, is a behaviour that has both fascinated and appalled researchers of the human condition for centuries (Stanford, 2001; Daly & Wilson, 1988). The behaviour is an ancient aspect of human societies and has occurred throughout human evolution (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Hoffer & Hall, 1981; Mealey, 2000).1 Evidence indicates that this behaviour is not geographically isolated and has occurred in all levels of cultural complexity (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Milner, 1998; Williamson, 1978).2 Another interesting aspect of infanticide is the fact that it is not limited to the human species; indeed, it has been documented in lions, birds, wild horses, dolphins, and other primates such as chimpanzees, gorillas, and langur monkeys (Campbell & Loy, 1996; Mealey, 2000; Stanford, 2001; Strier, 2003).

While the observation of infanticide in the wild produces little more than a sympathetic reaction for the creature, episodes of infanticide conducted by human agents tend to result in a strong emotional reaction in those who learn about the incident (Stanford, 2001). Historically, infanticide has not only been tolerated but encouraged in many cultures and its practice continues today (Buss, 1994; Daly & Wilson, 1988; Wright,

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1 Hoffer and Hall (1981) note “anthropologists have estimated that [P]aleolithic parents may have eliminated as many as 50 percent of their new-born females” (3).
2 In a study of 60 different societies Daly and Wilson (1988) discovered that infanticide was mentioned by ethnographers in 34% of the 60 societies.
One curious aspect of the acceptance of infanticide is that it appears to be dependent on the sex of the perpetrator; in other words, the reaction to infanticide committed by a female tends to be differentiated from infanticide committed by a male (Campbell & Loy, 1996; Daly & Wilson, 1988). Perhaps the most notable example of this sex-differentiated reaction to infanticide is in the construction of laws designed to prohibit and punish its practice. The history of the legislation surrounding this act provides a telling example of just such a differentiation.

This project explores the realm of infanticide with this sex-biased law as its impetus; the issue to be addressed is why we as a species and as a society react to an infanticide committed by a female in a qualitatively different manner than to an infanticide committed by a male. I am not making a value judgement here, nor am I stating that the law is right or wrong in regards to this offence; rather, I am merely interested in why the law, and the differential human reaction, is based on the sex of the perpetrator. In exploring this issue I will use evolutionary theory to explain this differentiation in the human species. In other words, I will attempt to show how that emotional reaction to a specific event helped to improve the reproductive fitness of those in our ancestral past. That goal is crucial to an evolutionary analysis, as emotional reactions are “neither random nor arbitrary but designed to enhance the fitness benefits of highly interdependent group living.” (Kurzban & Neuberg, 2005: 653).

For example, Mealey (2000) as well as Daly & Wilson (1988) note that female infanticide remains prevalent in countries such as India, China, and Korea. The authors discuss further how this sex-selective infanticide could help create a male-biased sex ratio that could impact on rates of war, and other violence, including criminal violence.

This differentiation is also seen in the reactions to attempted and completed infanticide in other primates (Campbell & Loy, 1996; Mealey, 2000; Strier, 2003). For a review of the utility of an evolutionary viewpoint in studying human behaviour see Crawford, 2004; Daly & Wilson, 1988; Kurzban, 2002; and Thornhill & Palmer, 2000.
Literature Review

**Definitional Issues**

Infanticide is typically defined in the literature as simply “the killing of infants” (Campbell & Loy, 1996: 151). However, viewing infanticide in this manner produces a number of problems for any systematic study; for example, this definition allows for the study of not only those perpetrators who are biologically related to the infant victim, but also those perpetrators who are ‘biological strangers’. In allowing for this type of definition to guide the study, a researcher is forced to examine numerous variables that may not be related to the research question or objective and may serve to confound any observations (Pals, 2003). Furthermore, “infanticide” has meant different things at different times in history. As a legal concept, the crime of ‘infanticide’ has only been in existence since 1922 (Dickinson & Sharpe, 2002). However, the act of killing an infant, including the concealment of a dead infant, has been criminalized since at least the 14th century (Hanawalt, 1979; Hoffer & Hall, 1981).

In response to the concern that the application of the term ‘infanticide’ to pre-1922 societies is anachronistic, Jackson (1996) chose to utilize the phrase ‘newborn child murder’ in his exploration of the behaviour. His choice of terms, however, is not completely devoid of confusion. Much like the uncertainty of what ages constituted an ‘infant’ in early modern English common law, the phrase ‘newborn child’ does not necessarily clarify the age of the victim (Hoffer & Hull, 1981). Notwithstanding this

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6 This includes the issues of step-parents and the unique manner in which children in situations involving step-parents tend to be at a much higher risk of abuse than children who live with their biological parents (Daly & Wilson, 1988).

7 Hoffer and Hall (1981) note “[i]n Tudor homicide trials an ‘infant’ . . . was defined to be eight years or younger . . . [while] the ‘age of discretion’ . . . was nine years old” (viii).
confusion, as subsequent sections will show, the main thrust of these laws, and the social
outrage which underpins them, typically concerned the deaths of children less than one
year of age. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, the term ‘infanticide’, despite its
anachronistic implications, will refer to the murder of a newborn child, less than one year
old, by that infant’s biological parent (either the mother or the father).

This definition has carried itself through the ages and remains a significant aspect
of today’s law. Section 233 of the Canadian Criminal Code (2005) states:

**Infanticide** – A female person commits infanticide when by a willful act or omission she causes the
death of her newly-born child, if at the time of the act or omission she is not fully recovered from
the effects of giving birth to the child and by reason thereof or of the effect of lactation consequent
on the birth of the child her mind is then disturbed. (emphasis added; 143-144)

Following this definition, the Code sets out the punishment for a violation of section 233
in section 237, which states:

**Punishment for infanticide** – Every female who commits infanticide is guilty of an indictable
offence and liable to imprisonment of a term not exceeding five years. (emphasis added; 144)

Immediately, one can see that it is legally impossible for a male member of the
human species to commit the crime of infanticide. If a male engages in the act of
infanticide (i.e. the killing of an infant) that individual will be charged with murder (s.
229 of the Code) or manslaughter (s. 234 of the Code), with the maximum punishment of
life imprisonment for either offence (Criminal Code, 2005). Therefore, it is readily

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8 As well, it is impossible for a biologically unrelated parent to commit the crime of ‘infanticide’. This is
the case in most western societies (Ward, 2002).
apparent that society as a whole, via the construction of infanticide law, views infanticide by a male perpetrator as far more abhorrent than infanticide committed by a female.9

This differentiation is not a mere by-product of today’s convoluted legal apparatus, but has been part of human society for ages (Joss, 1994; Daly & Wilson, 1988; Wright, 1994). Daly and Wilson (1988) outline the history of infanticide from medieval to present-day England, noting that in the early days of the offence there was a “disinclination to convict [because] juries were sympathetic to mothers, and began acquitting them by reason of ‘insanity’, with little regard for medical testimony” (67). This trend is further explored in the following section of this project.

Moreover, even the charge of infanticide became a rare occurrence despite the fact that “suspicious infant mortality persisted” (Daly & Wilson, 1988: 68). This trend continued even when social conditions and knowledge of birth control improved (Daly & Wilson, 1988). Similarly, research on infanticide in historical and contemporary Canada has shown that women accused of infanticide are more likely to go free than to be charged, and even those who are charged are often acquitted or serve no sentence at all, irrespective of whether the accused admitted her guilt (Jackson & Griffiths, 1995).

A Historical Analysis of Infanticide Law10

An in-depth analysis of the historical foundations of infanticide law from medieval England to early modern Canada generates some interesting insight into the

9 Even the very crime of infanticide is viewed with surprising leniency in Canadian criminal law when compared to other seemingly more frivolous offences; for example, section 49 of the Criminal Code (2005) outlines the prohibition of “[acts intended to alarm Her Majesty or break public peace” (31), the maximum penalty for which is fourteen years imprisonment.

10 In this project the historical analysis is limited to England as the laws constructed in that country formed the basis for much of the western world’s legislation around all crimes, including infanticide (Hansawall, 1979; Hofer & Hull, 1981).
construction of a legal response to this act. Moreover, this type of analysis is necessary not only to understand why the law is the way it is today, but also to provide some initial support for the idea that the law is based on a differentiated reaction emanating from a species-wide recognition of the circumstances surrounding infanticide.11

14th Century to 1938

In the 14th and 15th centuries infanticide (as committed by biological mothers) in England was forbidden, but not vigorously pursued or suppressed (Hoffer & Hull, 1981). A number of reasons have been put forth for this trend, including the argument that infanticides were simply not occurring during that time (Hoffer & Hull, 1981). However, other information leads one to suspect that such may not be the case. For instance, historians have noted the high child or infant mortality rate during this time period and deduce that there exists in the record some suggestive incidents that were termed accidental which may in fact have been infanticide (Hanawalt, 1979; Hoffer & Hull, 1981). Hanawalt (1979) supplements this argument by noting that children under twelve were involved in over 17 percent of all violent deaths noted in the coroners’ rolls in some parts of the country. If one looks at current data on homicides of children under twelve, the group which is most risk are those children under one year old (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Statistics Canada, 2005). Therefore, given this information, it is not unreasonable to assume that a good portion of the child deaths which occurred during this time were in fact concealed infanticides (Hanawalt, 1979; Hoffer & Hull, 1981). However, given the

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11 See hypotheses section below for a detailed description of this point. Briefly, my argument is that humans possess a psychological adaptation which unconsciously recognizes the different underlying reasons a parent commits infanticide and produces a sexually differentiated moralistic emotional reaction. Because the underlying reason a parent commits infanticide relate to the genetic interest of the parent and the respective interest affects the members of an ingroup, this reaction served to improve the fitness (survival and reproduction) of individuals within an ingroup over evolutionary time.
lack of available information, an exploration of the rates is difficult to complete; it is not until the 16th century that a concrete exploration can take place.

16th Century to 1623

During early 16th century England there was a relative scarcity12 of infanticide cases despite contrary findings from other western societies at the time. Hoffer and Hull (1981) note:

...[sixteenth-century Florentine officials reported over 181 suspected cases of infanticide in the years between 1500 and 1540. In the 250 years after 1500 the city of Nuremberg executed 87 young women for infanticide. Genevan authorities brought 25 women to trial for infanticide between 1580 and 1680. (5-6)]

Elsewhere, infanticide was being used to influence public opinion about certain religious groups. Racant (2002) explored this issue during the French Wars of Religion (1562-99) and found that “infanticide was associated with heresy and accusations were levelled against the Protestant community as a whole ... by Catholic propagandists” (18). This type of sentiment was seen later in the 17th century in England (towards unmarried servant girls and their illegitimate children) leading up to the construction of the 1624 statute.13

It appears then, in western countries near England the official response to infanticide was beginning to change. These foreign sentiments began to have an influence on the official response to infanticide in England over the early decades of the 16th century (Sharpe, 1984). In the later part of the 16th century, beginning with the accession of Queen Elizabeth I, attitudes towards social justice, including acts of

12 For instance, as indicated in Figure One (page 9), there were a mere 44 cases of infanticide in the major cities of England during the later half of the 16th century.
13 Child murder as a specific group activity is still suspected today; this was especially evident in the accusations and moral panic around satanic cults in North America in the 1980s (Deutschmann, 1994).
infanticide, began to change as well (Brantingham & Brantingham, 1984; Dickinson & Sharpe, 2002). This shift is exemplified by the increase in infanticide cases and the attempt at curtailing its occurrence with the construction of different statutes leading up to 1624.

The first official attempt made by the judicial institution of the time to deal with issues around infanticide (albeit in an indirect manner) was encompassed in the Poor Law of 1576\textsuperscript{14} (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Hoffer & Hull, 1981). The law made it a criminal act to impose bastard children upon the local charity and limit the parish's capacity to aid the so-called 'true poor' (Daly & Wilson, 1988). Furthermore, the law required that women accused of bastardy be 'examined' by justices of the peace to determine the name of the child's father, in order to then collect money to support the parish (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Hoffer & Hull, 1981). This set of circumstances presented the expecting unwed mother with an incredibly difficult situation; due to the push for collection of money for the parishes they were subjected to intense interrogation by officials and often subsequent violent repercussions from the accused fathers as well (Daly & Wilson, 1988). Daly and Wilson (1988) further suggest this "situation provided obvious [incentive] to hide one's pregnancy and dispose of the child at birth, and such behaviour evidently became epidemic" (66). Therefore, it was the impact on the economy of the time posed by bastard children who were not killed that later led to an increase in infanticide cases and social outrage against infanticide; a poor law indeed.

\textsuperscript{14} The Poor Law was not a direct attempt to curtail infanticide but is provided here as a primary example of how legislation surrounding the circumstances can impact infanticidal behaviour. Furthermore, the Poor Law of 1576 had a hand in increasing the instance and recognition of infanticide in England during this time period and eventually led the need for an officially legislated response to the behaviour.
Data collected on infanticide cases before and after the Poor Law of 1576 exemplifies this trend (Hoffer & Hull, 1981). For example, after 1576 there was a considerable increase in the number of cases of infanticide brought before the courts in three main areas of England (Essex, London & Middlesex, and Sussex). Before the institution of the Poor Law there was a total of 14 infanticide cases brought to the attention of the authorities (1558-1575) while post-1576 (1576-1593) there was a total of 30 (Hoffer & Hull, 1981). The impact of the Poor Law of 1576 had a notable, and one could imagine unintended influence on the rate of infanticide in Elizabethan England.

Figure One displays this impact; note the increase in overall infanticide cases after 1576, the year the Poor Law was instated.
This sort of influence marked the first of many such fluctuations in the infanticide rate that were due to public and legal opinion (Hoffer & Hull, 1981; Jackson, 1996).

With the Poor Law of 1576 providing the impetus behind an increase in the incentive to conceal their pregnancy and kill their illegitimate child, the stage was set for a corresponding increase in the actual number of infanticides committed by unwed mothers. Accompanying that increase in known cases was an increase in the social outrage against such cases, as more and more of the populace became aware of the behaviour (Daly & Wilson, 1988). Indeed, one can imagine that those who created the legal institution and the populace believed infanticide to be a new and particularly abhorrent phenomenon, arising not from the construction of the Poor Law, but rather the weakening morals of unwed, ‘lewd’ women (Hoffer & Hull, 1981; Jackson, 1996). With this increase came a more punitive response by the prosecution and judiciary. For example, in Essex and Sussex there was an increase in of cases of infanticide being tried as well as an increase in the proportion of defendants being found guilty (Hoffer & Hull, 1981).

During this period there was also a heightened awareness of that which offended the morals of the church, and therefore the state, and along with this awareness came a great desire to punish and thereby reform those who sinned against God (Hoffer & Hull, 1981). This desire to reform the sinning populace came most strongly from the ever increasing power of the Puritan element of early 17th century England (Dickinson & Sharpe, 2002; Hoffer & Hull, 1981). The sin that particularly concerned the Puritans was two-fold: first, the concealment of a pregnancy resulting from ‘lewd’ and ‘ unholy’ sexual conduct on the part of unwed women; and second, although seemingly less so, the actual
killing of an infant born from such conduct (Dickinson & Sharpe, 2002; Hoffer & Hull, 1981; Jackson, 1996). It was those sentiments, along with the increase in legal sensitivity to infanticide behaviour, that led to the construction of “An Act to prevent the destroying and murthering of bastard children . . .” (Daly & Wilson, 1988: 67) in 1624 and to which we now turn our attention.

1624 to 1802

In the early 17th century the stage was set for the introduction of a legal statute dealing with infanticide, and in April of 1624 the parliament introduced a bill that was passed and made law in May of the same year (Hoffer & Hull, 1981). The statute’s main spotlight, which would prove to influence the way infanticide cases were tried for almost 200 years, was the establishment of proving concealment of death by the offender (Jackson, 1996; Sharpe, 1984). Prosecutors were no longer required to prove that the infant had been born alive or not, as they were required to so before the Act, they only had to prove that the infant’s death was concealed (Jackson, 1996). Therefore, the only evidence required to prove the murder of a child was proof of the concealment of death (Hoffer & Hull, 1981; Jackson, 1996). As Jackson (1996) notes, this aspect of the statute made “a mother’s intent to conceal the death of her child . . . material . . . [which] allowed the courts some discretion to accept or reject certain evidence” (34). Such evidence was often circumstantial and included such factors as her past sexual conduct or overall character, as well as whether or not the woman: prepared any clothing or linen for
the baby (referred to as 'benefit-of-linen'), informed anyone that she was pregnant, sought aid during birth, and even whether or not she “kept bad company” (Hoffer & Hull, 1981:105; Jackson, 1996).

Trials in the 17th century typically consisted of witnesses giving evidence defendants were not allowed to provide on their own behalf. Furthermore, while prosecution witnesses testified under an oath to the court, defense witnesses provided evidence unsworn (Brantingham & Brantingham, 1984; Hoffer & Hull, 1981). This set of circumstances worked both for and against the woman accused of infanticide. Concealment could be ‘proven’ more easily if a witness provided testimony that a defendant’s parents had done such an act in the past for example;16 while some defendants were saved a visit to the executioner simply by a fellow member of the local community declaring that the defendant prepared some linen for the baby or that the baby was stillborn, all the while, unsworn (Hoffer & Hull, 1981; Jackson, 1996; Rabin, 2002). This fortunate (for the defendant) set of circumstances was simply a result of the wording of the 1624 statute, “except such Mother can make proof by one Witness at the least” (Jackson, 1996: 32). These legal ‘loopholes’ had a significant impact on the number of infanticide cases that resulted in a conviction. Figure Two provides a telling example of how this particular aspect of the law impacted conviction rates in the Middlesex, London, and Surrey areas after the institution of the 1624 statute. Despite the initial increase in

15 This defense refers to the preparation of clothing or other linens for the unborn child by the mother. It was held (assumed) that in preparing these linens (prior to the birth of the child) the expecting mother desired the child and would only dispose of a child’s body if the child was stillborn. Therefore, if such evidence were found the courts held the element of intent was not formed and the accused mother innocent of infanticide.

16 Jackson (1996) notes, “[t]he prosecution of a woman for the murder of her new-born child was ... the culmination of a sequence of events that originated in the suspicions, gossip, and rumors of the village ... in which the woman lived” (60). This gossip and suspicion was fuelled further by the incentive of payment that some received by bringing a woman’s concealed infanticide to the attention of the authorities (Jackson, 1996).
overall cases and convictions, the trend is obvious – over time the cases decrease in number dramatically, and, eventually, the convictions fall to nil.

Another aspect of the statute that had the effect of limiting the number of convictions was the punishment prescribed for a conviction: death. In numerous cases it seems that this punishment was deemed too severe by the juries trying the case and therefore an acquittal was typically rendered (Dickinson & Sharpe, 2002). In fact, in the late 1600s there were cases where juries acquitted on the charge of infanticide but inflicted supplementary punishments such as sentencing women to short periods in houses of correction, or to be whipped in order to satisfy a “more general desire to punish women of loose morals” (Dickinson & Sharpe, 2002: 41; Hoffer & Hull, 1981). This desire grew out of the concern for the ‘unwomanly’ behaviours of a young woman, rather
than from a substantial concern for the well-being of children in general (Dickinson & Sharpe, 2002).

An additional interesting feature of 17th century England that impacted the conviction rate of infanticide cases was the growing interest in psychology and its application to the legal process (Jackson, 2002; Hoffer & Hull, 1981; Rabin, 2002). There was a trend in infanticide cases, especially those involving a married defendant, for the courts to take into account the emotional turmoil of the mother giving birth (Jackson, 1996; Masciola, 2002; Rabin, 2002). The murder of a child by a married woman was seen as a qualitatively different act than infanticide carried out by an unmarried woman; it was felt a married woman lacked the desperate situation considered so common to single women so the only reason for a wed mother to kill her child was because of insanity (Rabin, 2002). This sentiment did not necessarily negate a single mother’s attempts at avoiding conviction; the use of an insanity plea carried with it some implicit admission of guilt (ibid). Therefore, single women tended to use the aforementioned standardized method of defense and make a claim of preparation for the baby’s arrival or produce a witness who testified to the baby’s being stillborn (Jackson, 1996; Rabin, 2002). However, over the course of the 17th century the connection between insanity and infanticide gained a stronger recognition and led to a push for reform and eventually the formation of current infanticide laws in England and Canada (Jackson, 2002; Marland, 2002; Rabin, 2002).

"The testimony in these cases was entirely uniform, formulaic and generally successful: it resulted in the mother's acquittal" (Rabin, 2002: 77).

Authors have noted that even the media’s portrayal of infanticide shifted over the 17th and 18th centuries from depictions of mothers as “monstrous child killers . . .” to [portrayals] as virtuous victims of men’s deceit or as insane” (Masciola, 2002: 64).
Taken altogether, the socio-political-legal milieu of the time seems to point to an interesting reluctance on the part of society and the legal system to treat infanticide committed by a female in the same manner as it did many other, seemingly less heinous crimes. As will be seen, this reluctance indeed carried on into the modern formation of infanticide law.

1803 to 1920

Lord Ellenborough's Act of 1803 (see Appendix One) consisted of a number of reforms to various aspects of the criminal law. The repeal of the 1624 statute regarding infanticide was included among those reforms. After numerous amendments, the statute received royal assent on June 24th, 1803 (Hoffer & Hull, 1981).

While influenced greatly by the wording of the 1624 statute, there were, as one might expect after nearly 200 years, some significant changes. First, Lord Ellenborough's Act reinstated common-law rules of evidence for the trials of unwed mothers, which was meant to ease the prosecution's difficulties in such cases (Jackson, 1996). Second, addressing the reluctance to convict, the 1804 statute gave courts the option of pronouncing an alternative verdict of 'concealment of birth', the punishment for which was a maximum of two years imprisonment (Jackson, 2002). This aspect of the statute was meant to apply when the murder of a bastard child could not be proven, but concealment of the infant's death could (ibid). Therefore, there was a strong link between illegitimate children, the sexual conduct of single women who produced them, the concealment of the shame of mothering such a child, and the desire to control and

\[\text{19 However, capital punishment was retained for those cases that an unwed mother was found guilty of infanticide whereas the two-year term was specific to charges of concealment of birth (Jackson, 1996).}\]
punish these women evident in the legislation (Rabin, 2002). This focus on single women was a strong remnant of the 1624 statute and a clear piece of evidence that the Act was indeed the result of conservative minds.

The new act of 1803 was meant to simultaneously increase convictions and allow courts to consider an alternative to the death sentence. The data collected by some authors seem to show that this intention was indeed realized by the courts of the 19th and early 20th centuries (Jackson, 1996). Ultimately, the statute allowed the courts the means with which to punish those women who offended the morals of the time by having bastard children (through the crime of concealment) while still retaining “the means of making capital examples when necessary” (Jackson, 1996: 175). Despite this availability, the last case to result in a capital conviction for infanticide (by a female) in England was in 1849 (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Jackson, 2002).

The 1890s and early 1900s saw a decrease in the interest in infanticide and as such, there was a “hiatus in the debate over the law on infanticide” (Ward, 2002: 257). However, in 1910 a bill was put through parliament that would allow the jury in infanticide cases to convict the accused of manslaughter instead of murder, thereby escaping the need for the court to impose capital punishment as a sentence (Jackson, 2002; Ward, 2002). While the bill was not passed through parliament because of prorogation, it would form the basis for the Infanticide Act of 1922.

Before turning to the Infanticide Act of 1922, a brief look at the increasing sentiment around insanity and infanticide during the late 19th and early 20th century is useful. The Victorian ethic viewed the murderous mother as a woman of unbalanced and irrational mind, and one who represented the antithesis of that to which any woman...
should aspire (Marland, 2002). It was felt the only way a woman could do such a thing as kill her own child was to be insane, if only temporarily so (particularly in the case of a wed mother). Over the course of the 19th century, with the increase of professional opinion being accepted in the courts and the continuing influence of the Victorian ethic, the idea of 'puerperal insanity'\(^2\) gained strong support from scholars, psychiatric and medical doctors, and finally, the judiciary (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Marland, 2002). Over time, this sentiment was increasingly applied to all women suspected of infanticide, rather than only married women, as it had been in the past (Marland, 2002). The defense of insanity from the effects of giving birth, although not a 'loop-hole' of the 1804 statute, was accepted by juries and often presented in as much of a formulaic fashion as the preparation defences of cases tried under the 1624 statute (Marland, 2002; Rabin, 2002). Broad acceptance of the concepts of psychology, (and even the residual effect of Darwin's ideas and the increased acceptance of science's influence on society) coupled with the already practised puerperal insanity plea was perhaps the most influential factor behind the formation of the Infanticide Act in 1922.

Infanticide Act - 1922

The calls for reform of the 1860s and 1870s, along with the bill introduced in 1910, had laid dormant for a decade only to be awakened by the notoriety of a single infanticide case tried in the Leicester assizes in 1921 (Ward, 2002). The case involved a 21 year old woman named Edith Roberts who killed her illegitimate child moments after giving birth in secret (ibid). Roberts was tried and found guilty by the jury, and despite a.

\(^2\) This particular set of mental conditions is often also referred to as 'lactational psychosis' (Daly & Wilson, 1988)
call for a strong consideration of mercy the prevailing judge sentenced Roberts to death (ibid). The case received a great deal of publicity and generated much sympathy for the condemned, culminating in a public meeting of over 500 people in the market place of Leicester demanding Roberts' immediate release and a change to the laws (ibid).22

Due to the influence of this case the 1910 bill was re-introduced, with some amendments, and had little difficulty passing through the Commons; the Act created a new offence of ‘infanticide’, which was to be considered a form of manslaughter, carrying the same penalty of up to life imprisonment (Jackson, 2002; Ward, 2002). The offence applied only to the mother of the child and only in cases “where the baby was ‘newly born’ and where the effects of giving birth were such that the balance of her mind was disturbed” (Ward, 2002: 264). The intent was to allow for a plea of temporary insanity wherein the mother did not know right from wrong during the act due to the effects of giving birth (Jackson, 2002; Ward, 2002). However, the parliament insisted that this be determined on a case-by-case basis and not simply equate the act of giving birth with insanity (Marland, 2002; Rabin, 2002).

Despite the initial outcry forming the impetus for the construction of the 1922 act public interest in the legal milieu surrounding infanticide waned. In legal circles however, there were two aspects of the Act that attracted almost immediate attention. The wording of the act created problems, specifically the meaning of ‘newly-born’. The provision for allowing a temporary insanity plea was intended to be applied to the circumstances immediately following birth, rather than days, weeks, or even months later (Ward, 2002). This confusion arose from the courts equating ‘puerperal insanity’ and

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22 The author did not indicate the fate of Ms. Roberts, but given the impact her case had on the legislature one could imagine the kind townsfolk of Leicester were granted their demands.
"temporary insanity"; the former referring to an unbalanced mind months after birth (Marland, 2002; Rabin, 2002; Ward, 2002). These two aspects of the Act resulted in numerous problems for the courts.

Much to the wonderment of the historian studying this area, judges once again eased the oft strict rules of legal application when hearing cases of infanticide: the judges were allowing insanity pleas when, for example, a woman had killed her child 35 days after the baby's birth (Ward, 2002).23 This example shows how the above two problems can arise in a case tried under this Act. First, is a 35 day old baby a ‘newly-born’ child? Second, can temporary insanity last 35 days? It was these types of inquiries that led judges to ask parliament for a clearer definition of what constituted a ‘newly-born’ infant and clarification on the insanity aspect of the statute (Jackson, 2002; Ward, 2002). These recommendations were taken up by parliament in the first half of 1938 and a bill amending the Infanticide Act of 1922 was passed in June of that year (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Ward, 2002).

Infanticide Act - 1938

The suggestions of the judiciary were taken a step further in defining the phrase ‘newly-born’. Instead of clarifying what that phrase constituted, the parliament introduced, within the amendment, a provision pertaining to a mother’s killing of her child within one year of birth (Ward, 2002). In response to the confusion surrounding the mental capacities of the woman giving birth, the parliament added that the mother had to

23 The author notes that these cases were included under the rubric of temporary insanity despite their exclusion from the M’Naghten Rules laid down by the judiciary in 1843 (Ward, 2002).
have not yet recovered from either birth or lactation (in other words, lactational insanity) (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Ward, 2002). Jackson (2002) summarizes the Act:

... infanticide was defined as any wilful act or omission on the part of a mother which caused the death of her child under the age of twelve months, while the balance of her mind was disturbed by reason of her not having fully recovered from the effect of giving birth to the child or by reason of the effect of lactation. (11)

The Act of 1938 is interesting, as it carries with it the punitive attitude held by those who formed the 1624 statute, albeit in a diminished manner, as well as the recognition of the social and emotional pressures that can drive a mother to kill her child, an aspect of the reform arguments from the 18th century (Hoffer & Hull, 1981; Ward, 2002). Ward (2002) points this fact out, noting “this way the law is able to maintain a generally punitive stance to a social problem, laced with an unthreatening show of compassion” (250).

This act remains in force in England today and is the culmination of over 600 years of legal reform and application (Jackson, 2002). However, the current sentiment surrounding the Act is not necessarily one of total acceptance. The reference to the effects of lactation is nothing short of odd when viewed with a contemporary (politically correct) lens, and in practice is applied to circumstances of extreme social and emotional stress (i.e. external influences interacting with internal psychological factors rather than simply an ‘unbalanced mind’) (Ward, 2002). There is also some feeling by judges that the Act promotes child abuse, and that the killing of an infant ought to be treated the same as any murder (ibid). Finally, some feminist arguments focus on the fact the Act still carries with it the idea of the ‘fallen woman’ from the age of the Victorian ethic in its
provision for lactational insanity (Quinn, 2002; Ward, 2002). The arguments contend that this provision implies only an insane woman would kill her child.

Social Issues in the 20th and 21st Centuries

Over the course of infanticide law's history the most important factor in shaping its construction was arguably the social sentiment of the specific time. This sentiment grew out of not only media portrayals of infanticides, but also the broader morals surrounding women, sexuality, and views of social class (Jackson, 2002; Sharpe, 1984). This is true for contemporary views as well. The general moral and legal acceptance of abortion and a woman’s right to pre-marital sex, as well as wide-spread availability of contraceptive devices have impacted infanticide in modern day in a profound manner. Milner (1998) outlines this fact, indicating that over 5 million pregnancies are aborted in the Western world each year, and one can only conjecture that if a portion of those foetuses were born they would have been victim to infanticide. Indeed the “frequent use of abortion has eased the necessity for killing an infant after its birth” (Milner, 1998: 4).

In seeing how this social sentiment of a specific time influenced the formation of infanticide law throughout history, one aspect of social and legal response to this act was consistently salient – a seeming leniency for the biological mothers of the murdered child. This leniency was an aspect of the history of this crime despite the fact that attitudes about crime in general and those that committed them changed drastically over time (Brantingham & Brantingham, 1984). It is this interesting consistency, coupled with

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24 Section 233 of the Canadian Criminal Code (2005) states: “Infanticide – A female person commits infanticide when by a wilful act or omission she causes the death of her newly-born child, if at the time of the act or omission she is not fully recovered from the effects of giving birth to the child and by reason thereof or of the effect of lactation consequent on the birth of the child her mind is then disturbed” (emphasis added; 143-144).
the research in the field of evolutionary psychology, which provides the impetus for this project.

**Evolutionary Psychology Theory**

Evolutionary psychology is based on the theory of evolution by way of natural selection as espoused by Charles Darwin in *The Origin of Species* (1859) and by the works of Sir Alfred Russel Wallace (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Krahe, 2001). Wright (1994) summarizes Darwin and Wallace’s ideas thusly:

> ... [i]f within a species there is variation among individuals in their hereditary traits, and some traits are more conducive to survival and reproduction than others, then those traits will . . . become more widespread within the population. The result . . . is that the species’ aggregate pool of hereditary traits changes. (23)

The change referred to in this quotation is termed an *adaptation*, which is defined as “an anatomical structure, a physiological process, or a behaviour pattern that contributed to [an] ancestral individual’s ability to survive and reproduce” (Crawford & Janicki, 2003: 3; emphasis added).

The inclusion of behaviour patterns is crucial, as it allows for the study of the psychological processes that human beings possess because of selection pressures due to the problems our ancestors faced over evolutionary time (Crawford, 1992; Buss, 1999). These ‘problems’ related to the specific obstacles our evolutionary ancestors faced with

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25 While there is no single evolutionary psychology theory, this section explores some of the most relevant (to infanticide) aspects of evolutionary psychology. As well, there are a number of notions in evolutionary theory which are often mistaken as arguments for justification of such behaviours as murder, rape, child abuse, and even infanticide (see Daly & Wilson, 1988; Kurzban, 2002; Thornhill & Palmer, 2000). This viewpoint comes from a misunderstanding of the tenets of evolutionary psychology and is nothing more than a moralistic fallacy; the ideas of evolutionary psychology are simply providing hypotheses for why certain behaviours exist in the human condition and are not arguing for the justification of any act, good or bad (Buss, 2005; Kurzban, 2002).
regards to survival and reproduction (Buss, 1999; Symons, 2005). Evolutionary psychology then, looks at the current psychological mechanisms that exist in humans today and determines how these mechanisms could have been adaptive in the environment of evolutionary ancestry and how these processes function (or do not function) in the environments of today (Crawford & Janicki, 2003; Krahe, 2001; Rowe, 2001; Symons, 2005). Adaptive in this sense refers to those adaptations that increased the chances of survival and reproduction for the organism exhibiting those adaptations (Mealey, 2000). An example of a behavioural adaptation that proved to be successfully adaptive is the psychological mechanism underlying sexual mate choice in humans and other primates (see Buss, 1994).

Relating the idea of adaptive psychological mechanisms to infanticide, much of the literature deals with the evolutionary rationale behind infanticide by both males and females (Stanford, 2001). The theoretical explanations have typically dealt with the evolved psychological mechanisms that would bring about infanticide perpetrated by a mother, father, or invading male. For example, in infanticide cases perpetrated by a mother the costs associated with raising an infant in an often unforgiving environment (such as characterized by a scarcity of food, lack of caregiver aid or protection, etc.) may produce a reaction in the young mother that unconsciously analyses the costs and benefits

26 Of crucial importance here, and with evolutionary psychology in general, is that the adaptations humans possess evolved in environments drastically different from the one’s in which most humans live today. The environment (both geo-physical and social aspects) human beings evolved in, and are therefore best suited for (i.e. adapted to) is referred to as the EEA (the environment of evolutionary ancestry or adaptation) (Mealey, 2000). Hagen (2005) is instructive in this regard, noting the EEA “refers to those aspects of the ancestral environment that were relevant to the evolution, development, and functioning of an organism’s adaptations — roughly, the environment in which a species evolved and to which it is adapted” (153).

27 Therefore, when looking at an adaptation one is attempting to discern its function in as much as it aids in increasing the organism’s fitness (Hagen, 2005).
and can lead to the killing of an infant (Mealy, 2000; Daly & Wilson, 1988; Hrdy, 1977; Wright, 1994).

Alternatively, theories focusing on male infanticide tend to utilize the notion of paternity uncertainty; that is, males who are unsure of the biological connection to an infant and are therefore uncertain as to whether the infant is their progeny may initiate (unconsciously) a psychological mechanism that encourages the destruction of any unrelated offspring to ensure that time and energy are not ‘wasted’ on an infant who does not possess their genes (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Buss, 1999; Mealey, 2000). While very interesting and instructive, these theories, and the research that they are based on, have not addressed the issue of why there is a differential reaction by the social community to those instances of infanticide committed by females as compared to those committed by males. The objective of the current study is to fill this gap in the research and attempt to explain why this interesting differential exists.

**Theoretical Foundation & Hypotheses**

**Theoretical Basis**

The above theoretical notions describing the different ultimate reasons for infanticide perpetrated by males and females lie at the core of the theoretical basis for my hypotheses. First, the idea of a psychological mechanism that exists in mothers which...
analyzes the cost and benefits of contributing resources to a specific offspring is crucial. This idea provides the reason that throughout our evolutionary history, and indeed most of our recorded history, the typical infanticidal mother is one who finds herself in an 'unfavourable environment' (Hrdy, 1977; Jackson, 2002). In other words, the environment within which the mother has become pregnant is not one in which the chances of her offspring surviving to a reproductive age are very high. Therefore, given this set of environmental conditions the psychological mechanism determines that the cost (to the mother’s fitness) of contributing resources (parental effort, food, protection, etc.) is too great to risk and 'produces' a set of emotions that can lead to infanticide of the offspring (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Hrdy, 1977). Relating to this point, Daly and Wilson (1988) note:

... the circumstances in which infanticide is allegedly practiced in any particular society are almost invariably circumstances in which the child is of inappropriate paternity, is of poor phenotypic quality, or is unlikely to survive for other reasons. Parental disinclination to raise a particular child is therefore best understood as reflecting evolved motives for allocating scarce parental resources; virtually all apparent exceptions to this generalization involved coercive interventions by parties other than the new parents. (294; emphasis added)

The second aspect of evolutionary psychology mentioned above is that of paternity uncertainty. This concept relates to infanticide in that males who doubt the genetic relatedness of a certain child will have an increased probability of abusing,

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29 Recall this includes not only the geo-physical environment but also the social milieu which the mother lives in (e.g., whether or not she has a partner, or the cultural limits on the sexual activity of females, etc.).

30 This is how the concept of 'reproductive fitness' is measured in evolutionary theory; a person is considered reproductively successful when he or she becomes a grandmother or grandfather (Mealey, 2000). This is not simply a convoluted aspect of the ideas around evolutionary theory; rather it is a concept which helps to explain why certain behaviours exist in certain organisms. For example, this concept helps to explain the almost world-wide phenomenon of grandchildren being 'spoiled' by their grandparents in a manner those same grandparents almost never engaged in with their own children (Daly & Wilson, 1988).

31 In other words, the propagation of her genetic heritage to successive generations.

32 This adaptive problem is sex specific in humans; i.e., mothers can always be certain that the child they give birth to is their genetic progeny. However, a father can never be the same certainty that the child he helps to raise is necessarily his genetic offspring.
neglecting, and even killing that child (Daly & Wilson, 1988). This type of behaviour is most evident in other primates, where males who invade a troop and usurp the dominant male(s) will tend to immediately kill the young of that troop (Hrdy, 1977; Mealey, 2000; van Schaik, 2000). Similarly, authors have also shown that step-children in human families have a disproportionately higher risk of harm and death at the hands of step-fathers than biologically related children (Daly & Wilson, 1988). Therefore, a psychological mechanism exists in males which analyzes an environmental situation (with regard to paternal certainty) and initiates a set of emotions that, much like a mother’s fitness cost-benefit analysis mechanism, may lead to infanticide of a child in order to increase the chances that any resources the male provides will be for a child which is his genetic progeny.

Given these two mechanisms, one can delineate their importance to not only the survival and reproduction of the individual parents, but also the ingroup within which the parents reside. An ingroup’s genetic certainty is matrilineal in nature; in other words, because of paternity uncertainty, and by contrast maternal certainty, individuals within an ingroup are aware (on an unconscious, genetic level) that their genetic lineage is for the

34 Interestingly, this murderous rampage by the invading male serves two purposes in most non-human primates. First, the invading male can be certain that he will not be providing any resources to the genetic progeny of a non-related male; and second, by killing the infant the mother is no longer required for breast feeding and therefore, is no longer lactating. This serves to initiate the reproductive cycle in the mother and ‘kick-start’ her estrus cycle; in other words, it serves to prepare her body for the ‘production’ of another offspring, typically one from the invading male, who is now the alpha male of the troop and the one who is provided with the most opportunities for copulation (Hrdy, 1977; Mealey, 2000; van Schaik, 2000).

35 This ingroup concept refers to the notion that over evolutionary time the typical characteristics of a person’s immediate social group were similar to that seen in hunter-gatherer societies today: in other words, about 25-35 people (Krebs, 1998). It is this type of environment, and its accompanying adaptive problems, for which our current brains have evolved (Crawford, 1992). Daly and Wilson (1988) provide an excellent articulation for why we ought to study modern day hunter-gathering societies in order to understand our environment of evolutionary ancestry (EEA), noting: ‘the adaptations of the human species . . . have been shaped by at least a hundred thousand generations of differential survival and reproduction in a preagricultural ecological niche. If we wish to understand human characteristics, then, we should study the hunting and gathering life-style in which and for which those characteristics have been shaped by natural selection’ (40).
most part dependent upon the mothers in the group. Therefore, it is in the interest of individuals within an ingroup to ensure those who can further the genetic interests of the group do so in the most fitness-enhancing manner. While natural selection does not operate at the level of the group, psychological mechanisms within individuals have been selected for in such a manner as to increase the utility of residing in a cooperative and cohesive group, since those who were part of these types of groups increased their chances of survival and reproduction over evolutionary time (Buss, 1999; Krebs, 1998; Kurzban & Neuberg, 2005). In essence, human beings are social animals and require social cohesion to survive and reproduce; we are unable to do so in complete isolation from other humans. This point serves as a foundational aspect of my hypotheses in this project. In relation to infanticide, if the mother's actions are such that they are benefiting her genetic interests, it will also, on average, tend to increase the fitness of members within the ingroup. In contrast, members of an ingroup will not react kindly to those members whose behaviours threaten the genetic interests of others in the ingroup. Kurzban and Neuberg (2005) echo this point, noting that humans "possess psychological mechanisms designed to preserve the benefits of sociality and simultaneously limit its costs" (653). Because of the shared desire (again, unconscious) to ensure the cohesiveness of the ingroup (thereby helping to increase the fitness of individual members of the ingroup) those who act in such a manner will be viewed as a detriment to the ingroup's fitness. This detriment will be viewed as such because of the recognition of the threat to the individual fitness of each person in the ingroup. Based on these inherent interests, ingroup members' reactions to certain behaviour will be guided accordingly.
Hypothesis One

Based on the adaptive psychological mechanisms that exist in males and females with regard to infanticide, it is hypothesized that there exists in the human brain an inherent, hardwired knowledge of the environmental conditions which influence these mechanisms.\(^3\)

Hypothesis Two\(^4\)

Because of the inherent knowledge of the environmental conditions which activate the mechanisms in both males and females and the divergent underlying genetic interests\(^5\) of perpetrators of infanticide, there will be a differential reaction by those within the ingroup\(^6\) to this particular act.

Hypothesis Three

This differential reaction will be in the form of a greater acceptance, understanding, or leniency by people to the knowledge of an infanticide committed by a female than that of a male. Accordingly, the reaction to male-perpetrated infanticide will be greater moral indignation and unsympathetic than that of a female-perpetrated

\(^3\) Recall that for a female these conditions revolve around the suitability of a particular environment to providing a certain level of assurance that her offspring have a chance of reaching reproductive age. While for males these conditions revolve, for the most part, around issues of paternity uncertainty.

\(^4\) This second hypothesis is connected to and logically flows from hypothesis one.

\(^5\) Recall a female’s interests in committing infanticide tend to relate to the interests of those within the ingroup, while the male’s interests are much more specific to his own genetic propagation. Further, it is crucial to keep in mind that these interests are in the genetic sense and are not sought after consciously by individuals (Buss, 1999).

\(^6\) Here the ingroup concept refers to any person who learns of the incident. This wide range of inclusion is justifiable here because of the notion of the environment of evolutionary adaptation (EEA). In our ancestral environment knowledge of others was essentially limited to those people known to the group, and did not include strangers to the same extent in today’s environments.
infanticide. In other words, the narratives of excuse provided for females will invoke a greater amount of understanding than those provided for males who commit infanticide.\textsuperscript{39}

**Thesis Statement**

Given these hypotheses, this project tests whether or not there is a differentiated reaction based on the sex of the perpetrator in an infanticide case (hypotheses one and two). Furthermore, the project will attempt to discern if any of the observed differentiation in reaction is reflective of a reduced amount of moral indignation towards a female offender (hypothesis three). And finally, once the hypotheses have been tested, the findings will be discussed within the context of evolutionary psychology theory.

\textsuperscript{39} Linked to this idea of understanding is the notion that the repercussions prescribed for either a male or a female perpetrator of infanticide will be differentiated as well, based on the reduced amount of moral indignation for the female. Furthermore, this hypothesis indicates perhaps the most important reason for the inclusion of a quantitative aspect to the analysis, i.e. the "narrative of excuse" (see Methodology section for further justifications for the survey design). This phrase necessarily implies a response which is not conducive to simply indicating a preference on a seven point scale. It is an expectation flowing from this hypothesis that the crux of the differences between respondents' reactions will arise from an analysis of the quantitative data.
Chapter Two

Methodology

Survey Apparatus

An attitudinal survey was constructed in order to test the above hypotheses (see Appendix Two). The survey contained a brief scenario depicting an infanticide, followed by a number of questions meant to gather data on the participants’ perceptions of the event. In the scenario, all of the events and characteristics of the parties within were kept consistent, save for the sex of the perpetrator. Three different scenario conditions, one with a female perpetrator, another with a male perpetrator, and a final scenario wherein the sex of the perpetrator is not indicated were presented. In addition, two separate scenario descriptions (maintaining the three different sex conditions), wherein the manner of death is differentiated, were created. One scenario description depicted an infanticide involving the perpetrator smothering an infant and the other described an infanticide involving the perpetrator shaking the baby to death. Therefore, in total there were six different versions of the survey. In addition to the scenario, the surveys included questions geared towards gauging both the moral indignation the participant felt towards the incident and the perpetrator, as well as what the participant felt was an appropriate

\[ \text{The specific wording used indicated the perpetrator as the ‘mother’, ‘father’, or ‘parent’ of the victim, respectively.} \]
judicial response. Questions were structured as closed-ended, Likert-scale type while also providing for participants to elaborate on their responses.

The surveys were constructed online and maintained on a publicly available webpage on the World Wide Web. Participants replied to the questions via selecting their response of choice on a 7-Point Likert scale, and the respondent could not advance in the survey until he or she had selected a response to each question. While elaboration for each question was provided for this was not required in order for participants to advance in the survey. The participants were also provided with the opportunity to end the survey at any time. At the end of the survey participants were asked to complete a demographics section, indicating general personal characteristics such as age, ethnicity, education completion, etc. The survey took less than ten minutes, on average, to complete.

**Sampling**

The sampling technique employed was a snowball sample technique (Palys, 2003). Initially, potential participants were solicited via electronic mail to complete one of the six versions of the survey. An email message was written wherein potential participants were asked to follow one of six hypertext links to one of the versions of the survey. In addition, participants were provided with space to provide comments about the survey in general. Responses to this question were not used in the final analysis of the results; the comments section was included as a manner in which to attempt to improve future research.

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41 Questions were designed to fit into three different classifications; Type I questions addressed issues of blameworthiness, Type II questions addressed issues around the severity of punishment, and finally, Type III questions addressed causal issues (i.e. reasons that the participant gave for the act’s occurrence). See Appendix Two for elaboration of question classification and for indication of which questions represented which question type.

42 The web page is called Survey Monkey and is located at www.surveymonkey.com. It is a pay for service web page and the surveys were kept open (i.e. available for completion) from April, 2005 to January, 2006. All data collection was via this web page; there was no paper version of the survey apparatus.

43 In addition, participants were provided with space to provide comments about the survey in general. Responses to this question were not used in the final analysis of the results; the comments section was included as a manner in which to attempt to improve future research.
survey. The links were arranged in random order at the end of the message. Initial potential participants were also asked to forward the message on to others, and so on. For the most part, initial potential participants were individuals known to the researcher as well as students enrolled in distance education courses making use of the online interactive program First Class. Due to the use of an online survey the potential for a greater inclusion of participants of varying demographic characteristics was increased (Schonlau, Fricker, & Elliott, 2002). However, due to concerns around participant identification there was no record kept of location or identity of any of the participants. The only information made available about the participants was the information provided by the individual participants themselves (i.e. the demographic information).

Rationale of Research Design

Survey Apparatus

An attitudinal questionnaire was employed in this project because it was seen as the most economical and appropriate method of determining whether a sex-biased differential reaction to infanticide exists at the individual level. Because of the notions of evolutionary psychology surrounding individual morality and judgment, an attitudinal survey should tap into the deep-seated moralistic decision making process within the

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44 See Appendix Three for a copy of the message sent out to friends, family, and acquaintances of the researcher. This message was one of a number of messages sent out, but the basic structure and intent remained the same throughout the different messages. In addition, it can be assumed that once participants forwarded the initial message they prefaced the message with a particular depiction of what the survey related to and what the other potential participants were expected to do.

45 Some of these students were enrolled in a criminology course that I was the tutor-marker for. In accordance with ethics, none of the students were identifiable and received neither favour nor punishment for completion or non-completion of the survey.

46 This included an ISP address location which was not collected by the Survey Monkey database, a request that was made in order to satisfy the parameters of ethics approval.
In other words, a scenario depicting infanticide should be sufficient to replicate a real-life incident which would initiate the moralistic decision making process (i.e. evolved psychological mechanism) that leads to a judgment of the situation and perpetrator. It is important to note that in utilizing an evolutionary perspective of human behaviour one necessarily assumes humans, as a species, possess similar physiological, behavioural, and therefore psychological mechanisms (Dawkins, 1995; Wright, 1994). In other words, there is homogeneity amongst our species with regards to the adaptations that lead to the evolved psychological mechanisms underlying human behaviour.\textsuperscript{47}

\textbf{Scenario Depiction}

Scenarios were written in a manner that limited the amount of external information about the perpetrators depicted in the scenarios. Information was kept at a minimum in order to gauge the type of inferences that participants would make in coming to a decision in assessing the different perpetrators. This minimization of information was intentional and allowed for the most sincere, or ‘raw’ response from the respondents, unguided by supplementary information beyond the sex of the perpetrator and certain details of the infanticide. Furthermore, the two different depictions of manner of death were utilized in order to overcome participant bias regarding knowledge of certain behaviours. In other words, because the project’s goal is concerned with participant views about the act of infanticide, it was felt two different manners of death were needed

\textsuperscript{47}This is not to say that all human behaviour is homogeneous, clearly it is not. But what is homogenous are the underlying psychological mechanisms. In other words, the mechanisms are similar across individuals but how those mechanisms are expressed (i.e. behaviours) in different environments varies from individual to individual.
in order to ensure participants were providing their views about the act of infanticide, rather than the manner by which the infanticide is carried out. The two depictions of infanticide were chosen based on research delineating actual infanticide cases from both historical and contemporary records (Backhouse, 1991; N. Boyd, personal communication, March 5th, 2005; Hoffer & Hull, 1981; Jackson, 1996; R. v. Lalli, 1993).

Question Design

Questions were designed with the goal of approaching three different areas of concern. First, the issue of blameworthiness was approached by four different questions. These questions were designed to gauge the degree of responsibility the participants felt the perpetrator possessed in the scenario. Second, the issue of punishment was addressed by five different questions and participants were asked to report the severity of punishment they felt appropriate for the perpetrator depicted in the scenario. Finally, the issue of causation was addressed by three different questions. Respondents were asked why they felt the incident occurred. These questions were open-ended in nature and were meant to provide insights into the biases and perceptions the participants may have had about infanticide in general and sex-biased morality.

The decision to include both Likert-scale type questions and open-ended questions arose from two areas. First, because of the intriguing historical analysis of infanticide and infanticide law (i.e. reactions to infanticide) it was felt that participants would likely feel the need to elaborate or justify their responses beyond merely selecting a choice on a seven-point scale. In other words, because of the long history of apparent

48 For the surveys which included the sex of the perpetrator (i.e. the mother and the father scenarios) there was only one question which addressed the issue of causality. See Appendix Two for a description of how these surveys differed.
sex-biased leniency in reaction to this act, accompanied by the fact that moral indignation is often still present in reacting to this type of act, it was felt an analysis of the reaction to infanticide would be inadequate if based solely on quantitatively acquired data (Hakim, 2000; Jackson, 1996). Therefore, qualitative data (i.e. acquired via open-ended elaboration) was required in order to obtain the necessary information to understand the totality of what is occurring during such a moralistic decision making process. Second, in much of the literature on social science research it is well established that a combination of these two methods of data collection and analysis can help in strengthening the interpretation of the results and serve to reduce the risk of making invalid conclusions based on correlations in the quantitative data alone (Hakim, 2000; Palys, 2003; Richards, 2005).

Use of Online Survey Technique

Making use of the Internet to disseminate the surveys was meant to increase the potential for inclusion of a wide demographic. As with much research in the social sciences, the concern of representation was paramount in this project and the use of an online survey is typically considered a good way to attack this issue (Schonlau, Fricker, & Elliott, 2002). While Internet and electronic mail based research does not necessarily solve the problem entirely, making use of this type of strategy arguably provides for a greater amount of representation than distributing the survey to undergraduate classes at a university (N. Boyd, personal communication, March 5th, 2005; Schonlau, Fricker, & Elliott, 2002). Furthermore, in employing an online survey and a snowball sampling technique inclusion of not only a wider range of age of respondents is provided for but
also a greater chance of inclusion of participants from varied cultures\(^4\) (Schonlau, Fricker, & Elliott, 2002).

**Coding**

A coding scheme (see Appendix Four) was created in order to aid in the analysis of the data and determine regularities (Punch, 2005). Codes were created for both the quantitative and qualitative data\(^5\) and analysis of the data was conducted using a statistical analysis computer program.

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\(^4\) In fact, the survey 'made its way' to at least the United Kingdom and the United States of America as a number of respondents indicated their general location in the comments section of the survey.

\(^5\) For qualitative data, commonalities within responses among respondents were observed and coded. In order to maintain the richness of the qualitative responses numerous codes were created which allowed for variable inclusion of a number of different responses. See Appendix Seven for a detailed outline of responses which exemplify each code category.
Chapter Three

Results

This chapter is divided into three main sections. A description of the demographic information of the participants in the study will be provided, followed by a description of the quantitative results. Finally, the chapter will end with an exploration of the qualitative results. Within each section both survey types (scenario types) will be covered.

Demographics & Response Rates (all survey conditions)

Number of Participants

One hundred and eighty-six individuals participated in the study, completing one of the six individual surveys. Table 1 shows the participant break-down for each sex condition and scenario type.52

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex of Perpetrator</th>
<th>Scenario QA</th>
<th>Scenario QB</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Sex</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

51 Due to the ethics requirement of ensuring no individualizing information was collected (including individual computer location information) there is no way to ensure that each participant did only one of the six surveys. There is a possibility that respondents completed more than one survey as each link in the original electronic mail message was available to them; although participants were instructed to complete only one of the surveys and no incentive was provided to complete more than one survey.

52 Recall that QA involved a scenario wherein a parent smothered his/her infant baby to death and scenario QB involved a depiction of a shaken baby death.
Non-Response Ratios

Of the 186 participants who began the survey, there were some incidents where participants did not complete each question of the survey. Table 2 displays the percentages of non-responses for each question on both the ‘smothering’ scenario (QA) and the ‘shaken’ scenario (QB).  

Table 2: Non-response ratios for both survey scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>QA-Ratio</th>
<th>QB-Ratio</th>
<th>Total Ratios Per Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1-Blame</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1B-Blame-Explain</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2-Justifiable</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2B-Justifiable-Explain</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3-Prison</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3B-Prison-Explain</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4-Violence</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4-Violence-Explain</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
<td>43.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5-Punishment</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5-Punishment-Explain</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>45.6%</td>
<td>44.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6-Prison Too Harsh</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6-Prison Too Harsh-Explain</td>
<td>51.0%</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td>47.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7-Prison Term</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7-Prison Term-Explain</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
<td>51.1%</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8-Other Punishment</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8.1-What Punishment</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8.2-Why this Punishment</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
<td>56.7%</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9-Why Committed</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10-Which Parent</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10.1-Why that Parent</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note: each ratio refers to the percentage of participants who did not complete the question for all sex conditions of either scenario type).

53 See Appendix Five for tables outlining the non-response ratios for the individual sex conditions for each scenario type (for each survey question, including demographics).
According to Table 2, the most common non-responses occurred for the supplementary questions; i.e. the questions which were either incidents of elaboration or entirely qualitative in nature. This is not a surprising result as the main (i.e. quantitative questions; Q1-7) required an answer in the web-based survey in order for the respondents to continue the questionnaire, while the supplementary (i.e. qualitative questions) did not.

**Overall Demographics**

Of the 186 participants in the study, 55 were male and 109 were female (22 participants did not indicate their sex). The age range for all participants was between 18-24 to 61-65, with the majority (40.3%) of participants being in the 25-30 years old age range. The vast majority of participants (74.7%) did not indicate any response in the religious affiliation category and the most often indicated occupation was ‘student’ (25.8%). The majority of participants (39.8%) had completed (or were in the process of completing) a university education, and the most often indicated level of university education was the Masters level at 15.6 percent; and the most common major of the participants was criminology (16.1%). However, it is worthwhile to note that of the 186 participants 92 (49.5%) indicated an occupation other than ‘student’. The majority of the participants indicated they did not have any children (69.9%), while only 15.1 percent of the respondents indicated they were parents.

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**Notes:**

1. Overall demographics are provided here in order to gauge the general characteristics of the participants in the study. Where required and appropriate, specific demographic information about the individual scenario types and sex conditions are given throughout the remainder of the paper.
2. While this is an interesting demographic to be most represented it is not surprising given that the initial request for participation was sent out to a criminology graduate student email list.
Quantitative Results

QA Results

Of the ninety-six participants who partook in survey QA, 20 (20.8%) completed the father scenario, 48 (50%) completed the mother scenario, and 28 (29.2%) completed the no-sex condition (non-response ratios for both scenario types are reported in Appendix Five). Given the hypotheses guiding the project it was expected that there would be a greater amount of moral indignation indicated by the participants in the study for the scenario involving the ‘father’ perpetrator. Table 3 shows the mean responses for the father, mother, and no-sex perpetrator conditions for questions 1-7, including Type I and Type II collapsed questions. Of the differences between the obtained means, only questions three (“Should the parent go to prison?”) and five (“Should the parent receive some form of punishment?”) resulted in significant differences between the ‘mother’ and ‘father’ scenarios; the obtained t-test results were $t(60)=2.172, p<0.05$ and $t(60)=2.320, p<0.05$, respectively. Therefore, in scenario QA (Smother) respondents were seeking not only some form of punishment for the father-perpetrator, but also agreed more strongly that prison is a suitable punishment for the father-perpetrator. This result is consistent with the expected hypotheses. In looking at the Type I and Type II questions, one can see a difference is evident in the mean values for each category. The difference between the mother and father conditions for the

56 Questions 8-10 produced qualitative data and will be discussed in the next section.
57 Recall Type I questions involved questions which elicited participant views on the blameworthiness of the perpetrator in the scenario and Type II questions dealt with the severity of punishment prescribed by respondents.
58 See Appendix Four for descriptions of the metric used for each question.
Table 3: QA - Mean response for each individual & type question (all sex conditions)\textsuperscript{19}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Sex of Perpetrator</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>$X^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (Blame)</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>5.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (Justifiable)</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>4.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (Violence)</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>4.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>5.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 (Punishment)</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 (Prison too Harsh)</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type I (Blameworthiness)</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>16.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type II (Severity of Punishment)</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>14.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punishment*</td>
<td>No-Sex</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No-Sex</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No-Sex</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No-Sex</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{19} The means for questions one to seven are based on a seven point scale (see Appendix Two for a description of each question). Type I and II questions contain three collapsed questions each and therefore produce a ratio based on a 2:1 point scale - the greater the number on the 2:1 points scale the greater the level of attributed blame (Type I) or severity of punishment (Type II).

Type I (Blameworthiness) questions, $t(60)=1.775, p<0.05$, and the Type II (Severity of Punishment) resulted in significant findings, $t(59)=2.212, p<0.05$. Therefore, respondents were, on average, seeking a greater level of severity of punishment for father-perpetrators than for mother-perpetrators and still holding fathers more...
blameworthy (on average) than mothers. Again, these results are consistent with the hypotheses set out earlier in the chapter.

In analyzing the differences between the other conditions (Mother vs. No-Sex; Father vs. No-Sex; Mother vs. Not Mother; and Father vs. Not Father)

60 only two significant differences were found. These differences were again in questions three (Prison) and five (Some Punishment); t(85)=2.000, p<0.05 and t(85)=2.152, p<0.05 respectively. This result is not surprising given the fact that in the ‘No Sex’ condition, 71.43% of the respondents indicated they believed the perpetrator was the mother in the scenario (10.71% indicated it was the father and 17.86% did not indicate a response). Therefore, in analyzing the data, one can argue that the ‘No Sex’ condition can almost be treated as though it is an extension of the ‘Mother’ condition and this helps explain the similarities in outcomes between the ‘Mother’ and ‘No Sex’ conditions. The only other combination which produced a significant difference was ‘Father vs. Not Father’ on the Type I questions; t(84)=2.047, p<0.05. Again however, this finding is not surprising either given the respondents’ beliefs that it was typically the mother who was committing the infanticide in the ‘No Sex’ condition.

QB Results

Of the 90 participants who participated in survey QB, 39 (43.3%) completed the father scenario, 21 (23.3%) completed the mother scenario, and 30 (33.3%) completed the no-sex condition (however, see non-response ratios in Appendix Five). The same guiding hypotheses for QA guided the analysis of the data produced by survey QB, and

60 ‘Not Mother’ and ‘Not Father’ were categories created to see if there were any differences between the two conditions combined (‘Father’ & ‘No Sex’ in the case of ‘Not Mother vs. Mother’, and ‘Mother’ & ‘No Sex’ in the case of ‘Not Father vs. Father’).
therefore the expectations were similar. However, one caveat which must be considered in the analysis of these data is the fact that the scenarios in the surveys depict an infanticide committed in drastically different manners. It was expected the main difference between the survey types would be the level of violence attributed to the act committed by the perpetrator in either scenario by the respondents. In order to determine if this was the case in this project, an independent samples t-test was calculated and indeed, a significant difference was found between the level of violence attributed to perpetrators (regardless of sex) between the QA (Smother) and QB (Shaken) scenarios; t(170) = -2.273, p<0.05. Therefore, respondents who completed the QB survey attributed a significantly higher level of violence to the act than those respondents who completed survey QA. This is not a surprising finding but is important to keep in mind when analyzing the QB results.

Table 4 shows the mean responses for the father, mother, and no-sex perpetrator conditions for questions 1-7, including Type I and Type II collapsed questions for survey QB. In exploring Table 4 it becomes apparent that there were a number of differences in the mean responses for the three different sex conditions on the quantitatively based questions. In fact, question one (Blameworthiness) produced three significant differences; ‘mother’ versus ‘father’, t(58)=2.765, p<0.05, ‘mother’ versus ‘not mother’, t(88)= -2.409, p<0.05, and ‘father’ versus ‘not father’, t(88)=2.157, p<0.05. Therefore, the results indicate that respondents held perpetrators more blameworthy when the perpetrator was either a ‘father’ or ‘not mother’. This finding is consistent with the

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61 Further differences in results between the two survey types are discussed below.
62 Questions 8-10 produced qualitative data and will be discussed in the next section.
### Table 4: QB - Mean response for each individual & type question (all sex conditions)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Sex of Perpetrator</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>( \bar{X} )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (Blame)*</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>6.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No-Sex</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>6.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Justifiable)</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No-Sex</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (Prison)</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>4.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No-Sex</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (Violence)</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>5.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No-Sex</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (Punishment)</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>5.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No-Sex</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 6 (Prison too Harsh) | Father | 38 | 3.71 |
| | No-Sex | 27 | 3.85 |
| 7 (Prison Term) | Father | 38 | 2.42 |
| | Mother | 20 | 2.60 |
| | No-Sex | 27 | 2.22 |
| Type I (Blameworthiness) | Father | 38 | 18.76 |
| | Mother | 20 | 17.35 |
| | No-Sex | 27 | 18.56 |
| Type II (Severity of Punishment) | Father | 38 | 14.84 |
| | Mother | 20 | 14.65 |
| | No-Sex | 27 | 13.22 |

(*: significant at the p<0.05 level)

hypothesis that respondents would be more sympathetic to a mother who commits infanticide than a father who commits the same crime.

In looking at the ‘no sex’ condition, there were no differences found between the ‘mother’ and ‘no sex’ conditions; however, there was a significant difference in the mean

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* The means for questions one to seven are based on a seven point scale (see Appendix Two for a description of each question). Type I and II questions contain three collapsed question each and therefore produce a ratio based on a 21 point scale – the greater the number on the 21 point scale the greater the level of attributed blame (Type I) or severity of punishment (Type II).
response to question three (Some punishment) between the ‘father’ and ‘no sex’ condition; \( t(63)=2.037, p<0.05 \). Both of these results are not surprising given the fact that, much like the QA scenario results, the majority (66.7%) of respondents felt the perpetrator was the mother in the ‘no sex’ condition.\(^{64}\)

Despite the numerous aforementioned differences there were no significant differences observed between sex conditions on the Type I and Type II questions. The only finding worth noting is the difference which approached significance between ‘mother’ and ‘not mother’ on Type I questions; \( t(83)=-1.773, p<0.05 \), a finding which again points towards the expectations outlined by the hypotheses.

**QA vs. QB Surveys**

In the rationale section above it was argued that two scenario types, (i.e. depictions of infanticide) were utilized in order to attempt to overcome potential bias regarding knowledge of certain behaviours and to ensure participants were providing their views about the act of infanticide and not a particular manner of death. In order to assess if these goal were met, analysis of the different scenarios was conducted. Table 5 displays the mean responses to each question for either scenario (all sex conditions combined).

\(^{64}\) In 16.7% of cases, the respondents felt it was the father, and the remaining 16.7% did not answer.
Table 5: Mean response to each individual and type question for both QA & QB surveys (all sex conditions combined)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Survey Type</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>( \bar{X} )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (Blame)*</td>
<td>QA</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>5.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>QB</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>6.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (Justifiable)</td>
<td>QA</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>1.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>QB</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (Prison)*</td>
<td>QA</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>5.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>QB</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (Violence)</td>
<td>QA</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>5.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>QB</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>5.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (Punishment)</td>
<td>QA</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>5.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>QB</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>5.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 (Prison Too Harsh)</td>
<td>QA</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>QB</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>3.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 (Prison Term)</td>
<td>QA</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>3.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>QB</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>2.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Type I (Blameworthiness)

| QA | 87 | 17.08 |
| QB | 85 | 18.36 |

Type II (Severity of Punishment)

| QA | 86 | 15.31 |
| QB | 85 | 14.28 |

(*: significant at the p<0.05 level)

A quick perusal of Table 5 reveals that there were indeed some apparent differences between the two surveys. In fact, five separate significant differences were found. For question one (blame) respondents completing survey QB attributed a significantly higher level of blame than respondents completing survey QA; \( t(184) = -2.214, p<0.05 \). For question three (prison as punishment), a significantly higher proportion of respondents in QB called for prison as a punishment than those in QA; \( t(171) = 2.095, p<0.05 \). As noted earlier, there was a significant difference between respondents’ views about the level of violence (question four) in either scenario; \( t(170) = -2.273, p<0.05 \). Finally, for question seven (prison term), the respondents completing survey QA indicated a desire for a significantly longer prison term than those who completed survey QB; \( t(169) = 3.411, p<0.05 \). This result is surprising, given that prima
facie it appears respondents in QB have a more punitive attitude towards the perpetrator in the scenario, yet they did not indicate an average length of sentence which was greater than that indicated in QA; in fact, respondents completing survey QB indicated a shorter prison sentence, on average.

In looking at Type I and Type II questions a significant difference was found for Type I (Blameworthiness) questions between the two survey types; \( t(170) = -2.773, p<0.05 \). This finding indicates that respondents completing survey QB held the perpetrator significantly more blameworthy than those respondents who completed survey QA. Although the difference between the means of Type II questions (severity of punishment) for surveys QA and QB differ according to expectations, the difference merely approached significance; \( t(169) = 1.371, p<0.05 \).55

**Qualitative Results**

The surveys allowed the respondent to elaborate after each Likert-scale style question in an open-ended format in order to capture some of the moralistic elements of the decision-making process. Furthermore, researchers have indicated one gains a much richer response when making use of both quantitative and qualitative techniques in gathering data (Hakim, 2000; Richards, 2005). Therefore, in this section results gleaned from the qualitative aspect of the research will be explored.

In analyzing these results it is important to remember that a specific coding scheme was created and utilized during the coding process. Coding allows for effective analysis of the data and a manner by which trends and supplemental support for

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55 See Appendix Six for sex specific significant differences between surveys QA and QB.
quantitative data can arise (Richards, 2005; Palys, 2003). Appendix Four displays the codes which were created (based on interpretation of the elaborated responses from the respondents) and used in analyzing the qualitative data; as well, Appendix Seven provides examples of the type of response that each particular code applies to.

Another important point to keep in mind around the issue of the qualitative aspect of the research is that the respondents were able to ‘skip’ the elaboration response. While the quantitative aspect required a response from the respondent before they could advance in the survey, there was no such stipulation for the supplemental/elaborative element of the questions. Therefore, for a number of the survey questions, regardless of type or sex condition, the majority of the responses were coded ‘998’, or ‘no response’. However, this aspect of the data does not render the qualitative element useless, as there were still a great number of instances where respondents did indeed complete the elaborative portion of the question(s), providing for a much richer and elaborative response than the quantitative data alone.

QA Results

General Observations

Across all of the sex conditions for survey QA, one of the most common responses was ‘more information required’ (code ‘911’). Due to the nature of the scenario descriptions, this was not a surprising result. What was surprising was the fact that this response was almost always followed by a discussion of what the respondent felt was the reason for the infanticide or what the appropriate response to the incident should be. The following is a very typical response seen throughout the data:
The baby was innocent regardless of what the mother was going through or her actions cannot be justified. BUT what if she was raped and that's where the baby resulted from or something? Hard to say whether or not the mother's actions could be somewhat justified. Never could they be fully, but to an extent it's possible...If she had a mental disorder, maybe she believed she 'had' to kill the baby or something.66

Based on this sort of response, and the numerous responses which are similar, it appears respondents are implicitly recognizing that their own biases may be guiding their response prior to indicating their thoughts. In other words, based on these types of responses it can be reasonably assumed that the scenario depiction was sufficient to 'tap' into the aforementioned psychological mechanism surrounding this type of action and the moralistic decision making process which engages as a result. Furthermore, this type of response provides greater justification for the inclusion of a qualitative aspect to the data collection process.

Question one, for all sex conditions, produced the highest response completion rate for all of the supplemental/elaborative questions. This is an interesting result as the first question is directly related to the moral indignation that respondents feel regarding the perpetrator blameworthiness in the scenario. Across the sex conditions the most popular response (other than 'no-response' or 'more information required') was a depiction falling into the category of 'perpetrator knowingly acted/made a choice'.67 Therefore, across the sex conditions for survey QA there was a sense that the blameworthiness for this act was high. This was similar to the results from question two as well, which addressed respondents' views on the justification of the act.

66 This response was coded as '1' (child is helpless/innocent victim), '3' (however—implies justification), '911' (more information required), and '912' (mental health issues/requires counselling).
67 See Appendices Four and Seven for detailed description of the codes and categories used in analyzing the qualitative data.
This result is also not surprising as one would expect most people to be morally outraged to some extent at the knowledge of an infanticide. Looking back to the hypotheses guiding the present research, one sees that this is expected, but this is only the first aspect of the issue that this thesis addresses. The next section differentiates the amount of outrage based on the sex of the perpetrator. In addition, another general observation about this aspect of the elaborative responses is that much like the ‘not enough information’ response, the typical response to questions one and two (i.e. ‘perpetrator knowingly acted/made a choice’) was often accompanied by further explanation which almost nullifies the ‘choice’ aspect of the respondents’ reply. In other words, while respondents seemed very quick to impart a high degree of blame and responsibility towards the perpetrator, this blame was curiously often accompanied by some sort of justification for the perpetrator’s actions (this difference was especially evident in the ‘mother’ sex conditions, explored below). To illustrate, the following response is typical of the point being made here:

[She may be depressed and not coping. A baby is a lot of responsibility. There are other ways to deal with it other than killing the baby though. . .]

One final general observation of the elaborative responses to the surveys in the QA condition was that across all sex conditions respondents were indicating the likelihood of the perpetrator suffering from mental health deficiencies. While the frequency of this explanation differed amongst the different sex conditions (see next section), it appeared frequently enough throughout the analysis to indicate that most respondents felt the murdering of one’s sleeping infant to be an indication of major psychological problems on the part of the perpetrator. The following is a typical response illustrating this point:
Sex Specific Observations

Predictably, there were a number of differences in the narratives provided by respondents who completed the different sex conditions. One of the most obvious differences when analyzing the data is the differing levels of elaboration respondents engaged in between the sex conditions. Overall, the frequency of elaborative responses differed drastically between the sex conditions; in summing the number of supplemental responses, the differences are striking (see Figure Three).

As Figure Three demonstrates, the majority of the elaborative responses originated from the 'mother' sex condition of the surveys. In addition to this discrepancy, one can look at another aspect of the qualitative data which draws attention to the difference in elaboration levels between the sex conditions.
In coding the supplemental responses the code ‘997’ was used to indicate when a respondent’s narrative of elaboration included a number of points which required more than one code to be used. In other words, ‘997’ is an indication of a more elaborate, detailed response. The following quote is an example of just such a response,

"We don’t know the mother’s motivation for the killing, and that does make a difference to me. She may have been suffering from a psychosis, or the baby may have been suffering horribly from a serious disease or other condition that distressed the mother beyond her limits.

This response was coded as ‘911’ (needs more information), ‘912’ (mental health issues), and ‘4’ (child was ill/suffering). Contrast this response with the following typical supplemental response for the ‘father’ sex condition for survey QA.

He took it upon himself to kill his child while it slept. He is 100% responsible for these actions.

In addition to these elaborative differences, the differences in the number of ‘997’ codes between the sex conditions are telling (see Figure Four).

![Proportion of Multiple Code Responses for All Questions](image)

Figure Four. Proportion of multiple code responses for all questions (QA Survey)
Examination of Figure Four reveals quite clearly that the ‘mother’ sex condition of the survey resulted in a more elaborate supplemental response than the other sex conditions; in fact, the ‘father’ condition generated less than an eighth of the total ‘997’ codes for the entire QA survey.

Taking these two disparities together, one can reasonably conclude that the respondents in the different sex conditions were composing much longer, detailed, and more elaborate supplemental responses in the ‘mother’ and ‘no sex’ conditions.\(^{68}\)

As outlined in the general observation section, respondents across the sex conditions indicated a high likelihood of mental health deficiencies (code ‘912’) on the part of the perpetrator in the scenario. Although this tendency was found across all the sex conditions, there was a difference in the frequency of this indication based on the sex of the perpetrator. The ‘father’ and ‘no sex’ conditions resulted in similar proportions of respondents indicating psychological health issues (QA-F=10.7%; QA-NS=10.4%). However, the ‘mother’ condition resulted in a much higher percentage of responses indicating mental health issues by the participants (QA-M=16.4%). Given this difference, it is reasonable to conclude that the respondents in the ‘mother’ sex condition felt that mental health deficiencies (broadly defined) played a significant part in the reasons for the infanticide. Furthermore, when the other psychologically based codes are combined with the broad ‘912’ code, this difference becomes even more pronounced.

The two other mental health codes used in analyzing the data were ‘19’, which was used when a respondent mentioned the possibility of post-partum depression, and ‘915’.

\(^{68}\) As indicated in the quantitative results section the majority (71.43%) of respondents felt the ‘no sex’ perpetrator to be the mother; therefore, this disparity in total ‘997’ codes (i.e., more elaborate responses) is even greater. In other words, in looking at the ‘father’ and ‘not father’ conditions it becomes apparent that respondents provided a more detailed and elaborate narrative of excuse for the ‘not father’ condition (which is both explicitly and implicitly the infanticidal mother).
was used when a respondent indicated the need for more information on post-partum depression specifically. In looking at the ratios for these data it becomes obvious that there is a substantive difference between the ‘father’ and ‘mother’ sex conditions. In the ‘father’ condition, mental health deficiencies are referred to in 10.7% of all supplemental responses, 12.3% in the ‘no sex’ condition, and 20.7% in the ‘mother’ condition. These differences could initially be explained away simply by the fact that respondents would not indicate the possibility of PPD (post-partum depression) for the ‘father’ condition because of its exclusivity to women. However, what this difference does indicate is that respondents are providing a more elaborate narrative of excuse (making use of the assumption of a psychological imbalance) for female perpetrators of infanticide than for their male counterparts. This result is consistent with the hypotheses guiding the research.

Another sex-specific difference, which relates to the idea of a more elaborate narrative of excuse for female perpetrators, is the disparity between the conditions in the number of non-responses to the supplemental questions. For all supplemental questions, the ‘father’ condition produced 45.9% non-response, the ‘no sex’ condition saw a non-response proportion of 30.2%, while the ‘mother’ condition generated a mere 23.3% non-response proportion. A reasonable assumption based on this data is that respondents are less likely to explain away, elaborate, or justify their initially punitive response to a father who commits infanticide. In other words, much as the hypotheses predict, respondents seem much more willing to provide a narrative of explanation, excuse, or justification for an infanticidal mother.

69 In essence, ‘915’ is a combination of ‘19’ (PPD) and ‘911’ (need more information).
During the quantitative analysis it was determined that there was no significant difference between the sex conditions in the length of prison term (question 7; \( \bar{X}_{QAM} = 3.76; \bar{X}_{QAM} = 3.00; \bar{X}_{QAM} = 3.44 \)) but an interesting difference emerged from analysis of the supplemental questions of the three sex conditions relating to the use of imprisonment as a sanction. Codes ‘10’ (no purpose to jail; current punishment scheme is not appropriate) and ‘20’ (need some form of punishment, but not prison) reveal respondents’ views as the appropriateness of the use of prison for the different sex conditions. The difference between the three sex conditions is rather striking in this regard; this difference is displayed in Figure Five.

Figure Five. Ratio of response indicating hesitancy to impose imprisonment (QA Survey).
In looking at Figure Five, one can see immediately that the majority of respondents who made use of supplemental responses coded '10' and/or '20' (indicating a hesitancy to impose imprisonment as a sanction) did so in the 'mother' condition. Furthermore, it should be obvious that there was a complete lack of this type of supplemental response for the 'father' condition. Therefore, respondents felt that imprisonment, a severe sanction, was not appropriate or was not required for the cases that involved a female ('mother') assailant in the infanticide case. In addition, one can then reasonably assume that the respondents felt the use of imprisonment in the case of a male ('father') assailant to be appropriate. In other words, respondents felt a greater amount of moral indignation and outrage towards an infanticidal father than an infanticidal mother (in terms of severity of punishment).

This increased amount of moral indignation is exemplified when analyzing the preponderance of another code used to gauge the severity of punishment desired by respondents, code '9'. Code '9' was used in those instances where the respondent called for either the death penalty or life imprisonment. The following quotes (both from responses to the 'father' condition) illustrate this type of sentiment,

[I]t is unbelievable, what a father can do to his child, that is brutal, he should be sentenced to death.

... I will recommend more than 20 years...

In addition to these quotes, looking at the difference in proportion of use of supplemental responses which were eventually coded as code '9' demonstrates this differentiated moral indignation further. Figure Six displays this differentiation.

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70 Figure Five shows the preponderance of supplemental responses which were coded with either code '10' or code '20' for all of the questions on the respective ('father', 'mother', 'no-sex') survey conditions. The ratios for Type II questions (dealing specifically with severity of punishment) were similar.
One can see from Figure Six that when respondents desired to make use of capital punishment or life imprisonment as a sanctioned response to the infanticide, they were much more willing to do so when the perpetrator was a male ('father') than when the perpetrator was a female ('mother'). Furthermore, this willingness is even further exemplified when one looks at the 'father' versus 'not-father' conditions; a difference of 53% to 47%, respectively. Clearly, respondents are composing narratives of excuse in accordance with the expectations outlined in the aforementioned hypotheses.

A final aspect of the qualitative data from survey QA worth examining relates to the questions which were geared towards assessing respondents' views as to the causality of the act (Type III questions). There were a number of differences among the three sex conditions but the two codes which will be discussed here are code '4' (child was ill or...
handicapped) and code ‘33’ (parent lacks resources). Table 6 shows the difference in response ratios for these types of supplemental responses.

Table 6: Sex condition differentiated response ratio of supplemental responses indicating causality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex Condition</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Ratios (Type III Q’s Only)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No-Sex</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No-Sex</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 shows that for those responses which indicated that the child was killed because of some illness or physical handicap for Type III questions (causal questions) the majority were mentioned in the ‘father’ sex condition scenario; while none of the respondents who were exposed to the ‘mother’ sex condition indicated this type of causal reason for the infanticide. This is an interesting result as it relates to the aforementioned difference between men and women and their genetic interests. Recall that a male will typically commit infanticide because of a concern (unconscious, genetic level) that the child is of unrelated genetic origin (Daly & Wilson, 1988). In other words, the infanticidal male is acting out of genetic self-interest. Respondents in this project may be recognizing this when they indicate that the father is killing the child because the child is ‘ill or physically handicapped’.

Concordantly, there is a difference in the use of supplemental responses indicating that the infanticide was conducted because of a lack of parental resources (e.g. money, support, coping skills, etc.) between the ‘father’ and ‘mother’ conditions. While respondents exposed to the ‘mother’ and ‘no-sex’ conditions made use of supplemental responses indicating such a condition, none of the respondents in the ‘father’ condition
felt that these sorts of variables were an aspect of the explanatory forces behind the infanticide. This result also relates to the aforementioned evolutionary psychology discussion in that there seems to be recognition by respondents of the sort of socio-economic (i.e. environmental) conditions that can lead a mother to commit an infanticide. Furthermore, in recognizing these sorts of conditions there is an implicit expression of excuse that is absent in the supplemental responses explaining the male-perpetrated infanticide - a result very much consistent with the hypotheses of the project.

**QB Results**

*General Observations*\textsuperscript{72}

Much as in the QA version surveys, there were some general patterns which emerged in analyzing the supplemental responses. Across all of the sex conditions for survey version QB there was an implication of a high degree of responsibility on the part of the perpetrator, as exemplified by the common usage of responses requiring code '2' ('perpetrator knowingly acted/responsible for actions'). This is by no means a surprising result, given the depiction of the infanticide. What is somewhat surprising is that much like the QA versions of the survey, there was also a high instance of explanatory narratives of excuse for the infanticide. These narratives are exemplified by the next most commonly used code, '997', which is an indication of a supplemental response that is elaborative enough to require multiple codes (see Appendix Seven). The combination of these findings is intriguing as it seems that while respondents are seeing version QB as

\textsuperscript{72} It is important to recall here that much like version QA surveys, the most common response for the QB version surveys was '998' or 'no response'; see Appendix Five for specific data on the ratio of non-response for each question.
a more violent manner of death they are still somewhat understanding of the parent’s behaviour(s).

Related to this understanding is the recognition of the possibility of a mental deficiency (again, very broadly defined) by the respondents on the part of the perpetrator. While not approaching the type of frequency of use that code ‘2’ (‘perpetrator knowingly acted/responsible for actions’) evidenced, there was a high instance of an assumption of mental illness of some kind across all of the sex conditions in the QB surveys. The following quote, from a respondent who completed the ‘father’ condition of the QB version of the survey, exemplifies this common trend:

*There is no excuse except for possibly mental illness for injuring a baby.*

Therefore, much like the QA surveys, respondents are cognizant that a mental deficiency is a valid explanatory and excusatory variable in cases of infanticide.

Another interesting trend which emerged across all three of the sex conditions for survey type QB was the feeling that prison as a sanction was an inappropriate reaction to this type of crime. In looking at the collection of Type II questions, which dealt with the severity of punishment, there appears a number of instances of responses which were coded as ‘10’ (‘no purpose to jail/current punishment scheme inappropriate’). This is an intriguing finding given the high level of violence that respondents held was described in the infanticide depiction; however, given the attribution of mental deficiency that many respondents engaged in, this becomes less surprising as respondents are indicating that prison is not the best place in which to deal with such mental health issues.
Sex-Specific Observations

While there was recognition of mental health stressors across all of the sex conditions, the frequency of this recognition varied considerably depending on the sex of the perpetrator. Much like the QA versions of the survey, respondents completing the QB surveys attributed the mother’s behaviour to a mental health issue far more frequently than in the ‘father’ condition. Again, this type of response lends itself to an interpretation that respondents feel the mother’s actions may be more readily explained away than the father’s actions, a sentiment in line with the expectations outlined in the hypotheses.

Related to, and further supporting this interpretation is the sheer frequency of supplemental responses which respondents provided across the different sex conditions. When analyzing the different proportions of responses requiring a code ‘997’, indicating a more in-depth response, a trend similar to the QA survey data becomes apparent.

Figure Seven displays this trend.

![Figure Seven](image-url)
Immediately one can see that the majority of responses which contained a more in-depth explanation or justification originated from the 'mother' sex condition of the QB surveys.

In analyzing the differences between the sex conditions in terms of the responses to Type I questions (blameworthiness), other trends in line with the aforementioned hypotheses were revealed as well. For instance, while Figure Seven displays the difference between the sex conditions in terms of the multiple code responses, the difference in this regard in terms of the Type I questions is even more pronounced. Figure Eight displays this marked difference.

Figure Eight. Proportion of multiple code responses for Type I questions (QB Surveys)

Clearly, respondents were providing a more elaborate supplemental response when confronted with the ‘mother’ scenario and responding to Type I questions. This is an important point to note since Type I questions were designed to elicit responses regarding the respondents’ views of blameworthiness. Therefore, one can conclude given this marked discrepancy among the different sex conditions that respondents feel more
inclined to provide an explanatory or justified supplemental response for a female perpetrator than a male perpetrator of infanticide. Again, this finding provides even more support for the hypotheses underlying the study.

In continuing with Type I questions, an interesting finding emerges, in terms of respondents' views about the level of violence used by the perpetrator. Recall that respondents generally viewed the infanticide depicted in surveys QB as significantly more 'violent' than the infanticide depicted in surveys QA. However, in analyzing the specific assessment of violence level between the sex conditions within QB it was discovered that respondents viewed the action by a father to be significantly more violent than the exact same action by a mother. In fact, respondents felt that the actions of the father were considerably violent in nature over twice as often as respondents who were exposed to the 'mother' sex condition. This finding is interesting as it speaks to the perceptions that respondents have in terms of the level of blame that they are willing to attribute to a father as opposed to a mother.

Related to this perception of blame attribution are the perceived stressors which could lead to such an event as an infanticide. While this concept is an aspect of Type III questions (causal questions), there was an interesting discrepancy which arose in analyzing the sex differences in responses to Type I questions. Specifically, these differences were exemplified in respondents' use of supplemental responses which indicated that the parent lacked resources of some kind, which led to the infanticide. In terms of this usage, respondents were more willing to indicate that the infanticide resulted because of such a lack of resources for the 'mother' sex condition than for the 'father' sex condition.

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53 Code number '33' was used in these instances and referred to a lack of resources such as money, social support, adequate coping skills, parenting education, etc.
condition (for Type I questions specifically). In fact, those respondents exposed to the ‘mother’ sex condition made use of such supplemental responses over twice as often as those who completed the ‘father’ sex condition survey. Again, there seems a reluctance to allow for the same indices of justification for an infanticidal father that respondents are allowing for an infanticidal mother.

In looking specifically at Type II questions a number of differences arose between the sex conditions; the most noteworthy, however, relates to the use of supplemental responses indicating the necessity of a harsh punishment scheme. Again, it should be noted that respondents were punitive in their responses overall; however, there was a difference in the incidence of responses which were coded as ‘21’, which referred to a response that indicated a desire to have the perpetrator punished to the full extent of the law. Predictably, those respondents who completed the ‘father’ condition of the survey made use of such responses more frequently than those who completed the ‘mother’ condition (13.8% and 9.6% of all supplemental responses, respectively). The following quotations demonstrate this difference in sentiment; the first is from the ‘father’ sex condition, while the second is from the ‘mother’ sex condition:

He took a persons life. Just because that person was a baby doesn’t change that. It should be treated as if he killed an adult.

I’m sure the punishment of having to live with herself is going to be far worse than anything our society could do. It [suicide] wouldn’t solve anything either- no deterrence, rehab, or any reason to imprison. I would make her go to counselling for a very long time though as she will need a lot of help to get through this.

In addition to the differences in willingness (or hesitancy) to impose a sanction such a prison the differences in the willingness to attribute the parent’s actions as resulting from mental illness was evident in analyzing Type II questions as well. While it has been noted for other question types numeros times, the differences between the sex
conditions for Type II questions on the QB surveys were considerable; Figure Nine displays these differences.

![Figure Nine. Proportion of supplemental responses indicating mental deficiencies on the part of the perpetrator for Type II questions (QB Surveys)](image)

Once again, it is exceedingly evident that respondents are attributing a mental deficiency of some sort to an infanticidal mother much more readily than when learning of the news of an infanticidal father, despite the fact that the actions depicted are exactly the same. This further supports the hypothesis of a sex-biased differential reaction to this type of crime which differentially impacts upon the readiness of an individual to impose a severe punishment, based on the sex of the perpetrator.

In considering the causes of the type of infanticide depicted in the QB surveys the respondents in this study differentiated based on sex as well. Specifically, in responding to Type III (causal) questions respondents were more willing to attribute the infanticide
to an inability to control feelings of anger and frustration when confronted with the ‘father’ sex condition than with the ‘mother’ condition. This difference was considerable and is readily evident in Figure Ten.

![Figure Ten. Proportion of supplemental responses indicating uncontrollable anger/frustration for Type III questions (QB Surveys)](image)

Once again, despite being provided with exactly the same behavioural descriptions, respondents exposed to the ‘father’ sex condition are assigning a much more aggressively undermined behavioural aetiology than those respondents in the ‘mother’ condition. It is not unreasonable to then conclude from this discrepancy that the respondents also hold the more aggressive behaviour on the part of the father as more morally reprehensible than the mother’s actions; once again confirming the predictions of the aforementioned hypotheses.

66
A final variable which is noteworthy in terms of the aetiology of the infanticidal behaviour of both the father and mother in the QB surveys is the mention of a lack of resources. As already noted, respondents in all sex conditions were willing to acknowledge that a lack of resources (money, social support, coping skills, etc.), however, the typical description indicating the specific type of resource the respondent felt was crucial in bringing about the infanticide differed between the sex conditions.

The following quotes from the ‘father’ sex condition typify what the majority of respondents indicated in terms of causal stressors for the infanticidal father:

- because the father was frustrated and didn’t know how to handle the baby and had lack of knowledge on how to handle a crying baby.
- frustration/rage/anger difficulty with coping mechanisms for his anger, lack of knowledge/preparedness for parenting

Compare these sentiments with the ones exhibited in the following responses taken from the ‘mother’ sex condition:

- sleep deprivation, frustration, [sic] poor support system, low parenting skills, isolation, other life stresses money as we get so little on maternity leave.

- [she did it because of] frustration, perhaps lack of family support or [because] she had no help from her partner

It appears then, that while respondents are aware of causal stressors that can lead to this type of infanticide, the stressors are differentiated based on the sex of the perpetrator as well. In other words, for the ‘father’ sex condition respondents provided casual stressors which related to issues of education or a lack of parenting skills, while for the ‘mother’ sex condition respondents tended to indicate a lack of resources such as money or social support. This lends support to the ideas surrounding the knowledge of the different
stressors (adaptive problems) which may have been present for men and women over evolutionary times that brought about the ‘need’ for infanticide.
Chapter Four

Discussion

The inquiry was centered on two main investigations. First, an in-depth historical analysis of the evolution of legal policies dealing with infanticide and second, a survey-based exploration of respondents' views about sexually differentiated infanticide perpetrators. The historical analysis resulted in the emergence of a curious trend wherein justices, legal administrators, jurors, and the public have displayed a leniency for infanticidal mothers, virtually nonexistent for infanticidal fathers. This maternal leniency was typically present for this specific behaviour, despite a more generalized increase in punitive attitudes towards female criminality over the same time period (Brantingham & Brantingham, 1984). Exploration of the data in this study demonstrated that respondents tend to attach higher levels of moral outrage, call for harsher penalties, and provide a reduced set of explanatory narratives of excuse for male perpetrators of infanticide than for female perpetrators. These analyses provide sound support for the hypotheses guiding the current investigation.

Hypothesis-Specific Empirical Support

Through revisiting each hypothesis and its corresponding supportive data, we can illustrate the above assertion further. For instance, hypothesis one holds that humans possess a hardwired (i.e. unconscious) knowledge of the type of environmental pressure or conditions which influence the mechanisms underlying male versus female-perpetrated
infanticide. During the theoretical discussion it was mentioned that these mechanisms center around the certainty a parent has in his or her genetic relatedness to an offspring. The phrase ‘paternity certainty’ is used throughout the literature in evolutionary psychology and is a well established concept theorized to be the source of numerous types of behaviours exhibited in both males and females (Buss, 2005; Daly & Wilson, 1988; Hrdy, 1999). In terms of infanticide it holds that throughout our ancestral history males committed infanticide when there was a doubt to the genetic relatedness of the offspring, as over evolutionary time there was a very strong selective pressure against being cuckolded (in other words, raising another man’s genetic progeny) (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Hrdy, 1999). This assertion has received strong support in the literature (see Buss, 1999; Buss, 2005; Daly & Wilson, 1988; Hrdy, 1977; Hrdy, 1999; Mealey, 2000; Thornhill & Palmer, 2000; and van Schaik, 2000) and is supplemented by other, no less impressive, research supporting the assertions surrounding female infanticide (Hrdy, 1977 & 1999, in particular). This research has indicated that over evolutionary time there were very strong selective pressures for mothers to be discriminatory in their allocation of precious resources and to impart those resources only when there is a strong possibility that the offspring will reach reproductive age74 (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Hrdy, 1977; Hrdy, 1999).

74 Recall that one’s reproductive success is measured by the production of offspring who survive to reproductive age and who in turn reproduce as well (Buss, 1998).
Therefore, we see a differentiation between the underlying mechanisms that led to an increased probability\(^7\) of an infanticide occurring when a parent is faced with certain environmental conditions. The condition for an infanticidal father is internal in nature (doubt as to the genetic relatedness) while the conditions for an infanticidal mother are external in nature (the lack of certain environmental circumstances). The question generated by hypothesis one is, do we see this differentiation acknowledged in the results obtained in the study? Given the results obtained from the survey study and the historical analysis, this question can be answered in the affirmative. Specifically, there is evidence of a long history of differential treatment by numerous justice systems, all of which were organized and manned by differently minded individuals, which exemplified this sexually biased differentiation, specific to the act of infanticide. Furthermore, looking at the survey-generated data we see numerous examples of this differentiation; for instance, referring back to Table 6 one can see that survey QA respondents felt that a father was more likely to commit an infanticide because of genetic self interest (an aspect of paternity uncertainty); whereas, respondents felt a mother was more likely to commit an infanticide because of a lack of resources (an aspect of the environmental pressures which impact on the probability of a child reaching reproductive age). These results provide strong support for hypothesis one.

Looking at hypothesis two, which logically flows from hypothesis one, we see that there is a prediction of a sexually differentiated reaction to the knowledge of

\(^7\) The word ‘probability’ is used here as yet another explicit recognition that these conditions do not always bring about an infanticide, nor have they in our evolutionary past. However, adaptations which exist in the human body be they physiological, anatomical, or behavioral (i.e. as a result of the formation of the brain), are present because they helped to increase, on average, the survival and reproduction of those in our evolutionary past (Buss, 2005). Committing infanticide when faced with these conditions is one such adaptation which has been selected for over evolutionary time.
infanticide. Both the historical analysis and the survey data provide strong support for this prediction. There is clear evidence throughout the evolution of the legal policies surrounding infanticide that the differentiation is sexually based. As mentioned, it is legally impossible for a male to commit the crime of infanticide in most western jurisdictions (Ward, 2002). Furthermore, much of the anthropological (cross-cultural) data supports this assertion of a sexually biased reaction to infanticide (Hrdy, 1977; Williamson, 1978). Therefore, there is a clear evidence in support of the argument that there is an explicit sexually differentiated reaction to infanticide evident in the literature. Looking at the survey-generated data we see there evidence which supports this sexually differentiated reaction. Even the briefest of glances at the extensive results section would lead one to this conclusion. A poignant example seen in the results is displayed in the analysis of QB surveys, which involved a parent ‘shaking’ a baby to death. Regardless of the sex of parent that respondents were exposed to, there was a morally outraged response; by no means did any respondent say that the parent, mother or father, was engaging in socially approved behaviour. However, what became obvious in analyzing the data was the manner by which respondents seemed to perceive the act based on the sex of the parent. Fathers were viewed as far more violent than mothers, despite the fact that the act was described in exactly the same manner. This is just one example of the many which arose during the examination process of the survey data, all of which point to supporting the prediction as outlined in hypothesis two.

In regards to hypothesis three, which also logically flows from the first two hypotheses, we see the prediction that because of the inherent awareness of the circumstances which precipitate infanticide and the differentiated reaction which results
there will be a greater amount of moral outrage towards a father who commits infanticide than to an infanticidal mother. As mentioned, this leads to another parallel prediction stating that a mother’s infanticidal behaviour will be more readily explained, excused, understood, and/or justified than the same actions of a father. These concordant predictions are readily supported by both the historical literature and the survey-generated data.

In looking at the historical analysis one sees that, given the pervasive existence of legal policies which sexually differentiate the sanctions imposed upon perpetrators of infanticide, it is difficult to argue that there is not historical and cross-cultural evidence supporting a species-wide sex-biased leniency towards this behaviour. Given the that a father will be charged with murder (up to life in prison) while a mother will be charged with infanticide (up to three years in most jurisdictions) for the same actions is telling in this regard. Furthermore, when one considers the survey-generated data one is struck once again by this apparent willingness to impart leniency in a sexually differentiated manner. This was shown time and time again throughout the empirical analysis: respondents consistently called for more severe punishments or sanctions for infanticidal fathers, held fathers to a higher degree of blame than mothers, provided a greater amount of and more detailed narratives of excuse for mothers than fathers, more readily attributed a mental health deficiency on the part of the mother, prescribed a sanction other than prison more often for mothers, attributed a higher level of violent action to a father’s behaviour, and allowed for the consideration of external factors (beyond the control of the perpetrator) for mothers more often than for fathers. The predictions generated from
hypothesis three were resoundingly supported by both the historical analysis and the empirical investigation of the current study.

**Hypothesis-Specific Plausible Alternative Explanations**

The social scientist who does not allow for the possibility of alternative explanations for the observed phenomena that he or she is purporting to explain is unwise at best, too blinkered by one paradigm at worst. Thus, in this section I will outline some of the anticipated retorts that my explanations are likely to generate. The basis of these alternative explanations will come from what evolutionary psychologists have referred to as the ‘standard social science model’ or SSSM (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Thornhill & Palmer, 2000). The SSSM is the traditional manner by which social phenomena are analyzed in the fields of criminology, sociology, and until recently psychology (Thornhill & Palmer, 2000; Zimmer, 1998). Briefly, the SSSM holds that there are two, dichotomous manners by which behaviour arises, ‘nature’ or ‘nurture’; the primary difference between these two well-known concepts being that the SSSM holds all aspects of ‘nature’ as deterministic (Tooby & Cosmides, 1992; Zimmer, 1998). Examples of those types of behaviour include certain reflexes and facial expressions which are expressed independently of the culture or socialization process of which an individual is the product (Tooby & Cosmides, 1992; Zimmer, 1998). The remaining constellation of behaviours exhibited by humans is therefore dependent upon ‘nurture’ and the processes of learning one’s culture via socialization (Curran & Renzetti, 2001). This model of behaviour has served as the template from which critiques of evolutionary theory have been derived and therefore it is the most appropriately anticipated herein as well.
Given the outline of the SSSM, we can see that there would be an immediate issue with hypothesis one’s assertion of a ‘hardwired’ knowledge of environmental conditions that influence the occurrence of infanticide. Those subscribing to the SSSM would hold that the different conditions that influence male versus female-perpetrated infanticide could be learned during one’s exposure to such environments and becoming aware of the causal relationship which exists between the environment and the behaviour. So, according to the SSSM, the sexually differentiated expressions presented by the respondents in the current study could be explained away as simply a representation of shared experiences.

There are two retorts to this assertion of shared experiences. First, given the considerable anthropological research indicating a cross-cultural incidence of these phenomena, one is hard-pressed to argue that everyone expressing knowledge of a sexually differentiated infanticide etiology has shared similar experiences in order to gain this knowledge (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Hrdy, 1977; Williamson, 1978). Second, in order to learn what conditions are required in order to precipitate or initiate an infanticidal reaction in a parent an individual (or the persons engaged in socializing that individual) would have to be exposed to or themselves learn about these conditions and ensure that this knowledge is then passed on. It is reasonable to assume that the process is too convoluted and that it is unlikely that the majority of respondents were privy to such a learning process despite the majority’s expressing recognition of such conditions. We are left then, without a plausible explanation, based on the SSSM and must look elsewhere in order to explain the results obtained in the historical analysis, the
anthropological data, and the survey-generated data. Evolutionary psychology provides just such an explanation.

**Hypothesis Two – Plausible Alternative Explanation**

Recall that this hypothesis predicts there will be a differentiated reaction to infanticide based on the sex of the perpetrator, and this was seen in both the results and the survey-generated data. The SSSM would hold it is likely that the differential reaction seen is not necessarily specific to infanticide but is in fact an expression of the different manners in which males and females are socialized in a society. Looking at feminist thought, which is strongly based in the SSSM, one could anticipate just such a proposed explanation to the observed results herein. For example, many feminists would point towards our sexually oppressive male dominated society and propose that the respondents in the study are differentiating their reactions because they have been socialized to believe that women are, in relative terms, incapable of violent actions (Boyd, 2004; Curran & Renzetti, 2001). Furthermore, because our society’s socialization process involves a typical conceptualization of how a ‘proper’ mother ought to behave, the respondents are differentiating their assessment of the scenarios accordingly (Curran & Renzetti, 2001). The essence of this explanation relates to the idea that the differentiation is based on the process of socialization experienced by the respondents rather than any hardwired knowledge about the different reasons mothers and fathers commit infanticide.

The socialization critique is indeed a valid explanation and carries with it excellent explanatory power; it would be foolish to attempt to dismiss the impact that one’s social environment plays on the perceptions of human behaviour. However, the SSSM/feminist explanation is proximal in nature and therefore fails in answering why
certain cultures socialize their inhabitants in a particular manner. Evolutionary theory is beneficial in this regard, as it is able to provide the ultimate explanation in order to elucidate the reasons that certain behaviours are expressed in the human condition (Quinsey, 2002). Therefore, evolutionary psychology makes use of both the proximate explanations and the ultimate explanations of human behaviour to provide a more accurate explanatory picture.

Hypothesis Three – Plausible Alternative Explanation

Hypothesis three, the culmination of the prior two hypotheses, predicts that when one learns of an infanticide one will base his/her level of moral indignation on the sex of the perpetrator; a sentiment that was discovered in both the historical analysis and the survey-generated data (particularly in the qualitative aspect of the responses). An explanation based on the SSSM would hold that this decreased amount of moral outrage could simply be an aspect of the decreased amount of outrage towards female criminality in general and not specific to infanticide. One could look at the difference between male and female involvement in crime overall and contend that the sexually differentiated reaction to infanticide is a result of the infrequency with which people are faced with female criminality in general and are reacting accordingly (Boyd, 2000; Curran & Renzetti, 2001). In other words, because of its infrequency compared to males, female criminality (including infanticidal behaviour) is not considered as morally reprehensible as male criminal behaviour (or more pathological rather than normal).

Once again, while that explanation does carry some weight it is incongruent with what one sees in the historical data. As mentioned, the historical analysis resulted in the discovery of a trend which was specific to infanticide – a leniency towards mothers
which was not extended to fathers and which was quite independent from legal and social sentiment towards female criminality in general. In analyzing the cases of female executions in the United States, author L. Kay Gillespie (2000) notes that “death sentences for infanticide were virtually unknown” (129), despite a consistent use of the death penalty for female involvement in other crimes (Gillespie, 2000). Looking at the survey-generated data however, one can argue that this particular critique is likely the strongest plausible alternative explanation as there was no control group which was exposed to different crimes (this shortcoming is discussed below). Nevertheless, one can look at the current sentiments in the criminal justice system regarding female criminality and the moral outrage at the evident increase of female involvement in crime (and a corresponding substantial increase in female prison populations of both Canada and the USA) and conclude that it is quite unlikely that there exists a pervasive tendency towards leniency for female offenders (Curran & Renzetti, 2001; Reichel, 2001; Reiman, 2004).

Therefore, we are left with an inadequate explanation for leniency that is evident both historically and in the survey-generated data.

*Evolutionary Psychology & Why We Sexually Differentiate our Reactions to Infanticide*

It is by no means a stroke of genius to claim that an individual’s survival and reproduction depends upon the existence of other human beings. However, a less immediately acknowledged fact is that the manner by which group dynamics play out significantly impacts upon each individual’s fitness within a group, and that has been the case throughout our evolutionary history (Krebs, 2005). As well, it is often recognized that the main threat to an individual’s fitness (survival and reproduction) over
evolutionary time was another individual (Buss, 2005; Daly & Wilson, 1988). Therefore, over vast spans of our evolutionary history humans have had a dual process of heavy reliance upon and a simultaneous aversion to other human beings. Issues such as stigmatization, racism, and xenophobia have been well examined with an evolutionary lens and results show that the emotional reactions we see in humans, vis-à-vis other humans, belie a self-interest in terms of fitness (Kurzban & Neuberg, 2005; Schaller, 2006). Those types of reactions then, are the manifestations of psychological adaptations which have been selected for over evolutionary time by natural selection. Crawford (2004) refers to this notion by terming emotion as a ‘fitness calculator.’ In other words, emotions have evolved over evolutionary time in order to guide human decision making to maximize one’s fitness. That conceptualization is crucial to the hypotheses guiding this study and the theoretical explanation of the results. Specifically, because there are evolved adaptations based on the recognition of group cohesion and its role in maintaining one’s fitness within a social group, human beings have evolved a set of emotions which on average, provide a bias towards actions which increase the fitness of individuals within the group. Furthermore, we have also evolved a number of adaptations, in the forms of emotion and moralistic decision making, towards those who act in such a manner in order to threaten the fitness of individuals (Buss, 2005; Krebs, 2005; Kurzban & Neuberg, 2005). Kurzban and Neuberg (2005) echo this point noting,

76 It should be noted here that in no way is the suggestion being made that the only way in which humans make daily choices is to explicitly increase their fitness, as Hagen (2005) notes, “genetically determined mechanisms do not imply genetically determined behaviour” (168; emphasis in original). However, the research indicates that there is a strong bias in behavioural and moralistic decision making towards the maximization of one’s fitness, including the well-known concept of inclusive fitness (Hamilton, 1964). This latter concept refers to the fact that behaviour which is nepotistic in nature also increases one’s fitness as one’s family members shares one’s genes; therefore, ensuring those members increase their reproductive success is inclusive to one’s own fitness.
Humans have an array of evolved affective/cognitive mechanisms because different social threats, like different physical threats, must be recognized and responded to appropriately. And different stigmatizing reactions are manifestations of function-specific adaptations designed to respond to individuals who pose different threats. (655)

It is my contention that we see just such an adaptation being expressed when we explore the sexually differentiated reaction to infanticide.

Recall that a group’s genetic heritage is matrilineal in nature due to the certainty of genetic relatedness between a mother and her offspring, versus uncertainty of paternity. In addition, recall that a mother and a father will differ in the typical underlying reasons for infanticide and that this difference has expressed itself over evolutionary time leading to differing psychological adaptations in both men and women, and recognition of those adaptations and underlying reasons in humans in general. Furthermore, the reactions that ingroup members will have to the knowledge of an infanticide is typically sexually differentiated and exemplifies an emotional adaptation which belies an evolutionary history of moral decision making based on the fitness interests of individuals within the ingroup. Therefore, what we see illustrated in the historical analysis and survey-generated data of the current study is an expression of this evolved, function-specific psychological adaptation. In other words, people sexually differentiate their emotional reactions (and moral outrage) because over evolutionary time it was advantageous, in terms of individual fitness, to do so.

This is by no means a novel suggestion; see Buss (2005). Buss (2005) argues that there exists an evolutionary arms race between the fitness enhancing inclinations towards murder and the simultaneous fitness enhancing defenses to murder. He also points out our “rich repertoire of defenses against killers [is] actually . . . compelling evidence that murderers have been among us for a long enough time to have sculpted the human mind”
This point relates to my thesis in that the differential reaction seen in the research and the survey-generated data betrays an evolutionary history in which it was costly to allow males to commit infanticide with impunity, but it was less costly to allow such actions by female perpetrators of infanticide.

Potential Shortcomings of Research

From conception to actualization, every researcher attempts to minimize the breadth of this section. This project was no exception. However, despite these efforts there are a number of areas within which concerns have arisen.

First, the historical analysis presents an interesting challenge to the researcher. Because the source for the historical discussion was secondary in nature, there is a process of filtration which occurs which could potentially influence the manner by which the historical data are represented by the secondary authors. This would be a serious concern were it not for the breadth of research that was conducted and the consistent pattern of discovery in terms of the sexually differentiated legal, political, and societal reactions to infanticide over the 700 years that was covered.

Second, the style of research utilized to gather data presents its own set of issues. Survey-based research can generate data which may not in fact be representative of the population to which one is hoping to generalize to (Palys, 2003). Attitudinal surveys are subject to personal bias, the influence of personal experience, and personal/religious beliefs which can provide researchers with a skewed or distorted look at the processes being investigated (Nedelec, 2002; Stanfield, 1995). However, because the goal of the study was to explore personal attitudes towards infanticide (and the similarities among individuals) this is a necessary aspect of the research. It is mentioned here however,
because one must acknowledge that an individual participant may have specific experiences or biases which may have influenced his or her decision making (beyond the expected influence of the evolved psychological adaptation). The following two quotes from the qualitative aspect of the surveys provide poignant examples of just such an influence:

My answers would have been very different two years ago. My sister in law who is highly educated, comes from a wealthy family, and has always been more or less mentally stable went through a horrendous case of PPD and PPP. The baby had to be taken away from her (at her request) for a few weeks as she had visions that she had to kill it. She was hospitalized and treated and is now a good mother but will be medicated for some time to come.

As a mother, my immediate, gut response would be to say not at all justified, but having been in a state of total sleep deprivation and having overwhelming feelings of frustration for this colicky newborn, I can say I empathize.

The first quote shows that the respondent’s reaction to the infanticide depicted in the survey was influenced by her experiences and personal knowledge, while the second exemplifies the empathy shown by a fellow mother whose frustrations have been pushed to the limit. While both of those respondents were likely influenced by their experiences, it is my contention that their experiences served to hyper-initiate the evolved psychological adaptation leading to a sexually differentiated understanding of infanticide.

A third concern with the research conducted in this study is the reliance on the Internet for establishing the subject pool for the collection of data. While numerous researchers have indicated the benefits of just such a method, the obvious shortfall is the issue of access; those without Internet access are unable to participate in the study (Hakim, 2000; Schonlau, Fricker, & Elliott, 2002). It is conceivable that the respondents who participated in the study provided a biased view, simply due to the fact that they are in a position to have access to the Internet and have the ability to complete a technologically-based exploration of a very emotionally-laden subject and were
motivated to participate. One could argue that those who do not possess such traits may have provided a different set of responses which may have affected the results obtained. The one challenge that could be raised against this problem however, is the use of a historical analysis, which not only laid the foundation for the survey based research but provided extra support for the survey-generated data in a manner that cut across the boundaries of not only technology, but also culture and time.

A fourth concern with the survey research relates to the particular make-up of the online survey itself. As mentioned, respondents were forced to select a choice on the seven-point Likert scale in order to progress through the survey. It is highly probable that respondents chose certain ratings based not on their moral decision making, but simply to satisfy the requirement of doing so in order to continue. That is indeed problematic as there is no way of knowing whether such was indeed the case and how pervasive that problem may have been. However, given the data extrapolated from the qualitative aspect of the survey one can conclude with reasonable certainty that the problem did not affect the validity of the quantitative results to a great degree (because of the congruence of the quantitative data in displaying a sexually differentiated reaction of increased leniency towards a female perpetrator).

The final two concerns relate to the number and demographics of the respondents who participated in the study. The sample size for the investigation, while ‘healthy’, did not reach more than 200 individuals. When looking at such an emotionally-laden subject matter one should maximize the number of respondents to minimize the effects of personal biases and personal experiences and their influence on the resulting data (Stanfield, 1995). In addition, the majority of the respondents in the study were North
American (specifically Canadian) and may have been influenced by certain cultural knowledge. While that is a definite concern, the use of the historical analysis provides at least a moderate protection against the biases of culture, as the historical discussion spanned a number of centuries and different societies which would minimize that concern. A final point, relating to the demographics of the respondents, is that a large percentage of the respondents (16.1%) indicated that they were criminology majors at a university. This may have influenced the results in that criminology students typically have knowledge of the type of factors required for a punitive sanction in the case of illegal behaviour. Because of the reduced amount of information provided in the scenario (which as mentioned, was necessary to ‘tap into’ the emotional reaction of the respondent) those particular respondents may have provided a less lenient response based on their legal knowledge, rather than the sex of the perpetrator. That bias can be checked by comparing the responses of that specific group to the responses of the others.

Future Research

Because this is the first original empirical exploration of the sexually-differentiated reaction to infanticide there is a great deal of research that needs to be done to validate or falsify what is argued here. As mentioned, there are a number of concerns which need to be addressed in order for the literature in this specific area to improve. Of primary concern is the number of participants in the research and the cultural backgrounds they possess. Cross-cultural research needs to be conducted in order to determine if the differential reaction is as pervasive as the historical, anthropological, and empirical data in the current study suggest. In addition, future research ought to include different methodologies to test the existence of the proposed functionally specific
psychological adaptation. As noted by authors Simpson and Campbell (2005), researchers proposing specific adaptations,

... can be tested more rigorously by conducting research that: (1) uses multiple methods and multiple measures to assess and triangulate the major constructs, (2) tests for and systematically discounts alternative explanations for a trait’s uniquely designed functional features, and (3) reveals the footprints of special design at different levels of analysis (ranging from neural mechanisms, to context-specific modes of information processing, to emotional reactions, to molar behavioural responses). (137)

A final aspect of this topic that must be addressed in future research and was mentioned above is the use of a control group wherein participants are exposed to behaviours other than infanticide. Future research could make use of a number of different behaviours, ranging from benign to highly criminal (other than infanticide) to see if there is a differentiation based on sex for human behaviours in general, and not specific to infanticide. It is quite likely that this type of analysis would provide even further support for the stated hypotheses, as it is expected the differentiation will not be as distinct as is seen for infanticidal behaviour (this assumption is based on both the results of the historical analysis and the pervasive narratives of excuse depicted in the qualitative data).

Policy Implications - The “so what?” of the investigation

The primary importance of the research, as stated in the introductory chapters, is to fill a gap in the theoretical literature regarding this particular area of study. While theoreticians have done considerable research on the underlying evolutionary (ultimate) reasons for the perpetration of infanticide, there is a lack of understanding of the reasons for a sexually differentiated response to those behaviours. The current study was meant to help initiate the process of filling that gap. However, providing a theoretical thrust to
the literature ought not be the sole purpose of research conducted in the social sciences, particularly in terms of behaviour considered criminal. It is often noted that law serves a crucial part of maintaining social cohesion and “is a tool to be used to try to achieve the most desirable, or the least undesirable, consequences for society” (Weber, 1978: 136). The laws that guide society are based on the policies that different legal bodies accept as useful, in terms of their guidance, and those policies are typically based on research conducted in the area which the policy or law is concerned (Jones, 2005). Therefore, in order for policy to be most effective it ought to be based on good research; research which exemplifies a clear understanding of the human condition and is not based on inadequate, incomplete, or inconsistent theorizing is to be preferred (Thornhill & Palmer, 2000). Evolutionary psychology provides a sound knowledge of the human condition and the research conducted in this area exemplifies the type of understanding that ought to help guide social policy (Jones, 2005). As Jones (2005) states, “[a] competent model of human behaviour is essential to wringing maximum effectiveness from legal systems” (972). In that regard we can look at the results of the current study and provide some suggestions.

First, relating to the exploration of the causes of infanticide between male versus female infanticide we can see that policy must address differing indices of aetiology. For expecting mothers policy needs to address issues such as social support, family support, support for a partner, financial burdens, potential emotional reactions due to pregnancy and birth, alternative options available, and recognition of the circumstances which may lead to the unthinkable: committing infanticide. As Buss (2005) has rightly argued, just because we find some of the certain traits and strategies natural selection has provided us
with does not mean that we ought to be ignorant of their existence. In other words, simply because we consider infanticide by a mother unthinkable, we ought not believe it to be impossible. Instead we must become aware of those circumstances wherein it is most likely to occur and take steps to change the environmental conditions which typically lead to its occurrence (Daly & Wilson, 1988). The issues surrounding male-perpetrated infanticide ought to be considered in the same manner. By being aware of those conditions, policy should be directed towards alleviating the factors which can lead to such behaviour. Furthermore, education for both males and females regarding the type of conditions which can lead to such behaviour ought to be an aspect of adequately guided policy as well.

The second major area that this research can have an impact on policy concerns the legal notion of “infanticide”. Given that our societal and legal reactions are based on an evolved psychological adaptation based on the social dynamics of an evolutionary past which may not be relevant in today’s ultra-advanced society, ought the crime to exist? Alternatively, one could also argue that because of this knowledge of the sexually differentiated reaction, there is no need to have males legally excluded from being charged with infanticide. Why continue to punish infanticidal fathers in a manner so inconsistent with the manner by which we punish infanticidal mothers? The answer to this extremely difficult question requires at least another 100 pages of its own; however, it is hoped that the current study can provide legal scholars with some solid information with which to make such a decision.
Conclusion

The historical analysis and the survey-generated data have shown that there is a pervasive tendency for individuals to sexually differentiate their reaction and moralistic decision making to the act of infanticide. This reaction is in terms of greater leniency towards females who perpetrate infanticide and a simultaneous increased moral outrage towards males who commit infanticide. While the criminological literature is essentially mute on this point, the major tenets of evolutionary psychology are an excellent way with which to analyze just such a phenomenon. Specifically, because of the importance of ingroup cohesion to the fitness of individuals within that group and the certainty attached to maternal lineage, moral outrage towards genetically selfish males who commit infanticide has, over evolutionary time, helped to increase the fitness of individuals who exhibited such an outrage. It is this legacy of moral decision making over evolutionary time which underlies the psychological adaptation which every *homo sapien* on the planet possesses.
Appendices

Appendix One

Lord Ellenborough's Act (1803)

C A P. LVIII.

An Act for the further Prevention of malicious shooting, and attempting to discharge loaded Fire-Arms, stabbing, cutting, wounding, poisoning, and the malicious using of Means to procure the Miscarriage of Women; and also the malicious setting Fire to Buildings; and also for repealing a certain Act, made in England in the twenty-first Year of the late King James the First, intituled, An Act to prevent the destroying and murdering of Bastard Children; and also an Act made in Ireland in the sixth Year of the Reign of the late Queen Anne, also intituled, An Act to prevent the destroying and murdering of Bastard Children; and for making other Provisions in lieu thereof.

[24th June 1803.]

I. 'WHEREAS . . .

III. 'And whereas Doubts have been entertained respecting the true Sense and Meaning of a certain Act of Parliament, made in England in the twenty-first Year of the Reign of his late Majesty King James the First, intituled, An Act to prevent the destroying and murdering of Bastard Children; and also of a certain other Act of Parliament, made in Ireland in the sixth Year of the Reign of her late Majesty Queen Anne, also intituled, An Act to prevent the destroying and murdering of Bastard Children; and the same have been found in sundry Cases, difficult and inconvenient to be put in Practice; for Remedy whereof, be it enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That, from and after the first Day of July in the Year of our Lord One thousand eight hundred and three, the said two several Acts, and every Thing therein contained, shall be, and the same are hereby repealed; and that, from and after the said first Day of July in the said Year of our Lord One thousand eight hundred and three, the Trials in England and Ireland respectively of Women charged with the Murder of any Issue of their Bodies, Male or Female, which being born alive would by Law be Bastard, shall proceed and be governed by such and the like Rules of Evidence and of Presumption as are by Law used and allowed to take place in respect to other Trials for Murder, and as if the said two several Acts had never been made.

IV. Provided always, and be it enacted, That it shall and may be lawful for the Jury by whose Verdict any Prisoner charged with such Murder as aforesaid shall be acquitted, to find, in case it shall so appear in Evidence that the Prisoner was delivered of Issue of her

77 Only the portion of the Act pertaining to infanticide is included herein.
Body, Male or Female, which, if born alive, would have been Bastard, and that she did, by secret Burying, or otherwise, endeavour to conceal the Birth thereof, and thereupon it shall be lawful for the Court before which such Prisoner shall have been tried, to adjudge that such Prisoner shall be committed to the Common Gaol or House of Correction for any Time not exceeding two Years.

[N.B.--The spellings of murthering, intituled, wilfully, levelling, counsellors, publickly and endeavour are thus.]

Appendix Two

Surveys

Scenarios for QA Surveys (‘no-sex’, ‘mother’, & ‘father’)

A parent has been discovered to have killed their 13 month old child. The child was sleeping in a crib when the parent smothered the child with a pillow. The child did not wake up and suffocated. The parent wrapped the child up in a blanket and placed the body in a nearby wooded area.

A mother has been discovered to have killed her 13 month old child. The child was sleeping in a crib when the mother smothered the child with a pillow. The child did not wake up and suffocated. The mother wrapped the child up in a blanket and placed the body in a nearby wooded area.

A father has been discovered to have killed his 13 month old child. The child was sleeping in a crib when the father smothered the child with a pillow. The child did not wake up and suffocated. The father wrapped the child up in a blanket and placed the body in a nearby wooded area.

Scenario for QB Surveys (‘no-sex’, ‘mother’, & ‘father’)

A parent, extremely frustrated in their unsuccessful attempts to comfort their crying baby, picked up the 13 month old child and began to shake the baby. Eventually the crying stopped as the shaking was such that it killed the baby. Unsure what to do, the parent contacted a relative who in turn contacted the authorities.

78 For the sake of brevity, only one version of the questions for both scenarios (survey type QA and QB) is included here. The survey template depicted here is the ‘no-sex’ condition; this is simply for the sake of reference and it should be emphasized that every survey was exactly the same except for the sex of the perpetrator and the corresponding sex specific pronouns used in the questions. The only other difference between the surveys was the addition of questions 10 and 10.1, which were specific to the ‘no-sex’ conditions. In addition, it should also be noted that each survey included only one scenario, followed by the survey questions.
A mother, extremely frustrated in her unsuccessful attempts to comfort her crying baby, picked up the 13 month old child and began to shake the baby. Eventually the crying stopped as the shaking was such that it killed the baby. Unsure what to do, the mother contacted a relative who in turn contacted the authorities.

A father, extremely frustrated in his unsuccessful attempts to comfort his crying baby, picked up the 13 month old child and began to shake the baby. Eventually the crying stopped as the shaking was such that it killed the baby. Unsure what to do, the father contacted a relative who in turn contacted the authorities.

**Questions**

(please indicate your answer by circling the appropriate response and in the space provided after each question please briefly explain or elaborate on your response)

1. **To what extent do you agree that the parent is to blame for their actions?**

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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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Explain:  

2. **How justifiable do you feel the parent’s actions are?**

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<td>Very justifiable</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Explain:  

---

92
3. How strongly do you agree that the parent in the scenario should go to prison for his/her actions?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly disagree Neither agree nor disagree Strongly agree

Explain: ________________________________

4. How strongly do you agree that the parent acted in a violent manner?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly disagree Neither agree nor disagree Strongly agree

Explain: ________________________________

5. How strongly do you agree that the parent should receive some form of punishment?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly disagree Neither agree nor disagree Strongly agree

Explain: ________________________________

6. How strongly do you agree that a prison sentence is too harsh of a punishment in this case?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly disagree Neither agree nor disagree Strongly agree

Explain: ________________________________
7. Assuming the parent is sentenced to prison, how long do you feel he/she should be in prison for?

1 - less than one year  
2 - 1-2 years  
3 - 3-4 years  
4 - 5-9 years  
5 - 10-19 years  
6 - more than 20 years

Explain: ________________________________________________________________

8. Do you feel a punishment other than prison should be given out in this case?

1 - Yes  
2 - No

8.1. If yes, what sort of punishment do you feel the parent should receive?

8.2. Why do you feel this punishment is more appropriate in this case?

(please feel free to use the back of this page if necessary)

9. Why do you feel the parent committed this act? (please indicate in the space below)

10. Do you feel this act was committed by the mother or the father of the child?

1 - Mother  
2 - Father

10.1. Please indicate why you feel this way:

94
**Demographic Information**

This information is being gathered because we are interested in the characteristics of our population as a whole, individual information will not be used in this project.

**Sex:** MALE FEMALE

**Age:** 18-24 25-30 31-35 36-40 41-45 46-50 51-55 56-60 61-65 66+

**Religion:** (if you do not subscribe to a religion please indicate "N/A")

**Occupation:**

**Education (completed):** less than high school high school diploma college trade school university post-graduate

If you are currently attending university or college please indicate what year of study you are in (first year, second year, etc.) and your intended major:

Are you a parent?: YES NO

If yes, how many children do you have?

What are the ages of your children? (please provide the age for each of your children)

This is the end of the questionnaire. Thank you very much for your participation.

Please feel free to write any comments you may have in the space below (this information will NOT be used in the project except for ways to improve future research).
Appendix Three

Original Email Message Sent to Potential Participants

Below are six different links to surveys I have constructed which relate to the research I am conducting for my M.A. at SFU. If you have about 10 minutes to spare please click (or copy & paste into your browser) one (and only one) of the links and complete the online survey. If you don't really feel like it I will not be offended, I have no way of knowing who has done the survey and who has not. As well, please feel free to forward the links to anyone you know who has an Internet connection, as I would like to gain as many participants as possible and hopefully from a varied background.

Thanks for your time and I hope everyone is having an enjoyable summer!

Take care and all the best,

Joe

Here are the links:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=379941002766
http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=599171002366
http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=448401002746
http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=49815976432
http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=653331002684
http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=821331002737

Joe L. Nedelec
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Burnaby, BC
jnedelec@sfu.ca
Appendix Four

Coding Scheme - All Surveys

Survey Classifications

QA → scenario involving smothering
QB → scenario involving shaken baby
Condition 1 → mother as perpetrator
Condition 2 → father as perpetrator
Condition 3 → no sex indicated

Question Types

Question Type I → questions about blameworthiness (Questions 1, 2, 4, & 8.2)
Question Type II → questions about the severity of punishment (Questions 3, 5, 6, 7, & 8)
Question Type III → questions about the causes of the act (causal) (Questions 9, 10, & 10.1)
*Note: Questions 10 and 10.1 only appear on the no-sex condition surveys.

General Codes (used throughout survey coding)

911 → not enough information; need more details; unknown
912 → mental health issues; requires professional help or counselling (without mention of post-partum depression; either the perpetrator has or may have mental health issues; depends on mental health status of perpetrator)
913 → concerns about the perpetrator’s motives; mitigating circumstances (without mention of psychological health; past behaviour); differentiated from ‘911’ because ‘913’ implies given a certain set of motives, culpability is more or less
914 → 911 & 912 (i.e. need more information on the mental health status)
915 → 911 & 19 (i.e. need more information about whether the mother had PPD)
997 → other database (i.e. more than one coding choice)
998 → no response or response unable to be coded (i.e. response is too vague or unrelated to the question being asked)
999 → not applicable

811 → yes
812 → no
Question Specific Codes:

*Note*: for all primary questions using the Likert-scale, the response is coded as selected by respondent, using the following metric.

Questions 1, 3, 4, 5, 6:
1 → strongly disagree
2 → disagree
3 → somewhat disagree
4 → neither agree nor disagree
5 → somewhat agree
6 → agree
7 → strongly agree

Question 2:
1 → not at all justifiable
2 → unjustifiable
3 → somewhat unjustifiable
4 → moderately justifiable
5 → somewhat justifiable
6 → justifiable
7 → very justifiable

Question 7:
1 → less than one year
2 → 1-2 years
3 → 3-4 years
4 → 5-9 years
5 → 10-19
6 → more than 20 years

Question 8:
1 → yes
2 → no

Question 10: (no sex condition)
1 → mother
2 → father
Codes for secondary (written) response

1 → child is helpless; innocent victim;
2 → perpetrator knowingly acted; responsible for actions; made a choice; alternative options exist; not an accident; reckless (regardless of circumstances)
3 → however - (implying justification)
4 → child was ill; handicapped; suffering (assumption)
5 → need to correct behaviour
6 → all killing is violent; murder is violent
7 → child did not suffer; acting out of compassion
8 → less violent option was employed
9 → parent should be put to death; life sentence should be imposed
10 → no purpose to jail; current punishment scheme is not appropriate
11 → (makes reference to punishments for other crimes to justify a longer sentence)
12 → probation; conditional sentence; house arrest
13 → community service; restitution of some sort
14 → depends on how others were impacted
15 → revenge or anger towards other parent
16 → unwanted or unplanned child/pregnancy
17 → selfish
18 → drugs or alcohol were involved (including addiction issues)
19 → PPD (specific to female)
20 → need some form of punishment; justice must be served; consequences for actions; need to be accountability or responsibility; *response indicates some form of retribution is required by society, but not prison*
21 → punish perpetrator to full extent of the law (also implies applying law based on current statutory and case law – punish based on what is legislated); *differentiated from ‘20’ in that ‘20’ implies a less harsh response*
22 → the action is definitely violent; unprovoked response; disproportionate violence
23 → traumatizing for parent; suicide watch is likely necessary
24 → (makes reference to punishments for other crimes to justify a shorter sentence)
25 → parent should be sterilized (actively or passively, i.e. through the passage of time); should not be allowed to have any more children
26 → parenting/child care education (focus is on education and not underlying psychological issues)
27 → restorative justice should be employed
28 → the act is punishment enough; parent will suffer from the act itself; no need for further punishment
29 → child was the result of rape or incest
30 → parent was protecting the child; for the child’s benefit; altruistic act
31 → parent is marginalized from society
32 → marital problems led to act
33 → parent lacks resources (including money, support, coping skills, etc.); feels helpless
34 → parent has abusive background
35 → no longer a risk to re-offend; not a threat to the community; *differentiated from ‘10’ as ‘10’ refers to institutional/prison problems which make it an inappropriate response*

36 → parent was careless, irresponsible (but not violent); it was an accident

37 → mothers are more likely to act out against their children

38 → fathers are more likely to act out against their children

39 → mothers spend more time with children (primary caregiver); fathers spend less time with children

40 → just assumed mother (pictured mother); assumed single mother

41 → scenario akin to case(s) in media involving a mother; mention media in general as a source

42 → mother acting out of maternal instinct; *differentiated from ‘30’ as ‘42’ implies less of a choice*

43 → mother is less likely to kill her own child

44 → contacting family members mitigates

45 → angry; frustration; unable to control emotions/self; ignorance; stupidity; impatient; (indication of something inwardly wrong with the perpetrator’s personality or coping skills); *differentiated from ‘912’ & ‘33’ because there is a greater assumption of culpability in ‘45’*

46 → frustration with a qualifier (e.g. tired); *differentiated from ‘45’ as ‘46’ implies a greater amount of understanding*

Demographic Information Codes

Question 1:
1 → Male
2 → Female

Question 2:
1 → 18-24
2 → 25-30
3 → 31-35
4 → 36-40
5 → 41-45
6 → 46-50
7 → 51-55
8 → 56-60
9 → 61-65
10 → 66+

Question 3:
999 → not applicable (non religious; atheist)
1 → Christian
2 → Lutheran
3 → Catholic
4 → Russian Orthodox
5 → Roman Catholic
6 → Protestant
7 → Sikh
8 → Islam
9 → Jewish
10 → Greek Orthodox
11 → Wicca
12 → Muslim

Question 4:
1 → student
2 → server
3 → teacher; TA/TA; professor
4 → researcher
5 → fast food industry
6 → health field
7 → accountant/economist
8 → insurance
9 → police officer; law enforcement
10 → actor; film/TV industry
11 → receptionist; administrative assistant; customer service representative
12 → youth worker
13 → parent
14 → government worker
15 → retired
16 → trades worker
17 → programmer/computer industry
18 → pilot
19 → retail
20 → swim instructor

Question 5:
1 → less than high school
2 → high school diploma
3 → college
4 → trade school
5 → university
6 → post-graduate

Question 5.1:
1-5 → year of study (between first and fifth year)
6 → Master’s level
7 → Doctorate level
8 → Post-doctorate
9 → Law school
Question 5.2.
1 → criminology
2 → psychology
3 → joint major (criminology and psychology)
4 → biology
5 → computing science
6 → undecided
7 → education
8 → philosophy
9 → law school
10 → geography
11 → earth sciences
12 → liberal arts
13 → business
14 → history
15 → sociology
16 → English
17 → political science
18 → anthropology
19 → archeology

Question 6:
1 → yes
2 → no

Question 6.1:
Enter number of children

Question 6.2:
Enter ages of children (separated by ‘,’); *for children aged under 1 years old code as 1 year old*
### Non-Response Ratios for Scenario QA

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<th>QA-F Ratio</th>
<th>QA-M Ratio</th>
<th>QA-NS Ratio</th>
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(QA => Smother scenario)
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(QB => Shaken baby scenario)
### Appendix Six

**Supplemental Sex-Specific Significant Quantitative Results for QA and QB Surveys**

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<tr>
<th>Father vs. Mother</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>$\bar{X}_{F}$</th>
<th>$\bar{X}_{M}$</th>
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($\bar{X}$ = mean; 'F' = father sex condition; 'M' = mother sex condition)

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (Blame)</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>-2.295</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (Justifiable)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>2.016</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (Violence)</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.78</td>
<td>16.78</td>
<td>18.27</td>
<td>-3.122</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type I (Blameworthiness)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

($\bar{X}$ = mean; 'M' = mother sex condition; 'NM' = not mother -> combined 'father' and 'no-sex' conditions)

---

80 These results are not included in the regular text of the results section due to the numerous differences between respondent reactions to either scenario (e.g. level of violence), which in effect nullify the importance of analyzing the combined sex condition results. Nevertheless, the combined sex specific results further support the primary hypotheses that the direction of moral outrage is towards a lesser amount of blame for female perpetrators than male perpetrators of infanticide.

81 The means displayed here are the combined means for the specific sex condition of both surveys, e.g. $\bar{X}_{F} \rightarrow \bar{X}_{F,QA} + \bar{X}_{F,QB}$. (QA -> Smother scenario; QB -> Shaken baby scenario)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>$\bar{X}_F$</th>
<th>Student-t</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type I (Blameworthiness)</td>
<td>$\bar{X}_F^{1}=18.52$</td>
<td>3.384</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$\bar{X}_F^{NF}=16.97$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

($\bar{X} =$ mean; ‘F’ = father sex condition; ‘NF’ = not father $\rightarrow$ combined ‘mother’ and ‘no-sex’ conditions)
Appendix Seven

Examples of Written Responses and their Corresponding Qualitative Data Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent #</th>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Response (italics added)</th>
<th>Code(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>136858299</td>
<td>QA-M</td>
<td>I would need more information on the case</td>
<td>911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>137135005</td>
<td>QA-M</td>
<td>[p]eople who are not mentally ill do not smother children (although new mothers with colicky babies MAY think about it - most of us do not follow through on those thoughts).</td>
<td>912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>137103791</td>
<td>QA-NS</td>
<td>she smothered him with a pillow, the description did not give enough info as to the intent or background of the defendant.</td>
<td>913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138407946</td>
<td>QB-M</td>
<td>Not enough information on the mother's mental state/situations is provided to judge the blame.</td>
<td>914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>137525141</td>
<td>QA-M</td>
<td>I only know her actions not her motivation and by that I mean her emotional health. She may have been suffering from post partum depression and I would need to know that before I would consider blaming her for her actions.</td>
<td>915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138165920</td>
<td>QB-M</td>
<td>Im stuck in the middle of this one. It was an accident but she should be held accountable. Im just not sure. It depends on more facts.</td>
<td>997 (20; 911)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>137144951</td>
<td>QA-F</td>
<td>personally, it's hard to justify murder of innocent child</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>136911445</td>
<td>QB-F</td>
<td>He is completely to blame for his actions because he had the ability to choose other means of comforting his child. Although he likely did not intend to kill his infant, he should have foreseen the potential lethal consequences of shaking a young baby.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>137140599</td>
<td>QA-M</td>
<td>. . . It is never OK to kill another human but it can be understood if looked at closely.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These examples are actual excerpts from written responses and as such are reproduced here in the exact manner by which they were originally submitted by the respondent. However, some of the responses indicated herein are only a portion of the entire response — the portion which pertains to the specific code that the response exemplifies.
It is also possible the child had some type of disorder that made caring for it difficult, expensive, painful for the child etc., and the parent therefore felt justified in committing this act...

Killing is violent no matter what the motives.

The manner of death was one that is not necessarily violent. Because the child was asleep when smothered, it shows she was not trying to cause pain to the child when ending its life.

I don't think smothering was necessarily violent. It could have been done in a gentle way.

She also needs to learn the correct behavior in dealing with children while also paying some sort of service to society...

Prison is a poor option for punishment in this case. A proper form of punishment could be found if the psychological state of the parent was analysed.

time served plus 24 month conditional sentence; probation

community service dealing with babies, and children

No idea, or actually any number of reasons, f...I could be revenge against the mother, etc...

The father wanted life to be the way it was before the baby...completely under his control. So I would say the father is more frustrated with how his personal life is different rather than being frustrated with the baby. He took his frustrations out on the baby.

Because he is selfish

For any number of reasons... drugs/alcohol... any number of other social/biological factors.

post-partum depression, post-traumatic stress after labour

Some sort of justice needs to be carried out...

The father killed his baby and should be punished according to the law of the land, but proper antenatal parenting classes supported by the State might have helped prevent this in the first place.
Even if there are reasons why she did it, these reasons do not negate that her actions were ultimately violent. She may have thought she was acting in a helpful manner (or what ever type of manner other than violent), her actions were still violent.

This is tough. If we base this on Karla Homolka and her prison sentence of 12 years (clearly an injustice), this woman should get 1-2 years. However, if this crime was premeditated, and not a result of a psychiatric illness such as Post Partum Depression, she should get about 15 years.

I think there should be some prison sentence and there should be a way to restrict this individual from having future children to murder.

Counselling, and restorative process would be necessary to address the effects of this case.

We are not told 'Why' the parent chose to do this...despite the fact that such behavior contravenes the LAW, there may be compelling reason, the child may have been conceived as result of rape, or incest...

The parent is mentally unstable. Or the child suffered from a severe disability--it may have been a so-called 'mercy killing'.

Quite simply she is multiple marginalized. This society is racist (where caucasian males are privileged) poverty, individualistic society, not being perceive as beautiful etc. ...

Maybe it was stress and or a breakup in a relationship...

If the woman lacked support we she could simply have been at the end of her tether.

. . . survivor of rape or incest . . . abusive family, abusive family...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Tag</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>138632168</td>
<td>QB-NS</td>
<td>Perhaps the parent can do something good for his or her community instead of rotting away in prison. I don't think the parent is likely to be a threat to the public at large (as long as there is some ministerial protection and surveillance for any surviving children this parent may have).</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>137138923</td>
<td>QB-M</td>
<td>The mother made a mistake and will likely need emotional support to overcome the trauma of killing her child...</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>136858962</td>
<td>QA-NS</td>
<td>don't know exactly, women may be more likely to act out against children.</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>136877750</td>
<td>QB-NS</td>
<td>he does not have the same level of nurturing skills that the mother naturally has. I would think if it was the mother she would have instinctively tried to comfort the baby not shake it.</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


