

PERCEIVED JUSTIFICATION AND ATTRIBUTIONS
OF RESPONSIBILITY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. THE LITERATURE REVIEW.	1
The Purpose of the Study.	1
Importance of Responsibility Attributions	4
Heider's Attribution Theory	5
Theories of Defensive Attribution	10
Definition of Responsibility.	13
Justification	15
II. PROBLEM.	22
Justification Reconsidered.	22
Responsibility Attributions	25
Defensive Attribution	26
Attraction.	27
Summary of Hypotheses	28
Attitude Material	29
III. METHOD	32
Subjects.	32
Procedure and Stimulus Material	32
Ethics.	34
IV. RESULTS.	35
Introduction.	35
Justification	37
Responsibility Attributions	38
Defensive Attribution	41
Attraction.	48
Justification as an Independent Variable.	49
V. DISCUSSION	53
Justification and Responsibility Attributions	53
Defensive Attributions.	60
Attraction.	65
Perceived Justification and External Justification.	66
VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.	69

Chapter	Page
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	73
APPENDIX A - SUMMARIES OF ANALYSES OF VARIANCE.	77
APPENDIX B - CORRELATION MATRIX OF INDEPENDENT AND DEPENDENT VARIABLES.	82
APPENDIX C - ANALYSES FOR DEFENSIVE ATTRIBUTIONS IN ATTITUDE x SITUATION x ACTION x RESPONSIBILITY INTERACTION EFFECT IN ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF ATTRIBUTIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY.	84

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Mean Justification Responses as a Function of Attitude and Situation.	38
2. Mean Responsibility Attributions as a Function of Attitude	39
3. Mean Responsibility Attributions as a Function of Situation.	40
4. Mean Responsibility Attributions as a Function of Attitude and Situation	42
5. Correlation Coefficients of Attitude and Responsibility Attributions with Justification and Attraction.	48
6. Mean Responsibility Attributions as a Function of Justification	51

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Responsibility Attributions in Conditions Theoretically Favorable and Unfavorable to Justification	44
2. Responsibility Attributions Within High Situational Demand	46
3. Responsibility Attributions Within Low Situational Demand	47
4. Responsibility Attributions with Justification as an Independent Variable	52

CHAPTER I

THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The Purpose of the Study

Justification has been widely used as a concept in social psychology in such areas as attribution theory, labeling theory, and cognitive dissonance. Even though widely used, the concept itself has received rare attention. The attention it has received has been largely of a theoretical nature. The purpose of this study is to experimentally examine the concept of justification and the influence of justification upon attributions of responsibility. With this purpose in mind, the treatment of the concept in psychology will be examined.

There have been two approaches to justification in the literature of social psychology. One has considered justification as an external contingency which is commonly accepted as a sufficient reason for behaving in a particular manner (Abelson, Aronson, McGuire, Newcomb, Rosenberg, and Tannenbaum, 1968). The most frequently cited example of this approach is the finding that lying in an experiment is justified for \$20 but not for one dollar (Festinger and Carlsmith, 1959). The second approach has considered justification as a tactic in the presentation of self to others (Scott and Lyman, 1968). This approach concerns individuals' attempts to avoid labels of deviance (Schur, 1971) and ensuing negative sanctions (Scott and Lyman, 1968) by providing acceptable reasons or positive aspects of untoward action.

In the present study a synthesis of these approaches is drawn which presents justification as a judgment made by individuals and dependent upon personal and situational variables. The synthesis deals with the problem of why some individuals will refer to an act as justified while others will not.

The synthesis can be associated with the term perceived justification, which is introduced to represent judgments of an act's justifiability as made by an individual. Perceived justification is studied in relation to attributions of responsibility. The study of responsibility attributions deal with the processes by which individuals assign responsibility for an event.

The originator of current attribution theories, Heider (1944, 1958), considered the relative assignment of responsibility to two sources: (1) the person who is associated with the action and (2) the situation in which the action occurs. Heider considered five "levels" of relationships between these two sources. The first three levels concern the attribution of responsibility for unintentional outcomes. Respectively, these levels deal with outcomes for which there is no personal action, personal action with unforeseeable outcomes, and personal action with foreseeable outcomes. The remaining two of the five levels involve intentional outcomes. These two levels shall be considered in the present study. Heider believed that when an action and outcome are intentional (Level IV), much responsibility will be attributed to the person associated with the action. When an action and outcome are intentional, but justified by external contingencies (Level V), less responsibility will be attributed to the person and more responsibility will be attributed to the situation. As the difference between the two levels is the

relative presence of justification, the influence of perceived justification upon attributions of responsibility for an intentional act is studied in this experiment.

The concept of defensive attribution has been identified by others as a mediating variable in the processes of responsibility attribution (Walster, 1966; Shaver, 1970). Shaver has suggested that, with conditions favorable to defensive attributions, as outcome severity increases less responsibility for the outcome will be assigned to the person who could have caused the outcome. Since, as shall be shown, (1) the conditions for defensive attributions are similar to conditions for justification and (2) defensive attributions and justification have similar effects on attributions, it is considered herein that defensive attributions may be an example of the effect of perceived justification upon attributions of responsibility.

One of the variables which will be presented as mediating perceptions of justification is the degree to which an act reflects attitudes which are shared or approved by an observer of the act. One result of shared attitudes may be interpersonal attraction (Byrne, 1971). A problem is therefore created for interpretation of this study. While attempting to vary perceptions of justification, it is likely that attraction will vary also. As interpersonal attraction is a potential confounding variable for an understanding of justification, it is examined in relation to the other variables of the study.

A comment about the organization of the remainder of the chapter will be helpful. Present interest in justification grew out of an interest in responsibility attributions. To understand the development of the concept of perceived justification, a background in certain aspects of

attribution theory is necessary. Therefore, literature pertinent to attributions of responsibility will be reviewed prior to literature directly relevant to justification. This review will establish the background from which the concept of perceived justification will emerge.

Importance of Responsibility Attributions

If research is to be invested in an area, it should be hoped that the information gained will contribute to a larger body of knowledge (Kuhn, 1970). In the present case, therefore, the contributions of an understanding of the processes by which responsibility is assigned shall be discussed.

The study of attribution processes concerns how the individual infers causality for the events in his world. Given such a definition, i.e., the perception of causality, the study would appear to be one for the psychologist of perception (Michotte, 1963). However, the attributions of present concern deal with causation of social behavior, not inanimate events. Attribution theory may be considered as the study of how the layman behaves as a social psychologist: how the layman attempts to explain and control social phenomena (Heider, 1958).

The study of the responsibility attribution process is important in a variety of the areas of social psychology. Historically, the first area in which responsibility attribution was discussed was the area of social sanctions for criminal acts (Heider, 1944; MacIver, 1942). Upon the occurrence of a crime, how does one determine who committed the crime and, upon determining who is guilty, what sanctions should be applied? The question may be restated as, "Who is responsible and how responsible is he?" Thus, besides social psychology, responsibility attributions

may be seen to be of interest to students of jurisprudence.

A second area of social psychology to which responsibility attribution is significant is the study of how an observer perceives another individual as possessing "personality traits" (Heider, 1958; Jones and Davis, 1964). As shall be discussed later, it has been hypothesized that personal dispositions are inferred from behavior. However, if an action is to possess significant information value for disposition inference, an actor must be seen as being responsible for the action. When an actor is not responsible for an action, the action can provide little information about the person. When an actor is responsible, the action is potentially high in information value. Hence, the question of how people assign responsibility can be seen as relevant to the study of person perception.

A fairly recent trend in social psychology has been the study of social problems and their possible alleviation. Here, too, the perceived source of responsibility is of significance (Caplan and Nelson, 1973; Scott and Lyman, 1968). Solutions for a problem are addressed to that which is perceived as the cause of the problem. If the victims of the problem are seen as being responsible for the problem, the solution is usually designed to change the victims. As an example, if "underprivileged" persons are viewed as responsible for their poverty, to attack poverty the victims must be motivated or educated. But, if responsibility for a problem is assigned to the social environment or system, then solutions will deal with the social situation. Ryan (1970) has illustrated a tendency in American society for problems to be defined as victim caused. He has suggested that this approach dehumanizes the victims and exacerbates many problems. Therefore, an understanding of

attribution process would be of value to the area of social change.

To briefly summarize this discussion, responsibility attribution has been shown to be of importance to the areas in social psychology of sanctioning behavior, person perception, and social change. It should be borne in mind that these topics are not the only ones for which attribution processes are of relevance, but are mentioned as indicators of the impact of responsibility attributions on social phenomena.

Heider's Attribution Theory

What is referred to as attribution theory in social psychology is not a unified theory but a group of theories. Several of these theories are interrelated and some are related only in terms of the topic of attributions. The major emphasis in this review is the theory proposed by Fritz Heider, and subsequent theories of defensive attributions. These theories are not the only theories of attribution. They are discussed here because it is thought that they are more applicable to the present concerns than are alternative theories. For information on other theories of attribution, books by Jones, Kanouse, Kelley, Nisbett, Valins, and Weiner (1971), Shaw and Costanzo (1970), and Stone and Farberman (1970) are recommended.

Causal Attributions

Heider's work on the perception of social causality has been the primary impetus to the field of attribution theory. There were, of course, antecedents to Heider's contributions, but his organization and synthesis of his antecedents has made his work a landmark in the maze of social psychology. Heider discussed the importance of social causality

to person perception in a 1944 article, and his major theory was presented in 1958 in his book, The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations.

Following the work of Brunswik (1952) on visual perception, Heider (1958) suggested that similar processes may operate in person perception. It was Brunswik's view that man perceives the external world by referring transient and variable events to invariant properties (see also Gibson, 1969). Heider posited that in person perception the search for invariant properties leads to the attribution of personal dispositions. The concept of dispositions is similar to the concept of personality traits in that dispositions "dispose" individuals "to manifest themselves in certain ways under certain conditions" (Heider, 1958, p. 80). According to Heider, dispositions are inferred from an observer's analysis of the causes for an actor's behavior. Therefore, to understand how an observer attributes dispositions, one must first understand how the observer perceives social causation.

Heider (1958) stated that an action results from a combination of factors within the person and factors within the environment. These two sets of factors were described as effective personal force and effective environmental force. If an action occurs and effective personal force is perceived to be the stronger of the forces, the action will be attributed more to personal causation. If effective environmental force is seen as being stronger, the action will be attributed more to impersonal causation.

Effective personal force may be broken down into its constituents which are "trying" (active intention) and "power" (ability). When "power" is sufficient to overcome effective environmental force, the actor "can" (capability) perform the action. An attribution of personal

causality will be made when it is jointly perceived that an action is the result of an actor's active intention and capability. Inferences about capability are derived from a backdrop of effective environmental force. If an action is thought to have been difficult, then capability is perceived as being high. If an action is simple, less capability is attributed. Intentions are inferred from their property of equifinality, by the apparent goal, and from knowledge of the actor's prior behavior. When a person attempts different means to achieve a goal (equifinality), intention may be inferred. The apparent goal of behavior is that outcome among a number of outcomes of the action which is judged to be most attractive. The more attractive outcome is considered to have been the intended outcome. Experience with a person's past behavior and intentions in similar situations may also aid in inferring present intentions. Heider stressed the point that intention is the central factor in personal causality.

Responsibility Attributions

Moving from causal attributions to responsibility attributions, Heider (1958) did not clearly distinguish between the two types of attributions. There are suggestions, though, that responsibility refers to accountability and sanctionability. For example, in his discussion of responsibility he states, "...the question of premeditation is important in the decisions regarding guilt" (p. 112), "...a person may be congratulated upon the victory of his school's football team" (p. 113), and "...[he] may be accused of bringing harm to [another]..." (p. 113). That he is referring to accountability is further indicated in his 1944 article when he discusses the work of Fauconnet (1928): "Fauconnet says that all situations which give rise to the ideas of responsibility

(the attribution of a crime to a person) [italics added] can be classed in two groups: ...contiguity and ...similarity" (Heider, 1944, p. 362). Unless Heider modified his definition in the 14 years between the publication of the two works of present concern, it would appear that responsibility in his model refers to an individual's accountability for an action.

Ability and intentions are important factors in attributions of personal responsibility, although ability is of less import than intentions. "People are held responsible for their intentions and exertions but not so strictly for their abilities" (Heider, 1958, p. 112). Personal responsibility was also seen to vary with the relative contributions of effective environmental force to the action outcome. The more the environment contributes to the action, the less personal responsibility is attributed. He suggested the existence of five levels of relationships between personal and situational (impersonal) responsibility. As the levels ascend, the conditions for attributions of personal responsibility become more specific. Titles for the levels were presented by Shaw and Sulzer (1964) who also provided experimental support for their general operation as theorized by Heider.

Level I. Global-Association: "...[T]he person is held responsible for each effect that is in any way connected to him or that seems in any way to belong to him" (Heider, 1958, p. 113). For example, the Jewish people were frequently persecuted in Christian countries for being the "Christ-Killers" hundreds of years after their ancestors may have participated in a crucifixion.

Level II. Extended Commission: The person is held responsible for any effect which he caused, even though he did not intend and could not

have foreseen the effect. Heider described this level as being similar to Piaget's (1932) "objective responsibility". Responsibility at this level is responsibility for an unforeseen accident which resulted from a person's action.

Level III. Careless Commission: The person is considered responsible for an effect which resulted from his action and that he could and should have foreseen, but which he did not foresee and was not part of his intentions. He is considered to lack either sufficient restraint, judgment, or mental capability.

Level IV. Purposive Commission: The person is held responsible only for those effects which resulted from his active intention: actions which resulted from personal causation. Motives are the central factor as in Piaget's (1932) "subjective responsibility".

Level V. Justified Commission: "The person is held only partially responsible for any effect which he intentionally produced if the circumstances were such that most persons would have felt and acted as he did. That is, responsibility for the act is at least shared by the coercive environment" (Shaw and Sulzer, 1964, p. 40). This level is of primary concern to the present proposal and shall be discussed at greater length when the concept of justification is considered.

Theories of Defensive Attribution

Other work in the area of responsibility attribution, which is somewhat independent of Heider's (1958) theory, deals with defensive attribution. Defensive attribution is of interest for it may aid in our understanding of the meaning of responsibility. Also, as will be seen later, defensive attribution may be related to justification.

Walster (1966) proposed that, for a person presented as being potentially at fault for an accident, the amount of responsibility attributed will increase with the seriousness of the accident's consequences. She argued that accidental misfortunes of slight magnitude will be attributed to chance since they are common events in the lives of everyone, e.g., the common response to an apology for a slight offense, "Think nothing of it; it happens to the best of us." However, catastrophes are not so common and people do not like to think that major misfortunes can befall them. Therefore, the person potentially at fault will be more closely and personally associated with the occurrence of the event as a means of disassociating the observer, thereby making it seem more unlikely that a similar event could happen to the observer. By assigning greater personal responsibility (blaming the actor) for the outcome, the observer differentiates himself from the actor.

In Walster's first experiment (1966) to test the hypothesis, college students listened to tape recordings which described an accident involving the automobile of a high school student. As severity of consequences increased, so also did the responsibility assigned to the automobile's owner, thereby supporting the hypothesis. The hypothesis fared less well in Walster's next report (1967). Two studies were performed in which high school and college students were provided with the following information: a person had acquired a house and had broken even or lost or gained varying amounts of money on the investment. The outcome was depicted as having been the result of external, uncontrollable events. Subjects in the first experiment assigned less responsibility to the stimulus person for extreme outcomes while subjects in the second experiment did not assign differing amounts of responsibility for extreme

outcomes. Results for both experiments were contradictory to Walster's hypothesis and earlier data. To briefly review, Walster's hypothesis was supported by one experiment, opposite results were provided by another, and no difference was found in a third.

After failing to find experimental manipulations which would provide responses supportive to Walster's (1966) hypothesis, Shaver (1970) proposed that defensive attributions were not attempts to avoid the occurrence of a negative event but were attempts to avoid blame for negative events. Of three experiments which he conducted (1970), only one produced a significant difference between responsibility attributions. For this experiment, female undergraduates were presented with the severe outcome information from Walster's 1966 experiment. The stimulus person was also presented as a female college student. Subjects were given one of two sets of instructions: to assume that they were similar to the stimulus person or different than the stimulus person. Subjects with "similar" instructions assigned less responsibility to the stimulus person than subjects with "different" instructions. Shaver proposed that when similarity is high between stimulus person and observer, the stimulus person's involvement in an accident means that the observer also can be involved in a similar accident. As the observer wants to avoid responsibility for severe accidents, the observer tends to deny that people like the observer are responsible for such accidents. Several later experiments have supported this hypothesis for negative consequences (Shaver and Carroll, 1970; Shaw and Skolnick, 1971), although support has not been unequivocal.

Definition of Responsibility

Recall that Heider (1944, 1958) apparently meant by responsibility the degree to which a person could be held accountable for an action and the degree to which he would be liable to receive social sanctions. Shaver (1970) seems to have held similar views when he equated responsibility with blame. Several problems arise from this definition. In discussing his fifth level of responsibility, Heider (1958) commented that "responsibility for the act is at least shared by the environment" (p. 114). One may ask, though, if it is possible to apply social sanctions to the environment. The environment may be considered as a causal factor, but it is somewhat immune to sanctions.

Another and more important problem concerns the interpretation of research results. Most studies which have dealt with responsibility and responsibility attributions have used responsibility in the sense that responsibility reflected causation (as examples: McMartin and Shaw, 1972; Pepitone and Sherberg, 1957; Walster, 1966 and 1967). Further, in many studies subjects have been asked questions about responsibility and the answers have been interpreted in terms of causation. Besides causation, if one were to follow Heider's definition, should not these results have been interpreted relative to the degree to which social sanctions were deserved? Perhaps the real question is when asked to assign responsibility, do subjects respond on the basis of causal influenced of sanctionability? Or stated more succinctly, what is the relationships between causation and sanctionability in responsibility attributions?

Shaw and Reitan (1969) have provided data which is relevant to these questions. They presented scenarios which represented Heider's five levels of responsibility (1958) to non-college student subjects

(lawyers, policemen, military personnel and ministers). Scenarios varied on levels, intensity of outcomes, and positive and negative quality of outcomes. The experiment involved the use of 40 scenarios with two scenarios in each cell of the design (Form A and Form B). Half of the subjects evaluated the responsibility of the actor for the outcome in each Form A scenario and assigned sanctions to the actor in each Form B scenario. This order was reversed for the other half of the subjects. Besides supporting the operation of Heider's levels in responsibility attributions, Shaw and Reitan found that the mean for responsibility attributions (mean = 2.39) was significantly greater than the mean for sanction assignment (mean = 1.59). This relationship existed in varying positive degrees across all cells of the design. Also, their data demonstrated that outcome intensity had a greater influence on sanctions than on responsibility.

The experiment by Shaw and Reitan (1969) supported their hypothesis that sanction assignments differed from responsibility attribution. Responsibility attribution was found to be a necessary, but not sufficient, consideration in sanctioning behavior.

Whiteside (1973) has also studied responsibility attributions and sanction assignments. His experiment was close to being an empirical replication of Shaw and Reitan's (1969) study. Scenarios, different than used by Shaw and Reitan, which represented Heider's levels (1958) plus another level proposed by Whiteside (1973) were presented to college student subjects. Scenarios varied on levels, intensity of negative outcome, and information content. For scenarios which presented the basic information for each level, responsibility attributions perfectly supported Heider's levels of responsibility. However, sanction assignments did not increase as levels ascended. For Heider's levels there

was only a significant difference in sanctions between Purposive Commission and Justified Commission with greater sanctions applied to Purposive Commission. The correlation between responsibility and sanction assignments was significant at the .05 level. Inspection of the correlations within levels and outcome severity indicated that the correlations were greater for the severe outcomes and often not statistically significant for the moderate outcomes. Whiteside concluded that "while sanctioning assignment and attribution of responsibility are related, the relationship is not as close as it would at first seem" (1973, p. 58).

Returning to the questions of the relationship between causation and sanctionability in responsibility attributions, the studies just cited suggest that both factors are related to responsibility. Both studies have demonstrated that sanction assignment is often affected by different considerations than are responsibility attributions. It may be safe to infer that responsibility primarily follows from perceptions of causation and that the effect of accountability is secondary. Therefore, the action of those researchers who have interpreted responsibility as causality appears to be justified.

Justification

Relevant theories of responsibility attribution and the meaning of responsibility have been reviewed. Attention may now be directed to literature in social psychology which has employed the concept of justification.

Social psychology as studied by psychologists occasionally differs from social psychology as studied by sociologists. One such difference exists in the manner in which justification is defined. Further, each

discipline has approached the problem of the influence of justified action on attributions from a different perspective. These approaches shall be discussed separately. In the next chapter a synthesis will be attempted.

Perspectives From Psychology

Psychologists in social psychology have consistently referred to justification as an external contingency which is commonly accepted as a sufficient reason for behaving in a particular manner. Discriminative stimuli and reinforcements are reasons for acting, but unless they are socially accepted as sufficient reasons for behaviors, they are not justifications. Justification has been considered in studies dealing with cognitive dissonance (see Abelson, et al., 1968) and studies of attribution processes. It was from these works that the above definition of justification was derived.

As mentioned earlier, Shaw and Sulzer (1964) titled Heider's (1958) fifth level for responsibility attribution as "Justified Commission". Paraphrasing Heider, they describe this level as one in which "[t]he person is held only partly responsible for any effect that he intentionally produced if the circumstances were such that most persons would have felt and acted as he did" (Shaw and Sulzer, 1964, p. 40). Note that the primary dimensions of justified action by this definition are (1) the circumstances of the situation and (2) socially acceptable behavior in the situation. Intentionality is also present, but the intent is induced by the circumstances and not by personal dispositions or motives. Of course a personal disposition or motive must exist which the circumstances make salient for intentionality to be elicited. However, the motives, under other circumstances, would not lead to the same

intentions. For example, a direct and immediate threat by another on one's life may elicit intentions from what may be termed a motive of self-preservation so that physical aggression is directed towards the other person. Under less extreme circumstances, though, a motive of self-preservation rarely causes one to behave in a physically aggressive manner. As another, less violent example, a person with a disposition of obedience would not be particularly predisposed toward intentions of mowing his lawn. Add a command by his wife that he mow his lawn and he develops intentions about lawn mowing. Although intentionality is a component of justified action, it can be considered as subsumed by the dimension of the circumstances of the situation. Assuming that the situation is the source of intentions, responsibility for a justified action should be attributed more to the situation than to the actor. This argument is supported by findings of Whiteside (1973) that greater situational than personal responsibility is assigned in Heider's level of Justified Commission.

The second dimension of justified action, social acceptability, is inferred from the phrase of Shaw and Sulzer (1964) "...most persons would have felt and acted as he did" (p. 40). If most people would act in a similar situation, then it may be assumed that the behavior is socially acceptable in the situation. Here, too, the situation is of importance. A behavior may be acceptable for that situation, but not other situations. Also, a behavior may not be deemed acceptable in any circumstances. Providing information to an enemy during war is considered unjustified even when doing so terminates torture.

Having extrapolated upon the Heider - Shaw and Sulzer approach to justification, it may be instructive to consider how other theorists of

attribution processes have discussed justification.

Kelley (1971) has reviewed literature on aggression in terms of the influence of justified action on attributions. He appears to have equated external justification with external causation. He indicated that intentionality is attributed to the actor for unjustified acts but not for justified acts.

Some examples: The guard on a boat prevents you from boarding but with a good justification; a bus driver passes you as you wait at a bus stop but you see that the bus is out of service and on its way to the garage; a person with whom you had an appointment calls to cancel it with the explanation that he is ill. In the arbitrary cases [that is when an external justification is absent] the attributor is pretty much reduced to attributing the behavior to the frustrating agent's own desires or whims (Kelley, 1971, p. 14).

As support for his thesis, Kelley (1971) cited several studies in which frustration or aggression from another person was either arbitrary or nonarbitrary (Burnstein and Worchel, 1962; Epstein and Taylor, 1967; Rothaus and Worchel, 1960). Subjects in these experiments responded with greater aggression toward the arbitrarily noxious person. Kelley concluded that subjects reciprocated the apparent intentions rather than the amount of injury. Subjects appeared to have assigned causation to the environment for nonarbitrary noxious stimuli and to have assigned causation to personal responsibility for arbitrary frustration or aggression. Thus, intentionality is reflected more by arbitrary than nonarbitrary (justified) action.

A few comments are offered by Kelley (1971) which are pertinent to

the social acceptability dimension of justification. He suggests that a person who complies with illegitimate power will be considered to be personally responsible for his action. Although Kelley's attention is directed to the perception of causality, he admits that attributions may also reflect attempts at "moral control". Thus, immoral action, even when resulting from strong external forces, is attributed to the actor as a means of preventing further immoral acts since sanctioning as a means of control is appropriate for acts of personal responsibility.

The effects of justified action upon perception of one's own beliefs has been considered by Nisbett and Valins (1971). They speak of insufficient justification to describe stimuli which cannot be considered as sufficient causation for behavior. Overly sufficient justification is used to describe stimuli which can be seen as more than sufficient causation. From a discussion of research on Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance and on Bem's (1967) counter-argument of self-perception, Nisbett and Valins propose that, under conditions of insufficient justification, an actor will attribute responsibility for his actions to himself and, under conditions of overly sufficient justification, responsibility will be attributed to external stimuli. The problem of interest to the authors is how an actor attributes attitudes to himself. They propose that attitudes are inferred from behavior, but, as external justification increases, "the less likely [the actor] will be to infer that his attitudes toward the stimulus are congruent with his behavior" (Nisbett and Valins, 1971, p. 77). With sufficient justification the actor perceives external stimuli to be responsible for his action; he does not need to explain his behavior in terms of his own dispositions.

The similarities among the approaches toward justification and attribution are apparent in the theories of Heider (1958), Kelley (1971), and Nisbett and Valins (1971). The conceptualizations of justification and the attribution processes are similar. The only noticeable difference is that Heider and Kelley both deal with attributions assigned by an observer and Nisbett and Valins are concerned with attributions assigned by an actor to himself.

Perspectives from Sociology

While psychologists of social psychology have considered justification as stemming from the external situation, several sociologists of social psychology have discussed justification as a representation of the actor's definition of the environment. These sociologists of the interactionist school have stressed the social nature of one's definition of the environment. They have not dealt with attributions of responsibility or dispositions, but have contributed much to an understanding of processes effecting the attribution of identities and labels (Lofland, 1969; Schur, 1971; Scott and Lyman, 1968). The work of Scott and Lyman (1968) will be used to illustrate this approach.

Scott and Lyman (1968) are concerned with attempts by actors of untoward action to provide explanations which relieve themselves of blame. These explanations, or definitions of the situation, are referred to as accounts. Two types of accounts are discussed: excuses and justifications. Excuses are defined as "socially approved vocabularies" which shift blame to external phenomena. Justifications assert that an individual is responsible for an event, but that an outcome's negative characteristics are outweighed by positive characteristics. Observe that

Scott and Lyman's use of "excuse" is more similar to justification as defined earlier than is their use of "justification". Instead of focusing justification on the action and situation as did Heider and others mentioned earlier, Scott and Lyman focus justification on the outcome and situation. The authors cite several types of excuses and justifications but seem to consider both excuses and justifications to function similarly as accounts.

The acceptance of an account by others is dependent upon several variables. The major variable, however, is whether or not an other is a member of one of the actor's "speech communities" (Scott and Lyman, 1968). Individuals are usually a member in several speech communities which are human aggregates in which the individual frequently interacts. Each such community develops norms for the description of actions and the expression of motives. If an account for an action fits with those accounts which are normative for the community, there is a greater probability of acceptance than otherwise. Certain accounts are appropriate only within the speech forms of a specific community. Therefore, it can be seen that accounts are social phenomena whose expression and acceptance is dependent upon other social phenomena. As stated by C. Wright Mills, "What is reason for one man is rationalization for another" (1940, p. 909).

CHAPTER II

PROBLEM

Justification Reconsidered

Psychologists have considered the influence of external justification upon attributions assigned by observers. As a simplification, sociologists have considered what might be described as internal justification: justifications as presented by actors. To draw a synthesis from these perspectives, consider that the definition of external contingencies sufficient to justify specific actions is learned through social interaction (Bandura and Walters, 1963). This understanding of the social nature of external justification is similar to the social nature of acceptable accounts (Scott and Lyman, 1968). Thus, as actors learn through social interaction to propose acceptable accounts, so do observers learn to determine justifying contingencies. Both phenomena are based on socially defined ways of viewing and expressing relationships in the physical and social environment.

When the social nature of justifying contingencies is made salient, a question emerges which may not otherwise have been evident: "What are the conditions which influence the degree to which a specific observer will consider a specific act as justified?" Why do some people consider an act as justified while others do not?

If one were to find oneself in a burning house, there exists wide agreement that one is justified in removing oneself from the premises.

However, in some former societies the new widow was not to remove herself from her late husband's pyre as she and much of her husband's property were to travel in death with the husband. Her death was justified and not to have remained on the pyre would have been unjustified. If one has supported a president who is later found to have committed acts of questionable legality, he who has supported the president is much more likely to consider the acts as justified than others who have views at variance with the president. The example of how to behave when in a fire illustrates widely accepted social definitions and justification is unlikely to be disputed within the social settings. The example of a possibly miscreant president displays disputed justification and the dispute appears to center on divergent attitudes. Thus, it appears attitudes may influence perceptions of justification.

Heider (1958) suggested that environmental forces which exert a powerful influence toward an action are major components of Justified Commission. It thus appears likely that the degree of situational influence will effect perceptions of justification. Recall the formerly popular question used by Selective Service Boards to disqualify applicants for Conscientious Objector status: "What would you do if a man were about to kill your wife and you had no way to stop him but by killing him?" Although the applicant may have been against killing in war, he was presented with what most applicants would consider as justification for killing. A non-conscientious objector would be more likely to consider both killing in war and killing to remove dire threats as justified. Returning to the example of a miscreant president, those opposed to the president would require less information on criminal activities in order to think that removal from office would be justified

than would those persons who had supported the president. But, if information on criminal activities continued to increase, eventually former supporters would consider removal from office as justified while members of the opposition would continue to believe it justified. While it is unwise to base a theory on anecdotal information, these examples suggest an influence of situational forces on perceived justification. Also, they suggest that differences in situational forces may have a greater influence on individuals who have a generally unfavorable attitude toward an action.

As with the Heider (1958) - Shaw and Sulzer (1964) definition of justification, perceptions of justification may be described as dependent upon two dimensions. The dominant dimension is suggested to be the degree to which an actor's behavior reflects motives or attitudes which are shared or approved by the attributor. This dimension shall be entitled "Attitude", and will refer to the attributor's attitude. The second dimension, entitled "Situation", is considered to be the degree to which situational forces are perceived by the attributor as eliciting the response. Hypothesis 1 of the current study predicts that observers for whom an action reflects approved attitudes will consider the action as more justified than will observers who do not approve of the reflected attitude. Hypothesis 2 states that, under conditions of low situational demand, subjects will consider an act as less justified than when the same act is performed under high situational demand. Hypothesis 2a, however, states that judgments of justification will be less affected by apparent situational demand for observers who approve of the actor's attitudes than will be judgments by observers who do not approve of the actor's attitudes. Thus, judgments by observers with attitudes divergent to the actor's attitudes will be more influenced by situational demand.

Responsibility Attributions

Heider's (1958) levels for responsibility attribution were discussed above. Shaw and Reitan (1969) and Whiteside (1973) have provided evidence that high personal responsibility is assigned for acts at the level of Purposive Commission while relatively low personal responsibility is assigned at the level of Justified Commission. From Heider's (1958) description of each level it can be seen that the central factor in Purposive Commission is that the actor intended to perform the action and the intention resulted from the actor's dispositions and motives. For the level of Justified Commission, the actor intended to perform the action, but the intention resulted from situational constraints. Hence, the difference between these two levels is that in one intentionality is seen as deriving from environmental influences. Given an intentional act, responsibility attributions are dependent upon cognitions about the origin of intentions. It is suggested that the variables Attitudes and Situation influence these cognitions. When conditions are favorable to perceptions of justification, attributions are expected to be similar to earlier findings with the level of Justified Commission. When conditions are unfavorable to perceptions of justification, attributions should be similar to findings with Purposive Commission.

Hypothesis 3 states that observers who do not share the attitudes reflected by an action will assign more personal responsibility than impersonal responsibility. Further, this pattern should be reversed for subjects who approve of the actor's motives. Hypothesis 4 predicts that greater impersonal responsibility will be attributed when apparent situational constraints are high and greater personal responsibility will be assigned when situational constraints are low. This hypothesis is

modified slightly by Hypothesis 4a which states that attributions by disapproving observers will be more influenced by manipulation of situational impact than will be attributions by approving subjects.

The degree of situational influence upon an action has been presented as a variable effecting perceptions of justification. As a test of this assertion, Hypothesis 5 predicts that a positive relationship will exist between perceived justification and attributions of impersonal responsibility.

Defensive Attribution

Shaver (1970) has proposed that when an actor is similar to an observer, the observer is very likely to make increasingly defensive attributions for the actor as outcome severity increases. Recall that to assign less personal responsibility in order to avoid blame is Shaver's definition of a defensive attribution. Note also that an observer is very likely to see others who are presented as being "similar" (Shaver, 1970), or similar in sex and status (Shaver and Carroll, 1970) as behaving from similar attitudes. As a variation on Shaw and Sulzer's (1964) definition of Justified Commission, one could say for a similar other that "...[the observer] would have felt and acted as [the actor] did...". As Shaver's defensive attributions for outcome severity has actor-observer similarity as its central determinant, and as perceived justification also is proposed to be influenced by similarity, theoretical parsimony may be achieved by considering defensive attribution as an example of the effect of justification upon responsibility attributions.

When the conditions conducive to perceived justification are present, Hypothesis 6 predicts that, as action extremity increases, impersonal

responsibility will increase and personal responsibility will decrease. When conditions favorable to perceived justification are absent, impersonal responsibility will decrease and personal responsibility will increase as action extremity increases.

The primary concerns of the present investigation are to determine factors which influence perceptions of justification and to determine the influence of these factors upon attributions of responsibility. Defensive attributions as attributions for extreme actions are included as a secondary issue to study possible generalizations of perceived justification. Conditions thought necessary for the major concerns have imposed two possible handicaps on the investigation of defensive attribution. These limitations are that theorists of defensive attribution have consistently studied attribution for accidents and extreme outcomes while the present concern is with intentional action and extreme actions. Although observers may be as defensive for intentional acts as for accidents, it is an empirical question which this study does not systematically investigate and, therefore, may pose a problem to interpretation. The difference between extreme outcomes and extreme actions is thought to be a smaller thorn. In the present experiment, increases in action extremity imply increases in outcome extremity.

Attraction

A positive relationship between attitude similarity and interpersonal attraction has been demonstrated in an impressive number of experiments (for reviews see Byrne, 1971, or Griffitt, 1974). It has been argued in the present paper that when an actor's behavior is seen as being motivated by approved attitudes, an observer will consider the behavior

as justified. Therefore, in making a case for the effects of perceived justification on attributions, it may appear that a case is being made also for the effects of attraction on attributions. In observation of actions among friends, this confounding may indeed be common. In the present study, however, it is believed that justification will be a more potent influence than attraction.

Byrne (1971) has pointed to data which indicate that attraction for another increases as the number of similar attitudes increases. With a few similar attitudes attraction is relatively small and with many similar attitudes attraction is relatively high. In the present study, one salient attitude will be reflected by an action. Observers will either agree or disagree with the attitude. As only one attitude will be presented, it is expected that attributions will be more closely related to perceived justification than to attraction (Hypothesis 7).

Summary of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Observers for whom an action reflects approved attitudes will consider the action as more justified than will observers who do not approve of the reflected attitudes.

Hypothesis 2: Under conditions of low situational demand, subjects will consider an act as less justified than when the act is performed under high situational demand.

Hypothesis 2a: Justification will be less effected by manipulation of situational demand for observers who approve of an actor's attitudes than will be judgments by

observers who do not approve of the actor's attitude.

Hypothesis 3: Observers who do not approve of the attitudes reflected by an action will assign more personal responsibility than impersonal responsibility and this pattern will be reversed for observers who do approve of the attitudes.

Hypothesis 4: Greater impersonal responsibility will be attributed when apparent situational constraints are high and greater personal responsibility will be attributed when constraints are low.

Hypothesis 4a: Attributions by disapproving observers will be more influenced by manipulations of situational impact than will attributions by approving observers.

Hypothesis 5: A positive relationship will exist between perceived justification and attributions of impersonal responsibility.

Hypothesis 6: When conditions conducive to perceived justification are present, impersonal responsibility will increase and personal responsibility will decrease as action extremity increases. The opposite pattern should occur when conditions unfavorable to perceptions of justification are present.

Hypothesis 7: Attributions will be more closely related to perceived justification than to attraction.

Attitude Material

To test the above hypotheses an action is required which reflects

attitudes important to the experimental subjects and attitudes on which subjects disagree. For economy it was thought best to select an attitude on which subjects would strongly and fairly evenly divide. Introductory psychology students at Oklahoma State University were surveyed on a wide variety of attitudes. The topic of abortion was selected as it appeared to have the best fit with selection criteria. It follows that an action which would reflect attitudes toward abortion would be the action of having an abortion.

The use of an abortion as the stimulus material presents two possible problems. The first problem is to determine who is the actor. Medical abortions are performed upon pregnant women, but a woman cannot become pregnant without a mate. Therefore, should a woman, a man, or both be presented as the actor? A consideration of common verbal descriptions of abortions indicates that the woman is usually considered the actor; "Mary had an abortion", "Joe's wife had an abortion", or "He told his wife to have an abortion". As can be seen even in the case in which the husband instructs his wife to have an abortion, the wife "has" the abortion. Perhaps the only manner in which a man is seen as the actor is when a male doctor performs the abortion. To avoid possible confounding effects of presenting a medical doctor (high status) as the stimulus person, the actor in the experiment was presented as a woman. Responsibility of the woman's husband was assessed to check the validity of the assumption that the woman would be seen as the primary actor.

A second possible problem from the selection of abortion is related to the first. Men may view responsibility for an abortion differently than do women since women are the ones who have abortions. Men may consider women more responsible while women may consider men more

responsible. This particular battle of the sexes is considered unlikely, especially in the current experiment in which the woman is identified as the actor. However, since such a possibility cannot be disregarded, the effect of subjects' sex on the dependent variables will be investigated.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Subjects

The subjects were 156 students in introductory psychology who received course credit for participating in the experiment. Twenty-one of the subjects were students at Oklahoma State University and 135 subjects were students at Tulsa University. The distribution of subjects by sex was 69 males and 87 females.

Procedure and Stimulus Material

Each subject was given a booklet which contained instructions, stimulus material, and response items. The first page of the booklet contained instructions on how to report responses. The second page presented a question on the subject's attitude toward abortion:

Only under the most extreme circumstances should a woman
be allowed to have an abortion

Strongly agree.Strongly disagree

Stimulus material was presented on the third page of each booklet. This material consisted of a description of a Situation and Action. Situation and Action were independent variables with two levels of each. A booklet presented one level of both variables.

The two conditions of Situation were (1) High Situational Force and (2) Low Situational Force. Respectively:

Situation

Herb and Fern were a young married couple. Both of them were working part-time to put themselves through college. Their parents could not afford to help pay their way through school. During their freshman year, Fern became pregnant. Having a child at that time would severely hinder their getting through college. Fern would have to stay at home with the baby and Herb would have to work full-time at a low-paying job to support them.

Situation

Herb and Fern were a young married couple. Both of them were full-time college students. Their parents had comfortable incomes and were glad to provide money for Herb and Fern while they were in school. During their freshman year, Fern became pregnant. Having a child at that time would not hinder their getting through college. They had sufficient resources to take care of any added expenses such as medical or baby-sitting expenses.

The two conditions of Action were (1) Low Extreme and (2) High Extreme. Respectively:

Action

During the second month of the pregnancy, Fern terminated her pregnancy by having an abortion.

Action

During the fifth month of the pregnancy, Fern terminated her pregnancy by having an abortion.

Dependent measures concerning responsibility assignment, justification, and attraction were taken following presentation of the stimulus material. These measures were in the following form.

How much do you consider Fern to be responsible for the Action?

Very little.Very much

How much do you consider the Situation to be responsible for the Action?

Very little.Very much

How much do you consider the Action to have been justified?

Very little.Very much

How much do you think you would like Fern?

Very little.Very much

How much do you consider Herb to be responsible for the Action?

Very little.Very much

Subjects were instructed to respond by circling a point on each 15-point scale which reflected their answer to a question.

On the last page of the booklet, subjects were asked to indicate their sex.

Ethics

Before beginning their participation, subjects were informed that it was acceptable to terminate participation at any time. This information was repeated twice in the experiment booklets. All subjects completed the experiment.

On the final page of the booklet, subjects were asked if they had been offended by the experiment. No subject indicated that offense had been taken.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

Subjects were assigned to the levels of Attitude (Pro or Anti abortion) on the basis of their responses to the question concerning attitudes toward abortion. Twelve subjects who provided neutral responses were removed from the analyses. As there were 16 cells in the ANOVA design (disregarding the repeated measure analyses) and the fewest number of subjects in a cell was five, subjects were randomly eliminated from other cells to achieve an equal cell size of five. Thus, data from 80 subjects was included in the analyses.

Data from each dependent variable was subjected to an analysis of variance. Each analysis of variance included Attitude, Situation, Action, and Sex (of subject) as independent variables. Before proceeding to present results related to hypothesis testing, data pertaining to the use of abortion as a stimulus topic will be presented. Two possible problems from the use of this topic were mentioned earlier.

The first problem was to determine the actor in an abortion: the wife or the husband. It was proposed that the woman usually is considered to be the primary actor. The experimental material was prepared on this assumption. To test the validity of this assumption in the experiment, responsibility assignments for the wife and for the husband were treated as repeated measures in an analysis of variance. The ANOVA

included the other independent variables. Responsibility assignments were found to be greater for the wife, $M = 11.9$, than for the husband, $M = 9.9$, $F(1, 64) = 12.95$, $p < .009$. Also, there were no first order, second order, or fourth order interactions of other variables with the responsibility of husband and wife in this analysis. One third order interaction was significant, the interaction with Attitude x Action x Sex of subject, $F(1, 64) = 4.16$, $p < .04$, but the pattern of greater responsibility for the wife was not disturbed. The assumption that the wife would be considered as the primary actor appears supported. Throughout the remainder of this chapter, references to the actor and to personal responsibility will be references to the wife.

The second possible problem from the use of abortion as the stimulus topic was the possibility that men and women may make differing assignments of responsibility for an abortion. In anticipation of this problem, sex of subject was included as an independent variable in all analyses of variance. However, in no analysis was the sex main effect significant. In the analyses of the measures of justification and attraction, there were no significant interaction effects which included sex. There was one interaction effect which did include sex in the responsibility analysis (personal and impersonal responsibility were treated as repeated measures of Responsibility) which was significant. This interaction was the interaction of Attitude x Action x Sex x Responsibility, $F(1, 64) = 5.48$, $p = .02$. Simple effects tests (Kirk, 1968) revealed that anti-abortion men had assigned more impersonal responsibility, $M = 8.8$, than had anti-abortion women, $M = 4.6$, for the more extreme action, $F(1, 64) = 5.67$, $p < .02$. There were no other significant simple effects across sex. Thus, it would appear that the results of this experiment

may be confidently generalized across both sexes.

Justification

The analysis of variance of the measure of justification (summary in Appendix A) revealed two significant effects: Attitude, $F(1, 64) = 64.95$, $p < .0001$, and Attitude x Situation, $F(1, 64) = 4.29$, $p < .04$. Inspection of the means for the levels of Attitude, $M_{\text{pro}} = 11.65$ versus $M_{\text{anti}} = 4.65$, indicated that subjects with favorable attitudes toward abortion found the action to be considerably more justified than did the anti-abortion subjects, thus offering support for Hypothesis 1.

The means for the Attitude x Situation interaction are presented in Table 1. Simple effect tests yielded a nonsignificant comparison between the levels of Situation for the anti-abortion subjects, but for pro-abortion subjects the more demanding situation produced greater justification than did the less demanding situation, $F(1, 64) = 6.79$, $p < .05$. The simple effects do not support Hypothesis 2a, in fact they indicate that differences were in the opposite direction than predicted. Comparing the correlations of Situation with justification for Pro subjects, $r = .45$, and for Anti subjects, $r = -.04$, by Fisher's r to z transformation (Hays, 1963) further supports the difference, $z = 2.29$, $p < .01$.

Hypothesis 2, that overall the more demanding Situation would result in greater justification, was not supported by the Situation main effect, $F(1, 64) = 2.59$, $p < .11$. However, as just mentioned, the Attitude x Situation interaction revealed that Situation did influence judgments of justification for pro-abortion subjects. Hypothesis 2, therefore, appears to apply to pro-abortion subjects but not to anti-abortion subjects.

TABLE 1
 MEAN JUSTIFICATION RESPONSES AS A FUNCTION
 OF ATTITUDE AND SITUATION*

Attitude	Situational Demand	
	Low	High
Pro	10.05 ^{ab}	13.25 ^{ac}
Anti	4.85 ^b	4.45 ^c

* Larger values indicate responses of greater justification. Means sharing the same superscript are significantly different at the .05 level or beyond by simple effect tests.

Responsibility Attributions

For the analysis of variance for responsibility attributions, attributions of personal and impersonal responsibility were treated as repeated measures of a variable titled Responsibility (summary in Appendix A). The analysis was a 2 x 2 x 2 x 2 x 2 orthogonal design with Attitude, Situation, Action, Sex, and Responsibility as simple main effects. Hypothesis 3 was tested via simple effects of the interaction effect of Attitude x Responsibility. It was predicted that observers who approved of the attitudes reflected by an action would assign more impersonal than personal responsibility while disapproving observers would assign more personal than impersonal responsibility. Means for the Attitude x Responsibility interaction are presented in Table 2. The interaction was found to be significant, $F(1, 64) = 13.43$, $p < .0008$. Simple effect

tests indicated that Anti subjects did assign more personal than impersonal responsibility, $F(1, 64) = 44.09$, $p < .0001$, but that the difference in attributions was not significant for Pro subjects, $F < 1$. These results only support Hypothesis 3 as it pertains to anti-abortion subjects. The hypothesis failed complete support.

TABLE 2
MEAN RESPONSIBILITY ATTRIBUTIONS AS
A FUNCTION OF ATTITUDE*

Attitude	Responsibility Source	
	Personal	Impersonal
Pro	11.075	10.375 ^a
Anti	12.7 ^b	6.875 ^{ab}

* Larger values indicate attributions of greater responsibility. Means sharing the same superscript are significantly different at the .05 level or beyond by simple effect tests.

Simple effect tests on the Attitude x Responsibility interaction further revealed a difference in assignments of impersonal responsibility between Pro and Anti subjects, $F(1, 64) = 15.92$, $p < .0008$, and a difference in personal responsibility assignments which approached an acceptable level of significance, $F(1, 64) = 3.43$, $p < .07$.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that greater impersonal than personal

responsibility would be attributed when apparent situational constraints are high and greater personal responsibility should be assigned under conditions of low situational demand. The hypothesis was tested through simple effects tests on the Situation x Responsibility interaction. The interaction was significant, $F(1, 64) = 7.29$, $p < .0009$, and the means for the interaction are displayed in Table 3. The tests indicated that under low situational demand more responsibility was placed at personal responsibility, $F(1, 64) = 34.47$, $p < .0001$, while attributions did not significantly differ at high situational demand, $F(1, 64) = 2.46$, ns. Hence, Hypothesis 4 also failed full support. It was supported for low but not high situational demand.

TABLE 3
MEAN RESPONSIBILITY ATTRIBUTIONS AS
A FUNCTION OF SITUATION*

Situational Demand	Personal	Impersonal
Low	12.35 ^a	7.2 ^{ab}
High	11.425	10.05 ^b

* Larger values indicate attributions of greater responsibility. Means sharing the same superscript are significantly different at the .05 level or beyond by simple effect tests.

Hypothesis 4a stated that attributions by disapproving observers would be more influenced by differences in the variable Situation than would be attributions by approving observers. The hypothesis was tested by analyses on the Attitude x Situation x Responsibility interaction. The interaction main effect was nonsignificant ($F < 1$) so that simple effect tests were considered inappropriate (Kirk, 1968). As the hypothesis required nonorthogonal, pairwise comparisons, Tukey's HSD statistic (Kirk, 1968) was employed. These tests (Table 4) provided one significant comparison which was across Situation at impersonal responsibility for Pro subjects. Instead of affecting attributions of Anti subjects, Situation affected the impersonal responsibility attributions of Pro subjects. Thus, Hypothesis 4a was not supported.

Hypothesis 5 predicted that a positive relationship would exist between the dependent variables justification and impersonal responsibility. The product-moment correlation coefficient between these variables supported this hypothesis, $r(79) = .56$, $p < .0001$. Although no prediction had been offered, it is of interest that personal responsibility negatively correlated with justification, $r(79) = -.29$, $p < .009$.

Defensive Attribution

Hypothesis 6 predicted that, when the conditions for internal justification are present as compared to when the conditions are not present, impersonal responsibility should increase and personal responsibility should decrease as action extremity increases. The opposite directions should occur when the conditions for justification are not present. The conditions for justification have been proposed to be a favorable attitude and high situational demand for action. Conditions which hinder

TABLE 4
 MEAN RESPONSIBILITY ATTRIBUTIONS AS A
 FUNCTION OF ATTITUDE AND SITUATION

Situational Demand	Attitude					
	Pro			Anti		
	Responsibility Source			Responsibility Source		
	Personal	Impersonal	(Difference)	Personal	Impersonal	(Difference)
Low	11.8	8.6	3.2***	12.9	5.8	7.1****
High	10.35	12.15	1.8	12.4	7.95	4.45****
(Difference)	1.45	3.55**		0.5	2.15	

Tukey's HSD values: error pooled
 *2.48 $\underline{p} < .05$
 **3.30 $\underline{P} < .01$

error within
 ***2.80 $\underline{p} < .05$
 ****3.72 $\underline{p} < .01$

justification have been considered to be an unfavorable attitude and low situational demand. These conditions were compared within the Attitude x Situation x Action x Responsibility interaction of the Responsibility Attribution analysis of variance. As the third-order interaction was nonsignificant, $F(1, 64) = 1.99$, ns, and the pairwise comparisons were nonorthogonal, Tukey's HSD statistic was employed (complete results in Appendix C). The means of the different levels of Action with the conditions favorable and unfavorable to justification upon attributions of responsibility are depicted in Figure 1. Visual inspection of Figure 1 will reveal that the hypothesis did not successfully predict differences in personal responsibility. Subjects unfavorable to justification hardly differed across Action while subjects in favorable conditions did significantly differ across action at the .05 level of significance, but in the unpredicted direction. Further, personal responsibility attributions did differ ($p < .01$) across favorable and unfavorable conditions for the second month abortion (less extreme action), although attributions for the more extreme action were not appreciably different. Greater differences were expected for the fifth month abortion (extreme action) than for the second month abortion.

Maintaining attention on Figure 1, it will be noted that attributions of impersonal responsibility were in the predicted directions. For both conditions of Action, subjects in conditions favorable to justification assigned greater impersonal responsibility than did subjects in unfavorable conditions. However, judgments did not diverge significantly across action extremity within either favorable or unfavorable groups. Hence, although impersonal responsibility attributions appear to support the hypothesis, differences are of insufficient magnitude. Neither

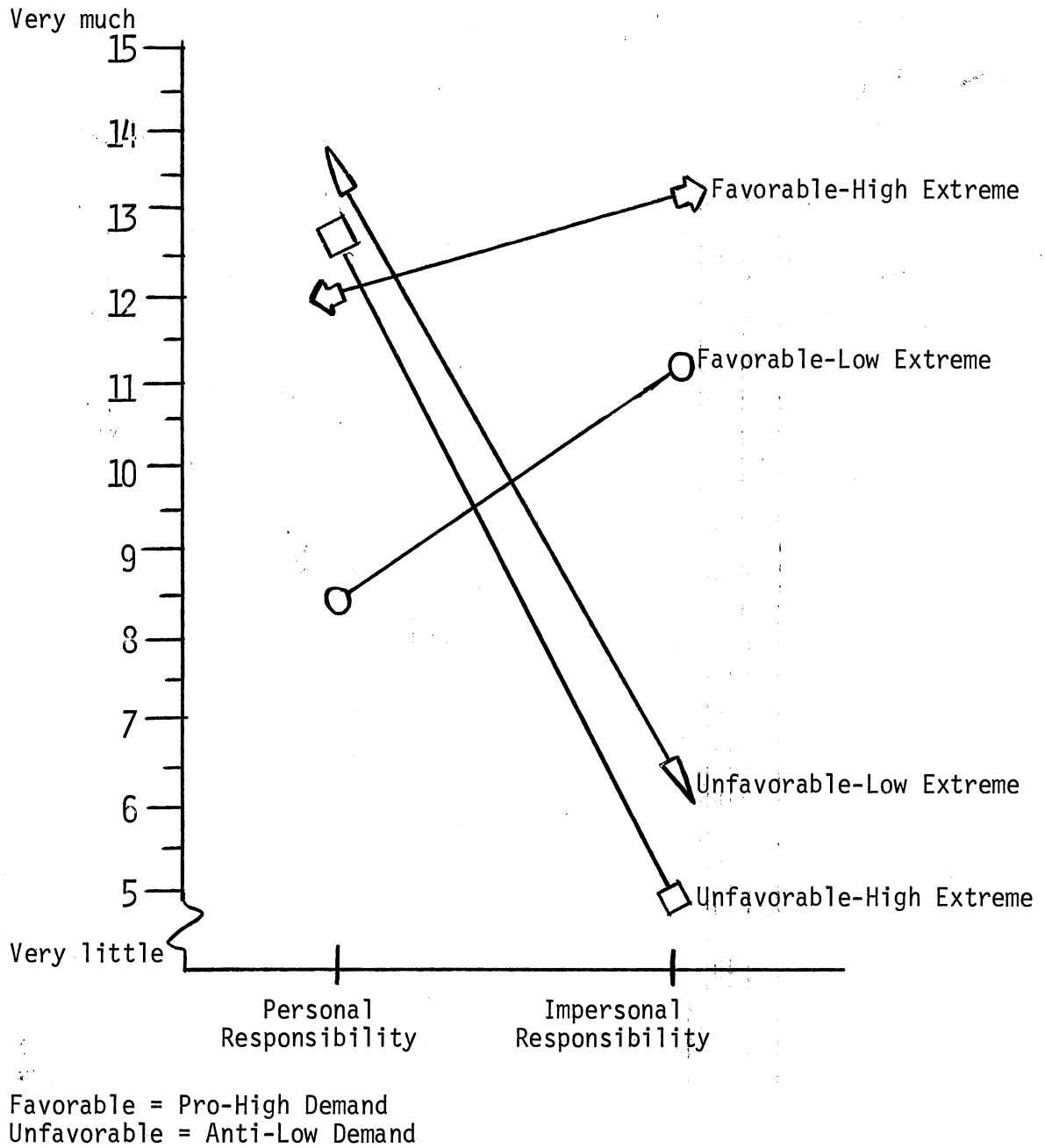


Figure 1. Responsibility Attributions in Conditions Theoretically Favorable and Unfavorable to Justification

personal nor impersonal responsibility assignments support the hypothesis.

Although Hypothesis 6 was not supported, it may be of value to further inspect the Attitude x Situation x Action x Responsibility interaction. The interaction was analyzed at each level of Situation. Figure 2 presents the pattern of means within the high demand situation and Figure 3 presents the means within the low demand situations. Besides the redundant information, similarities may be noted between Figure 1 and Figure 2. With Tukey's HSD statistic, personal responsibility did significantly differ ($p < .05$) across Attitude for the second month but not fifth month abortion. For impersonal responsibility at each level of Action, pro-abortion subjects attributed more impersonal responsibility than anti-abortion subjects ($p < .01$). Once more, though, within each level of Attitude there were nonsignificant differences across Action.

Moving to Figure 3, Tukey's test indicated no differences in personal responsibility by Attitude or by Action. However, interesting differences are to be found among attributions of impersonal responsibility. Impersonal responsibility did not differ across Attitude for the less extreme action while attributions did diverge ($p < .01$) across Attitude for the more extreme action and in the predicted direction. Also, pro-abortion subjects in the more extreme action condition assigned greater impersonal responsibility than did pro subjects in the less extreme condition ($p < .05$). According to Scheffe's S ratio (Kirk, 1968) the difference between the levels of Attitude at the more extreme action was greater than the difference between the levels of Attitude at the less extreme action, $F(3, 64) = 4.01$, $p < .0125$. Thus, an example of defensive attribution was found in the impersonal responsibility attributions of subjects in the low demand level of the variable Action.

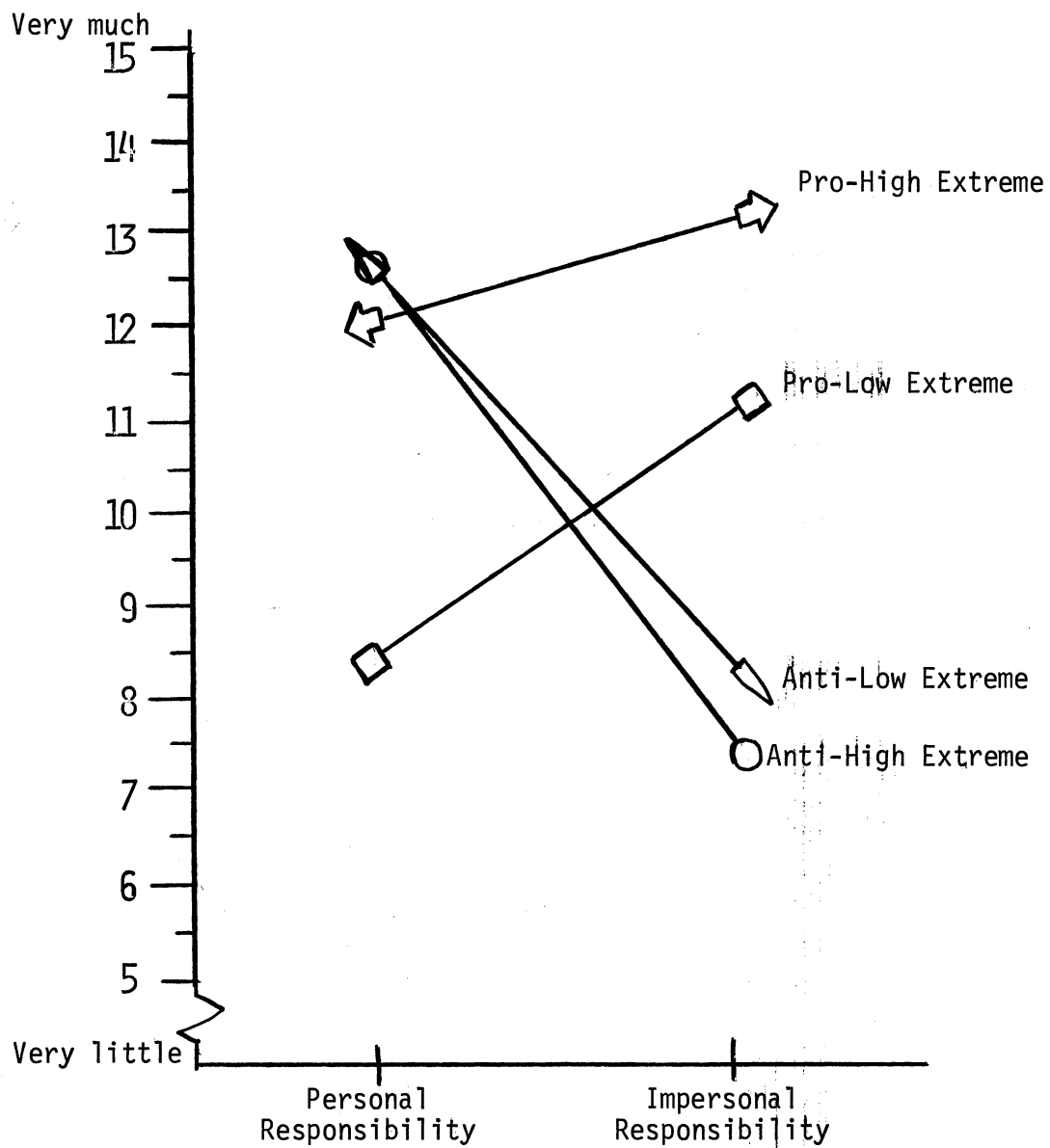


Figure 2. Responsibility Attributions with High Situational Demand

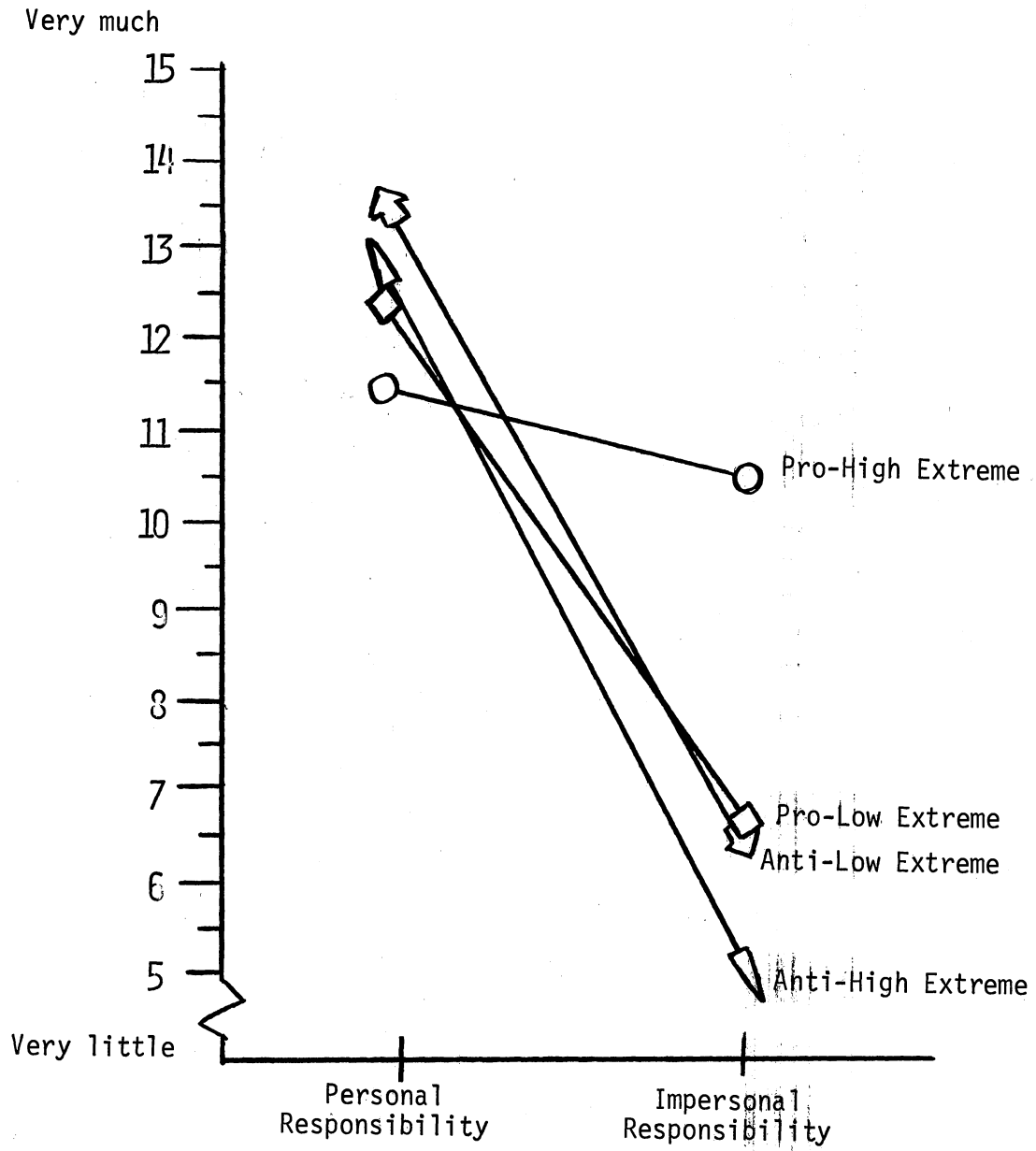


Figure 3. Responsibility Attributions within Low Situational Demand

Attraction

As Hypothesis 7, it was predicted that judgments of justification would be more likely to influence judgments of responsibility than would subjects' attraction for the stimulus person. This hypothesis was tested with the aid of Fisher's r to z transformation by comparing the responsibility items' correlations with the measure of justification and with the measure of attraction (Table 5). The correlations of personal responsibility with justification and with attraction were almost identical. However, the correlation of impersonal responsibility with justification was greater than the impersonal responsibility - attraction correlation, $z = 2.34$, $p < .01$, one-tailed. Hypothesis 7 is, therefore, supported only for impersonal responsibility.

TABLE 5
CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS OF ATTITUDE AND
RESPONSIBILITY ATTRIBUTIONS WITH
JUSTIFICATION AND ATTRACTION

	Attitude	Personal Responsibility	Impersonal Responsibility
Justification	.67	-.29	.56
Attraction	.38	-.27	.36

Another comparison between correlations adds support to the contention that the salient influences present in the study have more to do with justification than with attraction. Note in Table 5 that the variable Attitude has a greater correlation with justification than with attraction, $z = 3.66$, $p < .0002$.

An interesting observation may be made about the relationship between justification and attraction. As can be seen in Appendix B, justification correlates more with attraction than does any other variable in the study. This observation may have implications for attraction theory.

Justification as an Independent Variable

The presentation of the results of the analysis of variance for the measure of justification provided support for the proposed dimensions affecting justification. Attitude was found to be the dominant dimension and Situation influenced the judgments made by subjects with a favorable attitude. The analysis of variance for the responsibility attributions indicated that the variables Attitude and Situation were both significant influences on attribution. Since the dimensions of justification influenced responsibility attributions, it may be inferred that perceived justification for an act is related to attributions of responsibility for the act. That such a relationship exists is supported by the correlation coefficients. While viable inferences may be drawn from these analyses concerning the influence of justification upon attributions, a clearer perspective may be gained by employing justification as an independent variable. Such a strategy would be particularly applicable to determining the influence of justification on defensive

attributions as the dimensional approach failed to provide compelling evidence of a relationship between justification and defensive attribution.

For an ANOVA analysis of the effects of justification on attributions, judgments of justification were classed into two groups: High Justification and Low Justification. Since a 15 point scale had been used for responses, responses above eight were assigned to the High Justification conditions and responses below eight were assigned to Low Justification. Five subjects who had rated justification at eight on the scale were removed from the analysis. Justification as an independent variable was included in an analysis of variance along with Action and Responsibility. Once more Responsibility was a repeated measure for personal and impersonal responsibility. To achieve equal cell sizes across the conditions of Justification and Action, eleven more subjects were selected at random to be removed from the analysis. While 16 subjects which had been included in the original analyses were not included in this analysis, subjects from the original conditions were represented approximately equally within the remaining 64 subjects.

Results of the analysis (summary in Appendix A) demonstrated a significant Justification x Responsibility interaction, $F(1, 60) = 31.4$, $p < .0001$. Means for the interaction are shown in Table 6. Simple effect tests revealed several differences of interest. Personal responsibility was greater at Low Justification than at High Justification, $F(1, 60) = 7.99$, $p < .01$, and impersonal responsibility was greater at High Justification than at Low Justification, $F(1, 60) = 32.73$, $p < .0001$. At Low Justification more personal than impersonal responsibility was assigned, $F(1, 60) = 58.42$, $p < .0001$, while responsibility attributions did not differ at High Justification ($F < 1$).

TABLE 6
 MEAN RESPONSIBILITY ATTRIBUTIONS AS
 A FUNCTION OF JUSTIFICATION*

Justification	Responsibility Source	
	Personal	Impersonal
Low	13.47 ^{ab}	5.81 ^{ac}
High	10.84 ^b	11.13 ^c

* Larger values indicate attributions of greater responsibility. Means sharing the same superscript are significantly different at the .01 level or beyond by simple effect tests.

To examine the influence of Justification on defensive attributions the Justification x Action x Responsibility interaction was inspected. The pattern of means for this interaction effect is depicted in Figure 4. The interaction effect being nonsignificant ($F < 1$), Tukey's HSD statistic was employed. From Figure 4 it is apparent that Action did not effect attributions within the Low Justification condition. A significant difference also was not found between personal responsibility attributions across Action in High Justification. But, for the High Justification condition greater impersonal responsibility was assigned for the more extreme action ($p < .01$). Thus, as action severity increases, subjects who saw the act as justified assigned more impersonal responsibility. Note that the defensiveness among impersonal responsibility attributions is consistent with the defensive attribution results described earlier.

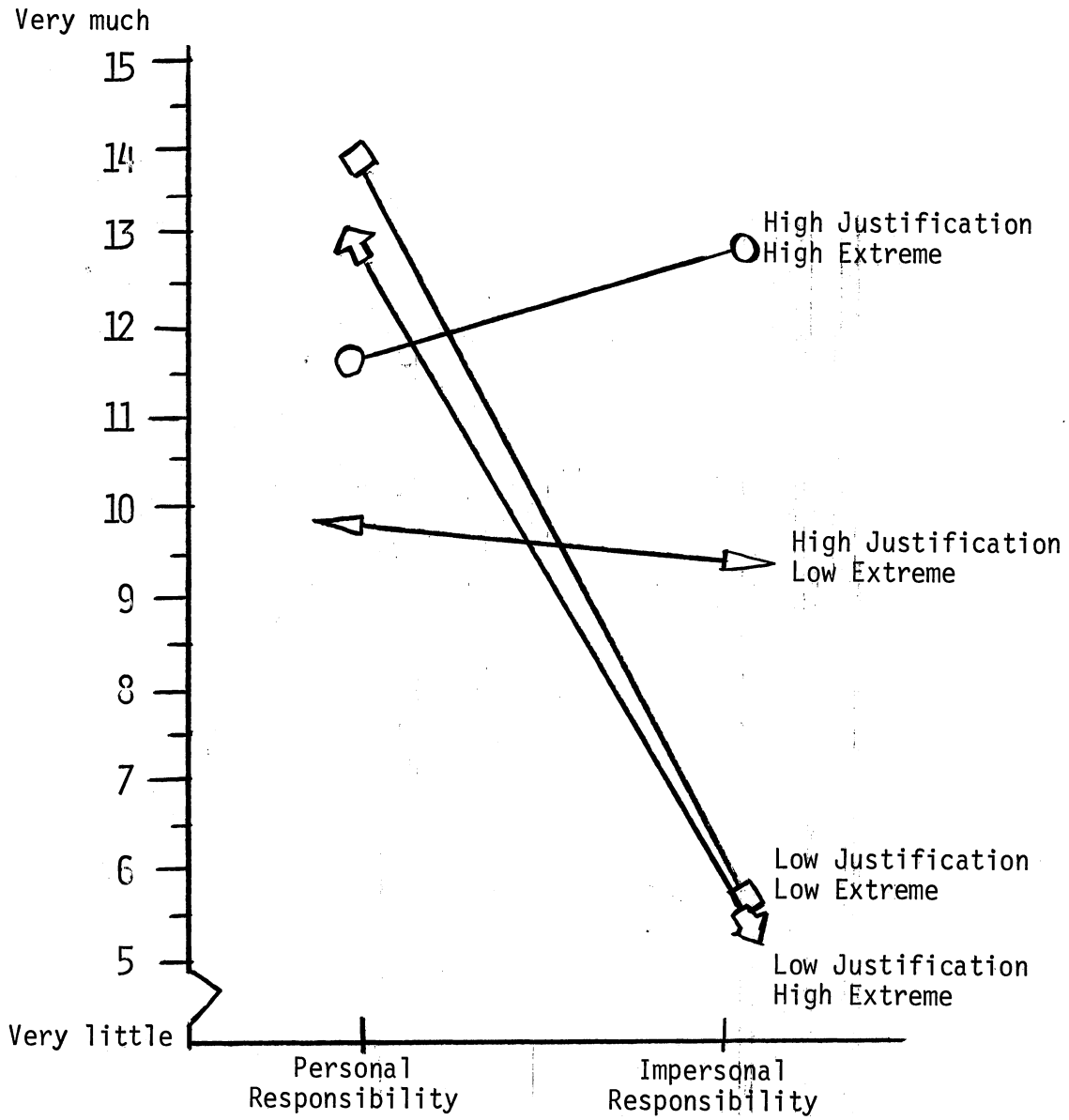


Figure 4. Responsibility Attributions with Justification as an Independent Variable

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Justification and Responsibility Attributions

The Dimensions of Justification

The variable Attitude was found to be the dominant influence on perceived justification. Subjects who approved of the general class of similar acts considered the act to be more justified than did subjects who did not approve of the class of acts. The variable Situation, that is whether or not the actor's situation constrained choice of action, operated secondarily to Attitude. Situation influenced justification ratings for subjects with favorable attitudes but it did not effect justification for unfavorable subjects. Even though favorable subjects thought the less demanding situation was less justifying than the more demanding situation, in both conditions of Situation the pro-abortion subjects assigned greater justification than did the anti-abortion subjects. Therefore, the dominance of Attitude as a variable effecting perceptions of justification is quite apparent.

The differential influence of Situation on subjects favorable and unfavorable to the act requires comment. Why did subjects favorable to the act vary ratings of justification according to situational demand while unfavorable subjects did not? A foundation for an answer to this question will emerge from an analysis of the relationship between

justification and responsibility attributions.

The dimensions of justification, Attitude and Situation, operated much the same on responsibility attributions as they did on the measure of justification. This comparison is particularly applicable to attributions of impersonal responsibility. The comparison is evidenced by three findings. (1) Pro-abortion subjects assigned greater impersonal responsibility than did anti-abortion subjects but pro subjects assigned only slightly less personal responsibility than did anti subjects. Also as with justification, (2) greater impersonal responsibility was assigned in the high demand situation than in the low demand situation whereas personal responsibility failed to differ across the conditions of Situation. (3) Of further interest is the observation that when the effect of Situation was considered separately upon pro and anti subjects, a statistically significant difference in impersonal responsibility across Situation was found only for pro subjects. Thus, the dimensions of justification effected impersonal responsibility attributions, but not personal responsibility attributions, in much the same manner as they affected justification ratings.

That the variables Attitude and Situation are influencing attributions as dimensions of perceived justification is supported by the use of justification ratings as an independent variable. While the levels of justification produced differences in all responsibility ratings, the difference in impersonal responsibility was considerably larger than the difference in personal responsibility. These differences were similar to the effects of the variables Attitude and Situation. A further similarity exists in that subjects who assigned low justification also assigned more personal than impersonal responsibility.

Subjects who saw the act as justified assigned approximately equal amounts of personal and impersonal responsibility. Note that in the responsibility analysis of variance with Attitude and Situation as independent variables, the conditions of these variables which were theoretically associated with low justification yielded similar results. Since justification as an independent variable influenced attributions much the same as did its proposed dimensions, support may be inferred for the operation of Attitude and Situation as dimensions of perceived justification.

A Model of Justification

The evidence appears to suggest that a more intimate relationship exists between justification and impersonal responsibility than between justification and personal responsibility. Of course, such a comparison was implicitly predicted by Hypothesis 5, but the ubiquitousness of the comparison was not anticipated. From Heider's (1958) summative model of personal and impersonal causation, one would expect an extremely strong negative correlation between personal and impersonal responsibility and for the attributions to correlate almost equally with other measures. The current data do not support these expectations. That the attributions are not summative may cast doubt upon Heider's summative model. One should bear in mind, however, that causality and responsibility may not be identical elements in Heider's model. The data suggest that personal and impersonal responsibility attributions differ along other dimensions than exclusively locus of causality. If there are a variety of dimensions affecting responsibility attributions, personal responsibility may be qualitatively different from impersonal

responsibility. Although the present experiment provides little information as to the nature of these differences, it does indicate that impersonal responsibility is related more to justification than is personal responsibility. An attempt shall be made at a theoretical understanding of the process of justification from these relationships within the current data.

There are several theories in the literature of psychology which propose that individuals strive to gain correct information about the environment. Such theories have been offered by Festinger (1954), Gibson (1969), Kelley (1967, 1971) and White (1959) among many others. These theorists maintain that, within limits and over time, individuals tend to assume that they correctly understand many of the characteristics of the physical and social environment. It is here proposed that an individual's assumptions as to appropriate actions and attitudes will be based upon those assumptions about the state of nature. Those actions and attitudes of either oneself or another which are consistent with one's understanding of the environment will be seen as having been caused by the environment and, thus, relatively high impersonal responsibility will be attributed. Since the action is seen as being caused by the environment, the action will be considered justified. When behavior is inconsistent with one's understanding of the environment, responsibility will be attributed to the actor as behavior is seen as being caused by factors independent of the environment. The present data demonstrate, however, that personal responsibility can also be attributed when behavior is consistent with the perceived environment. Perhaps these personal responsibility attributions are related to perceived intentionality within the situational context. Nonetheless, it is clear from the

data that perceived consistency between behavior and the perceived environment is related more to impersonal than to personal responsibility.

While this explanation of the relationship between justification and impersonal responsibility fits the results of the current experiment, post hoc reasoning is often considered to be less compelling than a priori hypotheses. It can be shown, though, that the explanatory model is consistent with ideas offered earlier in this paper and with findings by other researchers.

Recall that it was proposed that perceptions of justification would be mediated by (1) variations in the act's reflection of the observer's attitudes and (2) by the degree to which situational forces were perceived to have elicited the response. While attitudes may serve several functions (Katz, 1960), the essential nature of attitudes is that they are interpretations of the environment (Sherif and Hovland, 1961). Since attitudes are based on perceptions of reality, actions resulting from attitudes can be considered as ultimate effects of external contingencies. Thus, not only does the justification model account for the data, it also accounts for the influence of attitudes upon attributions and perceptions of justification. However, the second dimension of justification, Situation, is in danger of becoming a restatement of Attitude. To say that Attitude mediates justification by determining if the environment is seen as the source of causation and then to state that Situation is the degree to which the environment influences causation is redundant. According to this statement, the dimension Attitude subsumes the dimension Situation. Redundancy may be avoided by considering Attitude as a general response to the environment and by considering Situation as environmental influences in a specific

situation. When Attitude, as a general interpretation of situational influence, is inconsistent with an action, then Situation, as a specific instance of situational influence, will be irrelevant to judgments of impersonal responsibility. If Attitude is consistent with action, Situation becomes relevant as a specific instance of the general principle, and impersonal responsibility is perceived. Note that this argument is supported by the data. In the analysis of the measure of justification only pro-abortion subjects were influenced by variations in Situation and in the analysis of responsibility attributions only impersonal attributions by pro-subjects were effected by Situation.

A trend of research in attribution processes comes to mind as support for the proposed account of the data. In extending an idea put forth by Heider (1958), Jones and Nisbett (1971) have argued that actors tend to believe that their actions are primarily caused by situational contingencies while observers perceive causes for the behaviors in dispositional properties of the actors. This divergence in attributions has been supported in a variety of experiments (for example; Nisbett, Caputo, Legant, and Marecek, 1973; Storms, 1973). Of interest for present concerns is the observation that actors tend to see their behavior as a result of environmental circumstance. The observation may be taken as support for the premise that phenomenologically, behavior is based on individuals' perceptions of the environment. Phenomenological support is of primary concern as the act of attributing is based upon phenomenological data.

Justification and Personal Responsibility

These results have been shown to support a model of justification

based on impersonal responsibility. What, then, can be said about the relationship between justification and personal responsibility? This question is important since Heider (1958) posited that less personal responsibility would be assigned at the level of Justified Commission than at Purposive Commission. Heider's position was supported in the current data by the use of perceived justification as an independent variable. Unfortunately for the ideas put forth in the second chapter of this paper, the variables Attitude and Situation did not significantly affect personal responsibility attributions. Nevertheless, Attitude, Situation, and perceived justification did provide similar patterns of results which are relevant to distinctions between Justified Commission and Purposive Commission. In all conditions associated with low justification (Purposive Commission), personal responsibility attributions were greater than impersonal responsibility attributions. In those conditions associated with high justification (Justified Commission), personal and impersonal responsibility attributions did not differ. There was a trend, although usually not significant, for personal responsibility to decrease with conditions favorable to justification and a significant trend for impersonal responsibility to increase. Thus, from large differences within the distribution of responsibility with Purposive Commission, the assignments equalize at moderately high amounts of both personal and impersonal responsibility with Justified Commission. This evidence indicates that the difference between Purposive Commission and Justified Commission lies more with differences in impersonal responsibility than with personal responsibility.

That personal responsibility was less affected than impersonal responsibility by variables related to justification may result from

personal intentionality. Recall that Heider (1958) believed intentions to be the central factor of personal responsibility attributions and that the levels of Purposive and Justified Commission both deal with intentional acts. The results suggest that when an act is intentional, whether justified or not, personal responsibility will be attributed. When an act is justified, responsibility is seen as distributed across personal and impersonal sources instead of only personal sources as with unjustified actions. It would have been of value if a measure of intentionality had been included in the present experiment. As such a measure was not included, this argument lacks empirical backing.

Defensive Attributions

The hypothesis which was to demonstrate that defensive attributions are an example of the influence of justification on attributions was not supported. It was unsuccessfully predicted that as action extremity increased, conditions favorable to justification (pro-abortion and high situational demand) would yield blame avoiding attributions and that conditions unfavorable to justification (anti-abortion and low situational demand) would yield "victim-blaming" attributions. Consideration of the experimental setting, stimulus material, and pattern of results suggests several factors which may have led to the data's failure to support the hypothesis.

That 87% of the subjects in the experiment (83% in the analyses) were students at a medium size, high tuition, private school (Tulsa University) may have influenced the results. This statement appears likely when the current results are compared with results from a pilot study conducted with students from Central State University, a small,

low tuition, state university at Edmond, Oklahoma. The pilot study at Central State was identical to the current study in every respect except for location and that only the high demand level of Situation was employed. The results of the pilot study were similar to the present results except for those results pertaining to defensive attribution. With the high demand Situation, neither personal responsibility attributions nor impersonal responsibility attributions differed across Attitude for the second month abortion. But, for the fifth month abortion, greater personal responsibility was assigned by anti-abortion subjects than by pro-abortion subjects and greater impersonal responsibility was assigned by pro-abortion subjects than by anti-abortion subjects. As the attributions did not differ for the less extreme action and did differ for the more extreme action, an interpretation of defensive attribution is tenable. Observation of the results of the same conditions in the present experiment does not reveal a similar pattern (Figure 2). For personal responsibility, pro and anti subjects differ at the second month abortion but not the fifth month one. Also, pro subjects assign greater personal responsibility for the more extreme action. For impersonal responsibility, subjects differ across Attitude for both conditions of Action. An interpretation of defensive attribution could be made if the separate conditions of Attitude differed across Action or if Attitude differed more across the fifth month than second month abortion. Unfortunately, these conditions are not met.

Interestingly enough, defensive attributions in the present study appeared in the low demand Situation (Figure 3). With impersonal responsibility, pro-abortion subjects increased attributions for the more extreme action and Attitude differed more for the more extreme than

less extreme action.

Comparing the two sets of subjects, the Central State University students provided defensive attributions for the high demand situation while the Tulsa University students provided defensive attributions for the low demand situation. Perhaps it is plausible to speculate that the CSU students found the high demand situation similar to their own experiences and the TU students, with more per capita wealth and correspondingly greater personal freedom, found the low demand situation more similar to their experiences. Thus, stimulus person - subject similarity would have influenced defensive attributions as proposed by Shaver (1970). The speculation is supported by information from the schools' catalogues in that tuition per semester hour at CSU is \$10.50 in state and \$27 out of state (for a 15-hour semester cost of \$160 or \$405) whereas tuition at TU is \$50 per semester hour or \$650 per semester (12-18 semester hours). Tuition may be a deceptive index of student affluence as student loans, scholarships, and employment can ease the burden of high tuition, but it is perhaps equally likely that CSU students would need assistance in paying the low tuition as TU students would need assistance to pay the high tuition. If assistance levels were constant, then TU students would begin with more money than CSU students. Therefore, with or without financial assistance, TU students on the average may be assumed to be more affluent than CSU students. As the distinctive characteristic between conditions of situation was affluence of stimulus persons, it is plausible to think that the CSU students may have considered themselves as similar to the less affluent stimulus persons and that the TU students found themselves more similar to the more affluent stimulus persons.

Using the proposed dimensions of justification, the relationship between justification and defensive attribution is still rather tenuous. From the dimensional analysis it appears that subjects' attitude and perceived similarity with stimulus persons controls the appearance of defensive attributions. Since it has been found that Attitude is the dominant dimension of perceived justification and since one could easily argue that perceived similarity can act to bias one's perception of the environment, one could maintain that the same forces which influence the perception of justification influence defensive attributions. Even though the same processes may account for both responses, the argument may appear rather extended from the results of these analyses.

The measure of justification was substituted for the proposed dimensions of justification as an independent variable in order to avoid the above problem in inference. In the analysis of variance with Justification and Action as independent variables defensive attributions were found with impersonal responsibility attributions for those subjects who considered the act to be justified (Figure 4). From this analysis, then, one could infer that justification does indeed influence defensive attributions.

One problem remains. Those theorists who have dealt with defensive attributions have considered only attributions of personal responsibility (Shaver, 1970; Walster, 1966). The present results reveal defensive attributions not in personal responsibility but in impersonal responsibility. Therefore, it would appear that justification and defensive attributions of personal responsibility, as described by other researchers, are separate phenomena. When dealing with impersonal

attributions, defensive attributions are a reflection of justification.

That justification influenced only defensive attributions within impersonal responsibility is consistent with the theoretical model proposed earlier in this discussion to account for the relationship between justification and responsibility attributions. Subjects who did not consider the act to be justified did not change their attributions for the act's extremity (Figure 4). Any variation of the act, extreme or otherwise, did not alter responsibility assignments. Subjects who did consider the act to be justified assigned more impersonal responsibility and apparently, but not significantly, simultaneously more personal responsibility for the more extreme action.

It is suggested that the increased impersonal responsibility assignments were a defensive measure to avoid blame for a possible increase of personal responsibility assignments. In essence, subjects were making a plea of extenuating circumstances. The possibility of greater personal responsibility was defended by greater impersonal responsibility. Note that the increase in personal responsibility was not statistically significant so that it has been interpreted as an anticipated possibility.

As a final comment on defensive attribution, it should be pointed out that other studies on this phenomenon (Shaver, 1970; Walster, 1966; etc.) have used stimulus material depicting an accident. The current stimulus material did depict an accidental pregnancy, but the action of interest was the stimulus persons' reaction to the pregnancy. The reaction was so presented as to give the impression of intentionality. While other researchers have studied attributions for accidents, the present study looked at attributions for reactions to an accident.

Thus, the current results may not be directly comparable to earlier studies. The extent to which these results are comparable can only be determined through further research. That the present study found evidence of defensive attributions for an intentional act could be a most interesting observation.

Attraction

The measure of subjects' liking for the main stimulus person was included in the experiment to investigate the possibility that the manipulations might be more closely related to changes in attraction than in justification. If such were the case, instead of manipulating the effect of justification upon attributions, the experiment would be manipulating the effect of attraction upon attributions. From the results it can be observed that the variable Attitude had a much greater influence upon justification than upon attraction. It may be assumed, therefore, that justification was the more salient feature of the experiment.

The correlation of the measure of attraction with assignments of personal responsibility was not significantly different from the correlation of the measure of justification with personal responsibility assignments. However, the correlation between attraction and impersonal responsibility was significantly less than the correlation between justification and impersonal responsibility. That attraction and justification equally affected personal responsibility attributions while justification affected impersonal responsibility more than did attraction fits with the theoretical model. Apparently many factors may equally covary with attributions of personal responsibility, while

impersonal responsibility attributions are primarily related to perceptions of justification.

That attraction was related more to justification than to Attitude may have implications for attraction processes. Byrne (1971) has theorized that interpersonal attraction is mediated by the ability of another to provide relatively more rewards than punishments. One such reward is proposed to be attitude similarity. Within Byrne's model (1971) attitude similarity functions as a reward by providing consensual validation for the belief that one understands the phenomenal world correctly. If one adopts Byrne's model, the present results appear to indicate that perception of another's justified action serves as a more potent reward than does perception of another's attitude similarity. Byrne (1971) and others have shown that attraction increases with the number of similar attitudes. As there was but one attitude presented in the current experiment, the present results are of unknown generality. However, they may serve as a guide to further research. It could very well be that individuals are more significantly rewarded by understanding others' behaviors than others' attitudes. That is, one's understanding of the phenomenal world may have greater relevance for proper actions than for proper attitudes. Actions, after all, are primary if attitudes have their basis in the observation of actions.

Perceived Justification and External Justification

As discussed earlier, the results of the present experiment suggest that perceptions of justification are derived from a four-step process. These steps are as follows:

1. The individual acquires perceptions or judgments of the external environment.
2. From these observations the individual makes judgments about actions and attitudes appropriate for the environment.
3. Those actions and attitudes of oneself or of others which are consistent with one's view of the world are attributed to impersonal responsibility.
4. Being attributed to impersonal responsibility, such actions and attitudes will be considered as justified.

As the results indicate a relatively weak relationship of personal responsibility with impersonal responsibility and personal responsibility with justification, the above model appears not to be useful for personal responsibility attributions.

Recall from Chapter I that Heider's (1958) level of Justified Commission (Shaw and Sulzer, 1964) was dissected into two dimensions. These dimensions were (1) the circumstances of the situation and (2) socially acceptable behavior in the situation. Heider's discussion of justified action dealt with what has been termed as external justification. The present model for perceived justification corresponds well with the dimensions of external justification. The first dimension of external justification (circumstances) fits within the first step of perceived justification. Perception of the circumstances of the situation are a part of the perception of the environment. The second dimension (socially acceptable behavior) fits within the second step. One of the criteria of acceptable actions is that they are appropriate for the environment. Hence, while the proposed model was designed to

account for individual differences in assignments of justification, it also may be considered as an expansion of Heider's (1958) level of Justified Commission.

The current results and theoretical model may help to resolve an inconsistency in the results of experiments reported by Shaw. In two experiments reported by Shaw and Sulzer (1964) which were designed to examine differences in personal responsibility attributions across Heider's (1958) five levels it was found that personal responsibility attributions did not differ between the levels of Purposive Commission and Justified Commission. Later studies which were very similar to the 1964 studies did find that less personal responsibility was assigned for the level of Justified Commission than for Purposive Commission (Shaw and Reitan, 1969). This inconsistency in results is similar to the current experiment's low relationship between justification and personal responsibility. The present analysis would indicate that a more consistent pattern of results could have been achieved if the occurrence of impersonal responsibility with personal responsibility had been systematically considered.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study indicated several things about the nature of justification and the influence of perceived justification upon responsibility attributions. Foremost among the results was the indication of a model of the justification process, i.e., that actions consistent with one's perceptions of the environment are considered as justified. The model was found to apply reliably only to attributions of impersonal responsibility.

The prediction that defensive attributions are a special case of justification was not supported. Prior work with defensive attributions has concentrated upon defensive attributions of personal responsibility. The defensive attributions in the present results were defensive impersonal responsibility attributions. While the prediction was not supported, the finding that justification is related to defensive impersonal responsibility attributions is of interest. These findings may be compared to the courtroom plea of extenuating circumstances: the person is responsible for the act, but the action was justified. To increase the probability of such a plea being honored in a courtroom setting, it may be inferred from these results that it would be prudent for the defendant to present his action and himself in such a manner as to be appropriate within the judge and/or jury's beliefs about the environment. The dictum is familiar: know your audience.

An act's reflection of attitudes held by an observer was proposed to influence perceptions of justification. Elsewhere attitude similarity has been associated with interpersonal attraction. If the experimental conditions had been found to be more closely related to attraction than justification, arguments about the relationship of justification and responsibility attributions would have been weakened. The results demonstrated that the manipulations had a greater effect on perceptions of justification. The results further suggested that attraction may be more influenced by justified action than by attitude similarity. These relationships could be an area for further study.

Several ideas for further investigation have been developed from consideration of the present study, two of which have been derived from the justification model. The proposed model of the justification process is based upon individuals' perceptions of the social and physical environment. As perceptions are both veridical and nonveridical, they are a potentially rich area of study for attribution concerns. Nonveridical perceptions are of interest since they can produce attributional biases (Shaver, 1970; Kelley, 1971). In the present data, the defensive impersonal responsibility attributions were interpreted as resulting from the bias of avoiding blame. Other biases may effect perceptions of justification.

As one bias which may be of interest, Kelley (1971) has cited evidence to the effect that persons are held more personally responsible for actions directed at gain than for actions directed at the prevention of loss. One wonders what effect these different types of actions would have upon perceptions of justification. The present study demonstrated greater justification for an action whose aim was the

prevention of loss (high situational demand) relative to an action whose aim was neither the prevention of loss nor the acquisition of gain (low situational demand) so that the question remains unanswered. It may be of theoretical value to consider the effect of the goal of behavior on justification.

An attribution bias which was mentioned in the preceding chapter was the actor-observer divergence (Jones and Nisbett, 1971). Results from several studies have found that actors tend to attribute responsibility for their actions to the situation while observers of the action tend to attribute responsibility to the actor. The present study would suggest that the divergence in attributions would decrease if the observer considered the action justified. The decrease in the divergence would result from an increase in attributed impersonal responsibility for the actor. Present data indicates that perceptions of justification could be manipulated in an actor-observer situation by varying the saliency of similar attitudes and the saliency of situational constraints.

The third suggestion for further research does not deal with attributional biases, but deals instead with a direct extension of the present study. The present analyses dealt with attitudes toward abortion. In employing this topic, it was implicitly assumed that any topic of common concern would yield results similar to any other topic of broad concern. The study was concerned with the influence of attitudes as a hypothetical construct and not with the influence of specific attitudes. However, a specific attitude was employed in the experiment and was interpreted as representative of a hypothetical construct. There is no data to vitiate this procedure for inference.

Nevertheless, greater confidence in the present inferences could be obtained by presenting other attitude topics in a similar design. Such research could test the generality of the present results.

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APPENDIX A
SUMMARIES OF ANALYSES OF VARIANCE

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR
PERCEPTIONS OF JUSTIFICATION

Source of Variation	df	MS	F	Prob. > F
Attitude (A)	1	980.00	64.95	.0001
Situation (B)	1	39.20	2.60	ns
A x B	1	64.80	4.29	.04
A at B ₁ (low)	1	270.40	17.92	.0001
A at B ₂ (high)	1	774.40	51.33	.0001
B at A ₁ (anti)	1	1.60	.11	ns
B at A ₂ (pro)	1	102.40	6.79	.02
Action (C)	1	11.25	.75	ns
A x C	1	14.45	.96	ns
B x C	1	2.45	.16	ns
A x B x C	1	4.05	.27	ns
Sex of subject (D)	1	.05	--	ns
A x D	1	.45	.03	ns
B x D	1	1.25	.08	ns
A x B x D	1	6.05	.40	ns
C x D	1	33.80	2.24	ns
A x C x D	1	12.80	.85	ns
B x C x D	1	24.20	1.60	ns
A x B x C x D	1	9.80	.65	ns
Error	64	15.09		

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR
ATTRIBUTIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY*

Source of Variation	df	MS	F	Prob. > F
<u>Between S_s</u>				
Attitude (A)	1	35.16	3.13	ns
Situation (B)	1	37.06	3.30	ns
A x B	1	.31	.07	ns
Action (C)	1	29.76	2.65	ns
A x C	1	56.41	5.03	.03
B x C	1	20.31	1.81	ns
A x B x C	1	.16	.02	ns
Sex of subject (D)	1	12.66	1.13	ns
A x D	1	3.31	.29	ns
B x D	1	68.91	6.14	.02
A x B x D	1	4.56	.41	ns
C x D	1	17.56	1.56	ns
A x C x D	1	41.01	3.65	.06 (ns)
B x C x D	1	9.51	.85	ns
A x B x C x D	1	35.16	3.13	ns
<u>S_s within groups</u>	64	11.22		
<u>Within S_s</u>				
Responsibility (E)	1	425.76	21.77	.0001
A x E	1	262.66	13.43	.0008
A at E ₁ (personal)	1	52.81	3.43**	.07 (ns)
A at E ₂ (impersonal)	1	245.00	15.92**	.0001
E at A ₁ (anti)	1	678.61	44.09	.0001

(con't)

Source of Variation	df	MS	F	Prob. > F
E at A ₂ (pro)	1	9.8	.64	ns
B x E	1	142.51	7.29	.009
B at E ₁	1	17.11	1.11**	ns
B at E ₂	1	162.45	10.56**	.005
E at B ₁ (low)	1	530.45	34.47	.0001
E at B ₂ (high)	1	37.81	2.46	ns
A x B x E	1	15.01	.77	ns
C x E	1	4.56	.23	ns
A x C x E	1	5.26	.27	ns
B x C x E	1	10.51	.54	ns
A x B x C x E	1	39.01	1.99	ns
D x E	1	6.01	.31	ns
A x D x E	1	1.81	.09	ns
B x D x E	1	.76	.04	ns
A x B x D x E	1	35.16	1.80	ns
C x D x E	1	7.66	.39	ns
A x C x D x E	1	107.26	5.48	.02
B x C x D x E	1	33.31	1.70	ns
A x B x C x D x E	1	9.51	.40	ns
E x <u>Ss</u> within groups	64	19.56		

* Only Within Subjects sources are of concern as personal and impersonal responsibility are confounded in Between Subjects sources.

** F-ratio with pooled error.

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR ATTRIBUTIONS
OF RESPONSIBILITY WITH JUSTIFICATION OF AN
INDEPENDENT VARIABLE*

Source of Variation	df	MS	F	Prob. > F
Between <u>Ss</u>				
Justification (A)	1	57.78	5.01	.03
Action (B)	1	45.13	3.91	.05
A x B	1	69.03	5.98	.02
<u>Ss</u> within groups	60	11.54		
Within <u>Ss</u>				
Responsibility (C)	1	435.13	27.11	.0001
A x C	1	504.03	31.40	.0001
A at C ₁ (personal)	1	110.25	7.99**	.01
A at C ₂ (impersonal)	1	451.56	32.73**	.0001
C at A ₁ (low)	1	937.89	58.42	.0001
C at A ₂ (high)	1	1.27	.08	ns
B x C	1	6.13	.38	ns
A x B x C	1	2.53	.16	ns
C x <u>Ss</u> within groups	60	16.05		

* Only Within Subjects sources are of concern as personal and impersonal responsibility are confounded in Between Subjects sources.

** F-ratio with pooled error.

APPENDIX B
CORRELATION MATRIX OF INDEPENDENT
AND DEPENDENT VARIABLES

CORRELATION MATRIX

Variables	Dependent Variables				
	Personal Responsibility	Impersonal Responsibility	Justification	Attraction	Husband Responsibility
Independent					
Attitude	-.24*	.34**	.67****	.38***	-.15
Situation	-.13	.28**	.13	.08	.06
Action	.08	.12	-.07	-.04	.16
Sex	-.03	-.09	.00	-.05	.17
Dependent					
Personal Responsibility	--	-.30**	-.29**	-.27**	.12
Impersonal Responsibility	--	--	.56****	.36***	-.07
Justification	--	--	--	.51****	-.11
Attraction	--	--	--	--	-.03

*p < .05
 **p < .01
 ***p < .001
 ****p < .0001

APPENDIX C

ANALYSES FOR DEFENSIVE ATTRIBUTIONS IN ATTITUDE x
SITUATION x ACTION x RESPONSIBILITY INTERACTION
EFFECT IN ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF ATTRIBUTIONS
OF RESPONSIBILITY

MEAN RESPONSIBILITY ATTRIBUTIONS AS A FUNCTION OF ACTION
AND CONDITIONS THEORETICALLY FAVORABLE AND
UNFAVORABLE TO JUSTIFICATION

	Responsibility Source					
	Personal Responsibility			Impersonal Responsibility		
	Action Extremity			Action Extremity		
	Low	High	(Difference)	Low	High	(Difference)
Favorable to Justification	3.6	12.1	3.5*	11.2	13.1	1.9
Unfavorable to Justification	13.2	12.6	0.6	6.6	5.0	1.6
(Difference)	4.6*	0.5		4.6*	8.1*	

Tukey's HSD values: error pooled
 *3.51 $p < .05$
 **4.66 $p < .01$

MEAN RESPONSIBILITY ATTRIBUTIONS WITHIN HIGH SITUATIONAL
DEMAND AS A FUNCTION OF ATTITUDE AND ACTION

Attitude	Responsibility Source					
	Personal Responsibility			Impersonal Responsibility		
	Action Extremity			Action Extremity		
	Low	High	(Difference)	Low	High	(Difference)
Pro	8.6	12.1	3.5*	11.2	13.1	1.9
Anti	12.5	12.5	0	7.5	8.4	0.9
(Difference)	3.9*	0.4		3.7*	4.7**	

Tukey's HSD values: error pooled
 *3.51 $\underline{p} < .05$
 **4.66 $\underline{p} < .01$

MEAN RESPONSIBILITY ATTRIBUTIONS WITHIN LOW SITUATIONAL
DEMAND AS A FUNCTION OF ATTITUDE AND ACTION

Attitude	Responsibility Source					
	Personal Responsibility			Impersonal Responsibility		
	Action Extremity			Action Extremity		
	Low	High	(Difference)	Low	High	(Difference)
Pro	12.2	11.4	0.8	6.8	10.4	3.6*
Anti	13.2	12.6	0.6	6.6	5.0	1.6
(Difference)	1.0	1.2		0.2	5.4**	

Tukey's HSD values: error pooled
 *3.51 $\underline{p} < .05$
 **4.66 $\underline{p} < .05$

VITA

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