

A Survey of College Student Attitudes Toward the Incarceration and Execution of Young Offenders

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ABSTRACT

Proposition 21 and the juvenile death penalty are two highly debated and sensitive topics. Since college students are right at the cusp of the minimum age requirement, it was my goal to assess their views on these (personally relevant) topics. A survey of 287 college students from Cal State University, Long Beach and Fullerton City College investigated (1) attitudes towards trying young offenders under the age of 18 as adults, (2) attitudes towards the juvenile death penalty, and (3) demographic factors that may further help explain students' opinions on these issues. Overall, respondents appear to favor trying juveniles as adults, although age of the defendant mattered. Sampled students believe that judges should be given more discretion regarding sentences for young offenders and that rehabilitation is critical. Results also confirm that there were significant demographic differences in regards to religion, prior convictions, gender, ethnicity, as well as differences between the two sampled college campuses.

INTRODUCTION

Currently, a minor 14 years of age or older can be tried as an adult for certain offenses. If an offender is of this age, “has previously committed a felony, and is accused of committing one of a specified list of violent crimes, then that offender must be prosecuted in adult court” (CA Secretary of State). This is a result of Proposition 21, The Gang Violence and Juvenile Crime Prevention Act, which was passed in March of 2000. Proposition 21 changed the way juvenile cases are handled and has aimed to end the “slap on the wrist” of prior law “by imposing real consequences” for those adolescents that the law feels are beyond rehabilitation (CA Secretary of State).

In addition to trying kids as adults, the United States has, up until recently, imposed the death penalty on selected juveniles that engage in a specified criminal act. Of the 40 death penalty jurisdictions in the United States, 18 jurisdictions [had] expressly chosen a minimum age of 18, 5 jurisdictions [had] chosen an age 17 minimum, and the other 17 death penalty jurisdictions [used] age 16 as the minimum age (Streib, Professor of Law at Ohio Northern University). However, the issue of the death penalty for juveniles caught the attention of the U.S. Supreme Court and has recently been under consideration to be terminated. The Supreme Court justices decided to take the case of *Roper v. Simmons* to determine whether the execution of minors is illegal due to “cruel and unusual punishment” or whether current law should stand. Before this study was completed, a legal decision was rendered: “The Supreme Court abolished the death penalty for juveniles Tuesday, ‘March 1, 2005, ruling that it was excessive and cruel to execute a person who was under the age of 18 when the crime was committed” (Savage, LA Times).¹

¹ This information had no effect on survey responses as data was collected prior to this ruling.

Objectives

This study focuses on college students' perceptions towards minors who have committed serious crimes and the controversy over whether or not they should be tried as adults and possibly put to death. Seeing as how Proposition 21 is in full effect and is not likely to be reversed, the primary goal here is to find out if certain groups of people tend to feel a certain way. For example, more women may feel that kids should be tried as adults, while men may tend to feel that juveniles should not be tried as adults. Or, perhaps whites tend to support trying juveniles as adults, versus Hispanics who may oppose such treatment.

Tests will also explore college students' perceptions of the death penalty as it applies to young offenders and what enactment of that policy means for society as a whole (i.e., its general implications on the public, the economy, future crime rates, etc.). Since this is a fresh and debatable topic, my goal is to investigate student perceptions about the juvenile death penalty before it is decided on by the courts. At the time the survey was administered, the court ruling was unknown to all and thus, it did not impact the findings reported here. My survey explores questions such as, are certain types of individuals more in favor of (opposed to) the death penalty for minors? And, what mitigating factors impact their attitudes?

BACKGROUND AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Juveniles Being Tried as Adults

Public opinion polls have dealt with the issue of prosecuting youth as adults. These polls include a survey done by the Opinion Research Corporation, which was conducted in February of 1988 with a national probability sample of 1,007 adults split evenly by gender. The conclusion of this particular poll was that "respondents overwhelmingly opposed housing juveniles in adult jails, jailing status offenders with adults, sharing arrest records with prospective colleges, expelling students for smoking cigarettes, and granting prosecutors exclusive discretion over

whether juveniles should be tried as adults. Furthermore, respondents strongly favored setting aside funds in the new act specifically for juvenile crime prevention programs (Schiraldi and Soler, Opinion Research Corporation).

Another survey by the Survey and Evaluation Research Laboratory at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia (conducted September 15, 1995 – October 1, 1995) interviewed 811 randomly selected adult residents of Virginia by telephone. Among the findings of the study was that respondents were generally more supportive of approaches that stress rehabilitation than those that stress punishment (SERL, Commonwealth University Virginia). In addition, when offered a choice among four possible areas of emphasis to reduce juvenile crime, 68% of respondents said that government should concentrate on prevention or rehabilitation, rather than enforcement or punishment. A large majority (80%) felt that judges, rather than prosecutors, should decide whether a juvenile is tried as an adult, and most respondents (74%) knew that juveniles under 18 could be tried as adults for serious crimes, although very few knew the minimum age at which this could occur. A majority of the respondents said that it should be possible to try juveniles as adults (SERL, Commonwealth University, Virginia).

A third survey, the *State of the State Survey*, was conducted by Michigan State University's Institute for Public Policy & Social Research between September 5 and October 12, 1996. The authors claim that:

“Individual perceptions and attitudes toward crime and criminal justice are frequently characterized as punitive, asymmetrical, and imprecise. Not only are American citizens said to possess fixed beliefs about law and order, but when they adjust their attitudes toward crime, it is usually in a more hardened and punitive direction. Making individuals more disillusioned and pessimistic about crime and criminal justice is easier than making them more optimistic” (Davis, Michigan State University).

Their findings demonstrate that this image of individual attitudes toward crime and criminal justice as hardened, punitive, and inflexible may be flawed. It is apparent that attitudes toward crime and criminal justice depend on information and context. The conclusion rendered on the topic of juvenile criminal justice was that, on the whole, attitudes toward crime are punitive, especially when it comes to juvenile offenders. One question was: Should juvenile offenders serve comparable sentences to adults? The results were that 83.4% said 16-17 olds should, 59.8% said that 14-15 year olds should, and 45.4% said that 12-13 year olds should.

A fourth and final survey reviewed is the 1998 Texas Crime Poll. This poll involved a statewide telephone survey designed and commissioned by the Criminal Justice Center's Survey Research Program at Sam Houston State University. Included in the survey were questions concerning the extent of the public's confidence in the criminal and juvenile justice systems and their components; attitudes about the transfer of juvenile cases to the adult courts, people's thoughts about the relationship between crime portrayed through the media and the actual rates of crime; and the use of the death penalty (Texas Crime Poll 1998).

Regarding respondents' feelings of security with general law enforcement, the Texas Crime Poll found that:

"White respondents were significantly more likely to express 'a great deal' or 'some' confidence in their local police department, the Department of Public Safety (DPS), the local adult court system, and the adult prison system than were Hispanics, Black/ African-Americans and people from 'other' ethnic groups. Additionally, those with a high school education or less are more likely to have "little" or "no" confidence in the DPS than those who have some college education or beyond. Finally, females were significantly less likely than males to express confidence in the adult criminal system" (Texas Crime Poll 1998).

The poll found no significant associations between the demographic variables measured and the way respondents felt that juvenile offenders should be handled. Regardless of the respondent's age, gender, ethnic status, income, or education, approximately the same proportions recommended trying juveniles as adults. For property crimes, 69% felt that juvenile offenders

should be tried as adults with the median age being 15 years old. Twenty-seven percent said that the juveniles should not be tried as adults, and an additional 4% did not know or refused to answer. For personal violent crimes, 88% felt that juvenile offenders should be tried as adults with the median age being 15 years old. Nine percent said that juveniles should not be tried as adults, and an additional 3% did not know or refused to answer.

In regards to the subject of the juvenile death penalty, the Texas Crime Poll found that when asked whether or not juveniles convicted of murder should be given the death penalty, the level of public support for the sanction drops: i.e., 49% of those surveyed believed that juvenile should be given this sanction while 42% were opposed (Texas Crime Poll). Furthermore, demographic comparisons revealed that (1) women and Black/African-Americans are the least likely to support the above sanctions, and (2) males, White respondents, and those with the highest levels of both income and education are the most likely to support the application of the death penalty in cases involving women or juvenile offenders.

Execution of Minors

Perhaps the most interesting public opinion poll on the death penalty for youths was conducted by Tom W. Smith at the National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago. [This report was prepared for The Joyce Foundation.] According to this poll, support for the death penalty for convicted murderers rose from 45% in 1965 to 74% in 1982. Support then generally held at or just below three-quarters from 1982 until 1994 (with top support at 75% in 1985 and 1994). Since 1994 public backing for executions has subsided, falling to 62% in 2001 (Smith, University of Chicago). Regarding the actual progression of survey questions, the first general question asked whether or not the respondent favored capital punishment. If they were in favor, they were asked if they were in favor of the death penalty for minors under the age 18.

Smith found that support for the death penalty for murderers who were under 18 at the time of the crime was much lower than the overall support for executing convicted murderers. While 62% backed the death penalty in general, just 34% favored it for those committing murder when under the age of 18 (Smith, University of Chicago). These results are consistent with earlier findings. In a 1991 survey by Princeton Survey Research Associates (PSRA), only 45% agreed that “if a teenager commits a crime that could carry the death penalty for an adult...he or she should receive the death sentence....” Similarly, in a 1995 PSRA survey, only 47% favored the death penalty for a murderer who was “a young teenager at the time of the crime.” Likewise, a 1999 poll for NBC/Wall Street Journal found that just 26% endorsed “lowering the age at which the death penalty can be applied to juveniles under the age of fourteen.” Finally, in a 2001 PSRA survey in which 72% favored the death penalty for at least the most serious murders, only 38% wanted it applied to “juveniles younger than 18” and just 16% to “children younger than 12.” Smith also examined demographic differences (e.g., gender, race, geographic location, education level, income, age, and whether or not the respondent owns a gun). His summary stated that:

“Capital punishment in general and the youth death penalty in particular are much less supported by women, Blacks, and those not owning guns than by men, Whites, and gun owners. Support is also somewhat lower among residents of large cities, the college educated, and liberals. Younger adults and those with lower incomes are also less in favor of the youth death penalty, but age and income are unrelated to capital punishment in general. Regional differences are not consistent and having children in the household is not related to support for the death penalty” (Smith, University of Chicago).

In addition to the above public opinion polls, journal articles, and related information, The Supreme Court recently debated whether it was time to end the death penalty for minors in the United States. In 2002, “the court abolished capital punishment for the mentally retarded, saying that a ‘national consensus’ had emerged that executing such persons amounted to cruel and unusual punishment. The court noted in its 6-3 decision that all but a handful of states had exempted mentally retarded persons from the death penalty. On Wednesday [October 13, 2004],

the justices debated whether a similar national consensus existed for limiting capital punishment to killers who were 18 years or older when they committed their crimes” (Savage, Los Angeles Times). The court reached their final decision on March 1, 2005. “Juveniles are less mature than adults and, no matter how heinous their crimes, they are not among ‘the worst offenders’ who deserve to die, the 5-4 majority said” (Savage, LA Times). There are currently 72 juvenile convicts on death row whose lives will now be spared due to this ruling. This ruling does appear to render some of the questions surveyed here irrelevant. In any event, in the interest of scientific understanding, we do report those findings.

METHODOLOGY

Overview of Procedure and Sample

Respondents were recruited from business courses at California State University, Long Beach and from Liberal Arts courses at Fullerton College. The surveyed classes included students of all majors and all classes (i.e., freshman, sophomores, juniors, and seniors). Respondent ages ranged from 17 to 55, with the median age being 21; and slightly more than half were male (50.7%)..

All participants received the same instructions: they were told (1) to read and sign a Consent Form which stated that all responses are completely confidential, and (2) that the researcher would never see names or any person’s consent form. They were further instructed to:

- 1) Take their time.
- 2) Answer the questions in the order that they are presented.
- 3) Be honest.

After subjects finished the survey, they were instructed to submit it to the researcher and to take a debriefing statement before leaving the room. This debriefing statement informed them about

the purpose of the study. All were thanked for their time and cooperation. After the completion of these instructions, surveys were distributed.

Survey Instrument

In order to measure levels of agreement or disagreement, respondents were asked to provide ratings via 9-point scales, from “1” (strongly disagree) to “9” (strongly agree), for various questions relating to trying juveniles as adults and the juvenile death penalty. [See “Measures” listed in Table 1.] The students were first asked generally about their views towards trying juveniles, under the age of 18, as adults and towards giving the death penalty to juveniles under the age of 18. After these general questions, the respondents were given a three quarter page summary of Proposition 21 (see Appendix). This summary included the six major changes that Proposition 21 made to the juvenile justice system, and also informed the students of the fiscal impacts of Proposition 21. After the Proposition 21 summary, respondents read a short, two-sentence paragraph on the juvenile death penalty, including mention of the minimum age for the death penalty in California (before the recent Supreme Court decision).

[Insert Table 1 about here.]

After being informed on Proposition 21, subjects then proceeded to answer 28 questions pertaining to the topic of trying juvenile offenders as adults. A few questions were asked the same way, but with the option of different ages. For example: “A juvenile 12 or 13 years old charged with a property crime (theft, breaking and entering, destruction of property, etc.) should be tried as an adult.” In subsequent questions, the wording would remain identical except for the ages being replaced in a second question with “14 or 15 years old” and then in a third question with “16 or 17 years old.” This formula was repeated in the section of questions regarding attitudes towards the juvenile death penalty. There were 13 questions related to the topic of the juvenile death penalty. The questions started by asking whether the respondent supported the

death penalty in general, and led to more specific questions all of which had the age options except for two questions. After the completion of the death penalty section the respondents were led to a series of five questions that asked about their confidence in the legal system and in law enforcement. These questions were also on a 9-point scale with “1” being “no confidence” and “9” being “a lot of confidence.” After this short section, respondents were asked to list “any ‘special circumstances’ which would cause [one] to be less likely to favor prosecuting a juvenile as an adult or awarding the death sentence to a juvenile offender found guilty of a violent crime.” These circumstances could include anything that came to their mind. The most common responses were past abuse, mental state, background, family life, show of remorse, and outside influence. At the completion of this part of the survey, the students were then asked to write what they thought was the purpose of this research, which was then followed by demographic questions and a space for them to write additional comments if wanted.

RESULTS

Overall frequency distributions were first run to examine overall mean responses, not accounting for various demographic characteristics (see Table 1).

Overall Means and Verbatims

When presented with the general statement, “teenagers should be housed in adult jails,” the overall response leaned towards disagreement ($M=3.78$; $N=286$). When presented with the statement, states should be allowed to house offenders in adult jail for up to 24 hours, the overall response leaned more towards agreement ($M=5.23$; $N=286$). Students were asked whether juvenile arrest records should be available to colleges to which youth are applying for admission, even if they were not convicted of the offense for which they were arrested. The overall response leaned towards disagreeing with the statement ($M=3.39$; $N=286$). When presented with the statement, money should be specifically set aside in the new juvenile justice bill to fund

prevention programs, the overall response leaned more towards agreeing with the statement ($N=6.18$; $M=286$).

When presented with the statement, federal prosecutors should have total discretion to try juveniles as adults for all felonies, the overall response leaned more towards disagreement with the statement ($M=4.31$; $N=286$). In comparison, students agreed that judges should have the control to decide a juvenile's future. When presented with the question of whether judges should be able to decide if a juvenile should be tried as an adult, the overall response leaned towards agreeing with the statement ($M=5.81$; $N=287$). When presented with the statement, juveniles who commit crimes should receive the same length sentence as adults who commit the same crime, the overall response leaned slightly more towards agreement versus disagreement ($M=5.02$; $N=287$). For the statements pertaining to whether juveniles should receive the same length sentence as adults who commit the same crimes, the overall response was disagreement for 12 and 13 year olds ($M=3.44$; $N=287$) and disagreement for 14 and 15 year olds ($M=4.21$; $N=287$). However, the overall response for 16 or 17 year olds ($M=5.58$; $N=285$) receiving the same length sentences as adults was more in agreement than for ages younger than 16 years old.

The overall response to the statement, "the main purpose of the juvenile court system should be to rehabilitate," was positive ($M=6.96$; $N=285$). Likewise, the overall response to the statement, "the main purpose of the juvenile court system should be to punish," was generally in opposition ($M=4.86$; $N=286$). Overall, respondents were in agreement that juvenile correctional centers or community-based programs should be stressed more than punitive measures ($M=6.03$; $N=284$).

On the topic of whether a juvenile who is charged with a property crime should be tried as an adult, the overall response was against adult prosecution for 12 and 13 year olds ($M=3.35$; $N=286$) and also opposed for 14 and 15 year olds ($M=3.99$; $N=286$). However, the overall

response was in agreement for 16 or 17 year old juveniles who are charged with a property crime to be tried as adults ($M=5.36$; $N=286$). The overall response for juveniles who commit personal violent crimes was harsher. The overall response for the statement, “a juvenile charged with a personal violent crime (murder, arson, burglary, rape, etc.) should be tried as an adult,” was favored for 12 and 13 years old ($M=5.29$; $N=286$), for 14 and 15 years old ($M=5.82$; $N=286$), and was for 16 and 17 year olds ($M=6.79$; $N=286$). Note that the level of agreement increased with age. In other words, those surveyed agreed that 12 and 13 year olds should be tried as an adult for committing a personal violent crime, but they agreed more so that a 16 or 17 year old should be tried as an adult for a personal violent crime. This same pattern repeated itself in the next set of statements which pertained to whether a juvenile who has a history of repeat offenses should be tried in adult court or not. The overall response was in agreement that 12 and 13 year olds ($M=5.08$; $N=286$), 14 and 15 year olds ($M=5.62$; $N=286$), and 16 and 17 year olds ($M=6.72$; $N=284$) should be tried in adult court if they have a history of repeat offenses. Note that again the agreement escalated as the age rose.

When presented with the statement of whether a juvenile’s family situation, such as abuse by parents or siblings, should be taken into account when deciding if he or she should be tried as an adult, the overall response was in agreement ($M=6.15$; $N=285$). Students’ overall response was also in agreement for the fact that a juvenile being mainly in foster care should be taken into account when deciding if he or she should be tried as an adult ($M=5.72$; $N=286$). When presented with the statement of whether a juvenile who is mentally retarded (which is subjective to the courts) should be able to be tried as an adult, the overall response for the students was in disagreement ($M=3.38$; $N=286$). When the students were asked whether they agreed with the statement: “juveniles who have no prior offenses should be tried in adult court,” the overall response was, once again, more lenient towards the younger juveniles. The overall response was

in disagreement for 12 and 13 year olds ($M=2.64$; $N=284$), for 14 and 15 year olds ($M=3.12$; $N=285$), and for 16 and 17 year olds ($M=4.07$; $N=286$).

When presented with the statement, “I support the death penalty as a means for capital punishment,” the overall response was in agreement ($M=5.46$; $N=287$). On the same token, when presented with the statement, “I am against the death penalty as a means of capital punishment,” the overall response was in disagreement ($M=4.28$; $N=286$). The students were then asked a question pertaining to adults. The purpose of asking this question was to see if there would be different responses to the question based on whether the person committing the crime was an adult or a minor. The students were presented with the statement, “adults convicted of first-degree murder should be sentenced to life in prison with absolutely no chance of ever being released on parole instead of being given the death penalty.” The overall response was in agreement ($M=5.99$; $N=287$).

When asked this same question but with “adults” replaced by “juveniles under the age 18,” the overall response was in agreement as well; however, not to the degree that it was for the adults ($M=5.19$; $N=287$). When asked if a juvenile should have the possibility of receiving the death penalty if they commit first-degree murder, the overall response was in disagreement for 12 and 13 year olds ($M=3.46$; $N=287$) and for 14 and 15 year olds ($M=3.95$; $N=287$). However, the overall response was in agreement for those juveniles that were 16 or 17 years old when they committed the crime ($M=5.10$; $N=287$). When presented with the statement, “a juvenile should be given the death penalty if there have been prior efforts to rehabilitate that person and they have failed,” the overall response was in disagreement for all ages. However, the level of disagreement decreased as the age range increased. The highest level of disagreement was for 12 and 13 year olds ($M=3.56$; $N=287$). Disagreement decreased a little in regards to 14 and 15 year olds ($M=3.95$; $N=287$), and then decreased even more in regards to 16 and 17 year olds ($M=4.52$;

$N=287$). When presented with the statement, “a juvenile should be given the death penalty if they have a history of violent, unstable behavior and have committed first-degree murder,” the overall response was, once again, in disagreement for all ages. As with the previous question, the disagreement became less prevalent as the ages increased. The highest level of disagreement was for 12 and 13 year olds ($M=3.76$; $N=287$). Disagreement decreased a little in regards to 14 and 15 year olds ($M=4.14$; $N=287$), and then decreased more in regards to 16 and 17 year olds ($M=4.98$; $N=287$).

The respondents were then asked five questions pertaining to their confidence in certain legal entities within the United States. The overall response for the students leaned towards a high level of confidence in law enforcement in general ($M=5.28$; $N=287$), a high level of confidence in the court system ($M=5.63$; $N=287$), and a high level of confidence in our judicial system as a whole ($M=5.34$; $N=287$). In regards to the probation and parole departments ($M=4.79$; $N=286$) and correctional facilities within the United States ($M=4.70$; $N=287$), the overall response leaned towards a lack of confidence.

When asked what ‘special circumstances’ would cause [one] to be less likely to favor prosecuting a juvenile as an adult or awarding the death sentence to a juvenile offender found guilty of a violent crime, the most common responses were physical abuse (10.5%), mental state (7.7%), prior record (7.3%), background (7.0%), alcohol abuse in the family (6.3%), and being in foster care (6.3%). [Note: most respondents did not answer the optional, open-ended question of whether there would be “special circumstances” which would cause one to be less likely to favor prosecuting a juvenile as an adult or awarding the death sentence to a juvenile offender found guilty of a violent crime.]

While the above overall responses are meaningful and interesting, measured demographic variables were assessed for additional insight (e.g., gender, religious preference, ethnicity, and

marital status). Finally, results of the CSULB sample were compared to those of the Fullerton College sample (i.e., junior/senior college students versus freshman/sophomore students).

Gender Effects

Females ($M=6.45$) agreed more strongly than Males ($M=5.93$) that money should be set aside to fund prevention programs ($t=2.087$; $p=.038$). (See Table 2 for a summary of gender effects.) Females ($M=2.89$) feel more strongly than males ($M=2.38$) that a juvenile who is 12 or 13 years old and has no prior offenses should be tried in adult court ($t=2.333$; $p=.020$). Females were stricter, overall, than males on 12 and 13 year olds in regards to them being tried as adults. On the topic of the death penalty, males were stricter than females. Males ($M=4.23$) agreed more than females ($M=3.67$) that a juvenile who is 14 or 15 years old should be given the death penalty if there have been prior efforts to rehabilitate that person and they have failed ($t=1.994$; $p=.047$). Males ($M=4.93$) also agreed more than females ($M=4.11$) that a juvenile who is 16 or 17 years old should be given the death penalty if there have been prior efforts to rehabilitate that person and they have failed ($t=2.742$; $p=.007$). Lastly, males ($M=5.32$) also agree more strongly than females ($M=4.63$) that a juvenile who is 16 or 17 years old should be given the death penalty if they have a history of violence and unstable behavior and committed first-degree murder ($t=2.179$; $p=.030$).

[Insert Table 2 about here.]

Religious Preference Differences

Respondents were grouped based on religious preferences into the following categories: Protestant/Catholic, Muslim, Atheist, no religion, and “other.” The “other” category included religions such as Jewish, Buddhist, Mormon, Hindu, and Islam. There were not high enough response rates for these religions to grant them their own categories; however, as a group, their responses were significant. For the question regarding students’ overall attitudes towards

prosecuting juvenile offenders (under the age of 18) as adults, the biggest difference in responses was between Muslims and Atheists. Atheists ($M=6.42$) agreed more strongly than Muslims ($M=2.89$) that, in general, juveniles under the age of 18 should be tried as adults. Those students that are Protestant/Catholic ($M=5.35$), had no religion of preference ($M=5.24$), and chose “other” ($M=5.79$) also differed significantly from Muslims in regards to their overall attitudes towards prosecuting juveniles under 18 years old as adults. They agreed more strongly than did Muslims; however, they did not agree as strongly as did Atheists ($F=3.039$; $p=.018$).

When asked the question should a juvenile who is mentally retarded, which is subjective to the courts, be able to be tried as an adult, the most significant difference was between Muslims ($M=2.67$) and those respondents who chose “other” religion ($M=5.35$). Those students who checked “other” religion agreed more strongly than Muslims that a juvenile who is mentally retarded should have the chance of being tried as adults. Protestant/catholic respondents ($M=3.18$), those who have no religious preference ($M=3.19$), and Atheists ($M=3.75$) all agreed more strongly than Muslims that juveniles, under the age of 18, who are mentally retarded should be able to be tried as an adult. However, they did not agree as strongly as did those in the “other” category ($F=4.442$; $p=.002$).

There was one question pertaining to the death penalty that showed a significant variance in responses. While Muslim students were relatively conservative in regards to trying certain juveniles as adults, they changed their stance in regards to giving the death penalty to juveniles, with certain contingencies. Muslims ($M=5.67$) agreed more than Atheists ($M=3.75$), Protestant/Catholics ($M=4.25$), and those with no affiliation ($M=4.44$) that a juvenile who is 16 or 17 years old should be given the death penalty if there have been prior efforts to rehabilitate that person and they have failed. However, those students labeled as “other” ($M=6.13$) agreed even more strongly on this topic than did Muslims ($F=2.784$; $p=.028$).

In regards to the students' level of confidence in law enforcement within the United States, Atheists ($M=7.00$) had the most confidence while Muslims ($M=4.00$) had the least amount of confidence out of the five groups. Protestant/Catholic students ($M=5.57$), those with no religious preference ($M=5.03$) and "others" ($M=5.52$) had a higher level of confidence in the law enforcement in the United States than did Muslims; however, they had less confidence than Atheists ($F=2.482$; $p=.045$). In addition to Muslims having the least amount of confidence in law enforcement, they also had the least amount of confidence in the juvenile justice system as a whole ($M=2.50$). "Other" religions ($M=5.83$) had the most confidence in the juvenile justice system as a whole. Students of the Protestant/Catholic faiths ($M=5.71$), Atheists ($M=5.75$), and those with no religious affiliation ($M=5.28$) all had more confidence in the juvenile justice system as a whole than did Muslims, but had less confidence in the system than did those identified as "other" ($F=4.551$; $p=.002$). [Table 3 summarizes these findings.]

[Insert Table 3 about here.]

Ethnicity

Ethnic background was classified as the following: Hispanic, Asian, White, and "other." Included in the "other" category are Black/African-Americans, American Indians, Pacific Islanders, Filipinos, multi-cultural persons, and Middle Easterners. There were not a significant number of respondents to justify unique categories for each of those ethnic groups. Out of all the questions with significant responses, Asians were relatively harsher on all accounts than were those of other ethnicities. In addition, compared to the other ethnicities, Hispanics were in least agreement with harsh penalties and treatment. [See Table 4.]

[Insert Table 4 about here.]

Respondents were asked whether juvenile felony arrest records should be available to colleges to which youth are applying for admissions, even if they were not convicted of the

offense for which they were arrested. Hispanics ($M=2.76$) agreed the least, while Asians ($M=4.41$) agreed most strongly. White respondents ($M=3.12$) and the others" ($M=3.28$) agreed more than Hispanics that the records should be available, but did not agree with it as strongly as did Asian students ($F=5.331$; $p=.001$). When responding to the statement of whether federal prosecutors should have total discretion to try juveniles as adults, Hispanics ($M=3.63$) agreed the least out of all four groups, while Asians ($M=4.86$) agreed the most. Whites ($M=4.28$) and "others" ($M=4.37$) agreed more than Hispanics that prosecutors should have total discretion over trying juveniles as adults ($M=3.63$). However, Whites and those who chose "other" did not agree as strongly, on the same topic, as did Asians. When responding to the statement if a juvenile being mainly in foster care should be taken into account when deciding if he or she should be tried as an adult, Hispanics ($M=5.35$) disagreed the most that it should be taken into account.

Asians ($M=6.31$) agreed most of the four ethnic groups that a juvenile who has been mainly in foster care should be taken into account when deciding if he or she should be tried as an adult. White respondents ($M=5.41$) and "others" ($M=6.00$) agreed more strongly than Hispanics but not as much as Asians ($F=2.265$; $p=.051$). Hispanics ($M=3.41$) agreed the least that a juvenile who is mentally retarded (which is subjective to the courts) should be able to be tried as an adult. Asians ($M=4.45$); on the other hand, they agreed most strongly that a juvenile who is mentally retarded should be able to be tried as an adult. Whites ($M=3.22$) and "others" ($M=3.22$) agreed more strongly than did Hispanics, but not as strongly as Asians ($F=5.200$; $p=.002$).

When asked the question whether a juvenile who is 14 or 15 years old should be given the death penalty if there have been prior efforts to rehabilitate that person and those efforts failed, Hispanics ($M=3.48$) agreed the least. Asians ($M=4.57$) agreed the most out of the four ethnic groups that 14 or 15 year olds should be able to get the death penalty if there have been prior efforts to rehabilitate them and those efforts have failed. Whites ($M=3.68$) and those respondents

identified as “other” ($M=4.16$) agreed more strongly than Hispanics but not as strongly as Asians ($F=2.601$; $p=.052$). Lastly, Hispanics ($M=3.67$) were in least agreement, out of the four groups, with the statement of: “A juvenile who is 16 or 17 years old should be given the death penalty if there have been prior efforts to rehabilitate that person and have failed.” Asians ($M=5.16$) were in most agreement that juveniles who are 16 or 17 years old should be given the death penalty if there have been prior efforts to rehabilitate them and they have failed, and Whites ($M=4.23$) and “others” ($M=5.01$) agreed more than did Hispanics ($M=3.67$) but less than did Asians ($M=5.16$, $F=4.286$; $p=.006$).

The Impact of Marital Status

Since my survey was administered to college students there was only one person who was divorced or separated. Therefore, I did not include this individual in my analyses. I examined only the differences between single persons and married persons. In all three significant relationships, married students agree more strongly than single students (see Table 5). Married persons ($M=6.83$) agree more strongly than single students ($M=6.18$) that money should be specifically set aside in the new juvenile justice bill to fund prevention programs ($t=3.653$; $p=.027$). Married persons ($M=4.50$) also agree more than single persons ($M=3.38$) that juveniles who are 12 or 13 years old should receive the same length sentences as adults who commit the same crimes ($t=4.495$; $p=.012$). Lastly, married students ($M=5.33$) agree more strongly than single students ($M=4.15$) that juveniles who are 14 or 15 years old should receive the same length sentences as adults who commit the same crimes ($t=3.924$; $p=.021$).

[Insert Table 5 about here.]

The Impact of Prior Criminal Conviction

The only area of the survey where there were significant discrepancies between those students with prior convictions and those with no prior convictions was in their level of

confidence in the U.S. legal system and U.S. law enforcement. In all five of the questions pertaining to this topic, those students with a prior conviction had less confidence in the U.S. systems than those students who had no prior convictions. Those persons with no prior convictions ($M=5.38$) had a higher level of confidence in United States law enforcement than did person with prior convictions ($M=4.23$; $t=2.725$; $p=.007$; Table 6). Those students with no prior convictions ($M=5.74$) had a higher level of confidence in the United States court system than did students with prior convictions ($M=4.55$; $t=2.834$; $p=.005$). Those persons with no prior convictions ($M=4.86$) had a higher level of confidence in the United States probation and parole departments than did persons with prior convictions ($M=3.77$; $t=2.595$; $p=.010$). Those students with no prior convictions ($M=4.78$) had a higher level of confidence in United States correctional facilities than did students with no prior convictions ($M=3.77$; $t=2.374$; $p=.018$). Lastly, those persons with no prior convictions ($M=5.39$) had a higher level of confidence in the United States judicial system as a while than did those persons with prior convictions ($M=4.27$; $t=2.630$; $p=.009$).

[Insert Table 6 about here.]

College Setting/Class Standing

Along with the above demographics, the California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) students and Fullerton City College (FCC) students were compared (see Table 7). There were eight questions that showed significant differences between CSULB and FCC student bodies. On all accounts, the students from CSULB were more apt to agree with the questions than were the students from Fullerton City College. Those students from CSULB ($M=6.42$) agreed more strongly than Fullerton students ($M=5.48$) that money should be specifically set aside in the new juvenile justice bill to fund prevention programs ($t=3.358$; $p=.001$). Respondents from CSULB ($M=6.04$) also agreed more strongly than Fullerton respondents ($M=5.15$) that judges should be

able to decide whether a juvenile should be tried as an adult ($t=2.895$; $p=.004$). Students from CSULB ($M=6.98$) felt more strongly that a juvenile 16 or 17 years old and charged with a personal violent crime should be tried in adult court, than did FCC students ($M=6.25$; $t=2.345$; $p=.020$). Respondents from CSULB ($M=5.80$) also felt more strongly than FCC students ($M=5.11$) that a juvenile who is 14 or 15 years old and has a history of repeat offenses should be tried in adult court ($t=2.289$; $p=.023$). Furthermore, students from CSULB ($M=6.92$) agree more strongly than FCC students ($M=6.13$) that a juvenile who is 16 or 17 years old and has a history of repeat offenses should be tried in adult court ($t=2.584$; $p=.010$). Respondents from CSULB ($M=4.94$) had a higher level of confidence in the United States probation and parole departments than did respondents from FCC ($M=4.34$; $t=2.311$; $p=.022$). In addition, students from CSULB ($M=5.62$) had much more confidence in the United States judicial system, as a whole, than did respondents from FCC ($M=4.51$; $t=4.371$; $p=.000$). Lastly, students from CSULB ($M=5.52$) agreed more strongly that juvenile offenders (under the age of 18) should have the chance of being prosecuted as adults than did students from Fullerton City College ($M=4.81$; $t=2.731$; $p=.007$).

[Insert Table 7 about here.]

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Many of the findings reported above are consistent with findings of previous reputable surveys. However, the most recent survey that I found was conducted four years ago (2001) by Thomas Smith at the University of Chicago. Therefore, the results of my survey add to previous research and offer a different perspective. The key difference between my survey and previous surveys is that I targeted college students' opinions. To my knowledge, no empirical studies have focused on this demographic segment, a group that will have a significant impact on future state and national decisions regarding the juvenile justice system.

Overall, the respondents leaned towards agreeing that juveniles who commit crimes should receive the same length sentences as adults who commit the same crimes. Respondents were more likely to agree that 16 or 17 year olds should receive the same length sentence as adults than they were for 12 or 13 year olds and 14 or 15 year olds. These results are consistent with previous findings: e.g., the *State of the State Survey* (Michigan State University's Institute for Public Policy & Social Research) reported that 83.4% agreed that juvenile offenders who are 16 or 17 years old should receive the same length sentence as an adult who commits the same crime, and 59.8% said that 14 or 15 year old should receive the same length sentence. I also found that marriage had some impact: married subjects agreed more than single respondents that juveniles who are 12 - 15 years old should receive the same length sentences as adults who commit the same crimes.

The most interesting finding pertaining to whether or not a young offender should be tried as an adult when they committed a crime while under the age of 18, was the influence of religious background. Muslims were in the least agreement out of all the groups that a juvenile should be able to be tried as an adult. Atheists, on the other hand, were the group that most agreed with juveniles being tried as adults. The three other groups – Protestant/Catholic, none, and “other” – were in the middle of the opinions of Muslims and Atheists on all accounts.

When asked about the death penalty for juveniles, the opinions of the Muslims and Atheists were reversed. While Muslims had been relatively conservative in regards to trying juveniles as adults, they changed their stance in regards to giving the death penalty to juveniles. That is, Muslims felt that juveniles should have the possibility of being put to death for a criminal act committed while under the age of 18, while Atheists were on the other side of the spectrum in relative disagreement on this topic. As before, the other three groups – Protestant/Catholic, none, and “other” – all were in the middle of these two outliers. Past research found no significant

effects across different religious backgrounds. However, my research suggests that according to the broad topics of trying juveniles as adults and giving them the death penalty, Muslims and Atheists had some interesting bipolar activity. As noted by Imad-ad-Dean Ahmad, “all Muslims accept the permissibility of the death penalty because it is addressed in the Qur’an” (Imad-ad-Dean Ahmad, Ph.D., IslamOnline.net). This would explain why Muslims leaned towards favoring the death penalty. The key point is that the Muslim faith preaches that one may take life only “by way of justice and law.” Atheists, in general, do not believe in the death penalty. Ellen Johnson, President of American Atheists, argues that such punishment fails in its stated purpose on both ethical and factual grounds, and thus, should not be condoned. Atheists are in it for the here and now, and trust in the ability of people to find solutions to their own problems, rather than looking to a higher power whether it be God or the law (Johnson, American Atheists). This belief in people is based on the fact that Atheism is a life affirming principle (Johnson, American Atheists).

Something that could be behind the differences between the Muslim and Atheist views is the fact that when asked their level of confidence in the United States law enforcement and juvenile justice system as a whole, Muslims had the least confidence out of all five religious groups, while Atheists had the most confidence. Atheists do not believe in God or a god; therefore, they may tend to believe more in the present, here-and-now law of the tangible world. Muslims, on the other hand, are a strong religious group that believes strongly in the afterlife. Therefore, perhaps this religious group would like to leave more things up to God than to the tangible world’s law enforcement system. According to Islam Online in Chicago: “In this time of ‘secret evidence’ and ‘profiling,’ it also seems appropriate to discuss the issue of how juveniles are handled in the criminal justice system. Just as [Muslims] are concerned about the unfair treatment of Muslims under these regulations, it is equally, if not more, worrisome to witness the

disadvantage that minority youth face”. This quote highlights the reservations that Muslims have with the juvenile justice system and with the legal system in regards to their own people.

Atheists, on the other hand, tend to be quite liberal and are more out to solve problems themselves.

The only area where there were significant discrepancies between those with prior convictions and those with no prior convictions was in their level of confidence in the U.S. legal system and U.S. law enforcement. As expected, those who had been convicted of a prior offense were significantly less confident with these agencies and systems. After having a bad encounter with the justice system, it is no wonder that those people who were previously convicted would have less confidence as they got caught by that very justice system.

Overall, respondents agreed that the main purpose of the juvenile justice system should be to rehabilitate. Likewise, most respondents disagreed that the main purpose of the juvenile court system should be to punish. These results are consistent with previous findings reported by the Survey and Evaluation Research Laboratory at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia (conducted September 15, 1995 – October 1, 1995). In the Virginia Survey, 68% of the respondents said that government should concentrate on prevention or rehabilitation, rather than on enforcement and punishment. My results showed that females agreed more strongly than males that money should be set-aside to fund prevention programs. This statistic makes sense since, as will be discussed in more detail later, females, overall, are more lenient than males on the topic of juvenile sentencing. Therefore, females would be more inclined to want to prevent a juvenile from ever getting to the possibility of being sentenced than would males. In addition, those respondents that were married agreed more than those respondents who were not married that money should be specifically set aside in the new juvenile justice bill to fund prevention programs.

The Virginia Survey also found that a large majority (80%) felt that judges, rather than prosecutors, should decide whether a juvenile is tried as an adult. These findings are consistent with my data, which concluded that most respondents favored judges, rather than federal prosecutors, having total discretion to decide the juvenile's future. [At this point in time, with Proposition 21 in effect, prosecutors have discretion to file juveniles to be tried in adult court. Before Proposition 21, judges had total discretion over this subject.] When ethnic background was accounted for; (1) Hispanics agreed the least, out of the four ethnic groups surveyed, that federal prosecutors should have total discretion to try juveniles as adults, and (2) Asians agreed the most. [Keep in mind that these are opinions for college students only and are not to be generalized to people of all ages.]

In regards to whether a juvenile who is convicted of a property crime should be tried as an adult, the overall response was in favor of trying 16 or 17 year olds as adults, but most opposed trying 12 – 15 year olds as adults for property crimes. In a previous study conducted by the Criminal Justice Center's Survey Research Program at Sam Houston State University in Texas, 69% felt that juvenile offenders (median age = 15) should be tried as adults for property crimes. Those surveyed here were slightly more lenient: they do not support a 15 year old being tried as an adult for a property crime but they would be in favor of 16 or 17 year olds being so tried. This difference may be a result of the varying age distributions in the two studies: i.e., the narrow college sample versus the more representative sample of Texas residents.

The Texas Crime Poll also surveyed people's opinions regarding whether or not juveniles convicted of personal violent crimes should be tried as adults. The numbers rose from 69% support for property crimes to 88% supporting trying juveniles as adults for personal violent crimes with the mean age being 15 years old. My research found that overall respondents were in favor of trying offenders aged 12 - 17 years olds as adults if they commit a personal violent

crime. The difference in society's harshness towards property versus personal crimes is understandable since one is a crime against physical property and one is a crime against mankind (i.e., a living person or persons).

On the topic of the death penalty, the data leaned ever so slightly in overall agreement with the death penalty as a means of capital punishment. In a survey conducted by Tom Smith at the University of Chicago, results showed that respondents were slightly in favor of the death penalty (62%). This is a number that was higher in earlier years but has dropped and held constant at about this percentage since 1994. When asked if juveniles, under the age of 18, should be able to be given the death penalty, respondents in my survey were barely above the halfway point in agreeing that juveniles should be able to be tried as adults. In Tom Smith's survey (2001), while 62% backed the death penalty in general, just 34% favored it for those committing murder when under the age of 18. These results are consistent with earlier findings as well. In a 1991 survey by Princeton Survey Research Association (PSRA), only 45% agreed that "if a teenager commits a crime that could carry the death penalty for an adult...he or she should receive the death sentence..." Similarly, in a 1995 PSRA survey, only 47% favored the death penalty for a murderer who was "a young teenager at the time of the crime." Finally, in a 2001 PSRA survey in which 72% favored the death penalty for at least the most serious murders, only 38% wanted it applied to juveniles younger than 18 and just 16% to children younger than 12 (Smith 2001). These numbers have no set pattern, but the trend seems to be moving in an upward motion. Most likely as the years progress and the death penalty remains a part of the judicial system in the United States, the support for it, or at least the tolerance of it, will increase.

In addition, overall, males agreed more strongly than females that a juvenile who is 16 and 17 years old should have the chance of being given the death penalty if there have been prior efforts to rehabilitate that person and they have failed. Males also agreed more strongly than

females that a juvenile who is 16 or 17 years old should have the chance of being given the death penalty if that juvenile has a history of violent and unstable behavior. This is consistent with earlier findings that capital punishment in general and the youth death penalty in particular are much less supported by women than by men (Smith 2001). The findings are also consistent with the Texas Crime Poll findings that “males...are the most likely to support the application of the death penalty in cases involving women or juvenile offenders” (Texas Crime Poll 1998).

In regards to ethnic-based differences towards the death penalty in general and the juvenile death penalty, there were very consistent patterns. On all accounts, Asians were the harshest out of all the ethnic groups surveyed. On the other hand, Hispanics were, comparatively, the most lenient on all accounts, and Whites were in the middle. This could be because Asians are brought up in stricter households than Hispanics or Whites, and/or that they are more stringent in their public policy views. Though there were not enough Blacks to justify a separate category for them, evidence supports that capital punishment in general and the youth death penalty in particular are much less supported by Blacks versus Whites (cf. Smith 2001; Texas Crime Poll 1998). Past research has neglected Asians and Hispanics; therefore, the study reported here, offers a new perspective. In summary: Blacks and Hispanics tend to disagree the least, while Whites are somewhere in the middle, with Asians agreeing the most with the use of the death penalty as a means of punishment for juvenile offenders.

This survey was given on two college campuses, California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) and Fullerton City College (FCC). Overall, CSULB students agreed more strongly in prevention programs and in judges having discretion over whether a juvenile should be tried as an adult or not. CSULB students also had more confidence in the United States probation and parole department and in the United States judicial system as a whole. However, CSULB students were also more inclined to agree with younger ages being tried as adults, with certain

contingencies. Most likely, as a result of having more confidence in the U.S. judicial system, CSULB students have more confidence, in turn, that if a juvenile commits a wrong worthy of court repercussion, they will be given justice within the court system. In consequence, CSULB students felt more strongly than did Fullerton City College students that a juvenile who is 16 or 17 years old and has been charged with a personal violent crime should be tried in adult court, that a juvenile who is 14 or 15 years old and has a history of repeat offenses should be tried in adult court, and that a juvenile who is 16 or 17 years old and has a history of repeat offenses should be tried in adult court.

Limitations and Future Research

Some limitations should be noted. First, due to time constraints and a lack of professors willing to let me survey their classes, my sample size was limited to 287. In addition, I was only able to use Cal State University, Long Beach and Fullerton City College as platforms for my survey. Measurement issues are also acknowledged: i.e., some questions in my survey that could have been worded more effectively. For example, when asked the open-ended question about whether there “are any ‘special circumstances’ which would cause [a respondent] to be less likely to favor prosecuting a juvenile as an adult or awarding the death sentence to a juvenile offender found guilty of a violent crime,” I might have given the respondents some options (examples) to consider (e.g., “past abuse,” “behavioral history,” “attempts to rehabilitate”). As presented, the majority of respondents did not even bother with this question, most likely because it required more thought and effort.

As for future research, the issue of juvenile crime and its treatment need further assessment. Research might explore how far society feels that it should go. In other words, exactly what contingencies justify a juvenile being tried as an adult? And, how can we reduce criminal behavior amongst our treasured youth?

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TABLE 1
Summary of Overall Means

Measure	Mean	N	Measure	Mean	N	Measure	Mean	N
Teenagers should be housed in adult jails.	3.78	286	A juvenile 12 or 13 years-old charged with a property crime (theft, breaking and entering, destruction of property, etc.) should be tried as an adult.	3.35	286	I support the death penalty as a means for capital punishment.	5.46	287
States should be allowed to house offenders in adult jail for up to 24 hours.	5.23	286	A juvenile 14 or 15 years-old charged of a property crime should be tried as adult.	3.99	286	I am against the death penalty as a means of capital punishment.	4.28	286
Juvenile felony arrest records should be available to colleges to which youth are applying for admission, even if they were not convicted of the offense for which they were arrested.	3.39	286	A juvenile 16 or 17 years-old charged of a property crime should be tried as an adult.	5.36	286	Adults convicted of first-degree murder should be sentenced to life in prison with absolutely no chance of ever being released on parole instead of being given the death penalty.	5.99	287
Money should be specifically set aside in the new juvenile justice bill to fund prevention programs.	6.18	286	A juvenile 12 or 13 years-old charged with a personal violent crime (murder, arson, burglary, rape, etc.) should be tried in an adult court.	5.29	286	A juvenile who is 12 or 13 years-old should have the possibility of receiving the death penalty if they committed first-degree murder.	3.46	287
Federal prosecutors should have total discretion to try juveniles as adults for all felonies.	4.31	286	A juvenile 14 or 15 years-old charged with a personal violent crime should be tried in an adult court.	5.82	286	A juvenile who is 14 or 15 years-old should have the possibility of receiving the death penalty if they commit first-degree murder.	3.95	287
Judges should be able to decide whether a juvenile should be tried as an adult.	5.81	287	A juvenile 16 or 17 years-old charged with a personal violent crime should be tried in an adult court.	6.79	286	A juvenile who is 16 or 17 should have the possibility of receiving the death penalty if they committed first-degree murder.	5.10	287

TABLE 1
Summary of Overall Means

Juveniles who commit crimes should receive the same length sentences as adults who commit the same crime.	5.02	287	A juvenile who is 12 or 13 years-old and has a history of repeat offenses should be tried in adult court.	5.08	286	Juveniles (under the age of 18) convicted of first-degree murder should be sentenced to life in prison with absolutely no chance of ever being released on parole instead of being given the death penalty.	5.19	287
Juveniles who are 12 or 13 years-old should receive the same length sentences as adults who commit the same crimes.	3.44	287	A juvenile who is 14 or 15 years-old and has a history of repeat offenses should be tried in adult court.	5.62	286	A juvenile who is 12 or 13 years-old should be given the death penalty if there have been prior efforts to rehabilitate that person and they have failed.	3.56	287
Juveniles who are 14 or 15 years-old should receive the same length sentences as adults who commit the same crimes.	4.21	287	A juvenile who is 16 or 17 years-old and has a history of repeat offenses should be tried as an adult.	6.72	284	A juvenile who is 14 or 15 years-old should be given the death penalty if there have been prior efforts to rehabilitate that person and they have failed.	3.95	287
Juveniles who are 16 or 17 years-old should receive the same length sentences as adults who commit the same crimes.	5.58	285	A juvenile's family situation, such as abuse by parents or siblings, should be taken into account when deciding if he or she should be tried as an adult.	6.15	285	A juvenile who is 16 or 17 years-old should be given the death penalty if there have been prior efforts to rehabilitate that person and they have failed.	4.52	287
The main purpose of the juvenile court system should be to rehabilitate.	6.96	285	A juvenile being mainly in foster care should be taken into account when deciding if he or she should be tried as an adult.	5.72	286	A juvenile who is 12 or 13 years-old should be given the death penalty if they have a history of violent, unstable behavior and have committed first-degree murder.	3.76	287

TABLE 1
Summary of Overall Means

The main purpose of the juvenile court system should be to punish.	4.86	286	A juvenile who is mentally retarded (which is subjective to the courts) should be able to be tried as an adult.	3.38	286	A juvenile who is 14 or 15 years-old should be given the death penalty if they have a history of violent, unstable behavior and commit first-degree murder.	4.14	287
Juvenile correctional centers or community-based programs should be stressed more than punitive measures.	6.03	284	A juvenile who is 12 or 13 years-old and has no prior offenses should be tried in adult court.	2.64	284	A juvenile who is 16 or 17 years-old should be give the death penalty if they have a history of violent, unstable behavior and have committed first-degree murder.	4.98	287
A juvenile who is 16 or 17 years-old and has no prior offenses should be tried in adult court.	4.07	286	A juvenile who is 14 or 15 years-old and has no prior offense should be tried in adult court.	3.12	285			
Confidence in law enforcement.	5.28	287						
Confidence in the courts.	5.63	287						
Confidence in probation and parole.	4.79	286						
Confidence in correctional facilities.	4.70	287						
Confidence in our judicial system as a whole.	5.34	287						

TABLE 2
Summary of Gender Differences

Measure	Overall Mean	Males (N=145)	Females (N=141)	<i>t</i> Value	<i>p</i> value
Money should be set aside to fund prevention programs.	6.19	5.93	6.45	-2.087	.038
A juvenile who is 12 or 13 years old and has no prior offenses should be tried in adult court.	2.64	2.38	2.89	-2.333	.020
Adults convicted of first-degree murder should be sentenced to life in prison with absolutely no chance of ever being released on parole instead of being given the death penalty.	5.99	5.68	6.29	-2.078	.039
A juvenile who is 14 or 15 years old should be given the death penalty if there have been prior efforts to rehabilitate that person and they have failed.	3.95	4.23	3.67	1.994	.047
A juvenile who is 16 or 17 years old should be given the death penalty if there have been prior efforts to rehabilitate that person and they have failed.	4.52	4.93	4.11	2.742	.007
A juvenile who is 16 or 17 years old should be given the death penalty if they have a history of violence and unstable behavior and have committed first-degree murder.	4.98	5.32	4.63	2.179	.030

TABLE 3
Summary of Religious Differences

Measure	Overall Mean	Protestant / Catholic	Muslim (N=56)	Atheist (N=6)	None (N=4)	Other (N=129)	F Value	p Value
Overall attitudes towards prosecuting juvenile offenders (under the age of 18) as adults.	5.16	5.35	2.89	6.42	5.24	5.79	3.039	.018
A juvenile who is mentally retarded (which is subjective to the courts) should be able to be tried as an adult.	3.59	3.18	2.67	3.75	3.19	5.35	4.442	.002
A juvenile who is 16 or 17 years old should be given the death penalty if there have been prior efforts to rehabilitate that person and they have failed.	4.81	4.25	5.67	3.75	4.44	6.13	2.784	.028
Level of confidence in law enforcement.	5.39	5.57	4.00	7.00	5.03	5.52	2.482	.045
Level of confidence in the juvenile justice system as a whole.	5.08	5.71	2.50	5.75	5.28	5.83	4.551	.002

TABLE 4
Summary of Ethnic Differences

Measure	Overall Mean	Hispanic (N=46)	White (N=58)	Asian (N=111)	Other (N=67)	F Value	p Value
Juvenile felony arrest records should be available to colleges to which youth are applying for admissions, even if they were not convicted of the offense for which they were arrested.	3.39	2.76	3.12	4.41	3.28	5.331	.001
Federal prosecutors should have total discretion to try juveniles as adults.	4.29	3.63	4.28	4.86	4.37	2.929	.034
A juvenile being mainly in foster care should be taken into account when deciding if he or she should be tried as an adult.	5.76	5.35	5.41	6.31	6.00	2.625	.051
A juvenile who is mentally retarded (which is subjective to the courts) should be able to be tried as an adult.	3.41	2.78	3.22	4.45	3.22	5.200	.002
A juvenile who is 14 or 15 years old should be given the death penalty if there have been prior efforts to rehabilitate that person and they have failed.	3.97	3.48	3.68	4.57	4.16	2.601	.052
A juvenile who is 16 or 17 years old should be given the death penalty if there have been prior efforts to rehabilitate that person and have failed.	4.52	3.67	4.23	5.16	5.01	4.286	.006

Measure	Overall Mean	Hispanic (N=46)	White (N=111)	Asian (N=58)	Other (N=67)	<i>F</i> Value	<i>p</i> Value
View on whether there are special circumstances that would cause you to be less likely to favor prosecuting a juvenile as an adult or awarding the death sentence to a juvenile offender found guilty of a violent crime.	1.28	1.39	1.37	1.14	1.21	3.403	.018

TABLE 5
Summary of Marital Status Differences

Measure	Overall Mean	Single (N=273)	Married (N=12)	Divorced/ Separated (N=1)	<i>t</i> Value	<i>p</i> Value
Money should be specifically set aside in the new juvenile justice bill to fund prevention programs.	4.67	6.18	6.83	1.00	3.653	.027
Juveniles who are 12 or 13 years should receive the same length sentences as adults who commit the same crimes.	5.63	3.38	4.50	9.00	4.495	.012
Juveniles who are 14 or 15 years old should receive the same length sentences as adults who commit the same crimes.	7.56	4.15	5.33	9.00	3.924	.021

TABLE 6
Summary of Convicted Persons Differences

Measure	Overall Mean	Prior Convictions (N=22)	No Prior Convictions (N=258)	<i>t</i> Value	<i>p</i> Value
Level of confidence in United States law enforcement.	4.81	4.23	5.38	2.725	.007
Level of confidence in the United States court system.	5.15	4.55	5.74	2.834	.005
Level of confidence in the United States probation and parole departments.	4.32	3.77	4.86	2.595	.010
Level of confidence in United States correction facilities.	4.28	3.77	4.78	2.374	.018
Level of confidence in the United States judicial system as a whole.	4.83	4.27	5.39	2.630	.009

TABLE 7
Summary of Sectional Differences

Measure	Overall Mean	CSULB (N=213)	Fullerton College (N=73)	<i>t</i> Value	<i>p</i>Value
Money should be specifically set aside in the new juvenile justice bill to fund prevention programs.	5.95	6.42	5.48	3.358	.001
Judges should be able to decide whether a juvenile should be tried as an adult.	5.60	6.04	5.15	2.895	.004
A juvenile who is 16 or 17 years old and is charged with a personal violent crime should be tried in an adult court.	6.62	6.98	6.25	2.345	.020
A juvenile who is 14 or 15 years old and has a history of repeat offenses should be tried in adult court.	5.46	5.80	5.11	2.289	.023
A juvenile who is 16 or 17 years old and has a history of repeat offenses should be tried in adult court.	6.53	6.92	6.13	2.584	.010
Level of confidence in the United States probation and parole departments.	4.64	4.94	4.34	2.311	.022
Level of confidence in the United States judicial system as a whole.	5.07	5.62	4.51	4.371	.000
Overall attitudes towards prosecuting juveniles offenders (under the age of 18) as adults.	5.17	5.52	4.81	2.731	.007

APPENDIX
SURVEY: INFORMATIONAL STATEMENT

Please Read the following summary of Proposition 21, the Juvenile Crime Initiative Statute, also known as the Gang Violence and Juvenile Crime Prevention Act. It was passed by voters in March of 2000.

Proposition 21 made 6 major changes to the juvenile justice system:

- (1) requires more juvenile offenders to be tried in adult court;
- (2) requires that certain juvenile offenders be held in local state correctional facilities;
- (3) changes the type of probation available for juvenile offenders;
- (4) reduces confidentiality protections for juvenile offenders;
- (5) increases penalties for gang related crimes and requires convicted gang members to register with local law enforcement agencies; and
- (6) increases criminal penalties for certain serious and violent offenses.

The estimated fiscal state impact of Proposition 21 is an ongoing annual cost of more than \$330 million and one-time costs of about \$750 million. The estimated local cost is a potential ongoing annual cost ranging from ten to more than \$100 million and potential one-time costs in the range of \$200 million to \$300 million.

In addition to Proposition 21, children under 18 are able to be given the death sentence in some states. Within California the minimum age is 18 but there are 17 states that allow prosecution at age 16 and there are 5 states that allow prosecution of a minor at age 17.