

Resemblance to Capital Punishment and Beliefs

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Abstract

This paper uses data collected from 208 randomly digitized phone surveys in the Chattanooga, Tennessee area to examine the extent to which the fit between a person's physical characteristics and her or his perception of the physical characteristics of a majority of death row inmates affects her or his attitudes toward capital punishment. Psychological studies involving empathy, intergroup contact, the notion of "the stranger," and identity and emergency intervention support the hypothesis that the more a person resembles a perceived death row inmate, the more likely he/she will oppose capital punishment. The results showed no significant difference between the likeness of a person's physical characteristics to his/her perceptions of death row inmates and his or her support or opposition for capital punishment. The results did present a disconnect between a person's perceived level of information about the death penalty and his or her ability to correctly describe a majority of death row inmates. The data also revealed overwhelming support for capital punishment in the Chattanooga area despite skepticism about the fairness of administration.

INTRODUCTION

The dawn of the 21st century has seen the issue of capital punishment reappear in the forefront of public debate. News stories about the exoneration of innocent people on death row, the 2000 moratorium on executions declared by former Illinois governor Ryan, a 2002 United States Supreme Court decision barring the execution of mentally retarded individuals, the recent highly controversial executions in California of Tookie Williams, leader of the Cripps gang turned nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize for literature, and Clarence Ray Allen, 76 year old physically feeble Native American have turned the public's attention toward capital punishment and have renewed interest in assessing public opinion about the death penalty and the factors affecting the individual attitudes about capital punishment.

The American Institute for Public Opinion (AIPO), the producers of the Gallup Poll, began studying public opinion about capital punishment in December 1936. Since then, AIPO has conducted and analyzed 40 polls, finding vengeance, just deserts, cost efficiency, deterrence, incapacitation, biblical reasons, and justice as the most commonly mentioned reasons for supporting the death penalty. The most frequently mentioned reasons for opposing capital punishment included questions about the morality of taking a life, the possibility of wrongly convicting innocent persons, the belief that punishment should be left to God, the need for criminals to suffer longer for their crime, the possibility of rehabilitation, and fairness. Researchers have found a correlation between demographic characteristics and people's attitude towards capital punishment. Men, Whites, conservatives,

Republicans, less educated, Southerners, Protestants, and less frequent church goers favor capital punishment more than women, Non-Whites, liberals, Democrats, highly educated, people residing outside the South, Catholics, and frequent church goers. All of these issues will be discussed at length in the literature review section.

Although scholars have conducted a substantial amount of research assessing the impact of socio-demographic factors on beliefs about capital punishment, to date they have failed to examine how emotional and psychological factors might impact a person's attitudes toward capital punishment. For example, researchers have neglected to apply the psychological concept of empathy or the sociological concept of "the stranger" in studies about attitudes toward capital punishment. Similarly, none of the available research has examined the extent to which the fit between people's physical characteristics (e.g., race, gender and age) and their perceptions of the physical characteristics of the people on death row influences their attitudes about capital punishment and the administration of the death penalty.

The research reported here seeks to fill part of this void by exploring the extent to which the fit between a person's physical characteristics and her [or his] perception of the physical characteristics of a majority of death row inmates affects her [or his] attitudes toward capital punishment. The hypothesis for the study is that the following: the more one believes he or she resembles a majority of people on death row, the more likely one will oppose capital punishment. For example if a young, uneducated, Black male believes that most people on death row are young, uneducated, Black males, then he will be more likely to oppose the death penalty.

The paper first reviews the history of the death penalty and trends in public opinion toward capital punishment. The paper then reviews current research, including studies examining the factors affecting death penalty attitudes and studies providing the psychological basis for the paper's primary hypothesis. A description of the research methodology follows the literature review as does a discussion of the findings and the paper's conclusions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The History of Capital Punishment

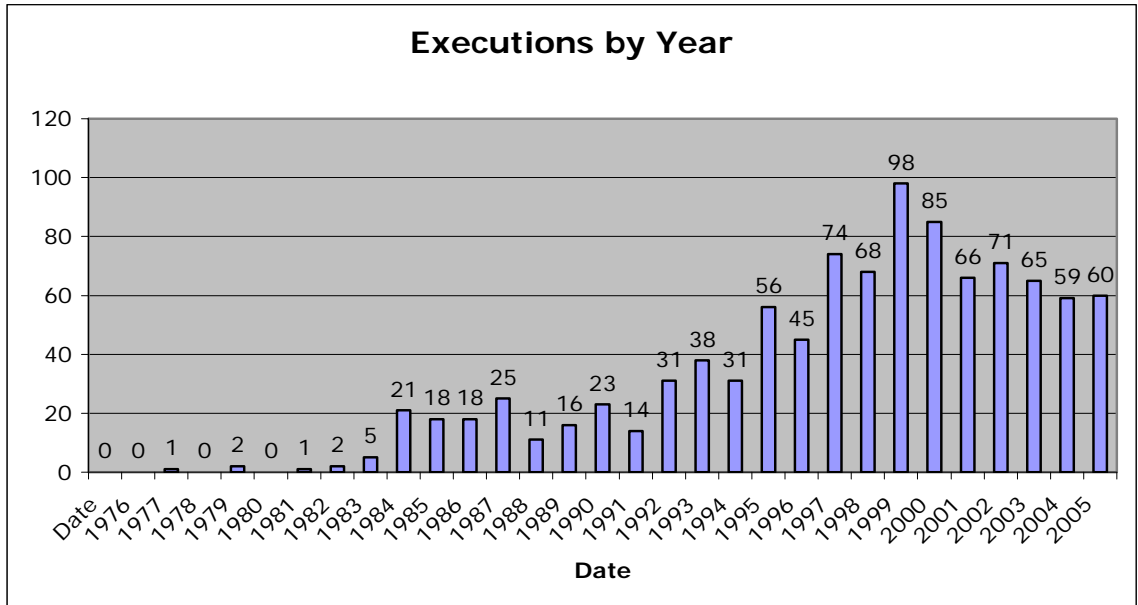
Capital Punishment in the United States

The history of the death penalty in the United States begins with the first recorded government execution in 1608 at the Jamestown Colony. George Kendall, a European settler, was sentenced to death by hanging for sowing discord and mutiny. Throughout the early history of the United States, few opposed the death penalty as seen by all of the colonies accepting the death penalty as punishment and the interpretation of the eighth Amendment in the Bill of Rights. Although the eighth Amendment does prohibit "cruel and unusual punishment," this was not interpreted to end capital punishment, but only to exclude its most heinous forms such as crucifixion or burning at the stake. From 1790 to 1865, repeal of the death penalty began to move through the states; however, this trend only lasted a few years at which time the state legislatures restored the death penalty. Executions reached an all time high during the 1930s and 1940s due to public outcry over a crime wave during the Great Depression.

After a challenge to the constitutionality of the death penalty in *Furman v. Georgia* (1972), there was a moratorium on executions from 1967 to 1977. In *Furman*, the Supreme Court ruled that the trial method for imposing the death penalty was unconstitutional because of its arbitrary and capricious nature and forced state courts to re-sentence all of the men and women on death row. The moratorium did not last long, and the Supreme Court overruled the *Furman* decision in *Gregg v. Georgia* (1976), which held that capital punishment was in fact constitutional because of new methods such as bifurcated trials and requirements for mitigating circumstances that were beginning to be used for capital punishment trials. As a result of *Gregg*, other states adopted the new methods in order to make the death penalty less arbitrary and capricious.

Despite the new legislation, states only slowly resumed executions after the reinstatement. Over the years, however, states have increased the number of annual executions, while at the same time the gap between sentence and execution lengthened as a result of new developments. The death penalty evolved into its current form over time by limiting the death penalty to only crimes involving murder, ending public executions, giving the trial jury sentencing discretion, humanizing the method of execution, and expanding the role of federal appellate courts. Supreme Court rulings have also limited the scope of the death penalty by ruling mandatory death penalty sentences unconstitutional in the 1976 *Woodson v. North Carolina* case, excluding rape from a capital punishment crimes in the 1977 *Coker v. Georgia* case, prohibiting execution of juveniles in 1988 *Thompson v. Oklahoma*, and finally in

2002 ruling *Atkins v. Virginia* that it is unconstitutional to execute the mentally retarded in. Currently, there are only twelve states that have abolished the death penalty. On December 2, 2006, North Carolina officials executed the one thousandth person, Kenneth Lee Boyd, since the reinstatement of the death penalty in 1976.



*Created by Carrol using data from Gallup Poll News Service

Capital Punishment in Tennessee

The first recorded incident of capital punishment in Tennessee occurred 14 years before statehood in 1782 when three horse thieves from upper East Tennessee were executed. Along with the rest of the nation, Tennessee experienced a ten-year moratorium on executions from 1967 to 1977 after the *Furman* decision declared the death penalty unconstitutional. The moratorium ended after the 1976 *Gregg* decision, which stated that capital punishment does not violate the Eighth Amendment under the new Georgia guidelines. After the *Gregg* ruling, Tennessee

passed the currently existing death penalty statutes. In 1981, a random mail survey of Tennessee residents revealed that 85% supported capital punishment, which was much higher than the current national level of 66% (Krycki, 2000).

In 1990 three new Justices joined the state Supreme Court, and they marked the beginning of a movement to abolish the death penalty in Tennessee. As their first action, the justices announced that they wanted to investigate whether Tennessee's death penalty statute violated the Tennessee Constitution. In April 1991, the justices ruled on this issue when an abolitionist group challenged the constitutionality of capital punishment in Tennessee in the triple murder case of Byron Lewis Black. The three judges, however, acted unexpectedly, and the Court upheld the constitutionality of Tennessee's death penalty three to two, while declaring one of the twelve aggravating circumstances that is required to qualify a defendant for the death penalty, felony-murder, unconstitutional. In 1992, the court again proved to be skeptical of the death penalty in two decisions. First, all three new justices dissented on the conviction and death sentence for Edward Leroy Harris. The issues discussed by the justices were whether death was a proportional punishment for his crime and, more generally, if death should be a punishment for felony-murder. In the second pro-abolitionist decision, the court voted 3-2 for a reexamination of whether electrocution amounts to cruel and unusual punishment. To further bolster the abolitionist view, the court overturned the conviction and death sentence of Thomas Hale who was convicted of killing his girlfriend's 2-year-old son. Continuing on this path, the Tennessee Supreme Court reversed the death sentence of Mack Ed Brown

who was convicted of beating his 4-year-old son to death in June of 1992, and voided the death sentence of the mentally retarded Donald Middlebrooks who was convicted of kidnapping, torturing, and killing a 14-year-old boy.

In 1993, the tide changed after inmate Wayne Lee Bates refused to let defense attorneys file appeals on his behalf. Later that year after public criticism of the slow moving death penalty system, the state appropriated \$500,000 to increase the speed of the death penalty appeals process. In reversing the death sentence of Roosevelt Bigbee in October 1994, the Supreme Court made one last anti-capital punishment ruling before sentiment changed by.

During his campaign, gubernatorial candidate Republican Don Sundquist vowed to end the slow moving death penalty process. After his election as governor, the Tennessee legislature passed a law that allowed only one complete post-conviction appeal in state court. Sundquist went a step further and abolished the Capital Cases Resource Center, which provided much of the legal defense for death row inmates. When Congress in 1996 passed the habeas corpus reform as a part of the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act that put time limits on capital appeals process, Tennessee quickly complied. In 2000, the state executed Robert Glen Coe ending a forty-year moratorium on executions. As of December 2005, there are 3,383 people on death row nationally. Of those 3,383 inmates, there are 108 on Tennessee's death row, and only two are women. The states have executed one thousand and four individuals since 1976, but Tennessee has executed only one person since that date.

Public Opinion and Capital Punishment

A majority of Americans have consistently supported the death penalty. The percentage of Americans who support capital punishment, however, has fluctuated significantly, which many attribute to Supreme Court decisions and historical events (Carroll, 2004). Gallup Poll data allows us to track public opinion data over time. As previously stated, the AIPO generated forty capital punishment opinion studies beginning in December of 1936 and ending in October 2005. The first study occurred as a result of the publicity over the alleged Lindbergh baby murderer, Bruno Hauptmann. The results revealed that 59% of Americans supported the death penalty whereas only 38% opposed it. The most recent Gallup Poll data shows that 64% of Americans support the death penalty and 30% oppose it. The average level of support since 1936 is 65%, and the average level of opposition is 28%. The highest level of support occurred in September of 1994 when roughly 80% of Americans supported capital punishment for murder. The lowest level of support took place in 1966 at 42%. The most common level of support is 66%, which occurred four times. The lowest level of opposition to the death penalty occurred in May 1995 when only 13% of Americans reported they opposed capital punishment, and the highest level of opposition occurred in May 1966 when 47% of Americans responded that they opposed it. Additionally, May of 1966 was the only date that there was a plurality of opposition to the death penalty. The rise of opposition to the death penalty most likely arose out of a resurgence of the anti-death penalty movement that occurred in the late 1960's and early 1970's. During this time, people became more skeptical of the death

penalty because anti-death penalty groups challenged its constitutionality in the court system in cases such as *Furman* (1972). Looking at public support for the death penalty over the decades, support decreased until the 1960s when it slowly began to increase until reaching its peak in the early 1990s at which time death penalty support once again decreased. Historical literature tracing events such as the Great Depression and the subsequent crime wave, the *Furman* and *Gregg* rulings, and recent DNA exonerations explain these shifts. (A table can be found in the appendix)

Effects of Race, Income, Gender, Political Affiliation, Age, Education, Religion, and Region

Researchers have identified a number of factors significantly related to people's attitudes towards capital punishment. Bohm (1991) analyzed data from 21 Gallup Polls conducted between December 1936 and September 1987, and found that race, socioeconomic status, gender, political affiliation, education, religion, and region all significantly related to capital punishment opinion. Age, however, appeared to have no relationship.

Race

Researchers have studied the effects of race on capital punishment since the advent of capital punishment opinion polls. Beginning in 1936, African Americans have consistently opposed capital punishment more than Whites. Bohm stated that race was the greatest predictor of capital punishment attitudes. In every poll he studied, he found that the percentage of Whites favoring the death penalty greatly exceeded the percentage of African Americans. Later studies support Bohm's

conclusions. For example in a study of Midwestern students, Baker (2005) discovered that Whites supported capital punishment significantly more than Blacks and that Blacks opposed capital punishment significantly more than Whites.

SES

Bohm discovered that Americans in the top income or socioeconomic group were more likely to support capital punishment than those in the lowest income or socioeconomic group. Those in the top income group supported capital punishment on average 64% of the time whereas the lowest income group supported capital punishment on average 50% of the time. Conversely, an average of 30% of the top income group opposed compared to an average of 39% of the lowest income group. In a follow-up study to Bohm's research, Fox (1991) found that income or class might not be as important factors as Bohm previously thought because of the relationship between race and class. Fox argued that because African Americans make up a majority of the lower class, this could be causing class to appear to be a significant factor when, in fact, the variables race and income are simply interrelated. Contrary to Fox's argument, Kevin O'Neil's (2004) study confirms Bohm's results, revealing that households earning more than \$60,000 were less concerned about capital punishment than middle-income households. Although O'Neil (2004) supports Bohm's findings regarding the results of socioeconomic status, Fox (1991) suggests that the interaction of race and class might account for the apparent connection.

Gender

According to Bohm's research, males favored the death penalty more than females. His most recent data showed that 74% of males compared to 66% of females favored the death penalty. On average, Bohm found that 65% of males and 53% of females favor the death penalty. Comparing average opposition percents, 29% of males and 37% of females opposed capital punishment. A more recent study by Krzycki (2000) of 1,000 Tennessee residents supported Bohm's study, stating that a significant difference exists between men's and women's attitudes towards the death penalty. Over 80% of men favored the death penalty compared to only 65% of women.

Political Affiliation

Bohm found political affiliation to be a high predictor of capital punishment attitudes. He concluded that Democrats tend to oppose the death penalty the most whereas Republicans oppose it least. Other studies, such as Kevin O'Neil's (2004) research, shows that Democrats oppose capital punishment significantly more than Republicans or Independents.

Age

Although there is less distinction between groups, Bohm found some differences in capital punishment opinions among various age groups. His study revealed that after 1960 people over 50 were more likely to support capital punishment compared to those under the age of 30. Despite the fact that differences

among the age groups exist, most current studies find that age has little effect on capital punishment attitudes. Carroll (2004) states that there are only slight differences in capital punishment attitudes based upon age. Others found assorted results when trying to link age with capital punishment support. Moran and Comfort (1986) concluded that death penalty support decreases with age. Only a few years later Fox (1991) discovered that death penalty support increases with age. There seems to be no consistent relationship between age and capital punishment opinions.

Education

Like Bohm's (1987) research, many studies prove that education is a major predictor of a person's opinion on capital punishment. Bohm divided people into three educational categories for his study: college graduates, high school graduates, and middle school graduates. The results show that high school graduates are most likely to favor the death penalty. College graduates, however, are most likely to oppose the death penalty. Fox's (1991) findings confirm Bohm's study. Using the same three categories, his study revealed that high school graduates were most likely to favor the death penalty, and college graduates were least likely to support it.

Religion

Bohm's (1991) research revealed that there was no significant difference between the opinions of Catholics and Protestants regarding capital punishment. More recent research done by the AIPO, however, indicated somewhat different results. Carroll (2004) points out that Protestants are somewhat more likely to support

capital punishment than Catholics, and much more likely when contrasted with people impartial to various religious groups. Contrary to what one would expect, the study revealed that those who attend religious services regularly are slightly less likely to support capital punishment than those who attend less frequently or not at all. Common knowledge would suggest that regular church attendees would be more conservative, and thus, more likely to support capital punishment. This study, however, showed the opposite. Adding religious preference to the frequency of attendance variables, practicing Catholics and Protestants are less likely to support capital punishment than non-practicing Catholics and Protestants.

Region

Bohm's (1991) research on region suggests that the South is the region least likely to support capital punishment and most likely to oppose. Bohm found the regions in order of least likely to support to most likely to support to be the South, Midwest, East, and finally West. Other researchers, however, have invalidated these findings numerous times throughout the last two decades. As previously stated, Fox (1991) conducted a follow-up study to Bohm's research to test its legitimacy. One of the main flaws Fox found regarded Bohm's region results. Fox discovered that the South had the greatest support for death penalty followed by the West, and finally the Midwest with the least. More recent studies also confirm these results. Bohm expresses concern about his findings when discussing the fact that the majority of executions take place in the South. He poses answers for this conundrum by stating

that the disproportionate number of African Americans and poor in the South may have led to the high opposition.

Psychology

While the factors discussed above may contribute to a person's support or opposition to capital punishment they do not provide any psychological insight into how a person's emotions might affect his or her attitudes toward the death penalty. Although there is little research concerning emotional factors determining attitudes toward capital punishment, related psychological research suggests other reasons people might choose to support or oppose capital punishment (Ellsworth & Ross, 1983; Gorecki, 1983; Tyler & Weber, 1982; Wallace, 1989). Specifically, people are more likely to help, accept, empathize, and care for others who resemble or act like them. Conversely, people may be more willing to punish those who differ from them.

Helping in Emergency Situations

Many studies including Levine (2005) have shown that people are more inclined in both emergency and non-emergency situations to help others who are similar to themselves. These results occur because of a human's natural inclination to empathize and sympathize with other humans who resemble them. Empathy may be defined as stepping into another's shoes in order to feel the emotions or see what the other person is experiencing. Empathy relates to the research question because if a person empathizes with another human on the verge of death, he or she may choose to oppose capital punishment.

Sympathy is the ability to share feelings the of another person, which also relates to the present study because if people feel a human connection between inmates and themselves, then he [or she] will be able to understand the feelings such as regret or sorrow that many of the inmates express. The greater resemblance between persons, the easier it becomes to sympathize with them. The classical economist Adam Smith (1976) presented this idea by stating that a direct association exists between sympathy and closeness of relationships. For example, people express greater sympathy with family than with friends, with friends than with acquaintances, and finally acquaintances as compared to strangers. Although Smith did not refer to strangers as future writers have, another connection with strangers and empathy exists. Evidence of the connection between empathy and opposition to capital punishment can be seen when family members of murder victims oppose capital punishment for the defendant even for the murder of their own family member.

Georg Simmel and the “Stranger”

The famous German sociologist Georg Simmel (Simmel, 1950) published numerous works on the “stranger,” a person who is physically a part of a group, but not an essential or meaningful member. Both physical and psychological distance makes a person a stranger. Physical distance as the name suggests refers to the proximity of one person to another. You would be more empathetic to your brother who lives up the street compared to a brother in another state simply because of the fact that you see your brother up the street on a regular basis. This is the same reason

that people identify first with their city, then with their state, and finally with their nation.

David Hume, Psychological Distance, and Ingroup Behavior

The Scottish philosopher of the Enlightenment, David Hume, connects the notion of the “stranger” to psychological distance. According to Hume, psychological distance refers to your familiarity and similarity to another person. Familiarity describes the extent of how well you know a person, which ties into the previous notion of physical distance. Similarity, on the other hand, applies to how much like another person you are based on gender, race, education, income, interests, etc. Prejudice, however, increases the psychological distance between people. Building on Hume’s notion, one could assert that the more a person thinks he resembles a typical death row inmate, the more likely that person will empathize with the inmate on death row. Research by Dovidio, Gaertner, and Kawakami (2003) shows that when people begin to see the “stranger” as a part of their group, drastic changes occur, including thoughts of greater closeness and a heightened sense of responsibility for the welfare of others. This heightened sense of closeness increases the psychological consequences of not helping a victim while it decreases the burden of helping. The new cost benefit analysis increases the probability of helping the victim. Dovidio (2003) suggests that individuals perceive events happening to in-group people as more relevant and personally threatening than a similar event that happens to a stranger.

Taken together, the psychological and sociological research described above provides the basis for the hypothesis that the more a person believes that a majority of death row inmates resembles herself or himself, the more likely he or she will oppose capital punishment.

Information about Politics

Research suggests that although Americans lack detailed information about many political issues, they do possess a good deal of general knowledge. Carpini (1996) collected over 2,000 survey questions about basic political facts in order to determine how informed the general public is on fundamental political issues. He found demographic variations among gender, age, race, and income, with men having more information than women; Whites having more information than Blacks; those with higher incomes having more information than those with lower incomes; and older people having more information than younger people. Socioeconomic status emerged as the best predictor of level of information among voters.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research question in this study seeks to determine if there is a significant relationship between a person's attitude toward capital punishment and the degree to which they see the majority of death row inmates as "looking like" themselves. As previously stated, the hypothesis for the study states that the more a person thinks he resembles who he or she perceives to be a majority of inmates on death row, the more likely he or she will oppose the death penalty. The dependent variable is attitude

towards the death penalty and the independent variables are perceived characteristics of death row inmates (i.e., their gender, race, age, level of education and income). Other variables included in the analysis include the respondent's gender, age, race, and education, their level of information about the death penalty, and their perceptions of how fairly the states administer the death penalty.

In order to test this research question, 208 telephone surveys were completed and analyzed. A research company provided a sample of 1500 random digitized numbers in the Chattanooga area to ensure random sampling. With the help of students in a Political Science research methods class, 208 surveys were collected over a one week period. (See appendix for copy of survey) The researcher and assistants called all phone numbers from a central location, and asked respondents to take part in the study. Out of the 1500 phone numbers, 208 residents chose to participate. A supervisor oversaw the students during the entire time the students assisted in obtaining the surveys.

After the surveys were completed, the data were coded and typed into the SPSS computer program. The data were then analyzed using the SPSS software. Analysis for the study was done using cross-tabulations and three way tables, all of which used the Chi-Square statistic at the 95% confidence level to test for significance between variables. SPSS was used to conduct both descriptive and inferential statistics. Results from the analysis can be seen in the findings section. (Information regarding coding can be found in the appendix) Several statistical procedures were performed beginning with descriptive statistics. Then cross-

tabulations were run to examine the relationship between attitude toward capital punishment and the independent variables, and finally a three-way table was created to test the research question.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Sample Demographics

The sample was composed of a random cross-section of residents from the Chattanooga area. Table 1 shows a summary of sample demographics compared with demographics of Chattanooga as a whole. Forty seven percent of the sample consisted of males while fifty two percent consisted of females. This is slightly different from the Chattanooga levels of forty seven percent males and fifty three percent females. Whites made up approximately three-fourths of the sample and Non-Whites accounted for about a quarter of the sample, which differed from Chattanooga's 60-40 ratio of White to Non-White. The sample exhibited a much greater representation of Whites and too few Non-Whites. About one fifth of the sample identified themselves as a high school graduate or less, approximately one third said they had some college or an associates degree, less than one third obtained a bachelor's degree, and a quarter received a master's degree or greater. Comparing these percents with the city of Chattanooga, the sample contained slightly fewer high school graduates or less at 27% and some college or associates degree at 29%. The sample included a greater representation of people with a bachelor's degree or greater with the population containing only 14% of people with a bachelor's degree and 8%

of people with a master's degree or greater. The average age of participants was 44, and the median was 45. About one quarter of the sample ranged from ages 18-34 years old, almost one half stated they were between 35 and 54, and another quarter of people reported they were 55 years old or older. Pie charts of the following can be found in the appendix.

Table 1 Sample Demographics

	<i>Census Percent</i>		<i>Survey Percent</i>	
Total Population	155,554		208	
Gender				
Male	73,370	47.20%	99	47.40%
Female	82,184	52.80%	109	52.20%
Race				
White	92,874	59.70%	159	76.10%
Non-White	65,961	42.40%	48	23.00%
Education				
High School Graduates or Less	28,252	27.10%	42	20.00%
Some College or Associates Degree	30,186	29.00%	58	27.80%
Bachelor's Degree	14,584	14.00%	57	27.30%
Master's Degree or Greater	7,865	7.50%	50	23.90%
Age				
16-24	41,641	13.50%	20	9.6%
25-44	89,325	29.00%	81	38.8%
45-64	74,899	24.30%	92	44.0%
65+	42,609	13.80%	12	5.7%
Attitude				
Support			149	71.30%
Oppose			48	24.40%

*All numbers come from the current study unless otherwise stated.

Awareness, Attitudes, Perceptions

Level of Information about Capital Punishment

A majority of the sample described themselves as informed on the issue of capital punishment. Conversely, a third reported themselves as somewhat informed and less than ten percent described themselves as uninformed. A clear majority of the participants believed that they were either informed or somewhat informed on the issue of capital punishment.

Table-2

Level of Information	N	Percent
Informed	(116)	55.5%
Somewhat Informed	(78)	37.35
Uninformed	(11)	5.3%
Total	(205)	98.1%

*Does not equal 100% due to missing or refused information

Attitude toward Capital Punishment

As seen from Table 3, approximately three fourths of the sample supported capital punishment while only one fourth opposed capital punishment.

Table-3

Attitude	N	Percent
Support	(149)	71.3%
Oppose	(48)	24.4%

*Does not equal 100% due to missing or refused information

Fairness of Administration

A majority of the sample believed that the death penalty is fairly administered only some of the time. Less than one third believed that its administration is fairly administered most of the time, and less than one tenth believed that it is fair all of the

time. Clearly, the sample had doubts about the fairness of the administration of the death penalty.

Table-4

Fairness of Administration	N	Percent
Some of the Time	(118)	56.5%
Most of the Time	(60)	28.7%
All of the Time	(12)	5.7%
Total	(190)	90.9%

*Does not equal 100% due to missing or refused information

Perceptions of Death Row Inmates

Participants provided a wide variety of responses to the questions about the demographics of a majority of inmates on death row. Figures one through four show respondents answers to the survey questions. The typical death row inmate is, in fact, males, White, 35-54 years old, a high school graduate, and the recipient of a low income. When asked the race of most death row inmates, a majority of people, 70%, incorrectly responded Non-White. Only one fifth of the sample believed that most death row inmates were White. All participants, however, correctly identified the majority of death row inmates as male. Regarding the average age of death row inmates, participants gave a wide range of answers. Almost 55% declared that inmates were from 18 to 34 years old. Only 38% of participants correctly responded that the average age was between 35 and 54. A small number of participants, 3%, believed that inmates were over the age of 55 years old. When asked about the education level of a majority of death row inmates, participants were about evenly divided between high school and above and less than a high school graduate with the latter having the majority at 53%. Participants were nearly unanimous in response to

the final demographic topic, income, with 80% of participants stating that they believed a majority of people on death row were in the low-income bracket, 10% stating middle income, and finally 5% stating upper or upper middle. See the charts below:

Figure 1

Race of the majority of people on death row

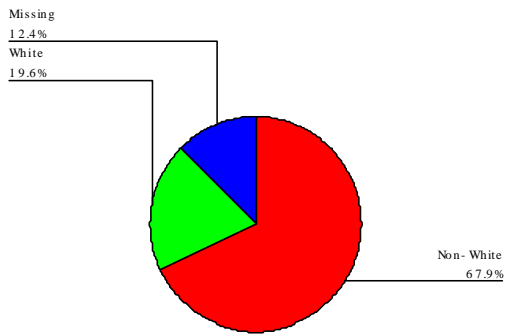


Figure 2

Age of the majority of people on death row

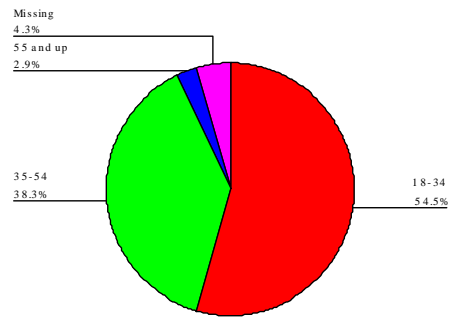


Figure 3

Education level of a majority of people on death row

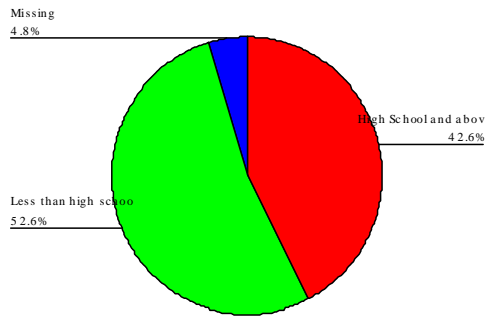
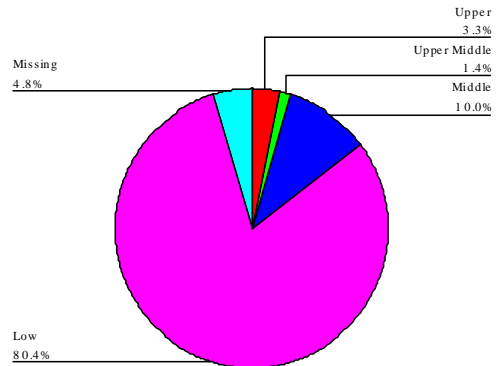


Figure 4

Income level at the time they committed the crime



FINDINGS

A series of statistical tests were run on the data in order to answer the research question. After looking at the data analysis, three other arguments developed based on the results. As previously stated, the first test, a bivariate cross-tabulation, examined the relationship between the dependent variable level of information and the independent variables gender, race, age, and education of the participant. A second cross-tabulation analyzed perceived fairness of application and all of the independent variables. The third cross-tabulation compared the main dependent variable, attitude toward the death penalty, with all the independent variables. Finally, a three-way table tested attitude toward the death penalty with perceived race of a majority of death row inmates and race of participants. All cross-tabulations and three way tables can be seen below with explanations. The Chi-Square statistic was chosen in order to test each set of variable for statistical significance. All tests were run at the 95% confidence level. For two variables to exhibit significance the p-value must be less than .05.

In the process of conducting these tests four main arguments about the sample emerged. These tests prove that the sample overwhelmingly supports capital punishment, are largely uninformed, and doubts the fairness of administration. Finally although not statistically significant, the data supports the above hypothesis that the more a person resembles a perceived majority of death row inmates, the more likely he or she is to oppose capital punishment.

Level of Information about Capital Punishment

National studies suggest that men are more informed on public policy issues than women. Table 5 confirms national studies that males tended to describe themselves as more informed than females. For example, two thirds of males consider themselves informed whereas slightly less than half of females considered themselves informed. When moving into the less informed categories fewer males rated themselves as somewhat informed, 30%, and uninformed, 3%, compared to females of whom 45% described themselves as somewhat informed and 7% described themselves as uninformed. Looking at both genders together, a majority of people described themselves as being either informed or somewhat informed and few people believed that they were uninformed. The p-value statistic of .014 reveals that the variables level of information and gender of participant are significantly related. In other words, there is a significant difference between males' and females' reported level of information regarding the death penalty.

Table 5 –Reported Level of Information on Capital Punishment * Gender of Participant

Percent within Gender			
Level of information		Male	Female
	Informed	67.0%	47.2%
	Somewhat Informed	29.9%	45.4%
	Uninformed	3.1%	7.4%
Total	N	(97)	(108)
		100%	100%

Chi-Square: 8.525 *Significant at .05
D.F.=204 **Significant at .001
P=. 014 *

Past research shows that Whites are more informed on policy issues than Non-Whites. The present study supports that statement. Although not statistically significant at the 95% confidence level, the Chi-Square statistic reveals that there is a significant relationship between perceived level of information and race at the 90% confidence level. As with males, Whites perceived themselves to be much more informed about capital punishment than Non-Whites. Roughly 60% of Whites reported themselves as informed compared to only 40% of Non-Whites. Non-whites reported themselves more in the less informed categories with half stating that they were somewhat informed and less than ten percent stating that they were uninformed. Fewer Whites, however, associated themselves with the less informed categories with one third stating that they were somewhat informed and 5% stating they were uninformed. As seen with gender, a majority of participants considered themselves some level of informed.

Table 6 –Reported Level of Information about Capital Punishment * Race of Participant

Percent within Race			
Level of information		Non-White	White
	Informed	42.6%	60.5%
	Somewhat Informed	48.9%	35.0%
	Uninformed	8.5%	4.5%
Total	N	(47)	(157)
		100%	100%

Chi-Square: 4.999

D.F.=203

P= .082

Delli Carpini (1996) found that older people tended to be more informed about political issues than younger people. Table 7 and the Chi-Square statistic below shows that there is no significant difference in participant's stated levels of information for each age. It is important to note that a majority of all ages reported themselves as informed, and fewer than ten percent of all ages reported themselves as uninformed.

Table 7 –Reported Level of Information about Capital Punishment * Age of Participant

		Percent within Age		
Level of information		18-34	35-54	55+
	Informed	58.9%	51.7%	61.4%
	Somewhat Informed	37.5%	39.3%	36.8%
	Uninformed	3.6%	9.0%	1.8%
Total	N	(56)	(89)	(57)
		100%	100%	

Chi-Square: 4.570

D.F.=201

P= .334

Contrary to age, a very significant relationship exists between perceived level of information and education as seen from the p-value statistic of 0.000 in Table 8. As one would imagine, past research shows that more educated people tend to be more informed on political issues than less educated people. The data seen in Table 8, showing that the more educated the person, the more they described themselves as informed supports past research. For example, four fifths of participants with more than a Bachelor's degree stated that they were informed while about half of participants with a Bachelor's degree or some college described themselves as

informed, and only one third of participants with a high school education or less stated they were informed. Conversely, none of the participants with more than a Bachelor's degree described themselves as uninformed compared with 8% of Bachelors or some college and 5% of high school or less. A majority of people in the upper two education brackets reported themselves as being informed, but a majority of people with a high school education or less reported themselves as somewhat informed.

Table 8 – Reported Level of Information about Capital Punishment * Education of Participant

Percent within Education				
Level of information		More than a Bachelor's	Some College or Bachelor's	High School or Less
	Informed	82.0%	53.5%	35.9%
	Somewhat Informed	18.0%	38.6%	59.0%
	Uninformed	0%	7.9%	5.1%
Total	N	(50)	(114)	(39)
		100%	100%	100%

Chi-Square: 22.674

D.F.= 202

P= .000**

The final cross-tabulation conducted in this section used the following variables: attitude toward capital punishment and level of information about capital punishment. This cross-tabulation was run in order to see if people who supported or opposed capital punishment were more informed. Table 9 reveals that roughly the same percentage of those who oppose or support described themselves as informed, somewhat informed, or uninformed on the subject of capital punishment. For example, 57% of those who oppose capital punishment stated they were informed,

and 58% of those who support capital punishment stated they were informed. As seen from Table 9, the Chi-Square statistic and p-value further proves that there is not a significant relationship between information level of capital punishment and attitude toward capital punishment.

Table 9 –Reported Level of Information about Capital Punishment * Attitude toward Capital Punishment

Level of information	Percent within Attitude	
	Oppose	Support
Informed	57.4%	57.8%
Somewhat Informed	34.0%	37.4%
Uninformed	8.5%	4.8%
Total	N (44)	(152)
	100%	100%

Chi-Square: .994

D.F.= 195

P= .608

Although a majority of people believed that they were not uninformed about the issue of capital punishment, the study suggests that they were actually relatively uninformed. Researchers asked each participant a set of questions about the gender, race, age, education, and income level of death row inmates among others. Tables 10 and 11 below shows the percent correct for each of levels of information along with percentage correct for gender, race, age, and education. The correct responses were the majority of death row inmates are males, White, 35-54 years old, a high school graduate, and has a low income wage earners.

Examining the results, participants who identified themselves as uninformed were actually more informed than those who identified themselves as either informed or somewhat informed. In other words, participants' actual level of information on the

death penalty was less than their reported levels. Specifically, those who identified themselves as either informed or somewhat informed exhibited lower levels of actual information than those who identified themselves as uninformed. Males and females tended to score relatively the same as participants of various ages and levels of education. Whites tended to answer slightly more correctly than Non-Whites. The main conclusion, however, revealed that a majority of the sample was uninformed despite their description of themselves as informed or somewhat informed. Participants only answered correctly on gender and income where the answers are fairly obvious. A further examination can be seen in the discussion section.

Table- 10 Perceived Level of Information *Factual Knowledge about Death Row Inmates

	Gender	Race	Age	Education	Income
	% Correct	% Correct	% Correct	% Correct	% Correct
Informed	100%	24.5%	41.2%	42.9%	85.7%
Somewhat Informed	100%	21.9%	36.5%	45.2%	82.2%
Uninformed	100%	10%	50.0%	54.5%	90.9%

Table- 11- Demographics* Factual Knowledge about Death Row Inmates

	Gender	Race	Age	Education	Income
	% Correct	% Correct	% Correct	% Correct	% Correct
Male	100%	19.5%	46.9%	40.0%	85.6%
Female	100%	25.0%	33.7%	49.0%	83.3%
White	100%	26.1%	40.8%	44.7%	87.0%

Non-White	100%	11.4%	37.2%	44.7%	75.6%
18-34	100%	33.3%	39.3%	48.2%	78.9%
35-54	100%	19.0%	41.4%	46.0%	83.9%
55+	100%	16.7%	37.5%	40.0%	90.7%
High School or Less	100%	16.7%	26.3%	56.1%	80.0%
Bachelor's or Some College	100%	26.5%	42.3%	45.4%	83.3%
More than a Bachelor's	100%	18.8%	46.0%	34.7%	90.0%

Fairness of the Death Penalty Administration Findings

The analysis of fairness reveals that the sample as a whole is skeptical of the fairness of death penalty sentencing. The first test compares perceived fairness of death penalty administration with gender. There appears to be no clear pattern based on the gender of participants. While females were more skeptical of the fairness with 67% believing that it is fair only some of the time; men were also fairly skeptical with 57%, indicating fairness only some of the time. More women than men, however, believe that the death penalty is fairly administered all of the time. Looking at the p-value statistic, .208, fairness and gender are not significantly related. Despite this fact, it must be noted that a majority of both genders believe that the death penalty is only fairly administered some of the time. This analysis shows that people acknowledge that there are some problems with its administration.

Table 12 –How often the Death Penalty is Fairly Administered * Gender of Participant

Percent within Gender			
Fairness		Male	Female
	Some of the time	57%	67%

	Most of the time	37.6%	25.8%
	All of the time	5.4%	7.2%
Total	N	(93)	(97)
		100%	100%

Chi-Square: 3.138

D.F.=189

P= .208

The next cross-tabulation evaluated the independent variable fairness with race of participant. As one would expect, Non-Whites appeared more skeptical of the death penalty than Whites where three fourths of Non-Whites and two thirds of Whites believed that the death penalty is only fairly administered some of the time. A larger percentage of Whites compared to Non-Whites, however, thought that the death penalty was fairly administered most of the time or all of the time. Once again, a majority of both races felt that the death penalty is only fairly administered some of the time. The p-value statistic at .061 is so close to .05 that a statistically significant relationship can be assumed between fairness and race. This means that Non-Whites believe the death penalty to be fairly administered significantly less than Whites.

Table 13 –How often the Death Penalty is Fairly Administered * Race of Participant

Percent within Race

Fairness		Non-White	White
	Some of the time		78.0%
Most of the time		17.1%	35.1%
All of the time		4.9%	6.8%
Total	N	(41)	(148)
		100%	100%

Chi-Square: 5.578

D.F. =188

P= .061

The statistics show no clear relationship between the next independent variable, age, and fairness of administration. It seems as though participants ages 55 and older were more skeptical, and those ages 18 to 34 were least skeptical with participants 35 to 54 somewhere in between. Once again, a majority of all ages believe that capital punishment is only fairly administered some of the time.

Table 14 –How often the Death Penalty is Fairly Administered * Age of Participant

Fairness	Percent within Age		
	18-34	35-54	55+
Some of the time	57.1%	61.4%	70.0%
Most of the time	33.9%	30.1%	30.0%
All of the time	8.9%	8.4%	0%
Total	N	(56)	(83)
		100%	100%

Chi-Square: 5.240

D.F. = 188

P= .264

There appears to be no clear pattern when examining the variables fairness and education, despite the fact that the two are significantly related at the 90%

confidence level. Participants with a high school education or less expressed the most skepticism regarding death penalty fairness with about three fourths of them stating it was only fairly administered some of the time. Participants with more than a Bachelor's degree at 68% followed closely behind High school or less participants. None of the people with more than a Bachelor's degree stated that the death penalty was fairly administered all of the time. About one tenth of participants with a high school education or less, however, believed it is administered fairly all of the time. A majority of all people stated that the death penalty was only fairly administered some of the time.

Table 15 –How often the Death Penalty is Fairly Administered * Education of Participant

Fairness	Percent within Education		
	More than a Bachelor's	Some College or Bachelor's	High School or Less
Some of the time	68.1%	56.7%	71.1%
Most of the time	31.9%	35.6%	18.4%
All of the time	0%	7.7%	10.5%
Total	N	(47)	(104)
		100%	100%

Chi-Square: 8.192
D.F.= 188
P= .085

National research shows that people who are opposed to the death penalty express more skepticism about its fairness. The present study supports those findings. Participants who opposed capital punishment perceived the death penalty to be less fair, and those who supported the death penalty perceived it to be fairly administered

more often. None of the people who opposed capital punishment thought the death penalty was fairly administered all of the time, and almost ninety percent perceived it to be fairly administered only some of the time. There was, however, an error in the question because there was not an option for none of the time. If that option had been available, some of the participants who responded some of the time most likely would have answered none of the time instead. A majority of supporters also felt that the death penalty was fair some of the time while only less than ten percent of supporters felt that it was fair all of the time. Using data from another table, all of the people who thought that the death penalty was fairly administered all of the time supported the death penalty, and nearly ninety percent of those who thought the death penalty was fairly administered most of the time supported the death penalty. As seen from the table, the Chi-Square statistic shows that there is a significant relationship between attitude toward capital punishment and fairness of administration of the death penalty.

Table 16-Attitude toward Capital Punishment * Fairness of Administration

Percent within Attitude			
Fairness		Oppose	Support
	Some of the time	86.7%	54.7%
	Most of the time	13.3%	36.7%
	All of the time	0%	8.6%

Total	N	(45)	(139)
		100%	100%

Chi-Square: 15.438

D.F. =183

P= .000**

Attitude Toward Capital Punishment

National studies show that men are more likely to support capital punishment and women are more likely to oppose capital punishment. Although the data in the present study reveals that there is no significant relationship between these variables, the direction of the percentages support national findings. As indicated in Table 17 below, about one fifth of males and one fourth of females opposed capital punishment. Conversely, about eighty percent of males and roughly seventy-five percent of females supported capital punishment. The p-value at .476 reveals that there is not a significant relationship between attitude toward capital punishment and gender of participant. For a significant relationship to exist the p-value must be less than α , which in this case is .05.

Table 17 -Attitude toward Capital Punishment * Gender of Participant

Percent within Gender			
Attitude		Male	Female
	Oppose	22.1%	26.5%
	Support	77.9%	73.5%
Total	N	(95)	(102)
		100%	100%

Chi-Square: .509

D.F. =196

P= .476

As specified in Table 18, it is clear that this study confirms the previous findings that there is a significant relationship between attitude toward capital punishment and race. About half of Non-Whites in the sample opposed capital punishment whereas only one fifth of Whites opposed the death penalty. This is a gap of almost 30%. The analysis for support revealed similar differences with about half of Non-Whites supporting capital punishment and four fifths of Whites supporting capital punishment. The p-value statistic of .000 further confirms the significance between attitude and race because .000 is clearly less than the alpha of .05. This cross-tabulation suggests that Whites are significantly more likely to support capital punishment than Non- Whites, and Non-Whites are significantly more likely to oppose capital punishment than Whites.

Table 18 -Attitude toward Capital Punishment * Race of Participant

Percent within Race			
Attitude		Non-White	White
	Oppose	45.5%	17.8%
	Support	54.5%	82.2%
Total	N	(44)	(152)
		100%	100%

Chi-Square: 14.353

D.F. =195

P= .000**

As previously stated in the literature review, there appears to be no consistent agreement about the relationship between age and attitude toward capital punishment. Table 19 and Figure 5 below show the results of the cross-tabulation. First, looking at the p-value statistic, .372, there seems to be no significant relationship between age and capital punishment as many other studies have shown. Examining the data more

closely, however, some differences exist. People ages 35-54 years old opposed capital punishment the least with only one-fifth of this age group expressing opposition. People ages 18-34 expressed the highest level of opposition with one third of their age group opposing. Although people 55 years old and up were closer in percentage to the 35-54 year olds than to the 18-34 year olds, they remained in the middle of the sample in both support and their opposition to capital punishment. Figure 5 more clearly displays this information.

Table 19 -Attitude toward Capital Punishment * Age of Participant

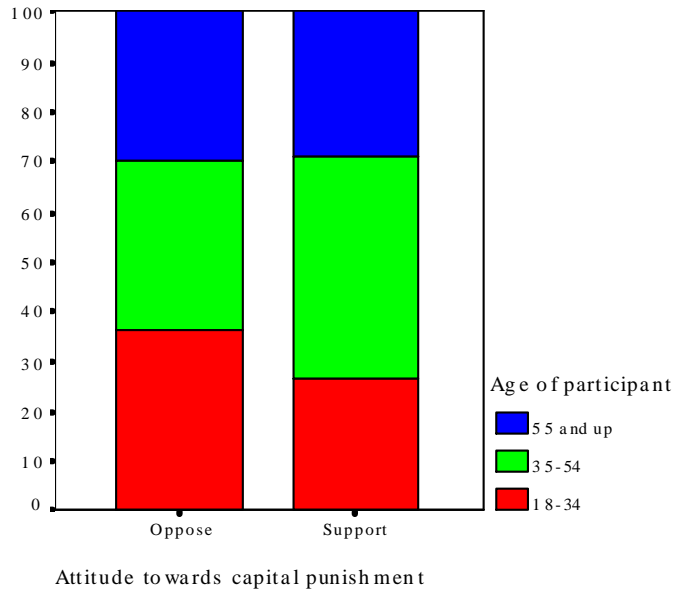
		Percent within Age		
Attitude		18-34	35-54	55+
	Oppose	29.8%	19.5%	24.6%
	Support	70.2%	80.5%	75.4%
Total	N	(57)	(82)	(57)
		100%	100%	100%

Chi-Square: 1.977

D.F. =195

P= .372

Figure 5



The final independent variable tested with regard to attitude toward capital punishment was education. National studies suggest that high school graduates favor the death penalty the most, and college graduates oppose the death penalty the most. The results from this study, however, do not completely confirm past research. Participants with education beyond a bachelor's degree expressed higher levels of opposition to capital punishment more than any other educational group with approximately one quarter opposing. Even though females are more opposed to the death penalty than males, a clear majority of females still support capital punishment. Participants with some college or a bachelor's degree expressed the highest level of support for capital punishment. Those with a high school education or less remained in between those with some education beyond a bachelor's degree and those with some college or a bachelor's degree. The Chi-Square statistic reveals that there is not a significant relationship between attitude toward capital punishment and education.

Although a significant relationship does not exist, the data somewhat conforms to Bohm's and Fox's studies when accounting for the increase in people achieving higher education since the late 1980's.

Table 20 -Attitude toward Capital Punishment * Education of Participant

		Percent within Education		
Attitude		More than a Bachelor's Degree	Bachelor's Degree or Some College	High School or Less
	Oppose	27.1%	23.1%	25%
	Support	72.9%	76.9%	75.0%
Total	N	(48)	(108)	(40)
		100%	100%	100%

Chi-Square: .285

D.F.=195

P=. 867

Resemblance-A Test of the Hypothesis

The final test conducted examined the hypothesis that the more a person resembles those he or she perceives to be a majority of death row inmates the more he or she will oppose capital punishment. The test chosen was a three-way cross-tabulation because the variables race of participant, race of death row inmate, and attitude toward capital punishment needed to be tested at the same time. The column variable was attitude toward capital punishment; the row variable was race of inmate, and the control or layer variable was race of participant. Like all other tests, this one used a Chi-Square statistic at the 95% confidence level. See Table 22 below for results.

Prior to conducting a three-way test, the relationship between perceived race of death row inmates and attitude toward capital punishment was examined. As

specified in Table 21 below, there appears to be no significant relationship between attitude toward capital punishment and perceived race of a majority of death row inmates. This means that a similar number of those who support and those who oppose capital punishment believe that a majority of death row inmates are Non-White, and around the same number of both those who oppose and those who support believe that a majority of death row inmates are White. People who oppose capital punishment are no more correct on the question of whether death row inmates are White or Non-White than people who support it. This information must be known before one can analyze the three-way table because if one group was more correct on the race of death row inmates, then it could have affected test results. For example, more Non-Whites oppose the death penalty than Whites, and if these Non-Whites knew that a majority of death row inmates were Whites, then their opposition could not be due to their similarity to death row inmates. Because neither group was more informed on the issue of race, there should be no interaction between race and level of information in the three-way table.

Table 21 -Attitude toward Capital Punishment * Perceived Race of Majority of Death Row Inmates

		Percent within Race	
Attitude		Non-White	White
	Oppose	28.4%	17.1%
	Support	71.6%	82.9%
Total	N	(134)	(41)
		100%	100%

Chi-Square: 2.093

D.F. =174

P= .148

Table 22 shows the relationship between how many participants either supported or opposed capital punishment based on perceiving a majority of death row inmates to be of their race or another race. Although the data fails the Chi-Square test for significance, the percentages do support the hypothesis. Nearly all of the Non-White participants, 95%, who opposed the death penalty believed that the majority of death row inmates were also Non-White whereas only 5% of the Non-Whites who opposed the death penalty believed that the majority of inmates were White. As for White participants, 24% of White participants who opposed capital punishment believed that a majority of death row inmates were White. Although 24% seems like a small number, there were only a total of 25 Whites out of 133 who opposed, leaving a small sample to analyze. When tested together, these variables lack significance most likely due to the overwhelming support found in the study. Another factor that discounts the validity of the hypothesis is that 82% of Non-Whites who supported the death penalty believed the race of the majority was also Non-White. This suggests that resemblance is not a major factor in a person's determination of support or opposition to capital punishment. Since the variables were not significantly related, the hypothesis cannot be proven although there seems to be evidence that a larger study with less overwhelming support might find a significant relationship.

Table 22 -Three Way Table

Race of Participant				Attitude toward Capital Punishment		
				Oppose	Support	Total
Non-White	Race of Inmates on Death Row	Non-White	N % Within Attitude	(18) 94.7%	(18) 81.8%	(36) 87.8%
		White	N % Within Attitude	(1) 5.3%	(4) 18.2%	(5) 12.2%
	Total	N % Within Attitude	(19) 100.00%	(22) 100.00%	(41) 100.00%	
White	Race of Inmates on Death Row	Non-White	N % Within Attitude	(19) 76.0%	(78) 72.2%	(97) 27.1%
		White	N % Within Attitude	(6) 24.0%	(30) 27.8%	(36) 27.1%
	Total	N % Within Attitude	(25) 100.00%	(108) 100.00%	(133) 100.00%	

Chi-Square: Non-White: 1.589 White: .147

D.F.

P= Non-White: .207 White: .702

DISCUSSION

This study tests the hypothesis that a person’s perceived resemblance to death row inmates could affect his or her opinion about capital punishment. Previous studies show that race, gender, education, region, religion, and political affiliation affect people’s decision about whether they support or oppose capital punishment. This study attempted to find another factor that might account for why people support or oppose capital punishment. Psychology proves that people empathize, identify, and are more willing to help those who look like them. The present study connects this

psychological concept to capital punishment and tests this relationship using inferential statistical procedures. The results of this experiment allow the researcher to draw conclusions, make connections with past research, as well as suggest what could possibly be done in the future.

The results from the three-way cross-tabulation table reveal that the hypothesis should be rejected. In other words, there is not a significant relationship between resemblance and attitude toward capital punishment. Although no statistical relationship existed, the percentages did follow patterns expected in the hypothesis. For example, almost all of the Non-White participants who opposed capital punishment believed that the race of the majority of death row inmates resembled theirs. This statement suggests that resemblance does play a role in a person's opposition to the death penalty. The overwhelming support for capital punishment, however, presented problems for this study because there were so few participants who opposed capital punishment to analyze. The large amount of support will be addressed later in the discussion. Since the statistics showed that there was not a significant relationship between resemblance and attitude toward capital punishment, the hypothesis could not be proven. Despite the lack of support for the hypothesis, the data analysis created several other topics of interest.

The first noteworthy aspect of the data involved the level of information people reported to have about the death penalty. In the survey, researchers asked participants to rate themselves as very informed, informed, somewhat informed, or uninformed. In a subsequent set of questions, researchers asked participants a series

of questions about the presumed gender, age, race, education, and income of those they perceived to be a majority of death row inmates. Analysis on level of information and the independent variables gender, race, age, and education were then performed. The results of the analysis revealed that gender, race, and education were all significantly related to level of information. Males, Whites, and the more highly educated stated that they were informed more often than women, Non-Whites and the less well educated. On the whole, however, a majority of people reported to be either informed or somewhat informed. When tested with attitude toward capital punishment, nearly identical results were calculated for participants who oppose and participants who support capital punishment, indicating that the same percentages of people who oppose identify themselves as informed compared with participants who support.

After testing these statements with the questions about death row inmates, the comparison clearly shows that a majority of people are not as informed as reported. In fact, a majority of people were incorrectly informed on nearly every topic except gender and income, which have fairly obvious answers. Scholars have repeatedly addressed this disparity between actual level of information and reported level of information about capital punishment. In a somewhat controversial statement, Supreme Court Justice Marshall proposed what would later become known as the Marshall Hypothesis in his concurring opinion in *Furman v. Georgia*: 1) the American public is relatively uninformed about the facts of capital punishment and 2) if these facts were known then “the great mass of citizens would conclude (...) that

the death is immoral and therefore unconstitutional” (*Furman*). The analysis drawn from this study seems to support Marshall’s theory. A majority of the sample was largely uninformed not only about the demographic characteristics of death row inmates, but also about issues regarding attorneys and victims. National studies support these findings showing that a vast majority of the American public believes such falsehoods as capital punishment is a deterrent for murderers, executing someone is far cheaper than life in prison, and convicted murders are often repeat offenders. Marshall suggests that if the public knew some of this information, they would be more likely to oppose capital punishment. Further evidence from this study can be seen by the link between the sample being largely uninformed and on the whole in favor of capital punishment. No real connection can be proven from this study, but the relationship is thought provoking.

The second topic of interest in this study revolves around the vast number of participants who were skeptical about the fairness of the death penalty’s administration, but who still remain highly supportive of the death penalty. Analysis revealed that race and attitude were both significantly related to perceived fairness at either the 95% or the 90% confidence level. As one would expect, Non-Whites and participants who oppose capital punishment were more likely to believe that the death penalty is less fairly administered. Whites and supporters of the death penalty were more likely to think that the death penalty is fairly administered most or all of the time. The Gallup Poll has conducted numerous fairness studies, although they are not phrased like the fairness questions in this study. For example when asked if an

innocent person had been executed under the death penalty in the past five years, 100% reported “yes” in both 2003 and 2005. A majority in both years felt that 1-5% of people executed were innocent. In the wake of DNA testing revealing innocent people on Illinois’ death row in 2000, death penalty support dropped to 66%, an all time low in 19 years. In spite of DNA suggesting that innocent people have been executed and in spite of reservations about its fairness, a majority of Americans still continue to support the death penalty.

Finally, the study’s analysis of attitudes toward the death penalty can be compared to national data. As Bohm and other researchers suggested, there is a significant relationship between attitude toward the death penalty and gender, race, and education. The present study, however, only found race to be significantly related to attitude toward capital punishment, which was most likely due to the tremendous support for the death penalty. With little opposition, it is hard to see differences for support and opposition based on sex, race, education, or age because there are too few data points to test. The analysis revealed that 71% of people in the present survey supported the death penalty whereas 24% opposed. These numbers exceed the national level of 64% support and 30% opposition recorded by the Gallup Organization in October of 2005. These figures are almost 10% higher than national numbers. Possible explanations for this outcry include the regional and religious influence of the sample’s location. Past research shows that Southerners support the death penalty more than any other region. Chattanooga is a relatively homogeneous religious area with well over a majority considered evangelical protestant, followed

by mainline protestants, a small number of Catholics, and under ten percent non-religious. Evangelical Christians who attend church regularly have been found to have the highest level of support compared with other religious groups. Combining these two factors and the small number of minorities in the sample, it is evident why the levels of support in this study are much higher than national studies.

Comparing the present study with national studies also reveals unexpected results. In the present study, the percentage of females and Non-Whites who support capital punishment exceeds national studies. The current analysis shows that 78% of male participants and 74% of female participants supported capital punishment compared to the national level of 74% of males and 62% of females. Non-Whites in the current analysis support capital punishment much more as compared to national levels with 55% locally versus 44% nationally. Perhaps, the effect of region on attitude toward capital punishment can explain these results. In 1994, over 45% of Non-Whites in the South supported capital punishment, and this percentage is rising steadily. One can imagine that since 1994, support for capital punishment among Southern minorities may have reached the level found in this study. The mounting support for capital punishment by Non-Whites could be attributed to increasing levels of education and income of Non-Whites. The increasing number of Non-White conservatives in the South might also play a role. One final explanation would simply be African American's high exposure level to violent crime. Although race and gender differ from national studies, education and age support Bohm's and other studies.

The purpose of this paper was to determine if there is a significant relationship between participants' perceived resemblance to death row inmates and attitude toward capital punishment. The study failed to find that there a significant relationship between resemblance and attitude. The results also revealed that the sample was generally less informed than they stated, skeptical of the death penalty's administration, and were much more supportive than national levels.

Although this study did answer the research question, some limitations existed. The limitations can be divided into three main categories: survey, administration, and sample. Beginning with the actual survey, there were minor problems with its content and structure. The main problem with the survey was that questions regarding religion were left off of the survey due to a technical problem that was not discovered until after the survey's completion. Without these questions, no data about religion was recorded. This information could have played a key role in our analysis. National religion studies, however, were included in the literature review in order to show that religion is often significantly related to attitude toward capital punishment. Information about residents of Chattanooga's religious affiliation was also included. Using national data about which religion supports or opposes capital punishment, the reader could then determine the effect religion plays on beliefs of capital punishment in Chattanooga. Due to the uniform nature of religion in Chattanooga, the lack of data was not as large of a problem as was previously foreseen. The second main problem with the survey was that the choice of "none of the time" in the question asking how often the death penalty was fairly administered

was omitted from the survey. Without this answer, people who oppose capital punishment or those who felt the death penalty is not fairly administered were left to choose “some of the time” or not answer the question at all. This omission most likely skewed the data on fairness of the death penalty.

The second limitation of the study occurred because of the administration of the survey. In order to get a large sample in a short amount of time, other students were enlisted to administer the survey. Although Dr. Brodsky, the advisor for this study, trained and supervised these students, the students had no incentive to make sure the results were as accurate as possible. The possibility exists that some of the students may have fabricated answers to the surveys in order to prove that they helped with the project. Other problems may have occurred as a result of students circling the incorrect answers on the survey. This problem was foreseen and was made as simple as possible by printing out a survey for each phone call, but accidental errors may have occurred. Finally, all studies conducted at least in part by humans must include simple human errors.

The third area of limitations regards the sample itself. The main problem with the sample was its uniform nature. Since a majority of participants chose roughly the same answer on each question, it left the other answers with very few data points to analyze. Numerous statistical errors can arise when dealing with a small number of data points. Thus, the statistics might be less accurate. The second problem can be seen in Table 1, which describes the demographics of the sample. The table clearly shows that the sample did not contain enough minorities, and contained too many

people with a Bachelor's degree or more for the area polled. This under and over representation might have distorted the results because past studies have proven that race and education are both significantly related to attitude toward capital punishment.

Although there are limitations to the present study, it does present ideas for further research. The fact that the research failed to confirm the hypothesis does discount the notion that there is some connection between resemblance and attitude. The same study should be conducted on a national scale with more participants. This would allow for a more heterogeneous sample and would eliminate the problems associated with the regional and religious influences. Such a study would generate a stronger foundation for analysis of the topic, and might challenge the results of this study. Another interesting study arising out of the analysis would be to further test the Marshall Hypothesis with level of information results. Research has been conducted on this topic, but none with questions regarding actual death row inmates. A researcher could incorporate these questions with ones about common death penalty myths. Finally, it would be fascinating to design a study that further examines the issue of fairness and death penalty support. It would be beneficial to the academic community to have a greater understanding of why people continue to support the death penalty despite the fact that they believe that innocent people are being executed.

Even though this study did have some limitations, various conclusions can still be drawn. The study connected ideas from past literature and explored uncharted

territory in the field of capital punishment. The results of the study are inconclusive about whether perceived resemblance towards death row inmates affects a person's attitude toward capital punishment. The study, however, reveals percentages that would suggest there is some relationship. Although the research failed to conclusively support the hypothesis, the results shed light on various aspects of capital punishment including levels of information, perceptions of fairness, and support or opposition.

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Appendix

Table 1- Public Opinion over Time

<i>Date</i>	<i>Support</i>	<i>Oppose</i>	<i>No Opinion</i>
2005 Oct 13-16	64	30	6
2005 May 2-5	74	23	3
2004 Oct 11-14	64	31	5
2004 May 2-4	71	26	3
2003 Oct 6-8	64	32	4
2003 May 19-21	70	28	2
2003 May 5-7	74	24	2
2002 Oct 14-17	70	25	5
2002 May 6-9	72	25	3
2001 Oct 11-14	68	26	6
2001 May 10-14	65	27	8
2001 Feb 19-21	67	25	8
2000 Aug 29- Sept 5	67	28	5
2000 Jun 23-25	66	26	8
2000 Feb 14-15	66	28	6
1999 Feb 8-9	71	22	7
1995 May 11-14	77	13	10
1994 Sep 6-7	80	16	4
1991 Jun 13-16	76	18	6
1988 Sep 25- Oct 1	79	16	5
1988 Sep 9-11	79	16	5
1986 Jan 10-13	70	22	8
1985 Jan 11-14	72	20	8
1985 Nov 11-18	75	17	8
1981 Jan 30- Feb 2	66	25	9
1978 Mar 3-6	62	27	11
1976 Apr 9-12	66	26	8
1972 Nov 10-13	57	32	11
1972 Mar 3-6	50	41	9
1971 Oct 29- Nov2	49	40	11
1969 Jan 23-28	51	40	9

1967 Jun 2-7	54	38	8
1966 May 19-24	42	47	11
1965 Jan 7-12	45	43	12
1960 Mar 2-7	53	36	11
1957 Aug 29-Sep4	47	34	18
1956 Mar 29- Apr 3	53	34	13
1953 Nov 1-5	68	25	7
1937 Dec 1-6	60	33	7
1936 Dec 2-7	59	38	3
Average	64.575	28.075	7.325

Support

Mean	64.575
Standard Error	1.578658754
Median	66
Mode	66
Standard Deviation	9.984314622
Sample Variance	99.68653846
Kurtosis	-0.485029117
Skewness	-0.568853885
Range	38
Minimum	42
Maximum	80
Sum	2583
Count	40

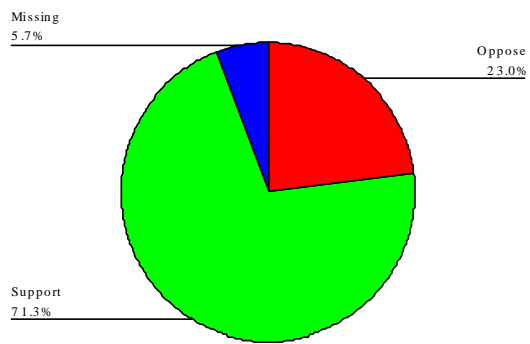
Oppose

Mean	28.075
Standard Error	1.282719217
Median	26.5
Mode	25
Standard Deviation	8.112628649
Sample Variance	65.81474359
Kurtosis	-0.328650929
Skewness	0.320969454

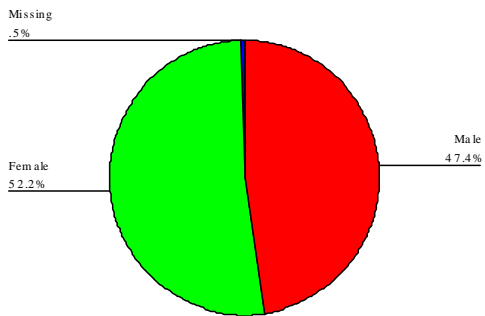
Range	34
Minimum	13
Maximum	47
Sum	1123
<u>Count</u>	<u>40</u>

Demographic Charts of the Sample

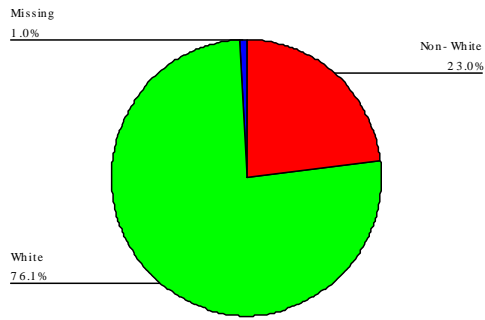
Attitude towards capital punishment



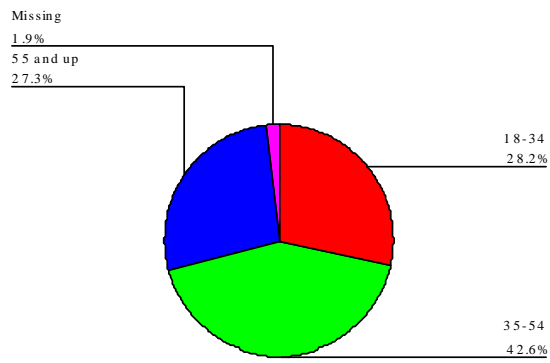
Gender of participant



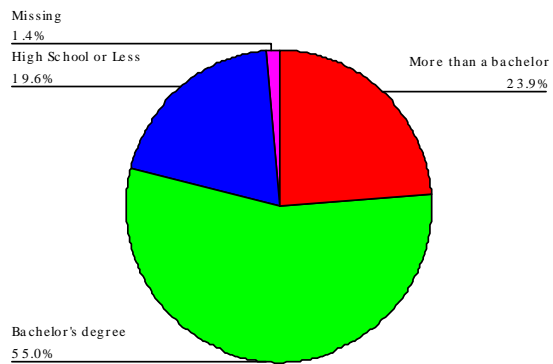
Race of participant



Age of participant



Education of participant



Coding Information

All variables were divided into subgroups and coded in numerical form including refused, coded 0, and don't know, coded 9, for each variable. The main dependent variable was attitude toward capital punishment, which was divided into support and oppose. Support was coded 2 and oppose was coded 1. Two other dependent variables, level of information and perceived fairness, were used to conduct two different tests using the data. Level of information was divided into informed, coded 1, somewhat informed, coded 3, and uninformed, coded 4. The subgroups for perceived fairness were "some of the time", coded 1, "most of the time", coded 2, and "all of the time", and coded 3. This variable is somewhat flawed because "none of the time" was not a choice. Looking at the descriptive statistics for this variable, however, reveals that most people did answer the question. It can be assumed that some of the people who answered "some of the time" would have answered "none of the time" had it been an option. The first independent variable, race, contained two sub-groups: White and Non-white. Non-white was coded 3 and White was coded 4. The next independent variable, gender, was divided into males and females with males coded 1 and females coded 2. The independent variable education was divided into high school graduates, 5, and less than high school graduates, 4. The final independent variable age was divided into 18-34 year olds, 35-54 year olds, and 55 and up where 18-34 year olds equals 1, 35-54 year olds equals 2, and 55 and up equals 3.

Introduction:

Hello, I am calling from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. We are conducting a survey to get a sense of people’s attitudes towards public services and safety issues in the Chattanooga area. All of your answers will be completely confidential and there will be no way to identify you from your answers.

First, I would like to ask you a few questions about the security in your area.

1. How would you rate the level of safety in the city of Chattanooga?
Excellent4
Good.....3
Fair.....2
Poor.....1
Don’t know.....9
Refused.....0

2. How do you rate the level of safety in your neighborhood?
Excellent4
Good.....3
Fair.....2
Poor.....1
Don’t know.....9
Refused.....0

3. Is there any area within a mile of your house that you would be afraid to walk alone at night?
Yes.....2
No.....1
Don’t know.....9
Refused.....0

4. Do you feel safer in Chattanooga now than you did two years ago?
Safer.....3
About the same.....2
Less safe.....1
Don’t know.....9
Refused.....0

5. Do you feel safer in your neighborhood now than you did two years ago?
Safer.....3
About the same.....2
Less safe.....1
Don’t know.....9
Refused.....0

6. Do you think the level of crime in Chattanooga has decreased or increased in the past two years?
Decreased.....2

- Increased.....1
- Don't know.....9
- Refused.....0

Next, I would like to turn to your satisfaction with various city services.

7. How would you describe your satisfaction with:

	Excellent-4	Good-3	Fair-2	Poor-1	Don't Know-9	Refused-0
Chattanooga Police Department						
Chattanooga Fire Department						
Trash pick-up						

8. In general do you think courts in this area deal too harshly or not harshly enough with criminals?
- Too harshly.....4
 - Not harshly enough.....3
 - About right.....2
 - Do not know.....1
 - Don't know.....9
 - Refused.....0

This section focuses on public information.

9. Where do you get most of your news?
- Newspaper.....4
 - Television.....3
 - Radio.....2
 - Internet.....1
 - Don't know.....9
 - Refused.....0
10. How informed are you about general criminal justice issues?
- Very informed.....1
 - Informed.....2
 - Somewhat informed.....3
 - Uninformed.....4
 - Don't know.....9
 - Refused.....0
11. How informed are you about the issue of capital punishment, the death penalty?
- Very informed.....1
 - Informed.....2
 - Somewhat informed.....3

Uninformed.....	4
Don't know.....	9
Refused.....	0

Now, I would like to ask you a few questions about capital punishment, the death penalty.

12. What is your attitude towards capital punishment?	
Support.....	2
Oppose.....	1
Don't know.....	9
Refused.....	0

13. If you support, what is your level of support?	
Strong.....	3
Moderate.....	2
Weak.....	1
Don't know.....	9
Refused.....	0

If you oppose, what is your level of opposition?	
Strong.....	3
Moderate.....	2
Weak.....	1
Don't know.....	9
Refused.....	0

14. Do you support or oppose capital punishment in	
All cases.....	4
Most cases.....	3
Some cases.....	2
On a case-by-case basis.....	1
Don't know.....	9
Refused.....	0

15. Are there any instances that could possibly change your mind?	
Yes.....	2
No.....	1
Don't know.....	9
Refused.....	0

16. Do you perceive the death penalty to be fairly administered in our country today?	
All the time.....	3
Most of the time.....	2
Some of the time.....	1
Don't know.....	9

- Refused.....0
17. Have any of your close friends or relatives ever been charged of a felony (serious crime)?
- Relative.....5
 - Close friend.....4
 - Neighbor.....3
 - Business associate.....2
 - No.....1
 - Don't know.....9
 - Refused.....0
18. Have any of your close friends or relatives ever been convicted of a felony (serious crime)?
- Relative.....5
 - Close friend.....4
 - Neighbor.....3
 - Business associate.....2
 - No.....1
 - Don't know.....9
 - Refused.....0
19. Do you know anyone who has been charged with a capital crime?
- Relative.....5
 - Close friend.....4
 - Neighbor.....3
 - Business associate.....2
 - No.....1
 - Don't know.....9
 - Refused.....0
20. Do you know anyone who has been convicted of a capital crime?
- Relative.....5
 - Close friend.....4
 - Neighbor.....3
 - Business associate.....2
 - No.....1
 - Don't know.....9
 - Refused.....0
21. Have any of your close friends or relatives been a victim of a capital crime?
- Relative.....5
 - Close friend.....4
 - Neighbor.....3
 - Business associate.....2
 - No.....1
 - Don't know.....9

Refused.....0

I am going to read you some words and I would like you to tell me which you think describe the majority of the people on death row.

22. Do you think the race of the majority is
White.....4
Black.....3
Hispanic.....2
Other.....1
Don't know.....9
Refused.....0

23. What do you think the average age is?

24. Do you think the education level of the majority is
Less than a high school graduate.....5
A high school graduate.....4
Some college.....3
A bachelor's degree from college.....2
More than a bachelor's degree from college.....1
Don't know.....9
Refused.....0

25. Do you think that their income level at the time they committed the crime was
Low.....4
Middle.....3
Upper middle.....2
Upper.....1
Don't know.....9
Refused.....0

26. Do you think they
Knew the victim.....2
Did not know the victim.....1
Don't know.....9
Refused.....0

27. Do you think the victim was of
The same race.....2
A different race.....1
Don't know.....9
Refused.....0

28. Do you think they were represented by
A hired attorney of their choice.....3

A public defender.....	2
An appointed attorney.....	1
Don't know.....	9
Refused.....	0

Finally, I would like to ask a few questions about yourself.

29. What is your gender?

Female.....	2
Male.....	1
Don't know.....	9
Refused.....	0

30. What is your race?

White.....	4
Black.....	3
Hispanic.....	2
Other.....	1
Don't know.....	9
Refused.....	0

31. What is your age?

32. What is your level of education?

Less than a high school graduate	
A high school graduate.....	4
Some college.....	3
A bachelor's degree from college.....	2
More than a bachelor's degree from college.....	1
Don't know.....	9
Refused.....	0

Thank you very much for helping us with our survey. The information you provided will be very useful in our study. We truly appreciate you taking the time to speak with us.