

CRIME ATTITUDES OF THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION

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## INTRODUCTION

The Millennial Generation, also known as Generation Y or the Net Generation, consists of teenagers and young adults entering and currently enrolled in college as well as those in their early thirties who have graduated and already started careers by 2013. Though there is some debate over the exact dates, most agree that this population includes those born anywhere from 1980 through 2000 (Howe & Strauss, 2002; Keeter, 2008; Keene & Handrich, 2010), meaning those aged twelve to thirty-two at the time of this study. Each generation may differ from their predecessors in how they view the world, and oftentimes political opinions are shaped by the major events that have occurred within their lifetime (Keeter, 2008). Much can be learned from identifying how patterns of a specific era affect individual opinions and beliefs in a cohort. For example, Millennials as a group are identified as being politically and socially more Liberal (Keene, 2010) as well as less traditionally religious (Drumheller, 2005). Being the second largest generational cohort, smaller only than those known as the Baby boomers (Chambers, 2010; Pardue & Morgan, 2008), the opinions of this age group have the potential to shape the future of our nation's social, business and political world. This study will explore the attitudinal cohort trends associated with the Millennial Generation and how they may impact attitudes about justice and criminal law.

While it is inappropriate to assume that any one person born during a specific period of time will have the same beliefs as every other person, it is accurate to say that shared circumstances can impact values and experiences of solidarity. According to Emile Durkheim's theory of social order, mechanical solidarity can be classified as the solidarity that results from homogeneity based on moral or predisposed similarities and is typically experienced by those

who place high importance on strong values, as this bond draws them together. While in contrast, organic solidarity is defined as that solidarity which is experienced by societies that are increasingly material and industry-oriented and is based upon the division of labor. The prevalence of penal law is seen within mechanical solidarity, and civil law is predominant in a society that functions according to the organization of organic solidarity. The collective conscience, or the society's moral code, within organic solidarity provides more room for individual initiative and variation, whereas mechanical solidarity relies more heavily on a collective absolute authority (Durkheim, 1893/1949). Using this definition, the current study will also seek to express how the Millennial Generation experiences organic solidarity.

One of the most significant ways in which cultural ideology shifts and is disseminated is through the accessibility of the information via the Internet. Given the common presence of the Internet throughout many homes and the general knowledge of how to find information, those who are adept at research have far greater access to information than did previous generations. Arriving during a time of great technological revolution, how the Millennials receive information is greatly impacted by the rise of new technologies and the prevalence of social networking. The current technologies available are being used in many different ways, from revamping education and learning (Kukulska-Hulme, 2010) to advertising for libraries (Jacobson, 2011) and the widespread use of social media sites as news venues or promoting awareness of political and social causes (Orange, 2011; Auer, 2011; Himmelboim et al., 2012; McGrath, 2011).

In addition to informing individuals, the news media landscape has been credited with empowering users as well. For instance, negative media coverage has been shown to promote higher political involvement when people are disappointed with what is happening and seek to

have an impact (Martin, 2008). Those who utilize these technologies frequently have been shown to be generally more aware of business, politics and general news events because their tech savvy presents a constant and immediate access to a wealth of information (Orange, 2011; Auer, 2011). Millennials in general utilize social media technologies more frequently than their elder counterparts and with greater comfort and familiarity (Halimuddin, 2013). According to a Pew Study, 83% of those aged 18 to 29 regularly used social networking sites, compared to 77% of those aged 30 to 49 and only 52% of those aged 50 to 64 (Brenner, 2013). Similarly the percentages of cell phone users who utilized social networking sites on their mobile devices were 67% of those between the ages of 18 to 29, 50% of 30 to 49-year-olds, and only 18% of those aged 50 to 64 (Brenner, 2013). Among 18 to 29-year-olds, 27% regularly used Twitter, whereas only 16% of users were aged 30 to 49 (Brenner & Duggan, 2013; Halimuddin, 2013). As a result, their user patterns have shaped much of how innovative media is developed and promoted (Carlson, 2005). The broader implication of these trends is that Millennials have the potential to impact not only the way that information is presented but the content as well, and deciding what is considered newsworthy can impact a culture significantly (Glassner, 2010).

Despite this presumption that a modern technological society is more informed and aware of the realities of the world, there are some ideologies that persist across generations, such as attitudes about justice and racism. Research on crime attitudes has not been a rapidly changing field, and studies tend to find that most people adhere to fairly traditional stereotypic beliefs regarding criminals (MacLin & Herrera, 2006; Hurwitz & Peffley, 1997). Research on attitudes towards crime also finds that Caucasians are more punitive toward minorities (Barkan & Cohn, 2005; Gordon & Anderson, 1995; Harrison & Esqueda, 2001). While racist motivations

no doubt exist, these beliefs are often attributed to class divisions, and poverty is often held up as the reason minorities are viewed as more criminal (Boggess & Hipp, 2010). Crime attitudes vary based upon the: race (Laderman, 2007; McCann, 2008; Unnever et al., 2005; Green et al., 2006; Dixon & Linz, 2000a; Entman & Rojecki, 2000), gender (Ketterer, 2002), and even age (Parker, 1983) of the respondent, with more punitive views being associated with both Conservative political and religious beliefs (Unnever & Cullen, 2006; Soss et al., 2003; Duckitt et al., 2010; Millares, 2009; Green et al., 2006). The common image in the minds of many Caucasians of a stereotypical criminal is that of a young, Black male (Dixon & Linz, 2000a, 2000b; Entman & Rojecki, 2000), and similarly Blacks in general are often viewed as more violent (Dixon & Azocar, 2007; Dixon, 2006a; Lipschultz & Hilt, 2003; Dixon & Linz, 2000a; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Oliver & Fonash, 2002; Hurwitz & Peffley, 1997), especially when portrayed in an urban environment and when correlated with gang activity. Various studies have also noted that crime news viewing is related to perceptions of the criminal persona (Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Oliver & Fonash, 2002; Dixon, 2007; Dixon & Linz, 2000a, 2000b), which would seem to affect the viewer's perceptions of both criminal stereotypes and crime severity, given the amount of crime news they consume.

However, with the cultural shifts observed within the Millennial Generation it is my intent to test whether crime attitudes and judgments are notably distinct from those found in previous research. It is hypothesized that with the more Liberal views held by these young adults (Broido, 2004; Halpin & Agne, 2009) and their seemingly untraditional religiosity (Cimino & Lattin, 1998; Drumheller, 2005), that Millennial thought regarding crime punishment will also be more Liberal and therefore less punitive. It is also hypothesized that Millennials' views of the

criminal will not be as racially stereotyped as evidenced by the level of harshness in exacting punishment on crimes. Through these hypotheses, this research seeks to answer the following questions: Are crime perceptions of the Millennials consistent with those traditionally found in research? If not, is there evidence of a generational distinction in attitudes of crime punishment? These questions are important as public opinion is commonly accepted as frequently guiding state policy, especially when elected officials seek to reach out to voters through the creation or endorsement of public programs (Norrande, 2000). These actions extend even to the federal level, and concern over addressing crime has often been an issue of discussion amongst public servants from mayors on up to presidents.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Organic Solidarity*

Millennials are seen as a highly independent group whose social preferences are distinctly less religious, which could indicate a divergence from traditional views of morality, and more in favor of social forms of restorative justice. These views are in line with the societal organization of Durkheim's organic solidarity (Durkheim, 1893/1949). One could also expect to see a high sense of individuality when observing moral values or opinions of an ethical nature, which is expected of these Millennials who seem as a group to present their generational views as a society that functions according to the systematization of organic solidarity.

### *Diversity*

The Millennial Generation is the most ethnically diverse in U.S. history (Howe & Strauss, 2000; 2002), with six-in-ten young adults (61%) being Caucasian, compared to nine-in-ten in 1972 (Keeter, 2008; Pew Research Center, 2010a). Comparatively, 62% of those within Generation X were non-Hispanic Caucasians, 73% of Baby Boomers were non-Hispanic Caucasians, and 80% of the Silent Generation were non-Hispanic Caucasians (Pew Research Center, 2010a). This means that 39% of the Millennial Generation is comprised of racial and ethnic minorities (Pew Research Center, 2010a). The 2010 U.S. Census reported the national ethnic composition as still predominantly Caucasian (72.4%), followed by Hispanic (16.3%), Black (12.6%), and Asian (4.8%). Asians are listed as the fastest growing minority group, grown by 63% from 1990 to 2000 and more than 45% from 2000 to 2010; and Hispanics grew 43% from 2000 to 2010, representing over half of the growth seen in the entire U.S. population in the last

decade (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000; 2010). This diversity is reflected in student populations with increased and rising minority enrollment both reported and predicted, and more youth likely to self-report as bi-racial or multiracial (Broido, 2004). As of 2008, 39.6% of 18 to 24-year-olds were enrolled in college (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), and reports are predicting that the Millennials are on course to become the most educated generation in American history (Keeter, 2008; Pew Research Center, 2010a). The Hispanic population comprises just over 12% of college students, with numbers increasing all the time (Liu, 2011). The growth of the minority populations in the United States and interracial coupling are common events that this generation has been raised to see as normative. Aside from ethnic composition, the Millennials are also noteworthy for their valuing of diverse viewpoints and opinions, respecting and seeking a variety of viewpoints on different topics (Roehling et al., 2010).

### *Political Ideology*

Many young adults hold political views relatively similar to their parents', but there are certain events and cohort influences that can drastically change a worldview. Just as individuals who reached maturity in the 1920s and 1930s had social issues of poverty burned into their memories from the Great Depression, each generation has a slightly different focus that can usually be traced to specific events occurring during their young lives (Keeter, 2008). The major political events that would have occurred in late adolescence and early adulthood of this American Millennial Generation that have helped to shape their worldviews include the Clinton presidency, the G.W. Bush presidency, the terrorist attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>, the Iraq War, and a national as well as global focus on terrorism. Another notable example of this ability for events to shape attitudes is the experience of the Baby Boom generation, whose politics were

largely shaped by the concerns that arose from the Vietnam War era and Civil Rights movement (Keeter, 2008). For Millennials, instead of Civil Rights, the discussion around race relations has centered on affirmative action<sup>1</sup> as well as views on illegal immigration, which have contributed to racialized attitudes (Broido, 2004).

While some trends may see increased political involvement from younger people, national statistics do not yet evidence such an association. The U.S. Census Bureau reported in 2010 that 25.3% of 18 to 29-year-olds were registered voters but only 23.9% had voted. Compared to 61% of those 65 and older, national statistics continue to find that voting and registration rates increase with age (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Yet many reports would suggest that those Millennials who are politically involved tend to lean in one particular direction. According to a 2010 Gallup poll regarding political affiliation, 39% of respondents considered themselves to be Republican whereas 50% identified as Democrat (Gallup, 2012). Similarly, in a national study of 18-29 year-old adults (Keeter, 2008; Halpin & Agne, 2009; Pew Research Center, 2010b) it was reported that young people today self-identify as more Liberal (44%) than Conservative (28%), and it is typical for these young adults to hold and express more Liberal attitudes on most social issues (Keeter, 2008; Broido, 2004). Used as an identifier of social, economic and political belief systems, the term “Liberal” is used to mean that these individuals both identify themselves with that term as well as reflect the values which are characteristic of social Liberalism. The Democratic Party is typically considered more Liberal, whereas the Republican Party is typically considered more Conservative, and this is reflected in measurements of party affiliation among these young people. One report took a look at the

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<sup>1</sup> Affirmative action: policy or program designed to counter discrimination against minority groups and women in areas such as employment and education.

electoral coalition backing President Obama in the 2012 election and found that 57% of Asian-Americans identified as Democrat or Democrat-leaning, while only 28% identified as or leaning towards Republican (Dugan, 2013). For only those Asian-Americans aged 18 to 34 the gap in political affiliation was even larger, with 61% identifying as Democrat and 24% Republican (Dugan, 2013). Comparatively, non-Hispanic Caucasians aged 18 to 34 identified as 41% Democrat and 44% Republican, Hispanics identified as 50% Democrat and 24% Republican, and non-Hispanic Blacks identified as 75% Democrat and only 11% Republican (Dugan, 2013). Asian-Americans are a growing population especially among the college populace, where from 1992 to 2011, the number of Asian-Americans enrolled in colleges nearly doubled while at the same time non-Hispanic Caucasian numbers remained virtually unchanged (Unz, 2012).

Polls of the Millennials indicate that Democrats outnumber Republicans in every region, and are especially concentrated in the Northeast (Keeter, 2008). Strong evidence of the Liberal affiliation of the Millennial Generation is the overwhelming voting support that was given by them to Barack Obama in the 2008 U.S. presidential election (Pew Research Center, 2010b; Keeter, 2008; Botsch & Botsch, 2009; Halpin & Agne, 2009). Relying largely on the Internet for their political news, the 2008 election also saw increased voting from young minority adults (Botsch & Botsch, 2009). This is often cited as evidence of the association between support of diversity and more Liberal ideals. From this political lean seen in American youth, it can be expected that these young adults will mostly likely bend away from holding staunch Conservative opinions on many issues. Even among those who identify as Republican, an ideological distribution suggests more modernized Liberal views on cultural and social values among all youth (Broido, 2004).

What is apparent from research on political affiliation is not simply that young people like to vote for more Liberal candidates, but that they are specifically motivated by their similarly Liberal beliefs regarding underlying issues that are often the focus in elections (Broidi, 2004; Keeter, 2008; Halpin & Agne, 2009). Though more students identify as Liberal (Broidi, 2004), more Conservative Republican organizations are also reporting increased involvement rates from younger adults (Colapinto, 2003), demonstrating greater political activism among today's youth. Overall, based on their recorded political trends away from established conservatism, we can anticipate that Millennials will be less punitive in their judgments on crime punishment as they are expected to hold more Liberal views on a majority of social issues.

### *Religious Ideology*

While the views of religious Fundamentalists have been linked to higher punitiveness in crime attitudes, conversely the opposite may be expected of those who are not religious or not as strongly motivated by religious beliefs. Millennials are the least overtly religious generation in the present time and one-in-four young adults are unaffiliated with any religion, which is far less traditionally religious than older adults when they were aged 18 to 29 (Pew Research Center, 2010a). Those Millennials who do seek religion often find spirituality in unconventional places (Drumheller, 2005), thus they are redefining what is typically viewed as "religious" or "spiritual." Research also states that Millennials report praying as often as their elders did in their own youth, indicating that not belonging to a specific religious label does not necessarily mean that these young adults do not believe in religious principles (Pew Research Center, 2010a). Some would argue that the entertainment media has become the primary way in which culture is communicated, and that as such entertainment is now competing with organized religion to be

the main source through which people receive spiritual insight (Cimino & Lattin, 1998; Drumheller, 2005). This research suggests that it is not that this generation is less religious but rather that they express their version of religiosity in a different way. For example, the Millennials have been bombarded with messages of anti-racism from an early age (Broido, 2004), with the increasing promotion of diversity and tolerance. As a group they have even come to expect and enjoy these varied views, while awareness of others differences has come to be seen as an indication of being more educated and intellectually sophisticated (Roehling et al., 2010). This diversity, headlined by the still-popular catchphrase “co-exist”, may cause youth to keep their religious views private in an effort not to offend anyone or not voice the reasons for their behaviors as emerging directly from their religious views.

### *Conservatism*

Political and religious associations have a tendency to be intertwined, as they are expressed in an individual's views and beliefs. Given the Millennials' high political involvement and the fact that this involvement tends to be concentrated in the Liberal direction (Broido, 2004; Keeter, 2008; Halpin & Agne, 2009), it is important to note that religious affiliation also typically has a correlation with both an individual's political leanings as well as views on crime punishment. Conservatism is strongly linked to more punitive attitudes on crime (Millares, 2009). These attitudes are often coupled with Conservative Christian values and beliefs which in turn are linked to punitive attitudes and support for capital punishment (Unnever & Cullen, 2006). Studies consistently find those with more Conservative religious beliefs, generally Fundamental Protestant Christians, are more punitive than other groups (Unnever & Cullen, 2006; Soss et al., 2003; Duckitt et al., 2010). In addition, Caucasians are still seen as more highly

punitive than minorities (Green et al., 2006) and this is further compounded among Caucasian Fundamentalists (Unnever et al., 2005; Millares, 2009; Laderman, 2007; McCann, 2008).

### *Millennial Punitiveness*

Studies show that those who are more punitive are often politically Conservative, as shown in research regarding capital punishment and death penalty attitudes (Millares, 2009; Unnever & Cullen, 2006; Soss et al., 2003). Millennials tend to be more Liberal than Conservative, holding more progressive views on social issues. Those who are highly religious in the traditional, Fundamental religions have been found to be more punitive in general as well as in minority race-specific crime judgments. However, Millennials are not staunch advocates of established religion, and seem to prefer more individualized methods of finding and expressing spirituality. Thus it is hypothesized that because of these characteristics Millennials will not be exceedingly punitive in their decisions on measures of crime sentencing and punishment.

**H1a: Millennials will not be highly punitive in their attitudes on criminal sentencing, as indicated by their judgments of the given burglary scenario.**

**H1b: Millennials will not be highly punitive in their attitudes on criminal sentencing, as indicated by their attitudes toward the death penalty.**

**H1c: Caucasians with higher religiosity will maintain higher punitiveness than their peers.**

*Exposure to Violence*

Exposure to violence among urban adolescents has often been reported at higher levels in Black youth, among males, and reported exposure rates increase as the teenagers get older (Selner-O'Hagan et al., 1998). Research contends that exposure to violence in childhood and youth perpetuates further violence (DuRant et al., 1994; Farrington, 1991; Straus, 1991; Dodge et al., 1990), with exposure to firearm violence believed to cause serious violent behavioral patterns later on (Bingenheimer et al., 2005). It can be expected that this cyclical effect of violence begetting more violence is most common in particular areas, designating that high exposure to violence and crime does not generally happen haphazardly. Emotional problems are also associated with exposure to violence at younger ages (Boney-McCoy & Finkelhor, 1995; DuRant et al., 1995; Selner-O'Hagan, 1998), which would most certainly affect individual attitudes towards violent crime later on. Because of this noted pattern of exposure to violence altering the behavioral patterns of youth, it can be presumed that this exposure will also alter attitudes towards crime and punishment. Especially since typically, minorities and those surrounded by and involved in crime believe that sentencing is too harsh and that the system is unfair (Baker et al., 2005), implying that higher exposure to, or involvement in, violence and crime produces more lenient attitudes towards punishment.

*Traditional Race Stereotypes*

Research has shown that Caucasians often utilize the idea of racial typification or assume that minorities are more likely to be criminal as a result of their minority status (Barkan & Cohn, 2005). In a study by Gordon and Anderson (1995), respondents were found to react with more racialized stereotyped beliefs when asked to respond rapidly to situational questions

on crime, indicative of an immediate reliance on stereotypes. Whereas those given time to respond did not automatically adopt such reactions, demonstrating that when forced to make rapid decisions people readily rely on their own cognitive stereotypes as default mechanisms of judgment (Gordon & Anderson, 1995).

Participants in a study by Harrison and Esqueda (2001) perceived that in situations when no escalation occurred, Black males are seen as being more likely to have been involved in previous violent incidents and more likely than Caucasian males to become increasingly violent towards females. Interestingly, in situations where escalation did occur, Black and Caucasian males were viewed as equally likely to have been involved in violent incidents (Harrison & Esqueda, 2001). This exhibits the common perception that Blacks are viewed as more aggressive and violent in general, whereas Blacks and Caucasians are equally capable of violent reactions within a given situation.

#### *Punitiveness & Minorities*

Older studies have found that there is an interaction between a defendant's race and the type of crime they are accused of committing that affects judgments, resulting in more punitive sentences for those accused of race-stereotypic crimes, i.e. embezzlement from a Caucasian suspect versus burglary from a Black suspect (Gordon, 1988; Gordon & Anderson, 1995). Caucasians typically judge Blacks as more violent and aggressive and often stereotype Black males especially as more likely to be involved in criminal behaviors (Harrison & Esqueda, 2001; Barkan & Cohn, 2005; Hurwitz & Peffley, 1997; Quillian & Pager, 2001; Dixon & Linz, 2000a, 2000b; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Dixon & Azocar, 2007; Dixon, 2006a; Lipschultz & Hilt, 2003; Oliver & Fonash, 2002). This image of Blacks as criminals within the news media has also

been a subject of controversy, with negative perceptions of Blacks resulting in greater support for policies such as Affirmative Action in hopes of eradicating such negative representations (Fujioka, 2005). Much research has also been dedicated to demonstrating that Blacks are disproportionately represented in juvenile justice and prison environments comparable to their actual population numbers (Benekos et al., 2011; Christianson, 1981; Yates, 1997; Jung et al., 2010; Warren et al., 2012; Eitle et al., 2002).

Notwithstanding the normally held opinions (at least, among Caucasians) of Black violence and a specific image that many hold of the common criminal, many efforts have been made to diminish these stereotypes as harmful and false (Goodyer, 2003; Beachum, 2003; Thomas & Henri, 2011; Witt et al., 2011; Todd et al., 2011; Marshall & Sensoy, 2011). To this day racism remains a grave issue in our culture and is usually addressed with a zero-tolerance attitude, a policy adopted by many schools and reinforced recently in cases of bullying. There is often heavy backlash from the community, and sometimes the nation, when crimes committed appear to be racially motivated; for instance, in the 2012 Trayvon Martin case (Botelho, 2012; Hightower & Schneider, 2012). Much research that cites poverty and continual economic hardship as the cause of cyclical urban violence and criminal acts among minorities (Bogges & Hipp, 2010) has subsequently helped to contribute to the stereotype of the Black criminal by associating poor, urban minorities with criminal behaviors.

#### *Caucasian Death Penalty Attitudes*

In continuance with the concept of maintaining more punitive attitudes towards minorities, Caucasians do generally appear to support the use of the death penalty more so than others, especially more than Blacks, and are also more likely to feel that the death penalty is a

deterrent to crime and is necessary for maintaining law and order (Baker et al., 2005; Green et al., 2006; Dovidio et al., 1997). Conversely, Blacks are likely to feel that capital punishment is unfairly applied to minorities (Baker et al., 2005). Racial bias seems to be particularly present in situations where the defendant is Black and the victim is Caucasian (Bowers et al., 2004).

Research has shown that those who believe internal attributes are to blame for criminal activity are more likely to endorse punitive crime policies, while those who deem external attributes to be at fault are more likely to support more Liberal crime policies (Templeton & Hartnagel, 2012; Maruna & King, 2004; Tyler & Boeckmann, 1997). In a study by Bowers, Steiner & Sandys (2001), narrative accounts showed that Black jurors viewed their Caucasian counterparts as harboring racial prejudice and predisposed towards the death penalty. The same study found that Black jurors tended to interpret evidence against the defendant under the presumption of a disadvantaged upbringing and believed the defendant expressed remorse and sincerity, while the Caucasian jurors interpreted a defendant's actions as evidence of "incurability, a lack of emotion, and deceptive behavior" (Bowers et al., 2001). One of the reasons minority criminals as a group are judged so harshly may be this belief that personal characteristics such as race are responsible, rather than life circumstances. Thus testing whether racial identity of a criminal suspect, devoid of other circumstances, affects the degree of punishment conferred may explain whether crime attitudes are highly racialized within the respondent population.

#### *Media Exposure Increases Stereotypes*

Many media experiments have shown that the portrayal of criminals on the news is correlated to judgments and adherence to race stereotypes (Dixon, 2006a, 2006b, 2007; Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000), and that Blacks are overrepresented as criminal suspects in news

programming (Dixon & Linz, 2000a). Since Blacks are linked to more criminal profiles (Dixon & Linz, 2000a, 2000b; Entman & Rojecki, 2000), increased television news viewing increases this exposure to the perception that Blacks tend to be more criminal (Dixon, 2007; Dixon & Linz, 2000a, 2000b), which in turn strengthens these stereotypes. Additionally, Black criminals are perceived as more violent (Dixon & Linz, 2000a; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Oliver & Fonash, 2002) and high news exposure has been linked to racialized beliefs and support of more punitive crime policies (Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000).

#### *Diversification Lowering Stereotypes*

The prevalence of perceptions regarding violence and criminal behaviors being strongly associated with the image of young, Black males are so pervasive that not finding evidence of this belief, or at least finding lessening support for it, would be significant. This study intends to explore the degree to which Millennials associate race and crime punishment, testing whether racial identity is used as a significant factor in making punitive decisions regarding criminal offenders.

It is important to note that Caucasians are conventionally more punitive as a group (Green et al., 2006; Unnever & Cullen, 2006), because evidence of their not adhering to racial stereotypes of criminals might posit that the ethnic diversity and increased minority representation of current culture has modified these views. This study explores whether the diversity of today's society and encouraged tolerance and acceptance of differences has had a major impact on current attitudes regarding race and crime, with specific regard to racial judgments.

**H2a: Millennials will have low levels of racially stereotyped views of criminal offenders.**

**H2b: Millennials will not make race-based punishment recommendations for criminals.**

## METHODS

### *Data Collection & Demographic Information*

Data was collected via online surveys voluntarily completed by both undergraduate and graduate students, aged 18 to 30, in attendance at a medium-sized Midwestern University. The survey was sent out to all University students through an e-mail invitation and undergraduate students within the Sociology major were especially encouraged to take the survey.<sup>2</sup> Those who chose to be involved responded to the e-mail using a web link to the survey, hosted on a survey collection website. The instrument consisted of 20 items, mostly multiple choice questions and Likert scales with two open-ended situational response questions (see Appendix A). The open-ended scenarios were alternating versions of the same question so that each respondent only saw and answered that question once. The first part of the survey measured gender, age, ethnicity, political views, religious views, and church attendance.

### *Independent Variables*

Students' political ideology was measured through questions on political party affiliation, political involvement, and a Likert scale of conservatism. Political party was ascertained by requesting which party the respondent would vote for in the then-upcoming presidential election, and not which party they identify as their own. Similar to Dixon's study (2008), conservatism was measured on a Likert scale with one being strongly Liberal and four being strongly Conservative, as higher scores of conservatism would then be associated with higher punitiveness. Religious ideology was measured through questions on religious affiliation,

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<sup>2</sup> IRB Protocol #372545-1.

which many further clarified through denominational affiliation, and the frequency of church attendance.

Each respondent's exposure to crime was measured by a checklist of crimes that they had either witnessed or experienced. The responses from these questions were then totaled and used to create scales of crime exposure, distinguished by crime type, violent or petty; and exposure, direct or indirect. Because violent crimes are fundamentally different in nature from other crimes, it was thought best to distinguish these violent and petty crimes in separate scales rather than combine them all in a potentially misleading representation of a crime exposure scale. The result was the following four scales of crime exposure: witnessing petty crime, experiencing petty crime, witnessing violent crime, and experiencing violent crime. Higher rankings in each category indicated higher levels of crime exposure, rated by the confirmatory responses to experiencing or witnessing physical assault, sexual assault, street fights, gang-related crime, drug crime, armed robbery, automobile theft, mugging, and arson. Separating these crimes into categories of violent and petty crime resulted in different ranges of scores for the different scales. The violent crime scales produced of potential score of zero to five, while the petty crime scales ranged from a potential score of zero to four. There was also an option to answer none of the above, resulting in a total crime exposure rating of zero.

Considering that local news is more likely to report specific crime stories than national news, which generally only focuses on crime news when serial events or notorious individuals come into the spotlight, news exposure was assessed through a report of frequency watching or reading the news. This frequency scale of news viewing asked how habitually the respondent is exposed to the news on a scale of daily to never; it was created by combining the questions of

(1) how often the respondent watched the local news on television or (2) read the local news online or in the newspaper.

### *Dependent Variables*

Separate regressions were used to test for 1) general punitiveness, and 2) race-based punitiveness. These dependent variables were measured through questions on appropriate crime punishment in open-ended situational responses requesting judgments of criminal scenarios. There were two separate scenarios that are identical in detail apart from the description of the perpetrator; approximately one half of the respondents viewed the situation with a Black burglar and the other half of the respondents viewed the situation with a Caucasian burglar.

Punitiveness, or the desire to punish, was assessed through recoding the open-ended responses of punishment to the given burglary scenario. The punitiveness variable was created by recoding the open-ended responses to these scenarios of a burglary crime into a scalar measure of responses, ranging from less to more severe on a scale of zero to ten. Based upon the given responses, financial restitution and community service without jail time were regarded as the least harsh responses, and physical retribution or the death penalty were the harshest responses given. Similarly, the responses were separated into those given for the Black perpetrator and those given for the Caucasian perpetrator and then utilized in two different regressions to determine racial punitiveness. Racial punitiveness here being defined as the judgment exerted on the Black or Caucasian perpetrators, not the race of the respondent.

Whether views on crime punishment are racialized, i.e., harsher on the minority, were appraised through these responses to the burglary situation with a Black or Caucasian offender, excerpted and adapted from a previous study (Gordon & Anderson, 1995). Both scenarios were equivalent in every way, with the only difference being the given race of the offender in the scenario description. The burglary scenario was read as follows:

*“Hal Smith, a 29-year-old [Black/White] male, was arrested and charged with first degree burglary. On the evening of July 13 in Raleigh, NC, Mr. Smith was seen leaving the home of Mr. and Mrs. Lou Allen by a neighbor at 5:30 p.m. that afternoon. At 9:35 p.m. that evening the Allens reported their home had been burglarized. An ‘all points bulletin’ was put out on the description of the assailant and Mr. Smith was picked up and questioned. Mr. Smith was found guilty of having committed burglary and removing possessions from the premises totaling \$10,000.”*

#### *Analysis*

The method of analysis will be ordinary least squares regression, with separate regressions performed for each hypothesis. It was expected that political ideology would significantly affect the respondent’s attitudes on crime punishment, net of all other variables. Another expectation was that the respondent’s own ethnicity in terms of minority status would have some effect on punitive judgments, consistent with what the literature would suggest, though perhaps not as strongly as their level of crime news exposure.

## RESULTS

### *Sample Description*

The survey received 992 respondents and once incomplete or exclusionary cases were removed, the remaining sample consisted of 829 respondents. The sample was 70.4% female, with females (n=584) serving as the reference category for the male variable (n=241). Caucasian served as the reference category for minority (n=96). A majority of the respondents in the sample were Caucasians (n=733); with 30 Blacks, 20 Hispanics, 12 Asians, three Middle Easterners, one Indian, one Native American, and 26 multi-racial students, all of which were combined to create the minority variable. The majority of the students were undergraduates (n=674), with the rest being graduate students and one exchange student (n=153). Given that dispersion, it is understandable that the predominant age throughout most of the cases was 18 (31.6%), followed by 19 (21.1%), and then 20 (12.3%). The mean age for the sample was 20, with all cases younger than 18 or older than 30 years of age being excluded.

Regarding religious affiliation, respondents were primarily Protestant Christian (47.8%), Non-religious or Atheist (28.8%), and Catholic (17.9%). There were also a few non-denominational Christian (2.4%), Jewish (1%), Jehovah's Witness (0.6%), Buddhist (0.4%), Muslim (0.2%), Hindi (0.2%), and one Mormon (0.1%). As expected, attendance of religious service was fairly low. The largest group reported their church attendance as never (28.2%) or only on major holidays (23.9%); fewer reported their attendance as monthly (20.5%), as weekly (19.5%) or as more than once a week (7.4%); see Table 2.

Conservatism, measured on a scale from Very Liberal to Very Conservative, had a mean of 3.62, with higher numbers indicating more Conservative. Those that described themselves as

Moderate held the majority (30.5%), followed by Liberal (24%), Slightly Liberal (13.9%), Conservative (11.6%), Slightly Conservative (10.7%), Extremely Liberal (6%), and Extremely Conservative (2.9%). Collapsing these categories into an ideological duality, excluding moderates, showed the result of a largely Liberal sample (43.9%) compared to Conservative (25.2%). Political involvement, measured on a scale from Extremely Involved to Not Involved, had a mean of 2.05, with higher numbers indicating greater self-reported political involvement. Surprisingly, most respondents reported lower levels of political involvement than expected; with 430 (51.9%) slightly involved, 193 (23.3%) not involved, and only 169 (20.4%) involved or 36 (4.3%) extremely involved. As expected for this age bracket, the party split by political affiliation leaned more in the direction of Democrat; with 370 (44.6%) voting Democrat, 214 (25.8%) voting Republican, 146 (17.6%) voting Independent, 10 (1.2%) voting Libertarian, 36 (4.3%) undecided, and 39 (4.7%) responded as not planning on voting; see Table 1.

### *Descriptive Statistics*

As illustrated in Table 1, there were some specific characteristics of this sample that were found that both met certain expectations and presented a few surprises. As already discussed, the sample was found to be predominantly politically Democrat and Liberal, which was something that the literature supports as being commonly descriptive of Millennial adults. If only observing the length of prison time that most respondents accorded to their given burglar, the first hypothesis is supported in saying that this sample was not highly punitive. Most respondents thought that between one to four years in prison was a just punishment for this crime; and the average length of time they felt the burglar should spend in prison was 2.984 years, with a standard deviation of 3.288. According to the laws in the state where the sample

university is located, the average punishment for first degree burglary is four to seven years jail time; and so this sample's response is on the lower end of punitiveness compared to what might realistically occur in a similar scenario.

**Table 1 – Descriptive Statistics:  
Nominal Variables**

<i>Variables:</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	584	70.4
Male	241	29.1
<i>Class</i>		
Undergraduate	674	81.3
Graduate	153	18.5
<i>Race</i>		
Caucasian	733	88.4
Black	30	3.6
Hispanic	20	2.4
Asian	12	1.4
Middle Eastern	3	0.4
Indian	1	0.1
Native American	1	0.1
Multi-racial	26	3.1
All Minorities	96	11.6

**Table 1 – Descriptive Statistics (cont'd)**

<i>Variables:</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Religious Affiliation</i>		
Protestant Christian	396	47.8
Catholic	148	17.9
Atheist	239	28.8
Non-denominational Christian	20	2.4
Jewish	8	1.0
Jehovah's Witness	5	0.6
Buddhist	3	0.4
Muslim	2	0.2
Hindu	2	0.2
Mormon	1	0.1
<i>Political Affiliation*</i>		
Democrat	370	44.6
Republican	214	25.8
Independent	146	17.6
Libertarian	10	1.2
Undecided	36	4.3
Not Voting	39	4.7

\* Respondent's political affiliation as given by voting preferences.

**Table 2 – Descriptive Statistics: Independent Scalar Variables**

<i>Independent Variables:</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>
Age	18	30	20.401	(2.843)
Conservatism	1	7	3.624	(1.530)
Political Involvement	1	4	2.058	(.780)
Church Attendance	0	4	1.537	(1.286)
News Exposure	0	4	2.356	(1.135)
Television Hours	0	21	2.16	(1.981)
<i>Crime Experience</i>				
Witnessed Violent Crime	0	5		
Witnessed Petty Crime	0	4	.575	(.703)
Victim of Violent Crime	0	5	.325	(.668)
Victim of Petty Crime	0	4	.107	(.365)
<i>Crime Opinions</i>				
Rehab Possible	1	4	2.371	(.697)
Prison Too Short	1	4	2.780	(.689)
Death Penalty Deters	1	4		
Crime Approval			1.539	(.498)
Death Penalty	1	2	2.433	(.888)

**Table 3 – Descriptive Statistics: Dependent Scalar Variables**

<i>Dependent Variables:</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>
Punitiveness (All)	0	10	4.705	(1.941)
Punitiveness (Black Suspect)	0	10	4.718	(2.056)
Punitiveness (White Suspect)	0	10	4.694	(1.833)
Prison Years (All)	0	25	2.984	(3.288)
Prison Years (Black Suspect)	0	25	3.026	(3.248)
Prison Years (White Suspect)	0	25	2.946	(3.326)

The last four variables listed in Table 3 were opinion questions measured on Likert scales of agreement with particular statements surrounding the death penalty; whether violent

criminals received shorter prison sentences than they should, and if rehabilitation for violent criminals was possible. The rehabilitation variable was reverse coded so that on all of these items higher scores are related to higher levels of punitiveness. As you can see, punitiveness on these questions was fairly evenly split with a slightly greater lean in the direction of more punitive. The greatest range of variance was seen in asking whether convicted murderers should receive the death penalty, presumably because this is a very controversial topic. Even though not all of these variables were used in the regression analyses, it is important to note their characteristics in understanding the punitiveness of this sample.

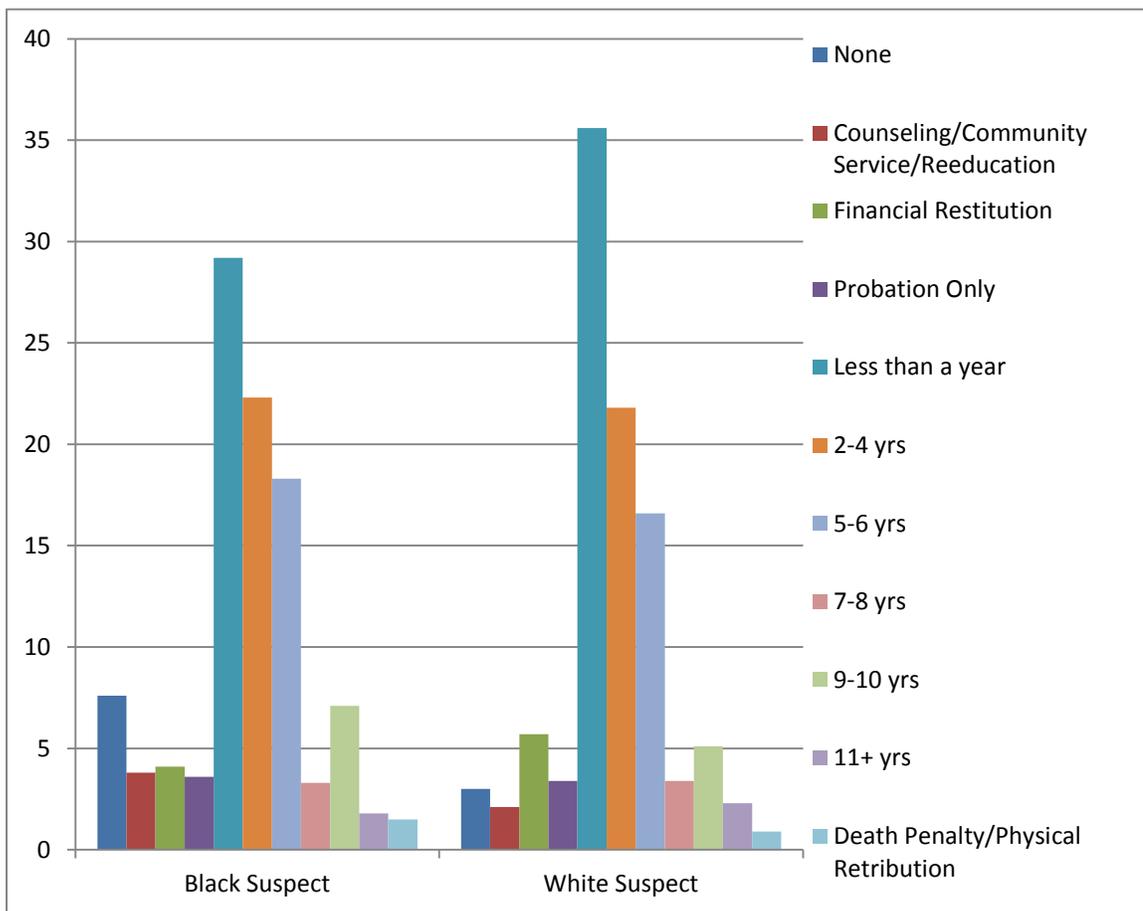
**Table 4 – Punitiveness Dependent Variable**

<i>Dependent Variable Coding Scale:</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
None	33	4.0
Counseling/Community Service/Reeducation	24	2.9
Financial Restitution	41	4.9
Probation Only	29	3.5
Less than a year	270	32.6
2-4 years	183	22.1
5-6 years	144	17.4
7-8 years	28	3.4
9-10 years	50	6.0
11+ years	17	2.1
Death penalty, physical retribution	10	1.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>829</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The mean of punitiveness in the sample that responded to the burglary scenario with a Black suspect was 4.718 (SD=2.056) on a scale of zero to ten, and the mean length of prison time in years assigned to the suspect was 3.026 (SD=3.248). The total range of prison time in years

assigned to the burglary suspect by respondents varies from zero up to 25. The mean of punitiveness in the sample that responded to the burglary scenario with a Caucasian suspect was 4.694 (SD=1.833) on a scale of zero to ten, and the mean length of prison time in years assigned to the suspect was 2.946 (SD=3.326). Slightly more people did respond to the Caucasian burglar scenario (N=435) than to the Black burglar scenario (N=394), however. Incomplete responses were removed from analyses and so that may account for this disparity.

**Figure 1 – Punitive Response Categories by Suspect Race: Visual Representation**



The above chart highlights the responses given to the open-ended burglary scenario and how they differed based upon which scenario the respondents answered. The least punitive

category begins on the far left and progresses towards the most punitive category on the far right, with the response categories organized by percentage. As seen in the differences between the responses to the two scenarios, there was a fairly even skew of punitive responses between the two different races of the burglary scenario suspect. In the responses to the Black suspect, there are a couple more responses on both the high and low ends of the punitiveness categories; whereas the responses to the Caucasian suspect trend significantly in the median categories. The overwhelming similarities in responses between these two categories illustrates support for the second hypothesis, which states that (a) Millennials will have low levels of racially stereotyped views of criminal offenders and (b) that they will not make race-based punishment recommendations for criminals. The majority of the respondents did not make mention of the suspect's race in their responses and the two groups appear to have judged each suspect equally.

While Figure 1 shows how punitive the respondents were in each race-based scenario and that many individuals had no qualms with significant lengths of prison time (such as four years or more), quite a few actually expressed the sentiment that they knew the punishment they were ascribing was harsh or a rather long amount of time but still felt it was necessary. This seems peculiar since most people do not generally think to question their own harshness when answering with what they deem to be just, but these Millennials did. This might indicate a softer spirit in this crowd that perhaps could be reflective of a generational empathy or distinction in their thoughts regarding crime punishment.

#### *Punitiveness of Millennials – Hypothesis One*

Punitiveness as a variable was created through recoding the open-ended responses to the burglary scenario. This scale was constructed from a numerical range of zero to ten, with an overall average of 4.705 (SD=1.941). Table 6 below shows a regression for general punitiveness, including the whole sample and thus all responses to both scenarios with racially different burglar suspects.

**Table 5 – Regression of Punitiveness**

<i>Independent Variables:</i>	B	S.E.
Minority (=1, Caucasian=0)	.024	.207
Male (=1, Female=0)	** .314	.148
<i>Religious Affiliation</i>		
Christian <sup>a</sup>	*** .455	.176
Church Attendance	-.103	.065
<i>Political Affiliation</i>		
Republican (=1, Else=0)	.061	.162
Politically Involved	* .140	.087
<i>Crime Opinions</i>		
Prison Too Short	*** .358	.101
Rehab Possible	*** .288	.101
Death Penalty Approval	*** .310	.074
<hr/>		
<i>N</i>	829	
<i>Constant</i>	1.679	
<b>Adjusted r-square</b>	<b>.080</b>	

- a. Christian includes Protestants, Catholics, and Non-Denominational.
- b. Dependent variable is punitive scale for all respondents.
- c. \*p<.10, \*\*p<.05, \*\*\*p<.01.

In this regression Males (b=.314) and Christians (b=.455) were shown to be more punitive than their reference categories, as expected from the review of the literature. Minorities (b=.024) and Republicans (b=.061) were slightly more punitive, though not

significantly. Surprisingly, higher church attendance resulted in lower punitiveness ( $b = -.103$ ) but missed the level of significance. Higher levels of church attendance were found to be associated with lower punitiveness, which was unexpected since higher church attendance tends to be typically associated with higher religiosity that is traditionally linked with higher punitiveness. As expected, those who agreed with the statement that convicted felons receive prison sentence that are too short ( $b = .358$ ) were more punitive than those who disagreed, as well as those who approved of the death penalty in cases of convicted murderers ( $b = .310$ ). Those who believed that rehabilitation for violent criminals was possible were also surprisingly punitive ( $b = .288$ ).

The crime opinions variables used in these regressions are highly correlated with the dependent punitiveness variable as a reflection of their essence as similar constructs regarding punitive attitudes. While they are distinct variables, they tend to imitate and predict each other's responses very well due to the fact that a characteristic such as punitiveness tends to hold true across various platforms, from punishing burglars to the death penalty. These confounded attitudes bring up the matter of endogeneity, meaning that their substance is quite analogous to that of the dependent variable.

#### *Racial Punitiveness of Millennials – Hypothesis Two*

The dependent variable for determining racial punitiveness is the same as the previous regression, but only the cases that responded to each racial scenario were analyzed in each of these regressions. In this way I was able to see the difference in the respondents' punitiveness with regard to the race of the perpetrator. Contrasting these results provides a comparison between how punitive the respondents were with a Black burglar versus a Caucasian burglar. Again, the two scenarios were identical in content with only the race of the suspect being

altered between them; and respondents were evenly divided between the two scenarios so that each respondent only viewed one scenario, either responding to the Black burglary suspect or Caucasian burglary suspect but not both.

*Black Burglar Scenario*

Cases used in this regression were those respondents who viewed the burglary scenario with a Black perpetrator (n=394). Those who viewed and responded to this scenario equaled 47.5% of the total sample.

**Table 6 – Regression of Punitiveness with a Black Burglar**

<i>Independent Variables:</i>	B	S.E.
Minority (=1, Caucasian=0)	-.043	.335
Male (=1, Female=0)	.321	.222
<i>Religious Affiliation</i>		
Christian <sup>a</sup>	.356	.279
Church Attendance	-.105	.100
<i>Political Affiliation</i>		
Republican (=1, Else=0)	.236	.253
Politically Involved	.079	.555
<i>Crime Opinions</i>		
Prison Too Short	.191	.150
Rehab Possible	***.401	.146
Death Penalty Approval	***.425	.110
<hr/>		
<i>n</i>	394	
<i>Constant</i>	1.764	
<b>Adjusted r-square</b>	<b>.093</b>	

- a. Christian includes Protestants, Catholics, and Non-Denominational.
- b. Dependent variable is punitive scale for respondents who viewed black suspect.
- c. \*p<.10, \*\*p<.05, \*\*\*p<.01.

More punitive individuals were Republicans (b=.236), males (b=.321), Christians (b=.356) and those with higher levels of political involvement (b=.079). Minorities (b=-.043) were less punitive, alongside those with higher church attendance (b=-.105). Again, those who agreed with statements that violent criminals typically receive prison sentences that are too short (b=.191), that violent criminals can be rehabilitated (b=.401), and those who approved of the death penalty for convicted murderers (b=.425) all had more punitive judgments of the burglary suspect.

*Caucasian Burglar Scenario*

Cases used in this regression were those respondents who viewed the burglary scenario with a Caucasian perpetrator (n=435). Those who viewed and responded to this scenario equaled 52.5% of the total sample.

**Table 7 – Regression of Punitiveness with a White Burglar**

<i>Independent Variables:</i>	B	S.E.
Minority (=1, Caucasian=0)	.062	.263
Male (=1, Female=0)	.261	.202
<i>Religious Affiliation</i>		
Christian <sup>a</sup>	** .518	.230
Church Attendance	* -.137	.086
<i>Political Behaviors</i>		
Republican (=1, Else=0)	-.103	.210
Politically Involved	* .192	.112
<i>Crime Opinions</i>		
Prison Too Short	*** .520	.137
Rehab Possible	.142	.140
Death Penalty Approval	* .160	.103
<hr/>		
<i>n</i>	435	
<i>Constant</i>	1.963	

**Adjusted r-square** **.065**

---

- a. Christian includes Protestants, Catholics, and Non-Denominational.
- b. Dependent variable is punitive scale for respondents who viewed white suspect.
- c. \* $p < .10$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .01$ .

Males ( $b = .261$ ), Christians ( $b = .518$ ), minorities ( $b = .062$ ), and those who were more politically involved ( $b = .192$ ) were more punitive, though not significantly. Those who agreed with the statements that violent criminals typically receive prison sentences that are too short ( $b = .520$ ), that violent criminals can be rehabilitated ( $b = .142$ ), and those who approved of the death penalty for convicted murderers ( $b = .160$ ) all had more punitive judgments. Though these crime opinion findings hold true for both burglary suspects, the coefficients were lower for those respondents who reacted to the Caucasian burglar. These numbers indicate a stronger level of agreement with the statement that violent criminals typically receive short prison sentences, while representing less strongly expressed agreement with the belief that violent criminals can be rehabilitated and that convicted murderers deserve the death penalty. This may perhaps indicate that those who reacted to the black burglar were slightly more punitive in some of these views. Once again, it was found that higher church attendance was associated with lower punitiveness ( $b = -.137$ ), which was originally unexpected.

It is interesting to note that while minorities did not show significant punitiveness in either of the regressions, they do come off as more punitive towards the Caucasian perpetrator ( $b = .062$ ) than towards the Black perpetrator ( $b = -.043$ ). This is consistent with the literature in which minorities are harsher on Caucasian criminals than on other minority individuals, typically

because of perceived injustices within the criminal justice system towards minorities (Baker et al., 2005).

#### *General Social Survey Comparison*

In order to measure the similarities between the Millennials in this study and other Millennials, this sample was compared to the corresponding age grouping taken from the 2010 General Social Survey. First, some general demographics were compared to note the parallels between this group of Millennials and Millennials as a larger group. Those who fell between the ages of 18 and 30 within the 2010 GSS sample numbered 415 respondents, or 20.3% of the entire sample. As expected, the 2010 GSS sample had slightly more racial diversity in their respondents. Religious affiliation was fairly similar across both groups, with the majority being Protestant Christians, followed by Atheists or No Religion and then Catholics. Both samples also maintained low levels of church attendance, supporting the supposition that Millennials maintain lower church attendance (Drumheller, 2005; Roehling et al., 2010). Those within the GSS sample, however, reported their political affiliation as leaning more towards Independent, whereas the 2012 University sample leaned towards Democrat. But similar to the 2012 sample, the 2010 GSS sample was also more Democrat (33%) than Republican (18%). Both samples also maintained similar levels of conservatism, leaning more towards the Liberal end. All of this supports the literature on Millennials that states that politically these young people lean towards Liberal policies and the Democratic Party (Keeter, 2008; Halpin & Agne, 2009). The descriptive table also shows that the mean age of those within the 2010 GSS sample (24) was higher than that of this study's 2012 sample group (20). Based on all of this information it can be

concluded that the University sample used in this study is neither abnormal nor unrepresentative of Millennials in these political and religious areas.

**Figure 2 – Millennials Descriptive Comparison**

<b>2010 GSS:</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>2012 Sample:</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Democrat	137	33.0	Democrat	370	44.6
Independent	190	45.8	Independent	146	17.6
Republican	75	18.1	Republican	214	25.8
Protestant	187	45.1	Protestant	396	47.8
Catholic	100	24.1	Catholic	148	17.9
No Religion	107	25.8	No Religion	239	28.8
Caucasian	268	64.6	Caucasian	733	88.4
Black	83	20.0	Black	30	3.6
Hispanic	37	8.9	Hispanic	20	2.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>829</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<b>2010 GSS:</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>	<b>2012 Sample:</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>
Age	18	30	24.87	(3.49)	Age	18	30	20.40	(2.84)
Conservatism	1	7	3.85	(1.42)	Conservatism	1	7	3.62	(1.53)
Church Attendance	0	4	1.39	(1.18)	Church Attendance	0	4	1.53	(1.28)
News	0	4	2.31	(1.09)	News	0	4	2.35	(1.13)

Figure 3 shows death penalty support throughout the years, using GSS samples of respondents aged 18-30 as well as the University sample from this study for the year 2012. The favor column demonstrates those who support the death penalty in cases of convicted murderers. While both the 2010 GSS sample and the 2012 University sample show more support in favor of the death penalty, the University sample does not have as wide of a percentage gap as the GSS sample. The GSS respondents favored the death penalty 58% to 35%, while the University respondents only favored the death penalty 53% to 45%. Again, this seems to demonstrate that the University sample falls within the range of what Millennials as a group

typically trend towards in these opinions on crime and punishment. This does not support Hypothesis 1b, which states that Millennials will not be highly punitive in their attitudes on criminal sentencing, as indicated by their attitudes toward the death penalty. It appears that there is still strong support for the death penalty even among this generation, though the opposing numbers may be rising.

**Figure 3 – Death Penalty Support over the Years**

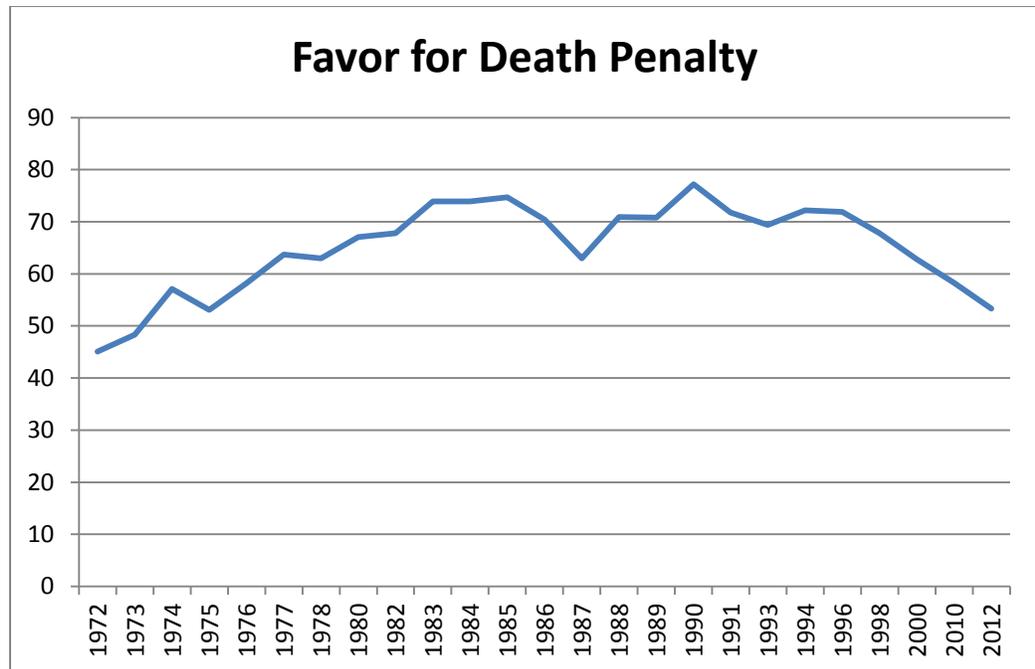
	<i>Favor</i>	<i>Oppose</i>		<i>Favor</i>	<i>Oppose</i>
	%	%		%	%
<b>2012</b>	53.3	45.6	<b>1985</b>	74.7	21.2
<b>2010</b>	58.3	35.7	<b>1984</b>	73.9	20.7
<b>2000</b>	62.8	30.1	<b>1983</b>	73.9	22.3
<b>1998</b>	67.8	25.8	<b>1982</b>	67.8	26.3
<b>1996</b>	71.9	21.4	<b>1980</b>	67.1	30.4
<b>1994</b>	72.2	22	<b>1978</b>	63	32.1
<b>1993</b>	69.4	24.7	<b>1977</b>	63.7	32.1
<b>1991</b>	71.8	24.7	<b>1976</b>	58.2	38.1
<b>1990</b>	77.2	17.7	<b>1975</b>	53.1	39.8
<b>1989</b>	70.8	24.7	<b>1974</b>	57.1	38.6
<b>1988</b>	70.9	24.5	<b>1973</b>	48.3	47.6
<b>1987</b>	63	32.5	<b>1972</b>	45.1	49.8
<b>1986</b>	70.4	24.5			

To illustrate a distinction in punitive attitudes across the years, the 1985 General Social Survey was used to demonstrate the differences between Millennials and a preceding sample of the same age regarding support for the death penalty. Those aged 18 to 30 were used to maintain age consistency amongst other cohort differences, denoting that those born between 1955 and 1967 were included in the 1985 GSS sample. This earlier sample included 387 respondents, 25.2% of the entire sample, with a mean age of 25 (SD=3.312). While the 1985 GSS sample shows a far more punitive level of support for the death penalty, the later 2010 and

2012 samples show less overwhelming support. Since both Millennial samples show lower punitiveness regarding the death penalty, it does appear from the comparison that they are less punitive than this previous group.

Favor for the death penalty peaked in 1990 at 77.2% and reached its second highest point in 1985 at 74.7% support. Since those from 1990 would have been born between 1960 and 1972, overlapping as part of both the younger segment of Boomers and Generation X, this was not the best year to choose for comparison because there were such strong differences in this group that it could not be accurately portrayed as a cohort. Therefore 1985, as the second highest spike in death penalty support over the years, representing those born between 1955 and 1967, was chosen to compare to Millennial support for the death penalty. It should be noted that this group also includes some overlap between Bust Boomers and Generation X, and they are not necessarily considered a specific cohort either. However, in an effort to avoid some potentially confounding cultural events that would have been widely recognized during the Baby Boomer period, those who were slightly younger from the 1985 sample were selected. Yet, if Millennial support for the death penalty as seen in Figure 3 is compared to support in 1977, 1978, 1980, or 1982, which are the years associated with Baby Boomers aged 18 to 30, it is clearly seen that Millennials in both the 2010 GSS sample and the 2012 university sample are less supportive of the death penalty than those who would be classified as Baby Boomers. Because the Baby Boomer Generation encompasses such a large group of individuals over the course of an eighteen-year span (1946-1964), it is difficult to satisfactorily make statements about the cohort as a whole since their experiences through this range of years may have been very different.

**Figure 4 – Death Penalty Support over the Years**



Those aged 18 to 30 in the GSS years 1976, 1977, 1978, 1980, and 1982 would be included in the Baby Boomer Generation as this group would include those born between 1946 and 1964. As shown in Figure 3, the 1976 sample showed 58.2% favor for the death penalty, 1977 showed 63.7% favor, 1978 showed 63% favor, 1980 showed 67.1% favor, and 1982 showed 67.8% favor. This increase in support of the death penalty at the time could be partially explained by the national notoriety of several serial killers such as John Wayne Gacy, who was convicted in 1980 of a series of murders committed between 1972 and 1978 in Chicago, Illinois (Maloney, 2011). Many other infamous serial killers operated before and during this timeframe of the 60's and 70's including Albert DeSalvo, confessed as the "Boston Strangler," (apprehended 1964); the still unsolved Zodiac Killer; John Norman Collins, "The Co-Ed Killer," (apprehended 1969); Charles Manson (apprehended 1969); Juan Corona, "The Machete

Murderer,” (apprehended 1971); Dean Corll (died 1973) and Elmer Wayne Henley for the Houston Mass Murders (apprehended 1973); David Berkowitz, “The Son of Sam,” (apprehended 1977); Ted Bundy (apprehended 1978), the Briley Brothers (apprehended 1979); Gerald Stano (apprehended 1980); and many more. Since this time period was notable for these often high profile cases, one wonders to what extent such nationally recognized events would have influenced a cohort or the opinions of the GSS sample groups on the death penalty.

Regardless of these potential differences, the purpose of comparing and contrasting the sample groups taken from the GSS, shown in Figures 3 and 4, was to demonstrate that it is not age alone that dictates certain beliefs or value trends. Since each of the samples taken from the GSS were limited to only include those aged 18 to 30, it can be assumed that generational experiences and the culture of the day in each period in time shown clearly had a far greater impact than simply youth versus developmental maturity. More so than other generations, Millennials believe that government should do more to solve problems (Pew Research Center, 2010a), which may be reflected in the still significant proportion of young people who advocate support for the death penalty.

Observing the GSS respondents’ favor for the death penalty over the years shows that support for the death penalty peaked in the 1980’s and in 1990 and then continued to decline until the present day. This also demonstrated support for the idea that younger people are less punitive, at least in reference to the death penalty. Death penalty attitudes are often where the most punitive and retaliatory views surface, making this a great way to demonstrate the decline of overall punitiveness. As can be more clearly seen in Figure 4, there does appear to be evident decline in the support for the death penalty over recent years.

To additionally observe the distinctions between the 2012 sample and the 2010 GSS sample, a simple z test was also conducted to test the difference between the population proportions. It was hypothesized that a higher proportion of respondents from the 2012 sample favored the death penalty than did the respondents from the 2010 GSS sample. The test statistic did not meet the critical z score and the findings were insignificant. Therefore the hypothesis that the 2012 Millennials did appear more punitive regarding the death penalty than their GSS peers could not be supported. This means that there is no significant difference between the proportions of the two populations, further supporting the similarities of this study's sample to the characteristics of their peer Millennials within the GSS data.

Furthermore, a much higher proportion of the Millennials within the 2012 sample favored the death penalty as compared to those from the 1990 GSS sample. In addition, the 2012 Millennials were also proportionally more punitive regarding their death penalty attitudes than the 1980 GSS sample. Though none of these tests provided statistically significant results, this would seem to indicate that punitive attitudes towards the death penalty have actually risen within this age group through the decades, but as Figures 3 and 4 illustrate, there is some level of variation throughout the years in the support for the death penalty.

### *Burglary Responses*

The open-ended responses from the burglary scenario were coded into the following six categories: not enough information given to issue a punishment, community service, counseling, rehabilitation or education, financial restitution, and first offense. These categories were coded in addition to whether or not the respondent assigned a prison sentence length. Regarding prison sentence, both groups together assigned a one year sentence as the most common

punishment (24.2%); the second most frequent prison length assigned was five years (18.2%), and the third was no prison time at all (15.7%). In both the group with a Black burglar, and the group with a Caucasian burglar, the same pattern was found. For the Black burglar: one year (21.6%), five years (19.3%), and no sentence (16.8%). For the Caucasian burglar: one year (26.7%), five years (17.2%), and no sentence (14.7%). While this shows little variation between the two groups, it can be seen that the respondents who issued a punishment for the Caucasian burglar more consistently chose a prison sentence of a year, and those who issued a punishment for the Black burglar more consistently issued a lengthier sentence in comparison or no sentence at all. Again, those who did not issue a prison sentence may or may not have included in their response a statement regarding whether they felt there was enough information or evidence present to convict the suspect and subsequently issue a sentence. Those who replied with a request for reeducation or counseling might also have chosen no prison sentence. For instance, sixty-six (16.8%) of the respondents to the Black burglar did not issue a prison sentence, but only thirty (7.6%) of those same respondents were coded as saying that there was not enough information to punish the suspected burglar. Much of this response is a direct result of the suspect's confession statement being removed from the burglary scenario, because it tended to influence the respondents to be overly empathetic and less punitive.

Interestingly, the respondents who received the scenario with the Caucasian burglar tended to lean slightly further in the direction of punishments requiring repayment of stolen property. These respondents (34.7%) were more determined than those who judged the Black burglar (32.5%) that the suspect should return all stolen goods and money, or somehow additionally repay the victims for the theft. The respondents who received the scenario with the

Black burglar were more likely to question whether it was the suspect's first offense (6.1%) than those who judged the Caucasian burglar (5.5%), as well as to reply that the potential punishment was dependent upon that fact. Furthermore, those who responded to the Black burglar (7.6%) were more likely to reply that there was not enough information given to issue a punishment than those who responded to the Caucasian burglar (4.8%). It should be noted that while these numbers are not gaping differences, they do indicate a preference to more readily judge the Caucasian burglar over a Black burglar. The judgments themselves, however, were not predominantly harsher on either suspect.

Figure 1, shown previously, portrays the punitiveness variable created and used as the dependent variable in both hypotheses; the categories used for this punitiveness variable are not entirely similar to the categorical responses. For instance, the punitiveness scale includes the death penalty and other physical retribution on its scale of harshness but the qualitative categories do not include this because it was not a very common response. Also, the punitiveness scale combined the categories of counseling, community service, and reeducation into one item. The following tables portray the open-ended responses by categorical frequency and are organized by the race of the suspect. Table 8, shown below, includes the descriptive information of these qualitative responses for all of the respondents together.

**Table 8 – Qualitative Response Categories to Burglary Scenario**

<i>Qualitative Categories:</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Mean*</i>	<i>S.D.</i>
Financial Restitution	279	33.7	.336	(.472)
Community Service	132	15.9	.159	(.366)
Counseling	84	10.1	.101	(.301)
Not Enough Information	51	6.2	.061	(.240)
Education / Rehabilitation	49	5.9	.059	(.236)
First Offense	48	5.8	.057	(.233)

\*Minimum values = 0, maximum values = 1.

Variables given in Table 8 were qualitative categorical variables describing response types to the burglary scenario, not the groupings used to create the dependent punitive scale. Each case was assigned a value of either zero or one for each of these categories, depending on whether the open-ended response reflected that particular theme. These themes were seen in the responses that respondents gave to the burglary scenario and Table 8 reflects all responses, not differentiated by race. Themes commonly seen were financial restitution, or the sentiment that the burglar should repay what he stole rather than serve prison time alone, and the performance of community service assigned as a punishment for the crime. Just because a response corresponded with any of the given themes does not mean that the respondent did not also assign a prison sentence.

Open-ended responses from the burglary scenario were coded within the categories shown in Table 8 as well as coded for a scale of punitiveness based upon the years of jail time or other punishment recommended. The next two tables show this skew of punitiveness, as organized by the race of the suspect portrayed within the burglary scenario. The latter categories indicate harsher punitiveness, with possible values ranging from zero to ten. It should

be noted that respondents' open-ended answers may have contained more than one of these categories and punitiveness was then graded according to the harshest sentiment present in the response. The "none" category includes those responses which stated that the respondent did not feel enough information was present to signify the guilt of the suspect and thereby warrant a punishment. The "probation only" category means that the respondent did not render any length of a prison sentence but instead believed the suspect should be released on probation. These tables function as a scale of punitiveness, with "none" being the least punitive, earning a ranking of zero, and "death penalty" being the most punitive, earning a ranking of ten. The spread of this information is shown numerically below in Table 4 and as a graph in Figure 1.

**Figure 5 – Qualitative Responses to Burglary Scenario: Visual Representation**

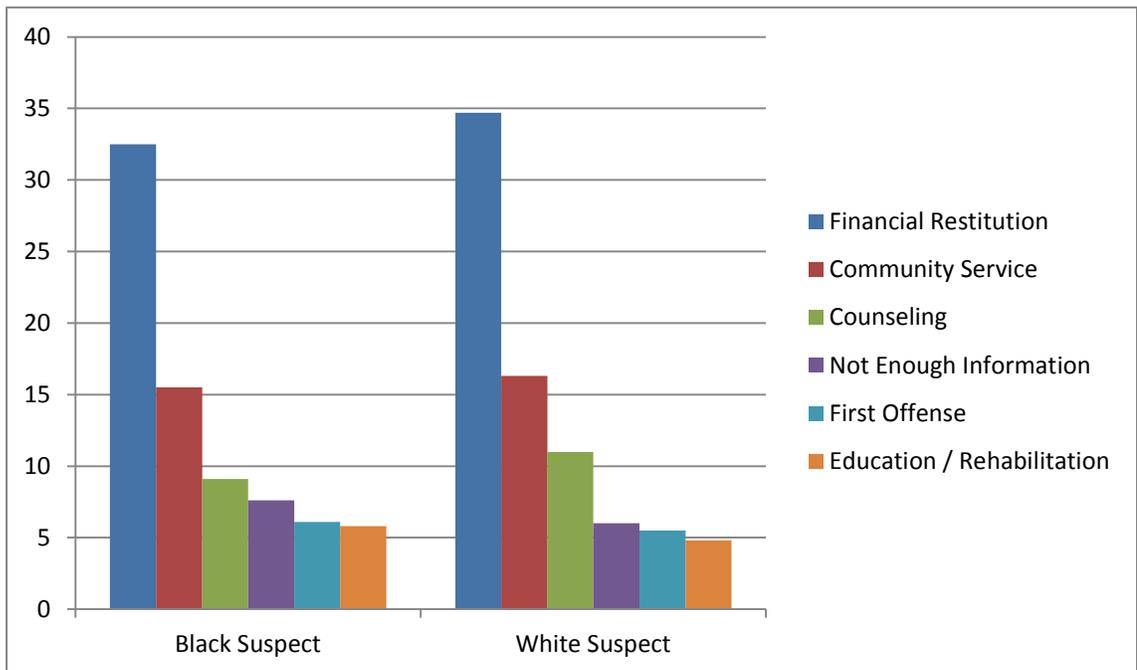


Figure 5, shown above, displays the qualitative categories seen as common themes in the open-ended responses to the burglary scenario. These are not the same categories used in

the creation of the punitiveness variable (Figure 1), as the respondent's harshest penalty was used to create that scale whereas the mere inclusion of the theme is recorded in this chart. These categories are organized by percentage and show very similar distributions across both suspects.

The following qualitative responses are ranked in order of frequency for all of the respondents, as shown in Table 8. The race, given in parentheses, is that of the suspect from the burglary scenario and not that of the respondent himself. Some responses are only given in part, due to both length and relevance, but it should be noted that most responses were quite multifaceted in their judgment of an appropriate punishment. Most recommended restorative methods and community efforts as well as some length of prison time. As mentioned before, there is a general lean in many of these replies towards restorative justice rather than simply prison sentences alone, especially among those who responded to the Caucasian burglar. The following quotations serve as an example of the complicated nature of these interwoven themes in the responses. As so many of the responses did, these replies touch on both prison sentence as well as several of the qualitative categories.

*"I think he should be fined the 10,000, and sentenced to a couple years in prison (no more than 3), and attend counseling and/or ethics classes at the time." (Black Suspect)*

*"He should have to pay at least \$9,000 of the total cost or return all of the items he stole. He should be arrested for one to two years and have community service for 6 months or so after he is released." (Black Suspect)*

*"Restitution for the amount plus some of what he took (\$10,000 plus court costs, etc.), jail time including group therapy and life skills courses." (White Suspect)*

### Financial Restitution

The burglary scenario specifically stated that the property stolen was equivalent to \$10,000 in cash, but many responses that included some degree of monetary compensation for the stolen items asked for more to be returned than the amount that was stolen.

*“He should have to repay those funds and/or return the items stolen. If he cannot repay those funds, then he should serve jail time equal to the funds that he stole.”* (Black Suspect)

*“Having to pay \$15,000 to the victims and serving 5 years in jail.”* (Black Suspect)

*“Community Service 6 months at minimum wage value until the 10,000 is paid off. Plus full repayment over time of the value of the items.”* (White Suspect)

*“Pay 150% of the value of what was taken, 100% for replacement and 50% for the hassle of the victims. Instead of simply jail time, I would prefer him to complete a rehabilitation time while living in a controlled environment.”* (White Suspect)

*“I think he should have to pay back double the amount that he stole to the family.”*  
(White Suspect)

### Community Service / Counseling / Education / Rehabilitation

The general sentiment among the responses that fell within the rehabilitation categories was that of potentially changing the individual and the course of his future actions through programs and community outreach. It touches on a hopeful belief in the redemptive qualities within people and as such these responses tended to be less punitive regarding prison sentences and more attuned to restorative methods of justice. There was a clear certainty here that such methods would produce a reformed individual.

*"I don't believe that nonviolent crimes should be punishable with jail time. I think, as a society, we should become creative and utilize principles of restorative justice. He should have to work and repay the family the value of items that he stole, be required to complete community service, and be required to wear an ankle monitor and given a certain radius." (Black Suspect)*

*"Six months in jail, and leaving with community service commitments. Also he has to take classes or some other rehabilitation class, instead of just sitting in jail without changing his thinking." (White Suspect)*

*"I would put him in jail for 2 years to let him get himself together and become an upstanding citizen of the community." (Black Suspect)*

*"Assuming he was fairly and certainly proven guilty... Perhaps Mr. Smith should be given a sentence where he works for \$10,000 worth of time within the system so he can gain actually gain skills and be better equipped and less likely to return too burglary out of necessity." (Black Suspect)*

*"He should have to return the items exactly in the condition they were stolen...he should have to write or say in a letter to the community disseminated through the media why he did what he did and that he plans never to do it again. He should have to do some community service and then be given the opportunity to put himself in a position where he doesn't feel the need to burglarize." (White Suspect)*

*"It isn't even clear that Mr. Smith even committed the crime, but I would say he needs to serve some jail time. I also think he needs to have intensive therapy and rehabilitation while in jail. Also, education is a key to creating a successful individual. Provide him with skills that he can use to get a job when he is released." (Black Suspect)*

*"A significant amount of community service would be appropriate as well as reimbursing the victims for the stolen possessions. I don't think a stiff prison sentence would be appropriate because the crime was not violent and the residents were not home." (Black Suspect)*

*"Possible therapy to fix his burglary problem." (White Suspect)*

*“Therapy to discover the root of his kleptomania, reimbursing the Allen's either through a fine or returning the stolen goods and 40 hours community service.”* (Black Suspect)

*“Stolen good returned, public service, 3 Years in prison, and a successful rehabilitation.”*

(White Suspect)

### Not Enough Information

This category seems to denote that the respondent felt there was racial discrimination in judging the suspect for the stated crime, and various responses to the Black burglar did indicate this, but many of these responses also confirmed that more background information on the individual would be necessary to make a fair punishment. Additionally, some respondents simply did not feel it was their place to render a judgment.

*“He shouldn't have been found guilty just after questioning. People just assume black people are the ‘only people’ who commit crimes. He left the home at 5:30! That's dumb to pick him out like that. Couldn't there have been other black males in the area too?!?”*

(Black Suspect)

*“It's entirely subjective to the circumstances surrounding the burglary. That's why the jury system exists.”* (Black Suspect)

*“First, I'm not really sure Mr. Smith actually committed the crime, because it just stated ‘seen leaving the home.’ That doesn't really suggest he committed the crime...”* (White Suspect)

*“My real concern is first was Mr. Smith really the suspect they were looking for? Then they would have to have solid proof before even discussing the punishment.”* (Black Suspect)

*“More information should be present. Was the man desperate for money? Does he have a mental disease? What is his background information? Is he a repeat offender? Assuming this is his first offense, he has no mental disorders, and he did not do this out*

*of desperation; he should be placed on probation and required to do community service.” (White Suspect)*

### First Offense

Whether or not the burglary suspect had a history of criminal or suspicious activity was not mentioned in the burglary scenario description, but 5.5% of the respondents to the Caucasian burglar and 6.1% of the respondents to the Black burglar thought that it was an especially important point. Again, the psychological, emotional, and financial background of the suspect in this situation is deemed to be imperative to judging how he should be punished. On that note, these respondents were not judging the suspect based upon the crime but rather based upon his own attributes or likeability. These respondents showed more than the others that personal characteristics outweigh blanket punishments for crimes, and each case is a different scenario with the potential for a different outcome.

*“If it's his first offense, a four year prison term (4-15 years in my home state for a Class 1 felony) plus community service and fines equal to court costs plus stolen goods and damage. If he's a repeat offender, I'd go for the 7-10 yrs prison plus stiffer fines.” (White Suspect)*

*“It depends on if this was his first offense, but I think jail time should be appropriate.” (White Suspect)*

*“Is it his first crime? What are the circumstances behind it? Did he steal it to sell for profit, his family, what? It depends on his circumstance. If it was a ‘noble’ crime, perhaps only a few years. If it wasn't his first crime and was for less glorious reasons, seven to ten years, probation and mandatory classes after five years.” (White Suspect)*

*“...If this is a first offense, I would recommend a long probation with steady community service in lieu of jail time.” (Black Suspect)*

*“Return all property or money gained from selling it, and go to prison for a period of time, attending seminars and performing activities designed to stop him from falling back into the criminal life. If it is a second offense or more, a longer stay is required, along with assistance out of prison, such as finding a job and a counselor possibly.”*  
(Black Suspect)

*“If it's a first offence, maybe 6 months imprisonment since there was no violence, and rehabilitation for the offender. Job training and/or educational services would help prevent future criminal acts, as robbery is typically the result of poverty.”* (White Suspect)

### Prison Time

While a number of the recommended prison sentences may sound harsh it should be noted in comparison that the laws in the state of this University allow for a typical sentence of four to seven years for the crime described in the burglary scenario. As previously mentioned, the typical range of prison time most respondents assigned was one year, followed by five years.

*“Going to prison for however long is normally sentenced.”* (Black Suspect)

*“He should serve jail time, since its \$10,000 I think it should be a longer sentence like maybe 8 to 10 years.”* (Black Suspect)

*“10 years to jail with no chance of parole.”* (White Suspect)

*“I think that he should have at least 10 years in prison for this. Or two years for every item that was stolen.”* (Black Suspect)

This spirit of hopeful recovery from the criminal problem of burglary is also reflected in those that did decide to issue a prison sentence for the suspect, making special note of their lenience in light of their faith in rehabilitation and communicating that repeated offenses should receive further and harsher punishment.

*"3-5 years in prison; if it is shorter than that they should go through a program of some sort to prevent it from happening again."* (Black Suspect)

*"He should receive a few months in jail to scare him a little and hopefully he will change his ways. If not, he will be caught & punished accordingly."* (White Suspect)

*"5-10 year sentence, depending on behavior/rehabilitation progression"* (Black Suspect)

*"6-10 months of prison followed by a strict long term rehabilitation wherein he must meet with a respective court approved officer for a period of 5 years and at least twice a week."* (White Suspect)

*"Prison with rehabilitation training and mentoring until Hal is cleared by a psychologist and a certain amount of time has passed (3 years)."* (Black Suspect)

*"I believe jail-time, ranging from 15-20 years would be appropriate for such an instance. During that time, however, Mr. Smith should be put through some type of programming, whether that be training for a future job of some type, higher education related (if he has not already completed such a program) or something related to understanding how he can bring himself up from this small hindrance in his life plan."* (White Suspect)

#### Other Responses

While not in the majority, there were some respondents that expressed strong opinions that crimes are not adequately punished and that merely compensating for the committed crime with finances or community service would not be enough.

*"If you give someone a slap on the wrist with a short sentence and huge amount of money they have to pay, how do you expect them to pay for that when they were stealing in the first place? They'll just relapse again. Longer sentence, less pay."* (Black Suspect)

*"Public shame and/or banishment."* (White Suspect)

*"6 months jail time, as well as having one hand amputated. Just serving time is not enough deterrent for criminals."* (Black Suspect)

*"Exile. He needs to be removed from the community if he can't be a part of it." (White Suspect)*

*"15-20 yr minimum based on the AMOUNT and QUALITY of evidence, one's punishment should be based on that alone-- unless you murder someone; they should get the death penalty." (Black Suspect)*

*"His hands cut off, eye for an eye, or 15000 hours of community service." (Black Suspect)*

Some responses were peculiar in that they appeared to be based upon other factors than what most typically used in their judgment of the crime; such as the situation of the victims rather than the actions of the burglar, or the personal attributes of the burglary suspect. Again, any presumed regret or remorse on the part of the suspect is shown to positively affect the given punishment.

*"Jail. Pay them back if they didn't have insurance..." (White Suspect)*

*"To give my full opinion I would have to have seen the trial to see what his attitude was like. But without that I would say about 5 years." (White Suspect)*

*"I think it would depend on his situation and his psychological state. If he was driven to it by desperation and regrets his actions, a short prison sentence would be best. The more likely he is to commit the crime again, the longer he should be held, to keep him sequestered from society." (White Suspect)*

*"...no indication of violence, no indication of premeditation, and even more importantly, no explanation of intent. What motivates a crime (vengeance, 'need' [to trade for drugs], need [to pay for food], thrill-seeking, etc.) is important to how that crime is punished. There is absolutely not a one-size-fits-all solution." (Black Suspect)*

Another notable attitude was that because this was *only* a burglary crime and not something *more serious* it shouldn't be punished as harshly. These respondents compared the burglary crime to other crimes that they deemed to be worthy of punishment, and in that mindset felt that burglary was not so bad after all.

*"I don't think he should have to even go to jail, maybe a hefty fine and some community service. Theft is not that serious of a crime in comparison to murder, rape, etc. Save the jail cells for those people." (White Suspect)*

*"A short prison term no up to a year would sufficient. Everyone makes mistakes." (White Suspect)*

*"Well stealing over \$300 is a felony instead of a misdemeanor, but at the same time he was not armed and put no life in danger. I think he should receive less than a year in jail along with probation and if possible mandatory community service." (Black Suspect)*

Throughout the responses, there began to emerge a pattern of complicated, interwoven opinions in which a spoken association with certain ideological positions was not always reflected in actual circumstances where such views should be further evidenced. Those who claim more Conservative thought patterns or beliefs might not realistically be as Conservative as one might then expect, and the same with Liberal opinions. The crime opinions of the Millennials in this sample, who characteristically match the Millennials from the GSS sample, form an intricate web of joined beliefs and ideologies. It is not enough to say that Millennials appear less punitive, but that their thoughts on crime policy and criminal punishment are created within a battlefield of culture lends an understanding as to why they are not easily grouped together in any matter apart from that of age. These Millennials do not reside in one of two camps of thought – they are not exclusively Liberal – they are spread out across the spectrum of ideology and demonstrate that their opinions are not simply quantified.

## CONCLUSION

### *Major Findings*

The demographic information of this particular sample suggests that the findings are comparable to other Millennial populations. As far as political affiliation, the respondents were highly Democratic (44.6%) versus Republican (25.8%); but fell within the median range of Conservativeness, 3.6 on a scale of 1 to 7. While still maintaining a largely Protestant Christian affiliation (47.8%) versus Atheist or No Religion (28.8%), they reported low levels of church attendance: 1.5 on a scale of 1 to 4.

Christians ( $b=.446$ ) and males ( $b=.306$ ) were significantly more punitive, as shown in Table 6, without taking into account the race of the suspect. Republicans were also more punitive, alongside those who were more politically involved, but neither was significant. When differentiated by the race of the suspect, the same findings hold relatively true; except for political involvement ( $b=.192$ ), which was only significant in the case of the Caucasian burglar. When including all respondents, minorities were more punitive; but when separated by the race of the suspect, the minorities who viewed the Black burglar were less punitive ( $b=-.043$ ), while those who viewed the Caucasian burglar were still more punitive ( $b=.062$ ).

Financial restitution as a theme was largely interwoven into a majority of the responses for both burglars, being highly significant in determining lower punitiveness alongside other categories reflective of restorative justice methods of crime punishment. Noticeably those who supported restorative justice were much less likely to add more punitive sentences, while those who agreed with such statements as convicted felons receive too lenient of prison sentences were much more likely to be highly punitive. One of the key differences in punitive sentences

and significant findings of this study seems to be this belief in whether criminals can be reformed. Believing they can turn their lives around and become productive members of society tends to make people go easier on them in determining their punishment. Conversely, believing criminals cannot be reformed left respondents to feel inclined to issue harsher sentences to prevent them from reentering the public sphere for some time.

Favor for the death penalty in the case of murderers was still strongly supported (53.3>45.6%) across both this University sample and a corresponding 2010 sample from the General Social Survey (58.3>35.7%). Support for the death penalty among a sample from the Baby boomer Generation, as taken from the 1985 GSS, was more punitive than either of the Millennial samples (74.7<21.2%), indicating that punitiveness has indeed decreased among the Millennial Generation, at least as far as death penalty attitudes are concerned.

#### *Hypotheses Supported*

In the analysis of the responses to the burglary scenario, 32% of all respondents thought the suspect should receive less than a year in jail, 22% said two to four years, and 17% said five to six years. When compared to state law which would normally render a judgment of four to seven years for such a crime as described, these responses were not viewed as highly punitive. Therefore, H1a, which states that Millennials would not be highly punitive in their attitudes on criminal sentencing regarding the burglary scenario, was found to be supported.

H1b states that Millennials will not be highly punitive in their attitudes on criminal sentencing, as indicated by their attitudes toward the death penalty. This was not found to be supported, however, as relatively strong death penalty support still remains within this group

and appears to have possibly risen from that of a previous generation. Based on what was found within this study, it is inclusive to say whether these Millennials were highly punitive in their death penalty attitudes.

Surprisingly, the respondents who attended church more were less punitive in each of the models, regardless of race or political affiliation. This divergent finding does not support hypothesis H1c, which states that highly religious Caucasians will maintain higher punitiveness than their peers. Since a large portion of the sample identifies as Protestant Christian but does not necessarily maintain stereotypically Conservative views, church attendance was used to further identify highly religious individuals. What was found, however, was that regardless of the amount of church attendance, the dispersion of punitive responses typically fell within the median range on the created scale of punitiveness.

The open-ended responses given were not overwhelmingly harsh, and did not vary greatly across the racial differences of the suspect. These findings support H2a, in that the responses did not significantly differ depending upon the race of the suspect and were in fact quite similar across both scenarios. This also supports H2b, which positions that Millennials will have low levels of racially stereotyped views of criminal offenders.

### *Limitations*

This sample came from a University and so there are present any limitations that would manifest within other student populations, including the lack of diversity when compared to a national sample. Ethnically, the sample was principally Caucasian, which was to be expected; and religiously, very Protestant. Furthermore, this group was predominantly female, which

offers the possibility of gender bias in many issues including that of empathy in regards to the burglary suspect.

Realistically, jurors decide a suspect's guilt and then judges assign what is deemed the appropriate punishment; and a couple respondents did pick up on this in their statements that they were not qualified to assign a judgment. Of course an actual jury would hear the full evidence of any case and be able to make a well informed decision so that many of the issues raised by respondents regarding lack of information would not exist in realistic scenarios. Again, these attitudes would not affect real life juries, since juries do not wield any power over criminal sentencing. Because of the endogenous relationship between several of the independent variables and the dependent punitive variable, these crime opinions did tend to align quite well with punitive attitudes regarding the burglary scenario, reflecting a consistency in punitive attitudes across several fronts within the realm of criminal punishment.

Being positioned in the Midwest, there is a certain cultural element to the surroundings that is predominantly more Conservative in its thinking and opinions. That is not to say that Liberal opinions are not present though, as this air of balance between the two often supersedes certain controversial issues of opinion; meaning that even though students in the Midwest might be Left-leaning and maintain more Liberal ideas, they are still rooted in the culture of the area where suburban communities and rural areas are predominantly Republican (Kotkin, 2012; Jochnowitz, 2013). However, times are changing and more and more this magnetic friction of the two sides is culminating in what appears to be a slow shift towards popular opinion being redolent of the Democratic Party. As evidenced by the most recent presidential election, the Midwest consists of several swing states (Michigan, Indiana, Ohio,

Pennsylvania, Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin, Minnesota) surrounded by the Democratic Illinois and Republican West Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee. In this past election, all of those swing states except Indiana went Democrat (Mitchell, 2012; New York Times, President Map 2012). This political tension is characteristically notable within opinions on crime and was certainly evident in this study as many respondents demographically appeared more Liberal-leaning but were not altogether stereotypically Liberal in their responses to crime, especially in their favoring of the death penalty.

What is practically portrayed here is not a clash of belief systems or ideological viewpoints, but rather an intertwining reality of the convoluted composition of views that people hold. Perhaps these younger people possess a differing understanding of associations. To identify with a particular perspective should not automatically reduce a person to be typecast as that sole conviction, but society clings to such stereotypes in an effort to more easily understand and categorize the plethora of opinions on very multifaceted issues. Being a Democrat or Republican does not necessarily mean maintaining any and every belief within what is stereotypically linked to those positions; and a significant issue that emerged in this study was the lack of people claiming a Moderate position, even though that was more accurately where on the political and ideological spectrum that they fell and that was what their responses indicated. Similarly with religious associations, maintaining a Protestant identity encompasses a far greater range of ideas and beliefs than many would readily acknowledge.

It should also be acknowledged that because it is not longitudinal data of the same sample group there cannot be solid conclusions drawn from the generational comparison discussed regarding the death penalty attitudes. There are certainly differences and dissimilar

experiences among these sample groups which could undoubtedly affect these attitudes and beliefs, and it is impossible in such a short summary to entertain or visit all of these possibilities.

#### *Future Research*

Being a student sample carries with it many issues surrounding identity and the formation of beliefs that are typically still ongoing at such an age, and so it is possible that these same people will later change their positions on these topics or perhaps fall more precisely into an existing classification of viewpoints rather than maintain a nontraditional conglomeration of ideas. Then again, it is possible that this adoption of seemingly conflicting thoughts is something to be seen with generational change. Ongoing research could focus on longitudinal studies of Millennials to analyze whether age might change their views, or if they are merely the product of the generation.

Further comparison could also be conducted on inter- and cross-generational views to verify whether an ideological transformation can be tracked through history and is continuing over time. Common sense would tell us that parents are characteristically more Conservative than their children and that each generation pushes more extreme or different social change. From observing the world and researching the topics of ideological opinions one might suppose that each generation gets consistently less Conservative; but as this study demonstrated, it isn't quite that simple. There is not as of yet much research done to further support the idea that social change is occurring through the beliefs and actions of our young people and particularly in the direction of more Liberal ideals, and that could very well be a topic for future research.

Concerning the societal structure of the Millennial Generation as a group, this study demonstrates in part that Millennials exhibit characteristics of functioning as an organically solid society. Since the division of labor is more widespread within advanced societies, this sense of organization and interdependency displays itself in the complicated arrangement of political and moral beliefs found to be intertwined with typically opposing opinions or beliefs. Seen in the differences within the Millennial Generation, it becomes evident that they are not a group of people with strictly similar and concrete characteristics. The preference for criminal justice laws of a restitutive rather than repressive nature would also be more characteristic of organic solidarity due to the division of labor, and opinions on restorative justice do evidence the desire for specialized units of justice to manage and rehabilitate criminal character (Durkheim, 1893/1949, p. 68-69). So while some research may suggest that punitive attitudes are decreasing among the Millennial Generation, yet there will always remain essential beliefs in any society that necessitate the retention of punitive attitudes in response to the presence of representative threats to society. One notable occurrence of the need to maintain social solidarity is the existence of a moral code of ethics, or the law. This type of social solidarity is universal to all members of a society and in repressive law is basic morality materially and symbolically indispensable (Durkheim, 1893/1949, p. 61-62).

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**Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire**

1. Do you agree to participate in this study?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
2. What is your sex?
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  
3. Are you an undergraduate or graduate student?
  - a. Undergraduate
  - b. Graduate
  - c. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. How old are you?
  - a. 18
  - b. 19
  - c. 20
  - d. 21
  - e. 22
  - f. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. Which one of the following best describes your ethnicity?
  - a. Caucasian
  - b. Black
  - c. Hispanic/Latino
  - d. Asian
  - e. Bi-racial

f. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

6. How Conservative would you consider yourself on most political issues?

- a. Extremely Conservative
- b. Conservative
- c. Slightly Conservative
- d. Moderate
- e. Slightly Liberal
- f. Liberal
- g. Extremely Liberal

7. Which political party do you plan to vote for?

- a. Republican
- b. Independent
- c. Democrat
- d. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

8. How politically involved would you consider yourself?

*Includes behavior such as voting in elections, following the political news, protesting, raising awareness of political issues, raising money or personally supporting a cause, etc.*

- a. Not Involved At All
- b. Slightly Involved
- c. Involved
- d. Extremely Involved

9. What is your religious affiliation?

- a. Protestant Christian
- b. Catholic

- c. Jewish
- d. Muslim
- e. Atheist/None
- f. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

10. How often do you attend church/religious service?

- a. More than once a week
- b. Weekly
- c. Monthly or every few weeks
- d. Only on major occasions/holidays
- e. Never

11. Violent criminals typically get shorter prison sentences than they should.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly Disagree

12. Violent criminals can be rehabilitated.

- a. Strongly Disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Agree
- d. Strongly Agree

13. How important do you think crime is as an issue?

- a. Not Important
- b. Not Very Important
- c. Important

## d. Very Important

14. Hal Smith, a 29-year-old Black male, was arrested and charged with first degree burglary. On the evening of July 13 in Raleigh, NC, Mr. Smith was seen leaving the home of Mr. and Mrs. Lou Allen by a neighbor at 5:30 p.m. that afternoon. At 9:35 pm that evening the Allens reported their home had been burglarized. An "all points bulletin" was put out on the description of the assailant and Mr. Smith was picked up and questioned. Mr. Smith was found guilty of having committed burglary and removing possessions from the premises totaling \$10,000.

*Please respond with what you think an appropriate punishment would be for this individual.*

14. Hal Smith, a 29-year-old White male, was arrested and charged with first degree burglary. On the evening of July 13 in Raleigh, NC, Mr. Smith was seen leaving the home of Mr. and Mrs. Lou Allen by a neighbor at 5:30 p.m. that afternoon. At 9:35 pm that evening the Allens reported their home had been burglarized. An "all points bulletin" was put out on the description of the assailant and Mr. Smith was picked up and questioned. Mr. Smith was found guilty of having committed burglary and removing possessions from the premises totaling \$10,000.

*Please respond with what you think an appropriate punishment would be for this individual.*

15. How important is the death penalty issue to you?

- a. Not Important
- b. Not Very Important
- c. Important
- d. Very Important

16. Do you agree that the death penalty is a deterrent to violent crime?

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly Disagree

17. Do you agree that people convicted of murder should be subject to the death penalty?

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly Disagree

18. Have you ever *witnessed* any of the following crimes?

*If yes, please select all that apply. If no, select none.*

- a. Physical assault
- b. Rape or sexual assault
- c. Street fighting/brawling
- d. Gang-related crime (e.g., shootings or stabbings)
- e. Drug-related crime (e.g., sale of illegal drugs)
- f. Armed robbery
- g. Auto theft
- h. Arson
- i. Mugging
- j. None

19. Have you ever been a *victim* of any of the following crimes?

*If yes, please select all that apply. If no, select none.*

- a. Physical assault
- b. Rape or sexual assault
- c. Street fighting/brawling
- d. Gang-related crime (e.g., shootings or stabbings)
- e. Drug-related crime (e.g., sale of illegal drugs)
- f. Armed robbery

- g. Auto theft
- h. Arson
- i. Mugging
- j. None

20. How often do you watch or read the news?

- a. Never
- b. Rarely
- c. Several days in a month
- d. Several days in a week
- e. Daily

21. On the average day, about how many hours do you personally watch television?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_

22. What types of television shows do you regularly watch?

*Please select all that apply.*

- a. Sitcoms/Comedy
- b. Dramas
- c. Reality TV
- d. Documentaries
- e. News
- f. Animation/Cartoons