

Constructing an Index of Public Opinion on the Death Penalty  
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We constructed our index of death penalty opinion using the same methodology and Baumgartner et al. did in their 2008 book (see Chapter 6), as Enns did in his 2014 article and 2016 book on crime punitiveness, and as Stimson first developed in 1991. The methodology is conceptually simple even if the details may be complicated. The idea is to make use of all available questions on the same topic, even if the question wordings may differ. Stimson, for example, was concerned with public attitudes toward the size of government, often tapped by questions asking if the government is spending “too much, too little, or about the right amount” on various public services, such as education, health care, roads, or hospitals. As should be expected, when looking at the trends of any of these individual questions, they track up and down over time in parallel. If aggregate public opinion, assessed by the average response to a national sample of whether we are spending too little on education goes down over time, then chances are that opinion on spending on health care probably went down by a similar amount in that same time period. If the answers to the question tap into a general attitude on government spending, then the individual series will all reflect an underlying trend. Political scientists call such an underlying, unobserved, trend a “latent variable.” Latent variables can affect any observed variable, such as responses to a question about spending on roads, education, or health care. Of course, whether a latent variable is causing changes to an observed variable is an empirical question. If the individual questions tap into different latent attitudes, they will not trend in parallel over time. If they do track together, then the questions may all be tapping into a generalized attitude toward some underlying issue. Any particular question will reflect some part of the latent attitude, and some part the particular twist on it reflected in the particular question. For example, more people might support increased spending on health care than on welfare, more on roads than on international aid. But when looking over time, when one series goes up, the others may go up by a similar amount. If the question is revised so that it elicits an attitude on a different topic, then it will not correlate over time with the latent variable and this will be observable in the data.

In his recent work on Americans’ attitudes toward punitive crime policies, Peter Enns (2014, see also 2016) used 33 different questions about crime and punishment, ranging from how adequately people feel protected by the police from being a victim of crime to how much confidence people have in the courts to convict and sentence criminals to jail time. Across the 1953 to 2012 time period, some of these questions were asked as many as 49 times, and others as few as three times. In all, the shared portion of the variance in the proportion of the respondents giving the “tough on crime” response to these many different questions was 56 percent. That is, of all the movement over time in these questions, 56 percent of the variance was shared; it could be considered to be a reflection of the public’s underlying, latent, attitude toward being punitive with regards to crime. The remaining variability in response, 44 percent, reflected idiosyncratic movement with regards to the particular wording in the different questions used.

We did something similar for the death penalty. In fact, we assembled the largest collection of national surveys so far compiled. Our index runs from the beginning of the modern era of the death penalty in 1976 and through the date of our data collection in October 2015. We identified

488 national surveys with 66 distinct questions about various aspects of the death penalty (in a 2008 book, Baumgartner and colleagues used 292 surveys from 1937 to 2006 to develop a similar index). These questions were asked as many as 25 times (for the Gallup Murder question), but all were asked at least twice. Our index on death penalty opinion explains 72.51 percent of the underlying variance. In sum, we have constructed the most comprehensive assessment of public opinion on the death penalty ever assembled. In contrast to any single survey, since ours is based on 488 national surveys, the sampling variation is reduced to a minimum.

The tables below present, first, the exact question text for all the question we used, as well as the Question ID; these are listed in alphabetical order by the Question ID. In the final table, technical details are presented for each of those Question IDs: how many times the question was asked, its statistical factor loading on the overall index, its mean value, and its standard deviation. The higher the loading on the first factor, the stronger the question contributes to the overall factor. (Loadings on the second factor are all zero.) Note that in the Stimson algorithm, the logic is simple. Neutral and no-answer responses are eliminated, and the percent of pro-death penalty responses is divided by the sum of the pro- and anti-death penalty responses. This single number, along with the sample size, the date of the survey, and the question ID go into the algorithm. Based on sample size and the degree of loading on the overall index, each observation then contributes proportionately more or less to the resulting score. Note that questions posed just once never enter the calculation, as the algorithm looks at movement over time for two or more occurrences of the exact same question wording, by the same survey firm or organization. Thus, it controls both for “house effects” as well as for “wording effects.” Further, keep in mind that the first several questions listed in the last table below, the most well-known, frequently asked, and familiar questions from Gallup and NORC, generate the core of the index we use, with extremely high factor loadings. This means that the simple correlation between any one of those series and the overall index are correspondingly high. A graph of two of them together would show parallel lines.

It is important to understand, but perhaps slightly counter-intuitive, that since the index reflects the combined results of many different question wordings, the numerical value of the index is difficult to interpret; rather *changes in the value over time* are of interest. That is, for example in the tables below it is clear that the Gallup Murder question, posed 25 times in our dataset, has an average value of 73% pro-death penalty. (This is higher than what would be in the raw survey responses because our calculation eliminates neutral and no-opinion responses, as described above.) The NORC question with the same question wording also has the same average value: 73.6. But the Gallup question allowing for the option of Life Without Parole has an average value of 57.5. (See the first three rows in Table 2, below.) In fact, looking down Table 2 below, it is clear that some questions have relatively low average scores. The virtue of the index is that it allows us to use the shared variance of diverse questions posed over time in order to generate a nuanced and highly accurate understanding of the *dynamics* of public opinion over time. But because it incorporates responses to so many different questions, and makes use of all questions that happen to have been posed in reputable national surveys made available through iPOLL (made available by the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research), the value of the index is completely determined by the mix of questions that were fed into it. We adjusted the value of

the index to have a value of zero in 1976. Therefore, it can be interpreted as higher or lower than it was at that time.

## References

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- Stimson, James A. 1999. *Public Opinion in America: Moods, Cycles, and Swings*. 2nd ed. Boulder, CO: Westview. [first published, 1991]

Table 1. Question Wordings.

Question ID	Question Text
ABC_18	Do you support or oppose the death penalty for people who are convicted of murder that they committed when they were juveniles--that is, when they were younger than age 18?
ABC_ACC	(For each item that I name, please tell me if you personally find it morally acceptable or unacceptable.)...The death penalty
ABC_APP	Regardless of your overall opinion on the death penalty, for each statement I read please tell me if you agree with it strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly....The death penalty is unfair because it's applied differently from county to county and state to state.
ABC_BLK	(Regardless of your overall opinion on the death penalty, for each statement I read please tell me if you agree with it strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly.)...The death penalty is unfair because it's applied unequally to blacks compared to whites.
ABC_COC	Do you think people convicted of selling cocaine should be given the death penalty, life imprisonment, a long jail term, a short jail term or what?
ABC_DETER	Do you feel that the death penalty acts as a deterrent to murder--that it lowers the murder rate--or not?
ABC_EVERIN	(Regardless of your overall opinion on the death penalty, for each statement I read please tell me if you agree with it strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly.)...The death penalty is unfair because sometimes an innocent person is executed.
ABC_EYE	(Regardless of your overall opinion on the death penalty, for each statement I read please tell me if you agree with it strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly.)...The death penalty is fair because it's an eye for an eye--the killer is killed.
ABC_HER	Convicted heroin dealers should get the death penalty?
ABC_LIFE	Which punishment do you prefer for people convicted of murder: the death penalty or life in prison with no chance of parole?
ABC_MUR	Do you support/favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder
ABC_NIK	(As you may know, Terry Nichols was convicted recently of conspiracy and involuntary manslaughter in connection with the Oklahoma City bombing which killed 168 people in 1995. But the jury acquitted Nichols of first-degree murder and the use of a truck bomb in the case.) As you may have heard, the jury deadlocked on the question of whether Nichols should receive the death penalty which means he will not be sentenced to death. Do you think Nichols should or should not have received the death penalty?
ABC_OJ	If he's convicted of murder, do you think (O.J.) Simpson should or should not receive the death penalty?
ABC_SAD	Which punishment would you prefer for Saddam (Hussein) if he is convicted of war crimes--the death penalty, or life in prison with no chance of parole?

ABC\_SPY Suppose a U.S. citizen is convicted of spying for the Soviet Union. Should that person receive the death penalty, life imprisonment, or go to prison for a number of years?

ABC\_TIM As you may know, Timothy McVeigh has been sentenced to death for the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995. Do you support or oppose the death penalty for McVeigh?

AP\_FAV Do you favor, oppose or neither favor nor oppose the death penalty for people convicted of murder? Would you say you favor the death penalty for people convicted of murder strongly or just somewhat? Would you say you oppose the death penalty for people convicted of murder strongly or just somewhat?

AP\_MUR Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?

AWP\_DETER Do you feel that the death penalty acts as a deterrent to murder--that it lowers the murder rate--or not?

AWP\_LIFE Which punishment do you prefer for people convicted of murder: the death penalty or life in prison with no chance of parole?

AWP\_MUR Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?

AYRES\_MUR (Do you support or oppose each of the following?)...The death penalty for murder

BEL\_MUR (Do you support or oppose each of the following?)...The death penalty for persons convicted of murder...Do you support/oppose that strongly or somewhat?

CBS\_18 What about people who commit murder when they are 16 or 17? Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for them?

CBS\_DET Do you think that capital punishment--the death penalty--is or is not a deterrent to murder?

CBS\_LIF What do you think should be the penalty for persons convicted of murder--the death penalty, life in prison with no chance of parole, or a long prison sentence with a chance of parole?

CBS\_LIFE What do you prefer for persons convicted of murder--the death penalty, or life imprisonment with absolutely no possibility of parole?

CBS\_MUR Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?

CBS\_PAR What do you think should be the penalty for persons convicted of murder--the death penalty, life in prison with no chance of parole, or a long prison sentence with a chance of parole?

CBS\_TIM As you may know, Timothy McVeigh was found guilty of the 1995 bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City, in which 168 people were killed, and was sentenced to death in 1997.... He is scheduled to be executed on Monday (June 11, 2001). Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for Timothy McVeigh?

CNY\_ANY Are there any circumstances under which you think the death penalty is justified?

CNY\_DRGM Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for people convicted of controlling large drug dealing operations?

CNY\_MUR Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?

CPS\_MUR QN08 Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?

CSRA\_MUR For criminals convicted of premeditated murder, which of the following do you think is the most appropriate sentence?... 25 years in prison, life in prison with the possibility of parole, life in prison without the possibility of parole, the death penalty

DPIC\_GUIL As you may know, in recent years many people who had been convicted of murder and sentenced to death have been released from death row after new evidence, such as DNA testing, shows they could not be guilty of the crime. They have been exonerated of all charges. For example, so many people on death row in Illinois were found to be not guilty that the state put a moratorium on carrying out the death penalty until the problem could be thoroughly investigated. Having heard that, which one of the following comes closest to describing your opinion about the death penalty?...I support the death penalty, but hearing this makes me feel less strongly in favor of it, hearing this does not affect my opinion of the death penalty, I oppose the death penalty, and hearing this makes me feel more strongly opposed to it

DPIC\_LIFE Which penalty do you prefer for people convicted of murder, the death penalty, or life in prison with no chance of parole?

DPIC\_MOR As you may know, in the court cases where the death penalty is one possible punishment, most courts require jurors to say they do not have a moral objection to imposing the death penalty if the evidence supports it, in order to qualify as a juror in a death penalty case. Someone who has a moral objection to the death penalty in all cases would be excluded from a jury in a death penalty case. Suppose you were in the jury pool for a death penalty case, would you qualify on those grounds, or would you be disqualified because you have a moral objection to the death penalty?

DPIC\_MUR Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?

FOX\_AND As you may know, Andrea Yates is the woman on trial for killing her children. Prosecutors are seeking the death penalty, but Yates' attorneys say she is innocent by reason of insanity. If Yates is convicted, what do you think is the appropriate penalty?...Death penalty, life in prison, life in a psychiatric hospital, time in a psychiatric hospital until she's well

FOX\_CHI Do you favor or oppose making the death penalty mandatory for anyone found guilty of abducting and murdering a child?

FOX\_KHA Now that Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, the terrorist who is believed to have helped plan the 9/11 (2001) attacks (on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon), has been captured, what do you think should happen to him? If Mohammed is convicted of mass murder, what do you think is the appropriate penalty: death penalty, or life in prison?

FOX\_MUR Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of premeditated murder?

FOX\_NIK In fact, Terry Nichols is facing the same charges in the Oklahoma City bombing as Timothy McVeigh faced. If Nichols is convicted of committing the bombing, do you think he should receive the death penalty or life in prison?

FOX\_RET Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for a person convicted of premeditated murder, if that person is shown to be mentally retarded?

FOX\_SAD If convicted, what do you think should happen to Saddam (Hussein)--life in prison or the death penalty?

FOX\_SCOTT (Last week Scott Peterson was found guilty of murdering his wife and unborn son.)...What do you think is the appropriate penalty for Scott Peterson--should he be sentenced to death or sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole?

FOX\_TEEN Do you think teens who kill other teens should face the possibility of the death penalty?

FOX\_TIM Later this month (May, 2001), Timothy McVeigh will be executed by lethal injection for the bombing of a federal building in Oklahoma City that left 168 people dead. Do you think the death penalty is the right punishment for McVeigh's crimes or not?

FOX\_UNA Authorities believe that the Unabomber used 16 bombs to kill 3 people while injuring 23 others. If Ted Kaczynski, the alleged Unabomber, is convicted of committing these bombings, do you think he should receive the death penalty or life in prison?

FOX\_UNAI Do you think Kaczynski (the alleged Unabomber) should get the death penalty even if he is insane?

GAL\_18 Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for...juveniles?

GAL\_21 ARE YOU IN FAVOR OF THE DEATH PENALTY FOR PERSONS UNDER 21 WHO ARE CONVICTED OF MURDER?

GAL\_21\_YN If so, are you in favor of it (the death penalty for murder) for persons under 21?

GAL\_ACC (Next, I'm going to read you a list of issues. Regardless of whether or not you think it should be legal, for each one, please tell me whether you personally believe that in general it is morally acceptable or morally wrong.) How about...the death penalty?

GAL\_AND Do you think Andrea Yates should or should not be sentenced to the death penalty if she is convicted of murdering her five children?

GAL\_APP Generally speaking, do you believe the death penalty is applied fairly or unfairly in this country today?

GAL\_BLK (As I read each of these statements, would you tell me whether you agree or disagree with it.) A black person is more likely than a white person to receive the death penalty for the same crime.

GAL\_BUR We have some questions about Buford Furrow, the man charged with an attack in Los Angeles which killed one postman and wounded several workers and children at a Jewish daycare facility. Which sentence do you think Furrow should get for this crime--the death penalty, or life imprisonment, with absolutely no possibility of parole?

GAL\_DET Do you feel that the death penalty acts as a deterrent to the commitment of murder, that it lowers the murder rate, or not?

GAL\_DRGN Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for drug dealers not convicted of murder?

GAL\_EVRIN How often do you think that a person has been sentenced to the death penalty who was, in fact, innocent for the crime he or she was charged with--do you think this has ever happened in the past 20 years, or do you think it has never happened?

GAL\_EVRIN5 How often do you think that a person has been executed under the death penalty who was, in fact, innocent of the crime he or she was charged with--do you think this has happened in the past five years, or not?

GAL\_EXT (Please tell me whether you would generally favor or oppose each of the following proposals which some people have made to reduce crime.)... Extending the death penalty for some serious crimes other than murder.

GAL\_JUA Thinking about the drug kingpin Juan Raul Garza, the man convicted of murder and controlling a large drug trafficking operation, which comes closest to your view--you generally support the death penalty and believe Garza should be executed, you generally oppose the death penalty, but believe Garza should be executed in this case, or you generally oppose the death penalty and believe Garza should not be executed?

GAL\_LIFE If you could choose between the following two approaches, which do you think is the better penalty for murder...the death penalty or life imprisonment, with absolutely no possibility of parole?

GAL\_MAND (The following is a list of some programs and proposals that are being discussed in this country today. For each one, please tell me whether you strongly favor, favor, oppose or strongly oppose)... A mandatory death penalty for anyone convicted of premeditated murder

GAL\_MAND\_YN There various proposals being discussed in this country today. Would you tell me whether you generally favor or generally oppose each of these proposals. A mandatory death penalty for anyone convicted of murder

GAL\_MEN Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for...the mentally ill?

GAL\_MOR Which cimes closer to yiur view? There should be a moratorium, or temporary halt, on the death penalty until it can be better determined if the death penalty is being administered accurately and fairly inthis country. There should not be a moratorium, or temporary halt, on the death penalty because there are already sufficient safeguards in the current justice system to prevent the execution of innocent people?

GAL\_MUR Are you in favor of the death penalty for a person convicted of murder?

GAL\_MUR\_YN (Suppose that on Election Day, November 2 (1982), you could vote on key issues as well as candidates. Please tell me how you would vote on each of these propositions.)...I favor the death penalty for persons convicted of murder, I oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder.

GAL\_NIK If Terry Nichols is convicted for the bombing in Oklahoma City, what do you think should be the penalty--the death penalty or life imprisonment, with absolutely no possibility of parole?

GAL\_NOTEV Suppose new evidence showed that the death penalty does not act as a deterrent to murder, that is does not lower the murder rate. Would you favor or oppose the death penalty?



GAL\_NOTEV Suppose new evidence showed that the death penalty does not act as a deterrent to murder--that it does not lower the murder rate. Would you favor or oppose the death penalty?

GAL\_OFT In your opinion, is the death penalty imposed too often, about the right amount, or not often enough?

GAL\_OJ Based on your understanding of the case, what do you think should be the penalty if O.J. Simpson is found guilty of the murders he has been charged with (of his ex-wife, Nicole Brown Simpson and her friend, Ronald Goldman)--the death penalty or life imprisonment, with absolutely no possibility of parole?

GAL\_PCT Just your best guess, about what percent of people who are executed under the death penalty are really innocent of the crime they were charged with?

GAL\_POOR As I read each of these statements, would you tell me whether you agree or disagree with it. A poor person is more likely than a person of average or above average income to receive the death penalty for the same crime.

GAL\_PRES Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of... attempting to assassinate the President?

GAL\_RAPE Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of... rape?

GAL\_RET Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for...the mentally retarded?

GAL\_SAD Thinking for a moment about the trial of former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein...If Saddam Hussein is found guilty of serious crimes during his trial, would you favor or oppose the death penalty for him?

GAL\_SKY Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of... hijacking an airplane?

GAL\_SPY Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of... spying for a foreign nation during peacetime?

GAL\_SUS In a recent criminal case that received a lot of media attention, Susan Smith confessed to drowning her two young sons in her car. If found guilty of murder in this case, do you think Susan Smith should receive the death penalty, or not?

GAL\_TEEN When a teenager commits a murder and is found guilty by a jury, do you think he should get the death penalty or should he be spared because of his youth?

GAL\_TEN ARE YOU IN FAVOR OF THE DEATH PENALTY FOR PERSONS UNDER 21?

GAL\_TIM Thinking about Timothy McVeigh, the man convicted of murder in the Oklahoma City bombing case and sentenced to death, which comes closest to your view? You generally support the death penalty and believe McVeigh should be executed. You generally oppose the death penalty, but believe McVeigh should be executed in this case. You generally oppose the death penalty and believe McVeigh should not be executed?

GAL\_TRE Are you in favor of the death penalty for persons convicted of: Treason?

GAL\_UNA If Theodore Kaczynski is convicted for the Unabomber murders, what do you think should be the penalty--the death penalty, or life imprisonment, with absolutely no possibility of parole?

GAL\_WOM Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for...women?

GEN\_BRU Which of the following murder cases, if any, would you consider justification for the death penalty?If murder is especially brutal

GEN\_CHI Which of the following murder cases, if any, would you consider justification for the death penalty?If victim was a child

GEN\_CON Which of the following murder cases, if any, would you consider justification for the death penalty?If murder is for hire

GEN\_CRM For what crimes besides murder should the death penalty be imposed?Drug dealing

GEN\_MOL For what crimes besides murder should the death penalty be imposed?Child molestation or abuse

GEN\_POL Which of the following murder cases, if any, would you consider justification for the death penalty?If victim was a prison guard If convicted of killing more than

GEN\_TRE For what crimes besides murder should the death penalty be imposed?Rape Treason against the U.S. (traitors,

GREEN\_FAV Now I'd like your opinion on several other issues. Please tell me if you favor or oppose the following....The death penalty...(If Favor/Oppose, ask:) Is that strongly favor/oppose or somewhat favor/oppose?

HAR Do you believe in capital punishment, that is the death penalty, or are you opposed to it?

HAR\_18 In many states, one of the criminal punishments that is available is the death penalty. Some people think that persons convicted of murder committed when they are under 18 years old should never be executed, while other people think it is right to execute those who are under the age of 18 at the time the crime was committed. Which is closer to the way you think, that young people who are convicted of a murder, committed when they are younger than 18, should never be executed, or it is right to execute young people for a murder they committed before they were 18?

HAR\_APP Based on what you have read or heard, do you think the criminal justice system in death penalty cases is generally fair or generally unfair?

HAR\_DETEF Suppose it could be proven to your satisfaction that the death penalty was not more effective than long prison sentences in keeping people from committing crimes such as murder. Would you be in favor of the death penalty or opposed to it?

HAR\_EVERIN If you believed that quite a substantial number of innocent people are convicted of murder, would you then believe in or oppose the death penalty for murder?

HAR\_MUR Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for individuals convicted of serious crimes such as murder?

HAR\_OJ If O.J. Simpson is guilty of murder (in the charges he murdered his ex-wife, Nicole Brown Simpson, and her friend, Ronald Goldman) do you think he should get the death penalty, or not?

HAR\_RET Some people think that persons convicted of murder who have a mental age of less than 18 (or the 'retarded') should not be executed. Other people think that 'retarded' persons should be subject to the death penalty like anyone else. Which is closer to the way you feel, that 'retarded' persons should not

be executed, or that 'retarded' persons should be subject to the death penalty like anyone else?

HI\_EVIN If you believe that quite a substantial number of innocent people are convicted of murder, would you then believe in or oppose the death penalty for murder?

HI\_MOR Do you think there should be a temporary moratorium or halt in the death penalty to allow government to reduce the chances that an innocent person will be put to death, or do you think there should not be a moratorium because there are already sufficient safeguards to prevent the execution of innocent people?

HTR Do you favor or oppose the death penalty?

HTR\_MOR Recently there has been some discussion about whether the death penalty is fairly applied. Which of the following statements comes closer to your view? Statement A: There should be a moratorium on state executions until death penalty procedures are officially reviewed. Statement B: No moratorium on state executions is needed--states only need to ensure that the accused receive fair trials.

ICR\_MUR Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?

ISPOS\_LIFE Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for people convicted of murder? (If Favor/Oppose, ask:) Is that strongly favor/oppose or somewhat favor/oppose?

ISPOS\_MUR Which punishment do you prefer for people convicted of murder?...The death penalty, life in prison without the chance of parole, a long prison sentence with the chance of parole

ISPOS\_OSA If Osama bin Laden is captured, tried and convicted of being a terrorist, which punishment should he receive?...The death penalty, life in prison without the chance of parole, a long prison sentence with the chance of parole

KAN\_MUR Do you favor or oppose more frequent use of the death penalty for people convicted of murder and other really serious crimes?

KN\_LIFE In general, what do you think should be the punishment for people convicted of murder?...Death penalty, life in prison with no chance of parole, depends on the circumstances

KRC\_FAV I'd like to talk to you about some public policy issues. For each issue I read, please tell me if you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose it.... The death penalty

LAT Do you approve or disapprove of the death penalty?

LAT\_BLK On another subject, say a non-white person and a white person are convicted of the same serious crime. Under our criminal justice system, do you think the non-white person is more likely to receive the death penalty than the white person, is less likely to receive the death penalty or are both equally likely to receive the death penalty?

LAT\_EVERIN Regardless of how you personally feel about the death penalty, do you think that there ever have been circumstances in which an innocent person was executed, or do you not think that has occurred?

LAT\_FAV Generally speaking, do you approve or disapprove of the death penalty?

LAT\_MUR Generally speaking, are you in favor of the death penalty for persons convicted of murder, or are you opposed to that--or haven't you heard enough about that yet to say? (If in favor or opposed) Is that (in favor/opposed) strongly or (in favor/ opposed) somewhat?

LAT\_SEX In your opinion, what is the appropriate punishment for sexual abuse of a child? Should the child abuser be given the death penalty, or sent to jail for more than twenty years, or sent to jail for more than five years, or sent to jail for from six months to five years, or given probation--or don't you think that punishment is appropriate?

LAT\_SOM Would you ever favor the death penalty for certain crimes, or are you opposed to the death penalty under any circumstances?

LHA Do you believe in capital punishment (death penalty) or are you opposed to it?

LHA\_COP Do you feel that all persons convicted of killing a policeman or prison guard should get the death penalty, that no one convicted of killing a policeman or prison guard should get the death penalty, or do you feel that whether or not someone convicted of killing a policeman or prison guard gets the death penalty should depend on the circumstances of the case and the character of the person?

LHA\_MUG Do you feel that all persons convicted of...Mugging...should get the death penalty, that no one convicted of...Mugging... should get the death penalty, or do you feel that whether or not someone convicted of...Mugging...gets the death penalty should depend on the circumstances of the case and the character of the person?

LHA\_MUR Do you feel that all persons convicted of first degree murder should get the death penalty, that no one convicted of first degree murder should get the death penalty, or do you feel that whether or not someone convicted of first degree murder gets the death penalty should depend on the circumstances of the case and the character of the person?

LHA\_RAPE Do you feel that all persons convicted of...Rape...should get the death penalty, that no one convicted of...Rape... should get the death penalty, or do you feel that whether or not someone convicted of...Rape...gets the death penalty should depend on the circumstances of the case and the character of the person?

LHA\_SKY Do you feel that all persons convicted of...Skyjacking...should get the death penalty, that no one convicted of...Skyjacking... should get the death penalty, or do you feel that whether or not someone convicted of...Skyjacking...gets the death penalty should depend on the circumstances of the case and the character of the person?

LHA\_TER Now let me ask you about some solutions that have been proposed as ways of dealing with terrorism. For each, tell me if you favor or oppose that solution....All those caught committing acts of terror should be convicted and given the death penalty

LUN\_ACC The death penalty is morally wrong and should never be instituted, regardless of the crime committed. Strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree

NBC\_APP From what you know, do you think that the death penalty is or is not applied fairly?

NBC\_CON (Let me read you a number of different proposals people have made about how to change the U.S. (United States) Constitution. For each proposal, please tell me whether you would favor or oppose this change in the Constitution.)... Amending the Constitution to outlaw the death penalty as cruel and unusual punishment.... Would you favor or oppose this change in the Constitution?

NBC\_DRUG In cases where death is caused from the use of drugs, would you favor or oppose the death penalty for the drug dealer who supplied the drugs?

NBC\_FAV Do you strongly favor, favor, oppose or strongly oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?

NBC\_MOR RC05B (I'd like to read you a list of changes that have been proposed and for each one I read, I'd like you to tell me whether you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose that change.)... Impose the death penalty in more criminal cases.

NBC\_MUR Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?

NBC\_OJ If O.J. Simpson is found guilty of the murders of Nicole Brown Simpson (his ex-wife) and Ron Goldman, do you think he should be sentenced to the death penalty?

NBC\_UNA If Ted Kaczynski, the man on trial for being the so-called Unabomber, is convicted, do you feel that he should or should not be given the death penalty?

NORC\_WOR Do you think that having a death penalty for the worst crimes is a good idea or are you against the death penalty?

NOR\_18 QA30 Several hundred murders are committed each year by persons under the age of 18. Taking this into consideration, do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder who were under the age of 18 when they committed the crime?

NOR\_MUR Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?

OMNI\_MUR Do you support the death penalty for persons convicted of first-degree murder?

ORC\_AGA Are you in favor of the death penalty for persons convicted of the following crimes?Against death penalty

ORC\_CRU As you may know, according to the US (United States) Constitution, any punishment that is considered 'cruel and unusual' cannot be used on people convicted of any crime. Do you consider the death penalty to be a cruel and unusual punishment, or don't you feel that way?

ORC\_HIJ Are you in favor of the death penalty for persons convicted of the following crimes?Hijacking of an airplane

ORC\_KHA (Now here are some questions about Khalid Sheik Mohammed who may be responsible for planning the 9/11 (September 11, 2001 terrorist) attacks (on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon) and who is now in custody at a US (United States) military prison in another country.)...If Khalid Sheik Mohammed is found guilty of planning the 9/11 attacks, which of the following statements best describes your view?...You generally support the

death penalty and believe he should be executed if he is found guilty. You generally oppose the death penalty, but believe he should be executed in this case if he is found guilty. You generally oppose the death penalty and believe he should not be executed if he is found guilty.

ORC\_KID Are you in favor of the death penalty for persons convicted of the following crimes?Kidnapping

ORC\_LIF If you could choose between the following two approaches, which do you think is the better penalty for murder--the death penalty, or life imprisonment, with absolutely no possibility of parole?

ORC\_MUR Do you favor the death penalty?

ORC\_OTH Are you in favor of the death penalty for persons convicted of the following crimes?Other crimes

ORC\_POL Are you in favor of the death penalty for persons convicted of the following crimes?Murder of police officer

ORC\_ZAC Now thinking about Zacarias Moussaoui, the man charged with crimes associated with terrorism, which sentence do you think Moussaoui should get for this crime--the death penalty, or life imprisonment with absolutely no possibility of parole?

PC\_CRM Do you support or oppose the death penalty for major drug dealers? And do you strongly support/oppose or only somewhat support/oppose?

PENN\_MUR (For each of these proposals, please tell me whether you favor or oppose them.)... Do you favor or oppose instituting the death penalty for first-degree murder?

POS\_FAV And, do you favor or oppose the death penalty for convicted murderers? (If favor/oppose, ask:) Do you strongly favor/oppose or just somewhat favor/oppose?

PPR\_DP Which one of the following four statements comes closest to your opinion of who should be subject to the death penalty...only those convicted of murder, only those convicted of the most brutal murders, mass murders and serial killings, all those convicted of murder, other especially violent crimes and major drug dealing or do you oppose the death penalty in all cases?

PPR\_MUR In moving on to another topic, do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?

PPR\_MUR\_Y  
N Are you in favor of the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?

PRRI\_ACC (Next, I'm going to read you a series of statements about personal behavior. Regardless of whether or not you think it should be legal, for each one, please tell me whether you personally believe that it is morally acceptable or morally wrong.)...The death penalty...Is this morally acceptable, or morally wrong?

PRRI\_FAV (Do you favor or oppose the following issues?...Strongly favor, favor, oppose, strongly oppose)...The death penalty for persons convicted of murder.

PRRI\_LIF Which punishment do you prefer for people convicted of murder--the death penalty or life in prison with no chance of parole?

PRRI\_MUR Now, I'd like to get your views on some other issues that are being discussed in the country today. All in all, do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose...the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?

PRRI\_SUP And all in all, do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose...the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?

PSR\_ACC Please tell me whether you would generally favor or oppose the death penalty for murder in each case of the following circumstances. If the convicted person was... only an accomplice to the person who actually did the killing... would you favor or oppose the death penalty?

PSR\_APP Generally speaking, do you believe the death penalty is applied fairly or unfairly in this country today?

PSR\_BLK As I read off each of the following statements would you tell me if you agree or disagree with it.... A black person is more likely than a white person to receive the death penalty for the same crime.

PSR\_DET Whatever your position on the death penalty, do you think it is a major deterrent to violent crime, a minor deterrent, or not a deterrent at all?

PSR\_EVERIN Since the death penalty was reinstated in the 1970s, do you think many innocent people have been wrongly executed, only some, very few, or none?

PSR\_FAV Do you strongly favor, favor, oppose or strongly oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?

PSR\_LVL I have some questions about the death penalty. Which of the following four choices comes closest to your opinion about who should be subject to the death penalty? Should it be used for...all those convicted of murder, other especially violent crimes, and major drug dealing, limited to those convicted of murder, further limited to cases of the most brutal murders, mass murders and serial killing, or do you oppose the death penalty in all cases?

PSR\_MAN In general, do you favor or oppose the death penalty for a man convicted of murder?

PSR\_MUR Do you favor or oppose...the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?

PSR\_TEEN (Please tell me whether you would generally favor or oppose the death penalty for murder in each of the following circumstances.) If the convicted person was...a young teenager at the time of the crime, would you favor or oppose the death penalty?

PSR\_TIM Timothy McVeigh, who was sentenced to death for murder in the Oklahoma City bombing case, is scheduled to be executed by lethal injection. Do you personally favor or oppose the death penalty for Timothy McVeigh?

PSR\_WOM In general, do you favor or oppose the death penalty for a woman convicted of murder?

QUI\_LIF Which punishment do you prefer for people convicted of murder--the death penalty or life in prison with no chance of parole?

QUI\_MEN In general do you agree or disagree with the decision that banned the death penalty for the mentally retarded?

QUI\_MUR Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?

RBI\_MOR Now, I'd like to get your views on some issues that are being discussed in this country today. All in all, do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose...the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?

RBI\_MUR Now a few questions about some legal issues that are pending before courts and legislatures around the country. Do you believe that the death penalty should ever be imposed for serious crimes or do you believe the death penalty should never be used?

RF\_DETER Does the death penalty discourage murder?

RF\_MUR Do you favor or oppose the following policies? The death penalty for persons convicted of murder.

ROP\_ARM Opinions differ as to whether there should be a death penalty for certain very serious crimes, or whether there should not be a death penalty for any crime, no matter how serious it is. How do you feel--are you in favor of the death penalty for certain crimes, or opposed to the death penalty under any circumstances? (If favor death penalty:) For which of these crimes, if any, would you favor the death penalty?armed robbery that results in death E. Favor the death penalty for

ROP\_ARS Opinions differ as to whether there should be a death penalty for certain very serious crimes, or whether there should not be a death penalty for any crime, no matter how serious it is. How do you feel--are you in favor of the death penalty for certain crimes, or opposed to the death penalty under any circumstances? (If favor death penalty:) For which of these crimes, if any, would you favor the death penalty?arson that results in death J. Favor the death penalty for

ROP\_CON Opinions differ as to whether there should be a death penalty for certain very serious crimes, or whether there should not be a death penalty for any crime, no matter how serious it is. How do you feel--are you in favor of the death penalty for certain crimes, or opposed to the death penalty under any circumstances? (If favor death penalty:) For which of these crimes, if any, would you favor the death penalty?a paid killing D. Favor the death penalty for

ROP\_HIJ Opinions differ as to whether there should be a death penalty for certain very serious crimes, or whether there should not be a death penalty for any crime, no matter how serious it is. How do you feel--are you in favor of the death penalty for certain crimes, or opposed to the death penalty under any circumstances? (If favor death penalty:) For which of these crimes, if any, would you favor the death penalty?hijacking a plane that results in death I. Favor the death penalty for

ROP\_KID Opinions differ as to whether there should be a death penalty for certain very serious crimes, or whether there should not be a death penalty for any crime, no matter how serious it is. How do you feel--are you in favor of the death penalty for certain crimes, or opposed to the death penalty under any circumstances? (If favor death penalty:) For which of these crimes, if any, would you favor the death penalty?kidnapping when the victim is killed H. Favor the death penalty for

ROP\_MUR Opinions differ as to whether there should be a death penalty for certain very serious crimes, or whether there should not be a death penalty for any crime, no matter how serious it is. How do you feel--are you in favor of the death penalty for certain crimes, or opposed to the death penalty under any



ROP\_OPP circumstances? (If favor death penalty:) For which of these crimes, if any, would you favor the death penalty?in death F. Favor the death penalty for Opinions differ as to whether there should be a death penalty for certain very serious crimes, or whether there should not be a death penalty for any crime, no matter how serious it is. How do you feel--are you in favor of the death penalty for certain crimes, or opposed to the death penalty under any circumstances? (If favor death penalty, ask:) For which of these crimes, if any, would you favor the death penalty?Oppose death penalty

ROP\_POL Opinions differ as to whether there should be a death penalty for certain very serious crimes, or whether there should not be a death penalty for any crime, no matter how serious it is. How do you feel--are you in favor of the death penalty for certain crimes, or opposed to the death penalty under any circumstances? (If favor death penalty:) For which of these crimes, if any, would you favor the death penalty?the killing of a policeman or prison guard B. Favor the death penalty for

ROP\_PUB Opinions differ as to whether there should be a death penalty for certain very serious crimes, or whether there should not be a death penalty for any crime, no matter how serious it is. How do you feel--are you in favor of the death penalty for certain crimes, or opposed to the death penalty under any circumstances? (If favor death penalty:) For which of these crimes, if any, would you favor the death penalty?assassinating a high public official G. Favor the death penalty for blowing up a government building that results

ROP\_TRE Opinions differ as to whether there should be a death penalty for certain very serious crimes, or whether there should not be a death penalty for any crime, no matter how serious it is. How do you feel--are you in favor of the death penalty for certain crimes, or opposed to the death penalty under any circumstances? (If favor death penalty:) For which of these crimes, if any, would you favor the death penalty?treason, espionage Favor the death penalty for

STAR\_FAV Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder? (If favor/oppose ask:) And is that strongly or somewhat (favor/oppose)?

STA\_MUR Now, thinking about the death penalty. Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for people convicted of murder?

STA\_RAP Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for people convicted of rape of an adult?

STA\_RET Some people feel that there is nothing wrong with imposing the death penalty on persons who are mentally retarded, depending on the circumstances. Others feel that the death penalty should never be imposed on persons who are mentally retarded under any circumstances. Which of these views comes closest to your own?

STA\_SEX Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for people convicted of sexual abuse of a child?

TNS\_MUR Are you personally in favor or against the use of the death penalty?

WAS\_ACC (I'm going to read you a list of issues. For each one, please tell me whether you think of it as a 'moral' issue involving your beliefs about what is morally

right and wrong or you don't think of it as a moral issue.) How about...the death penalty?

WAS\_COC Do you think that people convicted of selling cocaine should be given the death penalty, life imprisonment, a long jail term, or a short jail term?

WAS\_MUR Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?

WIR\_CRM Do you feel there are any crimes that would justify the death penalty?

WP\_MUR Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?

YAN\_ARM (Do you favor the death penalty for someone convicted of each of the following?)... Armed robbery

YAN\_BUR (Do you favor the death penalty for someone convicted of each of the following?)... Burglarizing a home

YAN\_CRM (Do you favor the death penalty for someone convicted of each of the following?)... Selling drugs to children

YAN\_DETER Do you think having the death penalty deters people from committing crimes, or don't you feel that way?

YAN\_HIJ Now I'd like to know how you feel about a number of important issues that face the country. Do you favor or oppose: Wider use of the death penalty for certain crimes such as hijacking or the killing of a police officer

YAN\_MUR Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for individuals convicted of serious crimes, such as murder?

YAN\_POL (Do you favor the death penalty for someone convicted of each of the following?)... Murdering a police officer

YAN\_RAP (Do you favor the death penalty for someone convicted of each of the following?)... Rape

YAN\_RET Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for mentally retarded individuals convicted of serious crimes, such as murder?

YAN\_SEX (Do you favor the death penalty for someone convicted of each of the following?)... Sexually molesting a child

YAN\_TIM As you know, Timothy McVeigh was convicted of murder in the Oklahoma City bombing. Do you think Timothy McVeigh should receive the death penalty, or not?

YSW\_KID Now here are some statements which represent some traditional American values. Will you tell me for each one whether you strongly believe in this statement, partially believe it or don't believe it. The death penalty should be restored for certain crimes like kidnapping or hijacking.

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Technical data from Wcalc concerning the construction of our index.

Estimation Report for File:

C:\FB\DP\StatisticalPortrait\PublicOpinion\DPOpinionNov10.dta

488 records after date scan

Period: 1976 to 2015, 40 Time Points

Number of Series: 66

Exponential Smoothing: On

Iteration History: Dimension 1

Iter	Convergence	Criterion	Items	Reliability	AlphaF	AlphaB
1	.5934	.001	66	.953	.627	.970
2	.0161	.001	66	.971	.638	.844
3	.0036	.001	66	.971	.626	.855
4	.0008	.001	66	.971	.624	.857

Table 2. Loadings and descriptive variable information

Vn	Variable	Cases	Dim 1	Dim 2	Mean	Std Dev
			Loading	Loading		
1	GAL_MUR	25	.956	.000	72.977	6.225
2	NOR_MUR	24	.961	.000	73.584	4.523
20	GAL_LIFE	16	.845	.000	57.509	5.245
49	GAL_ACC	15	.773	.000	69.209	3.048
39	PSR_MUR	10	.921	.000	71.596	5.188
43	GAL_OFT	13	.622	.000	72.984	8.387
53	GAL_APP	10	.674	.000	59.660	2.880
15	AWP_MUR	8	.821	.000	73.427	5.659
13	NBC_MUR	7	.929	.000	75.286	3.107
17	ABC_MUR	6	.957	.000	72.188	5.904
29	CBS_MUR	6	.901	.000	70.413	6.221
26	CNY_MUR	5	.917	.000	73.071	4.169
64	FOX_MUR	5	.893	.000	75.729	2.154
19	GAL_DET	5	.876	.000	51.694	13.886
10	GAL_RAPE	4	.953	.000	45.578	7.249
37	PSR_LVL	4	.853	.000	40.117	8.053
27	YAN_MUR	4	.792	.000	81.066	1.369
44	ABC_LIFE	3	1.000	.000	49.705	3.579
59	PSR_FAV	3	.999	.000	62.582	2.890
51	HAR_MUR	3	.974	.000	71.084	2.130
11	GAL_SKY	4	.715	.000	41.696	10.683

55	GAL_EVRIN5	3	.940	.000	29.676	5.195
33	CBS_LIFE	4	.639	.000	58.090	5.421
65	CBS_LIF	3	.844	.000	45.529	17.614
18	GAL_BLK	3	.788	.000	52.719	3.957
7	CNY_ANY	3	.755	.000	78.220	1.720
34	GAL_TIM	3	.702	.000	68.640	10.399
3	HAR_DETEF	2	1.000	.000	48.453	6.284
8	LHA_TER	2	1.000	.000	72.283	8.329
12	GAL_TRE	2	1.000	.000	43.089	1.229
14	LAT	2	1.000	.000	71.961	3.829
24	GAL_SPY	2	1.000	.000	48.089	2.437
25	CPS_MUR	2	1.000	.000	80.198	.653
28	CBS_DET	2	1.000	.000	56.291	9.100
31	GAL_EXT	2	1.000	.000	58.141	5.016
32	HTR	2	1.000	.000	75.134	.134
35	GAL_EVRIN	2	1.000	.000	9.935	3.749
36	PSR_ACC	2	1.000	.000	29.375	2.493
40	CBS_TIM	2	1.000	.000	77.935	.309
46	HI_EVIN	2	1.000	.000	51.442	8.109
50	HI_MOR	2	1.000	.000	35.677	.193
56	GAL_PCT	2	1.000	.000	60.548	1.408
58	ORC_LIF	2	1.000	.000	51.257	2.278
62	YAN_HIJ	2	1.000	.000	79.793	3.751
66	GAL_SAD	2	1.000	.000	67.843	6.384
63	ABC_HER	2	1.000	.000	34.024	.351
21	GAL_POOR	3	.549	.000	34.374	2.215
4	LHA	4	.345	.000	74.725	2.561
16	GAL_MAND	3	.404	.000	65.340	7.641
60	PRRI_LIF	3	.385	.000	46.408	3.232
9	ROP_MUR	6	.173	.000	75.310	6.607
38	PSR_TIM	3	.332	.000	79.615	2.718
48	AWP_LIFE	4	.245	.000	51.971	.921
54	QUI_MUR	3	.215	.000	68.944	.914
57	QUI_LIF	4	.026	.000	50.275	2.110
5	LHA_COP	2	-1.000	.000	75.794	1.984
6	LHA_MUR	2	-1.000	.000	73.262	2.210
23	GAL_PRES	2	-1.000	.000	62.963	2.324
30	PSR_TEEN	2	-1.000	.000	54.670	3.022
41	GAL_WOM	2	-1.000	.000	63.461	6.642
42	WP_MUR	2	-1.000	.000	72.396	.521
47	HTR_MOR	2	-1.000	.000	47.448	15.190
52	CBS_PAR	2	-1.000	.000	50.000	3.571
61	YAN_DETER	2	-1.000	.000	58.985	12.594
22	LAT_MUR	3	-.910	.000	81.018	1.241
45	HAR	3	-.965	.000	73.259	1.815

Dimension 1 Information

Eigen Estimate 5.33 of possible 7.35  
Pct Variance Explained: 72.51

Weighted Average Metric: Mean: 60.17 St. Dev: 4.59