

GETTING TOUGH WITH JUVENILE OFFENDERS

Explaining Support for Sanctioning Youths as Adults

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Despite recent “get tough” trends in juvenile justice, relatively little is known about support for sanctioning youths in adult courts. In response, this study examines several neglected explanatory factors, including links between marital status, political orientation, and philosophy of punishment. Analysis of data from the 1995 National Opinion Survey of Crime and Justice suggests that marital status and philosophy of punishment are consistently associated with support for adult sanctioning of youths when the offense involves any of three categories of offenses (selling illegal drugs, committing property crime, or committing violent crime). It also suggests that marital status conditions the effect of philosophy of punishment, an effect itself conditioned by political orientation when the offense involves selling illegal drugs. Research and policy implications are discussed.

In recent years, getting tough with juvenile offenders has become a prominent focus of reforms and political campaigns (Roberts & Stalans, 1998; Singer, 1996). Central to these efforts has been the increased expansion of laws enabling youths to be transferred from

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juvenile to criminal court, especially for the commission of violent and drug offenses (Torbet & Szymanski, 1998). This trend clearly runs counter to the *parens patriae* (state as parent) foundation of the juvenile court, in which rehabilitation and the "best interests" of the child were viewed as being of paramount importance (Feld, 1999). It also runs counter to public opinion in America, which generally holds that rehabilitation, particularly for juveniles, should be a central feature of sanctioning (Roberts, 1992, p. 158; Roberts & Stalans, 1998, p. 52). Indeed, survey research consistently reveals considerable support among Americans for investing in nonpunitive, rehabilitative sanctioning, especially where youths are concerned (Roberts, 1992, p. 131; Stalans & Henry, 1994). Given recent expansions in juvenile transfer laws, the question thus emerges as to the link between support for rehabilitative sanctioning and transfer of youths to adult court. The more general question is, Who supports sanctioning youths as adults and why?

Although substantial research has been conducted on public opinion and punishment, much of it remains primarily descriptive, prompting calls for more nuanced and theoretical analyses (Roberts, 1992; Warr & Stafford, 1984). The situation is particularly acute in the area of public attitudes about juvenile justice (Grisso, 1996; Schwartz, Guo, & Kerbs, 1993; Stalans & Henry, 1994), especially given the transformation of the juvenile court in recent years to an increasingly criminal-like institution (Feld, 1999; Singer, 1996). Taking these observations as a point of departure, this article has the following three goals: (a) to focus attention on theorizing and explaining views toward sanctioning youths in adult courts, (b) to examine specific factors that to date have not been sufficiently addressed in the context of juvenile justice sanctioning, and (c) to investigate specific mechanisms, including marital status and political orientation, through which a rehabilitative philosophy of punishment may affect support for sanctioning youths as adults. The latter focus stems from what appears to be an emerging tension between conservative "tough love" approaches (e.g., George W. Bush's recent calls for "compassionate conservatism"; see Lardner & Walsh, 1999) and more liberal/traditional rehabilitative emphases. In addition, the salience of "family politics" to policy formation suggests the increasing importance of examining marital status and political ideology in relation to policy

issues (Plutzer & McBurnett, 1991; Stoker & Jennings, 1995), not the least including the criminalization of the juvenile court.

SUPPORT FOR SANCTIONING YOUTHS IN THE ADULT JUSTICE SYSTEM

Despite the considerable research focused on public attitudes toward juvenile justice, much of this research has focused primarily on use of the death penalty for youths, rehabilitative sanctioning, funding for treatment and vocational training, and fear of victimization (for a review, see Flanagan & Longmire, 1996; Schwartz et al., 1993). One notable exception is Schwartz et al.'s national study of demographic factors associated with support for trying juveniles in adult court and sentencing them to adult prisons (see also Triplett, 1996). They found that the profile of those most likely to support sanctioning youths as adults for selling illicit drugs or committing property or violent crimes consisted primarily of males, persons approaching middle age, African American parents, and those who are fearful of being the victim of violent crime. However, they did not assess the role of philosophy of punishment or political or religious orientation or of factors such as income or marital status, each of which previous research suggests may be related to punitiveness (Jelen, 1998; Langworthy & Whitehead, 1986; Zeisel & Gallup, 1989). Moreover, contextual factors such as public disorder, urbanization, and crime rates, which research on the death penalty and fear of crime has highlighted as being of potential importance (Liska & Baccaglini, 1990; Rountree, 1998; Skogan, 1990; Taylor, Scheppele, & Stinchcombe, 1979), remain largely unexamined in studies of support for sanctioning youths as adults.

Perhaps of more immediate importance than assessing whether such factors indeed are related to support for more punitive sanctioning of youths is the need to understand better why and how. In the context of juvenile justice, a focus on rehabilitative attitudes toward sanctioning is particularly warranted, given the foundation of the juvenile court on the idea of rehabilitation and the best interests of the child. One avenue by which to explore this relationship is to examine links between rehabilitative orientations and whether an individual is married. The latter distinction is important because marriage can be

viewed as reflecting a commitment to mainstream conventional values, particularly those bearing on the notion of the sacredness of childhood (Platt, 1977). As Plissner (1983) has noted, "married people are more likely . . . to have, or to expect, children and, if so, to take a benign view of authority and a dim view of social disorder" (p. 53).

In theorizing possible linkages, two competing possibilities present themselves. On one hand, those who are married may adhere more strongly to conventional societal values (Kingston & Finkel, 1987; Plissner, 1983), which may contribute to their viewing youthful offenders as young adults. In turn, this view may temper the influence of a rehabilitative philosophy of punishment and enhance a nonrehabilitative, more punitive orientation. On the other hand, those who are married may be more likely to view youthful offenders as less culpable for their behavior, which may enhance the influence of a rehabilitative philosophy of punishment while diminishing that of a punitive orientation. Finally, insofar as an interaction exists between sanctioning philosophy and marital status, the question emerges as to whether it can be explained by reference to political ideology. The latter clearly is linked to sentencing policy formation generally (Plutzer & McBurnett, 1991; Roberts & Stalans, 1998; Stoker & Jennings, 1995) as well as to marital status not broadly but for specific political issues (Kingston & Finkel, 1987), thus raising the possibility that sanctioning philosophy and marital status may be linked to political orientation.

METHOD

DATA

The data for this study came from the National Opinion Survey of Crime and Justice (NOSCJ) ($N = 1,005$), conducted in 1995 (Flanagan & Longmire, 1995, 1996) and archived by the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research. Three dependent variables were examined: Juveniles should be tried as adults if charged with (a) selling illegal drugs, (b) committing a property crime, or (c) committing a violent crime. Each of these variables was coded 1 (*agree* or *strongly agree*) or 0 (*neutral*, *disagree*, or *strongly disagree*) to focus

on the issue of who actively supports adult sanctioning of youths. Descriptive statistics for both the dependent and independent variables (described below) are provided in Table 1.¹

Three sets of independent variables were used in the analyses: sociodemographic, attitudinal, and contextual factors. Sociodemographic factors included age as well as age squared (to examine curvilinearity in the effect of age; see Schwartz et al., 1993, p. 13); race (White versus non-White); annual household income (1 = less than \$15,000, 2 = \$15,001 to 30,000, 3 = \$30,001 to 60,000, 4 = greater than \$60,000); education (1 = Grades 1 through 4, 2 = Grades 5 through 8, 3 = some high school, 4 = high school graduate, 5 = some college, 6 = college graduate, 7 = graduate work); marital status (1 = married, 0 = other); and number of people in household. Although marital status can include a wide range of possibilities (e.g., widowed, divorced, never married), the married/nonmarried distinction was most relevant for the focus of this article (for a similar approach, see Kingston & Finkel, 1987). Unfortunately, the NOS CJ data do not include information about children, thus vitiating the possibility of exploring the potential importance of this factor (Schwartz et al., 1993).

Attitudinal factors included political ideology, which was coded dichotomously to emphasize conservative ideological orientations (1 = conservative, 0 = moderate or liberal), as well as views on parents having legal responsibility for their children's actions (1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *neither*, 4 = *agree*, 5 = *strongly agree*), religious denomination (1 = conservative Protestant, 0 = other), and rehabilitative philosophy of sanctioning juveniles (1 = rehabilitation, 0 = other). For religion, respondents were given denominational categories from which to choose; those who listed a specific denomination were coded as conservative Protestant if they described themselves as being Christian, evangelical, embracing the "full gospel," or as belonging to any of the following: Apostolic, Assembly of God, Baptist, Church of Christ, Church of the Nazarene, Faith United, Jehovah's Witness, Mormon, Pentecostal, Reformed Church, or Unity. For punishment philosophy, which will be central to the subsequent analyses, "other" included three options from which respondents could choose as representing the main purpose of punishing juveniles: deterrence, incapacitation, and retribution. The contrast thus was

TABLE 1: Descriptive Statistics: Dependent Variables and Select Predictors

<i>Dependent Variable</i>	M	SD	N
Adult sanction			
Selling illegal drugs	.70	.46	992
Property crime	.64	.48	991
Violent crime	.87	.33	996
Sociodemographic factors			
Age	41.93	15.94	990
White	.79	.40	998
Male	.48	.50	1,005
Income	2.68	.94	905
Education	4.83	1.20	992
Married	.62	.49	998
Number of people in household	3.38	1.47	994
Attitudinal factors			
Conservative political ideology	.33	.47	974
Parents legally responsible for kids	3.44	1.21	987
Conservative Protestant	.35	.48	987
Rehabilitative philosophy punishment	.50	.50	969
Contextual factors			
Public disorder index	.64	.55	981
Urbanized	3.02	1.34	990
Juvenile property crime rate	2,591.61	981.60	919
Juvenile violent crime rate	511.53	206.28	919

between rehabilitative and nonrehabilitative approaches to sanctioning.

Finally, contextual factors included a public disorder index (Cronbach's $\alpha = .808$) ranging from 0.00 (little or no disorder) to 4.00 (considerable disorder) and composed of views about eight items (trash and litter, neighborhood dogs running loose, graffiti, vacant houses and unkempt lots, unsupervised youths, noise, people drunk or high in public places, and abandoned cars and car parts); urbanization (1 = rural, 2 = small town, 3 = small city, 4 = suburb, and 5 = urban); and state-level juvenile (ages 10 to 17) property and violent crime rates (number of arrests per 100,000 persons ages 10 to 17). These rates were derived using data for 1994 or, when not available for this year, for the closest year for which the data were available (Snyder & Poole, 1997); states for which other years were used included Delaware (1992), Illinois (1992), Kansas (1992), Massachusetts (1995), Montana (1992), Ohio (1992), and South Dakota (1993). State rather

than SMSA-, tract-, or block-level rates were used here because the juvenile sentencing laws asked about in the survey pertained to state law, and data availability and consistency tends to be greater for this unit of analysis; it also seems likely, especially given that local media coverage frequently focuses on state-level trends, that individuals consider state rather than local juvenile crime rates in forming opinions about juvenile crime and policy (Liska & Baccaglini, 1990).

DESIGN AND ANALYSES

Given the considerable attention state legislatures have given to violent and drug offenses, the analyses center on three types of offenses (selling illegal drugs, property crime, and violent crime) rather than a composite measure of attitudes toward sanctioning youths as adults. Also, because the focus of this article is on examining support for or against sanctioning youths as adults, the dependent variables have been coded dichotomously; logistic regression thus is relied on for the statistical modeling.² After presenting multivariate analyses for these variables, a series of two-way and three-way interactive logistic regression models are presented to focus specifically on the interaction of philosophy of punishment with marital status and political ideology. All analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 10.0). For the multivariate analyses, Nagelkerke's (1991) pseudo R^2 is presented because it provides an easily interpretable measure of model fit that, similar to R^2 in ordinary least squares regression, ranges between 0 and 1, with values closer to 1 indicating improved predictive efficacy (Menard, 1995).

RESULTS

Table 2 presents results from the multivariate logistic models for each of three dependent variable offenses: selling illegal drugs, committing property crime, or committing violent crime. Focusing first on the noninteractive models (i.e., Model 1 for each of the offenses), there is slight evidence of a curvilinear relationship between age and support for more punitive (i.e., adult-like) sanctioning of youths who

engaged in property crime, with support declining until middle age and increasing thereafter. Similarly, review of Model 1 for property offending shows that males were more likely than females to support more punitive sanctioning when juveniles committed this type of offense. Those who had higher incomes were somewhat more likely to support more punitive sanctioning of juveniles when the offense involved selling drugs, whereas those who were married were more likely to support harsher sanctioning when the crime involved a violent offense. By contrast, both higher levels of education and adherence to a rehabilitative philosophy of punishment consistently were associated with a reduced likelihood of supporting the sanctioning of youths as adults, regardless of offense. These results largely parallel those of Schwartz et al. (1993), who focused on similar demographic characteristics; differences here center primarily around the magnitude of effect or the specific offenses for which a statistically significant effect emerges. Notably, many of the other identified factors of potential theoretical relevance were either unassociated with or inconsistently associated with support for more punitive sanctioning, including race (inclusive of comparisons among all racial groups), the number of people in a household (significant only for violent crime), adherence to a conservative political ideology or to the belief that parents should be held legally responsible for their children's actions, affiliation with a conservative Protestant denomination, perception of public disorder, and living in an urbanized area (significant only for selling illegal drugs) or in a state with higher juvenile property and violent crime rates.³ Notably, too, in additional analyses, introduction of political orientation did not significantly reduce the substantive or statistical effect of marital status. The significance of these findings is discussed below.

The second set of models in Table 2 extend the first by including the two-way interactions between philosophy of punishment (i.e., rehabilitative vs. nonrehabilitative orientation) and marital status (i.e., married vs. nonmarried) for each of the dependent variables. In each instance, the interaction term is statistically significant. That is, the effect of sanctioning philosophy on support for sanctioning youths as adults varied depending on whether an individual was married.⁴ To quantify what this interaction signifies, predicted probabilities, using the formula $P(x) = \exp(a + b_x) / (1 + \exp[a + b_x])$, can be generated

TABLE 2: Multivariate Logistic Regression of Support for Adult Sanctioning of Juveniles Who Commit Any of Three Offenses—Selling Illegal Drugs, Committing Property Crime, or Committing Violent Crime—on Select Factors

	<i>Selling Illegal Drugs</i>		<i>Property Crime</i>		<i>Violent Crime</i>	
	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Sociodemographic factors						
Age	-.011 (.990)	-.010 (.990)	-.044 (.957)	-.043 (.958)	-.014 (.986)	-.013 (.987)
Age ² /100	.027 (1.028)	.028 (1.028)	.058* (1.060)	.058* (1.059)	.008 (1.008)	.009 (1.009)
White (1)	.110 (1.117)	.104 (1.109)	-.063 (.939)	-.064 (.939)	.149 (1.161)	.155 (1.168)
Male (1)	-.112 (.894)	-.092 (.912)	.312* (1.365)	.332** (1.393)	.338 (1.403)	.369 (1.446)
Income	.201* (1.223)	.198* (1.219)	.102 (1.108)	.097 (1.102)	.158 (1.171)	.147 (1.159)
Education	-.191** (.826)	-.182** (.834)	-.142** (.868)	-.134* (.875)	-.214** (.807)	-.204** (.815)
Married (1)	.167 (1.182)	.696** (1.194)	.231 (1.260)	.690** (1.994)	.524** (1.689)	1.549***** (4.706)
Number of people in household	-.031 (.969)	-.022 (1.035)	-.029 (.971)	-.021 (.979)	-.171** (.843)	-.158* (.854)
Attitudinal factors						
Conservative political ideology (1)	.204 (1.227)	.178 (1.194)	.059 (1.061)	.034 (1.034)	-.038 (.963)	-.087 (.917)
Parents legally responsible for kids (1)	.042 (1.043)	.034 (1.035)	.009 (1.009)	.001 (1.001)	.062 (1.064)	.047 (1.048)
Conservative Protestant (1)	.062 (1.064)	.076 (1.078)	.013 (1.013)	.024 (1.024)	.088 (1.092)	.106 (1.111)
Rehabilitative philosophy of punishment (1)	-.887***** (.412)	-.447* (.640)	-.932***** (.394)	-.526** (.591)	-.746*** (.474)	-.096 (.909)
Contextual factors						
Public disorder index	.120 (1.127)	.130 (1.139)	.004 (1.004)	.014 (1.014)	-.101 (.904)	-.086 (.917)
Urbanized (1)	-.116* (.891)	-.101 (.904)	-.046 (.955)	-.033 (.968)	.037 (1.038)	.063 (1.065)
Juvenile property crime rate	.000 (1.000)	.000 (1.000)	.000 (1.000)	.000 (1.000)	.000 (1.000)	.000 (1.000)
Juvenile violent crime rate	.000 (1.000)	.000 (1.000)	.000 (1.000)	.000 (1.000)	.000 (1.000)	.001 (1.001)
Interaction						
Rehabilitation Married	—	-.865** (.421)	—	-.779** (.459)	—	-1.519*** (.219)

TABLE 2: continued

	<i>Selling Illegal Drugs</i>		<i>Property Crime</i>		<i>Violent Crime</i>	
	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Intercept	1.636**	1.282	2.420***	2.088**	2.618**	2.107*
Model χ^2	58.870****	64.858****	60.252****	65.676****	29.548****	38.743****
Degrees of freedom	16	17	16	17	16	17
Pseudo F^2	.110	.120	.108	.118	.074	.096

NOTE: Logistic regression coefficients; exponentiated coefficients are in parentheses.
* $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$. **** $p < .001$.

(Agresti, 1996, p. 103); the probabilities here are generated for the restricted models (i.e., with only the constituent terms). Among those adhering to a nonrehabilitative philosophy of punishment, the predicted probability for more punitive sanctioning of juveniles who sold illegal drugs was higher for the married (.833) than the nonmarried (.732). By contrast, among those adhering to a rehabilitative philosophy of punishment, relatively little difference surfaced in comparing married and nonmarried individuals (predicted probabilities of .608 and .616, respectively). The corresponding predicted probabilities for property crime (.799 vs. .703, .542 vs. .547) and violent crime (.950 vs. .874, .816 vs. .820) suggest a similar pattern. In short, those most supportive of sanctioning youths as adults were married and adhered to a nonrehabilitative philosophy of punishment, whereas those least supportive were married and adhere to a rehabilitative philosophy of punishment.

In attempting to account for the interaction between philosophy of punishment and marital status, it was theorized that an individual's political ideology might play a role and perhaps even eliminate any observed interactive relationship. To test this hypothesis, a three-way interaction term was created using rehabilitative philosophy (R), being married (M), and conservative ideology (C) as constituent terms in a restricted model. The resulting model can be expressed as follows:

$$Y = a + b_1R + b_2M + b_3C + b_4(R \times M) + b_5(R \times C) + b_6(M \times C) + b_7(R \times M \times C).$$

This model permits the effect of philosophy of punishment to vary according to marital status and political ideology; it thus permits a test

of the hypothesis that political ideology conditions the interactive effect of marital status on philosophy of punishment.

For ease of interpretation, Table 3 presents the restricted interactive models specified with only the constituent variables (i.e., philosophy of punishment, marital status, and political ideology). The only model for which a three-way interaction effect surfaced was support for adult-like sanctioning of youths who sold illegal drugs.⁵ Because three-way interaction terms can be difficult to interpret, Figure 1 shows the predicted probabilities for this model and, as a point of reference, those associated with the corresponding restricted two-way interactive model.

In the two-way interaction model (i.e., the first set of four columns), the effect of being married increased the predicted probability that a nonrehabilitative philosophy would result in support for adult-like sanctioning of youthful drug dealers (.833 among the married vs. .732 among the nonmarried). Conversely, among those adhering to a rehabilitative philosophy of punishment, being married only marginally affected the probability of supporting more punitive sanctioning. In the three-way interaction model for selling illegal drugs, the initial difference identified in the two-way interactive model was not eliminated but rather was differentially present among different groups. Specifically, the substantively significant contrasts between the married and nonmarried then surfaced for those whose political orientations were inconsistent (denoted "I" in Figure 1) with their philosophies of punishment. That is, being married increased the probability of supporting more punitive sanctioning among those adhering (a) to a conservative political orientation and a rehabilitative philosophy of punishment (.691 among the married vs. .572 among the nonmarried) or (b) to a nonconservative political orientation and a nonrehabilitative philosophy of punishment (.830 among the married and .684 among the nonmarried).

DISCUSSION

Findings from this research parallel that of other research (e.g., Schwartz et al., 1993; Skovron, Scott, & Cullen, 1989), albeit with notable exceptions due in part to different emphases, sources of data,

TABLE 3: Logistic Regression of Support for Adult Sanctioning of Juveniles Who Commit Certain Types of Offenses on Interaction of Philosophy of Punishment, Marital Status, and Political Ideology

	<i>Selling Illegal Drugs</i>	<i>Property Crime</i>	<i>Violent Crime</i>
Rehabilitative philosophy of punishment (1)	-.210 (.811)	-.612*** (.523)	-.120 (.887)
Married (1)	.816*** (2.262)	.371 (1.450)	.943** (2.567)
Conservative political ideology (1)	1.112*** (3.041)	.021 (1.022)	.398 (1.488)
Rehabilitation Married	-1.077*** (.341)	-.628* (.534)	-1.204** (.300)
Rehabilitation Conservative Political Ideology	-1.384*** (.251)	-.323 (.724)	-1.022 (.360)
Married Conservative Political Ideology	-1.058** (.347)	.284 (1.328)	-.078 (.925)
Rehabilitation Married Conservative Political Ideology	1.837*** (6.279)	.535 (1.708)	.990 (2.691)
Intercept	.770****	.882	1.843****
Model X^2	52.696****	57.850****	31.299****
Degrees of freedom	7	7	7
Dependent variable mean	.700	.650	.870
Pseudo R^2	.079	.084	.062

NOTE: Logistic regression coefficients; exponentiated coefficients are in parentheses.
** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$. **** $p < .001$.

and types of offenses examined. When the offense was property crime, slight evidence of a curvilinear relationship between age and support for sanctioning youths as adults emerged, with the greatest support among the youngest and oldest age groups. For this same offense, males were more likely than females to support more punitive sanctioning of youths. By contrast, an effect of income emerged only for youths tried for selling illegal drugs, with wealthier individuals more likely to support punitive sanctioning. Nonetheless, some general patterns consistently emerged across the three types of offenses examined in this study (selling illegal drugs, committing property crime, or committing violent crimes): Support for sanctioning youths as adults was greater among the married, and it was markedly lower among the better educated and adherents to a rehabilitative philosophy of punishment. In addition, few if any direct effects were evident

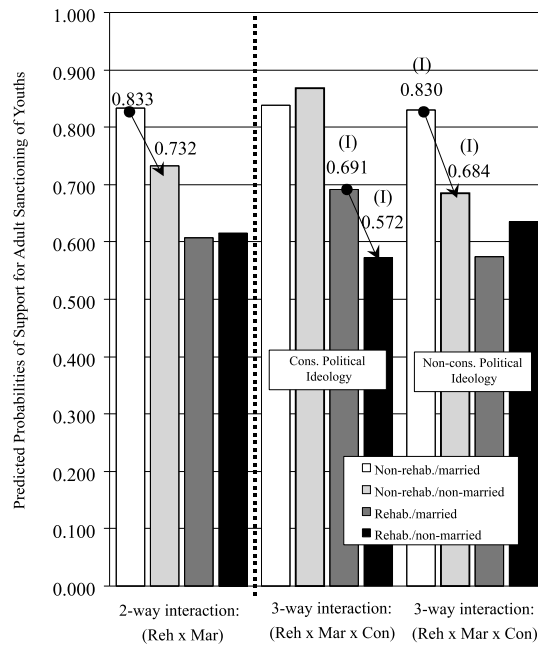


Figure 1: The Interactive Effects of Philosophy of Punishment, Marital Status, and Political Ideology on Support for Adult Sanctioning of Youths Who Sell Illegal Drugs.

for race, number of people in household, conservative political ideology, belief that parents should be legally responsible for their children's actions, conservative Protestantism, perception of public disorder, or living in an urbanized area or in a state with higher juvenile property and violent crime rates.

The fact that there is relatively widespread support for adult-like sanctioning of youths tried for selling illegal drugs or committing property or violent crimes and that, for the most part, this support cuts across many sociodemographic groups, contexts, and political ideologies, is striking. It does not belie the fact that widespread support also exists for rehabilitation, especially for youths (Skovron et al., 1989). However, it does suggest the prevalence of a tough love approach to juvenile sanctioning that perhaps always has underlain the juvenile court but that today clearly is more pronounced (Feld, 1999; Roberts

& Stalans, 1998; Schwartz et al., 1993) and is, it appears, independent of juvenile crime rates (Taylor et al., 1979). That certain factors, including marital status and philosophy of punishment, exert an influence that seemingly is independent of political ideology suggests also that views about punishment to some extent transcend political boundaries.

To understand better such support, this study has called for increased research on and theorizing about public views toward juvenile sanctioning. Thus, a greater range of factors was examined than typically is the case, followed by an attempt to explicate the effect of punishment philosophy. The widespread support for "getting tough" with juvenile offenders suggested a need to focus more directly on populations in which markedly lower or higher levels of punitiveness and/or conservatism would be expected. Consequently, particular attention was given to sanctioning philosophy, marital status, and political orientation and interactions among these.

In examining potential interactive effects, several notable patterns arose. First, an interaction between philosophy of punishment and marital status was evident across offenses. Specifically, among those with a nonrehabilitative orientation, the married were considerably more likely than the nonmarried to support sanctioning youths as adults; by contrast, marital status exerted little differential influence among those with a rehabilitative orientation. Second, a three-way interaction between philosophy of punishment, marital status, and political ideology surfaced but only for the crime of selling illegal drugs. Specifically, among those holding political orientations and philosophies of punishment that were inconsistent (e.g., a conservative political orientation coupled with a rehabilitative philosophy), being married significantly increased punitiveness.

The initial two-way interaction suggests that being married enhances a nonrehabilitative orientation, thus generating more support for tougher sanctioning of youths. This accords with the idea that those who are married have a greater stake in conventional mainstream societal values (Plissner, 1983) and therefore may be more likely to be threatened by affronts to society. The image thus is one of a group (i.e., those who are married and who adhere to punitive philosophies of punishment) that is especially fearful of crime and its poten-

tial consequences and, as a result, is more likely to view juveniles as young adults who warrant adult-like sanctioning.

An alternative explanation centers around the idea of a "halo effect." Specifically, couples who adhere to a nonrehabilitative sanctioning philosophy and who have or may have children may believe that their own progeny are (or would be) less criminal, whereas other children are predisposed to be more so. By contrast, among those with a rehabilitative orientation, whether married or not, there may be a greater inclination to believe that "kids are kids." Although this hypothesis was not directly tested here, the introduction of a family variable directly and in interaction with sanctioning philosophy yielded significant effects only when the crime involved a violent offense. This suggests that the interactive effect between sanctioning philosophy and being married may have less to do with the presence of children than it does with the state itself of being married (Kingston & Finkel, 1987, p. 58; Schwartz et al., 1993, p. 17).

Given that crime and social disorder have been prominent concerns among conservatives, the question is whether the observed interaction can be explained by reference to political ideology (Plutzer & McBurnett, 1991). The three-way interactive models provided tentative support for this possibility, but only for the offense of selling illegal drugs: Being married significantly increased the probability of supporting more punitive sanctioning of youthful drug dealers, but only among those adhering to inconsistent political and punishment orientations. One potential explanation for this finding, suggested by an anonymous reviewer, is that holding a consistent set of beliefs in essence may "trump" any effect of being married. By contrast, holding an inconsistent set of beliefs may lead those who are married to tend toward a more punitive punishment philosophy and, in turn, to support more punitive sanctioning of youths. Why? Kingston and Finkel (1987, p. 63) have observed that among the married, some couples may support select conservative causes even when they themselves are not Republicans or when they adopt liberal views on other issues. It may be, therefore, that in the absence of a broader platform of consistent beliefs, those who are married will tend toward more punitive sanctioning of youths, perhaps because juvenile offending is perceived to be a particular threat to marriage and family. Although this interpretation at present must remain speculation, it arguably is sup-

ported by the fact that this pattern obtains only when the offense involves the sale of illegal drugs, which is a crime that may be viewed as far more likely than most violent crime and far more serious than most property crime (Warr, 1995).

The interactive effects of sanctioning philosophy, marital status, and political ideology suggest the intriguing possibility that calls for tough love approaches to sanctioning—most recently and prominently the compassionate conservatism promoted by George W. Bush (Lardner & Walsh, 1999)—have a basis not only in conservative politics but in broader social and philosophical trends in society. The fact that a three-way interaction emerged only for selling illegal drugs lends potential support to this view, especially given the long-standing concern in the United States about the role of drugs in undermining social order (Gusfield, 1986). More generally, the interactive effects suggest that our knowledge to date about how exactly different groups view sanctioning and its effect merits renewed attention. Roberts (1992) has noted that “in the context of sentencing purposes, it is possible that people believe they are sentencing according to one principle (e.g., deterrence) and yet in fact are guided by another” (p. 144). In this same vein, it is possible that among the married, there are radically divergent views of what tough love or compassionate conservatism means. For some, it could mean a pragmatic, no-nonsense type of rehabilitative sanctioning, whereas for others, it could mean retributive, incapacitative sanctioning. Until we understand better such possibilities, we will lack a sufficient basis for transcending simplified or nominally explanatory accounts of support for “get tough” sanctioning.

CONCLUSION

Recent increases in more punitive, adult-like laws for juvenile sanctioning raise questions about the extent to which and why there is public support for such laws. Thus, this article has focused broadly on exploring previously identified factors, including those that have been less systematically examined, and, more specifically, on explicating the interactive role of sanctioning philosophy, marital status, and political orientation in support for sanctioning youths as adults. These issues are important because juvenile sanctioning has become a press-

ing social issue nationally (Torbet & Szymanski, 1998). However, they also provide a unique opportunity to understand better the basis on which the juvenile court has been transformed from an informal, rehabilitative institution founded on the notion of *parens patriae* to a formal, punitive-based institution that increasingly resembles the criminal justice system (Feld, 1999; Singer, 1996).

Clearly, public support for sanctioning youths as adults is widespread and cuts across many sociodemographic groups and social settings. However, there are notable divergences, particularly with respect to sanctioning philosophy and marital status and to their interaction with political orientation. It is these interactions in particular that help elucidate the broad-based support for punitive sanctioning currently prevalent in U.S. society. Specifically, they suggest that this support draws its strength from overlapping and mutually reinforcing social roles and attitudes. Thus, for example, those who are married and adhere to punitive philosophies of sanctioning are considerably more likely than their nonmarried counterparts to support sanctioning youths as adults. However, the findings also suggest that being married is associated with greater support of punitive sanctioning of youthful drug offenders, but only among those adhering to inconsistent political and punishment orientations. Such examples suggest that tough love approaches to sanctioning may resonate with those sectors of the American public where sanctioning philosophy, marriage, political orientation, and fears about the consequences of particular types of offenses intersect.

Beyond these observations, there are critical issues that require closer scrutiny if we are to understand better who supports sanctioning youths as adults and, to the extent that they do, why. Such understanding is important not only for its own sake but to provide policy makers with insight into the kinds of policies that reflect public sentiment. Foremost among these issues is the understanding that public opinion is neither monolithic nor simple. As Roberts (1992) has written, "Public perceptions of offenders . . . are complex and far from unidimensional" (p. 138). As but one example, the support for trying juveniles in adult court for commission of select offenses should not be taken as support for adult sentencing. Indeed, Schwartz et al. (1993) found that although the "public prefers having juveniles accused of serious crimes (felonies) tried in adult criminal courts . . .

[they do] not favor giving juveniles the same sentences as adults or sentencing them to adult prisons” (p. 24). Moreover and as noted earlier, research consistently shows that the public supports rehabilitative programming, especially of youths (Roberts, 1992).

Echoing calls from others for closer attention to support for tougher sanctioning of juveniles (Grisso, 1996; Roberts & Stalans, 1998; Stalans & Henry, 1994), findings from this article suggest the need for considerably more attention to studying the relationship between philosophy of punishment and other factors. Marital status constitutes an especially neglected area of analysis, particularly in relation to political orientation and support for various public policies (Kingston & Finkel, 1987, p. 63). For example, one avenue of research that needs to be better understood is the relationship between specific marital statuses, transitions into marriage, having children, and political ideology (Plutzer & McBurnett, 1991) and how these bear on philosophy of punishment, broadly construed, as well as on support for tougher sanctioning of juveniles. More generally, researchers should consider carefully the precise mechanisms through which philosophies of punishment affect support for particular sanctioning options (see Roberts & Stalans, 1998).

In addition to increased attention to philosophies of punishment, there also is a need for considerably more attention to other factors and to developing theories that can anticipate or account for particular relationships (see Flanagan & Longmire, 1996; Roberts, 1992; Roberts & Stalans, 1998; Rossi & Berk, 1997; Skovron et al., 1989; Schwartz et al., 1993; Taylor et al., 1979). For example, previous research has emphasized the role of fear of crime and of having children (Schwartz et al., 1993), but there are many other situational and social contextual factors that remain to be examined closely, including the role of victimization of family or friends, views toward the potentially mitigating influence of a youth's history of abuse, media coverage of crime, age composition of a given area, unemployment rates, religious heterogeneity, and so forth (Rountree, 1998; Stalans & Henry, 1994). Among other things, such research will help clarify the extent to which attitudinal factors indeed are more associated with punitive sanctioning than are sociodemographic or social structural factors or the way in which these various factors are linked

(Langworthy & Whitehead, 1986; Skovron et al., 1989; Schwartz et al., 1993).

In short, there is much empirical and theoretical work to be done to further our understanding of public support for sanctioning youths as adults. Given the profound changes to the juvenile court in recent years (Feld, 1999), there is a compelling need for such work. Indeed, if the juvenile justice system is to develop on a more rational basis or at least is to reflect accurately public opinion, the complexity behind their views will require more realistic and nuanced accounts. On the 100th anniversary of the first juvenile court in the United States, it is none too soon to begin developing a sounder foundation for juvenile justice policy.

NOTES

1. For descriptive analyses using the National Opinion Survey of Crime and Justice (NOSJC) data, a weighting variable is available that accounts for discrepancies between racial and gender distributions in the final sample versus the population (Sims, 1996, p. 176). Given that the focus in this article does not center on descriptive analyses (Flanagan & Longmire, 1996; Triplett, 1996) or directly on race and gender and that introduction of such post hoc weighting variables in multivariate analyses potentially can increase both variance and bias (Kish, 1965, pp. 425-427; Korn & Graubard, 1995), the multivariate results presented here rely on the unweighted data. Consultation with survey methodologists and the NOSJC survey designers led to adoption of this strategy, although the author alone bears responsibility for the decision. Analyses using the weighted and unweighted data yielded largely similar results.

2. It is possible that an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression or a multinomial modeling approach might be more appropriate for the original 5-point Likert-scale question (Menard, 1995, pp. 80-91). Although the estimated effects from the logistic regression models presented here are largely similar to those obtained through OLS regression, tests of the proportional odds assumption—that slope coefficients for each independent variable are constant across all cumulative contrasts (e.g., outcome category 1 vs. 2-5, outcome categories 1-2 vs. 3-5, etc.)—were rejected for almost all models, suggesting some warrant for a multinomial approach. However, the primary focus here is on factors associated with supporting adult sanctioning of juveniles, not with specific differential effects of predictors for specific response categories (e.g., *agree* vs. *strongly agree*) or for cumulative contrasts. The choice of logistic regression over alternative modeling options thus is strategic and not intrinsically superior or inferior to these alternatives (Menard, 1995, pp. 86-91).

3. For the individual-level data, the correlation between the juvenile property and violent crime rates was .07, and for the county-level data, the correlation was .101, suggesting little basis for concern about multicollinearity. Reanalysis without the contextual-level data yielded almost identical results.

4. For discussion of the specification and interpretation of interaction effects, see Hardy (1993) and Jaccard, Turrisi, and Wan (1990). Because the mean of one of the central interactive

terms—rehabilitative philosophy—is .5, centering of this variable through formation of deviation scores produces a constant, vitiating the use of this approach to address potential problems of collinearity. As Jaccard et al. have noted, however, “the major threat of multicollinearity in interactive models is not substantive but rather practical. Multicollinearity does not affect the properties of OLS estimates (i.e., such estimates are BLUE unless there is complete multicollinearity)” (p. 31).

5. The restricted two-way interactive models are statistically and substantively similar to the fully specified models presented in Table 2; similarly, the restricted three-way interactive models presented in Table 3 are statistically and substantively similar to the fully specified models.

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