

**Attitudes Toward Capital Punishment in America:
An Analysis of Survey Data**

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Abstract

This study used quantitative analysis of survey data to examine the factors that account for differences in Americans' attitudes towards capital punishment. A secondary analysis of the 2006 and 2008 General Social Survey was conducted.

The primary findings were that political factors, for example, party affiliation, opinions on the courts, and confidence in government were much more significant than social and economic factors. Republicans favor the death penalty more than Democrats, those who have a favorable opinion towards courts are more willing to support the death penalty, and those who have high confidence in the government are more willing to support the death penalty. The factors such as education and religiosity did not have any effect on attitudes toward support for capital punishment; however, Whites do support capital punishment more than African Americans. Economic variables, such as income and opinion on the government's crime spending do not have that much influence towards support for capital punishment.

As politicians push their agendas, these findings may be useful in recognizing probable support among voters for the specific issue regarding capital punishment. The common logic from this research is that Republican executive and legislators will be affirming their support for capital punishment more than the Democrats, because of the strong support of the Republican voters toward capital punishment.

I. Introduction

According to the report published by Federal Bureau of Justice Statistics, there are currently 2738 death row inmates in the United States criminal justice system with a total of 48 executions having been carried out between 2017 and 2018 (Office of Justice Programs 2019). Some Americans believe that 48 executions are low, considering the number of inmates on death row, with very few actually put to death. Other Americans believe that capital punishment conflicts with their beliefs, and executing people is still murder and immoral. The topic of capital punishment is always contentious in American politics. The debate regarding the federal and state governments' authority to take an individual's life raises political, constitutional, and ethical, and financial issues.

From the establishment of the United States, the U.S. Constitution guaranteed both the federal and states governments the right to set their own criminal penalties. The very first Congress passed federal laws mandating death the penalty for crimes such as murder and heinous sexual crimes. Additionally, each of the original states made several other crimes punishable by death as well.

Politically, two issues surrounding the death penalty are: the weakness of the criminal justice system that results in a person being wrongly accused of a capital crime, and the data which show that lower class, colored and poor offenders are more likely to be sentenced to the death penalty. Many believe that capital punishment is a part of an already flawed criminal justice system.

Constitutionally, the firm establishment of capital punishment made the death penalty legal. However, there is a clause in the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution, the phrase 'cruel and unusual punishment.' The Constitution prohibits the government to employ any method that

is fundamentally cruel and unusual. Additionally, state constitutions individually include stipulations that bar the employment of cruel and unusual punishment to its citizens. Historically, those constitutional clauses were rarely enacted. Additionally, there were no debate or litigation on this particular subject. This left a big dent on the constitutionality of the death penalty. The main reason is that the Eighth Amendment requires society to consider the evolving standards of decency to determine if a specific punishment constitutes as a cruel or unusual punishment. Can the same standard of 18th century statutes that determined the death penalty does not violate the clause of ‘cruel and unusual’ punishment be applied to the 21st century?

Ethical issues regarding death penalty arise when death penalty is viewed as both moral and immoral. The establishment of the death penalty can be viewed by many as a practice that society uses to accomplish the greatest equivalence of good over evil. They argue that the practice of death penalty is moral because it brings deterrence. Deterrence in any case is good for the society because once individuals know the consequences to such acts, they would hesitate to commit such acts. On the other hand, society as a collective organization has a moral duty to protect life. Taking into account that there is a priority of life in society, there exists a less severe alternative (such as life sentence) that would accomplish the same goal of deterrence.

Financial issues that arise with the death penalty can be played by both sides of the argument. The economic benefit argument cites that death penalty is a far less costly punishment for the taxpayers than life imprisonment. On the other hand, financial burden argument cites that death penalty costs are exorbitantly high. They cite the incarceration and legal costs. In a way, the death penalty is both an economic burden and an advantage for the concerned public.

Attitudes about capital punishment are difficult to be explained on one such occasion. The attitude and meaning of capital punishment swings as the political condition changes, the

world evolves, and the media alters people's view of the world. People from all across the spectrum have powerful feelings of opposite ends regarding death penalty, and this paper will untie and take into account all those factors and practical foundations for the difference in attitudes concerning capital punishment.

The research results and findings will be helpful to the policy makers, those working in the criminal justice system, and the American community at large. They all deserve to know the factors that give rise to the difference in attitude among Americans concerning the death penalty. So, when stakeholders, the public, and policy makers make certain decisions regarding death penalty, or even have a basic conversation about the death penalty; they have as much information as possible.

This research attempts to make an in-depth analysis of the survey data presented by the General Social Survey that encapsulates opinion data from the American public, and this quantitative research paper will also employ empirical methods. This data will answer the following research question: "What accounts for differences in attitudes among Americans concerning capital punishment?"

To effectively answer the research question presented above, the paper will be divided into various sections. First and foremost, the Literature Review will lay down the scope of the research paper. It will present the limitation of the research paper, and it will justify the research topic, design, and methodology. After the literature review, a methodology section will be presented. This section will explain the data of the research and combine it with the formal theory. Data Findings and Analysis will follow, and then to tie all the research findings up, a conclusion will be drawn.

II. Literature Review

Introduction:

Scholars have argued over the years whether the death penalty should be continued. In essence, the difference in attitude from the general public about the death penalty comes from their different interpretation to three major dilemmas concerning the practice of capital punishment. The first is a practical one: It calls into question the practicality of the death penalty. The second is a moral dilemma: It calls into question the acceptability of the death penalty as an ethical way to punish individuals. The third is a political one: It questions the collective society if they can agree to execute people. Thus, debates over capital punishment have focused primarily on its moral, practical, and political attributes as a government policy. This section will survey the literature about the difference in attitudes toward capital punishment. Predictably, the survey will be organized around two opposite schools of thought: those who favor the death penalty, and those who do not.

The Death Penalty Should be Present in The Criminal Justice System:

The death penalty is an institution that has been ever present in the American history. The first view of attitude towards the death penalty focusses that the practice of capital punishment should be present and continued. The practice of the death penalty, according to some researchers, should remain that way in the criminal justice system, because it is practical and moral.

The death penalty is practical according to Gross and Ellsworth (1978), because in a realistic world, when crimes go up, people look for harsher punishments to bring it down. Death is ultimate, and people have strong sentiments regarding certain violent crimes that only the death penalty can do justice to.

Rankin (1979) reiterates the same conclusion in his assessment and extrapolates that there exists a strong positive non-linear relationship between the support for capital punishment and violent crime. Crime, and specifically violent crime, harbors an emotion of anger in the public. Anger is somehow connected to justice. It is practical to have an institution like the death penalty that the public can have a legal channel to vent their utmost anger to the objects of anger (criminal). After all, attitudes regarding the death penalty are not based on rational concerns at all, but are primarily symbolic attitudes, based on emotions. Thus, death penalty is practical because it serves the emotional purpose.

Paternoster (1991) examines a Gallup poll that examines the notion of retributivism in American public and the death penalty. He comes across the same conclusion that the death penalty is a practical practice because it serves an emotional purpose that no other method could deliver. In his finding, he found out that many of the persons favor the death penalty because they believe that those who have committed capital crime deserve to be executed.

The criminal justice system according to some scholars that favor the death penalty, rests on the proposition that harder punishment are more deterrent than less severe punishment. Dezhbaksh, Rubin, and Shepherd (2003) argue that the conventional intimidation of capital punishment has accomplished its stated goal in deterring most coherent people from committing a criminal act, and that the apprehension of the harsh punishment continues to deter all but those who cannot be dissuaded by the imposition of any punishment. Their study concludes that capital punishment has a strong deterrent effect; each capital punishment results, on average, in 18 fewer murders approximately.

Furthermore, political scholars arguing in favor of the death penalty argue that the death penalty is morally justifiable. Van Den Haag writes, "There is no other way for society to affirm

its moral values than the death penalty. To refuse to punish any capital crime with death, then is to avow that the negative weight of a crime can never exceed the positive value of the life of the person who committed it, which is implausible to many American” (1982, 332-333).

Banner (2002) extends the view of Van Den Haag and points that many people support the death penalty because the death penalty is a moral requirement. The criminal law must remind citizens of a moral mandate by which humans alone can live, and the only penalty that can urge this reminder effectively is the death penalty.

Garland, McGowen, and Meranze (2011) argue that the abolition of the death penalty is a largely undemocratic process. Recent research has shown that the abolition of the death penalty is often implemented by the political and intellectual elites against the will of the public. Marquis (2005) argues along the same way. He argues that the abolitionists are supported by wealthy elites like George Soros and Roderick MacArthur. He writes, “The abolitionists were frustrated by polling that showed that virtually all groups of Americans supported capital punishment in some form in some cases” (2005, 501).

The Death Penalty Should be Abolished From The Criminal Justice System:

A second view towards capital punishment emphasizes that this practice should be abolished. Scholars aligning to this view point out in their literature that the death penalty is impractical and immoral. Some scholars have stressed the impracticality and characteristics of the way criminal justice system is actually managed for misdeeds of severe offenses. The section that follows in this review is intended to represent the arguments against the death penalty.

One of the most revered and influential opponents of the death penalty in the United States, Alan M. Dershowitz, writes, “The death penalty deters your constitutional right to go to trial. If people were ever to make a death penalty work efficiently, it would be at the cost of

justice” (1989, 330-335). The practice of death penalty makes the criminal justice system lose credibility as an institution that delivers justice.

Many succeeding studies have modified or extended the claim by Dershowitz (1989). Works by Bohm (1999) suggests that lapses of justice in capital cases, including erroneous executions do transpire, and they happen with some regularity and frequency. Regardless of the judicial determinations to limit convictions of innocent in the first place, they are unavoidable. The death penalty, to put in simple words, is purely final and irreversible. Ultimately, it leaves no room for human error, and prohibits the undoing of mistakes by the criminal justice system. Kyle and Pollitt (1999) state that the concern of innocence has had an overwhelming influence in the death penalty debate. It swings the debate in favor of eradicating the practice of the death penalty. The main reason is that the repeated failure in determining the guilt of those on death row has sharply eroded the public’s confidence in the death penalty.

Stephen B. Bright (1995) is equally invested in the topic concerning the impracticality of the death penalty, but he focuses on the vulnerability of offenders of color in getting the death penalty. He argues that racial bias has an increasing effect on who ends up on death row. Overall, there exists a surprisingly homogenous pattern of racial disparities in death sentencing throughout the United States.

Bohm (1999) extended this study and points out in his research that poor capital offenders are also more susceptible towards death penalty than regular capital offenders. In such scenario, the death penalty is not levied in a proper way. Those on the receiving end of such punishment are almost always those who are vulnerable because of their income, race, and minority status.

Furthermore, it is also questionable whether or not the practice of capital punishment deters crime, as it is so often argued. Dieter's (2007) research with different methodologies and statistical approaches regarding capital punishment suggests that the death penalty is not a superior deterrent. As a substitute, life imprisonment without the opportunity of parole seems to offer as much deterrence or public safety as capital punishment.

Kronenwetter further suggests that "If deterrence is at the heart of the practical debate over the death penalty, the sanctity of human life should outweigh the practicality" (1993, 22). Overall, scholars that argue against the death penalty points out that there is no credible empirical evidence that proves that the death penalty deters crime.

Scholars argue that the death penalty is impractical because it is a financial burden. Bohm (1999) asserts that while there is a consensus among the public that the death penalty is a less expensive punishment than life imprisonment, it is not the case for a majority of occasions. It is relatively uncomplicated to consider the costs of life imprisonment (the costs of everyday needs). This cost appears deceptively to be higher than trying someone for the death penalty. The main reason that this cost analysis is deceptive is that it is true only when the death penalty is carried out quickly. The fundamental thing to know here is that capital cases are complex and take a long time. Gradess and Davies (2009) conclude that for the past 25 years, in practically all of the states studied persistently show that the death penalty costs more than life in prison.

Additionally, scholars have argued against the death penalty because it is immoral. Kronenwetter (1993) and Kyle and Pollitt (1999) point out that when the government rationally puts a convicted capital offender to death the government is simply committing an additional murder. On moral basis, both acts, it is contested, involve the premeditation and cold blooded

killing of an individual. As a collective society that places so much value in the sanctity of human life, government is immoral in continuing to execute people.

Scholars further argue that the death penalty should be abolished because it is unconstitutional. Goldberg and Dershowitz write, “The death penalty is now unconstitutional under the principles of the Eighth Amendment adumbrated by the Supreme Court” (1970, 1818).

Conclusion:

In order to facilitate the research on the difference of attitudes among the public regarding the death penalty, two schools of thought have been explained. Those scholars that favor the death penalty argue that the death penalty is moral, and serves a practical purpose. On the other hand, scholars who argue the death penalty should be abolished deem the death penalty as immoral and impractical.

The methodology will be drawn in the next section. It will identify the different variables associated with this literature. Then, the methodology section will primarily explore the correlation between those variables.

III. Methodology

The scholars have cited various reasons about the difference in attitudes toward capital punishment. This section of the paper will operationalize the research topic and use selected variables to define the cause and effects. The literature review has specified two schools of thought regarding the difference in attitudes toward capital punishment: those who favor the death penalty, and those who oppose it. The literature has assisted in pinpointing the important variables that can be used when analyzing the research topic. In examining the research question of “What accounts for differences in attitudes among Americans concerning capital punishment?” the variables will be further classified into two groups, independent and dependent variables. This methodology section will ultimately hypothesize the correlation between them.

The independent variables that are expected to reflect the favorability of capital punishment can be classified into three sets of variables: political, social, and economical. The political independent variables associated with this study are party affiliation, court’s judicial performance, trust in government. Social independent variables such as education level, race, religion, and racial disparities will operationalize the social difference in Americans opinion regarding the death penalty. On that same note, economical independent variables such as income level and view on government spending will operationalize the economical difference in Americans opinions regarding the death penalty. In order to retrieve data for this research paper, the General Social Survey (GSS) 2008 and 2006 file from Micro Case software (LeRoy 2013) will be used.

A. Concepts and Variables

In the GSS 2008 file, variable 106) EXECUTE? will be the dependent variable, and in the GSS 2006 file, variable 107) EXECUTE? will be the dependent variable. Those two identical

dependent variables will operationalize the concept of difference in attitudes among Americans regarding capital punishment. The sample from which this variable derived from, the General Social Survey (2008) and (2006), consist of a cross-section of respondents that yielded 3559 and 4510 cases respectively. 106) EXECUTE? and 107)EXECUTE? is designed as a survey question for the respondent as “Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?” This variable is an ordinal data that has a range for its result as 0 and 1; with 0 representing those who oppose the death penalty, and 1 representing those who favor the death penalty for persons convicted of murder.

The following paragraph will operationalize the independent variables mentioned earlier into variables from the GSS file, and conceptually define them. An account of each independent variable will also be integrated to show the importance of why they were selected for this research.

Political Variables

1. 56) PARTY-This is an ordinal variable from GSS (2008) which questions the respondents of their party identification: “Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, Independent, or what?” The range of the result is 1 to 3; with 1 representing those who identify as democrats, 2 for those who identify as independents, and 3 representing those who identify as republicans. This variable measures political concept of party affiliation and tries to understand the stance of respondents on major political concerns.
2. 108) COURTS?- This is an ordinal variable from GSS (2008) which questions the respondents of the court’s judicial performance: “In general, do you think the courts in this area deal too harshly about right, or not harshly enough with criminals?” The range

of the result is 1 to 3; with 1 representing those who think the courts in the area deal to harshly with criminals, 2 for those who think the courts in the area deal about right with criminals, and 3 representing those who think the courts in the area deal not harshly enough with criminals. This variable measures the concept of judicial performance, which indicates the citizens' opinion on capital punishment sentencing.

3. 146) FED GOV'T?-This is an ordinal variable from GSS (2006) which questions the respondents of their confidence in the executive branch of the government: "Confidence? Executive branch of the federal government" The range of the variable is 1 to 3; with 1 representing those who have great deal of confidence in the executive branch of the federal government, 2 representing those who have only some confidence in the executive branch of the government and 3 representing those who have hardly any confidence in the executive branch of the federal government. This variable measures the concept of trust in the executive government.

Social Variables:

4. 28) EDUCATION-This is an ordinal variable from GSS (2008) which questions the respondents of their education level: "What is your education level?" The range of the result is 1 to 3; 1 representing those with no high school degree, 2 representing those with a high school degree, and 3 representing those with some college education. This variable measures the concept of education.
5. 32) RACE-This variable has a nominal level of measurement from GSS (2008) that denotes the race of the respondent by asking the question "Respondent's Race" The range of the result is 1 to 3; with 1 representing those who are white, 2 representing those who

are black, and 3 representing those who are of other race. This variable measures the concept of race.

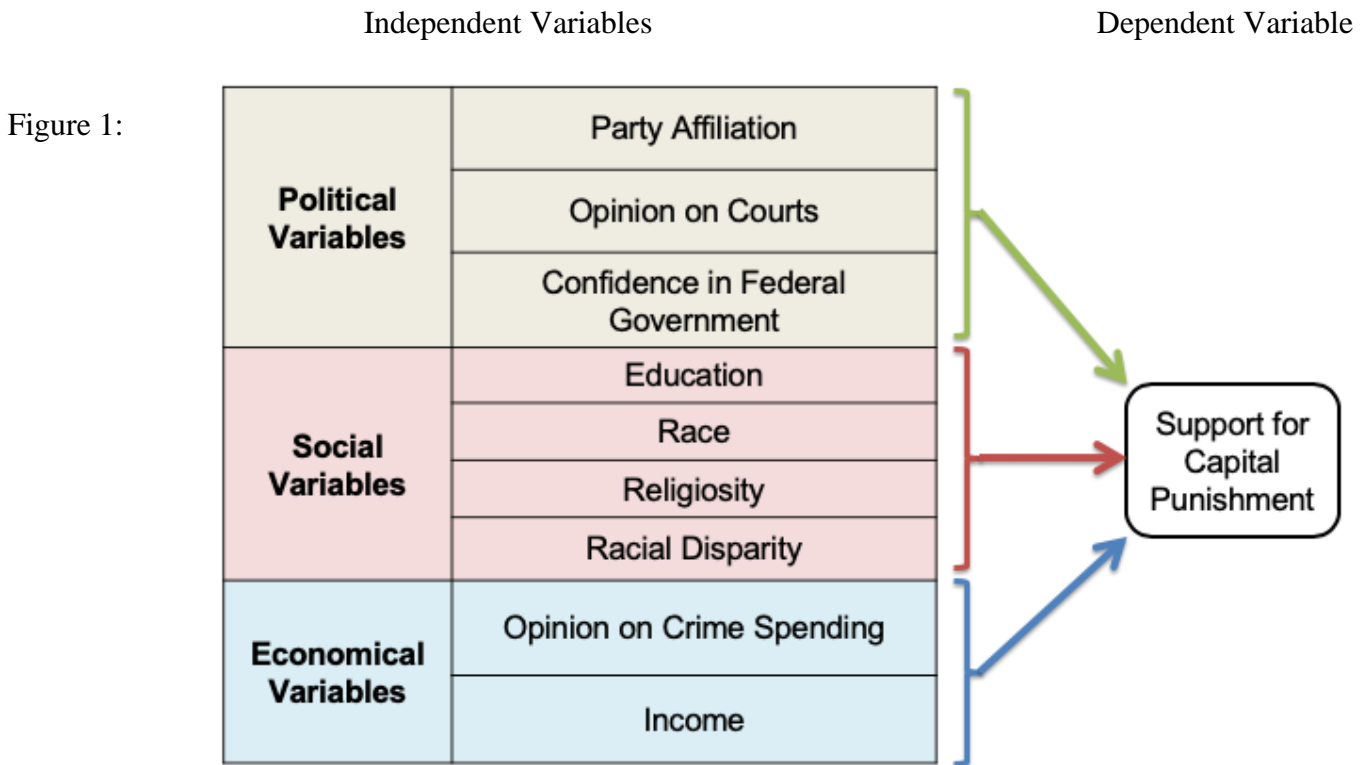
6. 262) RELPERSN-This is an ordinal variable from GSS (2006) that categorizes the respondent's religiosity by asking the question "To what extent do you consider yourself a religious person?" The range for this ordinal variable is 1 to 3; 1 representing those who consider themselves very religious, 2 representing those who consider themselves somewhat religious, and 3 representing those who consider themselves not at all religious. This variable measures the concept of religion.
7. 228) RACE DIF1-This is an nominal variable from GSS (2006) that questions the respondents on the prevalence of racial discrimination: "On the average (Blacks) have worse jobs, income, and housing than white people. Do you think these differences are...A. Mainly due to discrimination?" The range of the results is 1 to 2; with 1 representing those who answered yes, the differences are mainly due to discrimination, and 2 representing those who answered no, the difference not mainly due to discrimination. This variable measures the concept of racial disparity.

Economic Variables:

8. 68) CRIME \$-This variable has an ordinal level of measurement from GSS (2006) that questions the respondents of their opinion on government's spending on crime: "Spending on halting the rising crime rate" The range of the results is 1 to 3; with 1 representing those who think too little is being spent on halting the rising crime rate, 2 representing those who think right amount is being spent on halting the rising crime rate, and 3 representing those who think too much is being spent on halting the rising crime rate. This variable measures the concept of government spending.

9. 56) INCOME- This is an ordinal variable from GSS (2006) that categorizes the respondents based on their income: “Respondent’s family income range” The range of the result is 1 to 3; with 1 representing those who fall under low income status, 2 representing those who fall under middle income status, and 3 representing those who fall under high income status. This variable measures the concept of income.

Figure 1 represents all the independent variables to be tested against the corresponding dependent variable.



B. Hypotheses

Political Variables:

Hypothesis 1: Republicans have greater support for capital punishment than Democrats.

Citizens who have a strong political identification are more likely to be aware of the issues at hand. Those who identify as Republicans are hypothesized to halt any criminal justice reform that includes stopping the practice of capital punishment.

Hypothesis 2: Those who think courts in the area deal too harshly with criminals are less likely to support capital punishment than those who think courts in this area are lenient with criminals.

Robert Bohm (1999) points out in his study that lapses of justice in capital cases, including erroneous executions do occur, and they happen with regularity and frequency. People acclimatized to knowledge of this type, and people with negative view of the justice system think that the courts in this area deal too harsh with criminals, and they will be less likely to support capital punishment.

Hypothesis 3: People with great deal of confidence in the federal government have greater support for capital punishment than do people with hardly any trust in the federal government.

Respondent's confidence in the government are some good indicators of their opinion on government's execution of its policy. Since, capital punishment is one of the government's policy to curb violent criminal activity, those with great deal of confidence in the federal government are hypothesized to have greater support for capital punishment.

Social Variables:

Hypothesis 4: Those with higher education are more likely to oppose the death penalty

Scholars have examined and deduced that attitudes regarding the death penalty are not based on rational concerns, but primarily emotions (Rankin 1979). More education can

always reinforce the rational concerns in a more poignant way and change the perspective of people. Thus, people who attain higher education are more likely to oppose the death penalty.

Hypothesis 5: Whites have greater support for capital punishment than African Americans.

Cultural differences are more likely to be present in people with different races. With African Americans perceived as more susceptible to capital sentencing (Bright 1995), African Americans more likely to oppose the death penalty than the White Americans.

Hypothesis 6: Those who consider themselves very religious are more likely to support capital punishment.

Old system and traditional value are more likely to be prevalent in religious person. The social norms of many people are that the death penalty is a moral requirement (Banner 2002). It deems the death penalty as an enforcer of a moral mandate that people can live by. Those attitudes are more likely to be seen in a religious person. Thus, people who consider themselves very religious are more likely to support capital punishment than are people who don't consider themselves religious at all.

Hypothesis 7: Those who think racial disparities exist are more likely to oppose the death penalty than those who think racial disparities do not exist.

Scholars like Stephen B. Bright (1995) have concluded that there exists a surprisingly homogenous pattern of racial disparities in death sentencing throughout the United States. With such discovery, this paper will hypothesized that those who think racial disparities exists are more likely to oppose the death penalty.

Economic Variables

Hypothesis 8: Those who oppose more spending on halting the crime rate are more likely to oppose the death penalty than those who think too little is being spend on halting the crime rate.

The economic argument cited by scholars have concluded that the death penalty is more costly than life in prison (Gradess and Davies 2009). This argument may enforce people who oppose more spending on halting the crime rate to oppose the death penalty to save costs.

Hypothesis 9: Those with a higher income are more likely to support capital punishment.

Cultural differences among the rich and the poor are widening. Scholars such as Bohm (1999), in his research, found out that those on the receiving end of capital punishment are almost always those who are vulnerable because of their income. This research facilitates that those with a lower income are more likely to oppose capital punishment than those with a higher income.

C. Research Method

This research will be based on the secondary analysis facilitated by GSS 2006 and GSS 2008 file from the MicroCase software. The GSS 2006 and 2008 is based upon surveys that were done on 4510 and 3559 individuals in the United States that includes questions covering national spending opinions, recreational drug use, crime and punishment, race relation, quality of life, and confidence in institutions. The GSS 2006 file includes 888 variables, and the GSS 2008 file includes 355 variables, amongst which this research paper has singled out 10 to be used for examination. This research paper will be empirical, and employ quantitative data to answer the research question. The results produced in this research will be analyzed

using guidelines outlined in *Research Methods in Political Science: An Introduction Using MicroCase, 8th Edition* (LeRoy 2013).

The research paper will employ cross tabulations to determine if a relationship between independent and dependent variable exists or not. The presentation technique will be in the form of a contingency table. There will be category labels in the contingency table, where the labels for the categories of the independent variable will be drawn across the top of the table (column), and the labels for the categories of the dependent variable will be drawn on the left side of the table (row).

In the analysis, a test of statistical significance will be established. This will determine the probability that an observed effect would have occurred due to sampling error alone. As such, the cut-off point for test of statistical significance in this research would be 0.05. The measure would be denoted as “prob.” In a given case, where the relationship has prob exceeding the value of 0.05, the relationship will be deemed insignificant.

This relationship will also employ measures of association to determine the strength of the relationship between the independent and the dependent variable. This research will use two measures of association: Gamma for analysis that includes two ordinal variables, and Cramer’s V for analysis that include nominal level of measurement. The probable range of Cramer’s V and Gamma are same; in which 1.0 indicates a perfect relationship between the two variables, and 0 indicating no relationship. For numbers ranging between 0 and 1, The following parameter will be employed to interpret the strength of the measures of association related to Cramer’s V or Gamma that is in use:

In a relationship, where the value of absolute value of Cramer’s V or Gamma is under 0.1, the relationship is very weak.

In a relationship, where the value of absolute value of Cramer's V or Gamma is under 0.19 but above 0.10, the relationship is weak.

In a relationship, where the value of absolute value of Cramer's V or Gamma is under 0.20 but above 0.29, the relationship is moderate.

In a relationship, where the value of absolute value of Cramer's V or Gamma is above 0.30, the relationship is strong. (LeRoy 2013, 196).

The next section, Findings and Analysis, will survey and explain the preceding research method.

IV. Findings and Analysis

This section of the paper will test and analyze the hypotheses, which were outlined in the previous section. The hypotheses will be examined with the help of MicroCase software, and the data from the findings will be explained according to whether it supports the assumptions. The dependent variable used in this paper will be variable 107) EXECUTE? (GSS 2006) and 106) EXECUTE? (GSS 2008). It asks respondents: “Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?” it has two categories for answer; “Oppose” and “Favor.” “Oppose” category comprises of respondents who oppose capital punishment. Whereas, “Support” category comprises of respondents who support capital punishment. This is done to reflect the concept of capital punishment in a clear manner. The dependent variable will then be tested against independent variables: political affiliation, opinion on courts, confidence in government, education, race, religiosity, racial disparity, opinion on crime spending, and income. Each concept has been operationalized as a variable in the previous section, and has been categorized into three wide categories: political, social, and economical. The data from the cross tabulation will also be displayed using contingency tables- Table 1 to 9.

An account will be given for using crosstabulations as the presentation technique, Gamma, and Cramer’s V for measures of association. Based on the data, hypotheses will be regarded as supported or not supported. These findings will support in answering the research question of “What accounts for difference in attitude among Americans concerning capital punishment?”

Political Variables

A. Support for Capital Punishment by Party Affiliation

The first hypothesis states that those who are affiliated to Republicans have greater support for capital punishment than Democrats. This hypothesis is operationalized using the variable 56) PARTY as an independent variable which poses the question “Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, Independent, or what? 1) Democrat; 2) Independent; 3) Republican.” This independent variable will be tested against 106) EXECUTE? as a dependent variable that indicates support toward capital punishment. The two variables are sourced from the General Social Survey (GSS) 2008.

Table 1 displays the results of the cross tabulation between Support for Capital Punishment and Party Affiliation. There are three categories listed across the top of the contingency table, which characterizes the independent variable: respondent’s party affiliation. The categories are displayed into “Democrat” which represents those who identify as a Democrat, “Independent” for those who identify as an Independent, and “Republican” for those who identify as a Republican.

On the left hand side of the table, there are two categories listed which characterizes the dependent variable: support for capital punishment. Variable 106) EXECUTE? has been drawn into two categories; “Oppose” and “Favor.” The “Oppose” category comprises of respondents who answered that they oppose the practice of capital punishment. The “Favor” category comprises of respondents who answered that they favor the practice of capital punishment.

In doing the cross tabulation, the results produced a statistical significance of $\text{prob}=0.00$. This value implies that there is 0 chance out of 100 that the relationship does not exist in the population from which the sample was selected. This figure suggests that the relationship is

statistically significant. Since, both the variables are ordinal, Gamma will be employed as the measure of association to test the strength of the relationship. The Gamma for the association is 0.453, which tells us that the two variables have a strong relationship with each other.

Table 1: Support for Capital Punishment by Party Affiliation						
Support for Capital Punishment	Political Parties					
		Democrat	Independent	Republican	Missing	Total
	Oppose	43.7% (709)	32.3% (156)	17.8% (210)	25	32.7% 1075
	Favor	56.3% (913)	67.7% (327)	82.2% (971)	50	67.3% (2211)
	Missing	86	55	48	8	197
	Total	100.0% (1622)	100.0% (482)	100.0% (1182)	84	3286
P=0.00			Gamma=0.453			

In reference to the distribution of data within Table 1, it is observable that 82.2% of respondents who identified as a Republican support capital punishment, while only 56.3% of respondents who identifies as a Democrat support capital punishment. It is evident that there is a significant pattern to exemplify a contrast from those who identified as a Democrat and Republican. The data to this cross tabulation clearly supports the hypothesis that Republicans have greater support for capital punishment than Democrats.

A possible explanation for this finding is that Republicans have clearly stated in their election manifesto that they will be tough on crime. Tough on crime signifies harsh sentence for crimes. Thus, those who identified as Republicans, have greater support for capital punishment than Democrats. This assumption is clearly reflected in the findings of the data.

B. Support for Capital Punishment by Opinion on Courts

The second hypothesis states that those who think courts in the area deal too harshly with criminals are less likely to support capital punishment than those who think courts in this area are lenient with criminals. This hypothesis is operationalized using the variable 108)COURTS? as an independent variable which poses the question “In general, do you think the courts in this area deal too harshly about right, or not harshly enough with criminals? 1) Too Harsh; 2) Right; 3) Not Enough.” This independent variable will be tested against 106) EXECUTE? as a dependent variable that indicates support toward capital punishment. The two variables are sourced from the General Social Survey (GSS) 2008.

Table 2 displays the results of the cross tabulation between Support for Capital Punishment and Opinion on Courts. There are three categories listed across the top of the contingency table, which characterizes the independent variable: respondent’s opinion on court’s handling of criminals. The categories are displayed into “Too Harsh” which represents those who think courts in the area deals too harsh with criminals, “Right” for those who think courts in the area deals right with criminals, and “Not Enough” for those who think courts in the area are lenient with criminals. The left side is the same.

In doing the cross tabulation, the results produced a statistical significance of $\text{prob}=0.001$. This value implies that there is 1 chance out of 1000 that the relationship does not exist in the population from which the sample was selected. This figure suggests that the relationship is statistically significant. Since, both the variables are ordinal, Gamma will be employed as the measure of association to test the strength of the relationship. The Gamma for the association is 0.129, which tells us that the two variables has a weak relationship with each other.

Table 2: Support for Capital Punishment by Opinion on Courts						
Support for Capital Punishment	Opinion on Courts Handling of Criminal Cases					
		Harsh	Right	Not Enough	Missing	Total
	Oppose	56.8% (227)	24.9% (527)	37.4% (238)	108	31.5% (993)
	Favor	43.2% (173)	75.1% (1590)	62.6% (397)	101	68.5% (2160)
	Missing	12	112	41	32	197
	Total	100.0% (400)	100.0% (2117)	100.0% (635)	241	3153
P=0.001			Gamma= 0.129			

Looking into the content of Table 2, it is notable that 56.8% of the respondents who think courts in the area deal too harshly with criminals oppose capital punishment, while only 37.4% of those who think courts are not harsh enough with criminals oppose capital punishment. Clearly, this finding signifies the acceptance of the hypothesis that those who think courts in the area deals too harsh with criminals are more likely to oppose capital punishment.

This discovery can be attributed to the factor that people who constantly question the court regarding criminal issue are less likely to believe in the sentencing. We can hypothesize to see a pattern that people that do not believe in the system itself will not likely support capital punishment.

The anomaly to analyze here is the “Right” Category which signifies those who think courts in this area deal about right with criminals. The noticeable number is that they least oppose the death penalty, and they favor capital punishment more than the other two category. This can be attributed to the factor that the “Right” category are content with the already established system of capital punishment. It presents an interesting factor that this paper has not taken into account that people acclimatized and comfortable with a system will be in favor of

established system like capital punishment. This could certainly be the reason for a weak Gamma in this relationship.

C. Support for Capital Punishment by Confidence in Government

The third hypothesis states that people with great deal of confidence in the federal government have greater support for capital punishment than do people with hardly any trust in the federal government. This hypothesis is operationalized using the variable 146) FED GOV'T? as an independent variable which poses the question "Confidence? Executive branch of the federal government: 1) Great Deal; 2) Only Some; 3) Hardly Any." This independent variable will be tested against 107) EXECUTE? as a dependent variable that indicates support toward capital punishment. The two variables are sourced from the General Social Survey (GSS) 2006.

Table 3 displays the results of the cross tabulation between Support for Capital Punishment and Confidence in Government. There are three categories listed across the top of the contingency table, which characterizes the independent variable: respondent's confidence in the federal government. The categories are displayed into "Great Deal" which represents those who have high confidence in the federal government, "Only Some" for those who have only some confidence in the federal government, and "Hardly Any" for those who have hardly any confidence in the federal government. The left side is the same.

In doing the cross tabulation, the results produced a statistical significance of $\text{prob}=0.00$. This value implies that there is 0 chance out of 100 that the relationship does not exist in the population from which the sample was selected. This figure suggests that the relationship is statistically significant. Since, both the variables are ordinal, Gamma will be employed as the measure of association to test the strength of the relationship. The Gamma for the association is -0.2 , which tells us that the two variables has a moderate relationship with each other.

Table 3: Support for Capital Punishment by Confidence in Government						
Support for Capital Punishment	Confidence in Federal Government					
		Great Deal	Only Some	Hardly Any	Missing	Total
	Oppose	25.1% (75)	29.0% (248)	37.8% (267)	280	31.8% (590)
	Favor	74.9% (223)	71.0% (605)	62.2% (440)	677	68.2% (1268)
	Missing	16	46	38	1596	1696
	Total	100.0% (297)	100.0% (853)	100.0% (707)	2553	1857
P=0.00			Gamma= 0.2			

It is also evident within the distribution of data, the results of the cross tabulation between confidence in government and capital punishment, supports the hypothesis. For respondents who say that they have great deal of confidence in the government, 74.9% of them express support for capital punishment. However, only 62.2% of the respondents who has hardly any trust in the government support capital punishment. This finding therefore backs the hypothesis that those with great deal of confidence in the federal government have greater support for capital punishment than people with hardly any trust in the government.

Greater support for governmental action would lead to more confidence in the government. As such, if people support governmental action like their capital punishment sentencing policy and execution, and see the logic behind it, they are more likely to support capital punishment. This is clearly portrayed by the data in the table.

Social Variables

D. Support for Capital Punishment by Education

The fourth hypothesis states that those with higher education are more likely to oppose the death penalty. This hypothesis is operationalized using the variable 28) EDUCATION as an independent variable which poses the question “What is your education level? 1) No High

School Degree; 2) High School Degree; 3) College Education.” This independent variable will be tested against 106) EXECUTE? as a dependent variable that indicates support toward capital punishment. The two variables are sourced from the General Social Survey (GSS) 2008.

Table 4 displays the results of the cross tabulation between Support for Capital Punishment and Education Level. There are three categories listed across the top of the contingency table, which characterizes the independent variable: respondent’s level of education. The categories are displayed into “No High School Degree” which represents those who have not graduated from high school, “High School Degree” which represent those who have graduated from high school, and “College Degree” for those who have college education. The left side is the same.

In doing the cross tabulation, the results produced a statistical significance of $\text{prob}=0.476$. This value implies that there is approximately 47 chance out of 100 that the relationship does not exist in the population from which the sample was selected. This figure suggests that the relationship is not statistically significant. Since, both the variables are ordinal, Gamma will be employed as the measure of association to test the strength of the relationship. The Gamma for the association is 0.024, which tells us that the two variables has too weak relationship with each other.

Although, the relationship is too weak to consider, and statistically insignificant, we will still analyze the table accordingly. Examining the table, it is observable that only 34.4% of respondents who are college educated oppose capital punishment, while 39.8 % of respondents who are not high school graduated oppose capital punishment, and 24.8% of respondents who are high school graduate oppose capital punishment. Clearly, this signifies the rejection of the hypothesis that those with higher education are more likely to oppose capital punishment. On the

other side, the opposite hypothesis that those with higher education are more likely to support capital punishment is also rejected by this finding. It signifies that there is no relationship between education and capital punishment.

Support for Capital Punishment	Level of Education				
	No High School Degree	High School Degree	College Graduate	Missing	Total
Oppose	39.8% (219)	24.8% (223)	34.4% (657)	2	32.7% (1098)
Favor	60.2% (331)	75.2% (676)	65.6% (1253)	2	67.3% (2259)
Missing	35	48	112	2	197
Total	100.0% (549)	100.0% (898)	100.0% (1910)	7	3357
P=0.476			Gamma= 0.024		

The discovery can be attributed to the analysis of Rankin (1979) that attitudes regarding the death penalty are not based on rational concerns at all, but are primarily symbolic attitudes, based on emotions. It clearly supports the fact that there is no real relationship between support for capital punishment and education.

E. Support for Capital Punishment by Race

The fifth hypothesis proposes that Whites have greater support for capital punishment than African Americans. In operationalizing the concept of race, variable 32) RACE will be used. This independent variable is question posed to respondents of their race. In conducting the cross tabulation for this hypothesis, the independent variable will be tested against 106) EXECUTE? which operationalizes support for capital punishment. The two variables are sourced from the General Social Survey (GSS) 2008.

Within Table 5, there are three categories listed across the top of the contingency table representing the independent variable. The categories are “White,” “Black,” and “Others.” The left side is the same.

In doing the cross tabulation, the results produced a statistical significance of prob=0.00. This value implies that there is approximately 0 chance out of 100 that the relationship does not exist in the population from which the sample was selected. This figure suggests that the relationship is statistically significant. Since, the independent variable is nominal, while the dependent variable is ordinal, Cramer’s V will be employed as the measure of association to test the strength of the relationship. The Cramer’s V for the association is 0.202, which tells us that the two variables has moderate relationship with each other.

Support for Capital Punishment	Race			
	White	Black	Other	Total
Oppose	27.8% (725)	53.5% (230)	45.4% (146)	32.7% (1100)
Favor	72.2% (1885)	46.5% (200)	54.6% (176)	67.3% (2261)
Missing	141	29	27	197
Total	100.0% (2610)	100.0% (429)	100.0% (322)	3362
P=0.00		Cramer’s V= 0.202		

It is also evident that within the distribution of data, the results of the cross tabulation between race and support for capital punishment, supports the hypothesis. For respondents who are white, 72.2% of them express support for capital punishment. However, a lower percentage of them (46.5%) express support for capital punishment. This finding, therefore, backs up the hypothesis that Whites have greater support for capital punishment than African Americans.

Race has been a strong influence in the criminal justice system especially capital sentencing. Scholars are Bright (1995) has found in his study that racial bias has an increasing effect on who ends up on death row. This has been going on for a long time, and African Americans do have that presumption backed with facts cemented on them, that can be the factor in African Americans expressing less support for capital punishment than White Americans.

F. Support for Capital Punishment by Religiosity

The sixth hypothesis states that those who consider themselves very religious are more likely to support capital punishment. This hypothesis is operationalized using the variable 262) REL PERSN as an independent variable which poses the question “To what extent do you consider yourself a religious person? 1) Very Religious; 2) Somewhat Religious; 3) Not at all Religious.” This independent variable will be tested against 107) EXECUTE? as a dependent variable that indicates support toward capital punishment. The two variables are sourced from the General Social Survey (GSS) 2006.

Table 6 displays the results of the cross tabulation between Support for Capital Punishment and Religiosity. There are three categories listed across the top of the contingency table, which characterizes the independent variable: respondent’s religiosity. The categories are displayed into “Very Religious” representing those who consider themselves very religious, “Somewhat Religious” representing those who consider themselves somewhat religious, and “Not at all Religious” representing those who consider themselves not at all religious. The left side is the same.

Table 6: Support for Capital Punishment by Religiosity						
Support for Capital Punishment	Level of Religiosity					
		Very Religious	Somewhat Religious	Not at All Religious	Missing	Total
	Oppose	35.2% (183)	29.0% (543)	33.9% (138)	6	30.9% (864)
	Favor	64.8% (338)	71.0% (1325)	66.1% (269)	12	69.1% (1932)
	Missing	44	119	14	1518	1696
	Total	100.0% (521)	100.0% (1868)	100.0% (407)	1537	2796
P=0.445			Gamma= 0.030			

In doing the cross tabulation, the results produced a statistical significance of prob=0.445. This value implies that there is approximately 44 chance out of 100 that the relationship does not exist in the population from which the sample was selected. This figure suggests that the relationship is not statistically significant. Since, both the variables are ordinal, Gamma will be employed as the measure of association to test the strength of the relationship. The Gamma for the association is 0.030, which tells us that the two variables has a very weak relationship with each other.

Although, the relationship is too weak to consider, and statistically insignificant, we will still analyze the table accordingly. It is also observable that within the distribution of data, the results of the cross tabulation between religiosity and support for capital punishment, rejects the hypothesis.

For respondents who identify as very religious, 64.8% of them express support for capital punishment, while respondents who identify as somewhat religious 71.0 % express support for capital punishment, and respondents who identify as non-religious 66.1 % express support for

capital punishment. This finding rejects the hypothesis and makes it clear there is no relationship between support for capital punishment and religiosity.

The basis to draw this hypothesis was that the main argument for the death penalty was that capital punishment is a moral requirement. Therefore, it can be presumed that morality and religiosity can be linked together. Thus people who consider themselves religious would support capital punishment more than non-religious person. This finding contradicts this presumption. Thus, morality and religiosity is not linked in this research.

G. Support for Capital Punishment by Racial Disparity

The seventh hypothesis proposes that those who think racial disparities exist are more likely to oppose the death penalty than those who think racial disparities do not exist. In operationalizing the concept of racial disparity, variable 228) RACE DIF1 will be used. This independent variable is question posed to respondents of their opinion on the existence of racial disparities. In conducting the cross tabulation for this hypothesis, the independent variable will be tested against 107) EXECUTE? which operationalizes support for capital punishment. The two variables are sourced from the General Social Survey (GSS) 2006.

Within Table 7, there are three categories listed across the top of the contingency table representing the independent variable. The categories are “YES,” for those who think racial disparities exist and “NO”, for those who think racial disparities does not exist at all. On the left hand side of the table, there is no change.

In doing the cross tabulation, the results produced a statistical significance of prob=0.00. This value implies that there is approximately 0 chance out of 100 that the relationship does not exist in the population from which the sample was selected. This figure suggests that the relationship is statistically significant. Since, the independent variable is nominal, while the

dependent variable is ordinal, Cramer's V will be employed as the measure of association to test the strength of the relationship. The Cramer's V for the association is 0.210, which tells us that the two variables has moderate relationship with each other.

It is also evident that within the distribution of data, the results of the cross tabulation between race and support for capital punishment, supports the hypothesis. For respondents who think racial disparities still exist, 43.5% of them oppose capital punishment. However, a lower percentage of them who think racial disparities does not exist (23.1%) oppose the practice of capital punishment. This finding, therefore, backs up the hypothesis that those who think racial disparities exist are more likely to oppose the death penalty than those who think racial disparities do not exist.

Table 7: Support for Capital Punishment by Racial Disparity					
Support for Capital Punishment	Existence of Racial Disparity in America				
		Yes	No	Missing	Total
	Oppose	43.5% (263)	23.1% (270)	336	30.1% (534)
	Favor	56.5% (342)	76.9% (899)	703	69.9% (1241)
	Missing	51	72	1573	1696
	Total	100.0% (606)	100.0% (1170)	2612	1775
P=0.00			Cramer's V= 0.210		

It is also evident that within the distribution of data, the results of the cross tabulation between race and support for capital punishment, supports the hypothesis. For respondents who think racial disparities still exist, 43.5% of them oppose capital punishment. However, a lower percentage of them who think racial disparities does not exist (23.1%) oppose the practice of capital punishment. This finding, therefore, backs up the hypothesis that those who think racial

disparities exist are more likely to oppose the death penalty than those who think racial disparities do not exist.

This is similar to the independent variable of race, but this dives deeper into people who think that racial disparities still exist. Scholars like Bohm (1999) and Bright (1995) have concluded in their study that there exists a surprisingly homogenous pattern of racial disparities in death sentencing throughout the United States. When individuals get to know such facts and consider their support for capital punishment, they will be more likely to oppose capital punishment. Hence, those who think racial disparities exist are more likely to oppose the death penalty than those who think racial disparities does not exist.

Economic Variables

H. Support for Capital Punishment by Crime Spending Opinion

The eighth hypothesis states that those who oppose more spending on halting the crime rate are more likely to oppose the death penalty than those who think too little is being spend on halting the crime rate. This hypothesis is operationalized using the variable 68) CRIME\$ as an independent variable which poses the question “Spending on halting the rising crime rate: 1) Too Little; 2) Right Amount; 3) Too Much.” This independent variable will be tested against 107) EXECUTE? as a dependent variable that indicates support toward capital punishment. The two variables are sourced from the General Social Survey (GSS) 2006.

Table 8 displays the results of the cross tabulation between Support for Capital Punishment and Crime Spending Opinion. There are three categories listed across the top of the contingency table, which characterizes the independent variable: respondent’s opinion on spending regarding halting the crime rate. The categories are displayed into “Too Little being

Spent on Crime,” “Right Amount being Spent on Crime,” and “Too Much being Spent on Crime.” The left side is the same.

In doing the cross tabulation, the results produced a statistical significance of prob=0.001. This value implies that there is 1 chance out of 1000 that the relationship does not exist in the population from which the sample was selected. This figure suggests that the relationship is statistically significant. Since, both the variables are ordinal, Gamma will be employed as the measure of association to test the strength of the relationship. The Gamma for the association is 0.176, which tells us that the two variables has a weak relationship with each other.

Table 8: Support for Capital Punishment by Crime Spending Opinion						
Support for Capital Punishment	Opinion on Spending Regarding Halting the Crime Rate					
		Too Little being Spent on Crime	Right Amount being Spent on Crime	Too Much being Spent on Crime	Missing	Total
	Oppose	28.0% (236)	36.1% (157)	37.5% (34)	443	31.2% (427)
	Favor	72.0% (607)	63.9% (278)	62.5% (57)	12	68.8% (942)
	Missing	37	28	4	1627	1696
	Total	100.0% (843)	100.0% (434)	100.0% (91)	3073	1369
P=0.001			Gamma= 0.176			

This relationship is statistically significant but weak. However, we will still analyze the table accordingly. It is also evident that within the distribution of data, the results of the cross tabulation between crime spending opinion and support for capital punishment, supports the hypothesis. For respondents who think too much is being spent on crime, 37.5% of them oppose capital punishment. However, a lower percentage of them who think too little is being spent on crime (28.0%) oppose capital punishment. This finding, therefore, backs up the hypothesis that

those who oppose more spending on halting the crime rate are more likely to oppose the death penalty than those who think too little is being spend on halting the crime rate.

Financing the death penalty was a big empirical argument used against capital punishment. Scholars such as Gradess and Davies (2009) have concluded that for the past 25 years, in practically all of the states studied persistently show that the death penalty costs more than life in prison. In such scenario, people who think too much is being spent on crime are logically bound to oppose the death penalty. The distribution of data within the table fits within that narrative.

I. Support for Capital Punishment by Income

The ninth hypothesis states that those with a higher income are more likely to support capital punishment. This hypothesis is operationalized using the variable 56)INCOME as an independent variable which poses the question “Respondent’s family income range 1) Low; 2) Middle; 3) High.” This independent variable will be tested against 106) EXECUTE? as a dependent variable that indicates support toward capital punishment. The two variables are sourced from the General Social Survey (GSS) 2008.

Table 9 displays the results of the cross tabulation between Support for Capital Punishment and Income. There are three categories listed across the top of the contingency table, which characterizes the independent variable: respondent’s opinion on court’s handling of criminals. The categories are displayed into “Low” which represents those who fall under low income category, “Middle” for those who fall under middle income category, and “High” for those who fall under high income category. The left side is the same.

In doing the cross tabulation, the results produced a statistical significance of prob=0.00. This value implies that there is 0 chance out of 100 that the relationship does not exist in the

population from which the sample was selected. This figure suggests that the relationship is statistically significant. Since, both the variables are ordinal, Gamma will be employed as the measure of association to test the strength of the relationship. The Gamma for the association is 0.135, which tells us that the two variables has a weak relationship with each other.

Support for Capital Punishment	Income Category				
	Low	Middle	High	Missing	Total
Oppose	38.6% (267)	33.2% (312)	29.3% (467)	55	32.4% (1046)
Favor	61.4% (425)	66.8% (626)	70.7% (1127)	83	67.6% (2178)
Missing	38	35	107	17	197
Total	100.0% (691)	100.0% (938)	100.0% (1594)	155	3224
P=0.00			Gamma= 0.135		

The data in this table demonstrates that 70% of the respondents with high income express support for capital punishment, while 61.4% of the respondents with low income express support for capital punishment. This small but significant difference in the two categories demonstrates that the finding supports the hypothesis that those with higher income are more likely to support capital punishment.

Income plays a role in making a difference toward support for capital punishment. Although it is not a significant contribution, it should not, nevertheless, be taken away from the discussion. Bohm (1999) reiterates that those with low income are more susceptible to be sentenced the death penalty than those with high income. In such scenario, those with high income would have less qualms about the death penalty than those with low income. Thus, people with high income are more likely to support capital punishment.

The next section. Implications and Conclusion, will dive deeper into the proven contributing factors toward the support for capital punishment, and will answer the research question.

Implications and Conclusion

The goal of this paper was to point out important factors toward the support for capital punishment in determining the research question: “What accounts for differences in attitudes among Americans concerning capital punishment?” There are ongoing debates about capital punishment, and there is room for changes in ideologies and mindset toward both for and anti-capital punishment. It is not a black and white situation at this age because one cannot just determine capital punishment as right or wrong. Furthermore, it is not just rational facts that people take into account, but several other determinations that people take into account while determining capital punishment as right or wrong. To identify these factors, these variables were divided into three sub-categories: Political, Social, and Economic.

The Findings and Analysis section shows that people who affiliate themselves with Republicans, those with a favorable opinion of courts, those who have high confidence in the government, those who are white, and those who think racial disparities do not exist are more likely to support capital punishment than others. The cross tabulations for the stated independent variables yielded a strong relationship and a significant data distribution pattern within the contingency table. The sub-category that expresses the greatest support for capital punishment is political, which includes party affiliation as a variable that yielded the strongest relationship in this research.

Party Affiliation has the greatest effect on support for capital punishment. Republicans have greater support for capital punishment than Democrats. The main reason behind this is the

party ideology. Republican party manifesto clearly states their support for capital punishment, and the states' right to enact capital punishment sentencing (Republicans 2016). While Democratic party manifesto states their disdain for capital punishment (Democrats 2016).. Therefore, candidates in the Republican party can use this information and favor the death penalty to procure more votes and cement their conservatism. While candidates in the Democratic party may shift their policy toward the death penalty by not striking down the death penalty completely, but working to make it more fair and efficient. The second option for the Democrats is to shift the majority's public opinion on the death penalty by educating the public of the research done by Bohm(1999) and Kronenwetter (1993), and to put more effort into social movements that oppose capital punishment.

Another strong factor within the political category that contributes significantly to the support for capital punishment is people's confidence in the government. The future of the status of capital punishment depends on people's confidence in the government. If the government is to maintain high confidence within its citizenry, the institution of capital punishment will be favored for the foreseeable future.

There are certain variables in this research that have generated unexpected results, which proves to something more radical regarding people's attitude towards capital punishment, which this paper argues should not be neglected completely. Some cross tabulations generated a low value for the test of statistical significance, and a high value for measures of association that deem those variables as too weak to consider. However, after the analysis of data, it points the variables to another direction which could be useful for future political scholars researching in this field. Two examples of such cross tabulations for independent variables are religion and education.

Religion, yielded an insignificant relationship. The factor of religiosity showed no difference in the support of capital punishment. This can be due to the fact that religiosity may not play a significant role in deciding support for capital punishment but a different variable that focusses on the specific religion of the respondents could yield a significant relationship. Therefore, what is needed for better understanding between religion and support for capital punishment would be current data that measures the specific religion in a more efficient manner.

Education, surprisingly in this research yielded almost an insignificant relationship. The factor of whether an individual with more education or less education showed essentially no difference in the support of capital punishment. This points to a fact that rational fact comes second to emotional value when a person makes a political decision. This new finding could build up into good research where political scholars can study the relationship between political choice and emotional value toward issues.

This research paper has found numerous factors that attribute to support capital punishment, but it is not all exhaustive. With the findings regarding race and racial disparities, there is a need to focus on more profound research within American political institutions to determine whether discrimination in capital punishment sentencing is still occurring. Research about capital punishment is a continuous one, and new and improved data will clarify the factors that shape American's attitude towards capital punishment.

In determining American's attitude towards capital punishment, political variables are the most significant. However, more research is recommended here as well to examine all of the implications and explanations in these segments of factors that influence support for capital punishment.

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Author's Biography

Tenzin Thinley is a senior at Methodist University, majoring in Political Science. He has minors in Leadership Studies and Legal Studies. He plans to graduate in May of 2020. Following graduation, he would like to attend law school and then work in Tibetan social institutions in India.

While at Methodist University, Tenzin has participated in various campus activities and is also a member of Pi Sigma Alpha honor society.

Originally from Tibet, Tenzin attended United World College of the Atlantic in Wales, UK, where he was the organizing member of the annual sustainability conference.