



Predictors of Attitudes towards Capital Punishment and its Re-introduction

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to explore the possible predictors of attitudes towards capital punishment and its re-introduction within the British public. Research previously conducted concerning this topic has found that demographic characteristics such as race and age have significantly contributed towards one's attitude regarding capital punishment. In the present study, other possible predictor variables such 'belief in retribution', 'support of the death penalty', 'fear of crime' and 'personality', as well as demographic characteristics such as 'location' and 'gender' were examined to observe how these predictor variables can contribute towards one's attitude concerning capital punishment. In order to investigate this notion, a cross-sectional quantitative method was used with a questionnaire method of data collection. To determine which variable was the most significant predictor, a multiple regression analysis was conducted using SPSS statistical analysis programme to acquire the results. The results were able to establish that the most significant predictor favouring the re-introduction of capital punishment was one's support of the death penalty. Whilst examining one's sympathy towards an offender facing capital punishment, it was determined that supporting the death penalty was the most pivotal predictor, additionally, this was affected by one's location and belief in retribution.

KEY WORDS:	CAPITAL PUNISHMENT	DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERIS TICS	FEAR OF CRIME	BELIEF IN RETRIBUTON	SUPPORT OF THE DEATH PENALTY	PERSONALITY
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Introduction

Capital Punishment was introduced in 1707 and was widely used as a form of discipline in the United Kingdom. Capital punishment was a form of penalty whereby an offender was hanged for the crimes that they had committed. Although the last hanging took place in 1964, it was not abolished as a punishment for all crimes until 1998. Approaching the date of the discipline's abolition, many protests took place calling for the penalty to be reviewed and, consequently, abolished. There was a collective feeling of outrage towards capital punishment amongst the British public concerning the controversial cases of Ruth Ellis in 1955, the last woman to be hanged, and Timothy Evans in 1950, an innocent man who was wrongly hanged for the murder of his wife (Slapper, 2008). These cases of injustice were what led to the numerous protests.

As a form of discipline for those who committed crimes, Capital Punishment was once extremely common across Western Society. However, since 1945 the punishment has been found to be increasingly rare in democratic nations and it now tends to be more geographically concentrated within America (Baumgartner, De Boef and Boydston, 2008). Recently, a widespread debate has emerged regarding whether or not capital punishment should be re-introduced as a discipline into modern society. By examining the research discussed throughout, it can be assumed that, as time has progressed since capital punishment was abolished, attitudes towards the penalty have also changed. This project therefore has investigated what factors influence one's attitude towards capital punishment.

Whilst exploring the previous research conducted within the topic of attitudes towards capital punishment, it became evident that the majority of research focuses solely on the possibility that demographic characteristics determine one's attitude towards the notion. It was found within a study conducted by Payne and Coogler (1998) that most research tends to observe the effects of demographic variables such as race, gender, political affiliation and community size on one's attitude. The effects of this are not only seen within one's attitude, but they have also been witnessed within a courtroom. Research by White (1991) discovered that the race of a victim was more significant in determining whether the defendant would receive the death penalty compared to any other factor that would enhance the seriousness of the actual crime that was committed. The study by Payne and Coogler (1998) also determined that the majority of arguments people propose both for and against the notion of capital punishment, were deterrence, cost and racial disparity. Although British academic research into this topic is sparse due to the abolition of the punishment, Baumgartner, De Boef and Boydston (2008) investigated the attitudes Americans possess towards the death penalty in modern day society. The most common pro-death penalty attitude that they uncovered was that of 'an eye for an eye'. This phrase essentially means that the offenders should receive a punishment that is equal to the crime that they have committed and that those who have been convicted of committing terrible crimes, should receive a fitting, harsh punishment in return. Numerous other reasons as to why people support the death penalty include the ideology that the death penalty is a deterrence to criminals, that the cost of life imprisonment is more than sentencing an offender to death or that it prevents the offender from returning back to society (Bohm, 1987).

Despite many countries still practicing the death penalty, there remains to be a lot of controversy regarding whether or not this can be seen as an old fashioned and outdated form of discipline. Although America is an example of a large nation that still implements the death penalty, the number of states that continue to practice this discipline is slowly diminishing. This debate has become a large issue in America due to the pro-death penalty arguments and the anti-death penalty arguments coinciding as they both attempt to question morality. In the book 'Justice in Error' by Walker and Starmer (1993) the risks of the death penalty begin to be assessed. The researchers discovered that the pivotal determinants affecting the death penalty were the prospects that an offender could be wrongly incarcerated. This could be due to the fabrication of evidence, unreliable confessions resulting from police pressure, the presentation of the accused in a prejudicial way or faulty forensic evidence amongst many other circumstances. White (1991) found within his research that defendants who had been found guilty of common serious crimes, were highly likely to receive the death sentence based on the quality of the defendant's attorney. Additionally, White also discovered a higher percentage of miscarriages of justice in capital cases. This is due to the fact that, occasionally, the prosecutors or police would be put under pressure by their superiors to prosecute someone who was deemed eligible for the death penalty. This would often lead to incorrect prosecutions.

An article written by Geddes (2014) reported an FBI investigation regarding forensic errors within numerous cases whereby the offender had already been convicted. The article explains that an inquiry was opened two years ago into 2600 convictions. Since the beginning of this inquiry, 10% of these cases have been reviewed and 159 defendants, including 16 on death row, have been informed that they will be permitted to use DNA testing in an attempt to prove their innocence. The verdict of this inquiry could cause a domino effect and, consequently, this could cause more convictions to be investigated. This article by Geddes (2014) demonstrates the way in which convictions can be unreliable and incorrect and, subsequently, an innocent person could be found guilty and sentenced to death.

By using measurement scales such as the Belief in Retribution scale, sourced from Sidanius et al (2006:438), which asks participants to rate their response to questions such as 'those who hurt others deserve to be hurt in return', we are able to view the extent to which the British public wish to implement punitive measures as well as enforce punishments such as capital punishment. Cohen (1994) defined the term punitive as, 'being characterised by coercion, formalism, moralism and the infliction of pain on individual legal subjects by a third party' (Matthews, 2005:178). Punitive measures are able to serve as a reassurance mechanism to society as well as acting as a form of punishment for the offenders. Punitiveness can demonstrate and allow one to comprehend the argument for the re-introduction of capital punishment. Hough and Roberts (2002:128) have explained through their research how punitive policies can be put in place to ensure 'greater justice for victims and greater protection of public safety.' Once again, this can be seen within American research concerning the death penalty by O'Neil (2014). This research found a large general support of the death penalty with regards to sentencing verdicts. It was found that this attitude was predominately affected by the perspective that a sentence of life without parole nevertheless, still permits parole. In the democratic society in which we live, public opinion is highly important to elected representatives of the country. It

is evident that the continuing debate calling for the re-introduction of capital punishment often occurs after a high profile murder is brought to public attention e.g. the Ian Huntley case and the murder of two school girls; Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman (2002), (Gerrard, 2003) or the murder of the British Army soldier; Fusilier Lee Rigby (2013), (Grierson, 2013). The attitudes towards the discipline held by the British public have accounted for the introduction of numerous bills since the abolition of capital punishment, such as one in 2013 concerning the re-introduction of the punishment. It is however evident that none of these bills have proved neither popular nor successful within Parliament.

With regards to the Belief in Retribution scale (Siddanius et al, 2006), it has been proved through various studies that one's support for the death penalty is directly related to one's belief in retribution (Ellsworth and Ross, 1983). A belief in retribution is typically concerned with the view of an 'eye for an eye'. This view relates to the punishment offenders will receive for their committed crimes. This therefore means that the defendant should receive a fitting punishment for the crime in which they have been convicted of. As previously mentioned, Baumgartner, De Boef and Boydston (2008) found that this was the most common pro-death penalty attitude within America. However, Gibbs (1978:249) has previously expressed how critics have been quick to condemn one's belief in retribution as their argument for the death penalty due to their belief that it is a 'barbaric cry for vengeance.' This shows that it is often thought that the death penalty is a way for society to gain revenge on an offender rather than providing the offender with a suitable punishment. For this reason, a belief in retribution used to be a socially unacceptable view as; it is occasionally perceived as having more ruthless motives (Bedau, 1998). This therefore meant that people were less willing to admit that their belief in retribution was the reason behind their support for the death penalty. However, as support for the death penalty has increased in America, this has become a more acceptable reasoning for supporting the discipline (Fox et al, 1991).

By examining the background research regarding capital punishment in Britain, it has become evident that there is limited academic coverage concerning the attitudes that the public hold towards the retribution, thus it is necessary to assess these attitudes in greater detail. It is apparent that it may be beneficial for society if we were to know why people possess such views and whether it can be due to a reflection of the fear they have towards crime, their personality or demographic characteristics. A favourable approach used to measure personality is that of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire, Eysenck (1985). It is important to assess one's personality whilst looking at attitudes towards capital punishment, as it is a possible predictor that has not previously been examined. Eysenck (1985) discovered within his extensive research, that personality and behaviour could be measured through two dimensions; introversion/extroversion and neuroticism/stability. Eysenck deduced that a combination of these two dimensions could form the characteristics of one's personality. For example, if a participant of this investigation believed that capital punishment should be re-introduced and it was found through the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (1985) that they were an extrovert, their opinion could be accounted for by the typical personality characteristics of an extrovert such as; impulsiveness, crave for change and optimism. Alternatively, if the investigation found that fear of crime was the strongest predictor of one's attitude towards capital punishment, more safety measures could be implemented by the government. This

could include measures such as visual deterrents e.g. signage, surveillance and visible policing (Furedi, 2006). By introducing such measures, the public would be reassured of their safety, which would lead to diminished feelings of fear amongst the community. As demographic characteristics have already proven to be predictors of one's attitude towards the notion (Payne and Coogle, 1998), it is important to explore what other variables could be the most pivotal predictors of attitudes.

One demographic characteristic investigated is that of whether the participant lives in a rural or urban area. The Office for National Statistics (Benyon, 2012) has previously provided documents exploring the difference between the rate of crime in both rural and urban areas. This document expressed how the average crime rate for rural areas is much lower than in urban areas. Another document from the Office for National Statistics (Pateman, 2010), conveyed that crime levels in urban areas are able to equate to one crime per resident every 13 years, compared to the rural parallel of every 21 years. Despite these statistics, there is still a large feeling of fear of crime amongst rural dwellers. Research into fear of crime by Norris and Reeves (2013) has looked at the differences between the fear of crime within rural and urban areas. The results have been able to indicate that residents of rural areas were likely to possess a greater concern that offenders would travel into their community to offend. There were found to be no differences amongst urban dwellers. This fear could be explained by the rural idyll, which largely revolves around happiness, good health, a close-knit social community and a problem-free, relaxed life (Cloke and Milbourne, 1992). These key values held within rural communities are a stark contrast to the hectic, fast-paced lifestyle of urban dwellers. The differences in life values between urban and rural locations could explain why there might be different attitudes towards capital punishment. The fear of criminals infiltrating rural communities shows a low tolerance for criminal activity and therefore, a low tolerance for the criminals themselves.

The present investigation focuses on examining the attitudes that the British public possess towards the topic of Capital Punishment. In order to examine the attitudes towards this retribution, a cross-sectional quantitative method with a questionnaire method of data collection will be used. This will allow an observation of the following factors as well as determining whether these variables can have an effect on the public's attitudes: personality, fear of crime and demographic characteristics. The aim of this investigation therefore was to determine whether personality, fear of crime and demographic characteristics are predictors of people's attitudes towards capital punishment and, specifically, the possible re-introduction of the discipline. This topic was investigated due to the limited definitive coverage of the area within academic literature in Britain; this lack of research has proved to be difficult to reach a suitable hypothesis for the current research. The primary research question of this investigation therefore is; do the following factors affect a person's attitudes towards capital punishment; personality, belief in retribution, fear of crime and demographic characteristics? The second research question of this investigation is: what are the predictors of support of the re-introduction of capital punishment?

Method

Design

The present investigation used a cross-sectional quantitative method with a questionnaire method of data collection. Once the data had been collected, the data was then analysed using both support for the death penalty and the re-introduction of capital punishment as the independent variable. A multiple regression analysis was used in order to analyse the data and determine which of the variables were the pivotal predictors of public attitudes towards capital punishment. It was evident whilst looking at predictive factors, that a quantitative method of research was the most suitable for this investigation.

Participants

The sample of participants used in this study consisted of 104 participants. Participants were recruited via an opportunity sample from public places such as train stations and shopping centres. This sampling method was used to ensure that a diverse sample was collected and, to implement this, participants of different ages, races and gender were approached.

Materials

The material used in this project was the questionnaire which was distributed to the recruited participants (see appendix 4). The questionnaire used scales sourced from Sidanius et al. (2006), such as the Support of the Death Penalty scale, the Belief in Retribution scale, questions regarding fear of crime from the British Crime Survey (Office for National Statistics, 2010) and the re-introduction of capital punishment as well as the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire, Eysenck (1985). The questionnaire was administered and participants were asked to rate their answer to each of the questions on a Likert scale. The Belief in Retribution scale, Sidanius et al (2006: 438) was used to measure one's belief in punitiveness as well as a belief of revenge towards the offender. The scale is comprised of four items; (a) "Those who hurt others deserve to be hurt in return", (b) "Society does not have the right to get revenge for murder", (c) "For a terrible crime, there should be a terrible penalty", (d) "Punishment should fit the crime". The participant must rate whether they agree or disagree with each statement on a Likert scale. The Support for the Death Penalty Scale consists of eight statements to assess the extent of one's support of the death penalty; (a) "I support the use of capital punishment"; (b) "I favour the death penalty"; (c) "I favour a law which permits the execution of convicted murderers"; (d) "We must have capital punishment for some crimes"; (e) "Capital punishment should be used more often than it is"; (f) "No offence is so serious that it deserves to be punished by death"; (g) "I do not believe in capital punishment in any circumstances"; and (h) "Capital punishment is never justified". Another scale used within the questionnaire concerns one's attitude towards the re-introduction of capital punishment consisting of two questions; (a) "I would support the re-introduction of Capital Punishment in Britain" and (b) "I sympathise with an offender who is facing Capital Punishment." These questions are once again answered on a Likert scale. The questionnaire also involved the use of questions regarding psychopathic personalities devised from the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (1985:28-29). This questionnaire contains numerous questions such as "Do you tend to keep in the background on social occasions?" and "Have you ever been greedy by helping yourself to more than your share of anything?" in which participants had to respond by circling either 'yes' or 'no'

on the paper. Since they were created, each of the scales used have proven to be reliable and have remained valid over time. The final scale regards one's fear of crime. The participant's answers to the listed statements must be rated as 'not at all worried', 'not very worried', 'fairly worried' or 'very worried'. An example of these statements includes, (a) "Having your home broken into and something being stolen?" and (b) "Being physically attacked by strangers?"

Procedure

Participants were approached in public places such as train stations and shopping centres and were asked whether they wished to take part in the study. Once participants had confirmed that they desired to take part in the study, the questionnaire was distributed and they were asked to read the attached participant information sheet which listed the conditions of the research e.g. the participants right to withdrawal and how they can withdraw their data, the anonymity of the results etc. On completion of the questionnaire, participants were asked to read a participant debrief. Once the responses had been collected, the data was analysed by conducting both a multiple regression and a logistic regression through using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) Statistical Analysis programme.

The questionnaire was administered to all of the participants and they were asked to rate their answers to each of the questions on a Likert scale. Likert scales were used as they allow for a varying degree of opinion, the participant is also able to display that they do not have an opinion on the matter. Quantitative data is collected through using these scales which allows for the data to be easily analysed. By using a questionnaire method of data collection and closed questions within the questionnaire, the researcher will be able to insure uniformity within the results. This is due to the fact that each participant will receive identical questionnaires consisting of the same questions and, by doing this, the researcher is able to easily code the collected data. Each of the scales used within the questionnaire, e.g. the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire, Belief in Retribution scale etc. have proven to be reliable and have remained valid over time since they were created. Each of the measures are still being used to this day throughout modern psychology.

A multiple regression was used in order to assess which variables predict one's attitudes towards capital punishment. Through this method, it can be determined which of the three variables; fear of crime, demographic characteristics or personality were the strongest predictors of the notion.

Ethical Considerations

All participants were briefed regarding the topic and the aims of the investigation prior to filling in the questionnaire. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. In order to obtain participants' consent to partake in this study, participants were asked for their consent to discuss and proceed with the brief regarding the project, they were then also asked to confirm their consent once the investigation had been explained to them. Consent was gained by asking each participant to read the participant information sheet (see appendix 2) and complete the written consent form (see appendix 3) which was attached to each questionnaire. These forms explained that all of the answers and data collected from the questionnaire would remain anonymous. It was also explained that, following the process of analysing the collected data, each

questionnaire would be disposed of as a means to ensure that each person's data would remain protected. Each participant was also given an email address, which would enable him or her to contact someone regarding the project should they have had any queries.

Results

Once the data was gathered, it was analysed using SPSS Statistical Analysis programme. The data analysis consisted of a multiple regression analysis in order to determine the predictors of the two independent variables: (a) support of the re-introduction of capital punishment in Britain and (b) sympathy towards an offender who is facing capital punishment. By using a multiple regression analysis the following factors can be determined; how well a set of independent variables can predict an outcome, which independent variable is the best predictor of an outcome, whether a predictor variable is able to predict an outcome when the effects of another variable are controlled for and, lastly, the amount of variance explained in an outcome variable by all predictors. A multiple regression analysis was chosen, as it is an effective method of data analysis, it was therefore evident that a multiple regression analysis would be the best method to use.

Descriptive Statistics:

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the variables measured continuously: support for the death penalty, belief in retribution, fear of crime, psychoticism and age, including means (*M*) and standard deviations (*SD*). When dummy coded (yes or no), 42 participants (40.4%) reported that they would support the re-introduction of capital punishment in Britain and 46 participants (44.2%) reported sympathising with an offender who was facing capital punishment. There was no significant difference between males and females in relation to support for the re-introduction of the capital punishment or sympathy with an offender facing capital punishment, $p > .05$.

Table 1: *Descriptive statistics for all continuous variables*

Factor	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max	Cronbach's α
Support for Death Penalty Scale	23.99	15.29	0	48	.97
Belief in Retribution Scale	15.14	4.79	0	24	.72
Fear of crime	10.21	2.88	4	16	.82
Psychoticism	4.13	1.65	0	6	.70
Age	32.90	16.59	18	85	N/A

Multiple Regression Analysis

Support the re-introduction of Capital Punishment in Britain:

Standard multiple linear regression was employed to determine which of the predictor variables (gender, age, support for the death penalty, belief in retribution, fear of crime, psychoticism and age) predict the support of the re-introduction of capital punishment in Britain. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity. A test of the full model containing all predictor variables against the constant-only model was

statistically significant, $F(7, 96) = 69.92$, $p < .001$, and explained 81% of the variance in support the re-introduction of capital punishment in Britain. As shown in Table 2, only one independent variable made a unique statistically significant contribution to the model: support for the death penalty ($\beta = .85$). This suggests that more favorable attitudes towards the death penalty are related to greater support for the re-introduction of capital punishment in Britain while controlling for all other factors in the model.

Table 2: Regression analysis predicting Support for the re-introduction of Capital Punishment in Britain

	R^2	$adjR^2$	β	B	SE
Model	.82	.81***			
Gender			-.05	-.20	.21
Age			.04	.01	.01
Location			.09	.41	.20
Support for Death Penalty Scale			.85***	.12	.01
Belief in Retribution Scale			.08	.03	.03
Fear of crime			.08	.06	.0
Psychoticism			-.01	-.01	.06

Note: *** $p < .001$

Sympathy with an offender who is facing Capital Punishment:

Standard multiple linear regression was again employed, this time to determine which of the predictor variables (gender, age, support for the death penalty, belief in retribution, fear of crime, psychoticism and age) predict sympathy towards an offender who is facing capital punishment. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity. A test of the full model containing all predictor variables against the constant-only model was statistically significant, $F(7, 96) = 10.96$, $p < .001$, and explained 40% of the variance in sympathising with an offender who is facing capital punishment. As shown in Table 3, three variables made unique statistically significant contributions to the model: location, support for the death penalty, and belief in retribution. The strongest predictor was support for the death penalty ($\beta = -.34$). This suggests that individuals scoring higher on the support for the death penalty scale are less sympathetic to offenders facing capital punishment. Being from an urban location was related to greater sympathy ($\beta = .19$), while belief in retribution was related to less sympathy ($\beta = -.26$), while controlling for all other factors in the model.

Table 3: Regression analysis predicting Sympathy with an offender who is facing Capital Punishment

	R^2	$adjR^2$	β	B	SE
Model	.44	.40			
Gender			.04	.11	.27
Age			-.11	-.01	.01
Location			.19*	.65	.27
Support for Death Penalty Scale			-.34**	-.04	.01
Belief in Retribution Scale			-.26*	-.08	.04
Fear of crime			-.07	-.04	.05
Psychoticism			.10	.10	.07

Note: ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Summary:

The results of this investigation therefore display that support of the death penalty is a crucial predictor of one's attitude towards capital punishment. With regards to predicting sympathy towards an offender who is facing capital punishment, the findings show that this can be determined by one's location, support for the death penalty and belief in retribution.

Discussion

The research questions of the present investigation were; 'do the following factors affect a person's attitude towards capital punishment; personality, belief in retribution, fear of crime and demographic characteristics?' and 'what are the predictors of support of the re-introduction of capital punishment?' These research questions were successfully explored within this investigation and, as an outcome; the multiple regression analysis was able to determine how well the independent variables of (a) support of the re-introduction of capital punishment in Britain and (b) sympathy towards an offender who is facing capital punishment were able to predict one's attitude towards capital punishment. Furthermore, the analysis was able to demonstrate which of the independent variables were best able to predict an outcome, whether a predictor variable is able to predict an outcome when the effects of another variable are controlled for and, lastly, the amount of variance explained in an outcome variable by all predictors.

The results of this investigation displayed that 40.4% of the sample used would support the re-introduction of capital punishment as a form of discipline in British society. Additionally, it was determined through the multiple regression analysis that, support for the death penalty was the most statistically significant variable regarding support for the re-introduction of capital punishment. This finding coincides with the results of a 2014 poll, which determined that less than half of respondents, 45%, would support the re-introduction of capital punishment in Britain (The Guardian, 2014). This signifies a fall in support of capital punishment as the same poll conducted in 2010 found a support of 51%. The diminishing support for capital punishment could be explained by recent examples of problematic executions in America. There have been various cases reported describing the failure of the lethal injection. For example, in Oklahoma in 2014 (BBC, 2014) an offender endured a two hour death when one of his veins ruptured which prevented the lethal injection from working. Furthermore, it has been reported that the state will introduce nitrogen gas as a form of execution method due to the amount of botched injections (The Guardian, 2014). Additionally, Utah have decided to bring back the use of firing squad to implement the death penalty (The Guardian, 2015). The use of problematic injections and the introduction of cruel punishments could cause people to change their attitudes as many of these methods are viewed to be inhumane.

Whilst looking at the sympathy that people express towards an offender facing the death penalty, it was discovered that 44.2% of participants reported sympathising with an offender who was facing the punishment and this was influenced by the statistically significant predictor variables; location, support for the death penalty and one's belief in. Furthermore, the results exhibited that urban dwellers portrayed greater sympathy towards the offenders compared to rural dwellers. The results also demonstrated that participants showing a belief in retribution displayed less sympathy towards offenders. There was found to be no significant difference regarding gender in relation to either support of capital punishment or sympathising with an offender facing the punishment.

It was found within the results of this investigation that a difference in location was related to a difference in opinions regarding the sympathy that one holds towards an offender facing the death penalty. From this investigation, we can determine that

those inhabiting a rural setting are likely to show less sympathy towards these offenders. As reviewed earlier, Norris and Reeves (2013) established a difference between one's fear of crime in rural and urban areas. It was found that rural dwellers were prone to possess a greater concern that offenders would travel into their community to engage in criminal activities. Therefore, these criminals would pose a threat to, and cause difficulties for their community. A rural community tends to revolve around the concept of happiness, relaxation and a problem-free life (Cloke and Milbourne, 1992); this can often involve a fear of strangers infiltrating their close-knit community. This feeling of fear towards crime expressed within a rural setting demonstrates a low tolerance towards criminals and this is reflected within the finding that rural dwellers hold less sympathy towards offenders.

The present research was also able to determine that those who believe in retribution will show less sympathy towards offenders facing capital punishment. The significance of the Belief in Retribution scale (Sidanius et al, 2006) also shows the public's desire for punitive measures to be implemented within society. This finding coincides with previous research, which explored the meanings and values behind those who believe in retribution. A belief in retribution is typically characterised by the view of 'an eye for an eye' (Baumgartner, De Boef and Boydstun, 2008). This means that the offender should receive a fitting punishment for their conviction, in some instances; this would include the death penalty. This therefore shows that, in some circumstances, a belief in retribution is focused on and fuelled by vengeance rather than a desire for justice (Gibbs, 1978). Thus, it is not unanticipated that those holding a strong belief in retribution do not sympathise with offenders facing the death penalty. Due to the perception that having a belief in retribution is motivated by having a more ruthless motive (Bedau, 1998), it was once considered that people were less willing to admit that this belief was the reasoning behind their support for the death penalty. However Fox et al, (1991), displayed within their research that as support for the death penalty began to increase in America; believing in retribution became a more acceptable reasoning for supporting the punishment. Fox et al, (1991) provided a finding that is clearly confirmed within the results of the present study as belief in retribution was found to be a predictor of one's sympathy towards an offender facing the death penalty.

Support for the death penalty was found to be a significant predictor of one's attitude towards capital punishment and its re-introduction. It was discovered within American research that those who supported the death penalty did so due to the idea that the death penalty could be a deterrence for criminals, that the cost of a sentence of life imprisonment was more than that of sentencing an offender to death or that it would prevent the offender from returning back into society (Bohm, 1987). Therefore, it is evident that those who support the death penalty would favour the re-introduction of the punishment in British society.

The findings of this investigation have been able to provide us with a useful understanding as to why the British public might want to re-introduce capital punishment as a discipline in modern society. By gaining an understanding of why people desire to re-introduce such a harsh punishment, we can observe the flaws within the current criminal justice system and begin to see if any adaptations could occur. For example, it was previously discussed in the introduction that a study conducted in America by O'Neil (2014) had already uncovered a large support for

the death penalty due to the attitude that a sentence of life without parole nevertheless, still permits parole. By examining the meaning behind this attitude, it can be determined that people are often frightened that criminals, with convictions such as murder will be released and, consequently, live and work amongst their community. In February 2015, it was documented that across the UK there were over 50 criminals serving a whole-life sentence in prisons (The Guardian, 2015), compared to the current prison population of 85,348 criminals, this is a small proportion (Ministry of Justice, 2015). Traditionally, criminals were to receive a 30 year sentence for the majority of murder cases and were only ordered to whole-life sentences for offences that were deemed to be exceptionally serious (Criminal Justice Act, 2003; BBC, 2004). However, it would seem that the only way in which this issue of fear within the public of living amongst convicted criminals could be rectified, would be if more whole life sentences were given to offenders.

Although the findings of this study can be used to understand why people maintain such attitudes towards capital punishment, it must be remembered that the findings cannot be widely generalised as only a small sample was used. In order to study this topic further, it would be necessary to gain a larger and more diverse sample. However, it proved to be difficult to recruit participants whilst investigating this topic. Many people refused to take part as they felt that this was a rather personal topic to discuss and therefore deemed it to be too socially sensitive. Another limitation of this investigation is seen within the method of data collection. This is due to the use of Likert scales and questionnaires in an attempt to try to gather the attitudes of the public. For an example, a Likert scale does not allow the participant to express the reasoning behind their beliefs or to determine the scenarios in which they would support capital punishment. This limitation indicates that it could be beneficial to include a qualitative element to the investigation. Despite this, as previously discussed, much of the prior research surrounding this topic has been conducted in America and not previously explored in Britain. It is therefore extremely useful to perceive the attitudes that are held by Britain towards the notion. Furthermore, it is evident that this is a timely topic particularly since the recent spark of the debate instigated by the murder of the British Army soldier; Fusilier Lee Rigby (2013), (Grierson, 2013).

With regards to studying this topic further, it would be useful if the study were replicated using a larger sample size so that the results could be generalised and applied to society. In addition, if a qualitative component were added to the investigation, it would allow the participants to ascertain and express to the researcher why they held a certain view towards capital punishment. As previously discussed, the use of a questionnaire method involving Likert scales does not allow the participants to elaborate on their responses or even explain their answer. This would be key as, after they completed the questionnaire, many participants expressed that they felt the need to clarify some of their responses but were not able to; for example, they were not able to state that they would only agree with capital punishment in extreme circumstances. By adding a qualitative element to the investigation, participants would be able to explain their answers further and therefore, we would gain a better understanding as to why one either supports or condemns the use of capital punishment.

The present investigation determined that one's attitude towards the re-introduction

of capital punishment is predicted by a support for the death penalty. Furthermore, it was established that one's sympathy towards an offender facing the death penalty is predicted by one's location, their belief in retribution and whether they support the death penalty. The results have supported previous literature regarding this topic, which has been explored within the introduction; however, this investigation has allowed us to gain an insight into British attitudes towards the topic compared to the largely American based literature. The implications of these findings have allowed us to gain a useful understanding as to why the British public may support the concept of the re-introduction of capital punishment into modern society.

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