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A STUDY OF THE ATTITUDES OF
PSU STUDENTS TOWARD CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Science

by
Charles L. Hunsaker

PITTSBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

Pittsburg, Kansas

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A STUDY OF THE ATTITUDES OF
PSU STUDENTS TOWARD CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

An Abstract of the Thesis by
Charles L. Hunsaker

The purpose of this study was to determine the attitudes Pittsburg State University students held toward the debatable and controversial topic of capital punishment. A total of 154 Pittsburg State University students were selected from eight different classrooms on campus to take part in this study. Each student was requested to fill out a questionnaire which was distributed in each class.

Results of the study showed that the majority or 77 percent of Pittsburg State University students approved of the death penalty. The students who disapproved totaled 22 or 14 percent of the total population of 154. There were 14 students or 9 percent of the population who had no opinion. Factors which may have contributed to the selected students were also measured in this study which include: age, gender, political affiliation, ethnic origin, religious orientation, and income. These factors showed many differences among individual students.

As mentioned in this study in the review of literature section, the national average for approval of the death penalty is approximately 86 percent. PSU students have approximated this average with a 77 percent approval rate. Perhaps this is a growing trend in a country where violence and violent crime is on the rise.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Attitudes toward capital punishment have been varied among individuals in our society for decades. In early times, it was thought that capital punishment was a just means of removing from society those who insisted on killing, robbing, and raping. Today, approximately 86 percent of our nation agrees with the past, especially for those who murder, whether it be rape and murder, mass murder, serial murder, or just plain murder.

As mentioned, attitudes toward capital punishment vary within our society. Those who approve, do so, due to the belief that capital punishment seeks retribution for the victim and the victims family, as well as being a deterrent for others who may think twice before taking another's life. Unfortunately, there is no research showing that capital punishment is a deterrent nor does retribution indicate that the victims feelings are put to rest once the offender is put to death.

Opponents of capital punishment contend that the philosophy of an "eye for an eye" is not only inhuman, but barbaric in our present society. Since our society does not mug muggers or rape rapist, why then, should we as a society murder murderers? This attitude toward capital punishment is

slowly decreasing among our society's members due the increase of violence crimes encountered in present day America.

Due to the increase of violent crime in America, legislatures, judicial personnel, and members of society are increasingly becoming in favor of the death penalty. This attitude can now be realized in the great state of Kansas after recent passage of the death penalty.

Attitudes toward the death penalty are varied as well as the factors involved in this attitude. We must not forget that our present society members are not only complex in thought but also varied in beliefs. The debate for or against the death penalty will continue to be a complex issue among our members of society for a long time to come.

Statement of the Problem

This study is being conducted to determine the attitudes of PSU students toward capital punishment and to attempt to determine the factors which may contribute to these attitudes such as gender, political affiliation, religious orientation, age, ethnic origin, and college major.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed:

Question 1 - Do the majority of PSU students favor or oppose the death penalty?

Question 2 - Do the following factors contribute toward the attitudes toward capital punishment: gender, political affiliation, religious orientation, age, ethnic origin, income, and college major.

Delimitations

This study was limited to the students of Pittsburg State University and the areas to be studied are limited to the attitudes and factors involved in the attitudes of the respondents toward capital punishment.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to the cooperation, honesty, and willingness of the respondents when completing the survey instrument. Comprehension of the letter attached to the questionnaire was also vital for the study to be successful.

Definitions of Terms

Alcoholics Anonymous - an organization which attempts to cure alcoholics by using group therapy.

Capital punishment - the imposition of the death penalty for an offender convicted of a capital offense.

Criminologist - those professionals who study crime, criminals, and criminal behavior.

Eighth Amendment - excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishment inflicted.

Equability - all offenders should receive the same punishment for the same crime.

Fourteenth Amendment - all persons born and naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

Furman v. Georgia - a 1972 court decision in which the Supreme Court held that Georgia capital punishment statute was unconstitutional in its application.

Offender - a person who commits an offense; used in statutes to describe a person implicated in the commission of a crime.

Parole - the continued custody and supervision in the community by federal or state authorities after an offender is released from an institution before expiration of the sentenced term.

Perpetrator - one who commits a crime.

Retribution - a theory of punishment that contends that an offender should be punished for the crimes committed because he or she deserves it.

Assumptions

The first assumption was that the attitudes of Pittsburgh State University students support the findings on current research - that the majority favor the death penalty.

The second assumption was that the following factors contribute to the attitudes toward capital punishment: gender, political affiliation, religious orientation, age, ethnic origin, and college major.

The Significance of the Study

The attitudes towards capital punishment attempt to determine whether the guilty offender of murder be put to death or spend life imprisonment without parole. The attitudes of our personnel employed in the court system, correctional system, and the individuals in our society determine whether offenders of murder are put to death or spend the rest of their life in prison.

This study attempted to determine whether the influence of gender, political affiliation, age, religious orientation, income, ethnic origin, and college major contribute towards the attitudes of the death penalty.

Organization of the Study

This research study was organized according to the following outline:

1. CHAPTER I - Introduction

This chapter presents the reader with the statement of the problems, the subproblems, delimitations, limitations, definition of terms, assumptions, and significance of the study.

2. CHAPTER II - Review of the Literature

This chapter supports the research problem by providing some related and similar literature that has been written concerning the study.

3. CHAPTER III - Procedures

This chapter contains the methods and procedures used to gather the information which was used in this study and which will be discussed. The discussion includes the way the data was analyzed and displayed.

4. CHAPTER IV - Findings

This chapter presents the results of the research.

5. CHAPTER V - Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter is used to summarize the data and to provide conclusions. Recommendations will also be suggested in this chapter.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The debate for or against capital punishment has continued for centuries. The attitudes of the U.S. Supreme Court, state legislatures, and the general public have determined how our society should respond to offenders convicted of murder and rape. These debates are, presently, based on the Eighth and Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution of the United States, the belief of retribution, the deterrence of capital punishment, and the issue of equability.

In a 1972 landmark case, *Furman v. Georgia*, the U.S. Supreme Court favored a ban on using capital punishment as it was currently being practiced. Two of the justices (Brennan and Marshall) held that the death penalty was cruel and unusual punishment (the Eighth Amendment) under all circumstances. The due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment was evoked, leaving the states with the problem of passing legislation that met the Court's requirements. As described by Chief Justice Warren Burger:

The legislatures are free to eliminate capital punishment for specific crimes or to carve out limited exceptions to a general abolition of the penalty, without adherence to the conceptual strictures of the Eighth Amendment. The legislatures can and should make an assessment of the deterrent influence of capital

punishment, both generally and as affecting the commission of specific types of crime. If legislatures come to the doubt the efficacy of capital punishment, they can abolish it either completely or on a selective basis. If new evidence persuades them that they acted unwisely, they can reverse their field and reinstate the penalty to the extent it is thought warranted. An Eighth Amendment ruling by judges cannot be made with such flexibility or discriminating precision (1, 306).

In 1976 the U.S. Supreme Court lifted the ban on capital punishment since most states met the standards set by the Court. Once again, the death penalty was in force in thirty-seven states. Although the death penalty was back in force there were still issues in regard to the retribution ideology, whether the death penalty provided a deterrence against murder, and whether the sentences handed down by the states were uniform regardless of the offenders color.

The term retribution, philosophically, generally means "getting even" with the perpetrator. In today's society, most victims of crime believe this "get even" philosophy should be accomplished by the government and that punishing the offender is the best way to reduce crime. Believers in retribution assume that the offenders willfully choose to commit acts against society and that they are responsible for their own acts. This belief applies not only to minor crimes committed but also to the ultimate crime - murder. In other words, the death penalty can be justified and considered a deterrent toward crime.

The issue of the death penalty reducing the number of

murders committed are still being debated today. Those that believe the death penalty as a deterrent may agree with the following comments by Justice Marshall as quoted in the Furman v. Georgia case:

No other punishment deter men so effectually from committing crimes as the punishment of death. This is one of those propositions which it is difficult to prove, simply because they are in themselves more obvious than any proof can make them. It is possible to display ingenuity in arguing against it, but that is all. The whole experience of mankind is in the other direction. The threat of instant death is the one to which resort has always been made when there was an absolute necessity for producing some result....No one goes to certain inevitable death except by compulsion. Put the matter the other way. Was there ever yet a criminal who, when sentenced to death and brought out to die, would refuse the offer of a commutation of his sentence for the severest secondary punishment? Surely not. Why is this? It can only be because all that a man has will he give for his life. In any secondary punishment, however terrible, there is hope; but death is death; its terrors cannot be described more forcibly (1, 307).

The opponents of capital punishment attempt to show that there is no statistical basis that proves capital punishment is a deterrent to crime in America. In fact, there is an overwhelming body of evidence that the presence or absence of the death penalty has no effect on the homicide rate inside or outside the prisons. Murderers (who account for almost 99 percent of capital cases) are usually model prisoners (1, 307).

It has even been postulated that the death penalty itself creates an atmosphere that fosters violence in prison. The day of an execution is charged with extreme tension

inside the prison. The prisoners are often placed under more security than usual, and acts of violence in defiance of the authorities seem to be more prevalent.

Not only do opponents of the death penalty agree that capital punishment is no deterrent to crime but they also agree with Robert Johnson that capital punishment is immoral. Here are excerpts from his position:

...Murderers are dangerously flawed human beings - they are not creatures beyond comprehension or control. Their violence is not a specter or disease that afflicts them without rhyme or reason, nor is it merely a convenient vehicle for ugly passions. Rather, their violence is an adaptation to bleak and often brutal lives.... Thus, while it is true that murderers must be paid back for what they have done to their victims, this must be done in a way that is just and proper and not simply an imitation of their violence. This point is obvious as it applies to other crimes, including other violent crimes. No one seriously entertains the notion of robbing robbers, mugging muggers, or raping rapists, even if this is, strictly speaking, what these offenders deserve. Instead, these criminals are imprisoned for periods of time that are believed to produce suffering equivalent to, or commensurate with, the suffering wrought by their crimes.... Put bluntly, an execution is a premeditated killing, no more and no less. Fittingly, it is often preceded by trials in which, according to criminologist Stephen Gettinger, an inadequate defense is "the single outstanding characteristic" of capital defendants who, as a result, appear in court as "creatures beyond comprehension, virtually gagged and masked in preparation for the execution chamber...." Murderers treat their victims like objects to be violated and discarded but we as a society must not fashion our punishments after their acts.... Instead, murderers, like other criminals, must be punished as human beings who deserve to suffer in a way that is commensurate with the harm they have caused. Thus, their punishment must approximate death and yet respect their humanity by treating them as full-blooded persons and not as mere physical objects. [For]...[t]he majority of murderers...serving sentences of no more than ten years would be sufficient

punishment....Our worst murderers, those "monsters" we presently consign to the death chamber because their actions seem to place them beyond the bounds of human decency, would of course be eligible for lengthy prison terms, including a natural or true life sentence (15, 409).

Another debate for or against the capital punishment is the issue of equability. First, the prosecutor must enter a formal charge against the defendant and second, the prosecutor has the controversial role of discretion to seek the death penalty. This discretion is where the issue of equability comes into play.

In South Carolina, studies show that if the victim is white and the offender black, then the black offender is eight times as likely to face a death sentence as that same offender would face if the victim were black (7, 245-411). In Kentucky, blacks who killed whites, as compared to other homicide offenders, had more than an average chance of being charged by the prosecutor with a death-eligible crime and sentenced by the jury to die. This same research also found thirteen cases in their study's time frame in which whites murdered blacks and prosecutors failed to seek the death penalty even once (5, 189-207). In a recent study of executions since 1608, another researcher reached the same conclusion using status attributes such as race, social class, and economic status (8 529-544).

The issue of equability may be summed up as follows:

The heart of the question of equability is whether the punishment is applied across a jurisdiction. Are judges

imposing similar sentences to offenders who have committed similar crimes?

Another related question involves the issue of whether or not the punishment fits the crime. This question arises in the case of a single court staffed by eleven judges, all of whom sentence offenders accused of driving under the influence of alcohol. One judge may routinely impose fines of \$100 on all offenders to be sentenced; another sentencing judge may impose thirty days in jail plus thirty hours of community service. The other nine judges may place their offenders on probation, one condition of which may be compulsory attendance at meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous. Which, if any, of these punishments best fits the crime: a fine, jail time plus community service, or probation with mandatory attendance in an alcohol-avoidance program?

In terms of the death penalty, perhaps the question could best be phrased as: Are blacks who kill white victims more likely to receive a death sentence than are white killers who murder black victims? (1, 309).

The interpretation of the Eighth and Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution of the United States by the Supreme Court, the belief of retribution, the issue of whether or not capital punishment is a deterrent to crime, and equability to those sentenced to death are all factors in today's society on attitudes of the death penalty. Other factors may be included in this debate.

The individuals status may also affect the decision of for or against the issue of capital punishment. Socioeconomic status, race, education, political affiliation, religious belief, and even gender may affect our attitudes towards capital punishment. This complex, highly controversial issue affects all of society, and the final decision lies with each of society's members.

Various research has been done on the attitudes of capital punishment. Some of the literature deals with public opinion only, while there is other literature that deals with the factors which contribute to attitudes of individuals in regards to capital punishment.

The public's attitude toward the death penalty has been compiled, in much of the research, by the use of public polls. Most polls show strong support for the death penalty - with a low of around 60 percent showing support compared to the current rates of over 86 percent - this fact seems to have as little impact on death penalty legislation as public opinion has on gun control (16, 286-296).

Most research in the area of attitudes toward capital punishment are found in the different factors involved in the individuals and society's attitudes. Some of the research deals with such factors as: myths about aggression, race, religious orientation, attitudes of inmates, personal values, community sentiment towards the death penalty, the relationship between whether death penalty attitudes were related to conviction or acquittal proneness, attitudes towards the death penalty for juveniles, and jurors responses to aggravating and mitigating circumstances in capital cases. Other research was done in areas of the relationship between attitude and behavior, impact of crime victimization and fear of crime, retribution, general deterrence, and police attitudes toward capital punishment.

Research done in the realm of myths about aggression found misconceptions as applied to a complete understanding of aggression. One hundred sixty-five college students completed a survey containing a measure of misconceptions about human aggression and attitudinal items on the death penalty. The results did not provide strong support for the hypothesis that subjects with relatively high numbers of misconceptions about human aggression are more likely than better informed subjects to support the death penalty (14, 1337-1338).

Young examined the relationship of religious orientation and race to attitudes toward the death penalty. Data was obtained from 1,078 White adults and 150 Black adults. Results indicated that white subjects were more supportive of capital punishment than were black subjects. Religious worship was significantly related to opposition to the death penalty. Among all subgroups identified in the study, opposition to capital punishment was strongest among Black evangelicals. A fundamentalist orientation toward the Bible was associated with relatively strong support for the death penalty (13, 76-87).

In another study, Young tested the idea that Blacks' and Whites' attitudes reflect different ways of conceptualizing the issue of capital punishment. It was hypothesized that support for the death penalty among Whites is based on whether they attribute criminal behavior to characteristics

of the criminal or to the environment. Support among Blacks, however, was predicted to be influenced by perceptions of sentencing equity and by a lack of trust in representatives of the criminal justice systems. Analysis of data from 504 White and 136 Black respondents provided evidence in favor of the responsibility of the offender for Whites; whereas support among Blacks was found to relate primarily to degree of trust in the police, but not to the perception of sentencing inequities (12, 67-75).

Attitudes apparently vary from individual to individual and in the type of environment they are raised or live in. One environment that was studied by Dennis Stevens was that of the inmate. Stevens examined the attitudes of 307 inmates about capital punishment. The respondents, especially the most violent offenders, favored capital punishment for some crimes when applied to others, but not to their own criminal activity. Moreover, Stevens found that the inmates did not see capital punishment as a deterrent and implied that it reinforces their violent perspectives. The incarcerated offenders apparently feel as strongly as other citizens about capital punishment, but perhaps for different reasons (11, 272-279).

In today's society, juveniles may be tried as adults in some capital cases. This creates another decision individuals and society has to face. In a study conducted by Skovron, Scott, and Cullen the attitudes of 600 adults in two

communities toward capital punishment brought some interesting results. By using a telephone survey most respondents opposed the death penalty for juveniles below the age of 14 convicted of murder. According to this study, belief in the effectiveness of juvenile rehabilitation may account for the opposition (10, 546-561)

One place where attitudes toward the death penalty can be a matter of life or death for the accused is the court room and the attitudes of the jurors. Two studies done by Luginbuhl and Middendorf explored the relationship between attitudes toward the death penalty and support for or rejection of aggravating and mitigating circumstances in a capital trial. A total of 642 jurors serving on jury duty voluntarily completed questionnaires in the jury lounge. In study #1 subjects strongly opposed to the death penalty were significantly more receptive to mitigating circumstances than were the remaining subjects. In study #2, subjects who would have been excluded for their opposition to the death penalty were significantly less receptive to aggravating circumstances than were the other subjects. This study suggested that the present system of death qualification in capital cases results in biases against the interest of the defendant at all stages of the trial process (6, 263-281).

As can be seen in the previous research mentioned, attitudes of capital punishment vary and that the factors behind these attitudes are wide-ranging. In a study conducted

by Bohm, public opinion polls consistently show that three rationales provide the basis of support for the death penalty: retribution, general deterrence, and incapacitation. Sources of death penalty attitudes have been attributed to the family; to moral crusaders, politicians, and law enforcement officials; and to developing moral standards. In this study it was suggested that one of the most important issues regarding death penalty attitudes is that research, to date, is based almost entirely on the responses of poorly informed subjects (3, 380-396).

All attitudes for or against the death penalty by individuals and society determine what the accused will receive: death or life imprisonment. One of the major institutions that have a dramatic effect on capital punishment is our judicial system. Among the persons employed in this system are the police. In a study done by Fagan, police attitudes towards capital punishment were measured by using a survey of 78 police officers and the results compared to those of the general public. The police views were consistent with those of the citizens, although generally more strongly held. Both groups supported capital punishment for serious crimes (4, 193-201).

Another important part of the court system is the lawyers: both prosecutor and defense attorneys. In our present system attorneys may select jurors that will best fit there goals: getting the offender off or prosecuting the

offender to the maximum sentence of the law. The ability of the attorney to sway the jurors or at least select the jury has been studied by Arbuthnot. In this study, it was assumed that a person's sociomoral worldview can aid lawyers in their selection of jurors who are capable of advanced worldviews and sympathetic to the needs of procedural safeguards. The sociomoral worldview can be described as a conglomeration of intellect, education, experience, and role-taking opportunities. This study showed that a jurors worldwide view and sympathy to the needs of procedural safeguards allowed the lawyers to select those jurors that benefited the defendants needs (2, 27-30).

Summary of the Literature

The literature review indicates that the individual and societal attitudes towards capital punishment are not only complex but are varied among each of us. The factors that take up the attitudes for or against capital punishment are just as complex. Factors such as the environment, race, education, morals, religious beliefs, and income are just a few. Occupations, society influences, and even attorneys abilities to sway the juror are other factors influencing this complex, debatable subject.

This literature also indicates that the public, through public polls, are for capital punishment, with the current rate of 86 percent approval and with a low of 60 percent.

This approval may indicate that the public in general are upset with our current judicial system.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

The survey instrument used in this study was submitted to Pittsburg State University students. The survey instrument submitted contained a consent form explaining the purpose of the research and that a copy of the results will be provided to respondents that desire such.

Approximately one hundred Pittsburg State University students were surveyed by distributing the survey instrument in various classes on campus. Permission from each instructor was obtained.

The survey instrument contained questions in regard to each individuals attitude toward capital punishment and also items to measure the factors which may effect these attitudes by gathering personal information: gender, political affiliation, religious orientation, age, ethnic origin, income, city and town of place where the respondent grew up, and college major. The survey instrument also contained questions in regard to reasons for approving or disapproving capital punishment. As an example, a respondent who approves of capital punishment due to the taking of a life by an offender may not approve of the death penalty for an offender who has been convicted of rape or one who disapproves of the

death penalty may prefer to see the offender spend the rest of his or her natural life in prison rather than the offender receiving parole.

Data collected from each survey instrument was processed and presented in the form of tables which contain the number of respondents who approve or disapprove as well as the percentage. For example, for those who approve the death penalty the total number and percentage of the total group was shown in the appropriate table.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

In this study, one hundred fifty-four Pittsburg State University students from eight different classrooms on campus completed questionnaires. The survey instrument consisted of questions in regard to students attitudes toward capital punishment as well as personal data questions.

The data obtained from the questionnaire provided this information about students' attitude toward the death penalty. Students who participated selected one of three choices: approve, disapprove, or have no opinion toward capital punishment.

Other factors were analyzed which may have affected these attitudes such as: age, gender, political affiliation, ethnic origin, religious orientation, income, and the students major. Other questions such as the students status of undergraduate or graduate and traditional or nontraditional provided a breakdown to determine the approval, disapproval or no opinion rate which appears on separate tables throughout this section.

The students attitude toward capital punishment may be found in Table I. Out of 154 participating, 118 students or 77 percent approved of capital punishment, 22 or 14 percent

disapproved, and 22 or 14 percent had no opinion. These findings indicated that the students, by a large margin, favor capital punishment.

TABLE I
ATTITUDES TOWARD CAPITAL PUNISHMENT (N=154)

Attitude	Number	Percent
Approved	118	77
Disapproved	22	14
No opinion	14	9

In Table II, 153 respondents participated with one declining to divulge an age. As can be seen seven different age ranges were given with a variety of respondents participating in each range. Table II is used to show that two age ranges, 53 - 59 and 60 - 66, illustrated that 100 percent approved the death penalty. The highest disapproval age range was that of 46 - 52 in which 33 percent disapproved of the death penalty. The 25 - 31 age group had the highest rate of no opinion at 20 percent. It should be noted that the number of participants varied from one age range to another. As can be seen by these differences the approval, disapproval, and no opinion varied considerably from one age range to another. Also note that the participants found in the age range of

18 - 24 contained the most respondents, while, the age range of 60 - 66 contained the least amount of participants.

TABLE II

ATTITUDE VERSUS AGE (N=153)

Age Range	Approve		Disapprove		No Opinion	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
18 - 24	52	79	9	14	5	8
25 - 31	22	73	2	7	6	20
32 - 38	14	88	1	6	1	6
39 - 45	17	71	6	25	1	4
46 - 52	7	58	4	33	1	8
53 - 59	3	100	0	0	0	0
60 - 66	2	100	0	0	0	0

In Table III the students attitudes were divided up by gender with females totaling 98 and males totaling 56. As can be seen, 76 percent of females and 79 percent of males approved capital punishment. In the disapprove column 15 percent of females and 13 percent males disapproved, while in the no opinion column males and females were equal at 9 percent. Although the females outnumbered the amount of males participating the males obtained the highest approval rate. The female respondents totaled 74 in the approval column, 15 in the disapproval column, and nine in the no opinion column.

The male participants totaled 44 in the approval column, seven in the disapprove column, and five in the no opinion column.

TABLE III

ATTITUDE VERSUS GENDER (N=154)

Gender	Approve		Disapprove		No Opinion	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Female	74	76	15	15	9	9
Male	44	79	7	13	5	9

Another factor which may contribute to attitudes toward capital punish is the participants political affiliation. As shown in Table IV, 32 Democrats, 42 Republicans, 39 Independents, and one Socialist participated in this study. There were four respondents who had no political ties to any party.

Those from the Democrat Party 32 students or 68 percent approved the death penalty, nine students or 19 percent disapproved of the death penalty, and six students or 13 percent had no opinion. The Republican Party indicated that 42 students or 82 percent approved the death penalty, nine students or 18 percent disapproved, and all students participated. Of the Independent Party 39 students or 83 percent approved, three students or 6 percent disapproved, and five students or 11 percent had no opinion. The Socialist Party amounted to 100 percent approval of the death penalty, however, only one participant was found.

Table IV is used to illustrate those with no political ties approved the death penalty by 50 percent with four respondents, 13 percent or one student disapproved, and 38 percent or three students had no opinion. There was a total of 154 participants and the Socialist Party had the highest approval rate with the Independent party coming in second with 83 percent approval.

TABLE IV

ATTITUDE VERSUS POLITICAL AFFILIATION (N=154)

Party	<u>Approve</u>		<u>Disapprove</u>		<u>No Opinion</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Democrat	32	68	9	19	6	13
Republican	42	82	9	18	0	0
Independent	39	83	3	6	5	11
Socialist	1	100	0	0	0	0
None	4	50	1	13	3	38

Attitudes toward capital punishment versus ethnic origin is found in Table V. The respondents consisted of 135 Caucasians, 15 Asians, three Native Americans, and one Russian. The Caucasian group approved the death penalty by 79 percent or 106 students, while 13 percent or 18 students disapproved, and 8 percent or 11 students had no opinion. In

the Asian Group, 67 percent or ten students approved, 13 percent or two students disapproved, and 20 percent or three students disapproved.

The Native American group approved the death penalty by 33 percent with one student participating. There was 67 percent or two students who disapproved, and there were no respondents found in the no opinion column. The Russian participant approved of the death penalty which means a 100 percent approval rate.

TABLE V

ATTITUDES VERSUS ETHNIC ORIGIN (N=154)

Ethnic Origin	<u>Approve</u>		<u>Disapprove</u>		<u>No Opinion</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Caucasian	106	79	18	13	11	8
Asian	10	67	2	13	3	20
Native American	1	33	2	67	0	0
Russian	1	100	0	0	0	0

Table VI illustrates attitude versus religious orientation. The participants were members of the following religious factions: Protestant, Catholic, Buddhism, Moslem, Quaker, Islam, and Mormon. One respondent claimed to be agnostic while ten students had no religious ties.

Protestants approved the death penalty with 83 percent with 79 students responding. There were 13 percent or 12 students who disapproved and 4 percent or four students who had no opinion. Catholics responded with a 66 percent approval rate with 23 students participating and 20 percent or seven students who disapproved. There were 14 percent or four students who had no opinion.

Buddists approved the death penalty by 67 percent with

TABLE VI

ATTITUDE VERSUS RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION (N=154)

Religion	Approve		Disapprove		No Opinion	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Protestant	79	83	12	13	4	4
Catholic	23	66	7	20	5	14
Buddism	2	67	0	0	1	33
Moslem	1	100	0	0	0	0
Quaker	1	100	0	0	0	0
Islam	1	100	0	0	0	0
Agnostic	1	100	0	0	0	0
Mormon	0	0	0	0	1	100
None	10	63	3	19	3	19

two students approving and there were no students who disapproved. One student or 33 percent had no opinion. The remaining religions: moslem, Quaker, and Islam approved the death penalty 100 percent as well as did the agnostic participant. For those students who had no religious ties, 63 percent or ten students approved, 19 percent or three students disapproved, and 19 percent or three students had no opinion.

The student status as an undergraduate or graduate was also ask in the questionnaire in this study. Refer to Table VII for the results.

There were found to be 107 undergraduates and 47 graduate students responding in this part of the study. There were 78 percent or 83 students who approved of the death penalty, 16 percent or 17 students disapproving, and 15 percent or seven students with no opinion. A total of 154 students participated.

TABLE VII

ATTITUDE VERSUS UNDERGRADUATE/GRADUATE (N=154)

Status	<u>Approve</u>		<u>Disapprove</u>		<u>No Opinion</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Undergraduate	83	78	17	16	7	7
Graduate	35	75	5	11	7	15

Traditional and nontraditional student status was also used in this study. There were 68 traditional students compared with 86 nontraditional students. A total of 154 students participated.

The traditional students approved the death penalty by 79 percent with 54 students agreeing. There were 13 percent or nine students who disapproved and 7 percent or five students who had no opinion. Nontraditional students approved the death penalty by a 74 percent margin with 64 students giving approval. There were 15 percent or 13 students who disapproved and 11 percent or nine students with no opinion.

TABLE VIII

ATTITUDE VERSUS TRADITIONAL/NONTRADITIONAL (N=154)

Status	<u>Approve</u>		<u>Disapprove</u>		<u>No Opinion</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Traditional	54	79	9	13	5	7
Nontraditional	64	74	13	15	9	11

Another factor that may influence a students attitude toward capital punishment is income. In Table IX the attitude versus income of the 154 participants is depicted. There are six ranges which consist of \$0-19,999, \$20-29,999, \$30-39,999, 40-49,999, and \$50,000 plus range. The highest approval rate of the death penalty may be found in the

\$30-39,999 income range and the lowest approval rate at the \$0-19,999 income range.

The highest disapproval rate may be found in the \$20-29,999 and \$30-39,999 income range. In the \$0-19,999 income range 68 percent or 28 students approved, 15 percent or six percent disapproved, and 17 percent or seven students had no opinion. The income range \$20-29,999 shows 75 percent or 21 students who approve of the death penalty. There were 11 percent or three students who disapproved, and 14 percent or four students had no opinion.

In the income range of \$30-39,999, 68 percent or 28 students approved, 11 percent or three students disapproved, and 4 percent or one student had no opinion. The \$40-49,999

TABLE IX

ATTITUDE VERSUS INCOME (N=151)

Income Range	Approve		Disapprove		No Opinion	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
\$0-19,999	28	68	6	15	7	17
\$20-29,999	21	75	3	11	4	14
\$30-39,999	24	86	3	11	1	4
\$40-49,999	11	79	2	14	1	7
\$50,000 +	31	78	8	20	1	3

income range revealed that 79 percent or 11 students approved, 14 percent or two students disapproved, and 7 percent or one student had no opinion. The last income range, \$50,000 plus, showed that 78 percent or 31 students approved, 20 percent or eight students disapproved, and 3 percent or one student had no opinion.

Table X - Table XIII are used to display statistics that pertain to the different majors sought by the 154 students who responded in this study. The first, attitudes versus the School of Business, may be found in Table X.

The different majors found in this table consists of:

TABLE X

ATTITUDES IN THE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS (N=18)

Major	Approve		Disapprove		No Opinion	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Marketing	3	100	0	0	0	0
Accounting	6	100	0	0	0	0
Comp. Science	2	100	0	0	0	0
Bus. Finance	2	100	0	0	0	0
Bus. Management	1	100	0	0	0	0
Bus. Admin.	3	100	0	0	0	0
Economics	1	100	0	0	0	0

Marketing, Accounting, Computer Science, Business Finance, Business Management, Business Administration, and Economics. As shown in Table X, all 18 respondents approve of capital punishment 100 percent. There were no students who disapproved or who had no opinion - all students approved of the death penalty.

Table XI displays the following majors: Sociology, Social Work, Biology, Communications, Physics, Art, English, Nursing, Home Economics, Music, and Mathematics. There were a total of 45 students who responded in the College of Arts and Sciences. As Table XI shows, there were three majors who approved of the death penalty 100 percent: Sociology, Physics, and Home Economics. There were seven students who responded from these majors. There were also three departments who disapproved of the death penalty 100 percent: Art, Music, and mathematics. There was only three respondents from these departments.

In the Social Work Department, 64 percent or nine students approved of the death penalty, 36 percent or five students disapproved, and there were no students who had no opinion. The Biology Department approved by 50 percent or three students, 17 percent or one student disapproved, and 33 percent or two students had no opinion. The communications department approved by 75 percent or three students and 25 percent or one student had no opinion. English majors approved by 67 percent or by four students, 17 percent or one

student disapproved, and 17 percent or one student had no opinion. Nursing majors shows 50 percent or two students approve, 25 percent or one student disapproves, and 25 percent or one student had no opinion.

TABLE XI

ATTITUDES IN THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES (N=45)

Major	Approve		Disapprove		No Opinion	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Sociology	3	100	0	0	0	0
Social Work	9	64	5	36	0	0
Biology	3	50	1	17	2	33
Communications	3	100	0	0	1	25
Physics	1	100	0	0	0	0
Art	0	0	1	100	0	0
English	4	67	1	17	1	17
Nursing	2	50	1	25	1	25
Home Economics	3	100	0	0	0	0
Music	0	0	1	100	0	0
Mathematics	0	0	1	100	0	0

Table XII displays the student attitudes in the School of Education. The School of Education consists of the following majors: Elementary Education, Secondary Education,

Administration, Special Education, Psychology, Physical Education, and Recreation Therapy.

The Elementary Education majors which consisted of 18 students approved the death penalty by 94 percent and one student or 6 percent of the total disapproved. The two Secondary Education majors approved of the death penalty 100 percent.

The 13 Students majoring in Administration approved by 93 percent and 7 percent or one student disapproved. Majors

TABLE XII

ATTITUDES IN THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION (N=62)

Major	<u>Approve</u>		<u>Disapprove</u>		<u>No Opinion</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Elem. Education	17	94	1	6	0	0
Sec. Education	2	100	0	0	0	0
Administration	13	93	1	7	0	0
Special Ed.	5	83	0	0	1	17
Psychology	11	65	5	29	1	6
Physical Ed.	2	67	1	33	0	0
Recrea. Therapy	2	100	0	0	0	0

in Special Education approved the death penalty by 83 percent with five students agreeing and 17 percent or one student had no opinion. In the psychology department 65 percent or 11 students approved, 29 percent or five students disapproved and 6 percent or one student had no opinion.

The majors in the Physical Education Department approved of the death penalty by 67 percent with two students agreeing. Those who disapproved were 33 percent or one student. The two students majoring in Recreation Therapy approved by a 100 percent margin. The total amount of participants totaled 62.

Table XIII displays the attitudes of 28 students who are majoring in Technical Education, Technology, or Human Resource Development. These majors are offered through the School of Technology and Applied Science.

TABLE XIII

ATTITUDES IN THE SCHOOL OF TECHNOLOGY (N=28)

Major	<u>Approve</u>		<u>Disapprove</u>		<u>No Opinion</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Tech. Education	7	58	1	8	4	33
Technology	9	75	1	8	2	17
HRD	3	75	0	0	1	25

The students majoring in Technical Education approve of the death penalty by 58 percent with seven students agreeing. Only 8 percent or one student disapproves and 33 percent or four students have no opinion. The students in Technology approve by the margin of 75 percent with 9 students agreeing, 8 percent or one student disapproves while 17 percent or two students have no opinion. Majors in Human Resource Development provide the following: 75 percent or three students approve and 25 percent or one student has no opinion.

Table XIV displays the attitudes of capital punishment of Pittsburg State University students when compared with the location where they were raised. There were 153 students who responded, and one who refused to answer.

The information received either pertained to state or country in which each student was raised. The following is a list of states or countries in which the respondents were raised: New York, Oregon, Illinois, Russia, Malaysia, South Dakota, Texas, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, California, China, Taiwan, or Colorado.

Referring to Table XIV the respondents from five states and two countries approved the death penalty 100 percent: Oregon, Illinois, South Dakota, Nebraska, California, Russia, and China. One student from Colorado had no opinion.

The two respondents from New York amounted to one student favoring the death penalty, with the other expressing

no opinion. Table XIV shows that the three students raised in Malaysia differed in their attitude toward capital punishment: one student or 25 percent approved while the two remaining students or 75 percent disapproved.

TABLE XIV

ATTITUDES VERSUS RESIDENCE (N=153)

State or Country	Approve		Disapprove		No Opinion	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
California	2	100	0	0	0	0
China	2	100	0	0	0	0
Colorado	0	0	0	0	1	100
Illinois	1	100	0	0	0	0
Kansas	82	77	16	15	9	8
Malaysia	1	25	2	75	0	0
Missouri	8	80	2	20	0	0
Nebraska	3	100	0	0	0	0
New York	1	50	0	0	1	50
Oklahoma	6	86	1	14	0	0
Oregon	1	100	0	0	0	0
Russia	1	100	0	0	0	0
South Dakota	1	100	0	0	0	0
Taiwan	7	70	0	0	3	30
Texas	1	50	1	50	0	0

There were two students who were raised in Texas and their attitudes were split: 50 percent for approval and 50 percent disapproved. Those students raised in Missouri favored the death penalty by 80 percent with eight students agreeing, while 20 percent or 2 students disapproved.

The students raised in Kansas amounted to a total of 107 with 77 percent or 82 students approving, 15 percent or 16 students disapproving, and 8 percent or 9 students with no opinion. Ten students raised in Taiwan participated in this study with 70 percent or 7 students approving and 30 percent or 3 students with no opinion.

The survey instrument used in this study not only has been used to attempt to analyze the factors involved in the attitudes toward capital punishment but has been used to attempt to measure the participants attitude toward what constitutes the death penalty. Each participant was to respond yes or no if they thought the death penalty should be or should not be imposed for the following situations: forcible rape, child molesting, murder, mass murder, rape and murder, or serial murder. Table XV is used to show these results after 118 respondents responded to the survey instrument.

As can be seen by observing the information in Table XV, mass murder was the number one reason for the death penalty in which 98 percent of the participants agreed. The other information was as follows: 97 percent both for rape and

murder and serial murder, 92 percent for murder, 42 percent for child molesting, and 36 percent for forcible rape.

TABLE XV

CIRCUMSTANCES AND THE APPROVAL OF THE DEATH PENALTY (N=118)

Circumstances	Number	Percent
Forcible Rape	43	36
Child Molesting	49	42
Murder	108	92
Mass Murder	116	98
Rape & Murder	115	97
Serial Murder	115	97

For those participants who oppose the death penalty the following alternative punishments were listed in the survey instrument. Each respondent was to answer yes or no for the following alternative punishments: life imprisonment (without parole), life imprisonment (with parole), rehabilitation, counseling, or job training.

Referring to Table XVI, 91 percent of the respondents were in favor of life imprisonment without parole. There were 41 percent who were in favor of rehabilitation and counseling, 27 percent in favor of job training, and 23 percent in favor of life imprisonment with parole.

TABLE XVI

ALTERNATE PUNISHMENTS TO THE DEATH PENALTY (N=22)

Alternate Forms of Punishment	Number	Percent
Life Imprisonment (without parole)	20	91
Life Imprisonment (with parole)	5	23
Rehabilitation	9	41
Counseling	9	41
Job Training	6	27

As can be seen from the data obtained in this survey, the death penalty and other forms of punishment are very controversial items. Perhaps after Kansas experiences that form of punishment for a while the views of the states citizens may change.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is apparent that the data that was analyzed in this study indicated that the majority of the college students surveyed approve of the death penalty. In fact, 118 students or 77 percent of the Pittsburg State University students support the death penalty. Only 22 or 14 percent of the respondents were totally against capital punishment but indicated by 91 percent that they would favor the alternative to life imprisonment without parole.

It is also indicated by the findings that such factors as age, gender, political affiliation, ethnic origin, religious orientation, student status as an undergraduate or graduate, student status as a traditional or nontraditional student, and income affect the attitudes of each individual student who was surveyed. According to findings, even the country, state, or city in which an individual is raised affect their attitude of the death penalty.

In this study, the population that was studied indicated different backgrounds and beliefs. Here again, this may indicate that all humans are different and very complex individuals. When a study is used to attempt to analyze some of the factors that deal with the attitudes of varied

individuals, perhaps, this complex composition, the human being, cannot be predictable in their views of whether a person should live or die for a crime that was committed.

Data collected from this study indicated that in some categories such as age, income, or political affiliation there was not enough respondents to infer too much about the data. The major finding from this study was that 118 or 77 percent of the students surveyed approved of the death penalty.

Also lacking in this study was a diversified population. With only a few Asians and Native Americans as well as the majority of Caucasians the study did not demonstrate the beliefs and ideas of other Americans, No Afro-American or Hispanic were included in the study.

It is recommended by this researcher that the study be replicated using a larger population which could be obtained Fall or Spring semester rather than in the Summer semester when this research took place. It is also recommended that more than one college or university be surveyed. This would allow a more diversified population as well as a larger sample.

This researcher concludes that even the news media impresses upon us the values of our present society. The research findings of the 154 students whop were surveyed in this study tend to go along with research that has been done

before in the controversial issue of the death penalty. With approximately 86 percent of the nation approving the death penalty compared with 77 percent of the students who were engaged in this study, one may conclude without too much error that the death penalty is back and gaining strength in numbers.

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A P P E N D I X

APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM AND LETTER OF EXPLANATION

Date:

Dear Fellow Students:

I am pursuing a Master of Science Degree in Technical Education at Pittsburg State University. I have chosen to write a thesis entitled "PSU students Attitudes Toward Capital Punishment".

Capital punishment is not only a controversial issue in our great nation, but, also, the recent passage of the death penalty in Kansas has been criticized by those against capital punishment. My interest in this research project is to determine the attitudes that PSU students possess in regards to this debatable issue.

If you would voluntarily like to participate in this research project, please give your consent by signing in the space provided below. All your personal data and attitude toward the death penalty will be kept confidential and only the data collected will be used in the form of charts and tables in the findings section of the thesis. No names will be used.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this research project and realize only the data collected will be used.

SIGNATURE

Thank you very much for your participation in this survey.

Sincerely,

Researcher's name.

APPENDIX B

ATTITUDES TOWARDS CAPITAL PUNISHMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

INSTRUCTIONS

Please complete this survey instrument by filling in the appropriate space provided. Please do not place your name on the attached letter or on the survey instrument because your attitude and personal information gathered is confidential.

Personal Data

1. Age _____
2. Gender (Male or Female) _____
3. Political Affiliation (Democrat, Republican, Independent)

4. Ethnic Origin (Caucasian, Afro-American, etc.)

5. Religious Orientation (Catholic, Protestant, etc.)

Educational Data

6. What is your major?

7. Are you an undergraduate or graduate student?

8. Are you a traditional or non-traditional student?

Income Data

9. If you are a traditional student, what is your parents approximate income (check one)?
0-\$19,999 _____ \$20,000-\$29,999 _____ \$30,000-\$39,999 _____
\$40,000 - \$49,999 _____ \$50,000 or more _____

10. If you are a non-traditional student, what is your approximate income (check one)?

0-\$19,999 ____ \$20,000-\$29,999 ____ \$30,000-\$39,999 ____
\$40,000 - \$49,999 ____ \$50,000 or more ____

Residential Data

11. In what city and state were you raised (if you moved around a lot, list the city and state you spent most of your time when growing up)?

____ City _____ State _____

Attitude Data

12. Do you approve or disapprove of the death penalty?

____ Approve ____ No Opinion ____ Disapprove

13. If you approve of the death penalty, under what circumstances should the offender be put to death?

Forcible rape	____ Yes	____ No
Child molesting	____ Yes	____ No
Murder	____ Yes	____ No
Mass murder	____ Yes	____ No
Rape & murder	____ Yes	____ No
Serial murder	____ Yes	____ No
Other (Please specify)	____ Yes	____ No

14. If you disapprove of the death penalty, what alternate form of punishment should be used?

Life imprisonment (without parole)	____ Yes	____ No
Life imprisonment (with parole)	____ Yes	____ No
Rehabilitation	____ Yes	____ No
Counseling	____ Yes	____ No
Job training	____ Yes	____ No
Other (Please specify)	____ Yes	____ No

For a copy of the results of this survey you may write to the researcher (include a stamped self-addressed envelope) listed below:

Researcher's name
Address
City

