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**BE STILL MY HEART: DETERMINANTS OF SUPPORT FOR CAPITAL
PUNISHMENT ATTITUDES**

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
The Department of Political Science

by

Patrick Thomas More Hall

B.A. Ohio University, 2001
B.S.J. Ohio University, 2001

December 2004

DEDICATION

The following work is dedicated to the memory of Dr. J. Franklin Henderson, Jr. He taught the author the importance of preparing to meet any challenge, standing up for one's convictions, possessing the wisdom to respect all sides in an argument, and the having the humility to know that I am not always right. Thank you for being my political hero.

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ABSTRACT

The following research attempts to determine the factors used by an individual to develop an attitude on the political issue of capital punishment. Using data from the 2000 National Election Study and ordered probit analysis, this research produces a multivariate, multi-stage model of death penalty attitudes. Demographic factors such as race, age, gender, and education level are included in the initial stage of the model. Attitudinal variables such as party identification, ideology, and religiosity are added, one-by-one, in the second stage of the model to determine their own individual effect on death penalty attitudes, and their effect on the preceding demographic variables. The result is a comprehensive model of death penalty attitudes.

“And if any of you would punish in the name of righteousness and lay the ax unto the evil tree, let him see to its roots; And verily he will find the roots of the good and bad, the fruitful and the fruitless, all entwined together in the silent heart of the earth.--Kahlil Gibran

INTRODUCTION

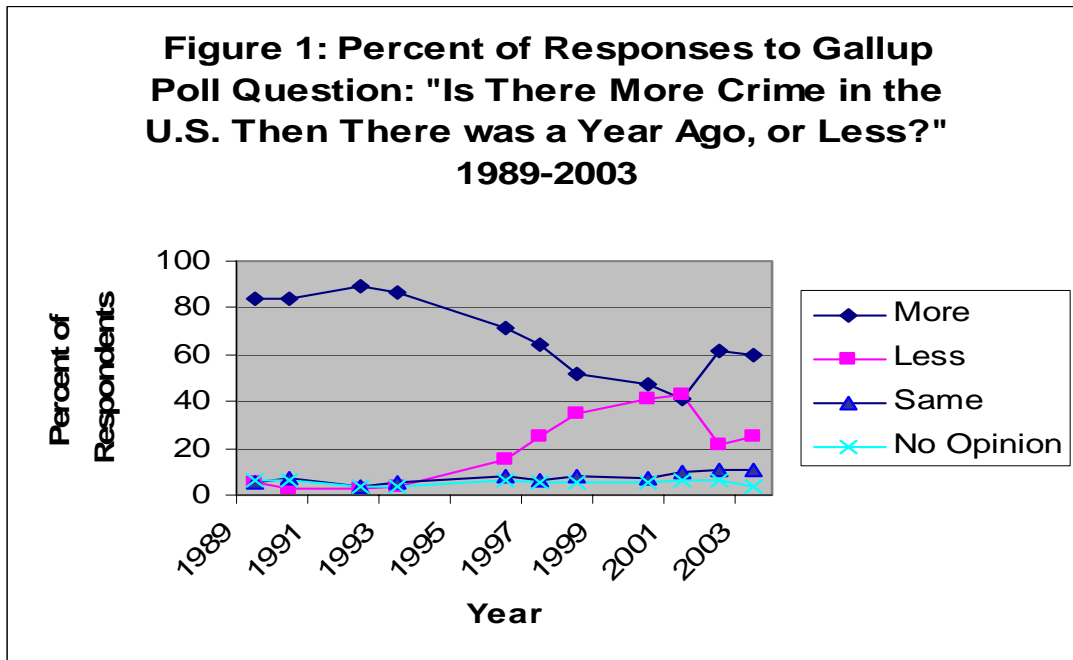
Since the late 1960s, the spread of violent crime has been a dominant domestic policy concern for many Americans. According to an October 2003 poll conducted by the Gallup organization 54% of respondents describe the problem of crime in America as “extremely serious or very serious,” (Polling Report, Inc. 2004, n.p.).¹ Americans often identify “crime” or “violence” as “the most important problem facing the United States today.” In 1994, a record 37% of respondents to a Gallup poll considered crime to be the most important problem facing the country, (Maquire and Pastore 2002, 108). This is especially true when discussing issues at the local level. Crime is frequently cited by respondents in surveys of urban residents as the most important problem in their cities, (Howell, 1990-2002; Mohai, 1990; Baldassare, 2003).

This preoccupation with violent crime may not be based in reality. The homicide and violent crime rates have consistently fallen since the early 1990s.² Yet the mass perception of the crime rate in America is that it is increasing. Figure 1 displays the change in response from 1989-2003 to the Gallup Poll question, “Is there more crime in the U.S. than there was a year ago, or less?” from (The Polling Report, Inc. 2004 , n.p.). As the violent crime and homicide rates consistently dropped during the period 1994-2002, more respondents incorrectly thought

¹ The question taken from the Gallup Poll of October, 2003 reads, “Overall, how would you describe the problem of crime in the United States? Is it extremely serious, very serious, moderately serious, not too serious, or not serious at all?” 17% of respondents stated crime was “extremely serious,” 37% stated it was “very serious,” 40% said it was “moderately serious,” 4% stated it was “not too serious,” 1% stated it was “not serious at all,” and 1% stated no opinion.

² According to The Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI) *Uniform Crime Report*, the violent crime rate has dropped continuously from a high of 757.7 violent crimes per 100,000 citizens in 1992 to the rate of 494.6 violent crimes per 100,000 citizens recorded in 2002.

that crime was increasing than correctly perceived that it was decreasing, (with the exception of 2002).



Americans expect their political leaders to enact policies to combat this perceived increase in violent crime. Political leaders have responded by implementing a plethora of anti-crime initiatives including: increased funding for law enforcement entities, after-school programs for the nation's youth, and longer prison sentences for violent criminals, all with varying degrees of success. However, these initiatives, and the actual decrease in violent crime, have not been able to reverse the public's view of the crime rate.

One anti-crime policy, capital punishment, stands out as uniquely controversial. Since the 1800s, proponents of the death penalty have argued in support of its deterrent and incapacitatory abilities. According to this view, the death penalty will prevent future murderers from perpetrating their crime through fear of punishment. "I believe that capital punishment is likely to deter more than other punishments because people fear death more than anything else,"

(van den Haag 1997, 450). However, evidence for an actual deterrent effect of the death penalty remains mixed.³

An additional reason that proponents offer in support of the death penalty is retribution. “Retribution is by far the most common reason given for favoring the death penalty,” (Ellsworth and Gross 1994, 29). At heart, this is a moral argument that can trace its history as far back as King Hammurabi’s law, “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,” (Hooker 1996, n.p.). Modern researchers such as, van den Haag (1983) and Berns (1979) argue that capital punishment is the only means by which the moral indignation of the community can be restored following a murder.

Opponents of the death penalty counter with a number of arguments against its use. They argue that capital punishment is quite costly in comparison to alternative forms of punishment, such as prison without the opportunity for parole. Various studies have identified the exorbitant cost of an individual capital trial. Additionally, opponents of capital punishment ground their arguments in moral terms. “People oppose the death penalty because they think it is wrong,” (Ellsworth and Gross 1994, 32). Much like proponents of the death penalty, critics of capital punishment often cite moral or religious reasons to justify their position. “The most commonly given ‘reason’ [for opposing the death penalty] has been ‘it is wrong to take a life’...the next most popular reason is basically that same reason with an explicitly religious rationale, e.g., ‘punishment should be left to God,’” (Ellsworth and Gross 1994, 32).

³ Ehrlich (1975) was the first research to identify statistical support for the deterrence argument; however, his findings have been largely discredited by later research including: Baldus and Cole (1975), Klein, Forst, and Filatov (1978), Sellin (1980), Zimring and Hawkins (1986), and Peterson and Bailey (1988, 1991). In fact, some researchers have pointed to the “brutalization” effect of capital punishment. Bowers (1988) and Bowers and Pierce (1980) find evidence that capital punishment may cause an increase in the homicide rate through the implication of the government condoning the taking of life as a means to settle disputes. Neither the brutalization or deterrence argument is tested directly by the research in this paper.

Despite the controversy concerning capital punishment, there has not been a comprehensive study of public opinion on the death penalty. Numerous public opinion surveys indicate that a majority of Americans support the death penalty (Ellsworth and Gross, 2003; Polling Report, Inc., 2004), and previous research has identified various factors including race, gender, religion, and geography that explain individual death penalty opinions. However, no one has offered a single, comprehensive model of capital punishment attitudes that includes all of these explanatory variables. Determining the source of death penalty attitudes is important due to the central role of public opinion in capital punishment jurisprudence. Supreme Court precedence concerning the constitutionality of the death penalty finds its basis in the “evolving standards of decency that mark the progress of a maturing society,” (*Trop v. Dulles* 1958, 100-101). In other words, the continued constitutionality of the death penalty relies on its continued public support. Therefore, it is important for social scientists to search for an explanation of that support.

A HISTORY OF SUPREME COURT JURISPRUDENCE, PUBLIC OPINION, AND THE DEATH PENALTY

The Supreme Court has had a difficult time determining the role that public opinion should play in capital punishment jurisprudence. Challenges to the constitutionality of capital punishment are based on the “cruel and unusual punishment” clause of the Eighth Amendment.⁴ Often, this takes the form of the Supreme Court interpreting the constitutionality of a state-imposed death sentence. The first case that tested the cruel and unusual punishment clause was *Wilkinson v. Utah* (1879). In this early trial, the Supreme Court unanimously supported the

⁴ The Eighth Amendment to the United States Constitution states “Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.”

constitutionality of a public execution by firing squad. The cruel and unusual punishment clause would remain unchallenged for more than 30 years.

In 1910, The Court ruled in *Weems v. U.S.* (1910) that, “the Eighth Amendment does more than bar barbarous punishment; it also prohibits punishments that are disproportionate to the offense,” (Lutzer 1998, 2). While not a death penalty case,⁵ the decision in *Weems v. U.S.* (1910) set an important legal precedent. This case would mark the first instance when the Court recognized that alterations in public opinion concerning the death penalty could be offered as arguments against its continued constitutionality. In the opinion of the Court, Justice McKenna wrote that the definition of “cruel and unusual punishment” is not static, but “may be therefore progressive, and is not fastened to the obsolete, but may acquire meaning as public opinion becomes enlightened by a humane justice,” (*Weems v. U.S. 1910*, 378).

The modern Court has staked their interpretation of “cruel and unusual” on what the public views as appropriate sanctions for crimes committed. This precedent was established in *Trop v. Dulles* (1958). In the opinion of the Court, Chief Justice Earl Warren states, “the [Eighth] Amendment must draw its meaning from the evolving standards of decency that mark the progress of a maturing society,” (*Trop v. Dulles*, 1958, 100-101). This phrase, “the evolving standards of decency,” would be the central point of dispute in the two most vital cases concerning the death penalty to be decided by the Supreme Court.

On June 29, 1972, for the first and only time, capital punishment, as administered at the time, was ruled by the Supreme Court to be an unconstitutional breach of the cruel and unusual clause of the Eighth Amendment. The 5-4 decision in *Furman v. Georgia* (1972) invalidated every death penalty statute across the nation. But this ruling did not lack controversy. The

⁵ In *Weems v. U.S.* (1910) the Filipino government, which was then under U.S. control, sentenced Weems to 12 years in prison in heavy chains, performing hard labor for the crime of falsifying a government document.

positions of Justices William O. Douglas, Potter Stewart, and Byron White would comprise the plurality of the Court. These justices staked out a middle ground, arguing that the death penalty was not per se unconstitutional, but that its arbitrary and oftentimes biased application caused it to be biased in its current incarnation. Justice Thurgood Marshall, in his concurring opinion, which became known as the Marshall Hypothesis, most eloquently discussed the intertwining of law and public opinion on this issue. The Marshall Hypothesis, in a thoughtfully articulated critique of public opinion research, questioned the legitimacy the single-item measure of death penalty public opinion.⁶

“In judging whether or not a given penalty is morally acceptable, most courts have said that the punishment is valid unless ‘it shocks the conscience and sense of justice of the people.’ Judge Frank once noted the problems inherent in the use of such a measuring stick: ‘[The court,] before it reduces a sentence as ‘cruel and unusual,’ must have reasonably good assurances that the sentence offends the ‘common conscience.’ And, in any context, such a standard - the community's attitude - is usually an unknowable. It resembles a slithery shadow, since one can seldom learn, at all accurately, what the community, or a majority, actually feels. Even a carefully-taken “public opinion poll” would be inconclusive in a case like this.’ While a public opinion poll obviously is of some assistance in indicating public acceptance or rejection of a specific penalty, its utility cannot be very great. This is because whether or not a punishment is cruel and unusual depends, not on whether its mere mention ‘shocks the conscience and sense of justice of the people,’ but on whether people who were fully informed as to the purposes of the penalty and its liabilities would find the penalty shocking, unjust, and unacceptable. In other words, the question with which we must deal is not whether a substantial proportion of American citizens would today, if polled, opine that capital punishment is barbarously cruel, but whether they would find it to be so in the light of all information presently available. This is not to suggest that with respect to this test of unconstitutionality people are required to act rationally; they are not. With respect to this judgment, a violation of the Eighth Amendment is totally dependent on the predictable subjective, emotional reactions of informed citizens,” (*Furman V. Georgia 1972*, 361-362).

Chief Justice Warren Burger and Justices Lewis Powell, Harry Blackmun and William Rehnquist also alluded to public opinion in their dissent from the opinion of the Court. They argued that public opinion, in the form of polls, showed widespread support for capital

⁶ For discussions of the Marshall Hypothesis, see Sarat and Vidmar (1976), Ellsworth and Ross (1983), and Wright,

punishment. In addition, they argued that the public's will had been expressed through the state legislatures, which had enacted the death penalty statutes, and should be the means of abolition if the public so demands. "However one may assess the amorphous ebb and flow of public opinion generally on this volatile issue, this type of inquiry lies at the periphery—not the core—of the judicial process in constitutional cases. The assessment of popular opinion is essentially a legislative, not a judicial, function," (*Furman v. Georgia* 1972, 444).

The abolition of capital punishment would last only four years. Capital punishment had only been invalidated due to its arbitrary and biased application; therefore, state legislatures across the nation hurriedly passed legislation that provided remedies for their capital punishment systems. The case, *Gregg v. Georgia* (1976), overturned the ruling in *Furman*. In addition to the bifurcated trial,⁷ the State of Georgia mandated an expedited direct appeal to an appellate court for those sentenced to death. This revised system was enough to sway the moderates from the *Furman* decision. In a 7-2 ruling, the death penalty was reinstated throughout the U.S. The majority opinion was based, at least partially, on public opinion on the death penalty. In the majority opinion, Justice Potter Stewart argued that the abundance of pro-death penalty legislation passed in statehouses throughout America adequately measured the community's "standards of decency." "Despite the continuing debate, dating back to the 19th century, over the morality and utility of capital punishment, it is now evident that a large proportion of American society continues to regard it as an appropriate and necessary criminal sanction. The most marked indication of society's endorsement of the death penalty for murder is the

Bohm and Jamieson (1995).

⁷ A bifurcated trial consists of two stages. In the first stage, guilt or innocence is determined. If the defendant is found guilty, the second stage begins and is used to determine punishment. The judge or jury can opt to impose a death sentence or a prison term. At the sentencing phase, the prosecution must present aggravating circumstances that prove the necessity of the death penalty as punishment. The defense may present mitigating circumstances to defend against the imposition of a death sentence.

legislative response to Furman,” (*Gregg v. Georgia 1976*, 179). The Court would further define legislative activity as the “clearest and most reliable objective evidence of contemporary values,” (*Penry v. Lynaugh 1989*, 331). This verbiage would be cited in more recent Supreme Court decisions concerning the death penalty. In *Atkins v. Virginia (2002)*, Justice Stevens cited the number of state legislatures that had prohibited the execution of mentally retarded convicts as evidence of the “evolving standards of decency” of the community against the execution of this type of convict.

In 2000, Illinois Governor George Ryan enacted a moratorium on executions within his state. This moratorium accompanied a commutation of sentence for all those under sentence of death to life in prison. This moratorium was enacted in response to a November, 1999 *Chicago Tribune* series describing the high number of exonerations given to death row inmates in Illinois.⁸ Governor Ryan also formed a commission to study the application of the death penalty within Illinois, and to make recommendations on ways in which the death penalty could be applied in a more fair and consistent manner, (Governor’s Commission on Capital Punishment 2002, i). The Commission only briefly discusses the merits of capital punishment. “A narrow majority of the Commission would favor that the death penalty be abolished in Illinois,” (Governor’s Commission on Capital Punishment 2002, iii).

If the actions of the various state legislatures are the “clearest and most reliable objective evidence of contemporary values,” then support for the death penalty may be eroding. A number of state legislatures have followed the model of Illinois. According to the Equal Justice USA website, 19 state legislatures have bills pending which would enact a moratorium on executions within their states or abolish the death penalty outright, or both, (Equal Justice USA 2003, n.p.).

⁸ Since 1973, 112 inmates have been exonerated in the U.S, (Dieter, 2003).

Another 10 state legislatures are considering the establishment of expert commissions to study the use of capital punishment within their boundaries.

If the actions of the state legislatures across the U.S. are to be an accurate depiction of the nation's current "standards of decency," then these recent efforts to abolish capital punishment should reflect an already-declining level of support for the death penalty in public opinion polls. Such a decline has not occurred. According to a Gallup Poll conducted in May 2003, 74% of respondents are in favor of the death penalty for those convicted of murder, (Polling Report Inc. 2004, n.p.). Other polls have found similarly high levels of support for the death penalty.⁹ In comparison, the Gallup Poll conducted in June 2000 found 66% of respondents supported the death penalty. This inconsistency between the trend in legislative actions and the trend in public opinion casts doubts on the legitimacy of using legislative action as the measure of community values. Contemporary standards of decency concerning the death penalty can and should be examined more directly. That is the subject of the research in the following section.

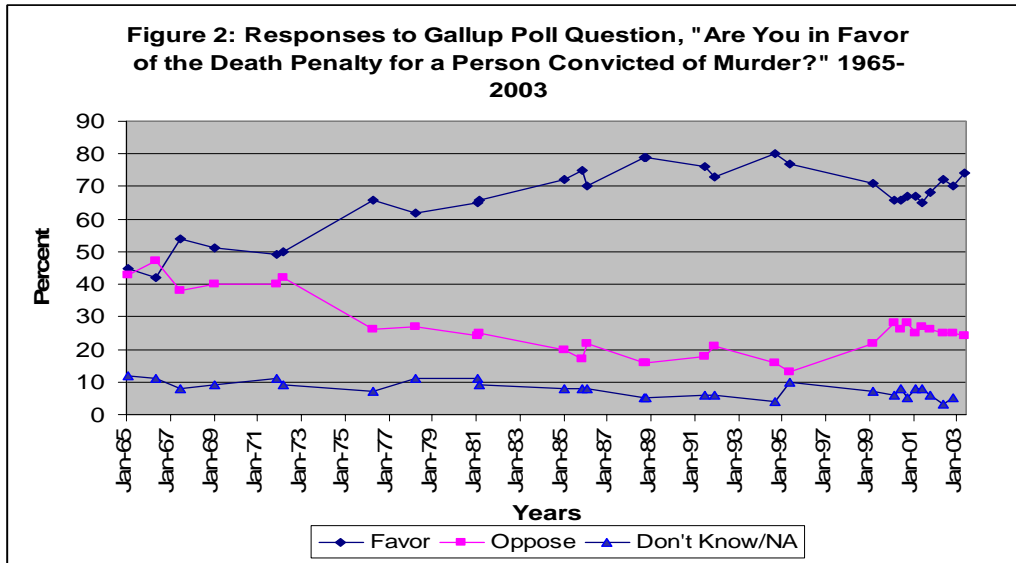
PUBLIC OPINION ON THE DEATH PENALTY

Support for capital punishment has remained strong since the late 1970s. Figure 2 depicts responses to the Gallup Poll question, "Are you in favor of the death penalty for a person convicted of murder?" in the period 1965-2003.¹⁰ After the *Furman* decision outlawed capital punishment in 1972, support for its use steadily increased until it reached a high of 80% favoring the death penalty in 1994. From this peak, support for the death penalty dropped briefly until

⁹ A Fox News/Opinion Dynamics Poll conducted in June 2003 found 69% of respondents favored capital punishment as a sentence for those convicted of premeditated murder. An ABC News.com Poll conducted in May 2002, found that 65% of respondents favored the death penalty for those convicted of murder, (Polling Report Inc. 2004, n.p.).

¹⁰ Sources for the Gallup Poll data are the Polling Report Inc. (2004) website and Ellsworth and Gross (2003, Appendix).

2000, but has since risen. According to the most recent Gallup Poll, 74% of respondents favor the death penalty, 24% oppose the death penalty, and 2% had no response.



Measurement Issues

While public support of capital punishment may appear strong, this support has been questioned by numerous researchers. While a majority of Americans support capital punishment, research indicates that Americans do not know much about the death penalty and its effects, (Wright, Bohm and Jamieson (1995), Bohm, Vogel and Maisto (1993), Ellsworth and Ross (1983), Sarat and Vidmar (1976)). These studies were performed to test the Marshall Hypothesis, an idea proposed by Justice Thurgood Marshall in his concurring opinion in the *Furman* decision. He argued that if the public were better informed on the death penalty and its effects, then “the great mass of citizens would conclude...that the death penalty is immoral and therefore unconstitutional,” (*Furman v. Georgia*, 1972, 363). Wright, Bohm, and Jamieson (1995) and Bohm (1991) find support for the Marshall Hypothesis. Increasing knowledge concerning the complexity of sentencing, execution methods, and disparities in sentencing rates

does lead to an increase in opposition towards capital punishment. Additionally, other researchers have found a connection between alternative sentencing options and opposition to capital punishment. Dieter (1997), Ellsworth and Gross (1994), and Bowers (1993) have all indicated that when respondents are offered alternative punishments such as mandatory life sentences without the possibility of parole or a life sentence with restitution, support for capital punishment declines. Much of this research indicates that the issue of capital punishment is more complex than typically presented and casts doubts on the firmness with which people hold death penalty attitudes.

Many researchers have questioned the accuracy of the standard single item measure of death penalty attitudes, (Bohm, 1991; Longmire, 1996; Niven, 2002; Murray, 2003). They argue that the complexity of the death penalty prevents an accurate assessment of public attitudes to be derived from a single general question. The questions do not differentiate between some and all convicted murders. Questions about the appropriateness of executing different types of convicts, such as juveniles, cannot be adequately answered with this general question. Skovron et al. (1989) surveyed residents of Columbus, Ohio and found greater support for the execution of adults than juveniles. Other researchers have found varying degrees of public support of the death penalty for this specific type of defendant.¹¹

Another distinction that cannot be addressed by this question type is the murder-type distinction. Durham, Elrod, and Kinkade (1996), and Murray (2003) discovered that mitigating or aggravating circumstances surrounding the murder led to varying degrees of support for the death penalty. Durham, Elrod and Kinkade (1996) provided respondents to a questionnaire with a variety of different scenarios surrounding the commission of a murder. They then asked respondents to choose the appropriate punishment for the perpetrator of the murder. Their

findings indicate that situations surrounding the murder have an impact on the application on support of the death penalty. Certain types of murders: mass murders, brutal murders, murders involving children, the elderly, or law enforcement officials as victims, or murders performed in connection with rape, elicit particularly strong support for the death penalty. The general Gallup-style question cannot begin to capture these distinctions.

Explanatory Factors

In addition to the murder-type or circumstances cited above, other determinants of capital punishment predispositions find support in public opinion research. Gender is commonly highlighted as contributing to the formation of predispositions concerning capital punishment. Numerous studies, (Shapiro and Mahajan, 1986; Smith, 1984; Barkan and Cohn, 1994; Fox et. al 1990-1991; Keil and Vito, 1991; Smith and Wright, 1992; Hurwitz and Smithey 1998) have found women to be less supportive of capital punishment. For example, in an analysis of the 1990 General Social Survey (GSS), Barkan and Cohn (1994) found that men were 7% more likely to support the death penalty. Most scholars attribute this lack of support for the death penalty among women to the “ethic of care,” (Gilligan 1982, Hurwitz and Smithey 1998). This theory argues that women are more compassionate and group-oriented, and value protection of the vulnerable and disadvantaged. Hurwitz and Smithey (1998) found that women fear crime to a greater extent than do men, but that this fear of crime translates into support for preventive anti-crime policies, not punitive policies like capital punishment.

Religious differences also lead to variance in the support of capital punishment. Moral arguments are often cited as justifications for death penalty attitudes. As a central source of moral development, religion may be a significant influence on the formation of death penalty attitudes. Young (1992) found that fundamentalist Christians support capital punishment

¹¹ For research on public opinion concerning the execution of juveniles see Seis and Elbe (1991).

significantly more than other religious sects; membership in a Fundamentalist church increased support for the death penalty among whites by 27%. Grismick et al. (1993) also found Evangelical Protestants to be the strongest supporters of the death penalty among all religious groups. Surprisingly, Roman Catholics were second most likely to support the death penalty, despite the Roman Catholic Church's espoused opposition of the practice.¹²

In addition to religious affiliation, religiosity, or the importance of religion to an individual's life, should reduce an individual's support of the death penalty. As stated previously, morality is a common argument against the death penalty. Religion is an important source of morals such as, compassion, equality, and justice. Kellstedt, Smit, and Kellstedt (1991) and Wilcox (1990) found that the more salient religion is to an individual's life, the more likely that individual is to apply religion to his/her political behavior. Thus, the more religious an individual is, the more likely that individual has been confronted with morals teachings that oppose the death penalty, and the more likely that individual will apply these moral teachings to their death penalty attitudes.

Myriad studies have presented a distinct cleavage in opinion concerning capital punishment between blacks and whites. Studies have indicated that whites consistently support capital punishment more than blacks (Ellsworth and Gross, 1994; Fox et al., 1990-1991; Keil and Vito, 1991; Smith and Wright 1992; Young, 1991). Using data from the Gallup Poll and the General Social Survey (GSS), Ellsworth and Gross (1994) reported that an average of 66.75% of white respondents supported the death penalty in the period between 1952 and 1992. During this same period, an average of only 46.75% of blacks supported the death penalty.

¹² For the Roman Catholic Church's position on capital punishment, see United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. 2003. "Efforts to End the Death Penalty." <http://www.nccbuscc.org/sdwp/national/criminal/death/mahony1.htm>

Furthermore, racial prejudice on the part of whites has been associated significantly with support for capital punishment, (Barkan and Cohn, 1994). Utilizing data from the 1990 GSS, they found that antipathy to blacks on the part of white respondents increases support for the death penalty by 17%. Additionally, holding negative stereotypes of blacks also increased support for the death penalty among whites by 10%. Young (1991) surveyed a sample of Detroit, Michigan residents and discovered that support of capital punishment among African-Americans originated in their attitudes towards police powers.

Regional differences are another significant determinant of support for the death penalty. “Describe the South however one wishes—the erstwhile slavocracy, the Old Confederacy, the Bible Belt—in this region the death penalty is as firmly entrenched as grits for breakfast,” (Bedau 1997, 21). If the use of the death penalty is a measure of its support, the South is in love with the death penalty. Since the reinstatement of capital punishment in 1976, five states (Texas, Virginia, Missouri, Florida, and Oklahoma) have accounted for nearly two-thirds of all U.S. executions, (Snell and Maruschak 2002). More than one-half of these executions took place in the southern state of Texas alone. This is a disproportionately high percentage of executions in consideration of the population of the South. When specifically gauging public opinion, Weakliem and Biggert (1999) find significant differences between the southern region and the other regions of the U.S. in support for capital punishment. Borg (1997) offers two explanations for the high support of capital punishment among Southern whites, the racial intolerance theory from Barkan and Cohen (1994) and the religious fundamentalism theory of Young (1992). However, a multivariate analysis would be necessary to determine if these factors are indeed producing the difference between the South and other regions.

The fear of crime, or an individual's interpretation of the crime rate, also has been statistically linked to support of capital punishment. Rankin (1979), Keil and Vito (1991), and Hurwitz and Smithey (1998) find that a fear of crime lies at the heart of support for capital punishment. In their study of the death penalty attitudes of Kentuckians, Keil and Vito (1991), find that the fear of crime increases respondents' support of the death penalty by 36.9%. Fear of crime, like region, has been connected to racial variables. Lizotte and Bordua (1980) describe whites' perception of the crime rate as being significantly influenced by their proximity to African Americans. Thus, racial intolerance in combination with fear of crime may significantly influence public opinion concerning the death penalty.

The research displaying a connection between fear of crime, race, and death penalty attitudes holds significance for the nation's urban population. Although most of the violent crime in America is perpetrated within its major cities,¹³ white city dwellers should be less supportive of the death penalty than white non-city dwellers. This is the case, because white city dwellers, choose to live in closer proximity to areas of high crime. While this has never been tested directly, Borg (1997) found that urbanicity, or the population density of the location in which a respondent resides, affects an individual's attitudes concerning the death penalty. City residents were 5.2% less likely to support the death penalty, (Borg 1997, 35). But Borg (1997) did not separate blacks and whites in his research, so the exact relationship between urbanicity and death penalty attitudes remains unknown.

A variety of factors have been empirically shown to be related to death penalty opinions, but it is plausible that other variables also play a role in the formation of death penalty attitudes. Party identification and ideology are factors that affect a wide variety of political attitudes

(Miller and Shanks 1996), and the expectation is that conservatives and Republicans will support capital punishment more than their liberal and Democratic counterparts. Education has been shown to have a liberalizing effect on an individual's political opinions concerning non-economic issues, (Erikson and Tedin 1995), so it is reasonable to hypothesize that more educated respondents will be less likely to support capital punishment.

Age is also a demographic variable common to the behavior research. Previous research has demonstrated that younger respondents are more liberal on social issues than their older counterparts. Erikson and Tedin (1995) report that 44% of respondents to the 1996 GSS that are 30 years of age or younger support "abortion for any reason" while only 32% of respondents 55 years of age and older support that statement. Thus, youth may have a liberalizing effect on social issues like the death penalty.

Some of the variables mentioned above, such as region and religion, have been shown to work in tandem. Many are known to be related to each other. However, most researchers have chosen to examine these variables only one or two at a time. This prevents the effect of other variables to be controlled for, preventing the independent effects of each variable to be assessed. Thus, a comprehensive, multivariate model of death penalty opinion is needed to identify the independent effects of each explanatory factor.

In addition, the temporal impact of the independent variables necessitates the utilization of a multi-stage analysis. Demographic variables such as: race, age, gender, religious affiliation, region, urbanicity, education, and income are theoretically placed as antecedent variables in the initial stage of the model. In the first stage, only demographic variables are entered into a model

¹³ According to the FBI Uniform Crime Report for 2002, 88.5% of the violent crimes in America occur within Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), which are cities with at least 50,000 inhabitants and the surrounding counties in which the city is located.

of death penalty attitudes. In this stage the relative impact of all of these demographic variables will be estimated and we will be able to discern which ones truly have independent effects.

In the second stage of the model, the attitudinal variables: ideology, party identification, racial intolerance, religiosity, and views of the crime rate are added to the model one at a time in order to gauge their effect, not only on the dependent variable, but also on the demographic independent variables introduced in the first stage. As an attitudinal variable is added to the model, it may “soak up” some of the explanatory effect of the demographic variables that are entered in the first stage of the model. If a demographic variable reaches insignificance, it can be argued that the attitudinal variables added to the model provide much of the explanatory power of the demographic variables. If a demographic variable’s influence is reduced substantially, we say that part of its impact on death penalty attitudes is through certain attitudes and dispositions.

Thus the research strategy is to first identify the key influential demographic factors related to death penalty attitudes, then to examine how these demographic factors operate by observing what happens to their effects when attitudinal variables are introduced.

METHODOLOGY

All of the data used to test the model are derived from the 2000 National Election Study (NES) conducted by the Center for Political Studies at the University of Michigan.¹⁴ The dependent variable for the model is a respondent’s position on the death penalty. In the 2000 NES, this variable is measured using a four-point Likert scale, with those strongly supporting the death penalty coded “four,” those weakly supporting the death penalty coded “three,” those somewhat opposed to the death penalty coded “two,” and those strongly opposed to the death penalty coded “one.” Because the dependent variable is ordinal, ordered probit regression is the

appropriate statistical technique to use in this study, (Aldrich and Nelson 1984). The following ordered probit equation is a mathematical representation of the initial demographic stage of my model:

$$D_i = \beta_1 + \beta_2(\text{FEMALE}) + \beta_3(\text{WHITE}) + \beta_4(\text{SOUTH}) + \beta_5(\text{CITY}) + \beta_6(\text{SUBURBAN}) \\ + \beta_7(\text{FUNDAMENTALIST}) + \beta_8(\text{CATHOLIC}) + \beta_9(\text{AGE}) + \beta_{10}(\text{INCOME}) + \\ \beta_{11}(\text{EDUCATION}) + \beta_{12}(\text{CITY*WHITE}) + e$$

Measures of Demographic Variables

In this model, demographic variables are included as an initial bloc. Dummy variables have been created to measure gender, race, and geographic region.¹⁵ The gender dummy variable is coded one for female respondents and zero for male respondents. The race dummy variable is coded one for whites and zero for all other racial categories. The region dummy variable is coded one for southern residents and zero for non-southern residents.¹⁶

The city and suburban dummy variables, which measure the population density of the area in which the respondent resides, are derived from the original urbanicity variable used by the NES. The NES uses population density classifications derived from “the 1990 U.S. Census, the 1990 Office of Management and Budget (OMB) definitions, 1990 Census Population reports (as reported in the 1992 Annual Metro, City and County Data book), and the 1990 Census ‘urbanized area’ (as shown in the 1994 Rand McNally Road Atlas - 70th edition,” (Burns, et al. 2000). The six categories used by the NES were condensed into two dummy variables. The city

¹⁴ All data are provided by the American National Election Study through the Inter-university Consortium for Political Science Research. This author bears the responsibility for all conclusions reached in this paper. For complete question wording from which the variables used in this study are derived, please see Appendix 1.

¹⁵ Race is included as dummy variable in this analysis to make the findings more generalizable. An alternative method of analysis would be to divide the sample into racial categories, and run separate analyses on each of these racial groups. This would prevent the analysis of race on the model, as it would not be controlled for.

¹⁶ The NES utilizes the regional classifications of the U.S. Census. The states classified as comprising the South are: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Washington, D.C., Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.

dummy variable codes respondents as one if they are residents of the central cities of the six largest Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Areas (CMSAs) and the central cities of the 15 next largest CMSA/MSAs, and zero if they reside in any other area. The suburban dummy variable codes residents of the suburbs of the six largest CMSA/MSAs and the 15 next largest CMSA/MSAs and suburbs of all other CMSA/MSAs as one, and all others as zero.

In order to determine the impact of religious affiliation on death penalty attitudes, two dummy religious affiliation variables are included in this stage of the model. Using the guidelines established by Bolce and de Maio (1999),¹⁷ the dummy Evangelical variable is coded one for respondents that are members of a fundamentalist Christian sect and zero for all other respondents. The Catholic dummy variable is coded one for respondents that are Roman Catholics and zero for all other respondents.

Measures of Control Variables

Three control variables, common to public opinion research, are added to this initial stage of the model. While no previous research has indicated any relationship between these three variables and death penalty attitudes, it is plausible that a relationship exists. The first of these control variables is education. The education variable measures the highest level of education achieved by the respondent. Those who have zero to 12 years of education, but have not received a high school diploma or equivalency test are coded one, those with a high school

¹⁷ The Christian sects identified as fundamentalist by Bolce and De Maio (1999) are: "Seventh-Day Adventists, Adventists (NFS), American Baptist Association, American Baptist Churches, USA, Baptists Bible Fellowship, Baptists General Conference, Baptist Missionary Alliance, Conservative Baptists, General Association of Regular Baptists, Baptists (NFS), Church of Brethren, Brethren, Mennonite, Moravian, Old Order Amish, Evangelical Covenant, Evangelical Free Church, Brethren in Christ, Mennonite Brethren, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Church of God (Anderson, IN), Church of God (Findlay, OH), Church of God (NFS), Holiness (NFS), Plymouth Brethren, Independent Fundamentalist Churches of America, Independent Fundamentalists (NFS), Missouri Synod Lutheran, Wisconsin Synod Lutheran, Other Conservative Lutheran, Primitive Methodist, Congregationalist Methodist, Assemblies of God, Church of God (Cleveland, TN), Church of God (Huntsville, AL), Four Square Gospel, Pentecostal Church of God, Pentecostal Holiness, United Pentecostal, Church of God in Christ, Church of God of Prophecy, Vineyard Fellowship, Cumberland Presbyterian, Evangelical or Reformed Presbyterian, Christian

diploma or equivalency test are coded two, those with some college but no bachelor's degree are coded three, those with a bachelor's degree are coded four, those with an advanced or professional degree are coded five.

The second control variable is income. It is argued that the wealthy will be more likely to support the death penalty. Respondents with an annual income of \$24,999 or less are coded one, those with an annual income between \$25,000 and \$64,999 are coded two, those with an annual income between \$65,000 and \$94,999 are coded three, those with an annual income between \$95,000 and \$124,999 are coded four, and those with an income of \$125,000 or greater are coded five.

The final control variable is age. The age variable is comprised of the following categories: those respondents 18 to 25 years old are coded one, 26 to 33 years old are coded two, 34 to 41 years old are coded three, 42 to 49 years old are coded four, 50 to 57 years old are coded five, 58 to 65 years old are coded six, and those respondents older than 65 are coded seven.

An interaction variable, city x white, is included in the model. It is generated by multiplying the city dummy variable and the race variable. This variable is included in the model to analyze the effect that residency has on the attitudes of whites concerning the death penalty. Whites that live in an urban setting should be less likely to support the death penalty because they choose to live within the city, which is a higher crime area.

Adding the Attitudinal Variables

Once the initial stage of the model is complete, the attitudinal variables are added to the model one at a time. These attitudinal variables intervene between the demographic variables and the dependent variable. Thus, they may “soak up” some of the explanatory power of the

Reformed Church, Churches of Christ, Church of Christ (NFS), Christian Congregation, Worldwide Church of God,”(Bolce and De Maio 1999, 535).

demographic variables that precede them in the model. The following ordered probit equation is a mathematical representation of the full attitudinal and demographic model:

$$D_i = \beta_1 + \beta_2(\text{FEMALE}) + \beta_3(\text{WHITE}) + \beta_4(\text{SOUTH}) + \beta_5(\text{CITY}) + \beta_6(\text{SUBURBAN}) \\ + \beta_7(\text{FUNDAMENTALIST}) + \beta_8(\text{CATHOLIC}) + \beta_9(\text{AGE}) + \beta_{10}(\text{INCOME}) + \\ \beta_{11}(\text{EDUCATION}) + \beta_{12}(\text{CITY*WHITE}) + \beta_{11}(\text{PID}) + \beta_{12}(\text{IDEOLOGY}) + \\ \beta_{13}(\text{RELIGIOSITY}) + \beta_{14}(\text{CRIME}) + \beta_{15}(\text{RACISM}) + e$$

Measures of Attitudinal Variables

The standard means by which party identification is measured is by categorizing the respondents' self-classification as a Democrat, a Republican, or an Independent. This model employs the standard seven-point party identification scale. Strong Democrats are coded one, weak Democrats are coded two, Democratic leaners are coded three, Independents are coded four, Republican leaners are coded five, weak Republicans are coded six, and strong Republicans are coded seven.

Political ideology is measured by a seven-point scale based on respondents' self-identifications. Strong liberals are coded one, weak liberals are coded two, liberal leaners are coded three, moderates are coded four, conservative leaners are coded five, weak conservatives are coded six, and strong conservatives are coded seven.

In addition to the religious affiliation variable discussed earlier, an individual's religiosity, or the importance of religion to their daily life, may reduce an individual's support of capital punishment. The NES question "do you go to religious services every week, almost every week, once or twice a month, a few times a year, or never?" is used to measure a respondent's religiosity. "Never" respondents are coded one, "a few times a year" respondents

are coded two, “once or twice a month” respondents are coded three, “almost every week” respondents are coded four, and “every week” respondents are coded five.

Due to a mistake that occurred when the NES was conducted, the fear of crime variable could not be used in this research.¹⁸ A surrogate question had to be used in replacement. The NES question, “Would you say that compared to 1992 the nation’s crime rate has gotten better, gotten worse, or stayed about the same?” is the closest measure available. Respondents who felt the crime rate got “much worse” are coded one, those who felt the crime rate got “somewhat worse” are coded two, those who felt the crime rate “stayed about the same” are coded three, those who felt the crime rate got “somewhat better” are coded four, and those who felt the crime rate got “much better” are coded five.

Racism is operationalized with a seven-point Likert scale with seven indicating a positive feeling towards blacks and a one indicating a negative feeling towards blacks. This scale was created by averaging the scores of answers to three questions that gauge a respondent’s agreement/disagreement with stereotypes of blacks.¹⁹

In short, from the NES data, using the variables discussed above with ordered probit analysis, I hope to develop a comprehensive model of death penalty attitudes. While many factors have been shown by previous research to affect death penalty attitudes individually, it is

¹⁸ The NES question that measures a respondent’s fear of crime is, “how afraid are you that a member of your family, or a close friend, or you yourself might be the victim of an assault during the coming year? Would you say you are very afraid, somewhat afraid, a little bit afraid, or not afraid?” Unfortunately, due to an error in the application, the question was only asked to the post-election interview. This excluded 1,042 cases from the survey. Thus, this question could not be used.

¹⁹ The NES questions from which this index is derived provide a characteristic, and then ask the respondents, “Where would you rate blacks on a scale of 1 to 7?” With each question, the stereotype would change. The first question asks the respondent how hardworking blacks are, with one equaling hardworking and 7 equaling lazy. The second question asks the respondent to rate the level of intelligence of blacks, with one equaling intelligent and 7 equaling unintelligent. The third question asks the respondent to rate the trustworthiness of blacks, with one equaling trustworthy and 7 equaling untrustworthy. These questions were asked of all respondents to the NES. While it could be argued that black respondents would be hesitant to respond that other blacks are unintelligent, lazy, or untrustworthy and should be removed from the sample, it should be noted that some blacks did respond this way, indicating that they have accepted these stereotypes about the black race and should be included in the sample.

important to include these factors in one model in order to compare these factors against one another.

BIVARIATE ANALYSIS

Initially, the bivariate relationships between all of the independent variables and the dependent variable were examined in order to take a first look at the relationships hypothesized in the model. Table 1 displays the fifteen independent variables and tau-c's measuring the strength and direction of the relationship with support for the death penalty.

Table 1: Bivariate Relationships with Support for the Death Penalty

Independent Variables	Tau-C
South	0.031
Female	-0.067**
Age	-0.027
Education	-0.063***
PID	0.172***
Religiosity	-0.090**
White	0.125***
Evangelical	-0.004
Income	0.019
Ideology	0.154***
Fear of crime	-0.122***
City	-0.048
Suburb	0.042
Catholic	0.023
Racism	0.069***

* = $p < .1$ ** = $p < .01$ *** = $p < .001$

As the table indicates, a number of factors appear to be related to an individual's death penalty opinion. Race, party identification, ideology, racism and fear of crime are all significantly related, ($p < .001$ level) to an individual's support of/opposition to the death penalty. As predicted, whites, Republicans, conservatives, and racists are all more likely to support the death penalty. In fact, party ID has the strongest bivariate relationship with death penalty opinion (tau-c = .172).

Education, the fear of crime, religiosity, and gender are all negatively correlated with support for the death penalty. Those who believe the crime rate has gotten worse since 1992, those who are very involved with their religion, those who are better educated, and females are less supportive of the death penalty.

The remaining independent variables, Southern residence, age, income, religious denomination, and living in either a suburb or city are not significantly related to support of the death penalty. While these variables are not related to the dependent variable in bivariate analyses, a significant relationship between these variables may emerge in a multivariate analysis.

MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS

Demographic Model

As described in the methods section, the initial multivariate analysis includes only the demographic independent variables. The results of this ordered probit analysis are displayed in Table 2.

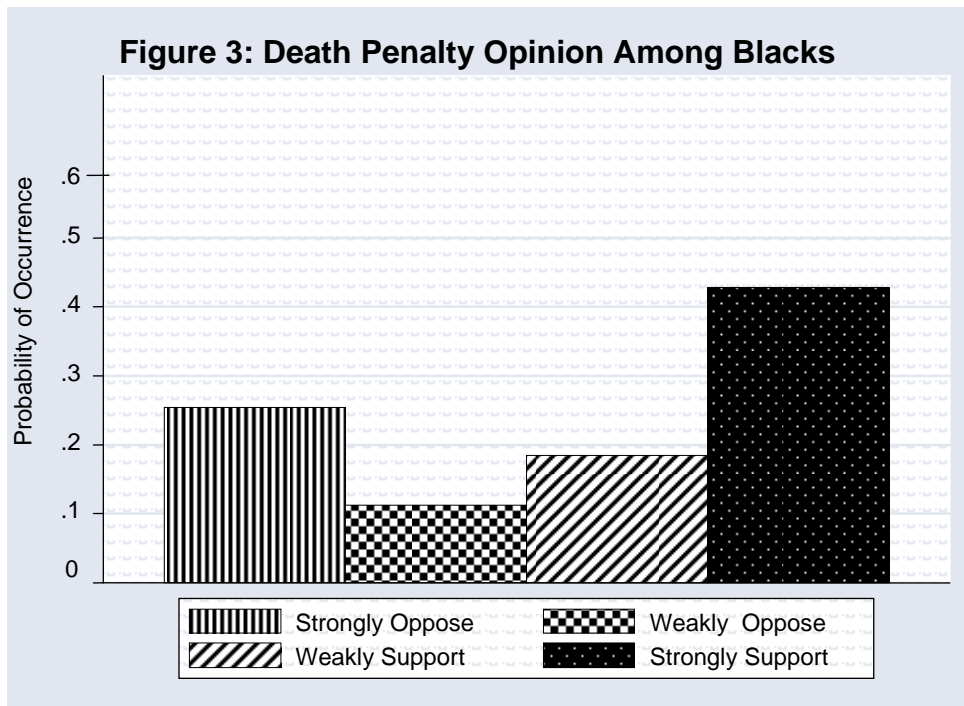
Table 2: Demographic Variables Relationship with Support for the Death Penalty

Independent Variables	Coeff.
South	0.117
Female	-0.121
Age	-0.047*
Education	-0.141***
White	0.389**
Evangelical	-0.120
Income	0.004
City	-0.002
Suburb	0.122
Catholic	0.117
City x White	0.025

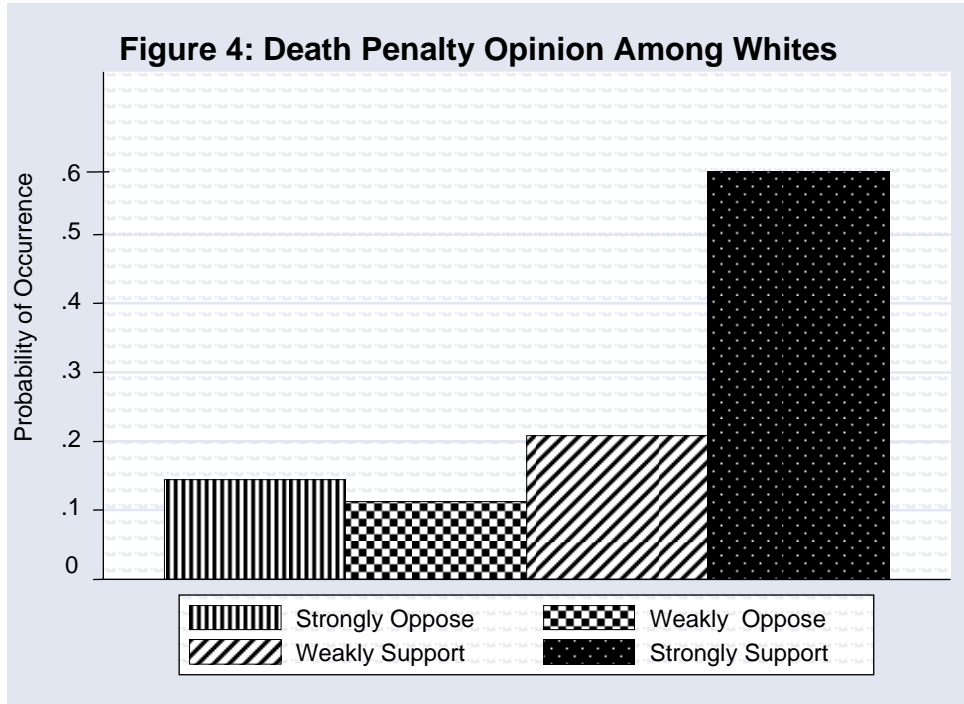
* = $p < .1$ ** = $p < .01$ *** = $p < .001$ N= 874 psuedo-R²= .0189

Three demographic factors are significantly related to an individual’s death penalty opinion.²⁰ First, as hypothesized, as an individual becomes better educated, he/she is less likely to support the death penalty. Age is also related to an individual’s death penalty opinion. As expected, older people are less likely to support the death penalty. Finally, as hypothesized, whites are much more supportive of the death penalty than blacks.

Because the coefficients produced in an ordered probit analysis cannot be directly interpreted or compared, the best means by which ordered probit results can be understood is to compute predicted probabilities. When computing these predicted probabilities, all other independent variables are held at their means, leaving only the independent variable of interest to vary. Figure 3 displays the predicted probabilities of support for the death penalty among blacks and Figure 4 displays the predicted probabilities of support for the death penalty among whites.



²⁰ The coefficients displayed in Table 2 cannot be directly interpreted. They are shown for reference purposes only. For more information on this, consult Long (1997)

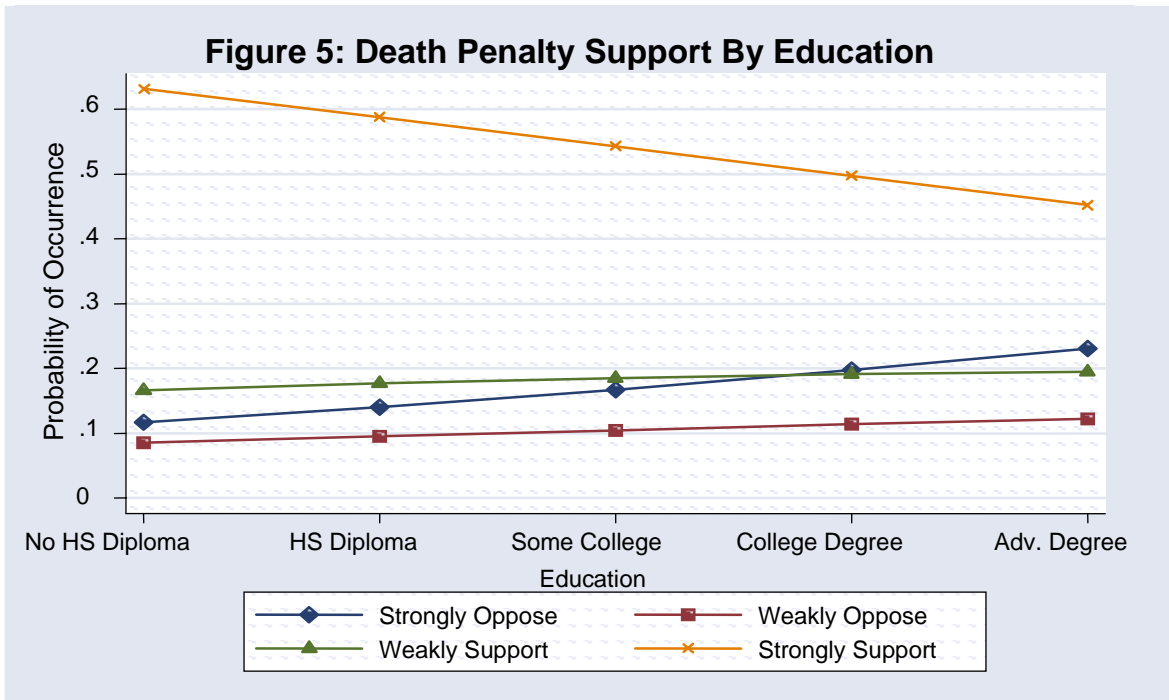


These probabilities support previous research on the central role of race in death penalty opinion formation. The probability that a black respondent will strongly oppose the death penalty is approximately 25%. In comparison, the probability that a white respondent will strongly oppose the death penalty is approximately 15%. At the other end of the scale, the probability that a black respondent will strongly support the death penalty is approximately 42%, while the probability that a white respondent will strongly support the death penalty is approximately 58%.

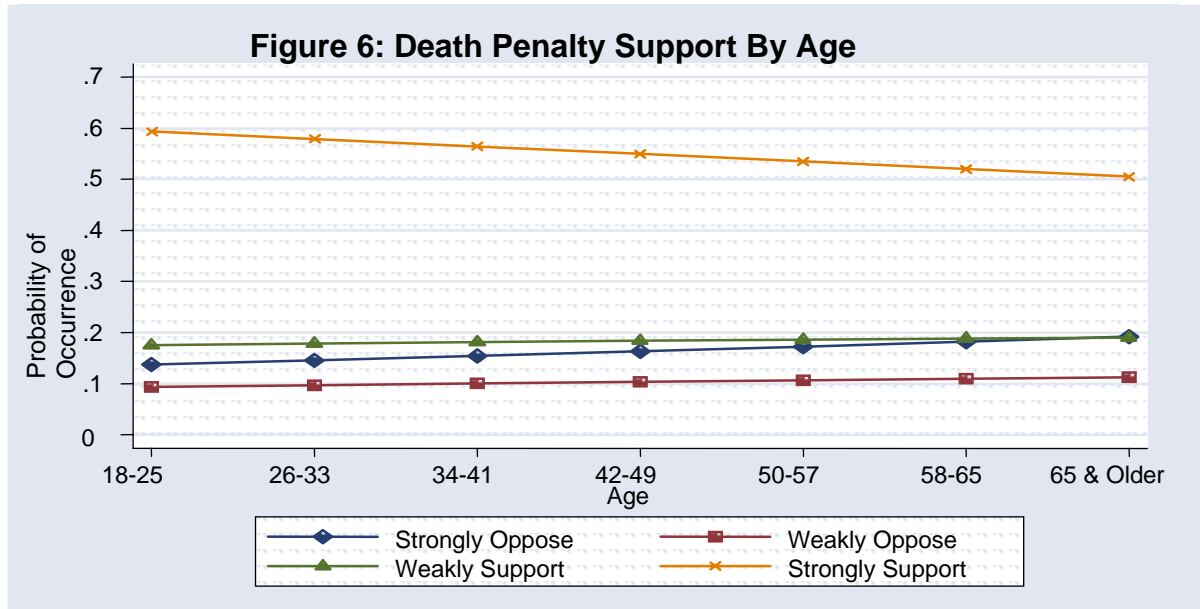
This difference in level of support between the races is similar in both rural and urban areas. The city x white interaction variable was not significantly related to support of the death penalty. Additionally, it is interesting to note the overall high level of predicted support of the death penalty by both races. While more whites strongly support the death penalty than blacks, a significant proportion of black respondents, 42%, strongly support the death penalty. It should

be noted that these are predicted probabilities, and not actual responses. In fact, strong support for the death penalty was the modal actual response among blacks. This is consistent with the high overall levels of support the death penalty has received in previous public opinion polls.

As mentioned above, education reduces support for the death penalty. Figure 5 displays the predicted probabilities for each response to the death penalty question. As Figure 5 indicates, the predicted probability that a respondent will strongly support the death penalty decreases from approximately 63% of respondents with no high school diploma, to approximately 41% of those with an advanced degree. In contrast, the predicted probability that a respondent will strongly oppose the death penalty increases from approximately 10% of respondents with no high school diploma to approximately 27% of respondents with an advanced degree. Thus, education has a profound impact in reducing support of the death penalty.



Age also reduces support for the death penalty. Older respondents are predicted to be more supportive of capital punishment than are their younger counterparts. Figure 5 displays the predicted probabilities of support for the death penalty by age.



The predicted probability of a respondent strongly supporting the death penalty falls from approximately 60% for those between 18 and 25 years of age to approximately 48% for those aged 66 and older. While the overall strength of support for the death penalty is evident in this graph as well, it should be noted that age does not have as strong an impact on strong opposition to capital punishment as race and education. The predicted probability that a respondent will strongly oppose capital punishment increases from approximately 13% for those 18-25 years of age to approximately 20% for those 65 years of age and older. This is an increase of 7% between the high and low age groups. In comparison, the predicted probability that a respondent will strongly oppose capital punishment increases from approximately 11% for those respondents with no high school diploma to approximately 27% for those respondents with an advanced degree. That is an increase of 16% between the high and low education groups. The predicted probability that a respondent will strongly oppose capital punishment increases from

approximately 15% whites to approximately 25% for blacks. That is a difference of 10%. Thus, age has a weaker effect as a predictor of opposition to capital punishment.

In sum, race, education, and age are the only significant demographic variables in the initial model. To determine what attitudes intervene between these demographics and death penalty opinions, I will now add the attitudinal variables, one at a time, to the model.

Attitudinal Model

The first attitudinal variable added to the model is party identification, and the results of this ordered probit analysis appear in Table 3. Party identification is significantly related to an

Table 3: Attitudinal Variables Relationship with Support for the Death Penalty

Independent Variables	Coeff.
South	0.088
Female	-0.126
Age	-0.048*
Education	-0.161***
White	0.273*
Evangelical	-0.178
Income	-0.002
City	-0.021
Suburb	0.077
Catholic	0.116
City x White	-0.034
PID	0.115***

* = p < .1 ** = p < .01 *** = p < .001 N= 858 psuedo-R²= .0341

individual's opinion concerning the death penalty. As hypothesized, Democrats are less likely to support the death penalty than Republicans. The same three demographic factors; age, education, and race remain significantly related to an individual's death penalty opinion; however,²¹ it is important to note the effect that the inclusion of party identification has on the effect of race on the death penalty. The coefficient for race dropped from .389 to .273. This

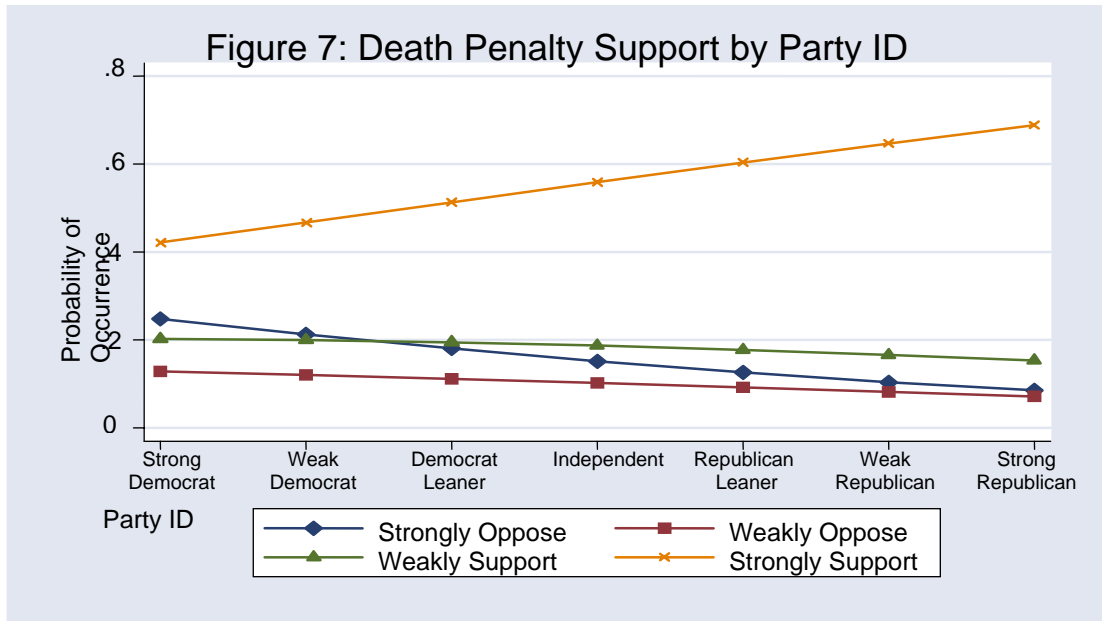
indicates that some of the explanatory power of race is filtered through an individual's party identification.

This is due to the fact that few blacks identify themselves with the Republican Party. In fact, a plurality blacks are strong Democrats.²² This difference in party identification and intensity of party identification is partially responsible for the impact of race on death penalty attitudes.

Figure 7 displays the strong effect of party identification on death penalty attitudes. The graph shows the predicted probabilities for each death penalty response by party identification. Approximately 70% of respondents that are strong Republicans strongly support the death penalty. This dwarfs the 41% of strong Democrats that support the death penalty. Additionally, strong opposition to the death penalty drops as a respondent moves from one end of the party identification spectrum to the other. Approximately 22% of strong Democrats oppose the death penalty. This level of opposition is cut in half, to 10%, among strong Republicans.

²¹ Again, the coefficients displayed in Table 3 cannot be directly interpreted. They are shown for reference purposes only. For more information on this, consult Long (1997).

²² Of the sample used in this research, 129 blacks, 32% of the sample, identify themselves as strong Democrats, compared to only 27, or 7%, who identify themselves as strong Republicans. The total number of blacks in the sample is 406. In contrast, 217 white respondents, or 16% of the sample, identify themselves as strong Democrats and 209, or 15%, identify themselves as strong Republicans. This is of a total of 1370 white respondents in the sample. Thus blacks are disproportionately Democratic.



The next attitudinal variable added to the model is ideology. It has an effect similar to party identification on death penalty attitudes. Table 4 displays the results of the ordered probit analysis that includes ideology. Ideology is significantly related to support of the death penalty.

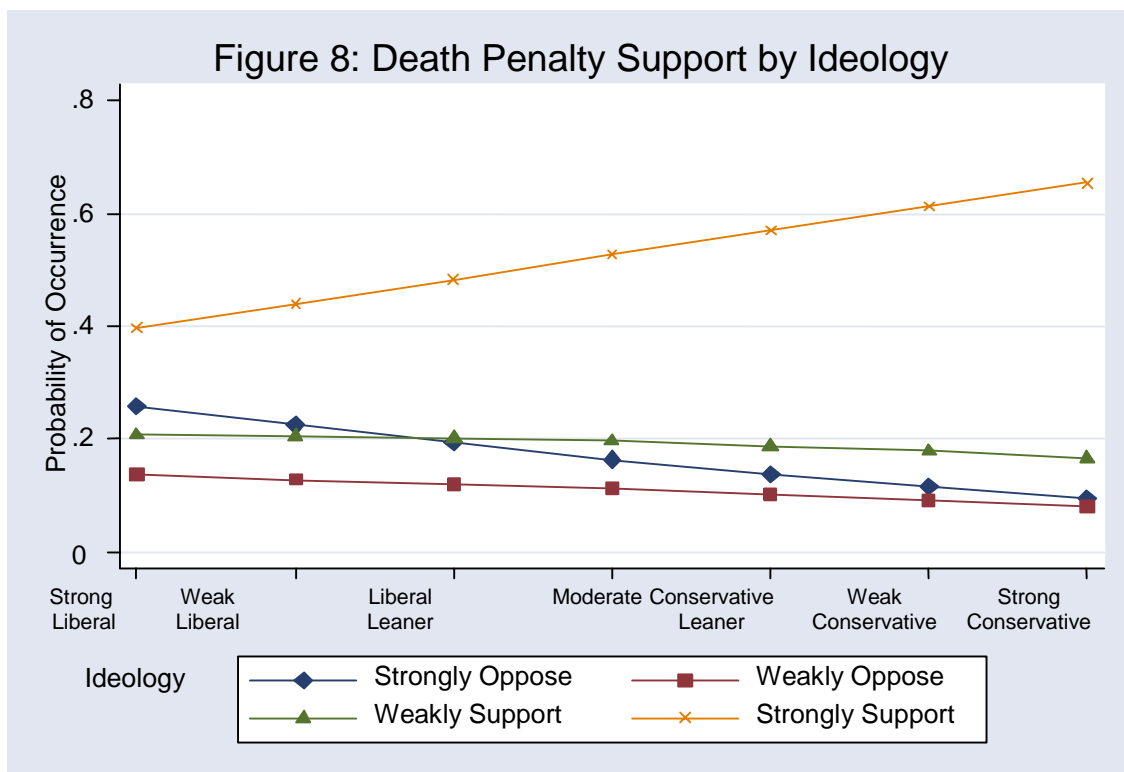
Table 4: Attitudinal Variables Relationship with Support for the Death Penalty

Independent Variables	Coeff.
South	0.042
Female	-0.073
Age	-0.059*
Education	-0.154***
White	0.249*
Evangelical	-0.228
Income	-0.003
City	-0.125
Suburb	0.099
Catholic	0.042
City x White	-0.038
PID	0.091***
Ideology	0.120***

* = p < .1 ** = p < .01 *** = p < .001 N= 790 psuedo-R²= .0435

As hypothesized, conservatives are more supportive of the death penalty than liberals. Additionally, ideology affects the relationship between race and support for the death penalty. The coefficient for race falls from .273 in the previous model to .249 in this model. Thus, some of the explanatory power of race is filtered through an individual's ideology. This cannot easily be explained. Blacks are not only slightly more likely to call themselves liberal than are whites.²³ Whites may simply be more likely to view ideology as more pertinent to the issue of the death penalty than do blacks. Regardless, ideology does not completely eliminate the importance of race to death penalty attitude formation.

Figure 8 displays the predicted probabilities of support for the death penalty by ideology.



²³ Forty-three percent of black respondents identify themselves, to some degree, as liberal. In contrast, 35% of the white respondents identify themselves as liberal. Fifty-nine percent of whites identify themselves as conservative. Fifty percent of blacks identify themselves as conservative. Thus blacks are slightly more likely to be liberal, but nearly as likely to be conservative.

As Figure 8 indicates, conservatives are more likely to support the death penalty. The probability that a respondent will strongly support the death penalty increases from approximately 40% of strong liberals to approximately 63% of strong conservatives. Additionally, the probability that a respondent will strongly oppose the death penalty decreases from approximately 24% of strong liberals to approximately 15% of strong conservatives. Beyond race, ideology does not significantly affect the other independent variables. Education, and age remain significantly related to death penalty attitudes, and ideology does not alter these relationships.

Religiosity is the next attitudinal variable added to the model. Table 5 displays the results of this ordered probit analysis that includes religiosity. Having religion as an important part of one's life reduces the support a respondent has for capital punishment. It should be noted that

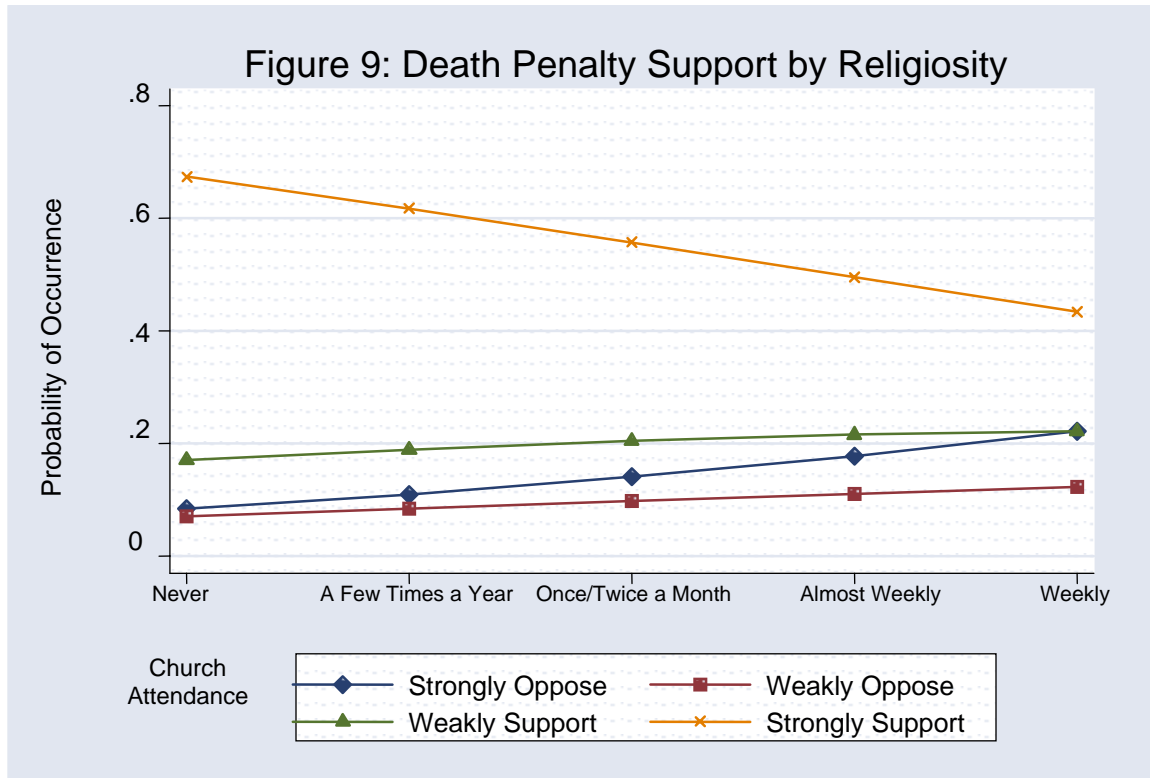
Table 5: Attitudinal Variables Relationship with Support for the Death Penalty

Independent Variables	Coeff.
South	0.114
Female	-0.064
Age	-0.037
Education	-0.163***
White	0.280*
Evangelical	-0.260
Income	-0.009
City	-0.195
Suburb	0.123
Catholic	0.043
City x White	-0.089
PID	0.098***
Ideology	0.107**
Religiosity	-0.158***

* = p < .1 ** = p < .01 *** = p < .001 N= 542 psuedo-R²= .0548

age is no longer significantly related to death penalty attitudes. Religiosity may explain the effect of age on support for the death penalty. This is may be due to the lack of religious

importance felt by younger respondents.²⁴ Figure 9 displays the predicted probabilities of support for the death penalty by religiosity. As Figure 9 indicates, religion has a strong impact on



the death penalty attitudes of respondents, mostly through a reduction in strong support for the death penalty. The predicted probability of a respondent strongly supporting the death penalty falls from approximately 64% among respondents who never attend church to 41% among respondents who attend church weekly. Thus, religion significantly reduces strong support for the death penalty.

Fear of crime is the next variable added to the model. Table 6 displays the results of the ordered probit analysis that includes fear of crime. Fear of crime increases an individual's

²⁴ While few respondents, regardless of age, responded that they never attend church, a discrepancy exists in church attendance levels between age groups. Religion becomes more important as one ages. Twenty-eight percent of respondents 18-25 years of age attend church once or twice a year, 17% in this age bracket attend church weekly. In

support of capital punishment. Those who stated that the crime rate has increased since 1992 are more likely to support the death penalty than those who do not believe that the crime rate has increased. Adding fear of crime to the model has also reduces the coefficient of education from

Table 6: Attitudinal Variables Relationship with Support for the Death Penalty

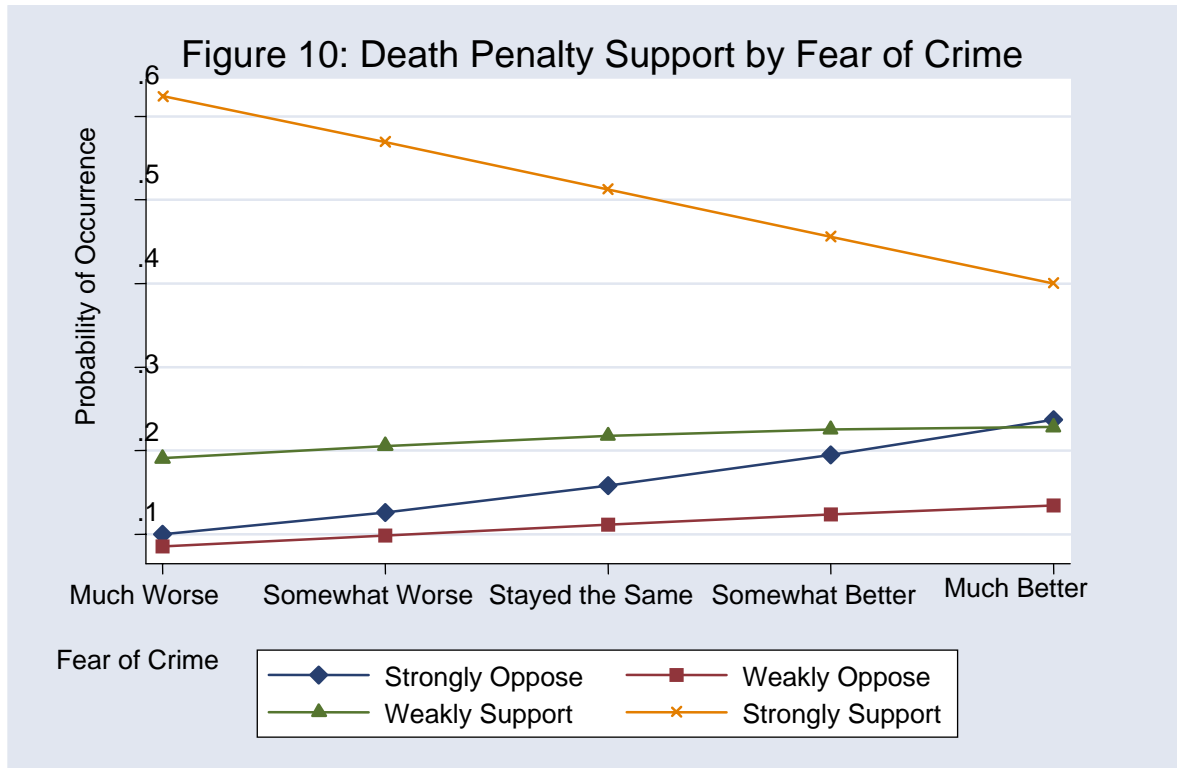
Independent Variables	Coeff.
South	0.139
Female	-0.095
Age	-0.033
Education	-0.113*
White	0.295*
Evangelical	-0.333
Income	-0.008
City	-0.106
Suburb	0.160
Catholic	0.028
City x White	0.035
PID	0.080**
Ideology	0.124***
Religiosity	-0.167***
Crime	-0.143**

* = p < .1 ** = p < .01 *** = p < .001 N= 495 psuedo-R²= .0655

-.163 to -.116, indicating that the fear of crime is partially responsible the effect of education on death penalty attitudes. This makes sense. As discussed previously, most Americans opinions of the crime rate are not accurate. Those who are more educated may pay closer attention to political information such as the crime rate, thereby increasing the accuracy of their views. This, in turn, reduces their fear of crime and their support of the death penalty as a means of deterring crime, or punishing criminals. In addition, highly educated people may simply be more insulated from crime. Therefore, they may fear crime less, due to their lack of direct exposure to it. This reduces the impact of fear of crime on death penalty attitudes.

comparison, 14% of respondents age 66 or older attend church once or twice a year, while 61% attend church weekly. Religion is much more important to older respondents.

Figure 10 displays the predicted probabilities of the various levels of support for the death penalty by fear of crime. As Figure 10 indicates, the fear of crime increases support of



the death penalty. The predicted probability of a respondent strongly supporting the death penalty drops from approximately 63%, among those respondents who believe that the crime rate has gotten much worse, to approximately 40% of respondents who believe that the crime rate has gotten much better. Furthermore, the predicted probability of a respondent strongly opposing capital punishment increases from approximately 10% of respondents who believe that the crime rate has gotten much worse to approximately 23% of respondents who believe that the crime rate has gotten much better.

The final attitudinal variable added to the model is the racism variable. Table 7 displays the results of the ordered probit analysis of the full model. As Table 7 displays, racism is not significantly related to support of capital punishment; however, it does drop the race variable to

Table 7: Attitudinal Variables Relationship with Support for the Death Penalty

Independent Variables	Coeff.
South	0.155
Female	-0.105
Age	-0.017
Education	-0.139*
White	0.262
Evangelical	-0.216
Income	-0.009
City	-0.105
Suburb	0.094
Catholic	0.065
City x White	-0.030
PID	0.080**
Ideology	0.117**
Religiosity	-0.169***
Crime	-0.108*
Racism	0.071

* = p < .1 ** = p < .01 *** = p < .001 N= 446 psuedo-R²= .0611

insignificance. This indicates that racism, party identification and ideology largely explain the effect of race on death penalty attitudes. Blacks are less Republican, less conservative, and certainly less racist than whites. Thus, they are less supportive of capital punishment.

This is the complete model of death penalty attitudes. It includes every demographic and attitudinal variable hypothesized to have an effect on the formation of capital punishment attitudes. However, this model is not parsimonious. In order to develop a more parsimonious model, one that includes only those variables that have a significant relationship with support of the death penalty, I estimated a reverse stepwise ordered probit analysis. Table 8 displays the results of this reverse stepwise ordered probit analysis, showing only those variables that are significantly related to death penalty attitudes at the p<.05 level. As Table 8 indicates, education, party identification, ideology, religiosity, fear of crime, and Evangelical are the variables that have the greatest impact on death penalty attitude formation. It is interesting to again note that education and Evangelical remain the only demographic variable to remain significant in this

parsimonious model. Evangelical returns to the model because so many of the other variables are dropped. It is also interesting that being an Evangelical Christian reduces support for the death penalty. This appears counter-intuitive; however, it is not. The previous research conducted on death penalty attitudes was bivariate; only looking for the relationship between death penalty attitudes and membership in an Evangelical denomination. Once the party identification and ideology variables, which have a strong influence on death penalty attitudes, are controlled for in a multivariate analysis, the negative relationship between Evangelical and death penalty attitudes is revealed. Additionally, popular Evangelical leaders have signaled a change in their support for the death penalty recently. For example, Pat Robertson, a famous Evangelical Christian leader recently called for a national death penalty moratorium, (Petofsky 2000, n.p.).

Table 8: Attitudinal Variables Relationship with Support for the Death Penalty

Independent Variables	Coeff.
Education	-0.114*
PID	0.094**
Ideology	0.121**
Religiosity	-0.181***
Crime	-0.108*
Evangelical	-.25*

* = p < .1 ** = p < .01 *** = p < .001 N= 446 psuedo-R²= .0545

Thus, it is not characteristics about an individual that have the greatest effect upon that individual's death penalty opinion. Rather, it is attitudinal variables related to those characteristics that play a greater role in determining how strongly an individual supports or opposes the death penalty.

There is no standard goodness of fit measure for ordered probit. The pseudo-R² are controversial because they are means to approximate the measure of a true R². By definition, the R² statistic is the ratio of explained variance to unexplained variance, measured in terms of

difference between Y 's and \hat{y} 's. MLE analyses do not produce residuals because they do not try to predict y -values, but rather the probability of an outcome. Thus no residuals are calculated, so R^2 cannot be calculated. Up to this point, I have not been as concerned with the goodness of fit as with which variables best explain death penalty attitudes. Now that I have reduced the model to its most parsimonious form, a look at goodness of fit is appropriate. Two measures, the BIC' and the fit of predicted values to actual values will be used. The BIC' is probably the most favored measure, but it is only useful when comparing models, and that is not the case here. What is important is that the BIC' be negative, meaning that the model does fit the data sufficiently well to justify the number of parameters that are used (Long 1997). The BIC' for the reduced model is -22.615.

A second method is simply to compare the values predicted by the model to the actual death penalty attitudes. A simple crosstab between these two variables indicates a low, but positive, relationship with a tau-b of .20. The relationship is low because 50% of the sample strongly favor the death penalty, so the model over-predicted the number of cases in the strongly favor category. In sum, the model does provide improvement over no model, but the improvement is modest.

CONCLUSION

The goal of this research was to produce a comprehensive model of death penalty attitude formation. This goal has been achieved with some unique results. Consistent with previous research, I have also found that support for the death penalty remains high; however, certain factors reduce that support significantly. Race and education are two demographic variables strongly tied to an individual's death penalty attitude. The historic racial imposition of the death penalty has severely reduced black support of capital punishment. Whites are nearly 20% more

likely support the death penalty than blacks. This may have a future impact on the application of death sentences, as blacks as jurors or judges may be unwilling to choose execution as a punishment for a capital crime.

Education and Evangelical are the only demographic variables to remain significant with the addition of every attitudinal variable to the model. The importance of education is an interesting finding, as no previous research indicates a relationship between education and opposition to the death penalty. This is a significant finding, especially for those that advocate an end to the use of capital punishment. As the U.S. populace becomes better educated, they may be less likely to support the death penalty. Thus, anti-death penalty advocates have a potential audience in college students.

While the negative relationship between education and support for the death penalty aids anti-death penalty advocates, the relationship between age and the death penalty hurts their cause. Surprisingly, older Americans are less likely than their younger counterparts to support the death penalty. As they die and leave the population, this could lead to a new wave of support for capital punishment. This could indicate a generational effect exists on the issue of the death penalty; however, it is beyond the scope of this research to test for a generational effect.

The attitudinal variables of party identification, ideology, and religiosity are also significantly related to the death penalty. Because party identification and ideological identification are related to a wide range of political attitudes, it should be no surprise that they are important predictors of death penalty attitudes. Both party identification and ideology have similar but independent effects on death penalty attitudes; Republicans and conservatives are more likely to strongly support the death penalty.

Religion, both denominational membership and religiosity, are also significant factors in determining support of the death penalty. The more important religion is to a person, the less likely that person is to support the death penalty. Belonging to an evangelical denomination also reduces an individual's support of the death penalty. Both of these findings reinforce the notion that most opposition to the death penalty is based on moral reasoning.

Overall, it should be noted that a single-item measure of death penalty attitudes is insufficient for in-depth analysis. As this research indicates, a wide majority of respondents strongly support the death penalty, but this high level of strong support may be due to deficiencies in the single-item measure of death penalty attitudes. As the Marshall Hypothesis argues, capital punishment is a complex issue, with many intricacies. A single-item measure does not accurately assess the effect of these characteristics on an individual's death penalty opinion. Future research should focus on developing an accurate, multi-item measure of death penalty attitudes.

The death penalty remains a controversial issue. New cases advocating the abolition of the death penalty for certain classifications of the criminals reach the Supreme Court every year. It does not appear as if this flood of cases will end any time soon. While support for capital punishment remains high, it is not absolute. Alterations in certain demographic and attitudinal factors could change the public's "standards of decency."

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