

Research Note: Views Toward Crime, Criminals, Treatment, and Punishment Among Bangladeshi and U.S. College Students

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It is important to understand crime views, and how they differ among nations across the world. No published cross-cultural research on crime views of Bangladeshi and U.S. individuals could be located; therefore, this preliminary study examined the views of crime, criminals, treatment, and punishment among college students of Bangladesh and the U.S. The results of the independent t-test indicated that views differed on 14 of the 17 indicators used. When Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression equations were calculated to determine whether the results were independent of the effects of gender, age, academic standing, and importance of religion in a person's life, the two nations differed on 15 of the 17 indicators. For respondents from both nations, these issues are complex. Within each group, there were differing views as well. Thus, there are not only cross-national differences in the views, but intra-national differences as well.

Every society deals with crime. While crime is universal, views on crime, criminals, treatment, and punishment are not. These views are often shaped by social forces. The literature suggests that social orientations influence individuals' views, attitudes, and perceptions, and distinct cultural groups have their own values, views, and norms (Chung & Bagozzi, 1997; Yick, 2000). This implies that not only will views differ within a society but across societies. Yet, according to Mayhew and van Kesteren (2002), "with a few exceptions - researchers have explored public opinion within, rather than across, jurisdictions" (p. 63). Senese and Kashem (1997) argued that there is very limited criminal justice literature on comparative analysis between nations, particularly among non-Western countries.

The lack of this type of research limits the understanding of crime views and how they differ across the world (Terrill, 2007). For theoretical and practical reasons, it is important to compare and contrast crime views across the globe. Using a cross-cultural perspective, a better understanding of views on crime, criminals, treatment, and punishment will be gained. Jowell (1998) pointed out that "the importance and utility to social science of rigorous cross-national measures is incontestable. They help to reveal not only intriguing differences between countries and cultures, but also aspects of one's own country and culture that would be difficult

or impossible to detect from domestic data alone” (p. 168).

With a growing global economy, the nations of the world are becoming more and more tied with one another. Furthermore, cross-national studies help narrow the gap between societies and help build bridges leading to the flow of information across the planet. There is a need to explore what people of other nations think about crime, criminals, punishment, and treatment (Cao & Cullen, 2001); therefore, this preliminary study was undertaken to examine the views of crime, criminals, treatment, and punishment among residents of The People’s Republic of Bangladesh (henceforth, Bangladesh) and the United States of America (henceforth, U.S.) to determine whether there were similarities or differences.

Because this was a preliminary study with limited resources, college students in each nation were surveyed. Bangladesh was selected because it a large, growing, and important Asian nation. Additionally, there has been almost no published research in Western criminal justice journals on criminal justice issues involving Bangladesh (Senese & Kashem, 1997). Finally, one of the authors is familiar with Bangladeshi society and the operations of the Bangladesh criminal justice system.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF BANGLADESH AND THE U.S.

Bangladesh (translates to “Country of Bengal”) is a nation in South Asia. It is a low lying country of river deltas that empty into the Bay of Bengal on the Indian Ocean. It is surrounded by India, except for a small border with Myanmar (Bangladesh, 2006). The population of Bangladesh is approximately 150 million, making it the seventh most populous nation in the world (Infoplease, 2007) and among the most densely populated (Bangladesh, 2006). The U.S. is located in North America and is the world’s third most populous nation, with a population of about 300 million (World Desk Reference, 2007a). Both Bangladesh and the U.S. were former British colonies, and both are currently democratic nations; however, the U.S. has been an independent nation far longer than Bangladesh.

The area of Bangladesh has a long and rich history dating back more than four thousand years. Although many nations invaded and ruled Bengal (present day Bangladesh and West Bengal of India) throughout its history, in general, the people were rarely affected by the political changes as they mostly lived in the self-sufficient village communities until British rule. In the 16th century, Europeans set up trading posts, and, by the middle of the 1700s, it eventually became part of British India (Nationmaster.com, 2007a; World Desk Reference, 2007b). In 1947, Bangladesh separated from India and became part of Pakistan, and, in 1955, it was named East Pakistan. After a bloody conflict, East Pakistan seceded and became Bangladesh in 1971 (Bangladesh, 2006; Nationmaster.com, 2007a; World Desk Reference, 2007b). There have been four military coups since its

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founding. Currently, Bangladesh is a democratic nation. It has a secular parliamentary form of government. There is a unicameral parliament (*Jatiyo Sangshad* or House of Nation) headed by a Prime Minister who oversees the daily government functions. There is also a largely ceremonial post of President who is elected by the parliament for a five year term (Bangladesh, 2006; Nationmaster.com, 2007a; World Desk Reference, 2007b). The two main political parties are the Bangladesh Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. Bangladesh is divided into six administrative divisions, and these divisions are further divided into 64 districts (Bangladesh, 2006).

The U.S. is a country in North America. It was formerly a British colony that declared its independence in 1776. Its constitution was ratified in 1787. The U.S. is a federal republic comprised of a federal government and 50 state governments. The federal government is based on three branches of government, the executive branch, the legislative branch, and the judicial branch (Central Intelligence Agency, 2009). The executive branch is headed by the President who is democratically elected every four years. The legislative branch is headed by the U.S. Congress, a bicameral legislature. The two legislative houses of Congress are the House of Representatives and the Senate. There are currently 435 members of the House of Representative who represent the individual 50 states, and they are elected every two years. The number of representatives from each state in the House of Representatives is apportioned based on the number of residents in each state from the U.S. Census (Office of the Clerk, 2009). Two Senators represent each of the 50 states; thus, there are 100 U.S. Senators. Senators are elected every 6 years (U.S. Senate, 2009). The federal judicial branch is overseen by the U.S. Supreme Court. There are currently 9 U.S. Supreme Court Justices who are appointed for life (U.S. Supreme Court, 2009). The two primary political parties are the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. The U.S. has been an independent nation for more than 200 years and has had a democratic federal republic form of government during this time. In general, the political structure and society of the U.S. is viewed as stable (World Desk Reference, 2007a).

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated nations in the world. As the World Factbook (2004) states, over 140 million people live in a geographic area which is slightly smaller than Iowa. According to a 2002 estimate the 40% people are either unemployed or underemployed. The literacy rate is 43.1%, where literate is defined as a person aged 15 or older who can read and write simple words. About 54% of men are literate in contrast to 32% of women. Bangladesh's population is largely young, rural, poor, and Muslim (Bangladesh, 2006). Roughly 60% of the population are under 25 (Bangladesh, 2001). The majority of Bangladeshi citizens are involved in agriculture and the vast majority live in rural areas (World Desk Reference, 2007b).

The U.S. population is older, a greater percentage lives in metropolitan areas,

and is highly literate (World Desk Reference, 2007a). Many Bangladeshis live below the poverty line (World Desk Reference, 2007b). The U.S. is a much more prosperous nation. The U.S. has one of the world's largest and richest economies (World Desk Reference, 2007a). Gross domestic product per capita in Bangladesh is \$2200 and in the U.S. it is \$39,452 (United Nations, 2005; Nationmaster.com 2007a, 2007b; World Desk Reference, 2007a, 2007b). One of the major export nations for Bangladesh is the U.S. (World Desk Reference, 2007b). In recent years, there have been concerns and protests over the economic situation in Bangladesh (Perera & Kumara, 2002).

The population of Bangladesh is largely ethnically homogeneous, with 98% being Bengali. The vast majority of Bangladeshis are Muslim (88%, with most being Sunni). The next largest religious group is Hindus at 11% (World Desk Reference, 2007b). While Bengali the most common language spoken and is the official language, English is widely spoken as well (World Desk Reference, 2007b).

While the U.S. is a multi-ethnic nation, the majority of the U.S. residents are Caucasian (69%) (World Desk Reference, 2007a). The majority of U.S. residents are Christian (77%), 4% identify another religious denomination (approximately half of those are either Jewish or Muslim), 14% have no religious preference, and 5% decline to identify with a particular religious denomination (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). English is the most frequently spoken language in the U.S.; although 18% of U.S. residents speak a language other than English at home (World Desk Reference, 2007a).

Before British colonization, like many other parts of Indian sub-continent, Bangladesh had an informal justice system which was rooted in the local community. The village leaders tried to find an amicable solution for the disputant parties in both criminal and civil matters. This informal justice system, *Shalish* or sometimes called *Panchayet*, had been in place in Bangladesh from the time of antiquity. The remnants of *Shalish* can still be seen in rural Bangladesh as a form of dispute resolution. In addition to the informal justice system, there were Zaminder's and King's courts which served a larger population beyond the jurisdiction of one or a few villages. Today, laws in Bangladesh are primarily based on English common law (Law Research, 2007).

While originally based on the British legal system, the U.S. system has evolved and is often embraced by U.S. residents as uniquely their own. The U.S. relies far more on official control structures than informal control structures. Even though the crime rate has been declining for the past 10 years, there is a fair degree of crime and fear of crime in the U.S. (Uniform Crime Reports, 2007; Weitzer & Kurbin, 2004). In the past several decades, there has been a hardening of public attitudes toward crime and criminals in the U.S., which have led to governmental efforts to control crime through suppression methods and punitive

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sanctions. “Virtually everyone agrees that the public in the United States harbours punitive views toward offenders” (Cullen, Pealer, Fisher, Applegate, & Santana, 2002, p. 128).

With an incarceration rate of 756 per 100,000, the U.S. has the highest rate of people under criminal incarceration in the world. The next nearest nation is Russia with a rate of 629 per 100,000. Bangladesh has a much lower rate of 51 per 100,000 (Walmsley, 2008). There are over two million inmates housed in correctional facilities in the U.S. (World Desk Reference, 2007a). There are about 80,000 individuals incarcerated in Bangladeshi prisons (Walmsley, 2008).

In the past decade, there has been an increase in crime and a breakdown of law in Bangladesh (Ganguly, 2002; United Nations, 2005). From the 1990s until recently, the crime rate has risen in Bangladesh (World Desk Reference, 2007b). In 2002, the United Nations issued a report expressing concern over the increase of violent crimes (Ganguly, 2002). There has been an increase in terrorism as well. For example, on August 17, 2005, 400 bombs aimed at government buildings exploded (Human Rights Watch, 2006). The bombs were set by Jamaat-ul Mujahideen, an Islamist extremist terrorist group that has called for strict Islamic law in Bangladesh (U.S. Department of State, 2007). On January 11, 2007, President Lajuddin Ahmed declared a state of emergency and suspended many civil rights and postponed national elections (U.S. Department of State, 2007). The Bangladesh National Party came to power in 2001 on a platform that it would respond to the growing crime problem (Human Rights Watch, 2006). In the fall of 2002, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia launched “Operation Clean Heart,” which used the army to crack-down on crime, corruption, and terrorism (Ganguly, 2002; Perra & Kumara, 2002). There have been concerns about human rights violations by the crackdown to restore law and order in Bangladesh, including alleged extrajudicial killings of suspects by government agents (Human Rights Watch, 2006). Many Bangladeshi people view the police as inept and corrupt, and some even fear the police (Asian Human Rights Commission, 2005). While there were allegations of some human rights violations, most of the Bangladeshi press stories were favorable of the operation (Ganguly, 2002; Hossain, 2002). The rise of violence has led to more harsh punishments in Bangladesh, including sentencing people to death (World Desk Reference, 2007b). According to the U.S. Department of State (2007), punishments for crimes in Bangladesh can be more severe than in the U.S. for similar crimes. There is also a serious delay in trials in Bangladesh. Additionally, correctional facilities are out of date and overcrowded (Kashem, 1996; Senese & Kashem, 1997).

Political fighting and corruption at all levels of government is widespread as well as all types of crime. Lawlessness is a common phenomenon that Bangladeshi people live with everyday. Larceny, highjacking, robbery, burglary, arson, damage of private and public property, fights over property and political power,

murder (including political assassinations), and rape are a few of different types of crimes that Bangladeshi people experience on an everyday basis. Crime is viewed as the most important social problem in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh in 2006, there were about 4200 murders, 1600 robberies, 8300 thefts and over 11,000 crimes of cruelty to women (e.g., rape, domestic violence) reported to the police. A total of 130,578 crimes were reported to Bangladeshi police in 2006 (Bangladesh Police, 2007). The murder rate in Bangladesh is approximately 2 per 100,000, the sexual assault rate is approximately 0.5 per 100,000 and the theft rate is about 11 per 100,000 (Senese & Kashem, 1996). The murder rate in the U.S. is about 6.1 per 100,000, the sexual assault rate is approximately 31 per 100,000, and the theft rate is about 2200 per 100,000 (Uniform Crime Reports, 2007). It is important to note that, although underreporting of crime is common, it is more of a problem in Bangladesh than the U.S.

Public service is not the guiding principle among police in Bangladesh, which ranks among the most corrupt countries in the world, according to the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) published by Transparency International, an anti-corruption, watch-dog organization (Transparency International, 2008). The CPI ranks nations on the degree to which corruption is perceived to exist among public officials and politicians. From 2001 to 2004, Bangladesh ranked among the nations with the highest levels of corruption. As police departments are among the most corrupt organizations, reporting crime requires a bribe to police. Police mostly serve the influential, especially political leaders and activists, and when a crime is committed by a member of influential group against someone of masses, then reporting the crime to the police may bring additional danger to the victim. While most people reported avoiding the police, 10% said that they had had some contact with the police (United Nations, 2005). Of those who had had contact with police, 84% complained of police corruption. In order to report domestic violence or other crimes, citizens are expected to pay on average Taka 2000 (\$29 USD), which is a huge portion of respondents' average yearly salary (Transparency International, 2008).

Police are also believed to be complicit in the ruling party's efforts to suppress the political opposition. Writing in *Time Asia*, the Asian equivalent of *Time* magazine, journalist Aravind Adiga argued that ordinary Bangladeshis "believe the cops are only lackeys in a system in which the chief criminal beneficiaries are a handful of powerful gang lords with important political connections" (Adiga, 2004, p. 6). In other words, ordinary people take systemic corruption for granted; major criminals are protected by police and well-placed politicians. In making a second point, Adiga reiterates a remark made by former Bangladeshi President Chowdhury (1991-2001), who characterized the political instability following the elections of 2001: "some politicians have cultivated gangs of armed youths in order to intimidate their opponents" (Adiga, 2004, p. 6).

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No published cross-cultural research on crime views of Bangladeshi and U.S. individuals could be located. This preliminary study was therefore undertaken to examine the views of crime, treatment, punishment, and criminals among Bangladeshi and U.S. college students.

METHODOLOGY

In 2005 and 2006, a convenience sample of students at one Bangladeshi university and one U.S. University was undertaken. The Bangladesh institution was the largest public university located in the capital city, Dhaka. The institution offers both undergraduate and graduate degrees in 51 academic disciplines and had an enrollment of about 30,000 students. The surveys were administered during the class period with the permission of the instructor. The surveys were given to 8 classes from 8 different disciplines to ensure that students from different academic backgrounds were represented.

The U.S. university was a public institution located in the Midwest with enrollment of approximately 20,000 and offered undergraduate, master, and doctoral/terminal degrees.¹ At the U.S. university, undergraduate students in 18 classes were surveyed. The selected classes represented a wide array of majors and included general education classes required by all majors. At both academic institutions, the survey was explained to the students, and it was emphasized both verbally and in writing that the survey was voluntary and anonymous. Students were asked not to complete the survey if they had done so in another class. Students completed the survey during class time. It was estimated that more than 90% of the students present took the survey.

A total of 258 usable surveys were returned by Bangladeshi students, and a total of 484 usable surveys were returned by U.S. students. Thus, a total of 742 surveys were used in this study. For the overall group of respondents, 56% were women and 44% were men, with about the same percentage of women in both groups. For the overall group, the median age of the respondents was 21 and the mean age was 21.57, with a standard deviation of 4.62. The Bangladeshi respondents were slightly younger than the U.S. respondents (20.80 versus 21.96 mean years old). For the overall group, 30% were freshmen, 14% were sophomores,

1. The survey data from the U.S. has been used to previous studies which examined the crime views of Chinese and U.S. students, Indian and U.S. students, and Nigerian and U.S. students. While there may be some similarities in this research note and the above papers, none of these previous studies examined the crime views of Bangladeshi and U.S. students. The survey of Bangladeshi students took place about six months after the surveys of students of the above mentioned nations. Full citations are available upon request.

34% were juniors, and 22% were seniors. The Bangladeshi students were more likely to be freshmen and the U.S. students were slightly more likely to be seniors. The vast majority of respondents (91%) indicated that they had never been married, and there was no difference between the two groups of students in terms of marital status.

The respondents were asked seventeen questions about crime, treatment, punishment, and views of criminals (See Table 1 for specific questions asked). All the questions were answered using a five-point Likert-type of response scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. In addition, gender, age, academic level, importance of religion in a person's life, and nationality of the respondent were used in the multi-variate analysis. All have been linked to crime attitudes, at least in the U.S., and are based on past studies of crime views (e.g., Applegate, Cullen, & Fisher, 2002; Applegate, Cullen, Turner, & Sundt, 1996; Baker, Lambert, & Jenkins, 2005; Cao, & Cullen, 2001; Cullen, Clark, Cullen, & Mathers, 1985; Farnworth, Longmire, & West, 1998; Lambert, 2004; Lambert, & Jiang, 2006; Mackey & Courtright, 2000; Mackey, Courtright, & Packard, 2006; Mayhew, & van Kesteren, 2002; Tsoudis, 2000).

Gender was measured as a dichotomous variable representing whether the respondent was a male (coded 1) or female (coded 0). Age was measured in continuous years. Academic level was an ordinal variable coded as 1 = freshman, 2 = sophomore, 3 = junior, and 4 = senior. Respondents were also asked the extent that religion had played in their lives. Five percent of the respondents indicated not at all (coded as 1), 24% indicated not much (coded as 2), 35% indicated a fair amount (coded as 3), and 35% indicated a great deal (coded as 4). There was only a slight difference in the importance religion had played in the lives of the two groups of students. Finally, a dichotomous variable was created measuring if the respondent was from Bangladesh (coded 1) or the U.S. (coded 0).

RESULTS

The percentage responses for the seventeen Likert-type of questions are presented in Table 1. For almost all the questions, there appeared to be differences between Bangladeshi and U.S. respondents in their views. More U.S. respondents felt their nation had a great deal of crime than did Bangladeshi students (89% versus 77%). Interestingly, far more Bangladeshi respondents felt that crime was a pressing social problem (95% versus 62%) and that courts were not harsh enough with offenders (75% versus 43%). The Bangladeshi respondents appeared slightly more supportive of treatment for offenders than were U.S. respondents (e.g., 84% felt that more educational and vocational programs were needed to deal with crime and offenders as compared to 73% of the U.S. students). The Bangladeshi

Table 1: Percentage Results of Crime, Criminals, Treatment, and Punishment Views for Bangladesh and U.S. Respondents (N = 742)

Statement	Bangladesh (n = 258)					U.S. (n = 484)				
	SD	D	U	A	SA	SD	D	U	A	SA
Bangladesh/U.S. has a great deal of crime.	6	17	10	35	32	1	3	7	53	36
Crime is one of the most serious social problems facing society today.	1	1	4	20	75	4	16	18	47	15
Courts generally are not harsh enough with criminals.	2	14	10	50	25	4	27	26	33	10
The main goals for dealing with criminals should be to treat and rehabilitate them.	3	12	23	40	22	4	19	24	40	14
We need more educational and vocational programs to effectively deal with crime and offenders.	2	5	7	44	42	2	8	17	54	19
Showing mercy is more important than seeking revenge.	8	26	24	35	8	4	22	35	32	7
We should stop viewing criminals as victims of society who deserve to be rehabilitated and start paying more attention to the victims of these criminals.	2	9	30	43	16	4	19	30	38	9
Society has a right to seek revenge on violent criminals.	5	3	10	49	33	10	26	26	30	8
Criminals need to be punished, not coddled.	1	4	9	46	40	4	8	19	54	14
A criminal will only “go straight” if the punishment is harsh.	6	10	25	48	11	11	42	32	11	4
Criminals do not generally fear being caught and punished	11	14	14	47	14	3	22	23	47	4
Incarceration is a powerful deterrent to crime	1	9	42	43	5	1	15	29	50	5
I support the death penalty	16	12	2	29	41	13	15	15	38	19
The death penalty is necessary to maintain law and order	4	19	11	37	29	14	29	28	23	6
Once a criminal, always a criminal.	15	34	19	17	15	18	44	19	16	4
Most people commit crime because they are mentally ill or sick.	4	27	18	44	7	14	47	20	18	2
People commit crimes because they are lazy.	18	31	16	29	5	17	48	19	16	0

Note. Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding. SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, U = Uncertain, A = Agree, and SA = Strongly Agree.

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Table 2: Differences Between Bangladesh and U.S. Respondents on Crime Views (N = 742)

Statement	Bangladesh (n = 258)		U.S. (n = 484)		t-value	Regr.
	M	SD	M	SD		
Bangladesh/U.S. has a great deal of crime.	3.70	1.23	4.19	0.78	6.55**	**
Crime is one of the most serious social problems facing society today.	4.67	0.64	3.50	1.07	-16.06**	**
Courts generally are not harsh enough with criminals.	3.81	1.02	3.20	1.05	-7.63**	**
The main goals for dealing with criminals should be to treat and rehabilitate them.	3.66	1.04	3.42	1.05	-2.91**	**
We need more educational and vocational programs to effectively deal with crime and offenders.	4.20	0.90	3.80	0.91	-5.77**	**
Showing mercy is more important than seeking revenge.	3.08	1.11	3.14	0.99	0.67	**
We should stop viewing criminals as victims of society who deserve to be rehabilitated and start paying more attention to the victims of these criminals.	3.63	0.92	3.28	1.00	-4.47**	**
Society has a right to seek revenge on violent criminals.	4.01	1.01	2.99	1.13	-12.02**	**
Criminals need to be punished, not coddled.	4.20	0.85	3.66	0.95	-7.58**	**
A criminal will only “go straight” if the punishment is harsh.	3.48	1.02	2.56	0.97	-11.89**	**
Criminals do not generally fear being caught and punished	3.40	1.20	3.27	0.96	-1.61	-
Incarceration is a powerful deterrent to crime	3.44	0.74	3.42	0.85	-0.29	-
I support the death penalty	3.67	1.50	3.36	1.30	-2.97**	**
The death penalty is necessary to maintain law and order	3.69	1.18	2.77	1.13	-10.29**	**
Once a criminal, always a criminal.	2.83	1.30	2.44	1.07	-4.38**	**
Most people commit crime because they are mentally ill or sick.	3.22	1.06	2.48	1.00	-9.19**	**
People commit crimes because they are lazy.	2.72	1.21	2.35	0.95	-4.59**	**

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$.

students were also more supportive of punishment (e.g., 82% agreed that society had a right to seek revenge on violent criminals as compared to 38% of U.S. students). Likewise, Bangladeshi respondents were more likely to support capital punishment (70% versus 57%) and were more likely to feel that the death penalty

was required for law and order than were their U.S. counterparts (66% versus 29%). Lastly, Bangladeshi respondents appeared to have a more negative view of criminal offenders than did the U.S. respondents (e.g., 51% agreed that most of offenders committed crimes because they were mentally ill or sick, as compared to 20% of the U.S. students).

The Independent t-test was used to determine whether the two groups of respondents significantly differed in their views, and the results are presented in Table 2. There was a statistically significant difference on fourteen of the seventeen items. U.S. respondents were more likely to feel that their nation had a great deal of crime, while Bangladeshi students were more likely to feel that crime was one of the most pressing social problems in their country and that courts were not harsh enough with criminals. Bangladeshi respondents were also more supportive of having rehabilitation and treatment as the main goals for responding to offenders and were more likely to feel that more educational and vocational programs for offenders were required. However, there was no difference in the two groups on whether showing mercy was more important than seeking revenge. Both groups were mixed in their views on this item. Moreover, Bangladeshi respondents were also more supportive of punishing offenders than U.S. respondents, including support for capital punishment. There was no significant difference between the two groups on the deterrent effects of punishment. Both groups of respondents felt that criminals generally did not fear being caught. Nonetheless, both groups indicated that incarceration was a powerful deterrent to crime. Bangladeshi respondents were more likely to feel that criminals would continue to commit crimes, were lazy, and were mentally ill.

To determine whether the two groups were significantly different in their views independent of the effects of gender, age, academic standing, and importance of religion, Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression was utilized. Each of the seventeen items presented in Tables 1 and 2 were entered into an OLS regression as the dependent variable. The nationality of respondents (Bangladesh = 1, U.S. = 0) was entered into the model as the independent variable. Four control variables included gender (female = 0, male = 1), age (measured in continuous years), academic standing (1 = freshman, 2 = sophomore, 3 = junior, 4 = senior), and importance religion played in a person's life (1 = not at all, 2 = not much, 3 = a fair amount, 4 = a great deal). The results for the impact of the dichotomous measure of nation of the respondent are reported in the last column of Table 2 (i.e., the Regr. column). On fifteen of the seventeen items, there was a statistically significant difference in views between Bangladeshi and U.S. respondents. The same significant differences observed in the bivariate analysis were observed in the multi-variate analysis. In addition, there was a difference on the item for importance of showing mercy. In the multi-variate analysis (but not the bivariate analysis), U.S. respondents were more likely to feel that it was important to show

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mercy rather than to seek revenge.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

There are several findings from this study. First, there were differences between the two groups of respondents on their views. Second, both groups were complex in their views. On all but two of the seventeen items, there was a statistically significant difference in the multi-variate analyses between the two groups. U.S. respondents were more likely to feel that there was a great deal of crime in their country, while Bangladeshi students were more likely to feel that crime was one of the most serious social problems facing their society. It could be that U.S. respondents have become more accustomed to crime because it has been an ongoing social issue for the past several decades, while crime has become more of a pressing social issue in Bangladesh in the last five years. Furthermore, the view that crime is not one of the top problems in the U.S. could be the result of the “war against terrorism” which was ongoing at the time of the survey. Bangladeshi students viewed that the courts were too lenient with criminals could be the result of the view that the courts are slow, sometimes corrupt, and politically regulated. As previously indicated, Bangladesh has a much lower incarceration rate than the U.S. Interestingly, even with the world’s highest incarceration rate, the majority of the U.S. students felt that the courts were not harsh enough with offenders.

Bangladeshi respondents were much more supportive of punishment for criminals than were their U.S. counterparts. This desire for punitiveness could be the result of frustration with the political atmosphere, ineffectiveness of law enforcement and recent rise in crime. Interestingly, Bangladeshi students were also more supportive of treatment of offenders. It could be that the Bangladeshi respondents wish to punish offenders so that they are reformed and brought back into law-abiding society. It could be that the high level of support for both punishment and treatment could be the result of the competing values of justice found in Bangladesh. On one hand, there is the formal secular government justice system which grew out of the system formed by the British. This official system is based upon a Western view of justice which punishes the offender. On the other hand, the informal justice system grew from the indigenous people who populated Bangladesh long before the British ruled it as a colony. This community-based system of justice has at its core the desire to treat and change the offender and to respond to the harm done not only to the victim but also to the community. Competing justice systems could have led to a desire to both treat and punish criminals. Bangladeshi respondents were more likely to have a negative view of criminals than were the U.S. respondents. In Bangladesh many crimes are politically motivated, or many criminals have political affiliation or support from political leaders. Also peoples’

lives are affected by street crimes everyday and since the justice system overall fails to provide a remedy, the frustration and anger most often get directed to the criminals.

The results also indicate that views on crime, criminals, punishment, and treatment are complex for respondents from both nations. For both nations, there were not universal views on any of the seventeen items. Among each group, there were differing views. Not only are there cross-national differences in the views, but there are also intra-national differences as well. In addition, there were conflicting views within each group. Many Bangladeshi and U.S. students supported both punishment and treatment for offenders. On the surface these findings would appear inconsistent, but they are not. This dichotomy of support for punishment and treatment is not a new phenomenon. For example, Cao and Cullen (2001) reported that many respondents in their study reported a desire to both punish and treat offenders. The support for punishment does not mean that a person cannot also support treatment for criminals. Many U.S. citizens feel that offenders should be sent to prison for punishment, but once there, they should be provided treatment services. Based upon the results of this study, it appears that Bangladeshi students want both punishment and rehabilitation for criminals.

The findings from the Bangladeshi students are interesting. While there have been many studies that have examined the crime views of U.S. residents, there has been very little, if any research, published in Western journal on the crime views of Bangladeshi residents. As previously indicated, the previous history and current social and economic conditions may have influenced the views of the Bangladeshi students. Bangladesh is a relatively new nation that has had a violent past and had been subjugated previously as a colony. It could be that these historical forces have shaped the current views of the Bangladeshi citizens on crime, criminals, punishment, and treatment. The criminal justice system has not had the time to become formalized and entrenched as is the case in the U.S. Thus, the conflicting views observed among Bangladeshi students in this study could be a reflection of the struggle between the informal and formal systems of justice. In addition, the U.S. criminal justice system is much more formal and less prone to abuse and corruption. This is not the case in Bangladeshi. Corruption and abuse of authority are much more common and open. This could cause the students to have a tainted view of the how to best respond to crime. Furthermore, in the past, including the recent past, the criminal justice system has been used as an arm of the political party in control to remain in control. Thus, the conflict found in the Bangladeshi criminal justice system may cause respondents to be more emotional in their responses than their U.S. counterparts. These are just a few possible explanations of the findings, none of which has been tested. There is a need for future studies to explore why the Bangladeshi students responded the way they.

This study has shortcomings. It was a single study that surveyed students.

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College students were selected because they were convenient, and this was a preliminary study. Preliminary studies are less concerned with generalizing the results and more concerned with exploring whether any differences and similarities exist in an area not frequently studied. The results of this study suggest there is a need for more research on the crime views of Bangladeshi and U.S. residents. Future studies should survey the general population to determine whether the results found in this study can be replicated. It is important to note that a much smaller percentage of the Bangladeshi population attends college than is the case in the U.S. This may have influenced the results. Moreover, it may mean that the views of Bangladeshi college students may be even more important because these respondents are more likely to become the elite of the Bangladeshi society. Future studies that survey the general public need to be aware that literacy may be more of an issue with Bangladeshi citizens than with U.S. citizens. Thus, interviews should probably be used rather than questionnaires, which were used in the current study. Additionally, there is a need to delve deeper and learn what these statements mean to respondents in different nations. There has been little research on whether punishment and treatment are similarly defined or not in countries around the globe. This need to be explored to determine what people specifically think would be effective responses to crime and criminals. Furthermore, this study was based on using questions based on past research of Western respondents. It is recommended that survey questions be developed that reflect the specific responses to crime found in each nation.

More detailed measures of views of crime, criminals, punishment, and treatment should be developed and used. It should be noted that research among U.S. citizens suggest that specific questions about crime (e.g., punishment by a specific offender for a specific crime) elicit different responses than do general questions about crime and punishment (i.e., the type of questions used in the current study) (Applegate et al., 1996). It is unknown if similar results would be found in other nations. This needs to be explored. Additionally, other questions about crime, criminals, punishment, and treatment should be used. In addition, strong adjectives in the wording of questions could influence the results (e.g., "Criminals need to be punished, not coddled"). It could be that these types of questions invoke a different type of response than would less strongly worded questions (e.g., "Criminals should be punished rather than rehabilitated"). Future research on this point may also wish to include both closed-ended questions (where the respondent is forced to select a pre-determined response option, as was the case in the current study) and open-ended questions to determine whether the views of respondents change depending on how the questions is asked and answered. Furthermore, future studies should examine other factors that help explain the differing views towards crime, criminals, punishment, and treatment. In addition, measurements of why respondents feel a particular way should be developed and tested. Finally,

continuing research is needed to determine whether views evolve as both nations continue to change.

In closing, there is a need for cross-national research on crime views. Angel and Thoits (1987) argued that views and attitudes of different groups are windows to the salient values of the particular group. The limited research on cross-national crime views has been largely limited to Western societies. Surprisingly little is known about the crime views of Non-western people. More cross-national research is needed, and this future cross-cultural research will not only provide a better understanding of crime views, but how and why they differ across nations. This study examined the views of crime, criminals, punishment, and treatment among college students in Bangladesh and the U.S. and found that there are differences in each of these areas. While the results of this study are interesting, this study left unanswered many questions that have yet to be explored. It is hoped that this study will spur further research. In any event, the results from this study should shed a bit more light on the Bangladeshi and U.S. people's views on crime, punishment, treatment, and criminals.

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