Capital punishment or the death penalty is the punishment carried out by the Government of a country to people who have committed violent crimes such as rape and murder. When we compare the benefits of capital punishment with the negative aspects of capital punishment there is no answer whether or not it should exist. My hypothesis is that capital punishment is more harmful than beneficial.

So what are some of the benefits of capital punishment and what are some of the negative aspects of it?

There are lots of reasons why the death penalty appeals to some. For example, the American Government, as well as the majority of the American public, are in favour of capital punishment. Although someone who has committed a crime has been sentenced to imprisonment, they also have the chance of parole. In an article I read (buzzle.com) that was definitely pro capital punishment, it stated that this means that there is the chance that the person will commit the same crime again, threatening the safety of the people in the community. There have also been many arguments that life imprisonment costs more than capital punishment, and why should people pay for someone to live who has destroyed other people when they have done so much damage to so many people. In another article I read that was supporting capital punishment in New Zealand (teara.govt.), it said that many people believe that if an individual brutally murders another person or in the worst case, many people, they should be punished to death as "there are extraordinarily heinous crimes; terrorism, the harm of children." People felt that criminals who receive the death penalty tend to be violent people and will threaten to harm others. This article also said that because the death penalty is there, it might stop people before they committed the crime. Therefore, for the safety of other prisoners, the public as well as the prison guards, the best option seems to be capital punishment. Having a death penalty could also encourage some people in society to not commit such serious crimes. Also the money spent on keeping someone in prison all their life could be better spent on supporting victims.

Many people do oppose capital punishment, including Amnesty International, for moral reasons and almost two-thirds of the world. An article which gave reasons why New Zealand should oppose the death penalty said that there is a possibility that some individuals on death row may be innocent and wrongfully charged for a crime. This is a concern for many people. Unfortunately a number of individuals are not proved of their innocence until after the execution, often because of the new technology of DNA. The Amnesty web site explains and gives examples of capital punishment that is cruel, inhumane and cold-blooded as methods can include stoning, beheading, shooting, electrocution and hanging. If people have to have the death penalty then at least we should be humane about it, and be fair, for example no forced confessions and violent interrogations. Executing a criminal can be quick and painless, but in some cases can also be painful and slow – some cultures prefer their criminals to suffer whilst others don’t. I also think some people probably get the death penalty just because they haven't got enough money to get a good lawyer. I also found out about Damien Echols who is on death row for killing two eight year old boys. Him and his two friends were accused of the murders because they stood out in the religious community. They were poor kids who liked heavy metal and wore makeup. The investigation was botched and the evidence was lost. A documentary was made about the case called ‘Paradise Lost’ where all the evidence points to the stepfather of one of the boys who had abused his stepson for years. Daniel and the two others also charged, didn’t have the money for a defense lawyer. I think that is terrible if you could end up being killed by the state because you couldn't afford lawyer's fees.

Capital punishment is an issue which is still being heavily argued. Only recently has Japan allowed the public to look inside the building where executions take place and where many have been forced to confess to a crime. Although there are a number of pros that come with the death penalty, the negative aspects of capital punishment are enough to convince me and many others that it is immoral.