

Departmental Seminar

Immoral Character Invites Harsher Punishment: An Analysis of Retributive and Utilitarian Motives

11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. | December 2, 2016 (Friday)

CPD-2.42, Central Podium Level | Centennial Campus | The University of Hong Kong



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Abstract

“Hate the crime, but not the criminal,” is a fundamental tenet in the criminal justice system in modern society. However, this view often contradicts the naïve sense of morality and justice among ordinary people. In this talk, I will present finding from a series of experimental studies demonstrating that ordinary people regard criminal defendants with immoral character as deserving harsher punishment. The studies also examined different punitive motives that may underlie this effect, including the desire for retribution (i.e., moral outrage) and utilitarian motives (e.g., deterrence and incapacitation). Results revealed that the motive for incapacitation, as well as moral outrage, was the most consistent mediating variable. Furthermore, this mediation appeared to be based on an intuitive or “fast” rather than deliberate or “slow” processing of the criminal information. Theoretical implications for the study of person-based morality judgment and applied significance for criminal justice are discussed.

~All are Welcome~