CHARACTERISTICS OF A PUNITIVE STATE

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Abstract: Findings from the literature on mass incarceration in the United States have in the past suggested that incarceration rates are strongly related to social, economic and political variables. In this study, I build upon these findings by testing (1) if the prevalence of more conservative political elites influences incarceration rates, and (2) if the racial context of a state relates to state punitiveness. My results suggest that states with citizens that have more conservative ideologies as well as states that are more racially diverse have higher incarceration rates.

In July of 2015, Barack Obama became the first sitting president to visit a federal prison. This visit, along with President Obama's decision to commute 46 non-violent drug offenders a week earlier, highlight an issue that is currently facing our nation: mass incarceration. For hundreds of years people have been exploring effective ways to punish those who do not abide by societal rules. However, no country in the world incarcerates as many of its own citizens as does the United States (International Centre for Prison Studies 2013)[1]. The United States, while home to less than 5% of the world population, houses about 25% of the world's convicted criminals (ICPS 2015). In the past ten years scholars have argued that this mass incarceration is not economically sound (Curtin 2007; Cohen and Piquero 2009), it does not effectively deter crime (Webster and Doob 2012), and worst of all, it has been discovered to be a system of vast racial and class disparities (Pettit and Western 2004; Yates and Fording 2005; Cole 2010; Forman 2012; Hutchings 2015).

It is increasingly apparent that our criminal justice system is broken, yet we see little push for reform from politicians across the country. Why is this? While efforts have been made to reduce prison sentences for nonviolent drug offenders on a federal level in the past year, the bulk of the American criminal justice system remains in the hands of state and local governments, so any reform that will have significant impact must come from the states. The question therefore remains: why is it that states across America who are presumably aware of the wide array of problems that arise from mass incarceration choose to remain "tough on crime," favoring policies that reinforce mass incarceration? Why is it that these states remain so punitive instead of pushing for state level policy reform to the harsh sentences that were put in place 40 years ago?

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[1] United States has the highest number of prisoners in the world with 2, 217,947 total prisoners compared to China's 1,649,804 total prisoners and Russia's 650,613 total prisoners. The United States also has the second highest rate of Imprisonment per capita at 693 people imprisoned per 100,000 (International Centre for Prison Studies).

Yates and Fording (2005) conducted a comprehensive study to better understand what political, social and economic characteristics have an effect on the punitiveness of each of the 50 states. While their focus was primarily on the disparity in white and black incarceration rates, their findings provide insight into what causes different states to be more punitive than others. They found that increases in state political conservatism contributed to increases in the imprisonment rates of Whites and African Americans between 1975 and 1995, as well as the imprisonment disparity of African Americans relative to Whites. Much, however, has changed since the 1975-1995 period that they studied. Party polarization has dramatically increased since 1995, and has been shown to have effects on an array of different issues (Jones 2001; Layman and Carsey 2002; Layman et al. 2006; Dalton 2008). Since 1995 there have also been many policy changes within states. Since then, California and a number of other states have revised their three-strikes laws. For example in California, Proposition 36 altered the state's three-strikes law to only impose life sentences when the new conviction is "serious or violent," or if the previous "convictions were for rape, murder or child molestation." Four states have legalized marijuana. Many other states have decriminalized marijuana, or have legalized the drug for medical use[2]. This is important because one third of those incarcerated in state prisons are non-violent offenders, a significant portion of which are drug offenses (Thorpe 2015; BJS). Overall, while Yates and Fording found that incarceration policy is primarily political, it is important to look at all aspects of a state's architecture including an array of economic and social factors.

While many studies have hinted at the underlying factors that make certain states more punitive than others, few have observed how multiple variables affect states' punitiveness. In

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[2] Decriminalization means that possessing small amounts of the substance will not land a person in jail, however they can still be forced into drug education and rehabilitation programs. Furthermore the cultivation, sale and distribution of the drug is still illegal. With legalization, there are not punishments criminal or otherwise for the use of the drug. In addition as long as the supplier has the proper permits the sale and distribution of the drug is a legitimate and taxable business.

order to study how multiple variables affect state punitiveness I will first summarize the findings of other scholars such as Rebecca Thorpe and, Gordon and Huber, in relation to what affects punitiveness. Then I will explain how I intend to replicate the Yates and Fording (2005) statistical model such that it encompasses the variables I wish to observe. The purpose of this study is to examine of how characteristics of a state as well as the individuals in a state (e.g. ideology, education, race, economic state) relate to a state's degree of punitiveness. By examining the relationship between these variables and the incarceration rate per state, I hope to better understand some of the barriers to prison reform.

This paper finds that while crime rates do have an effect on incarceration rates, citizen ideology is the biggest driver in state-level variation in incarceration rates. In addition racial context also affects the punitiveness of a state. I find that more racial diverse states have higher incarceration rates than those that are less diverse. Although these two variables cannot be directly changed by legislation, they help us better understand what factors are present in more punitive environments.

Why So Punitive?

Mass incarceration is inevitably a political problem. As Lasswell argues, politics is about who gets what, when, and how (Laswell, 1936). Elected representatives are a community's point person, such that whenever an individual needs something done they go to their member of congress and ask for it. In regards to mass incarceration, there seems to be a disconnect between what the people want and what the politicians are doing. While public opinion polls seem to suggest that people want significant prison reform, prison sentences remain harsh as ever (Cassel and Luna 2011; International Business Times 2015).

There are signs that the public has become disillusioned with mandatory minimum sentencing. Many blame mandatory minimum sentences for prison overcrowding and injustice (Nauman 2013; *The Economist* 2010; *The Wall Street Journal* 2014). Therefore, it would follow that politicians would make efforts to reform such mandatory minimum sentencing. However, "proposals for comprehensive reform have carried a career-ending risk for the campaigning politician, whose opponents could label him as soft on crime"(Cassel and Luna 2011, 219).

In examining the 39 states that hold judicial elections, Gordon and Huber (2005) found that in an attempt to "remain safe" elected trial judges tend to become progressively more punitive over time. "Perceived under punishment is easier to observe than perceived over punishment," and for this reason the re-elected judges err on the side of over punishment rather than under punishment (Gordon and Huber 2005, 248). Presumably members of state legislature act in similar ways.

Enns (2014) argues that it is the public's level of punitiveness that has led to the continual increase of the incarceration rate and less about the "political elites." It has been the public's preference for members of Congress who are tough on crime that has been "a primary determinant of the incarceration rate" (Enns 2014, 858). This suggests that the characteristics of the individuals within a state will also have a significant impact on the punitiveness of a state.

The degree to which a state is rural can also affect its punitiveness. Thorpe (2015) argues that mass incarceration survives in the United States in periods of reduced crime because many politicians are able to provide economic gains from imprisoning a certain "subset of society," through what Thorpe calls rural prison development (Thorpe 2015, 619). While it is clear that the impact of harsh sentencing has had disproportionate negative impacts on the African American families and communities (Roberts 2004, Snyder 2015), for rural white communities, these

prison systems are seen as economic power plants. Thorpe argues that policymakers have kept such prison infrastructure in place "in order to bring jobs and capital to many economically distressed, rural communities" (Thorpe 2015, 619). Although these prisons provide little *actual* economic improvement, actual effects matter less than the perceived benefits. Thorpe argues that more criminals means more prisons which means more jobs, and to many whites in rural parts of the United States, that is all that really matters. Therefore the economic conditions of a state may be significant in determining how punitive a state is.

Yates and Fording examined the degree to which "(1) the political environment of states influences the degree to which they incarcerate their citizens, and (2) the political determinants of state punitiveness may be conditional upon the racial subpopulation being incarcerated" (Yates and Fording 2005, 1099). They found that while crime rates affect imprisonment to a certain degree, imprisonment rates are tied predominantly to the "elite political environment and politicians' electoral incentives"(Yates and Fording 2005, 1118). As Baum (1996) and Jacobs and Carmichael (2001) had found in the past, Yates and Fording found that increased conservatism in state political elites rather than the sentiments of the public led to higher rates of imprisonment. More specifically, political conservatism increases imprisonment rates of African Americans as well was the incarceration of African Americans relative to Whites.

However, I would like to emphasize that much has changed since the years that Yates and Fording analyzed. Sixteen states have abolished the criminal penalties for possession of marijuana and twenty-three have legalized and begun to tax the sale of marijuana for medical use. Because many people are incarcerated for drug offenses, these changes may have dramatically affected incarceration rates. Furthermore in the past five years, a few states have begun to reform their minimum sentencing laws while others have not. Lastly, scholars have

determined that in the late 1990s the United States saw an appreciable rise in party polarization. The consequences of party polarization stretch across all aspects of the political environment in the United States; presumably state punitiveness is no exception. Given these changes, it is important to take another look at the determinants of punitiveness in across states.

The racial composition of a state may also affect its level of punitiveness. Gordon W. Allport (1954) argued that the best way to improve relations among different societal groups is through interpersonal contact. The intergroup contact theory states that with increased opportunity of communication between majority and minority groups, prejudice and discrimination will evolve into understanding and appreciation of other cultures and ways of life. This suggests that as African American and Hispanic populations grow within a state, Whites will become more accepting of these minority groups because of increased interactions. It is known that African Americans and Hispanics are incarcerated at much higher rates than Whites (Pettit and Western 2004; Yates and Fording 2005; Cole 2010; Forman 2012; Hutchings 2015). This may be due in part to the conflict between Whites and minority groups. Whites may push harsh sentencing policies that they perceive as helpful in controlling the "threat" they feel from minority groups. These perceived threats may be reduced with greater context between whites and minority groups. Therefore, states with larger populations of minority groups may have lower levels of punitiveness within the state.

Conversely, Blalock (1967) developed the racial threat theory, which states that as the relative size of the African American population grows, Whites perceive this growth as a threat to their social, economic and political authority. This implies that punitiveness may be intensified with growing minority populations in attempt to maintain control.

While past studies have maintained a focus on specific aspects of political, economic, or social factors that affect state level punitiveness in some respects, this study attempts to provide a more holistic view of what affects punitiveness in each of the 50 states. I intend to build upon past studies to determine more general trends within more punitive states. More specifically I look to better understand how education levels, criminal sentencing reform, and the differences in the percentages of Whites, Hispanics and African Americans within a state affect punitiveness.

Using a model similar to that of Yates and Fording (2005), and additional variables similar to those used by Smith (2004) it is possible to see what state level differences account for greater punitiveness. Just as in Yates and Fording's study, the dependent variable (state punitiveness) will be measured based on the rate of a state's imprisonment. The independent variables are described below.

The previous discussion points to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Republican-Controlled Legislatures and Republican Governors will have a positive effect on the Incarceration Rate.

Hypothesis 2: More conservative Citizen Ideology will increase the Incarceration Rate.

Hypothesis 3: The Poverty Rate, Unemployment Rate, The lack of high school degrees is to have a positive effect on Incarceration Rate, and the percentage of people who have obtained a Bachelor's Degree or higher is expected to have a negative effect on the Incarceration Rate.

Hypothesis 4: I expect that the difference between the population sizes of the races in relation to one another will have an effect, although I am uncertain of what type.

A Model Not So Black and White

To test these hypotheses, I used a cross-sectional state-level design similar to that of Yates and Fording (2005). While Yates and Fording focused primarily on the disparities between Whites and Blacks in terms of incarceration, this study examines incarceration rates as a whole. The variables in this model allowed for the use of data from all 50 states. The general model is given below.

$$Incarceration\ Rate_i = \alpha + \beta_1 RepublicanLegislature_i + \beta_2 RepublicanGovernor_i$$

$$+ \beta_3 CitizenIdeology_i + \beta_4 CrimeRate_i + \beta_5 PovertyRate_i + \beta_6 UnemploymentRate_i +$$

$$\beta_7 RevenueCapacity_i + \varepsilon_i$$

The subscript *i* denotes the state. The dependent variable *Incarceration Rate* is defined as the number of prisoners incarcerated per state per 100,000 people in 2014. The independent variables are outlined below.

First, the model includes three political variables. *Republican Legislature* refers to the party in control of the state legislature where 1= Republican and 0=Democrats in 2014. *Republican Governor* refers to the party in control of the governor's seat in 2014, where 1=Republican, and 0=Democrat. I also included the liberalism of the electorate in 2013 (*CitizenIdeology*).[3]

A variety of variables known to influence incarceration rates, including criminal involvement, socio-economic conditions, and government policy were also included. Since crime rates affect incarceration rates *CrimeRate,* is included in the model. *CrimeRate* is defined as the number of violent crimes, and property crimes reported per state per 100,000 people in the year 2013.[4]

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[3] This data are for the year 2013. Data provided by Fording at URL. The data are based on methods described in Berry et al. (1998).

[4] There exists some discrepancy in the findings regarding crime and incarceration rates that Yates and Fording (2005) attribute to the relationship between crime and differing levels of law enforcement. They include *ArrestRate*

UnemploymentRate, the annual rate of unemployment per state, is included because it has been linked to sentencing outcomes (Nobiling et al. 1998; Hogan et al. 2005 ; Chiricos and Bales 2006). *PovertyRate,* the rate of poverty per state, is included as well. *NoHighSchool* which is defined as the percentage of state population with less that a high school education, and *Bachelors,* the percentage of people with a Bachelor's degree or higher, are also included in each of the models. These data (unemployment, poverty and education rates) are provided by the United States Census Bureau for the years 2009-2013, and collected via the American Community Survey (ACS). *RevenueCapacity* is included as "an indicator of state economic capacity," in the sense that it will help control for whether or not a state has the financial resources to build, and maintain the prisons (Yates and Fording 2005). This study measures *RevenueCapacity* as per capita tax revenues.[5]

Thorpe (2015) argues that it is the perceived economic benefits of prisons in rural communities that have lead in part to the persistence of mass incarceration. In an attempt to control for such an effect the model takes additional variables into consideration: *Rural* is defined as the percentage of a state that is rural based on the data from the United States Census Bureau for the year 2010. In a similar manner *PrivatePrisons* is the percentage of incarcerated in private prisons. This variable is also included because Private Prisons have been considered money savers for the states that use them.

Beyond variables employed in earlier research, I added two policy variables. After determining the effects of each of the other variables, I decided to determine the effect that

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as an additional control variable. However these data have not been published by the FBI and is only available through purchase, and therefore is not included in my study. Crime rate and arrest rates are also be problematic in that they often unreliable and subject to political manipulation. In addition, crime rate and incarceration rates may have correlated measurement error, violating OLS assumptions. For these reason I also estimated the model without crime rate and the arrest rate. The results support the conclusions I lay our below (See Appendix).

[5] Yates and Fording (2005) measure this variable using the per capita tax revenue. This study measures it the same way.

minimum sentencing laws have on incarceration rates. The first variable used to determine the effects of minimum sentencing laws is *ThreeStrikes,* coded 1 if a state has a three-strike law, and 0 if it does not. *DecriminalizationofMarijuana* is coded in the same manner as *ThreeStikes,* coded 1 if a state has decriminalized use of Marijuana in any form, 0 if it has not. [6]

In order to measure the effects of racial context of a state on the incarceration rate I created the variable *White Population Minus Black Population,* which is defined as percentage of Whites minus the percentage of African Americans in each state.[7] Models will be estimated via OLS regression.

Results

Consistent with earlier studies such as Carroll and Cornell (1985) and Yates and Fording (2005), the results presented in Table 1 suggest that economic deprivation (Poverty Rate) and criminal involvement (Crime Rate) continue to be predictors of state-level variation in punitiveness. [8]

In addition, as Yates and Fording (2005) found, states' political contexts also shape punitiveness, as the statistically significant coefficient for citizen ideology shows. In this new period, a period of increasing political polarization and evolving drug and sentencing policies in a variety of states, economic and political contexts still strongly influence incarceration rates. This is different from the findings of Yates and Fording. While their results were consistent with earlier findings that state punitiveness was by the prevalence of conservative political elites rather than mass ideology (Baum 1996, Beckett 1997), my results suggest the opposite.

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[6] Yates and Fording (2005) included Overcrowding Litigation as a government policy control variable, however found it to be statistically insignificant, therefore it was omitted from my model.
[7] Projected 2014 data on racial populations by the United States Census Bureau based on the 2010 census.
[8] All models were estimated for the year 2014.

Table 1 shows a statistically significant effect for citizen ideology but no effect for partisan control of state government (Republican Legislature and Republican Governor). Although conservatism within the political elites was not statistically significant conservatism within the public was.

Table 1: Regression Results for Determinants of State Imprisonment Rates 2014

	Dependent variable:	
	Incarceration Rate	
	(I)	(II)
Republican Representatives	21.056	32.839
	(74.774)	(66.903)
Republican Governor	59.345	35.492
	(61.034)	(54.984)
Citizen Ideology	−5.913***	−6.467***
	(2.171)	(1.946)
Crime Rate	0.474**	0.377*
	(0.223)	(0.201)
Poverty Rate	23.366**	21.073**
	(10.323)	(9.249)
Unemployment Rate	29.452	13.138
	(27.822)	(25.317)
Revenue Capacity	−0.00000	−0.00000
	(0.00000)	(0.00000)
White Population minus Black Population		−4.088***
		(1.200)
Constant	366.080*	847.118***
	(186.753)	(218.603)
Observations	50	50
Adjusted R^2	0.575	0.661
Residual Std. Error	162.313 (df = 42)	145.034 (df = 41)

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
standard errors in parentheses

However, the more interesting results from this study come from Model II. This model includes an additional variable capturing the racial context of the states. Including racial context does not alter the estimates for crime, poverty and citizen ideology considerably. The effects of racial context were statistically significant. The smaller the disparity between White and African American populations within a state the higher the incarceration rate. That is, more diverse states tend to have higher incarceration rates. This finding supports the racial threat hypothesis outlined above.

While testing my hypothesis on state punitiveness, I performed various checks to see how robust my results are. In general, small changes to variables[9] or the model specification[10] did not generate any notable changes. However, one additional finding does warrant attention. The results from Model III suggest that when including state-level education rates (High School Education and Bachelor's Degree) the significance of all other variables except for the Poverty Rate remain the same. Instead of the Poverty Rate remaining significant, instead High School Education is statistically significant. In addition a one-point increase in the percentage of people with a high school degree results in a 32.2-point decrease in the incarceration rate. This finding suggests that increasing high school graduation rates may be able to assist in decreasing incarceration rates. This finding, unlike many of the others, seems to provide a clear direction for possible policy solutions to the mass incarceration issue.

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[9] For the variable Republican Representatives, I estimated the model using both the percentage of state legislature that was republican, and secondly a dummy variable to denote which party was in control of the state legislature. Both measures of the variables provided similar results.

[10] I also examined whether the following variables had an effect on my results: *Rural-* the percentage of a state that is defined as rural by the US census bureau, *Private Prisons-* a dummy variable 1 if a state does have private prisons and 0 if it does not. *Decriminalization of Marijuana-* a dummy variable 1 if a state has decriminalized marijuana and 0 if it has not, *ThreeStrikes-* a dummy variable 1 if a state maintains a three strikes rule and 0 if it does not. None of these variables were found to be statistically significant, and the main conclusions still hold when including these variables in the model.

Table 2 gives the minimum, median, and maximum values for each of the statistically significant values in Model II. The changes in the incarceration rate based on each of these values are also listed below said values.

Table 2: Magnitude of Impact of Statistically Significant Variables

	Minimum	Median	Maximum
Citizen Ideology:	20.98	47.31	91.85
	-135.68	-305.95	-593.99
Crime Rate:	25.6	325.95	640.4
	9.65	122.88	241.43
Poverty Rate:	9.2	14.6	21.5
	193.87	307.66	453.07
Racial Context:	22.2	71.5	93.8
	-90.75	-292.29	-383.45

To get a sense of the size of the estimated impacts, consider a one-point increase in citizen ideology, which means a state is a bit more conservative. Such an increase is estimated to be associated with a 6.5-point decrease in the incarceration rate. My results indicate that while holding other variables constant the difference between the most progressive state and the state with the median ideology is a difference of 288 people incarcerated per 100,000. The difference between the median value and the most conservative state is 170 people incarcerated per 100,000. When holding all other variables constant we see a difference of 458 people incarcerated per 100,000 between the state whose citizens are the most progressive and the state whose citizens are the most conservative. Ceteris paribus, the difference in incarceration rates between the least and most conservative states is an additional 60% of the median incarceration rate (775 incarcerated per 100,000). As interesting as this finding may be however, it does not bring us any closer to a solution for managing mass incarceration in the United States.

A one-point increase in the poverty rate results in a 21.1-point increase in the incarceration rate. While holding other variables constant the difference between the state with the highest poverty rate and the median poverty rate is 145 people incarcerated per 100,000. This implies that for states that have the highest poverty rates in the country, lowering their poverty rates to the national average would lower the predicted incarceration rate by about 259 people per 100,000. Again considering the median state incarceration rate this is a substantial difference.

While it is true that Crime Rates are statistically significant predictors of state-level variation in incarceration rates the substantive significance of crime rates remains relatively small compared to that of the other significant variables. A one-point increase in Crime Rates results in a .4-point increase in the incarceration rate. When holding other variables constant the difference between the state with the highest crime rate and the median crime rate is 145 people per 100,000. While one might imagine that crime rates were the largest indicator in incarceration rates, my findings show that instead it is citizen ideology that has the larger impact.

Lastly, a single point increase in the racial context measure (percentage of the population that is White minus the percentage of the population that is African American) has a 4.1-point decrease on the incarceration rate. The difference between the state with the smallest difference in population size of Whites and African Americans and the median difference in these population sizes, holding other variables constant, I found that there are 201 more people incarcerated per 100,000 in the more diverse state.

Conclusion

Findings from the literature on mass incarceration in the United States have in the past suggested that incarceration rates are strongly related to social, economic and political variables. In this study, I build upon these findings by testing (1) if the prevalence of more conservative

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political elites influences incarceration rates, and (2) if the racial context of a state relates to state punitiveness. My results suggest that although conservatism within states does affect incarceration rates, it is the conservatism of the public that is significant and not the conservatism of the political elites. As interesting as this finding may be however, it does not allow for any obvious solutions. In many ways it is easier to change the partisan make up of elected officials than it is to change the ideological cast of state populations. However the public's general ideological orientation does change over time, which means that we can expect to see changes in incarceration rates as public opinion and ideology continue to change (Erickson et. al. 2002). Furthermore, one could assume that if the public's ideas, principles and morals (the basis of ideology) change in favor of less punitive policies then we would see these less punitive policies enacted.

Racial context of a state was also shown to be a significant factor in determining the punitiveness of a state. Since more diverse states were found to be more punitive than other states as states become more diverse incarceration rates might increase. I would also like to point out that diversity within states takes into account White and Black populations as well as non-White and non-Black populations. Thus even if states become more diverse by increased Hispanic or Asian populations, the results suggest that the state incarceration rate will rise. Considering the large number of Hispanics and Asians that continue to immigrate to the United States, incarceration rates may continue to rise. It would be interesting to delve deeper into how and why racial context affects incarceration rates in this way. Racial context is not something that can be "fixed" in the traditional sense. However, realizing the reality of the effects of a state's racial context on incarceration rates is the first step to understanding why when

controlling for other variables that racial context is a strong indicator of increased incarceration rates.

Overall although these results predict that more diverse and more conservative states are more punitive, and that higher poverty rates lead to higher incarceration rates, it is important to look at the results together. Simply changing any one of these variables in the direction that the model indicates will lower incarceration rates might not automatically lead to decreased punitiveness because states that currently have more liberal, less diverse populations may be unique in some ways the model does not capture. If so, shifting state ideology or racial composition may not lead the state to change incarceration rates.

When I began the research for this paper, I wanted to avoid focusing too much on how race plays a role in our criminal justice system. It is widely known that African Americans and Latinos are incarcerated at much higher rates than any other race in the country. However, I hoped that this research would help shed light on to characteristics of punitive states that were perhaps unrelated to race. It is clear however that the conversation about race as it pertains to incarceration is not over.

My results suggest that the most tangible method of decreasing incarceration rates across states is to first increase high school graduation rates. Education continues to be a topic of debate, and lower incarceration rates are just one more reason to focus our efforts as a nation on educating future generations. While yes it is important to focus our efforts on how to provide better education, increase high school education rates, and in turn alleviate poverty, additional change has to occur within the minds of the American people. Race, holding poverty and crime rates constant, still greatly impact incarceration rates across the United States.

In the future I hope to look further into these results and perhaps look at the same variables across the past ten years to see if the results remain consistent over time, or how they have changed. In the future perhaps a comparative study between the judicial systems of states with conservative ideologies and states with more liberal ideologies can shed light on what exactly about these states causes them to be more punitive. The same can be done for more diverse and less diverse states. It would be interesting to see if this diversity itself is the cause of the state-level variation in incarceration rates or if there are any other underlying factors that could be at work. I hope that further research will be done to understand what it is specifically about citizen ideology and racial context that affects incarceration rates so significantly.

Appendix:

Model I:

    Incarceration Rate$_i$ = α+ β$_1$RepublicanLegislature$_i$ + β$_2$RepublicanGovernor$_i$

    +β$_3$CitizenIdeology$_i$ + β$_4$CrimeRate$_i$ + β$_5$PovertyRate$_i$ + β$_6$UnemploymentRate$_i$

    + β$_7$RevenueCapacity$_i$ + ε$_i$

Model II:

    Incarceration Rate$_i$ = α+ β$_1$RepublicanLegislature$_i$ + β$_2$RepublicanGovernor$_i$

    +β$_3$CitizenIdeology$_i$ + β$_4$CrimeRate$_i$ + β$_5$PovertyRate$_i$ + β$_6$UnemploymentRate$_i$

    + β$_7$RevenueCapacity$_i$ + β$_8$ White Population Minus Black Population$_i$ + ε$_i$

Model III:

    Incarceration Rate$_i$ = α+ β$_1$RepublicanLegislature$_i$ + β$_2$RepublicanGovernor$_i$

    +β$_3$CitizenIdeology$_i$ + β$_4$CrimeRate$_i$ + β$_5$PovertyRate$_i$ + β$_6$UnemploymentRate$_i$

    + β$_7$RevenueCapacity$_i$ + β$_8$ EducationHS$_i$ + β$_9$ EducationBachelors$_i$ + ε$_i$

Table 3: Regression Results for Model III

	Dependent variable:
	Incarceration Rate
Republican Representatives	35.474
	(75.406)
Republican Governor	55.568
	(58.828)
Citizen Ideology	−4.911**
	(2.204)
Crime Rate	0.394*
	(0.219)
Poverty Rate	0.615
	(14.432)
Unemployment Rate	9.014
	(28.204)
Revenue Capacity	−0.00000
	(0.00000)
High School Education	−32.207**
	(14.482)
Bachelors Degree	−3.217
	(8.150)
Constant	3,727.895**
	(1,460.805)
Observations	50
Adjusted R^2	0.607
Residual Std. Error	156.103 (df = 40)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 4: Regression Results for Determinants of State Imprisonment Rates

	Dependent variable:	
	Incarceration Rate	
	(I)	(II)
Republican Representatives:	56.725	61.556
	(75.802)	(67.049)
Republican Governor:	65.330	38.296
	(63.421)	(56.586)
Citizen Ideology:	−6.388***	−6.880***
	(2.246)	(1.991)
Poverty Rate:	22.683**	20.362**
	(10.733)	(9.514)
Unemployment Rate:	56.778**	33.162
	(25.674)	(23.632)
Revenue Capacity:	−0.00000	−0.00000
	(0.00000)	(0.00000)
White Population minus Black Population:		−4.407***
		(1.223)
Constant	373.829*	890.665***
	(194.227)	(223.780)
Observations	50	50
Adjusted R²	0.540	0.640
Residual Std. Error	168.842 (df = 43)	149.314 (df = 42)

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

In the past there has often been concern with including Crime Rates in models measuring Imprisonment and Incarceration rates. Crime Rates have been dubbed unreliable and highly subjected to political manipulation. For this reason, I decided to also rerun the regressions of Model I and Model II excluding Crime Rate, in order to see if there would be any significantly different results. After doing so, the results support the conclusions laid out in the results section.

As I explained in the original findings, citizen ideology and racial context are the two largest predictors of Incarceration Rates and remain so even when dropping crime rates. Economic factors such as poverty rates too remain essential in understanding what makes certain states more punitive than others. One small difference in the findings after excluding crime rates as an independent variable is that the variable for unemployment rates became statistically significant when the racial context variable is not included. However this merely emphasizes the importance that economic factors matter when looking at incarceration rates. Even so, this difference is only present when the racial context variable is not included in the model.

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