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The Relationship of Prisoners, Poverty Measures, and Social Welfare Allocations in Ohio*

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Abstract
Prisoners are counted in the county in which they are incarcerated, according to the U. S. Census Bureau's guidelines. This fact has increasingly been the subject of academic interest because census data are used for redistricting and for allocation of federal and state funds based on population and poverty criteria. Using canonical correlation analyses and a canonical loading of at least .30 meaningful, this study found that lower numbers of prisoners, no prisons in a county, higher ruralness, fewer percentages of persons below poverty, and higher percentages of homes receiving social security insurance are associated with lower allocations for case management, lower allocations for health and human services, and lower allocations for criminal justice. Taking into account the cross loadings, having a prison, higher ruralness, and fewer percentages of people below poverty line remain significant. The author discusses the policy implications of these findings.

The Relationship of Prisoners, Poverty Measures and Social Welfare Allocations in Ohio

In 1790, Congress authorized the decennial counting of United States citizens for the purpose of determining each state's political representation in the U. S. House of Representatives. This duty was imposed upon the U. S. Department of Commerce and one of its subdivisions--the Bureau of the Census. In addition to shaping the U. S. House of Representative, the census is used to determine and shape states' electoral districts, determining how regions of a state are represented in states' legislatures (*Armour v. the State of Ohio*, 1991; *Baldrige v. Shapiro*, 1982; *Quilter et al. v. Voinvich*, 1992).

From time to time, the courts have been drawn into this issue because the drawing of some legislative districts has led to charges of disproportionate representation and discrimination against minorities (*Black Political Task Force et al. v. Galvin*, 2004; *The State of Georgia v. Askcroft*, 2002). The legal references cited above are based on a decision by the U. S. Supreme Court that every person's vote must count equally with another person's vote in determining an election--"the one man [sic], one vote principle" (*Baker v. Carr*, 1962).

According to Stinebrickner-Kauffman (2004), “how the Census Bureau counts inmates affect not only apportionment and districting, but also government spending, because a huge portion of government funds are distributed through formulas based on the Census Bureau’s figures” (p. 256). For instance, in 1992, the District of Columbia sued the United States Department of Commerce, contending that it would lose about 60 million dollars in federal funds because Lorton prisoners were counted as part of Virginia instead of the District of Columbia (*District of Columbia v. United States Department of Commerce et al.*, 1992). The prison at Lorton, although it is physically located in Virginia, is operated and funded by the District of Columbia. The inmates’ families were residents of the District of Columbia and the prisoners when released would more than likely return to the District of Columbia. However, according to the Census’ rules, prisoners are counted where they are incarcerated.

Illuminating the importance of this problem, Stinebricker-Kauffman (2004) wrote that “the presence of a prison in a rural, largely Caucasian town, for instance, lowers its per capita income level and increases its apparent size, both of which increase the level of government funding to the town” (p. 256). Further, when the federal government utilizes formulas for road building, job training, and community development, a part of

these formulas is based on the U. S. census. In addition, federal money for Medicaid, foster care, adoption assistance, and social services block grants is based on the census (Butterfield, 2004). At the state level, Arizona, Illinois, and Wyoming use the U. S. census numbers to allocate state and other funds (Kulish, 2001).

Conflicts occur because redistricting affects the political landscape and because billions of dollars are at stake. According to the U. S. Census Bureau (2001), for the year 2000, the federal government gave to state and local governments through a few federal offices the following amounts: the Health Care Financing Administration 119.3 billion, the Office and Elementary Secondary Education 13 billion, the Family Support Payments 13.4 billion, Housing Programs 26.3 billion, Food and Nutrition Service 16.7 billion, and the Highway Trust 16.7 billion (U. S. Census, 2001). Further, the federal government gave almost 292 billion through the Department of Agriculture, with California, New York, and Texas receiving about 33.1 billion, 30 billion, and 17.3 billion respectively (U. S. Census, 2001). The Department of Health and Human Services gave to state and local governments over 159 billion, with California receiving 18.6 billion, New York 19.4 billion, and Texas, 8.9 billion (U. S. Census, 2001).

Providing a quantitative illustration, the city of Florence, Arizona has a population of 5,224 and has 11,830 prisoners. Florence expanded its boundaries three times to include inmates within its city limits. In 2001, Florence received about 4 million dollars from federal and state funds due to its prisoners and has used their prisoners' windfall to help build a one-million-dollar community center, new town offices, a new little league field with a digital scoreboard, and fire and police facilities (Kulish, 1991). Calipatria, California, Ionia, Michigan, and Gatesville, Texas have used funds generated from their prison populations to pay for street improvement, community center, and infrastructure improvement. In Gatesville, Texas, 58% of the population is inmates, and this high number of prisoners has helped the town to receive a 4.2 million dollar grant (Kulish, 1991).

The Planning Director for Greene County, New York stated that the 3,000 prisoners at two prisons in his county made the county more competitive in securing federal grants that are distributed based on the per capita income. Prisoners do not earn any money, or little money, and their numbers, along with free citizens, are used to compute the per capital income for Greene County. The per capita income provides a baseline that lasts for ten years or until the next census (Dowdy, 2000).

The demographics of prisons and their locations have been of interest and concern to professionals (Lawrence & Travis, 2004). For example, Ms. Linda Meggers directed the Georgia's Legislature Redistricting Office and was said to be intimately knowledgeable about demographics, changing demographics, and the political geography of the entire state. She was called as an expert in a lawsuit challenging the redistricting plan for Georgia after the 2000 census. In one redrawn senate district, there were two small colleges in that district, but Ms. Meggers did not know the enrollment. However, she knew that the district had a prison and there were 1,100 prisoners in that institution (*State of Georgia v. Ashcroft et al.*, 2002).

This issue has become more intriguing because of the explosion of the incarceration of minorities since the 1980s, according to Stinebrickner-Kauffman. Stinebrickner-Kauffman (2004) discussed extensively the legality of counting prisoners in Census population bases but did not address the economic issues, "noting the impact that prisons have on the distribution of federal funds is certainly a worthwhile topic of study" (p. 257).

Accordingly, the purpose of this study is exploratory and seeks to determine the relationship between the number of prisoners in Ohio counties, poverty measures, and the amount of money allocated for social welfare spending in those counties.

In this sense, social welfare will be defined as consisting of allocations for case management, health and human services, and criminal justice. Predictor variables are poverty indicator measures and the central focus of this study prisons and prisoners.

A Brief Discussion of the Issues and Literature

The Ohio Department of Correction and Rehabilitation operates 32 institutions, housing nearly 44,000 prisoners (Ohio Department of Correction and Rehabilitation, 2004). Many of these institutions are located in rural areas among the 88 counties in Ohio. In 2003, Ohio closed one of its older prisons due to budgetary problems, which became the subject of a lawsuit filed by the union for the correctional officers. One of the arguments against closing this prison was that it would have a negative impact upon the rural community in which it was. However, Ohio appellate courts ruled that the Governor and Director had the authority to close one of its prisons (*State of Ohio v. Taft*, 2004; *State ex rel. Wilkinson et al. Reed, Judge et al.*, 2003; .

The prison population may have direct and indirect effects on funding for a particular county. First, the U. S. Census does not designate a county as urban or rural and a county will have a percentage of it designated as urban and rural, depending upon population density and housing. For example, Franklin

County, Ohio contains Columbus, Ohio, the capital of Ohio, with over 1,000,000 people. But a portion of Franklin County, according the U. S. Census, is rural. Hence, a prison could affect the amount of funding that a county receives when population is taken into account.

Admittedly, some researchers and professionals discount the economic impact of prisons. Hooks, Mosher, Rotolo, and Lobao (2004) analyzed national data on the relationship between economic growth, which was measured by jobs, and the number of prisons in a county, while controlling for a host of variables. They found no relationship and concluded that prisons do not produce jobs for a county. Similarly, Huling (2002) stated that prison produce few economic benefits for counties. For example, many of the prison jobs require skills and education that local rural people do not have and many prison employees transfer from other prisons. Also, many prison employees prefer to commute to their jobs and do not necessarily live in the rural communities where they work. However, both Hooks et al. and Huling were discussing jobs. Huling admits, however, that a prison population figures into the grants that a county may receive and increase the political representation of rural areas. This study begins the exploration of the impact of prisons and prisoners on grants to counties.

Method

Procedure and Measurement

The unit of analysis for this study is the county. Ohio has 88 counties, which constitutes the sample size. The data representing the independent variables cmme from the United States Census Bureau for 1990. As Dowdy observed, a county's per capita income provides a baseline that lasts for ten years or until the next census (Dowdy, 2000). Hence, data collected in 1990 have an influence on the allocation of money until the end of 2000. These data representing the independent variables were the number of prisoners in each Ohio County, the rural population for each county, the people below poverty in each county, the homes receiving public assistance, and the homes receiving social security benefits. One variable, whether or not a county had one or more prisons, came from the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction. The data representing the dependent variables came from one Ohio social welfare bureau. These were the amount allocated to each county for case management, health and human services, and criminal justice.

Some of the variables were converted to percentages by dividing the numbers of homes in a county by the number of homes receiving public assistance and social security insurance

benefits. Also, the number of persons residing in a rural area in a county was divided by the total number of persons in that county. The number of prisoners in a county and the amount of money spent on case management were used as they were. Ohio listed the amounts allocated for health and human services and criminal justice for each county by giving the top ten counties that received the most money and the top ten counties that received the least money. This information was converted into a ranked variable from 1 to 3, with 1 representing counties receiving the most money and the counties receiving the least money as 3. The remaining counties received 2's.

Results

All variables were initially analyzed in terms of their means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis. The skewness and kurtosis are particularly of initial interest because they indicate the extent to which variables are not normally distributed. Kline (1998) states that a skewness above 3.0 and a kurtosis above 10 indicate serious departures from normality in a distribution. With these criteria, only the amount of money spent on case management was problematic with a skewness of 4.73 and a kurtosis of 25.89. A number of transformations exist to bring scores more towards the mean without changing the

character of the variable. The square root of each score was taken, and this transformation produced a skewness of 2.56 and a kurtosis of 8.34.

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations for all the variables. The transformed amount spent on case management had a mean of 573.14 and a standard deviation of 478.94. Both the ranked spending for health and human services and criminal justice had a mean of 2 and a standard deviation of .48. The mean number of prisoners in each Ohio County was 472.93 with a standard deviation of 1034.26. A few counties had no prisoners within its borders. The ruralness of each county had a mean of .55 and a standard deviation of .25. In terms of poverty, the mean percent was .35 with a standard deviation of .15. The mean percent of homes receiving public assistance was .08 and the standard deviation was .04. Also, the mean percentage of persons receiving social security insurance was .29 and the standard deviation was .04.

Table 1 About Here

Next, the data were analyzed using correlations between variables to ascertain statistically significant relationships and to detect signs of multicollinearity. No correlations seem to be unusually high that would indicate a problem for

statistical analysis. The amount allocated for case management had six statistically significant correlations. There was a negative association with the ranked allocation for health and human services, $r = -.63$, $p < .0005$. Because ranking was based on 1 to 3 with 1 being the most allocated and 3 the least allocated, the negative correlation means that counties that received the least for case management also received the least for health and human services. Similarly, counties that received the least for case management also received the least for criminal justice, $r = -.53$, $p < .0005$. There was a positive association between the amount allocated for case management and whether a county has one or more prisons, $r = .27$, $p < .01$. This means that having one or more prisons was associated with more allocation for case management. There was a strong, negative association between the amount allocated for case management and the ruralness of a county, $r = -.70$, p. $< .0005$. This means the more rural a county is, the less allocated for case management. On the other hand, there was a positive association between the amount allocated for case management and the percentage of persons in a county below the poverty level, $r = .78$, $p < .0005$. This means that the higher the percentage of people below poverty in a county, the more that is allocated for case management. Last, there was a negative association between the amount allocated for case management and the percentage of homes

receiving social security insurance, $r = -.27$, $p < .01$. This means that the higher the percentage of homes with individuals receiving social security insurance benefits, the less allocated for case management.

Table 2 About Here

The primary interest of the researcher was in the significance, if any, of prisoners and prison on allocations. The number of prisoners in a county was significantly associated with the ranked allocation for health and human services, $r = -.22$, $p < .04$. Because the coefficient is negative, this means the more prisoners in a county, the more money that was allocated for health and human services. Also, there was a negative relationship between the number of prisoners and the ranked allocation for criminal justice, $r = -.32$, $p < .003$. This means that the more prisoners in a county, the more that was allocated for criminal justice. As expected, there was a positive association between the number of prisoners in a county and the number of prisons, $r = .69$, $p < .0005$. There was positive association between the number of prisoners in a county and the percentage of people below the poverty level, $r = .25$, p

< .02. This means that prisoners are located in counties with high levels of poverty. Further, prisons are located in counties with increasing percentages of persons below poverty, r = .34, p < .001. However, the presence of a prison or prisons is negatively correlated with the percentage of ruralness of a county, r = -.29, p < .006. This means that the more rural a county is, the more likely it is not to have a prison within its boundaries. However, this might be because of how ruralness was measured. At first glance, ruralness might look like a dummy variable with a low of 0 and a high of 1, but it is in fact, a ratio variable. Individuals live in some areas that are 17% rural, 55% rural, 88% percent rural, and 100% rural, for example. There might not be prison in a county that is 100% rural, but there might be a prison in a county that is 60% rural.

Because there were multiple dependent variables and multiple independent variables, canonical correlation analysis is used for analyses. Scarcely employed much until recent advancement in computer programming, canonical correlation analysis is a multivariate statistical approach, which has spawned multiple regression, factor analysis, and multivariate analysis of variance--better known multivariate analyses. Simply, canonical correlation analysis, using both continuous and discrete variables, creates a composite of the dependent

variable set and a composite of the independent variable set. The two composites are then correlated producing a coefficient, the canonical correlation, that when squared represents the amount of variance explained by the two variates. The canonical correlation is tested for statistical significant by either the F test or Chi Square. However, only the function for the canonical correlation that is statistically significant is interpreted. The number of number of factors that can be derived is based on the number of variables in the smaller set. Because there are three dependent variables and six independent variables, three factors are composed. Among the interpretable statistics are the canonical correlation, canonical variates, canonical loading (also called canonical structure correlations), canonical cross loading, the canonical correlation (R_c), R^2_c, and Redundancy Index.

Table 3 shows the results of the canonical correlation analysis. The canonical correlation for Factor 1 is statistically significant, $R_c = .89$, $X^2 = 139.61$, DF =19, $p < .0005$. Factor 2 and Factor 3 are not significant and thus are not interpreted. The standardized canonical coefficients are similar to beta weights and may be roughly interpreted as beta weights are in multiple regression--the higher the coefficient, the more important the variable is. However, these coefficients must be cautiously interpreted and cannot be interpreted

absolutely. The relatively most important variables based on the coefficients are the amount of money spent on case management (-.61), number of persons below poverty in each county (-.56), and the percentage of a county which is that (.49).

Table 3 About Here

The more interpretable data than the canonical coefficients are the canonical loadings. They are the correlations between a variable in a set and its own canonical variate. They also reflect the loading on a factor. According to guidelines provided by Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black (1998), loadings equal to .30 to .39 are viewed as significant, .40 to 4.9 as more important, and .50 and above as very significant. The three dependent variables--amount allocated for case management (-.93), amount allocated for criminal justice (.83), and amount allocated for health and human services (.75)--are very significant. Among the independent variables number of prisoners (-.30), number of prisons (-.37), and the percentage of homes receiving social security insurance (.31) are

significant. The number of persons below poverty (-.91) and percentage of a county that is rural (.88) are very significant.

These loadings mean that low numbers of prisoners, no prisons in a county, higher ruralness, fewer persons below poverty, and higher percentages of homes receiving social security insurance are associated with lower amounts allocated for case management, lower amounts allocated for criminal justice, and lower amounts allocated for health and human services.

Hair et al. (1998) state that analyses of the canonical cross loadings are equally and perhaps more important than the canonical loadings. Findings based on loadings should be validated by examination of the cross loadings to ensure the results hold when loadings indicate meaningful variables. Another manner to validate is to split a sample. Whitley (1999) had a large enough sample to split in order to validate his results. When sample size does not permit splitting, the cross loadings should be examined. The cross loadings are derived by the correlation of each independent or dependent variable with the opposite canonical variate. The cross loadings of the dependent variables, the amount allocated for case management, the amount allocated for health and human services and the amount allocated for criminal justice with the independent variable canonical variate are -.83, .74, and .67 respectively.

Considering both the canonical loadings and the canonical cross loadings, we are more confident in stating that these variables are very important. There was a slight change in the cross loadings for the number of prisoners (-.27) and the percentage of persons receiving social security insurance (.28). There variable dropped below .30; however, they were at most borderline meaningful in the canonical loadings.

The last analysis is to report the redundancy index, which is the amount of variance that one set of variables (either the independent or dependent set) that is explained by the other set. Because one set of variables is considered as dependent and the other set as independent, we want to know how much variance in the dependent set that is explained by the independent variable set. The appropriate redundancy, therefore, is .561. This means that about 56% of the total variance in allocation for case management, health and human services, and criminal justice is explained or can be predicted by the independent variables canonical variates.

Conclusion

The major findings from this study are that having no prisons in a county, higher ruralness, fewer percentage of persons below poverty are associated with lower amount of

spending for case management, lower allocation for health and human services, and lower allocation for criminal justice. Because the number of prisoners and the percentage of persons receiving social security benefits' cross loadings dropped below .30 and were just meaningful in the canonical loading, they are left out of this particular canonical analysis in the interest of conservative analysis. In extremely rural areas and in counties with lower percentages of persons below poverty, less money is allocated.

These analyses show that social welfare allocations in Ohio are basically being directed at the areas with the most need. In counties with lower numbers of people in poverty, lower allocations should occur. This means that areas with high numbers of people in poverty were allocated the most in social welfare spending. Also, a negative correlation exists between the ruralness of a county and the percentage of people below poverty. This finding suggests that the higher percentages of people below poverty are found, not in rural areas, but in more urban areas. Thus, if urban areas receive more social welfare allocations, then it is not because of discrimination against rural areas, but because there is more need in urban areas.

However, the initial aim was to begin to examine the issue of the impact of prisoners and prisons on social welfare spending. The results suggest that having a prison has some

association on the allocation in the areas of health and human services and criminal justice. The correlations for prisons and the allocation variables seem to support the conclusion that having a prison leads to the allocation of more money to counties. It also suggests that extreme rural areas of Ohio do not have prisons. This finding, however, does not contradict the literature that reports that prisons tend to be in rural areas.

There are few limitations with this study that must be acknowledged. First, the sample size, while satisfactory for canonical correlation analysis' requirement of a minimum sample size of 50, limits the number of predictors that may be studied. Correlation analysis, like multiple regression, requires about 10 cases for every one variable. Thus, a sample size of 88 permits about 9 variables to be studied, which is what was used. A larger sample size would permit more variables to be studied. At first glance, increasing the sample size by adding the counties from a neighboring state, like Indiana, might seem practical, but it may not be practical because Indiana's funding formulas for various allocations may be different from Ohio's.

Another possible limitation is the measurement of the allocation of money to counties for health and human services and criminal justice was ordinal. However, canonical correlation analysis is robust and can handle variables that are

not purely interval level variables. Moreover, we believe that an ordinal variable in which a ranking is used is not much different from an interval level variable. For instance, one can predict the ranking for the top ten football teams in the country and have as predictable variables the number of returning starters, the difficulty of the upcoming schedule, whether a team has a returning starting quarterback, the number of seniors on a team, the number of games won the previous season etc. Although the ranking is ordinal, one could determine the beta weights for having a starting quarterback returning and the number of returned starters and how much an increase in rank occurs with a starting quarterback or the amount of increase in one rank when one senior is added to a team.

Further research is needed, and future studies should examine the large states that have had a major increase in the prison population and that also have a lot of counties, such as Georgia with 159 counties and Texas with 254 counties. As society incarcerates more and more people, the research may show an increasing impact of having prisons and prisoners on specific funding areas, which may not be clearly shown now.

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Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, Range

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
Square Root of Amount Spent on Case Management	573.14	478.94	0 - 2920.17
Rank Spending on Health and Human Services	2	.48	1 - 3
Rank Spending on Criminal Justice	2	.48	1 - 3
Number of Prisoners	472.93	1034.26	0 - 5341
Number of Prisons	.24	.43	0 - 1
Percent of County Rural	.55	.25	0 - 1
Percent of Persons Below Poverty	.35	.15	.13 - .78
Percent of Homes Receiving Public Assistance	.08	.037	.03 - .19
Percent of Homes Receiving Social Security Insurance	.29	.039	.20 - .38

Table 2

Correlations of Study Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Square Root of Amount Case Management								
2. Amount Spent on Health & Human Services	-.63**							
3. Amount Spent of Criminal Justice	-.53**	.60**						
4. Number of Prisoners	.21	-.22*	-.32**					
5. Number of Prisons	.27*	-.28**	-.34**	.69**				
6. Percent of County Rural	-.70	.69**	.61**	-.19	-.29**			
7. Percent Below Poverty	.78**	-.64**	-.58**	.25*	.34*	-.64**		
8. Percent of Homes with Public Assistance	-.06	-.03	-.02	-.02	-.12	.19	.11	
9. Percent of Homes with Social Security Insurance	-.27*	.22*	.22*	-.19	.01	-.25*	-.09	.58**

Table 3
Canonical Correlations, Significance, Coefficients, Canonical Variate Loadings, and Cross Loadings

	Factor 1			Factor 2			Factor 3		
Canonical Correlations	.89			.27			.17		
Wilk's	.18			.90			.97		
Chi Square	139.61			8.59			2.37		
Degrees of Freedom	18			10			4		
Significance	P < .0005			P < .57			P < .67		
	SCC	CAL	CRL	SCC	CAL	CRL	SCC	CAL	CRL
Dependent Variables									
Square Root of Amount Spent on Case Management	-.61	-.93	-.83	1.17	.37	.10	-.04	.03	.01
Ranked Spending on Health & Human Services	.30	.83	.74	.85	.42	.11	-1.08	-.36	-.06
Ranked Spending on Criminal Justice	.24	.75	.67	.51	.41	.11	1.16	.53	.09
Independent Variables									
Number of Prisoners	-.04	-.30	-.27	-.36	-.41	-.11	-.80	-.80	-.13
Number of Prisons	.01	-.37	-.33	-.15	-.37	-.10	-.16	-.57	-.10
% Ruralness	.49	.88	.78	.98	.28	.08	-.47	-.09	-.02
% of Persons Below Poverty	-.56	-.91	-.81	1.14	.30	.08	-.21	-.06	-.01
% of Persons Receiving Public Assistance	-.11	.03	.03	-.64	-.31	-.08	.71	.37	.06
% of Persons Receiving Social Security Insurance	.20	.31	.28	.09	-.07	-.02	-.34	.13	.02
	Proportion of Variance Explained by Own Canonical Variate								
Dependent Variables Set	.703			.160			.137		
Independent Variable Set	.319			.094			.186		
	Proportion of Variance Explained by Opposite Canonical Variate								
Dependent Variable Set	.561			.012			.004		
Independent Variable Set	.255			.007			.005		

SCC Standardized Canonical Coefficients; CAL Canonical Loadings; CRL Cross Loadings