The Cook Undergraduate Research Journal

University of Idaho Department of Politics and Philosophy

University *of* **Idaho**

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first volume of the *Cook Undergraduate Research Journal (CURJ)*, a scholarly platform dedicated to the dispersion of cutting-edge research and innovative perspectives within the field of political science. CURJ strives to facilitate an open dialogue and knowledge exchange among scholars, policymakers, and practitioners to better understand the complexities of political systems and their impact on society.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Religiosity, Income, and Political Violence

by Claryssa Baker

Introduction

Political violence is not a new phenomenon. Branching from the Crusades in the Middle Ages, the Salem Witch Trials, and numerous Russian revolutions, the actual cause of political violence has remained a mystery throughout history. One of the most recent examples of political violence argued by scholars is the riots in the U.S. Capitol Building on January 6th, 2021. The unknown cause of political violence is what led me to my original question: what effect does religiosity have on political violence?

Of course, this question has been widely explored already-but the results are widely inconclusive. Some scholars believe that religiosity has absolutely nothing to do with political violence and that researchers should look at other psycho-socioeconomic factors instead. Others argue that not only is it religiosity, but it is highly dependent on the type of religiosity an individual practices. This school of thought is usually rooted in racism and xenophobia, basing its sources in anti-Islamic literature, mostly coming from Western researchers after the tragedy on Sept. 11, 2001. There are other scholars, though, that are adamant that it is not the type of religion practiced that allows for political violence to thrive, but instead how intensely individuals practice their religion. Extremism is one of the biggest contributing factors to why the examples stated above; the Crusades, Salem Witch Trials, and many Russian Revolutions; had taken place.

There is a gap in this literature that I wanted to explore. Because there is no one right answer to this question, I explored what would happen if I tested both psycho-socioeconomic factors and religiosity *together.* To do this,

I decided to look at income and religiosity specifically. I held 4 hypotheses exploring the interaction between income, religiosity, and how that affected support for political violence. Because measuring actual acts of political violence in a binary way is borderline impossible, my driving question for this research was changed to *what effect does religiosity have on support for political violence?*

The initial hypotheses I held were as follows:

Hypothesis 1: An increase in income among non-religious individuals will lead to an increase in support for political violence.

Hypothesis 2: A decrease in income among religious individuals will lead to an increase in political violence.

Hypothesis 3: A decrease in income among non-religious individuals will lead to a decrease in support for political violence.

Hypothesis 4: An increase in income among highly religious individuals will lead to an increase in support for political violence.

In order to test these relationships, I will run a regression analysis of the interaction between income and religiosity, and how these variables affect an individual's support for political violence.

I found that rather than it being cut and dry, support for political violence is essentially a spectrum. When an individual has both high income and high religiosity or low income and low religiosity, there is higher support for political violence. When they have a high income and low religiosity or low income and high religiosity, there is lower support for political violence.

Literature Review

The question I pose is *what effect does religiosity have on support for political violence?* There have been many explanations for this phenomenon. Many scholars argue that this occurrence stems from psychosocial reactions. Others tend to agree more with the explanation of relative deprivation. There is a vast amount of literature arguing that religious extremism is the biggest factor. In this review, I will be examining the existing literature for these explanations and identifying any gaps found.

Religious Extremism

The first school of thought discusses how religious extremism affects political violence. Political violence promoted by religion stems from the desire extremists have to establish uniformity in the world they live in (Modak-Truran, 2007a). Religious extremists, also referred to as religious fundamentalists, are those who practice religion in the purest sense. The 30 Years' War and the Great Reformation are historical examples of religious conflicts started by extremists. They were brought on by a lack of conformity in the given states or residence, and the desire for uniformity manifested as religious crusades throughout Europe (Modak-Truran, 2007a). Religious extremists have a desire for people to adhere to the same type of moral code they do, which prompts violence in the first place. It is agreed upon in this scholarly debate that morality and norms are often shared between people who follow the same faith, scripture, clergy, and historical respect of the sect (Brown, 2016). Using hard power to impose said morals onto someone is an effective way for extremists to establish the desired conformity. It is proposed by Brown (2016, p 802) that religion and political ideologies share 4 functions that contribute to motivational biases: "(1) explain socioeconomic and political conditions by ascribing causes; (2) evaluate such conditions as desirable or undesirable; (3) orient people by furnishing their identities; and (4) prescribe social and political action." Political action using these motivational biases often leads to violent force; adding strong religious ideologies to a political sphere does nothing but further motivate political violence in the name of religiosity (Brown, 2016).

Psychosocial Reactions to Loss

The second school of thought illustrates how psychosocial reactions can increase political violence. In the broad literature, psychosocial reactions are the psychological response to a threat or perceived threat. Canetti et al. (2010) use the conservation of resource theory (COR) to explain the effect that psychosocial loss can have on religiously charged violence. The COR predicts that when an individual's personal, social, or economic resources are threatened, a defense mechanism that is often deployed is violence. Canetti et al. (2010) believe that as well as the conservation of resource theory, there is a general theory of reactions to stress, the use of coping mechanisms, and actual and perceived discrimination (specifically discrimination in the allocation of socio-economic resources) that illustrates why a combination of religiosity and psychosocial reactions lead to violence.

Continual social or economic discrimination (public school availability and/or funding; healthcare; social services; unemployment resources) or ongoing resource loss (decrease in self-worth; loss of family or friends, jobs, housing, and/or education) leads to a cycle that triggers a psychosocial reaction (Khoury-Kassabri et al., 2015; Canetti et al. 2010). Recurring perceived or actual social discrimination or loss leads to response mechanisms, which prompt individuals to look to political or religious leaders for insight on how to cope with said losses. It is only when these leaders advocate for violence that this can provoke a favorability of violence in these coping mechanisms (Canetti et al., 2010).

More specifically, psychosocial responses also seem to play a role in religious discrimination. Wright (2016) suggests fundamentalism, religious involvement, religious commitment, and homogenization

as the four biggest factors in perceived or actual religious discrimination. Before I discuss the proposed reactions to discrimination, it is important to understand what these terms mean in the context of this paper. First, fundamentalists, as discussed above, are groups of people who practice religion in the purest sense. Individuals who are fundamentalists, regardless of religion, are more likely to support or act on racial prejudice, hostility toward norm-violating outgroups, and violence against outgroups. Second, religious involvement is generally defined as the level to which an individual attends worship, reads scripture, and partakes in prayer/meditation. Third, religious commitment is the degree to which one's religious beliefs influence day-to-day behaviors. Finally, homogenization is the favorability of uniformity within a group (Wright, 2016). Religious fundamentalists tend to feel pressured when there is rhetoric that may threaten their beliefs, whether they are political, socioeconomic, or religious. When an individual has high levels of religious involvement and commitment, they tend to adhere to the *coalitional commitment hypothesis*; an increase of in-group cooperation and commitment to its members (Ginges et al., 2009). Each of the factors proposed by Wright (2016), alone or combined, support the notion that psychosocial reactions to loss can escalate religiously charged political violence. It is when these psychosocial responses are combined with any violent ideologies of leaders or ingroup members that an increase in political violence occurs.

Relative Deprivation

The final school of thought, although very similar to psychosocial reactions, examines the theory of relative deprivation. Relative deprivation is the idea that frustration (due to deprivation of some kind of want or need) is the leading cause of aggressive behavior (Saleh, 2013; Zaidise et al., 2007). There is a subcategory of relative deprivation, being *subjective* deprivation, that employs subjective feelings of deprivation rather than

concrete variables like income, education, or socioeconomic status (Zaidise et al., 2007). Looking through the lens of this theory, people are more likely to commit acts of political violence when their needs are not met by the government.

It is a known fact that the cause of revolutions and most other political violence is the urge for change, political, economic, or societal. What sets this theory apart from others, though, is the citizens' *perceived* needs that cause frustration. Saleh (2013) notes that in relative deprivation, there is a disparity between citizens' expectations and what is actually attainable.

Scholars argue that relative deprivation can be applied to the link between religiosity and political violence. Ethnic and/or religious conflicts may occur under relative deprivation when multiple ethnic or religious groups reside in the same political sphere but receive different treatment (Saleh, 2013). Kunst and Obaidi (2020) state that people may partake in violent extremism to counteract feelings of insignificance in socioeconomic spheres, for example having a lower income or living in low income areas due to economic circumstances. These authors state that second-generation and older Muslim immigrants in Western countries are more likely to support political violence than younger generations (Kunst & Obaidi, 2020). This can be attributed to the perceived stigmatization and deprivation and perhaps a way to show dominance over other groups who are found more favorable, so to speak. There are concordant results found in studies conducted in the Middle East, with Christian respondents (Kunst & Obaidi, 2020). Zaidise et al. (2007) also found in their study that because Israeli Muslims are underrepresented in government, public service, and industry, that the Muslim population of Israel will show more support for political violence.

That being said, using the relative deprivation theory to attempt to explain the connection between religiosity and political violence does not always prove to have these same results. It is often found to be inconclusive,

unless there are specific variables being employed (Zaidise et al., 2007). The relative deprivation theory has some well-known gaps. Why do some people, who are wholly or partially deprived of rights or resources, fail to participate in movements meant to obtain these rights or resources? This question can be asked more specifically through the lens of religiosity and violence: why do some people who are discriminated against or deprived due to their religion fail to favor political violence? I think this gap can be filled by looking at extremism and psychosocial reactions/ relative deprivation together. Observing both economic factors, namely income, and religious factors may be able to provide an insight that has not been previously explored.

Theory and Hypothesis

Scholarly literature is divided on the causes of political violence. Some scholars argue that religious extremism is one cause. Others argue that relative deprivation theory and psychosocial reactions to loss are other factors that promote violence. There is a significant body of literature that suggests that support for political violence is completely unrelated to religion. In my chosen dataset, Armaly et. al (2022) list income as a control variable that is used to determine support for political violence. However, they fail to highlight the results of this variable in their findings. I will be using income as an independent variable in this study, as I suspect it will interact with religion in finding support for political violence.

I expect that high income among non-religious individuals will lead to higher support for political violence. There is evidence that suggests that people in the upper or middle class are more likely to support political violence compared to those with lower income levels (Khoury-Kassabri & Ali, 2015). So, despite religiosity not being high in this scenario, we can expect a higher level of support for political violence due to income level alone, because of empirical findings that show higher income can lead to higher support for political violence.

Hypothesis 1: An increase in income among non-religious individuals will lead to an increase in support for political violence.

Low income among religious individuals will lead to higher support for political violence. Despite lower income being a variable here, we can expect that high religiosity will influence support for political violence. This is theoretically due to the notion of religious extremism and its link to violence, as discussed in the literature review.

Hypothesis 2: A decrease in income among religious individuals will lead to an increase in political violence.

Low income among non-religious individuals will lead to lower support for political violence. If the two variables (religiosity and political violence) are separated, we can see two theoretical scenarios. Low religiosity relates to a low level of support for political violence. Low income can also be linked to a decrease in support for violence. This combination of variables is where we will see the **lowest support** for political violence.

Hypothesis 3: A decrease in income among non-religious individuals will lead to a decrease in support for political violence.

High income among religious individuals will lead to higher support for political violence. This is because religious individuals tend to support political violence in the abstract. Higher income levels also correlate to increased support for political violence. In combination, these variables are where we will see the **highest support** for political violence.

Hypothesis 4: An increase in income among highly religious individuals will lead to an increase in support for political violence.

Research Design

To test whether the income and religiosity of a person affects their support for political violence, I will be using quantitative data found in a public survey. The survey was conducted by Armaly, Buckley, and Enders (2022), using Lucid to field their survey. They

were measuring how different variables affected support for political violence and the January 6th attack on the Capitol, employing variables including white identity, perceived victimhood, and Christian

Nationalism. The survey was conducted in February 2021, with the original sample size being 1,100 U.S. adults. After employing attention checks and removing respondents who sped through the survey, the final sample size is 817 adults in the United States.

I will measure the first independent variable, religiosity, using data from the Armaly et al. (2022) survey responses. They asked questions to determine respondents' levels of religious attendance. Religious attendance is directly correlated with an individual's personal religiosity. They asked questions about respondents' church attendance, which was coded 1-5, every week being 1 and never being 5. I will measure the second independent variable, income, using the same dataset. They used income as a control variable, so I will be using the data they collected to determine the income levels of respondents, which was collected by asking respondents what their income was, giving 5 options in order from "$15,000 or below," to "$100,000 or above," and respondents who did not know their income were omitted from the tests. High or low income will be tested alongside religiosity to examine what effect they will have on support for political violence.

To measure my dependent variable, support for political violence, Armaly et al. (2022) used three questions to determine if respondents had high or low support for political violence. They employed a 5-point scale, 1 being "strongly disagree" and 5 being "strongly agree" for respondents to answer these questions: "(1) It is acceptable to use violence in advancing political goals these days, (2) Violence is sometimes an acceptable way for Americans to express their disagreement with the government, and (3) Violence is justified if the members of the other side act violently first" (Armaly et al., 2022 p 948).

The control variables I will be using are age, gender, and level of education. These variables are also measured as control variables in the Armaly et al. (2022) dataset. Gender was coded as 1 being male, 0 being female; age was true value, and education level was coded 1-5, with options in order from did not graduate high school; high school diploma or equivalent; some college but no degree; bachelor's degree; and graduate degree. I chose these variables as a control to ensure that there is no other plausible interaction between one of the controlled variables and religion that can influence support for political violence.

To test this relationship, I will be running a regression analysis of the interaction between the independent variables (income and religiosity). I will use this dataset and this means of testing to see how each interaction between these independent variables affects the dependent variable (support for political violence) among the respondent adults in the United States.

Results

I ran a multivariate regression with interaction for these variables, as seen in Table 1. First, I will assess the control variables. We can see that all three control variables are statistically significant, and there is a negative relationship between gender and support for political violence, as well as age and support for political violence. This means, holding all other variables constant: women are less likely to support political violence; higher education levels lead to higher support for political violence; and young respondents are less likely to support political violence than older respondents.

Now, we will assess the interaction between religiosity and income and how both variables affect support for political violence. Income was coded from 1-5, 1 being low income and 5 being high income. Religious attendance was coded 0 and 1, 0 being low attendance and 1 being high. The graph shows that high income and high religiosity will lead to higher support of political violence, as well as low
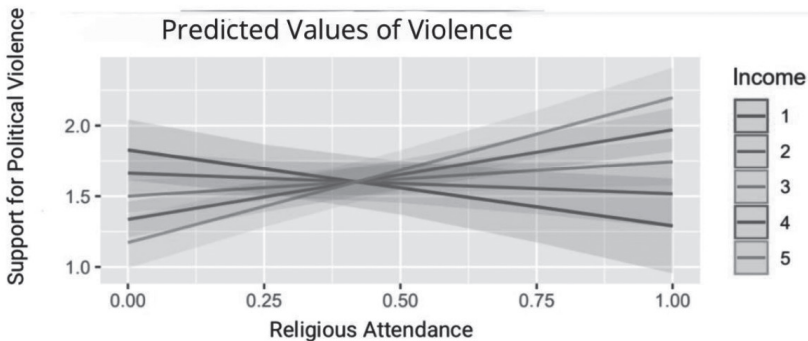
income and low religiosity will lead to higher support of political violence. By contrast, high income and low religiosity will lead to lower support of political violence, and low income and high religiosity will lead to lower support of political violence.

These results run counter to hypotheses 1 to 3, but I do find support for hypothesis 4, where high income and high religiosity lead to higher support for political violence.

We can pull a possible explanation for these results from one of the schools of thought discussed in the literature review. Having low income and low religiosity, or high income and high religiosity, can be argued to be a form of extremism. Being highly religious and wealthy is one end of a spectrum, while on the other end of the spectrum sits low income and low religiosity. Extremism was previously described as the want by individuals to live in conformity, so it is fitting that these results reflect that people on either end of this hypothetical spectrum will support political violence. It also works conversely; people who are perhaps in the middle of this spectrum will not show the same levels of support for political violence.

Some other variables that may be worth looking at in a different analysis would be political ideology, geography/location of the respondent, and possibly if the different sects of religion would have any variation not already explored in these tests.

Effects on Political Violence

	Political Violence
Church Attendance	-0.93***
	(0.28)
Income	-0.16***
	(0.04)
Female	-0.49***
	(0.07)
Education	0.37**
	(0.14)
Age	-1.38***
	(0.15)
Income X Attendance	0.39***
	(0.08)
Constant	2.83***
	(0.16)
Observations	791
R^2	0.23
Adjusted R^2	0.22
F Statistic	38.80*** (df = 6; 784)
Note:	*p**p***p<0.01

Predicted Values of Violence

Support for Political Violence (y-axis), Religious Attendance (x-axis), Income (legend: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

Discussion and Conclusion

The interaction of the variables did not provide the results that I had expected. However, it still relays very valuable information. It seems as though the combinations of high income/high religiosity and low income/low religiosity are both forms of extremism, but on opposite ends of a hypothetical spectrum. This leads me to draw similarities between the school of thought that discusses religious extremism that was discussed in the literature review. That school of thought illustrated that extremists tend to want conformity in the world, and when that conformity is threatened, they tend to lash out at the institutions or people who are responsible. The results of the low income/low religiosity interaction can also be tied to the school of thought that discusses relative deprivation and psychosocial reactions. They all describe economic or social hardships of some sort and that these types of factors are consistent with support for political violence. Thus, the results are similar to existing scholarship, but they add a sense of depth that otherwise would not have been explored.

The implications of this study are essentially a broader understanding of why people support political violence versus not. As discussed in the introduction, there is not one agreed-upon cause for political violence. This study can help other scholars in the future to rule out certain variables, or pay attention more closely to others. Variables I would suggest investigating would be political ideology, geographic location (rural versus urban versus college town versus suburbs, et. cetera), studying variation among the different sects of religion studied, and potentially an international study in multiple countries.

There were some limitations in this research. One, fairly obvious, limitation would be a person's image. If survey respondents knew they were being asked about support toward political violence, there is no guarantee that they were being completely honest and true with their responses to the questions that were designed to calculate that measure. Another limitation, also about the survey questions, is that 3 questions to determine high versus low support for political violence is not very thorough. There is a desire to not bore or upset participants, but for the most accurate information, it would be wise to explore the dependent variable via some additional questions to help gauge their level of support for political violence. One other blatant limitation is that these results are exclusively accurate in the United States, due to respondents all being American adults. Despite these, and any additional limitations, because this research is very consistent with previous scholarship, I am confident that these results are an accurate depiction of variables that affect support for political violence.

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Restricted Driver's Licenses and their Effects on Deportations

by Thomas Garcia Jr.

Introduction

Restricted driver's licenses are gaining widespread media attention in the United States. Many states, like Minnesota and Massachusetts, have enacted and implemented laws granting undocumented individuals the right to a license. There have been many advocacy groups in Idaho, such as PODER of Idaho and other student-led organizations at universities and colleges across the state, which helped spread the Manejando Sin Miedo (Driving Without Fear) campaign, an effort to show support to grant driver's licenses for undocumented individuals. These licenses would only allow individuals to drive vehicles but restrict them from using them for voting or purchasing a firearm.

Though gaining popularity, people from Latine backgrounds are concerned that it would create a new system of discrimination, making it easier for police officers and immigration officials to target people of color on public roads. Many individuals believe it would open new doors to racial profiling and harassment.

Previous literature has looked at the benefits of restricted driver's license policies. Some scholars have found that around ⅓ of all hit-and-run accidents involve unlicensed drivers (Benson et al., 2021). Other scholars have found that states that have passed and enacted these laws saw an immense decrease in hit-and-runs (Lueders et al., 2017). An explanation for such a dramatic decrease was that it allowed newly licensed individuals to stay at the scene to report accidents and were able to cover the costs of damages with insurance they could now obtain.

Other scholars argue that restricted driver›s licenses do more harm than good. Some

research has shown that banning these licenses would decrease motor mortality rates by one percent (González 2010). However, other scholars have found no relationship between restricted driver's licenses and increasing fatality rates in car accidents (Churchill, 2021).

Other scholars look at the correlation between these licensing laws and the health of undocumented immigrants. They found that communal relations between the police and the undocumented communities improved after New York implemented their Green Light law. Scholars also found that it repaired relations and reduced anxiety levels of children of undocumented parents during encounters with the police (Smith et al., 2021).

Though countless pieces of literature look at the public safety and health of the undocumented community, no research examines the correlation between restricted driver›s licenses and deportation rates. I believe that states with these licensing laws will have lower deportation rates. Undocumented individuals with these licenses could have a lower chance of running into a police officer who would question their documentation status. Thus, I presented the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis: States with restricted driver licensing laws will have lower deportation rates than states without such laws.

For the methodology behind the study, I looked at 50 U.S. states but excluded districts and territories. I specifically gathered all my data from the year 2020. I looked at data from the National Conference of Legislatures to see which states had restricted driver›s licenses, but I excluded states that passed

and enacted them after 2020. I used statistics from the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC) to measure total deportations from each state in 2020 and the U.S. Census to measure the total population. For my controls, I looked at states that border Canada, states that border Mexico, racial and ethnic diversity, their median income, and their education levels.

With the data collected, I found support for my hypothesis. Restricted driver›s licenses decrease the number of deportations in a state. My control variable of states that border Mexico is also statistically significant.

Literature Review

Undocumented individuals face countless barriers when living in the United States. Many cannot accomplish everyday tasks such as taking their children to school, heading to a local grocery store, or driving to work without fearing the threat of deportation. There are many legal restrictions that many U.S. citizens do not experience that undocumented individuals do.

What connections do scholars make between accessible licenses and the everyday experiences of undocumented individuals? To make the question more concrete, what effect does giving licenses to undocumented individuals have on deportation rates across the U.S.?

Previous research has found positive and negative associations between undocumented immigrants obtaining licenses. Increased public safety, improved immigrant health and safety, and economic opportunity are among the schools of thought. Alternatively, some researchers discovered negatives such as increased death rates and higher insurance costs.

Effects of Undocumented Immigrant Licensing Laws on Public Safety and Costs:

Having insurance protects drivers from unexpected costs that result from car crashes. Though most Americans have car insurance, many undocumented immigrants do not. Undocumented individuals who gain the right to a license would be legally allowed to obtain auto insurance. Lueders et al. (2017) found a $17 million decrease in market inefficiencies per year due to newly insured immigrants because they were less likely to flee the scene of an accident. They also found that it helped save not-at-fault drivers $3.7 million in out-of-pocket expenses. Cáceres and Jameson (2015) also found that states that prevented immigrants from being licensed had their insurance expenditures increased due to the lack of uninsured people. Compared to states with restricted driver's licenses, states that ban undocumented immigrants from pursuing a license have higher insurance premiums (Williams et al., 2019). Though people are saving money from being insured, it is fair to note that there has also been an increase in claims correlated with UILP (Unauthorized Immigrant Licensing Policies) in California. Though there are more claims within the state, Lueders and Mumpers (2022) found little to no evidence of price increases in auto insurance. They also believe that if other states adopt similar policies, there would be no differing effects on auto insurance and its outcomes.

Existing literature has made public safety one of the most significant focal points in the political debate regarding this policy issue. For instance, Benson et al. (2021) found that ⅓ of hit-and-run drivers lacked a valid license and that the lack of licensing also increased the likelihood of individuals fleeing by 400%. Lueders et al. (2017) found that once California passed AB60 in 2015, a law that allows undocumented individuals the right to a license, there was a 4,000 accident decrease involving hit-and-runs. Allowing these driver's licenses gave immigrants more confidence in reporting accidents due to reduced fears of involving the authorities. Evidence shows that 73% of red-light runners do not have a valid license (Romano et al., 2005). Though the number of hit-and-runs decreased, undocumented immigrants are still involved in crashes.

Existing literature mentions how allowing undocumented immigrants the right to a

license would increase motor mortality rates. González (2010) found that banning driver's licenses for undocumented individuals would reduce motor mortality rates by 1%. However, more recent literature says otherwise. Lueders et al. (2017) found no correlation between newly licensed immigrants and the increasing rate of motor fatalities after the passage of AB60. Churchill (2021) also found no substantial connection between UILP and increasing car-related fatalities.

Effects of Undocumented Immigrants Licensing Laws on Immigrant Physical and Mental Health:

Scholars found that when immigrants received licenses, they had new opportunities to access health services. Koball and Hartig (2020) found that these driver's license programs gave children from immigrant backgrounds a chance to receive medical attention, such as dental checkups, routine visits to the doctor, and optometry, at a 5% increase. A compelling thing that scholars noticed was that carpools increased by 6.5%, allowing more individuals to access medical attention through relatives and friends (Barajas, 2021).

After September 11, 2001, the federal government wanted to implement a law requiring individuals to provide their social security numbers, proof of residency, and proof of identity to get a license, which later created the Real ID Act of 2005 (Mount, 2003). The REAL ID Act of 2005 intended "to improve the reliability and accuracy of state-issued identification documents" and to "inhibit terrorists' ability to evade detection by using fraudulent identification" (Silva 2015 pg. 2). Though with good intent, it then led to other problems, especially in the areas of policing and racial profiling among Latine communities.

Other scholars argue that racial profiling increased due to the REAL ID Act. New York passed the Green Light Law in 2019, a law that gave licenses to immigrants. But before the law implementation, authorities would purposefully scout 'Mexican-looking'

individuals because Latine individuals lacked legal status, which resulted in people being detained and deported (Smith et al., 2021). Nevertheless, with the implementation of the Green Light Law, police were less likely to bother immigrants with licenses, which, in turn, helped children of immigrants by lowering their levels of anxiety and trauma when it came to encounters with the police (Smith et al., 2021).

Effects of Undocumented Immigrants Licensing Laws on Immigrant Economic Opportunity:

Gaining access to cars in vehicle-dependent cities, newly licensed drivers have seen a positive in their lives. For instance, when married undocumented women obtained a driver's license, they saw a 9.2% decrease in fertility rates, meaning they had fewer children (Gunadi, 2022). Being restricted to the household only allowed immigrant women to care for their homes and children. Other limitations also included fear of the police or limited accessibility to vehicles. But those barriers were removed when undocumented women were allowed licenses. Women were allowed to go to work more often, with an increase of 1.5% in weekly hours (Gunadi, 2022). Cho (2022) also discovered a 0.9 percentage point rise in the employment rate, equating to 31 to 41 thousand additional jobs for undocumented immigrants in states with restricted driver's licensing legislation. That helped explain why immigrants were able to afford medical attention.

Many scholars find a lot of positive outcomes that come with allowing undocumented immigrants to acquire a driver's license. Many found that it helped protect the community through insurance coverage and health benefits and even reduced anxiety and trauma among children. However, to my knowledge, no literature examines the connection between a state with restricted licensing laws and their deportations. I will fill these gaps by looking at each state in the U.S. and exploring whether they have laws that allow immigrants the right to a driver's license and cross-reference with their deportation rates.

Theory & Hypothesis

Previous literature shows an association between undocumented individuals' ability to access restricted driver's licenses and safety outcomes. Some scholars found that states with restricted driver's licensing laws decreased hit-and-runs, had lower insurance expenditures, and allowed undocumented immigrants to travel safely to grocery stores and hospitals. However, to my knowledge, no literature examines the connection between states allowing driver's licenses to undocumented individuals and their deportation rates. To fill this gap, I will investigate all U.S. states to see whether they have policies allowing undocumented individuals to obtain driver's licenses and the relation to deportation rates.

So, what effect does giving driver's licenses to undocumented individuals have on deportation rates across the U.S.? I argue that states with easily accessible driver's licenses will have lower deportation rates. One reason could be that police officers will question an individual's citizenship status at a lower rate if they present a legal driver's license, even if police officers are more likely to hold a bias against Latine individuals and their immigrant status. The reason would be that undocumented individuals can provide a legal document allowing them to drive, meaning that police officers would not have a valid reason to hold them in custody or question them. Thus, I present my hypothesis.

Hypothesis: States with restricted driver licensing laws will have lower deportation rates than states without such laws.

Research Design

For my observation, I will look at all 50 states in the United States. I will not be looking at territories or districts that the U.S. occupies, such as Puerto Rico or Washington, D.C. I will be strictly looking at data from 2020. For my control variables, I will be looking at states that border Canada, states that border Mexico, racial and ethnic diversity, median income, and education levels.

For my independent variable, I will use the National Conference of State Legislatures (2023) to see which states have restricted driver's licensing laws. In my data, I will represent each state that does not have said licensing laws with the number 0 and a number 1 for states that have those laws. I will exclude some states, such as Minnesota because they enacted their policies in 2023. With said restrictions, there are only 16 states that meet this criterion.

I will also consider a state's population as my second independent variable. I will obtain this information from the United States Census Bureau (2023). It is crucial to examine the state population because some states, such as California and Texas, have a larger population and are expected to have higher deportation rates.

For my dependent variable, I will examine data from TRAC Immigration (2021). They collect their data from the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE). Their data consists of deportation rates reported by ICE. Although they have data dating back to 2003, I will just be looking at the deportation rates of each state in 2020.

For my first control variable, I will identify which states border Canada. I will code states that do not border Canada with 0 and those that border Canada with 1. Thirteen states in the U.S. border Canada. For my second control, I will look at states that border Mexico. States that do not border Mexico will be coded with 0, and those that do border Mexico will be coded with 1. There are four states that border Mexico. All data to identify border states will be used from Beaver (2006).

My third control variable will be the Diversity Index. My data will come from the United States Census Bureau in 2020. The dataset generates a probability using percentages of the chance that, if picked at random, two people will identify as a different race and ethnicity. Though many legal immigrants come from Asia and Latin America, undocumented people are more likely to be of Mexican heritage due to their physical connection to the United States. It is crucial to

examine state diversity since some states are more diverse than others.

My last control variable is an individual's income and education. I will use data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (2023). Their educational data contains 25-year-old individuals who have earned a bachelor's degree or higher. I will also utilize their 2020 median household income datasets (USDA, 2022).

With all the data presented, I will use a regression model to assess my variables. I will examine if states with restricted driver licensing laws affect deportation rates. To be concrete, I expect that states with restricted driver's licenses will have lower deportation rates compared to states without those laws.

Results

So, what effect does having restricted driver's licensing laws have on the deportation rates in each state? I looked at all 50 states in the U.S., and I excluded districts and territories. I observed each state with and without restricted driver's license laws to see if they had any significant differences in their deportation rates. In my controls, I examined each state and their laws on licenses, education levels, Diversity Index score, median income, if the state borders Canada, and if they border Mexico.

As seen in Table 1, I discovered that one of my control variables and my independent variable are statistically significant. To be more concrete, my control variable of states that border Mexico is statistically significant. With the recent influx of migrants coming into the United States from Latin America, most migrants must cross through into California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. These four states are the first ground they touch when entering the U.S.

The second significant variable would be the state law that allowed restricted driver's licenses to undocumented communities. With the interpretation of the results, states with these laws will have lower deportation rates compared to those without them.

Table 1

Effects of Restricted Driver's Licensing Laws on Deportation Rates by State

	Deportation Rate
Restricted Driver's License Laws	-0.0005[*] (0.0003)
Border State - Canada	-0.0000 (0.0002)
Border State - Mexico	0.001[***] (0.0004)
Diversity Index	0.0000 (0.0000)
Median Income	-0.00 (0.0000)
Education	0.0000 (0.0000)
Constant	-0.0001 (0.001)
Observations	50
R^2	0.37
Adjusted R^2	0.28
F Statistic	4.13[***] (df = 6; 43)
Note:	[*]p[**]p[***]p<0.01

With previous literature, it would help heal relations between immigrant communities and the police while simultaneously helping reduce racial profiling. Thus, resulting in the police asking less about documentation out of suspicion of citizenship status if these communities can provide driver's licenses, registration, and insurance.

The results from my regression do support my hypothesis. Restricted driver's licensing laws decrease the number of deportations a state conducts. However, a contributor to increasing deportations would be states that border Mexico. Migrants flowing into these border states are more likely to face

Immigration and Customs, and depending on the state, they would face harsher enforcement of immigration laws. It is important to note that these restricted driver's license laws are relatively new policies. Only a few states enacted these license laws after 2014, but many continue to discourse in legislatures.

It is also important to note some variables I should have considered while creating my datasets. In future research, I would look at a state's political leanings, such as liberal-leaning California and conservative-leaning Texas. Since most states that passed these licensing laws are more liberal compared to conservative states, future research could examine more conservative states that later pass and enact said laws, such as Idaho. I would also expand from 2020 and look at a more recent date, such as 2023, to include states that recently enacted their licensing laws. Another variable that would be interesting to examine could be how undocumented individuals were detained by ICE, as in being pulled over for not having a license (which coincides with racial profiling), ICE raids at worksites and homes, or if it was the result of someone questioning and reporting a person's documentation status.

Discussion & Conclusion

Restricted driver's licenses decrease a state's deportation rate. My hypothesis was supported by my regression model. However, it is unsurprising to see states that border Mexico would have higher deportations. Latine individuals are most likely to be undocumented individuals who head to states like Texas. Heading to these states increases their chances of being deported, especially since Texas is one of the strictest states that enforce immigration laws.

My research does not fit in with the pre-existing literature I discussed. Many scholars looked at the benefits of allowing undocumented individuals the right to a driver's license. They found that it helped decrease hit-and-runs, decreased insurance premiums, helped the undocumented

community seek medical attention, and opened a new door to work opportunities. My research focused more on whether it would decrease deportations in a state with restricted driver's licensing laws.

With the implications of my data, we can see that deportations are affected by restricted driver's licenses. That means that these laws would decrease the amount of deportation a state conducts. My data could have been more substantial if I had used data from states implementing the laws after 2020. It was also challenging to find data that broke down the reasoning as to why an individual faced deportation.

Once enough time has passed, for future research, I would immediately include states that passed and enacted restricted driver's licenses after the year 2020. Simultaneously, I would look at Democrat-leaning or Republican-leaning states since the majority in my study were Democrat-leaning. I would also search for a dataset that would break down individual cases and their reasons for undocumented individuals facing deportation. It would then exclude people who committed violent crimes such as murder and rape and only focus on individuals who committed traffic violations, thus narrowing the research to focus on unlicensed undocumented individuals.

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American Antitrust Policies: A Retrospective Analysis

By Flick Kemp

Introduction

Microsoft has recently put forward plans to purchase Activision Blizzard, a video game developer. Though this was blocked on April 26, 2023, by the Competition and Markets Authority (a UK regulatory body), and the Federal Trade Commission has filed a complaint to block this deal soon thereafter, Microsoft still plans to pursue this acquisition and challenge both rulings (Ziady, 2023). A capitalist market relies on competition and consumer choice to create new products and innovate older ones. When one company becomes too dominant, or snuffs out competition, it prevents the full function of this style of economy. Microsoft is not the only modern example of a monopoly under capitalism. In American groceries, three companies control 75% of the market for about a third of all items. Three companies, Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, and Keurig Dr. Pepper, control 93% of the soft drink market (Lakhani et al., 2021). Or consider film, or international shipping, or online shopping. Monopolies are omnipresent in the American economy, yet it wasn't always so. With the onset of industrialization in the United States, businesses have tried to monopolize their niche. In response to these anticompetitive behaviors, the federal government instituted a type of legislation called antitrust. Antitrust encompasses a a range of actions regulatory bodies, often governments, take to limit the growth of trusts, or monopolies. This can be through the dissolving of a monopoly or through preemptive measures that attempt to support a diverse and competitive market, such as preventing a merger of two or more companies. The goal is to prohibit and limit the ability of companies to remove competition and attain market dominance. This economic policy started in the late 1800s in the United States as a response to oil and rail tycoons and has remained in place since then, with varying degrees of enforcement.

A close analysis of antitrust legislation has revealed mixed results in its influence over markets. Some scholars argue they have only limited influence on modern market regulation due to the preeminence of monopolies and lack of market shocks (Givel, 2006). Others instead point to the historic successes of antitrust legislation in improving market competition (Stigler, 1966). However, this type of legislation broadly has not been examined through the lens of the punctuated equilibrium theory, nor is there detailed research on what factors shape antitrust legislation. The general framework of punctuated equilibrium theory posits that economic policy does not change much over time, and when significant changes do occur, they are typically seen after a prominent event or catastrophe. (Jones & Baumgartner, 2012). Within this theory, more focus is given to individual actors and specific events, such as the 2008 financial crisis and its impact on modern financial behaviors (Campbell, 2010). Within this framework, there is little direct focus on antitrust legislation within the United States.

I theorize that a more liberal mood will increase the amount of antitrust bills proposed and passed because it is considered a more liberal policy. The more broadly a public supports a legislative action, the more Congress will act toward that end, because they rely on their constituents to remain in elected office and are therefore incentivized to pursue the interests of their constituency. As their constituencies show greater favor toward antitrust legislation, members of Congress will reflect these political beliefs.

From this, I hypothesize that as public opinion increases its support for antitrust legislation, Congress is more likely to pass antitrust legislation.

I used statistical analysis to examine antitrust law between 1952 and 2020. This was done using a linear regression model in R. I include both bills proposed, and bills passed, to account for the legislative process. I control for elections, the party makeup of both Congress and the presidency, as well as GDP. The time frame is truncated between 1952 and 2020 because that is the range of data for Stimson's policy mood index, which I use as my independent variable as a proxy for public support for antitrust legislation. My results for this regression analysis were null. I found some support for the opposite, where greater conservatism led to more antitrust legislation being passed. To test how my data aligns with punctuated equilibrium theory, I perform a further outlier test. Here again, my results are null.

Literature Review

The theory of punctuated equilibrium describes the evolution of political policies and positions as stasis interspersed with moments of growth or change (Jones & Baumgartner, 2012). This growth is typically induced by outside factors, or actors outside of the formal political process. This theory was developed from a theory of the same name in the field of evolutionary biolog;y which describes the evolution of species as static until an external force or event necessitates further evolution to adapt to new environments (Givel, 2010). Policy stasis, the lack of change in policy over time, is induced by many factors, primarily the difficulty in creating a large enough shock to maintain a desired policy change. Radical change is often met with strong opposition, both within the governmental structure and from other interest groups. Similarly, once an exogenous shock has occurred, there is no guarantee that policy will change. Effective policy change requires policy entrepreneurs, or individuals or entities who champion and lobby for a specific policy to be enacted. These often

take the form of interest groups; however, government entities can also become policy entrepreneurs in response to major disequilibrium. Another factor influencing policy outcomes under the punctuated equilibrium theory is information processing. Those issues and punctuation events which gain the most focus from the population will have the highest rate of change (Yildirim, 2022). In some policy areas, though a punctuation event has occurred, there is not a strong push for change; in others, though there is a call for policy change, there are too many policies to effectively channel public demands and energy (ibid).

Beyond pure policy, the punctuated equilibrium theory has also been applied to economic and market changes. It satisfactorily explains changes in the monetary policy of the Federal Reserve Banks as a response to bursting market bubbles and economic downturns in the United States. Market crashes are a crisis that affect everyone and generate major disturbances from the status quo. This allows public focus to shift onto various interest groups and policy entrepreneurs as they put forward solutions to the crisis. In the case of the Federal Reserve, the political climate and public mood after market downturns caused them to adopt novel policies and approaches to their monetary policies (Campbell, 2010).

Likewise, if competing groups can create an alternative to longstanding policy, they can disturb the equilibrium. This happens when opposing interest groups gain enough momentum to challenge the dominant interests. When the equilibrium is disrupted, there is a chance for dramatic policy change. The conflict in the 1990's and early 2000's demonstrates this disequilibrium well. As public health advocates became more vocal within the political system, they challenged the monopoly that the tobacco industry had regarding policy. These campaigns were able to focus the attention of the public on the issue and exert some pressure over public policy. However, though states passed legislation restricting the purchase and use of tobacco products, this did not have a major

impact on the tobacco industry (Givel, 2006). Though the status quo was challenged, the resistance to change overcame the push for new policies.

I now turn my focus to antitrust legislation. This policy arena restricts businesses and corporations from creating monopolies or otherwise exerting undue influence over the market. Through these laws, the government maintains a free and competitive market. Antitrust legislation focuses primarily on cartels, monopolies, and corporate conspiracies. Cartels are agreements between companies to collaborate and conspire to reduce costs and competitors' influence while benefiting themselves. A monopoly is a singular company that has control over most if not all of a market and manipulates prices to maintain control and profits. Corporate conspiracies have multiple forms, but all involve some form of collusion to benefit themselves and reduce the fair competition of the market beyond the definitions of a cartel. This can be done through bid-rigging, where companies agree beforehand who will win a bid for a contract, price setting, or other anti-competitive behaviors (Fugate, 1963).

In the United States, antitrust law finds its roots in English Common Law. First instituted against agricultural monopolies, they did not see great use or exercise until after the industrial revolution in the mid-1800s. With the growth and expansion of the railroads, antitrust grew in popularity (Forrest, 1896). This popularity was fueled in part by the pervasive hold rail commerce and travel had on the American psyche at the time, as well as growing discontent caused by visible wealth inequality (Genova, 2018). The first major antitrust legislation passed in the United States was the Sherman Act of 1890, which made monopolies, or attempted monopolization and other restrictive practices illegal (*The Sherman Antitrust Act*, 1890). Initially considered a great success of the progressive era, it quickly became obvious that in practice it fell short of its ideals.

Soon after the Sherman Act was passed, a wave of mergers happened, creating a sharp spike in corporate trusts and other monopolistic corporations. Several court cases interpreted this act to oppose only cartels, rather than all monopolistic business models (Bittlingmayer, 1985). To expand the scope of the Sherman Act, Congress passed the Clayton Act in 1914. This act made preferential rates, predatory pricing, and other discriminatory pricing schemes, as well as buying shares for the purpose of inducing a monopoly illegal. However, nonprofit and labor unions were exempted from these regulations (*The Clayton Antitrust Act*, 1914). In the same year, Congress passed the Federal Trade Commission Act, which created the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), to better enforce antitrust law and regulate the market as necessary (*The Federal Trade Commission Act*, 1914).

The most prominent antitrust case, as stated previously, is *Standard Oil Co. Of New Jersey v. United States*. This case brought antitrust to the forefront of the American public consciousness. Standard Oil, headed by John D. Rockefeller, utilized both vertical and horizontal mergers to gain a monopoly over the oil market in the United States. Accused also of predatory price fixing, the Supreme Court found it in violation of the Sherman Act in 1911, and it was dissolved into 43 separate companies (McGee, 1958). This publicity made it an ideal comparison for modern antitrust actions. Standard Oil is considered the standard for a corporate monopoly.

During the World War I era, little was done to enforce the established antitrust laws. Frequently, the Supreme Court weakened the legislation by ruling against federal agencies and restricting the scope of these antitrust acts. At the onset of the Great Depression, more focus was given to antitrust enforcement, and under President Franklin Roosevelt the federal government put more energy to enforcing market regulations. This emphasis waned again in the 1970s as the United States lost its economic edge in the global market and the Supreme Court once more weakened its favor toward market regulations (Kovacic & Shapiro, 2000). Despite

the inconsistent strength of enforcement, antitrust legislation has had an impact on market concentration. When enforced, it noticeably reduces mergers and attempted mergers (Stigler, 1966). The historic record shows that enforcement of antitrust legislation comes only when the perceived need is high and remains loosely enforced, if at all, when there is no perceived threat from monopolization.

During the late 20th century, the internet grew and became accessible to the broader population, leading to concerns that Microsoft was creating a monopoly. Culminating in the case *United States v. Microsoft Corp.* Microsoft adjusted some of its business practices but was not dissolved. However, it is debated whether Microsoft fully qualified as a monopoly, and the true use and viability of antitrust legislation as a means of market control. Bourdreaux and Folsom (1999) argue that applying antitrust criteria to Microsoft would limit the function of the market to optimize efficiency and needlessly complicate business practices, as legislators are not experts in business. Still, what began with Microsoft in the 1990s continued with the rise of accessible internet. In 2019, the 5 most valuable companies were all tech companies. Data has replaced oil as the all-encompassing good of the century, yet the FTC has not taken substantial action against their market dominance, and antitrust law has not grown out of the 19th and 20th century contexts within which it was written (McIntosh, 2019).

Amazon has become the focus of public criticism over the past few years for anticompetitive behaviors, buying out companies such as Twitch, Goodreads, and Whole Foods. Amazon markets its global reach, encouraging smaller businesses to use Amazon as a platform for their own products, or risk losing access to potential customers. Despite the obvious market dominance, Amazon still does not officially violate antitrust law: it has not *technically* engaged in predatory pricing, or limited consumer choice (Myers, 2019).

Wal-Mart has likewise been mired in antitrust issues. Since the late 1960s, it has used predatory pricing to weaken competition and create virtual monopolies in certain regions. These practices have impacted both the consumer and the distributors who supply Wal-Mart's goods. Despite this, there are minimal checks on the power and influence of Wal-Mart on the American market (Lynn, 2006).

Clearly, the circumstances under which antitrust legislation is brought forward and leads to significant policy changes are inconsistent. In the past, significant monopolies have been approached head on, and policy has been put forward to try and maintain a fair and competitive market. Though we see similar trends toward consolidation in business conglomerates today, the push for antitrust legislation has not followed. This variation in expected pattern is not explored in current literature, and I hope to begin filling that gap here.

Theory and Hypothesis

The theory of punctuated equilibrium offers a useful framework of analysis for policy shifts. This theory is already applied to policy areas, primarily to foreign and economic policy, and shows strong support. It allows clear distinctions to be made between 'before' and 'after' states, which demonstrate immediate policy impacts of catalyst events. However, this research is very narrow in its time frame, focusing on the impact of one exogenous event on policy. My research seeks to apply punctuated equilibrium theory to American antitrust legislation, something that has not been analyzed yet. I will also examine this policy area over time, rather than on one specific legislative act passed. This stretches the punctuated equilibrium theory over many decades, rather than a few years, something that also has scant literature. Antitrust legislation has a long and varied past, and a unique place in economic policy. Extant research on antitrust law focuses on specific cases, rather than the entire body of observations. This research also doesn't fully

develop the causes of antitrust legislation, which I am exploring here.

Several push factors could increase support for antitrust legislation, from economic growth to public opinion. Specifically, I will examine the impact of public opinion on this legislation. I believe that negative public opinion of real or perceived corporate monopolies leads to an increase in antitrust law, because there is increased pressure on Congress and the bureaucracy to limit the power of these corporations. As the public sours toward large conglomerates or monopolies, they will petition for greater market regulations, as well as support and elect politicians who have this platform. Elected officials have a vested interest in reelection, and will therefore reflect the desires of their constituents, particularly when these desires are consistently and publicly expressed. In line with punctuated equilibrium theory, there must be a critical mass of public opposition to monopolistic behavior for Congress to take interest or action on the matter.

Hypothesis 1: *I hypothesize that as public opinion increases its support for antitrust legislation, Congress is more likely to pass antitrust legislation.*

Research Design

My body of antitrust law will come from the Congressional Archives, a subset of the Library of Congress. For laws proposed prior to 1975, I will use the Congressional Record to find antitrust laws. These will be laws that have antitrust in the title, or otherwise refer to prior antitrust legislation. For laws proposed between 1975 and 2020, I will use the Congressional Archives' legislation index, using the "competition and antitrust" tag to filter my results. This provides me with 4386 total observations, 373 from the Congressional Record and 4013 from the legislation index. I will use James Stimson's policy mood index to measure policy mood and public opinion regarding antitrust law from 1952 to 2020.

I will control for the president's political party, unified or split government, economic strength, whether the United States is at war, and if the year is an election year. These variables allow me to control for potential ease of passage, as well as other extraneous issues that would draw the focus of political capital each year away from or towards antitrust law. Information regarding the president's party will come from the American Presidency Project, while the data regarding Congressional majority parties will come from the House Archives and Senate History Office. This will allow me to determine if Congress was unified with the president or not in any given year. Data regarding election years will be found here as well. Economic data will be sourced from the Measuring Worth database. Data regarding war will be found within various historical resources.

I will measure antitrust law in two ways. First, I will count the number of bills proposed each year. Second, I will count the number of bills that became law in any given year as a subset of proposed bills. I will measure each year rather than each congressional session, as that allows my nominal data for antitrust laws to line up more closely with my data on policy mood. The president's party will be coded as 0 for Republican and 1 for Democrat. Similarly, a unified Congress will be marked as 1, while a split government is marked 0. War and peace are also measured this way, where peace is coded 0, and war is coded 1. If a war began or ended in a certain year, even if it did not last the entire year, it will be considered that the United States was at war. Election years will be measured with two dummy variables, one for presidential elections, and one for midterm elections. The economy will be measured in the percentage change in GDP from the year prior, using real GDP per capita in 2012 dollars, as well as just GDP per capita in 2012 dollars.

To determine the influence of public mood on antitrust law, I will run a multivariate regression, controlling for the effects of presidential party, split congress, economy,

war, and election year. This allows me to gain a clearer understanding of the relationship between proposed and passed antitrust legislation and public opinion.

RESULTS

As seen in column 1 of Table 1, when proposing bills, only GDP per capita and years since 1952 are significant. This means as GDP per capita increases, the amount of antitrust legislation passed decreases, and as time progresses away from 1952, antitrust legislation is proposed more frequently. Substantively, about 8 more bills are proposed each year, when all else is held

equal, and for every additional 100 in GDP per capita 1 less antitrust bill is proposed. Policy mood, and all other control variables were insignificant regarding the number of bills proposed. For this measure, my hypothesis is null. Policy mood does not influence the number of antitrust bills proposed.

As seen in column 2 of Table 1, when antitrust legislation is passed, the years since 1952 and GDP per capita remain significant, however, policy mood, presidential and midterm election years, and the party ID of the president become significant. The year counter still has a positive influence on bills being passed, however it is much smaller. GDP per capita likewise has a much smaller influence on antitrust legislation passing. Both midterm election years and presidential election years have a positive influence on legislation passing. The effect of a midterm election is twice as great as the effect of a presidential election. The political party of the president also has a significant influence on how much legislation is passed: when the president is a Republican, more antitrust legislation is passed. Policy mood, my variable of interest, has a statistically significant effect on passed antitrust legislation. It has a negative influence, meaning that as policy mood becomes more liberal, less antitrust legislation becomes law.
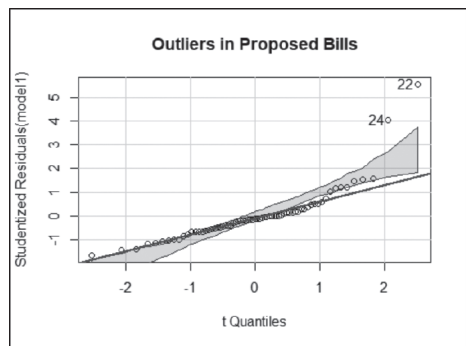
Table 1

| Policy Mood and Antitrust Legislation		
	Antitrust Legislation:	
	Proposed Bills (1)	Passed Bills (2)
Policy Mood	-2.71	-0.34***
	(1.45)	(0.09)
Midterm Election	-16.47	4.44***
	(12.42)	(0.81)
Presidential Election	-20.38	2.18**
	(12.02)	(0.79)
Presidential Party ID	-22.55	-1.84*
	(12.84)	(0.84)
United Congress	7.00	1.69
	(13.01)	(0.85)
Year Counter	8.17**	0.46**
	(2.50)	(0.16)
Percent change in GDP	196.74	11.38
	(242.93)	(15.86)
GDP per capita	-0.01**	-0.001*
	(0.004)	(0.0002)
War	-22.83	-0.004
	(17.53)	(1.14)
Constant	355.46***	28.69***
	(89.64)	(5.85)
Observations	69	69
R^2	0.37	0.51
Adjusted R^2	0.28	0.44
Residual Std. Error (df = 59)	41.04	2.68
F Statistic (df = 9; 59)	3.92***	6.88***
Note:		*p**p***p<0.01

Table 2

To test my results within the framework of the punctuated equilibrium theory, I looked for outliers in my dataset. Here also, there was no support. I had two outliers in my dataset for proposed bills, shown in Table 2. These outliers corresponded to 1973 and 1975. They are not outliers because of a shift in policy mood, or any other measure, rather they are outliers because of issues in the dataset itself. 1973 was the first year that the Congressional Archive had full data on antitrust law, and the available legislation for me to include increased drastically those two years.

Table 3
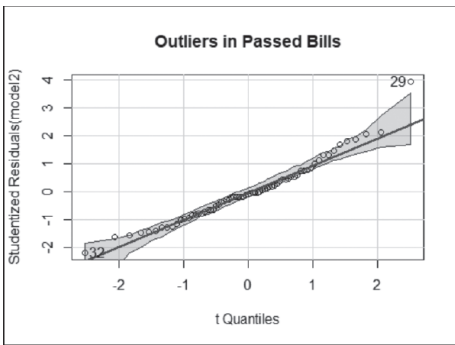
In Table 3 I show the outliers in passed bills. Again, there are two datapoints that are outliers. These are 1980 and 1983. In 1980, 16 pieces of legislation passed, while in 1983, 0 pieces of legislation passed. The respective moods for each year are lower than the average by about 9 points in 1980 and 2 points in 1983. This likewise does not support my hypothesis. I expect fewer pieces of legislation to pass when the mood is more conservative, and here more legislation passed with a conservative mood than a comparatively liberal mood.

Overall, these results do not support my hypothesis. In the case of proposed legislation, my findings were null, policy mood had no effect on antitrust legislation. In the case of passed legislation, my findings were the opposite of my hypothesis. I expected that a more liberal policy mood to lead to greater antitrust legislation being proposed and

passed. This follows similarly for the party ID of the president, I expected Democratic presidents to lead to more bills being passed, however the opposite was true.

I believe in part my results are influenced by the selection of bills I used. Though I filtered only for antitrust legislation, and eliminated all bills regarding appropriation, I did not refine more than that. This allowed many bills that referenced antitrust somewhere to be included, even if they were not directly related. Likewise, I did not specify if the bills I included increased antitrust legislation or reduced and eliminated existing law. This lack of specification may have allowed the amount of legislation to be combined with the specific type of legislation when they were not necessarily the same.

Similarly, the process of finding all legislation proposed and passed was somewhat complicated, as Congress did not have full records for the entire time frame. This, and the difficulty in correctly counting each piece of legislation may have also led to errors in the dataset. I also did not include every possible influencing factor in my dataset. Going forward, providing a more concrete and consistent dataset, as well as finding a more complete source for the legislation I included will provide clearer and more confident results.

Conclusion

In sum, my results were null. My hypothesis that a more liberal mood would lead to more antitrust legislation being proposed and passed, was not supported by the data. There is some support that the opposite is true, that as policy mood becomes more conservative, more antitrust legislation is passed. This is shown in the results regarding passed bills only, and not with proposed bills. I believe my null results were caused by two primary factors. First, my data has a lot of noise in it, not all the bills I counted were relevant, nor did I filter out bills meant to weaken antitrust laws already in place. Second, I believe I misjudged the causal mechanisms driving this type of legislation, which would lead to little

interaction between policy mood and antitrust legislation.

With regards to previous literature, there is scant research explicitly on this topic. However, there appears to be a stronger connection between individuals acting on the economy in a way described by punctuated equilibrium theory than there is between antitrust legislation and the economy. I did not find anything that I can confidently place within this theoretical framework. Though it is recognized that monopolization is becoming a bigger issue within the United States, this knowledge does not translate into policy mood on the part of the public, nor to legislative action on the part of the federal government.

These results point to a disconnect between public opinion and economic regulation. Perhaps the widespread existence of monopolistic tendencies has led to apathy in the general public towards the issue. The concerns that lead to antitrust in the 1890s were obvious. The United States was in a time of change, and the rail and oil companies were clear examples of the inequalities the market created; something that was tangible, and the public could acutely recognize. Now, however, monopolies are more hidden. Their commonality has perhaps made their existence normal, and difficult to challenge.

Still, this research is imperfect. My data collection was vastly hampered by the limitations of using only an online archive to find bills. Not everything has been digitized, and this prevents me from including everything. Likewise, filtering through bills proved challenging, as each attempt provided entirely different results. As I created my dataset, I excluded appropriations bills, however I included everything else. This has allowed bills that are not related at all to antitrust to be considered an antitrust bill, and bills which weakened preexisting law to be considered the same as bills seeking to strengthen antitrust law. I believe this explains most of the results that went contrary to my expectations. I also did not include every possible influential factor on this issue. My data does not account for the actions of the court in enforcing antitrust law, nor do I account for consumer protection cases and laws, which are separate from antitrust law, but seek to achieve a similar end.

In future research, better data should be collected and used. Greater specificity, and greater consistency in which bills are counted would improve the conclusions drawn from this data. Likewise, accounting for other governmental bodies involved, such as the courts, will help create a more detailed understanding of antitrust laws. Other causal mechanisms should also be explored. Since policy mood has little influence on antitrust legislation, other factors and causes need to be explored. Other theoretical frameworks should also be used to analyze and understand antitrust legislation. Punctuated equilibrium theory does not explain these changes over time well, and other points of analysis would enrich our understanding of the topic. In future research, it would also be useful to extend the time frame back to 1890 and the Sherman Antitrust Law. This would make the specific causal factors clearer and bring forward the key differences between the present moment and the past.

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The Effect of Body-Worn Cameras on State Conviction Rates

By Sydney Sterling

Introduction

In recent years, news headlines and social media have been increasingly filled with more information and stories regarding law enforcement and police reform. When one reads stories about the police, often it is putting law enforcement in a negative light and context. Simply just typing in the search bar "police" or "law enforcement" and your results will be centered around law enforcement reform connected to problems and events made public. In addition, due to advancements in police technology along with the increased need for accountability and accuracy in our criminal justice system, an increased need for a device to accurately capture these police interactions has become more prevalent. Body-worn cameras offer numerous benefits and is essential to consider and address concerns surrounding policing, privacy, evidence management, fair legal treatment, and other topics of importance. The footage these cameras capture is not just used to record what happens for viewing pleasure but to increase citizen and police accountability, promote transparency, and provide accurate and truthful video evidence in court trials and convictions. With the increased implementation of these devices, there is now the question of how criminal sentencing has been affected or will be effected in the future.

There has been previous research conducted on what exactly affects conviction rates and sentencing outcomes for offenders. There were a few common "effects" that became consistently apparent in my research that are said to affect conviction rates. The first area of literature examined was mandatory minimums. Mandatory Minimums are criminal sentences that must be given to an individual when they are convicted of a certain crime. This affects criminal conviction rates because it takes out the individual circumstances or unique facts about the crime (Johnson, 2013). It is argued that mandatory minimums are necessary for deterring crime and ensuring consistency, however, obtaining consistency is nearly impossible when law interpretation and implementation varies between jurisdictions.

Mental Health is another area of literature that has been connected to having a role in criminal conviction rates in states. The relationship between mental health and crime rates is complex and influenced by many factors. However, it is important to note that mental illness alone does not directly cause criminal behavior, alternatively there are several ways in which mental health does impact crime rates. There is literature stating that just the label alone of a psychological disorder can be influenceable for a juror or judge when deciding convictions. This "label" phenomenon can be found in the third area of literature examined, criminal history. The evidence and knowledge of an offender previously offending has influence on jurors deciding on a conviction (Laudan & Allen, 2011). Personal bias is hard to ignore, but criminal history is not a positive look for someone that has reoffended, particularly for marginalized and minority communities (Franklin & Henry, 2020).

Finally, the last area of literature was the role race plays in criminal conviction rates. Just like in the previous area of literature, minority communities are largely disproportionately represented in our prison systems and criminal justice system. Race can influence conviction rates in many ways: racial profiling, bias, over-policing, differential treatment in legal process, jury composition, and policing

prioritization of marginalized communities. It is also to note the differing jurisdictions and the policy implications for laws, resource allocation, and criminal sentencing. For example, African American and Latino males receive harsher and longer conviction sentencing than their white counterparts (Doerner, 2009; Kansal, 2005).

While there is literature and research on what affects conviction rates as well as individual research on Body-Worn Cameras (BWC), there was not much research on the relationship between BWCs and conviction rates. The gap in the research surrounding this correlation led to the research topic of this study, to find the role and impact BWC have on state conviction rates in the United States. We know that BWC has a positive impact on policing and our court systems, but it was important to know if BWC influences an individual being convicted of their crime. Because of these known positive benefits of this technology, it is hypothesized that when state laws with BWC increase, conviction rates will increase within the state as well.

Due to my research topic being centered on Body-Worn Cameras, this became the independent variable of theoretical interest. In addition to this independent variable, additional controls were included for other variables that could affect the results. The control variables are poverty rate, median age, sex, geographical location according to region, and non-white population within states. It was necessary to control for these variables because the income or poverty rate of individuals could influence one to enter a life of crime due to forced circumstances. In addition, the age of the offender is something that influences if one will offend or not. The sex of the individual, male or female, was important to examine due to the differences between the two and how it is statistically proven that males will participate in criminal behavior at higher rates than their female counterparts. The geographic region of a state could influence legislature and policy surrounding socioeconomic factors and law enforcement resources, thus potentially influencing crime rates. It was important to

control for non-white population to accurately understand if the non-white population of the state has any effect on the states conviction rates. Lastly, the dependent variable being tested against was the conviction rates of each state. After compiling all the data for the corresponding variables, a Regression was run through R studio.

Literature Review

For the past decades, we have seen an extreme increase in incarceration rates and convictions in the United States. Many different influences and societal/cultural factors play into a prison population of 1.5 million Americans (Americans with Criminal Records). One can assume there are many factors such as bad policing, geographic location, family history, and more. Upon examination of previous literature, there were four common factors that influence conviction rates. One of these factors is the previous criminal history of the offender in question. Other explanations can be linked to mandatory minimums for sentencing, mental health history, and racial makeup. This literature review will examine some of the researched explanations for conviction rates.

Mandatory Minimums

Research has been done on the role mandatory minimum sentencing has on conviction rates. A mandatory minimum is a criminal conviction sentence that must be given to a person convicted of a crime, these are mandated by state and congressional legislature (Mandatory Minimums in a Nutshell, 2012). These mandatory minimums exclude unforeseen or unique circumstances involved in the crime along with the individual accused. A piece of literature can be found stating that mandatory minimums "undermine the commitment of the criminal justice system to a fair trial (Sentencing and Mandatory Minimums, 2018)."

In previous decades, the number of these mandatory minimum policies has nearly doubled throughout the nation (Sentencing and Mandatory Minimums, 2018). It is

widely known that the United States has the highest incarceration rate and the number of individuals in prison than any other nation. Even with these policies in place, it can be inferred that these mandatory minimums do not mean that they will produce individuals that will never offend again (Mandatory Minimum Sentence Statistics, n.d.).

These mandatory minimums have a significant effect on conviction rates. Having a mandatory sentence and not taking into consideration the unique circumstances of the crime may lead to more incarceration instead of other options besides prisons (Johnson, 2013). These alternatives could be treatment centers, rehab facilities, or even "lighter" punishments such as a fine or patrol (Sundt, Schwaeble, & Merritt, 2019). These mandatory minimum sentences are more commonly in place for lower-level, no-violent, crimes, such as drug crimes (Sorensen & Stemen, 2002). With these policies, first-time offenders are immediately sent to prison instead of even being considered for the option of a lesser sentence. Instead of these policies deterring crime, they are conforming our criminal justice system into one that does not look at the individual in question, but the crime alone. Expanding the criminal justice system and what modern-day "punishment" looks like will greatly help bridge the unfamiliarity between the punishment and the act itself that lead to the punishment (Johnson, 2013).

Mental Health

The second area of focus to explain influences on criminal sentencing is mental health. Researchers have conducted studies where the individuals convicted of misdemeanors or felonies were cross-referenced with mental health documentation before the crime. Walthall (2019) showed that mental illness has the most effect on sentencing outcomes on lower-level crimes or misdemeanors. In addition, the "interaction of serious mental illness with violent felonies increased the likelihood the defendant would receive a prison sentence" (Walthall, 2019). The presence of mental illnesses in some cases can lead an individual to crime or make

them more susceptible to that behavior (Ghiasi, Azhar, & Singh, 2022). It is also found that just the label of a psychological disorder alone can influence punishment and sentencing results (Berryessa & Wohlstetter, 2019).

On the other side, some research showed the opposite. A particular article researching mental illnesses and sentencing outcomes found that the addition of empathy and compassion could have "important and far-reaching effects (Johnson, 2013)." This same article talked about how we need to be understanding and protective of the offender in question. Yes, they broke the moral code of society, but if they are to be incarcerated, they become the responsibility of the state. The mental and physical safety of the individual has to be considered when determining to sentence.

Criminal History

The last examination of literature made was related to the prior criminal record of the individual and the role it plays in reoffending and sentencing outcomes. The data tells us that 1 in 3 US adults have been arrested by the age of 23, and 1 in 3 Americans have a criminal record (Vallas & Dietrich, 2014).

There also is a relationship between criminal history and the role it plays in jurors' criminal sentencing decisions. The presence of previous criminal convictions can and does influence jurors' decisions (Laudan & Allen, 2011). When one looks at the role of a juror, they are the individuals making the life, and death in some cases, decisions that affect more than the criminal in question. It is hard not to bring one's own biases into the courtroom, but inevitably, these biases cannot simply disappear, there are still biases within jurors in court rooms. This can include biases on previous criminal history. These assumptions can be linked to a plethora of different foundations, including racial influences. Race and criminal history are mutually correlated and have a great impact on one another (Franklin & Henry, 2020).

Race

The last strand of literature examines the relationship between racial background and conviction rates. In the past couple of years, the social and racial movements enacted to incite change in government policy and criminal justice reform have brought more attention to the racial biases deeply rooted in convictions and court systems. Minority communities are affected by the harsh criminal sentencing statistics more than other ethnic groups (Vallas & Dietrich, 2014). It is reported that young African American males receive longer sentences while Latino young males receive harsher convictions than their male counterparts (Doerner, 2009). Nellis (2021) writes that the offender's "place" or "position" in society plays a deep role in determining to sentence. These statistics have deep racial undertones and eventually lead to increased discrimination overall in the criminal justice system, particularly on the federal level (Nellis, 2021). We see the influence race has on convictions, particularly with low-level, non-violent, and drug crimes involving Hispanic and African American ethnicities (Steffensmeier & Demuth, 2000).

A further examination of the research only reinforces the idea that the racial identification of the defendant plays a role in their criminal convictions. A report found a total of seven states that have a racial disparity between whites and minorities of nearly 9 to 1 (Kansal, 2005). For everyone one white inmate, there are nearly ten minority inmates alongside him. The same study found that 1 in 81 African American adults are serving time in the United States (Kansal, 2005). Through this literature group, we see that the influence of race in criminal convictions has deep effects on individuals, with race being something completely out of control, one wonders what must change to eliminate the bias of jurors and judges when it comes to criminal sentencing.

Body-Worn Cameras

The articles and research conducted on the accountability, transparency, and legitimacy of these cameras are overwhelming in support of this technology (Katz, Nuño, Choate, & Ready, 2014). These cameras have benefitted communities, individuals, police officers, and departments (Morrow, Katz, & Choate, 2016). Research has shown that since the implementation of BWCs, there is an increased likelihood of arrests, charges filed, cases going further, and even plea bargains being used more when this technology is involved. The reality is, the benefit of this technology is quicker resolution, thus, all aspects of the criminal justice system are held more accountable. This accountability of law enforcement can also be flipped back onto the public, it holds offenders, bystanders, and all involved in a crime accountable and reliable for their actions. In recent years, acknowledgement of the benefits these cameras provide, such as police accountability and brutality, have been seen as a positive take-a-way from increased use from law enforcement officers. Kitzmueller (2014) argues that we also see the role these cameras play in keeping officers safe from legal encounters or accusations.

The research obtained for this study has been supportive of BWCs and their implementation of them in departments around the nation. However, minimal research was found on the influence this technology has had on conviction rates themselves. Yes, they play a crucial and large role in some cases regarding evidence and accountability (Morrow, Katz, & Choate, 2016). Although, we do not know the influence BWCs play on sentencing outcomes in criminal trials. My research gap is to find out how much impact or effect BWCs have on conviction rates across the states in the United States, and perhaps look into the effects on different conviction rates as well.

Theory and Hypothesis

The United States criminal justice system is a topic of much discussion and research. For decades, humans and society have been fascinated by crime and punishment. It is important to understand the influences that go behind crime, and more importantly, the crime outcomes and sentencing that follow the criminal behavior. Previous literature on the influences of conviction rates can be tied to mental health history, racial makeup, previous conviction history, and mandatory sentencing minimums in place. Many factors go into the judge's or jurors' decision when it comes to convicting an individual as "guilty" or "not guilty." While mental health history and racial makeup are topics that give a lot of room for biases and personal opinions to influence convictions. While mandatory minimums and criminal history are solidified in policy and law. There have also been previous literature highlighting Police Body-Worn Cameras and the role they play in the criminal justice process, and it is a large one. The research alludes to the influence this technology has on sentencing outcomes. This leads me to believe that body-worn cameras have an increased effect on conviction rates.

Previous literature and findings on Body Worn Cameras have provided validation that there is a positive benefit from wearing these cameras on our policing agencies and court systems. However, for this study, instead of examining further the relationship between our judicial system and BWCs, but rather the relationship between BWCs and the probability of an individual, or offender, being convicted of a crime. Therefore, it is proposed that when the number of body-worn camera laws increase within individual states, the conviction rates will increase. Because of the relationship BWCs have on policing, such as increased transparency and accountability for officers and the public, the use of BWC footage has played a key role in the court systems. As technological innovation within our criminal justice system as the highest it has ever been, new ways of examining evidence and relaying facts to judges and jury's has never been more important. These cameras are capturing the crime in question in addition to the interactions between the officer and the individuals involved in the said crime, or even in some cases the bystanders and external factors of the crime. Due to these facts, there is believed to be a positive relationship between BWC and state conviction rates. Therefore, it is hypothesized that with the increased use of BWC, states will see increased numbers in convictions due to the crime being captured as undisputable evidence within a case.

Research Design

The following pages will outline the processes and steps taken to find the data and analysis for this research project. A test will be conducted to see how the influence of law enforcement Body Worn Cameras (BWCs) state policies have on state conviction rates. Research and data was collected from all fifty states in the United States, in addition to the District of Columbia. All the data collected has been published in 2023. Next, you will find the operationalization of the variables chosen for this specific research project, utilizing data from the World Population Review and the Urban Institute. Included in this research design is the type of model used to analyze the relationship in question. Finally, the results section, which indicates no significant relationship for my hypothesis.

My dependent variable is incarceration rates by state. The Sentencing Project collects data on the number of incarcerated individuals per 100,000 residents and categorizes the results by state. Data selection was made from 2023. The number on the data set is the raw number per 100,000 and has not been converted into a percentage rate and is separated by all fifty U.S. States along with the District of Columbia. The World Population Review draws data from the Sentencing Project in conjunction with the Bureau of Justice. This is an ongoing research project; meaning there are data records that can be reviewed from previous years.

The primary independent variable of theoretical interest is measure of body-worn cameras, with the intent to analyze the effect Body Worn Cameras have on conviction rates. The Urban Institute provides a log and track of all legislative policies regarding police body-worn cameras. This data set includes all state legislature about the use of these cameras along with the use of their footage that can be released to the public. Decades of data has been collected, however, there was a recent update made in 2022. The data set has the option of four possible categories where a state could either have the pertaining legislation to BWCs or it would not. If the state had a related policy, it received a point, if it did not have a related policy, it received a zero for that category. Thus, the highest score a state could receive is a four, while the lowest score is a zero. This all depends on how many policies are in place per state for BWCs.

Included in the study was variety of additional independent control variables. The poverty rate was gathered from the census for each state and was converted from a percentage to a general number format. Data found from the US Census in 2023 allowed control for the median age of each state. The sex of the offender was an additional control taken into consideration, with utilizing the percent of males in each state. Geographic location can influence legislative jurisdiction, law interpretation, and even severity of law. Therefore, the region of each state was included in the study. This data was obtained from National Geographic, listed five main regions within the US. The last control variable was the non-white racial population within each state.

In the following analyses, I will first conduct a test on whether police law enforcement Body Worn Cameras influence conviction rates. The dependent variable in question is conviction rates while my theoretical independent variable of interest is Body Worn Cameras. I will then introduce my other independent variables or controls: median age, poverty, sex differences, geographic region, and racial identity, to see the influence these controls have on my dependent variable. I will use a regression method to test my hypothesis and correlate the data with one another.

I use regression, as it can assess the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variables. By the end of the regression, I hope to understand the relationship, whether positive or negative, between body-worn cameras and conviction rates.

Results

Below in Table 1 is the regression for my research project, with the dependent variable being the conviction rates. In this regression, we analyze what effect laws in place for body-worn cameras (BWCs), poverty, median age, whether you are a male, geographic location, and if the individual is of non-white racial background has on conviction rates in states. As seen in the results below, the two variables that are significant for this research project is one of the control variables, Poverty, as well as the Geographic Region, Northeast. The results from the Poverty control prove that if the state has higher poverty rates, conviction rates will increase. This variable is the most significant off the nine tested. The other significant variable, Northeast Region, provides significance, the results show that there are higher conviction rates in states in the Northeast region. The control variable, state sex composition has no significant effect on conviction rates. An interesting finding was that the two control variables, Median Age and Non-White Population, has no statistical effect on conviction rates at all. We know there is no statistical effect through the negative coefficient associated with the variable. Our independent variable of theoretical interest, Laws in Place for BWC, demonstrated that there is no significant effect on conviction rates, which is not supportive of my hypothesis.

Ultimately, there is no support found for my hypothesis – states with laws in place for law enforcement BWCs have increased conviction rates. It should also be noted that all but two of the control variables proved to be not significant enough to say it affects

Table 1

Effects of Body Worn Cameras on State Conviction Rates

	Dependent variable:
	Conviction Rates
Laws in Place for BWC	2.06 (11.42)
Poverty	21.84*** (7.90)
Median Age	-0.69 (6.89)
Sex: Male	9.16 (32.37)
Geographic Region: Northeast	-86.79* (51.16)
Geographic Region: Southeast	43.65 (49.91)
Geographic Region: Southwest	85.73 (66.83)
Geographic Region: West	20.15 (47.53)
Non-White Population	-1.04 (1.30)
Constant	-361.76 (1,729.83)
Observations	51
R^2	0.57
Adjusted R^2	0.47
Residual Std. Error	90.44 (df = 41)
F Statistic	5.93*** (df = 9; 41)
Note:	*p**p***p<0.01

conviction rates. The only two variables with any significance to conviction rates further ensured that there wasn't support for my research topic.

I do believe a limitation to the data was partially associated with my independent variable of theoretical interest, laws for BWC. A score was associated to states corresponding to how many laws in place they had, this did not include laws being enacted in the future, laws currently being drafted, or pending legislation. A control was included for geographic location, however, region a state is in can only effect rates so much. This is further reinforced through, once again, different jurisdictions carry different policies and influence.

Discussion & Conclusion

My results for the regression proved to be insightful and unexpected. It was clear from the regression table that my independent variable of theoretical interest, Laws in Place for BWC, has no significant effect on state conviction rates in states. This was the opposite of what I was expecting, and the results for the control variables were also not what I had been predicting. Along with BWC Laws having no significant effect, "Sex" was also a variable that had no significant effect. An interesting finding about the "Median Age" is that it had no statistical effect on conviction rates whatsoever. The only significant variable was "Poverty". The positive relationship shows that if the state has a higher percentage of poverty rates, the conviction rates will also increase.

Efforts to reduce crime could be found through further examination of policies and social factors connected to poverty. Some of these efforts to reduce crime and the correlation with poverty commonly include improving access to education and employment opportunities, providing social services, and support at-risk individuals and communities, and even implementing effective crime prevention and law enforcement strategies within marginalized

and impoverished communities. It is important to take into consideration the broader social and economic factors which means that this issue can be tied to public policy.

Upon reflecting on my results from this project, there are a few implications and takeaways that I have learned regarding influences on conviction rates. A lot of the previous literature could relate to biases in the criminal justice system. These biases could range from the jurors and their personal opinions and views on the offender to the criminal history and mental health status of those involved in the crime. It is hard to ignore the "human" elements that enter the courtroom, and it is often not the system that fails, but rather the individuals incorporated into the system that fail. According to my research, I tried to choose controls that cannot be so loosely interpreted or that would allow personal bias and opinion to change the facts of the case.

There are limitations and ways to improve every paper, project, or research conducted. If I were to look at the criminal justice system through just the lens of what my results show me, then I am comforted knowing that the age of the offender in addition to the identification of "male" or "female" does not affect the state conviction rates. I will admit that I was not shocked to see that "Poverty" is an influence and significant on conviction rates. Again, if my results were salient and without fault or gaps in data, then could be more confident in my research and overall findings. However, after completion, I realized I did not account for certain controls or factors in my research.

The first limitation of my research has to do with the basic deciding factors of the controls and data chosen. It would have been beneficial to approach my research question from a time perspective rather than space, a longer observation period to see the changes over time could have provided more insight. Instead, I chose the most recent years but did not take into account recent events like COVID-19 and how they would affect my research and data collection.

There is also something to be said about controlling for "support" or "appreciation" for law enforcement and police officers. I am not sure how to quantify that statistic but imagine looking into overall funding for police departments could shed light on overall public approval for policing.

One of the benefits of doing my research project on BWC is that I discovered that there are still so many avenues to explore when it comes to this technology. Body-Worn Cameras were not implicated in our police departments and communities until only a few decades ago, thus, there is still so much yet to uncover about the benefits and opportunities it can provide for criminal justice reform and improving relationships between our communities and police officers. If it were to continue my research, it would be interesting to categorize crimes into levels of violence or look into specific crimes and the usage of BWC in those criminal court proceedings and if there is an influence on those sentencing outcomes. It also became apparent to me during the research portion of the project that this is not much literature or talk about BWC usage in court. I would be curious to know how often this footage is played before a jury and used as evidence. Finally, I think it would be insightful to understand and obtain data on how often these cameras capture footage evidence of the crime being committed.

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