

Max Lisch
Puff Grant Application
Project Proposal

Alternative Social Control: Incarceration and Public Assistance Spending in the State of California,
1995-2015

Research Question:

"In what ways, if any, does the utilization of public assistance have an effect on the utilization of incarceration. Can changes in public assistance spending be mapped onto changes in the rate of incarceration? If so, what is the size of this effect?"

Literature, Theory, and Methods:

The theorist Donald Black proposed that law and the utilization of formal social control varies with other social phenomenon and state functions (Black 1976). Building from this theoretical framework, it is likely that there is a relationship between state assistance and the utilization of incarceration (Sutton 2000, Becket and Western 2001). I argue that public assistance represents an alternative form of state control and is important for understanding the utilization of jails and prisons. Both incarceration and welfare have been analyzed in relation to crime, but have not been adequately explained in relation to each other (Chamlin et al. 2002, Savolainen 2000, Worrall 2005). By drawing a link between public assistance and incarceration, I highlight the way in which marginalized populations are shuffled between different forms of state control.

I use county level measures of assistance spending and incarceration rates in a pooled time-series multivariate model to explore the link between county investment in different forms of social control and the utilization of incarceration (Sutton 2000). The model uses fixed effects in order to account for county specific effects and employs county level controls including, economic, political, demographic, and crime measures.

Project Time Frame:

Primary quantitative data collection was completed over winter and spring quarters of 2018-2019. Cleaning and preliminary bivariate analysis began in October of 2019 and is on going. Due to a lack of transparent available information online in regards to county revenue and expenditure, I have made plans to visit a sample of californian counties to gather information about the process of county level expenditure and reporting. County visits will begin near the end of November and continue until mid December. Draft writing will begin in mid December with the goal of a working draft by the end of January. I plan to present my research and findings at the Pacific Sociological Association conference in March and later at the American sociological Association conference over the summer. My application to the Pacific Sociological Association conference has been accepted, and I will be submitting my working draft to the American sociological Association at the end of January.

Citations:

- Beckett K., & Western, B. 2001. "Governing Social Marginality." *Punishment & Society* 3(1):43-59.
- Black, D. 1976. *The Behavior of Law*. New York: Academic Press.
- Chamlin, Mitchel, John Cachran and Christopher Lowenkamo. 2002. "A longitudinal Analysis of the Welfare-Homicide Relationship." *Homicide Studies* 6(1):39-61.
- Garland, David. 1991. "Sociological Perspectives on Punishment." *Crime and Justice* 14:115-165.
- Jacoobs, Davis and Ronald Helms. 1996. "Towards a Political Model of Incarceration: A Time-Series Examination of Multiple Explanations for Prison Admission Rates." *American Journal of Sociology* 102(2):323-357
- Savolainen, Jukka. 2000. "Inequality, Welfare State, and Homicide." *Criminology* 38(4):1021-1041
- Sutton, John. 2000. "Imprisonment and Social Classification in Five Common-Law Democracies, 1995-1985." *American Journal of Sociology* 106(2):350-386.
- Worrall, John. 2005. "Reconsidering the Relationship Between Welfare Spending and Serious Crime." *Justice Quarterly* 22(3):364-391.

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Learning Potential

During my time at community college my faculty mentor introduced me both to sociology, and to the study of deviance/criminology. I become fascinated by the ways in which states attempt to control and manage marginal populations. In my first quarter at UC Davis, my law and society professor explored the utilization of law and incarceration as a manifestation of formal state control. Soon after the completion of that course I began research with this professor which has allowed me to continue my exploration of the topic. Moving into my senior year this project has been shaped into a senior thesis. The project will expose me both to the writing of an academic paper, and the presentation of my finished work in a formal setting. My goal is to apply to graduate programs in the fall of 2020, and this project will provide me with research experience, a well written and edited writing sample, and social connections made from attending conferences and working closely with faculty. Upon completion of the senior thesis I plan to adapt the paper and submit it for publication.

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Budget

Travel Expenses:

I plan to visit a diverse group of four counties in the state of California. The visits are to gather information about the ways these counties allocate funds, make choices about fund allocation, and plan for the future. Because the primary goal is to get a nuanced understanding of California counties, it is necessary to visit a wider range of counties than those immediately around UC Davis. In person interviews with multiple persons at county comptroller's offices and county board supervisors offices provides more in depth information about county functions than could be achieved otherwise. Travel expenses include visits to two counties outside of the immediate UC Davis area. It include the cost of gas and lodging for two county visits.

Gas: \$200.00

Lodging: \$200.00

Food: \$50.00

Software Expenses:

My research requires the use of statistics software packages that are not easily available on campus or through the virtual lab. The first part of my project utilizes a fixed effects model that is easily built and interpreted in Stata. Stata is available easily on campus. The second, and more ambitious modeling method using a hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) to group observations over time by county. It is of theoretical interest if county level measures have differential effects over time for different counties. As a student new to the process of HLM, specialized software exists that helps teach the process of HLM and provides full written equations for each estimated model. A one year subscriptions to HLM 8 software will assist me in learning the methodology of HLM, and provide interpretable equations to be used in my paper and conference presentations.

HLM 8: \$170.00

Summary:

The gathering of information about county expenditures, and the utilization of HLM modeling allows me to form a nuanced understanding of the interaction between public assistance and incarceration. The amount of agency and discretion over fund allocation that is afforded to counties can only truly be understand by asking the people who work in county governance. This information is crucial to understanding how the county level choice to invest in assistance impacts the utilization of incarceration. Though my project using primarily quantitative methodology, understanding the people and meanings behind each measure is the only way to understand and interpret my results.

Travel Sub Total: \$450.00

Software Subtotal: \$170.00

Budget Grand Total: \$620.00