Political Science Undergraduate Honors Theses   Political Science

5-2022

Determinants of Public Corruption in Arkansas and the Nation

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Citation

Determinants of Public Corruption in Arkansas and the Nation

An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for Honors Studies in

Political Science

By

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Spring 2022

Political Science

J. William Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences

The University of Arkansas

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, it is necessary to thank Dr. Parry, who has served not only as my advisor throughout the process but also as my inspiration. From my first interactions with her in Arkansas Politics, she has been nothing but encouraging to me in my academic endeavors. Even through countless edits (and plenty of careless grammar mistakes that had to have made her cringe), she weathered the storm and pushed me to create the best product possible.

It would be impossible and improper to draft any acknowledgement section without the inclusion of my parents. They always instilled the belief in me that when you invest in yourself, there is no ceiling for what you can accomplish. Plenty of times throughout the creation of this thesis, I found myself inspired by many various quotes from my mother and father. I am the first person in my family to pursue education beyond an undergraduate degree, and this is an accomplishment that can be traced directly to the values of hard work and determination that were established by my parents as the only option in our household. They have always believed that I was capable of extraordinary things, and along the way I started to believe them.

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Introduction

Political misdeeds have a significant place in the history of the state of Arkansas. Whether it be the early days of Arkansas's Statehood in which accounts read more like tales of the wild west, with legislators racing their horses up the stairs of the old State House, or even the recent indictments of six state legislators, one of which was Jeremy Hutchinson, the nephew of Governor Asa Hutchinson, there are a number of cases that are exemplary of Arkansas's relationship with corruption. This is not an exhaustive list by any means, and instances like this litter Arkansas's history predating its recognition as a state in 1836.

During one of the first meetings of the General Assembly, Speaker of the House John Wilson murdered his fellow Representative Joseph J. Anthony with his Bowie knife on the floor of the Old State House in a duel that began when Wilson thought Anthony slighted him in a speech over a bill concerning wolf pelts.[1] This primitive nature of the period of early statehood was also reflected in the way power was exercised by its early leaders. The dynasty made up of the Conway, Johnson, Sevier, and Rector families accounted for almost 200 years in a variety of elected positions in early Arkansas and managed to leave the state with a massive $3 million debt and a distrust of public officials amongst the constituency that would last long after they were gone.[2] These issues that built up during the state's early period are universally agreed upon to have been detrimental to progress, but these issues from the past have largely been ignored and left to be fixed by the passing of time.

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[1] Jeanne Lewis, "Pages from the Past: 1837," Arkansas Democrat Gazette, 23 May 2019, 7A.

[2] Diane D. Blair and Jay Barth, Arkansas Politics and Government, 2d ed. (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 8.

In the early 20th century, a prosecutor named Lewis Rhoton noticed the corruption that was occurring in the state legislature and took it head on. The unraveling of the state's largest corruption scandal began with Rhoton's decision to investigate the 1905 session of the Arkansas General Assembly after charges of corruption had been raised for the past decade. Reports indicated that Thomas L. Cox, who was the state's most powerful corporate lobbyist, representing Western Union Telegraph Company, Southwestern Telephone Company, and many other corporate agencies, had bribed state officials for years. According to reports, many legislators were openly given elaborate gifts like fine whiskey and cash to pursue the interests of wealthy businessmen. Cox gave certain legislators gifts up to $1500 at each session and often gave out loans to other prominent officials. Rhoton's efforts helped secure indictments against sixteen state senators and representatives, one mayor and three other individuals, and the Arkansas Senate's expulsion of a member who confessed to taking bribes. Ultimately, Rhoton was unsuccessful in indicting his main target of Alonzo Webb Covington, who he saw as the largest perpetrator in the ring but remained relentless in his pursuit of exposing political corruption. Rhoton earned a reputation as a hero among Arkansans and helped usher in the state's first truly progressive governor in George W. Donaghey, but the effect on corruption in the long term was insignificant.[3]

Flash forward to the recent history, and the reports of misdeeds in Arkansas politics still remain. In 2017, a large scandal revolving around the General Improvement Fund garnered national attention after Representative Micah Neal pleaded guilty to receiving kickbacks for directing grants toward Springdale's Ecclesia College and Bentonville's nonprofit Preferred Family Healthcare. This led to the conviction of six legislators, including Jeremy Hutchinson, the

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[3] James F. Willis, "Lewis Rhoton and the 'Boodlers': Political Corruption and Reform during Arkansas's Progressive Era," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly 76,* no. 2 (Summer 2017): 95-124.

nephew of Governor Asa Hutchinson.[4] Arkansas has attempted to curb corruption with things like ethics commissions and review boards, but whether any efforts have proven successful remain up for debate. Duane Kees, former U.S. attorney for the Western District of Arkansas, exemplifies this best when he said of the General Improvement Fund Scandal: "Those in Little Rock will walk the straight and narrow for about 10 years… 15 years from now, there'll be nobody left in Little Rock to remember this. They will have forgotten the lesson, so it'll be a different scheme, but I think it'll happen again."[5]

Through reviewing the existing scholarly literature on corruption, factors that seem to increase the likelihood or contribute to rising numbers in reported cases of corruption will be used to determine which factors are most highly correlated with the amount of reported public corruption in a state's government. With this, one will gain knowledge on which states have the highest levels of reported corruption and what factors are present in the state that can help explain the high levels of corruption. This combination of relationships will answer the question as to what a state should look for to address issues related to political misdeeds. With that being said, we can examine where Arkansas falls with respect to general corruption level rankings compared to other states in the nation and assess the presence of multiple factors that may contribute to increasing the likelihood of higher numbers of reported corruption within the state.

Literature Review

The current state of research on corruption reveals many different explanations as to the resulting negative effects on a population, but fewer studies have been conducted to pinpoint the

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[4] Ron Wood and Doug Thompson, "GIF kickbacks cases still grinding through courts," Arkansas Democrat Gazette, 22 November 2020, 8A.
[5] Wood and Thompson, 8A.

contributing factors of corruption. In this study, the levels of corruption in each American state government will be examined. However, the data compiled in this literature review looks far beyond the borders of the United States to attempt to gain the most complete understanding of what causes public corruption. By taking a comparative approach of applying studies done on governments in other countries to the research regarding governments in the American states, one can begin to paint a picture of why corruption may occur.

Multiple specific contributing factors of corruption have been identified by researchers, but the majority of findings and hypotheses can be condensed into five main categories. Factors related to the general size of the government, such as the presence and amount of policy or the presence of oversight committees to curb corruption, were mentioned the most in the body of research. The levels of professionalism in a legislature, which is usually measured by legislative salaries, the number of days spent in legislative session, and the number of staff members each state legislator has, was also commonly hypothesized to have a negative effect on corruption, and hypotheses related to demographics of populations, such as education, income, and diversity, were far less common.

"Big" Government

To classify a government as a "big" government is a difficult task made easy by the Fraser Institute's Economic Freedom Index, which can be used to measure and compare the size and scope of the governments of each U.S. state. Dincer and Gunalp use this Index to show that states with more regulations and institutions ironically do a poor job at regulating corruption within its departments. They find that the association between reported corruption and a high number of federal regulations is statistically significant. According to their study, an increase by one standard deviation in the Fraser Freedom Index is equal to an increase of a half standard

deviation in the Corruption Convictions Index.[6] Basically, any increase in the amount of

government regulation or oversight resulted in an increase in the number of officials convicted of

federal public corruption charges.

Other research studies have backed up the findings of the Fraser Index. Dincer and

Gunalp explain that this can be attributed to the idea that with more red tape, there is an

opportunity to create even more. They explain that there are "direct and indirect mechanisms

through which regulations cause corruption"[7] which allow for public officials to extract personal

gain through corrupt practices. This goes hand in hand with work done by Bologna in which she

identifies a connection between corruption and high levels of competition. Her reasoning is that

more government regulations and departments create opportunities to create either mutually or

individually beneficial business opportunities through government outsourcing, such as

contracting. Thus, the competition between businesses or individuals to secure the contracts

leads to increased opportunities for someone to partake in corrupt practices,[8] and there are

countless examples of this that we can observe. It also makes sense that the accountability

mechanisms would begin to get lost in an ever-expanding sea of red tape. Dimant and Tosato

summarize this the best when they explain that the creation of "regulations and authorizations"

creates a monopoly on power that lies in the hands of the officials who supervise the activity.

They also link the creation of more regulations to more opportunities for government officials to

interact with people in the public sector, which they identify as an increase in the opportunities

for someone to partake in corrupt activity[9] (e.g., accepting kickbacks or bribes in exchange for

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[6] Oguzhan Dincer and Burak Gunalp, "The Effects of Federal Regulations on Corruption in U.S. States." *European Journal of Political Economy* 65, (December 2020).
[7] Dincer and Gunalp.
[8] Jamie Bologna, "Corruption, Product Market Competition, and Institutional Quality: Empirical Evidence from the U.S. States," *Economic Inquiry* 50, no. 1 (2016).
[9] Dimant and Tosato.

lucrative contracts). Bologna, Dincer, and Gunalp define these governments with excessive and cumbersome regulations as "low quality institutions" and explain that the problems created by having many regulations and departments can lead to lower institutional quality.

Another byproduct of big government is that with more regulations, departments, authorizations, etc., it inevitably becomes much harder for citizens within the population to hold officials accountable due to the vast size and scope of the institution itself. There will also be much less transparency due to the size of the government, for the simple fact that it would take the most dedicated members of a constituency to keep tabs on everything that goes on within an overgrown, complex, and subsequently inefficient bureaucracy. For a corrupt public official, this would only be seen as another opportunity to capitalize and cash in on the system. There are conflicting reports about whether or not federal regulations are helpful in limiting growth or lessening corruption in an already large state government, but a method that has shown to be unsuccessful more often than not is watchdog organizations or boards that are created to keep public figures accountable. Many states have tried this strategy, but to no avail.[10]

In a comparative study that looked at ethics commissions and regulations put in place to limit corrupt governance in both Jalisco, Mexico, and Arkansas, similar findings were reported that can best be categorized with a few conclusions about what occurs when new regulations are put in place to curb corruption. First, reform in the form of policy or ethics commissions are usually the result of long-standing public distrust and frustration, but the specific variables that lead to the introduction of such policies are highly unpredictable. In addition, when policies are put in place by government officials, they are mostly symbolic in nature and created to "protect as much of their autonomy as possible from public scrutiny and oversight." These mostly

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[10] William D. Eggers, "Transforming Arkansas Government," *Policy Review* 88, (March/April 1998): 10.

symbolic reforms have two possible outcomes according to the literature; they either result in more public distrust and frustration, or they eventually evolve into bureaucratic organizations that actually lead the charge for active reform. However, the following can result in a complex system that could potentially lead to repeated violations because officials are not properly educated on all of the rules.[11]

In summary, most studies indicate that a good place to start in decreasing the likelihood of corruption is to reduce the size of the government at the state level.[12] The optimal approach at limiting corruption seems to be found in the hands of the people who live in a democratic society.

Legislative Professionalism

Due to the lack of uniformity among each of the fifty individual state governments that collectively make up the United States, there are vast and easily observable differences in the laws and regulations that dictate how each state's legislature operates. Legislative professionalism is one of these differences that can be measured and observed in a variety of ways and has been hypothesized to be a factor in determining the likelihood for corruption in a government. According to Peverill Squire's Squire Index, legislative professionalism is predominantly based upon three major components. These are salary and benefits, time demands of service, and staff and resources allocated.[13]

In "The Merit of Meritiocratization: Politics, Bureaucracy, and the Institutional Deterrents of Corruption," Carl Dahlstrom argues that a more professionalized legislature is less

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[11] Jeffrey J. Ryan, Jorge A. Alatorre, and William D. Schreckhise, "A Comparative Case Study of State Ethics Reform in Jalisco and Arkansas." *Public Integrity* 8, no. 4: 362-363.

[12] Dincer and Gunalp.

[13] Peverill Squire, "Measuring State Legislative Professionalism: The Squire Index Revisited," *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (Summer 2007).

likely to be corrupt because professionalized state legislatures usually possess many of the same

attributes as what one would expect to see in a long-standing and highly developed democracy.

Some of these have been discussed in some capacity as their own subcategory for being an

indicator of corruption, such as a widely read press as well as diversity in the lawmaking bodies,

but Dahlstrom also analyzes the relationship between corruption and other factors that relate to

professionalism, like "bureaucratic factors, such as public employees' competitive salaries,

career stability, or internal promotion."[14] In theory, a highly professionalized state government is

less likely to be corrupt because it provides less motivation for legislators to partake in

corruption for personal gain.

Another aspect of political corruption that can be closely linked to the issue of legislative

professionalism is greed. Greed was identified in the literature to be a component that arises as a

result of politicians advocating for their own personal gain. Charles Funderburk notes that

"traditional techniques of political corruption involving the use of public office and political

influence for personal enrichment are motivated primarily by venality and greed."[15] Aspects of

greed were certainly reported in the state of Arkansas where, for instance, six legislators were

convicted of corruption charges for receiving kickbacks in a large scandal involving the state's

General Improvement Fund and later its Medicaid Program.[16] However, individual greed being

the most significant contributor to political corruption is much less common in the modern era. It

has already been argued that the expansion of the federal government is likely to increase

corruption, but this instance when combined with a less professional legislature is perhaps the

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[14] Carl Dahlstrom, Victor Lapuente, and Jan Teorell, "The Merit of Meritocratization: Politics, Bureaucracy, and the Institutional Deterrents of Corruption," *Political Research Quarterly* 65, no. 3 (September 2012): 657.

[15] Charles Funderburk, *Political Corruption in Comparative Perspective: Sources, Status, and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2016).

[16] Wood and Thompson, 8A.

one exception. Large party machines such as New York's Tammany Hall used to have many

resources in which they could use to manipulate a system that was almost like the wild west

compared to the state political systems of today. With the expansion of social welfare and social

service agencies during the New Deal as well as the mass migration to suburbia following World

War II, the large urban party machines that existed in cities, like Tammany Hall or Lewis

Rhoton's "Boodlers," lost the immense influence that they held prior to these programs. With

that major transition, corruption based on greed, such as bribery, extortion, and kickbacks,

became much less of a widespread ordeal and moved more towards what we can observe in the

modern day: a set of individuals who seek to gain personal benefit rather than the whole of their

party organization.[17]

How does one go about measuring professionalism in a state legislature? There are many

factors that can be linked to professionalism, and therefore there are different ways to measure

professionalism. For instance, one factor worth considering when examining legislative

professionalism are the laws drafted by a particular state legislature. A professionalized

legislature should be expected to pass unique and innovative policies that are a clear reflection of

public opinion in the state that also hold up under a test of constitutionality under scrutiny by the

U.S. Supreme Court.[18] However, by using public opinion and the numbers of laws struck down

serving as indicators of what should be produced by a professional legislature, we still do not

know the specific qualities that make one legislature more professional than the rest. The Squire

Index was created for this exact purpose; it determines legislative professionalism based upon

the aforementioned major components. These are salary and benefits, time demands of service,

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[17] Funderburk.

[18] Susan M. Miller, Eve. M. Ringsmuth, and Joshua M. Little, "Pushing Constitutional Limits in the U.S. States: Legislative Professionalism and Judicial Review of State Laws by the U.S. Supreme Court," *State Politics and Policy Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (December 2015).

and staff and resources allocated.[19] By measuring these, one can measure how professional a state legislature is when compared to others, and the data collected by this can be compared to the corruption rate of a state.

Many studies offer the hypothesis that legislatures that are more "professional" are less likely to be corrupt. This is because individual actors within a professional legislature have less motivation to be corrupt due to their compensation for doing their job well. Measuring the level of professionalism across states is difficult due to its complexity, but multifaceted approaches such as the Squire Index can be used to provide a comprehensive measurement to compare to reports of corruption.

Political Education

For obvious reasons, political education makes a lot of sense when attempting to explain high levels of reported corruption. However, to move in this direction it is first imperative to outline a brief definition of what is meant by political education. Political education can be defined as an individual's capability to combine their knowledge of the political process and current events to vote as informed citizens. For the purposes of this literature review however, the definition for political education will be used as an umbrella term that covers a variety of indicators of a functioning democratic society, all of which were gathered from scholarly articles. These indicators include civic engagement measured by voter turnout in any particular population, reported interest in state politics, and a general knowledge of issues facing the voter base as well as knowledge regarding the democratic system and its mechanisms. When a population group possesses some or many of these traits, the government that represents them is less likely to be corrupt. This can best be explained with the theory that a voter base with a

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[19] Squire.

higher amount of politically educated citizens within their population will be more likely to hold corrupt officials accountable by voting them out of office or by simply mobilizing to vote against policies and legislation that could contribute or lead to corrupt practices.

Samuel Lipset hypothesizes that the average education levels of a population are the most reliable indicator of whether or not the population is likely to be corrupt, and he largely makes the claim that a population with higher levels of formal education will naturally be more politically educated.[20] The purpose of this section is not to dispute or confirm Lipset's hypothesis, but an intriguing argument can be made for lower education levels being a contributing factor in and of itself in a corrupt society rather than whether or not we can equate education with political education. Many scholars seem to think so. According to a study on the dynamics between economic freedom and corruption in the United States, education is identified as having a significant negative impact on corruption.[21]

While Lipset's argument carries some merit, in analyzing voting behavior and political activity there are a vast array of factors that can contribute to the political education of an individual (e.g., how often they read the newspaper, membership in political organizations, donations to campaigns, etc.). By using only education as a means of determining political education, one would neglect this idea in favor of simplicity in gathering data. In the United States, one of the main sources of political knowledge is the news. Research shows that in countries with a free press, there is a better chance of higher voter participation as well as higher chances at the removal of corrupt officials.[22] These same outcomes can be attributed to the

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[20] Seymour M. Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (Garden City, NY, Doubleday, 1960),
[21] Nicholas Apergis, Oguzhan C. Dincer, and James E. Payne, "Live Free or Bribe: On the Causal Dynamics Between Economic Freedom and Corruption in U.S. States," *European Journal of Political Economy* 28, no. 2 (2012).
[22] Dahlstrom, Lapuente, and Teorell.

readers of a free press, and Dimant notes that "long exposure to democracy predicted lower corruption."[23] Compante and Do agree that the press can help boost levels of political education within a population, but they add that there is also a geographic variable that can impact political involvement and education. In the United States, states that have very isolated capital cities and a large spatial distribution of their population have been found to have less accountability mechanisms on elected officials due to their isolation, and a population that is less interested in politics by measures of voter participation.[24]

An important aspect of this that needs more review is the importance of the press and political education in its relationship with corruption during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2018, Dimant linked education to contagion effects (an increase in corruption rates by 10% resulted in an increase by 4%-11% in a neighboring state) and other factors that allowed for better access to the state government, such as eGovernment.[25] Many states were forced to revert to conducting business over electronic platforms in 2020, and this is a problem with effects that deserve to be studied in states, like Arkansas, with large amounts of their population generally having poor access to broadband internet.

As stated, political education as an explanation for higher reported corruption rates should be self-explanatory, as it directly effects the way in which people vote in elections.

Income Inequality

The conversation regarding how income inequality creates opportunities for corruption is a very similar conversation to the ethnic diversity argument in the way that they effect ethnic minorities' participation in the political process. Alesina notes that the suspected causes of

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[23] Dimant and Tosato.
[24] Filipe R. Campante and Quoc-Anh Do, "Isolated Capital Cities, Accountability, and Corruption: Evidence from U.S. States," *American Economic Review* 104, no. 8 (August 2014).
[25] Dimant and Tosato.

corruption being an issue that stems from income inequality is for the exact same reason as for

the ethnically diverse population; politicians have to "disguise" redistributive policies.

According to Alesina, public officials often use public employment as a redistributive device.

Statistics back this up, as city employment is "significantly higher in cities where income

inequality and ethnic fragmentation are higher."[26] It has been discussed that we can link

corruption in the form of redistributive policies with ethnic diversity and income inequality.

It is also important to note that income inequality was reported in the literature, both by

Apergis and Alesina, as a derivative of per capita personal income combined with the

unemployment rate in a society, and both of these will likely hit minority populations in higher

proportions according to a study done by Apergis in which the results of how corruption affects

economic variables are examined across different demographics in the United States.[27] Apergis

initially studied the association between corruption and income inequality in the United States in

2010 by using a test on data from statistics from U.S. Department of Justice which report the

number of officials from each state convicted on federal corruption charges. The results indicated

that there was "a long-run equilibrium relationship" between income inequality and corruption.

Income inequality was also found to have negative effects on other factors like unemployment,

but also corruption contributors that have been discussed already such as education.[28] In the

study that covered every year from 1980 to 2004, the south was found the most corrupt region in

the United States, with approximately 0.35 convictions per 100,000 people. This would make

sense in terms of income inequality, as nine of the ten poorest states in the country are south of

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[26] Alesina et al.

[27] Nicholas Apergis, Oguzhan C. Dincer, and James E. Payne, "The Relationship Between Corruption and Income Inequality in U.S. States: Evidence from a Panel Cointegration and Error Correction Model," *Public Choice* 145, no. 1-2 (October 2010).

[28] Apergis et al. (2010).

the Mason-Dixon line, with many of the remaining southern states not too far behind in the rankings.[29]

Apergis would later confirm her findings in another study using a slightly different test. Rather than the aforementioned test, a panel error correction model using data to measure the effect of economic freedom on corruption in each U.S. State from the same time period used in the previous study, and the results only confirmed what was unearthed two years prior: "per capita income has a negative and statistically significant impact on corruption, whereas income inequality has a positive and statistically significant impact."[30]

Another factor that would have completed the case for income inequality was the failure to mention that income inequality usually goes hand in hand with other factors that are not strictly related to economics. Apergis identified that lower levels of education also had a statistically significant impact on corruption, but it could be hypothesized that income inequality has a statistically significant impact on the average education as well as the educational opportunities within a society. We have already determined that education and political education have a noteworthy impact on the likelihood of corruption, but education being an unfortunate byproduct of income inequality would make for an interesting argument to say the least.

Not only do higher levels of income inequality have potential negative effects on reports of corruption, but income inequality within a state can also correlate with other factors that could potentially influence reports of corruption.

[29] Grant Suneson, "Wealth in America: Where are the Richest and Poorest States Based on Household Income?" *USA Today,* 8 October 2018.
[30] Apergis et al. (2012).

Ethnic Diversity

As ethnic diversity increases in a population, the likelihood of corruption increases along with it. This positive correlation can be explained for a various number of reasons. Primarily, the more diverse a population is, the more it negatively impacts the economy and the institutional efficiency of a society. Broadly speaking, this is due to the idea that as a constituency becomes ethnically heterogeneous, voting will focus less on keeping elected officials accountable in terms of honesty. Instead, it will likely focus more on resource and wealth distribution across the many groups that exist within the population of the state.[31] In a study that identified potential correlates of higher reports of political corruption on an international scale, Paulo Mauro added that the risk of corruption can only grow when ethnic diversity within a population is combined with greater ethnolinguistic differences within the same population.[32] Mauro's study essentially shows that a population that has greater diversity and cultural influence is more likely to have higher levels of corruption. This is undoubtedly a difficult pill to swallow given that there are not many ways to approach this problem. In the United States, it is generally not realistic to have the expectation that a state's legislative body will be composed of lawmakers that are a good representation of the ethnic composition or the ethnolinguistic differences of any place, especially those that are more diverse than average. Even if one were to comprise a legislative body that was a close representation of the population, it would be highly unlikely for it to have the ability to cater to all the different demographics, since no group would be able to possess a majority in the legislative body. Along with this, elected officials in more ethnically diverse societies have

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[31] Edward L. Glaeser and Raven E. Saks, "Corruption in America," *Journal of Public Economics* 90, no. 6-7 (August 2006).

[32] Paulo Mauro, "Corruption and Growth," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 110, (August 1995).

shown a pattern of participating in corruption by "disguising" redistributive policies as something more sinister that will ultimately benefit their ethnic background the most.[33]

In a study conducted on corruption climates in sub-Saharan Africa, a diverse ethnic population was noted as the most significant contributor to a political climate that had high levels of corruption.[34] This relates back to the "scramble for Africa," in which European powers colonized the African continent and thus divided the continent amongst themselves. The way in which the European countries ruled the African people had a severe impact on the indigenous cultures in a way that would influence the distribution of power and governmental apparatuses long after the European powers left.[35] While this may seem like a problem that only faces victims of European colonization, one could undoubtedly infer that a similar phenomenon can be seen in the United States and particularly in the southern United States due to the many years of enslavement endured by African Americans as well as the legal and social marginalization and discrimination of African Americans and other minority groups. Like the groups discussed in Parboteeah's study on Sub-Saharan Africa, people who belong to different ethnic groups in the United States, such as African Americans, American Indians, and people of Hispanic descent will be less likely to fully integrate into the governmental process, and more likely to be negatively affected by several factors that relate to corruption. This includes, but is not limited to, what Parboteeah calls "socioeconomic crises" and "inequities in the distribution of power in a multiethnic context."[36]

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[33] Alberto Alesina, Reza Baqir, and William Esterly, "Redistributive Public Employment," *Journal of Urban Economics* 48, no. 2 (2000): 219.
[34] Praveen K. Parboteeah, H. Titilayo Seriki, and Martin Hoegl, "Ethnic Diversity, Corruption, and Ethical Climates in Sub-Saharan Africa: Recognizing the Significance of Human Resource Management," *International Journal of Human Resource Management* 25, no. 7 (2014).
[35] Parboteeah.
[36] Parboteeah.

The ethnic diversity argument is only furthered by the argument that once an in-group, or representatives of the majority in a population are in a position of power, they will do anything to maintain their lock on leadership. With that being said, it can be observed that elected officials who display corrupt behavior are still likely to maintain their position of power if they are a member of that in-group.[37] This not only contributes to corruption through a lack of consequences that takes the form of punishment coming from the voters, but it also keeps smaller ethnic groups out of power. This problem of holding different ethnicities out of power while sacrificing integrity would likely be magnified as a population grows more diverse.

A diverse population is more likely to fall victim to corruption for a few reasons that have been identified in prior research studies. A lack of representation in the government from minority groups,[38] in-group voting,[39] and issues surrounding resource distribution[40] all serve as examples that support the idea that the ethnic diversity argument is a convincing one.

Methodology: Measuring Corruption and its Determinants

With the primary research question of this study being used to examine whether or not the state of Arkansas has addressed from its history of misdeeds, one can shed light on this by exploring the relationship that different factors hypothesized to be determining factors of corruption have with the levels of corruption in each individual state. The goal of this section is to twofold: (1) explain the datasets used to examine the factors identified in the literature that are

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[37] Eugen Dimant and Guglielmo Tosato, "Causes and Effects of Corruption: What has Past Decade's Empirical Research Taught Us? A Survey," *Journal of Economic Surveys* 32, No. 2 (2018).
[38] Parboteeah,
[39] Dimant and Tosato.
[40] Alesina et al.

known to increase the likelihood of corruption and (2) the association with two competing

dependent variables that we should expect to see in the results section.

Measuring the Dependent Variables:

Two primary dependent variables that measure corruption were used to interpret data in

this study, the first of which was based on a study done by Glaeser and Saks in which they

gathered data from the Department of Justice's *Report to Congress on the Activities and*

Operations of the Public Integrity Section, which includes many different crimes that fall under

the umbrella of corruption, to find a corruption rate. The corruption rate was derived by using the

average number of federal corruption convictions from each state over three different years

(1989, 1999, and 2002), dividing that average by the state's population, and multiplying it by

100,000 to configure the average annual convictions per 100,000 people, otherwise referred to as

corruption rate.[41] For the purposes of this study, Glaeser and Saks' method of finding corruption

rate was replicated to provide an updated, more current data set to compare the predicting

variables to. To do so, the information from the 2019 *Report to Congress on the Activities and*

Operations of the Public Integrity Section was used to find the ten-year average of each state's

federal corruption convictions. Then, the ten-year average was divided by the population of each

state as provided by the most recent data from the census bureau and subsequently multiplied by

100,000, leaving us with the average annual convictions per 100,000 members of the population.

On a nationwide scale, the average of people convicted with a federal corruption charge from

2010-2019 was 0.284 in every 100,000 with a standard deviation of 0.203 convictions per

100,000.

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[41] Edward L. Glaeser and Raven E. Saks, "Corruption in America," *Journal of Public Economics* 90, no.
6-7 (August 2006):

The other method of measuring corruption in this research is modeled based on studies

done by Glaeser and Goldin as well as Paulo Marco. In an effort to measure the most corrupt era

of American history between the years 1815 and 1975, Glaeser and Goldin searched words like

"corrupt," "fraud," and other similar words in newspaper databases and used the number of

results returned to hypothesize what period was the most corrupt.[42] Similarly, Marco used word

counts in newspaper databases to create a dataset that suggested that violent death counts among

Italians were underreported during World War I and the start of Mussolini's regime.[43] For the

purpose of this study, a newspaper database search was used to create another dataset to compare

each state's levels of corruption over a specific time period. In order to be somewhat consistent

with the other dataset, the years observed were 2010 to 2021. Similarly, to Glaeser and Goldin,

the search terms entered into the database were: the name of each state in the leading or first

paragraph, followed by the terms "fraud" and/or "corruption" in the leading or first paragraph, as

well as "state legislature" in the first paragraph in order to attempt to filter out any articles about

the national government. The NewsBank inc. database was used for this search, and while this

method has its limitations, as evidenced by the lack of large newspapers such as the New York

Times or Wall Street Journal in the NewsBank database, all of the searches were held constant

with the only differentiating factor being the names of each state included in the search. The

number of results that each search returned without any further adjustment were used as the

measure of corruption in the dataset.

With two dependent variables that indicate the levels of corruption that exist within a

state, we can then use both of these created datasets to compare with data that represents the five

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[42] Edward L. Glaeser and Claudia Goldin, "*Corruption and Reform: Lessons from America's Economic History,"* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006: 4.

[43] Casolino Marco, "Large Scale Analysis of Violent Death Count in Daily Newspapers to Quantify Bias and Censorship." *Journal of Big Data* 7, no. 1 (December 2020).

contributing factors of corruption from the current base of literature on corruption in the U.S. and abroad. In theory, correlations should be fairly easy to describe within the data at a surface level observation, but two ordinary least square regressions will be run for each of the five independent variables, because of the two competing datasets on corruption. This should describe the strength of each factor's relationship, and these relationships can then be used to determine what qualities might increase the risk for a corrupt state governance. This will also be able to answer the research question of whether or not Arkansas has made improvements in addressing previous state and local government corruption.

Measuring the Independent Variables:

"Big" Government

In this study, to measure big government essentially means to measure the size and scope of a state government. To do so, one can measure how "big" a government is based on its score on the Fraser Institute's Economic Freedom Index, as Dincer and Gunalp did in their study about the effects of federal regulation on corruption on a nationwide scale. The same thing can be done on the state level with the Fraser Institute's Economic Freedom Index of North America 2020, which measures the size of government by measuring government spending, taxes, and labor market freedom. In Dincer and Gunalp's study, they found that each increase of a standard deviation increase in the freedom index was equal to an increase of about half a standard deviation in their dataset that also used convictions as a means to measure corruption.[44] With that, we can expect to see a positive relationship between the economic freedom statistic and the corruption rate and newspaper count.

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[44]Oguzhan Dincer and Burak Gunalp, "The Effects of Federal Regulations on Corruption in U.S. States." *European Journal of Political Economy* 65, (December 2020).

Legislative Professionalism

Professionalism in the 50 legislative bodies that make up the United States can be measured best by Peverill Squire's method. Squire argues that the two most important qualities in determining the level of professionalism in a legislature are the salaries, number of staff, resources allocated, and days spent in session, and he created the Squire Index to condense these factors into a single professionalism score that assesses "the capacity of both legislators and legislatures to generate and digest information in the policymaking process.[45]" For the eight states that do not pay legislators an annual salary, Squire found a way to normalize the data. For Maine, who pays a higher salary in the first year than in the second year of a legislature, the salaries were averaged. The remaining seven states pay per diems, including one that pays a weekly wage, Squire calculated the salary for the number of days or weeks that the legislature was in regular session.[46] It is also important to note that the Squire Index includes uncorrected and corrected measures and rankings. Aside from the score of Michigan, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania, who produced large discrepancies in the data due to their days spent in legislative session, the discrepancies in the data are mostly minimal. For these reasons, the corrected measure was used as the dataset.

Political Education

From research about political education's relationship with corruption, we learn that there are plenty of ways to gauge how politically educated a population may be. As discussed in the literature review, civic engagement, voter turnout, reported interest in state politics, knowledge of issues facing the voter base, and familiarity with the democratic system and its mechanisms

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[45] Squire.
[46] Squire.

are all signs of a politically educated population. For the sake of simplicity in the research,

education statistics will be used as a measurement of political education in accordance with

Lipset's argument that higher education levels within a population will naturally correspond with

higher levels of political education.[47] To measure education levels in a state, high school

graduation rates from the National Center for Education Statistics were collected. While there are

differences in every state's curriculum, most states require their public schools to have a social

studies curriculum for students that includes at least a semester-long course in civics. If the

research hypothesis is supported, we should expect to see a negative correlation between

graduation rates from high school with both corruption rate and newspaper count.

Income Inequality

Due to the complexity of income inequality as a factor, multiple datasets that measure

income inequality could have been used as independent variables for comparison to corruption

rate and newspaper count. Apergis and Alesina both noted that income inequality was a

derivative of the unemployment rate and median income in a society. The unemployment rate

collected from statistics published by the United States Board of Labor measures unemployment

rate as a measure of the unemployed portion of the civilian labor force, which is a sum of all

employed and unemployed individuals estimated from data that they gathered from the United

States Census Bureau's American Community Survey. The numbers used in this report from the

Bureau of Labor Statistics are updated monthly, and the last reported data was collected in

September of 2021.[48] However, the dataset used for this study will be the Gini Coefficient. The

United States Census Bureau defines the Gini Index as a summary measure of income inequality.

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[47] Seymour M. Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics,* Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1960.
[48] "Local Area Unemployment Statistics: Unemployed Rates for States, Seasonally Adjusted." United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. Last Modified Date: 22 October 2021, Accessed 8 November 2021.

It summarizes the distribution of income in a society on a scale from 0 to 1, with 0 meaning that everybody in the population receives the same income, and 1 meaning that only one member of the population/one group within the population receives all of the income.[49] In this study, the numbers were multiplied by 100 and given as a percent rather than a number between zero and one.

Ethnic Diversity

Parboteaeah found that in sub-Saharan African nations, corruption was positively correlated with higher levels of ethnic diversity. In order to measure ethnic diversity within a U.S. state, this study will use the United States Census Bureau's diffusion score, which is a statistic that measures the combined percentage of all racial and ethnic groups that are not in the top three most populous racial/ethnic groups within a state. In the United States, the top three minority groups are identified as White alone non-Hispanic (57.8% of the population), Hispanic or Latino (18.7% of the population), and Black or African American (12.1%) as of the 2020 census. The breakdown of the remaining 11.4% of the ethnic makeup of the population of U.S. states can be used to determine how diverse the population is. A higher diffusion score means that the population is less concentrated within the top three race groups and more "diffused" throughout other ethnic groups.[50] If the research hypotheses regarding ethnic diversity as having a causal relationship with corruption are correct, then we would expect that states with high diffusion rates to also have a high corruption rate as well as a high newspaper count.

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[49] "Gini Index," U.S. Census Bureau.
[50] Eric Jensen et al. "2020 U.S. Population More Racially and Ethnically Diverse Than Measured in 2010: The Chance that Two People Chosen at Random Are of Different Race or Ethnicity Groups Has Increased Since 2010." *United States Census Bureau,* 12 August 2021.

Results

This section begins with describing and showing the datasets for the fifty states and both of their corresponding scores for corruption rate and newspaper count. After this, the relationships between each independent variable, the contributing factors of corruption, and the two dependent variable datasets will be analyzed.

As mentioned, some of the data is derived from Glaeser and Saks' method of configuring a "corruption rate" in their empirical study, "Corruption in America," in which corruption data from the Department of Justice's *Report to Congress on the Activities of the Public Integrity Section*[51] was used. Table 1 was created using a formula identical to the one used by Glaeser and Saks to determine the number of federal corruption convictions per 100,000 residents in a state over a ten-year span from 2010 to 2019. Across the United States, there was an average of about 0.28 people convicted for corruption which corresponds exactly with Glaeser and Saks average of data that they collected from 1976 to 2002. However, in this dataset, there is a much greater degree of variation across states with a standard deviation of 0.20 compared to the 0.13 standard deviation in the Glaeser and Saks study.

There are many crimes that constitute being labeled as corruption. In the *Report to Congress on the Activities of the Public Integrity Section*, the Department of Justice lists the number of federal, state, and local officials who were convicted of crimes like fraud, obstructions of justice, conflict of interest, and campaign finance violations. The 2019 edition of this report specifically notes that election offenses, such as election fraud and or ballot fraud, are covered in these numbers as well. According to the report, there was a total of 19,303 federal, state, or local

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[51] Glaeser and Saks.

officials, and private citizens involved in public corruption offenses over the ten-year span in

which the data was collected, with federal officials accounting for over 7,500 of that total.[52]

Table 1 is the database of the number of federal corruption convictions per 100,000 residents for

every state over the span of 2010-2019. The higher the score, the higher the corruption rate.

Table 1:
Corruption Rate of U.S. States

Montana	1.198	**North Dakota**	0.249
South Dakota	0.803	**New York**	0.231
Maryland	0.582	**Michigan**	0.226
West Virginia	0.530	**Vermont**	0.224
Kentucky	0.513	**Indiana**	0.217
Louisiana	0.497	**Wyoming**	0.207
Virginia	0.491	**Ohio**	0.207
Oklahoma	0.488	**Kansas**	0.206
Mississippi	0.417	**Idaho**	0.173
Alaska	0.396	**Maine**	0.164
Georgia	0.355	**Delaware**	0.164
Arkansas	0.347	**California**	0.164
New Jersey	0.341	**Iowa**	0.162
Alabama	0.332	**Hawaii**	0.162
Pennsylvania	0.327	**Wisconsin**	0.156
Arizona	0.324	**Connecticut**	0.126
Tennessee	0.315	**North Carolina**	0.126
Illinois	0.296	**Washington**	0.105
Texas	0.289	**Nevada**	0.104
Nebraska	0.284	**South Carolina**	0.103
Rhode Island	0.283	**Minnesota**	0.083
Missouri	0.275	**Colorado**	0.076
Massachusetts	0.271	**Oregon**	0.062
Florida	0.270	**Utah**	0.037
New Mexico	0.258	**New Hampshire**	0.030
		National Average*	0.284

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[52] United States Department of Justice. *Report to Congress on the Activities and Operations of the Public Integrity Section for 2019.* Public Integrity Section: Criminal Division.

The second method of measuring the levels of conviction in each of the American states is derived from a Glaeser and Goldin study that used the number of results returned in a variety of newspaper databases from searching for terms related to corruption. Glaeser and Goldin's study sought to pinpoint the most corrupt eras and regions throughout the United States, but in this study their efforts are replicated to provide another database for corruption levels, or at the very least the media's perception of corruption within a state. Other studies have also used similar methods. Marco created a similar database that involved newspaper database searches and their results to prove that the deaths of Italians during Mussolini's rise to power was underreported.[53]

To replicate the efforts of studies like those conducted by Marco and Glaeser and Goldin to determine a rate or amount of corruption in an American state, a few fundamental changes can be seen when compared to the datasets in other studies. For starters, the date range was not as long as the Glaeser and Goldin study. Similarly, to Marco's study, an intentional and relatively short date range was selected. This was done to correspond closely with the years analyzed in the Department of Justice's report to Congress. To be consistent with the corruption rate dataset, the years set for the filter in the newspaper database were 2010 to present. Most importantly, the names of the different states were included in each search so that the number of results could be individualized in order to create a dataset in which each state was represented.

Also, it is important to emphasize that the newspaper count was taken directly from the results returned, without any norming per population as was done with the corruption rate data. This was done in order to keep the results consistent with the data returned in Glaeser and

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[53] Marco.

Goldin's study. Table 2 represents the dataset of newspaper count, which counts the number of

times words relating to corruption were found in relation to a state in a newspaper.

Table 2:
Newspaper Count for U.S. States

New York	12062	Mississippi	1619
Florida	7342	Louisiana	1612
Texas	6572	Maryland	1610
California	6042	Minnesota	1599
Pennsylvania	4274	Utah	1559
Ohio	3733	Vermont	1541
Virginia	3637	Kentucky	1504
North Carolina	3612	Maine	1446
Michigan	3397	South Carolina	1441
New Jersey	3245	Nevada	1437
Illinois	3237	West Virginia	1429
Georgia	3129	New Hampshire	1364
Iowa	2830	Oregon	1357
Kansas	2498	New Mexico	1295
Arizona	2291	Delaware	1259
Indiana	2234	Idaho	1196
Wisconsin	2230	Rhode Island	1073
Missouri	2106	Nebraska	1060
Massachusetts	2088	Montana	1014
Alabama	2029	Alaska	943
Arkansas	1960	Washington	912
Connecticut	1951	North Dakota	878
Oklahoma	1807	Hawaii	776
Tennessee	1741	Wyoming	766
Colorado	1704	South Dakota	712
		National Average*	2383

Before comparing these two datasets to statistics that correspond with the contributing

factors of corruption and conducting a multivariate regression analysis to determine the strength

of these variables, there are a few issues with the dataset that are worth mentioning. The largest

problem in these datasets can be found in the configuration of the corruption rate statistic. By

using the number of convictions or cases prosecuted by the Department of Justice as a measure

of corruption, one runs into the problem of measuring system capacity or system overload of the

federal court system rather than the actual levels of corruption in a state. Alt and Lassen explain

that using statistics like these are usually a good place to start in measuring corruption, but they

theorize that "white-collar crimes, including corruption, are insufficiently prosecuted "due to

many states having a strain on their prosecutorial resources, which in turn means that states with

greater resources "result in more convictions" and vice versa.[54]" However, these are quite

possibly the best statistics that we have to tally corruption for the purposes of this study. For that

reason, the data should not be considered illegitimate, but it is important to keep this in mind

when examining the results.

In regard to the newspaper count statistics, it goes without saying that this measurement

of corruption is not foolproof. It is practically impossible to get a completely accurate count

given the sheer number of publications that exist and the inability to gather them from a singular

database. It is also worth noting that in Glaeser and Goldin's study, a variety of databases were

used to conduct the search and a vetting process was used to eliminate any repeated articles and

stories that weren't actually about corruption. In this research, the Newsbank database was the

only one used and there was no vetting process; the results were recorded verbatim.

To determine the strength of the relationship between the five independent variables

compared to corruption rate and newspaper count, two separate multivariate regressions were

conducted to determine a correlation between the five determinants and each dependent variable.

The complete dataset of the numbers from every state that represent each independent variable

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[54] James E. Alt and David Dreyer Lassen, "Enforcement and Public Corruption: Evidence from the American States," *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 30, no. 2 (May 2014).

(big government, legislative professionalism, political education, income inequality, and ethnic

diversity) can be found below in Table 3.

Table 3:
Complete Dataset for U.S. States

State	Big Government	Legislative Professionalism	Political Education	Income Inequality	Ethnic Diversity
AK	4.67	0.296	80	41.74	17.9
AL	5.71	0.175	92	47.69	6.0
AR	6.14	0.207	88	47.00	8.0
AZ	6.57	0.264	78	46.82	11.5
CA	4.71	0.629	85	49.00	10.8
CO	6.49	0.268	81	45.90	8.5
CT	6.45	0.267	89	49.00	9.5
DE	5.51	0.203	89	45.00	9.4
FL	7.73	0.245	87	49.00	7.5
GA	7.27	0.149	82	48.16	8.9
HI	5.12	0.321	85	43.69	21.8
IA	6.23	0.241	92	44.00	6.5
ID	7.04	0.169	81	44.57	3.9
IL	5.96	0.294	86	48.00	9.6
IN	7.08	0.156	87	44.94	7.0
KS	6.86	0.181	87	45.55	9.2
KY	5.45	0.162	91	47.41	6.1
LA	6.41	0.187	80	49.03	6.1
MA	6.69	0.431	88	48.26	12.6
MD	6.57	0.278	87	45.13	12.0
ME	5.58	0.154	87	45.00	4.0
MI	6.00	0.401	81	46.00	8.5
MN	5.44	0.204	84	44.90	10.8
MO	6.92	0.243	90	46.32	8.0
MS	5.38	0.161	85	48.00	4.7
MT	6.29	0.116	87	45.87	5.9
NC	6.95	0.238	87	47.48	8.6
ND	6.88	0.112	88	46.00	9.3
NE	6.75	0.230	88	44.20	7.5
NH	7.84	0.048	88	43.44	4.6
NJ	5.99	0.233	91	47.82	14.2

NM	5.37	0.140	75	48.00	6.9
NV	6.54	0.182	84	45.00	16.0
NY	4.25	0.430	83	51.02	14.3
OH	5.75	0.384	82	46.41	7.3
OK	7.05	0.229	85	46.52	17.8
OR	5.17	0.417	80	46.00	8.3
PA	6.48	0.417	87	46.80	7.9
RI	5.23	0.200	84	47.38	9.6
SC	6.11	0.156	81	46.90	6.2
SD	7.28	0.103	84	44.00	7.6
TN	7.55	0.136	91	47.86	6.5
TX	7.61	0.234	90	48.03	9.2
UT	6.73	0.115	87	43.00	9.2
VA	7.62	0.178	88	46.73	12.6
VT	5.08	0.178	85	44.00	3.9
WA	5.97	0.272	81	45.60	13.0
WI	6.58	0.204	90	44.00	7.6
WV	4.50	0.157	91	46.21	3.2
WY	6.72	0.081	82	43.00	4.2
Nat'l Avg*	6.24	0.229	86	46.22	9.0

Table 4 represents the results of both multivariate regression analyses of the five most significant factors in determining corruption. The first column represents the data in relation to the corruption rate, while the second column represents the data in relation to the numbers produced by the newspaper count. The null hypothesis for the regression analyses can read as follows: there is no relationship between a rise in the levels of corruption in a state and an increase in government size and structure, legislative professionalism, levels of political education, income inequality, and diversity. For this study, the threshold of significance for the p-values returned is set at $p < 0.10$. A value in the table less than that equates to stronger evidence that the null hypothesis can be rejected, while the inverse means that the research hypothesis was not supported.

Table 4:
Regression Results for Corruption Rate and Newspaper Count

	Corruption Rate	Newspaper Count
Big Government	0.6665	0.3415
	(0.0364)	(271.7695)
Professionalism	0.0913†	0.0056**
	(0.3452)	(2573.2564)
Political Education	0.5453	0.3787
	(0.0076)	(57.1747)
Income Inequality	0.1836	0.0003**
	(0.0165)	(123.4677)
Diversity	0.6541	0.9100
	(0.0083)	(62.3934)

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses

The corruption rate column uses the data from Table 1, while the newspaper count column uses the data from Table 2.

$†p < 0.10$ $*p < 0.05$ $**p < 0.01$

Turning first to the data from the corruption rate column, we see that only one variable, legislative professionalism, had a statistically significant relationship with the corruption rate, suggesting that higher levels of professionalism in state governments lead to higher corruption rates. It is also worth noting that even with the statistical insignificance that a *p*-value of 0.0913 suggests, it was the only variable that lay within the threshold of significance by a wide margin.

The next closet variable, income inequality, more than doubled the value of professionalism. With this, we can conclude that none of the rest of the independent variables are significant correlates of high corruption rates.

The newspaper count column produced some informative results in regard to the strength of evidence to reject the null hypothesis. Income inequality and professionalism were found to have significant relationships with this particular measure of corruption levels with both returning a *p*-value well under 0.01. This shows that high levels of legislative professionalism and more income inequality were found to result in higher levels of corruption. Interestingly enough, the two independent variables with the strongest correlation to their respective measurements of corruption were the same in both columns: legislative professionalism and income inequality.

These results give us more questions than answers. A reasonable expectation would have been to see more variables have stronger correlations with either dependent variable given the existing literature on the causes of corruption. However, there are many reasons as to why the results were not quite on par with what was expected. The first reason is that corruption is simply difficult to measure in an objective way. The corruption rate measure is a perfect example of this. While it is perhaps the most objective measurement of corruption due to the fact that it is based on real and measurable data, the data itself makes it difficult to see the entire picture. The corruption rate is derived from the Department of Justice's crime reports. This may be a great place to start in measuring corruption, but a critique of this means of measurement is that it is a more accurate measurement of the system capacity of the federal court system in each state rather than the actual corruption rate. Alt and Lassen apply the criminological theories of system capacity and system overload as a critique of the use of these statistics as the only dependent

variable in corruption research. They explain that "white collar crimes, including corruption, are insufficiently prosecuted." This is due to the fact that many states have ongoing strains on their prosecutorial resources, which in turn means that states with better resources can be expected to have more convictions and vice versa.[55]

The newspaper count was chosen as a measure to try and combat some of the aforementioned problems that are inherent when using corruption rate. Even so, it comes with problems. As addressed earlier, this dataset was limited by the amount of newspaper databases that were used. This was not nearly as extensive of a search as the one conducted by Glaeser and Goldin, but rather an attempt to offer another dataset to supplement the corruption rate in a way that would address the concerns about this nature of data expressed in the research of Alt and Lassen. Because of the aforementioned reasons, it makes it all the more interesting that every independent variable except diversity produced a stronger correlation with the newspaper count than it did for the corruption rate.

An important note on the newspaper count is that an alternate dataset was created to norm the newspaper results to population data to create a newspaper result rate. Unlike the corruption rate statistic however, the newspaper rate table returned results that came very close to ranking states by their populations when this was attempted; the small states were all clustered near the bottom of the newspaper count while the large states like New York and California all congregated at the top.

The results reveal that the dependent variables that are commonly used to measure corruption are imperfect. That is not to say that this work or conclusions drawn in this research and previous research should be discounted, but rather it should be seen as an area that requires

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[55] James E. Alt and David Dreyer Lassen, "Enforcement and Public Corruption: Evidence from the American States," *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 30, no.2, (May 2014): 310.

more attention from scholars in the future, especially in regard to statistical analyses on societal

factors that influence corruption.

Another problem could lie in the fact that the predictors of corruption were not measured

thoroughly enough, thus creating an imperfect dataset that was used with the regression analyses.

This would potentially explain why we did not see the same strong correlations in this research

as other scholars hypothesized. An alternative suggestion as to why the regression results were

lacking strength could be that the variables suffer from multicollinearity. If this is true, it would

mean that the low regression coefficients do not indicate that the variable did not have a

statistically significant relationship with corruption, but rather that the independent variables

were correlated closely with each other and subsequently took away from the strength of the

correlation in the regression.[56]

Conclusion

With the significant contributing factors of corruption identified, we can determine what

this data means for the state of Arkansas. In professionalism and income inequality scores,

Arkansas does not stand out. Ranked 25th in their level of legislative professionalism and 19th in

income inequality, these numbers are not exactly consistent with what the regression would

identify as a state that is likely to have large numbers of reported corruption cases. Arkansas was

actually below the national average in its legislative professionalism (0.207 compared to 0.229),

only slightly above the national average in its income inequality score (47.00 compared to

46.22), and both of these scores are within one standard deviation of the national average. When

this is taken into consideration, it is unsurprising that Arkansas's raw scores for both of the

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[56] Kim Nimon, "Multicollinearity," *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Educational Research, Measurement, and Evaluation,* (2018): 1099-1100.

reported corruption datasets do not set it apart either, also falling within one standard deviation of the national averages for corruption rate and newspaper count.

With this, it would be hard to argue that Arkansas is as corrupt as some reports made in its early history made it out to be, which could merely be attributed to modernization and the passing of time. Far removed are we from the era of Arkansas politics when John Wilson and Joseph J. Anthony dueled by deliberating in Little Rock and the era of the strong political machines prosecuted by Lewis Rhoton. While there are still instances of misdeeds in state and local politics within Arkansas's borders, the data shows that the number of them in recent memory do not seem to raise any red flags when compared to the rest of the country. What we are left with is a sigh of relief, or perhaps the motivation to take a more targeted approach at understanding the contributing factors of corruption and the effects that arise because of those.

As mentioned before, the study of what causes corruption in U.S. states is incomplete and may never be fully understood due to the complex and ever-evolving nature of it. As with any other crimes, criminals will adapt quickly to circumvent any measures put in place to prevent it. Therefore, our best chance to prevent corruption and whether it be in Arkansas, the national government, and any other government is to take a proactive approach and attempt to understand the factors that correlate with higher reports of corruption and attempt to find solutions for those factors rather than to attack corruption itself. It would be an unrealistic goal to get rid of corruption completely, but by identifying the unique characteristics of the places in which it is the most prevalent, we can take a smarter approach in making ourselves less vulnerable to scandals and misdeeds in our governments.

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