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Mapping Collaboration: Examining State-Government Alliance in Addressing Specific Child Sexual Offenses

An Honors Thesis proposal submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

Honors in *Political Science*.

By

Allison Ruth Lair

Under the mentorship of *Dr. Maureen Stobb*

ABSTRACT

Amidst our society, a harrowing reality persists: one in ten children bear the burden of enduring sexual abuse before reaching the tender age of eighteen. Alas, this issue often remains hidden from the societal spotlight due to limitations in offense-specific statistical crime data. Since 1930, the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Report (UCR) has been the primary resource for annual state-level law enforcement data collection. However, the voluntary nature of participation and the mass categorization of offenses within the UCR methodology, lead to the exclusion of crucial data concerning child sexual offenses. This research explores the dynamics of state cooperation with the federal government in achieving common objectives, particularly focusing on the factors influencing state participation in the UCR program. Why do some states participate in the UCR, and others do not? I argue that states participation increases as their detail in statutory language does. Ultimately, this reflects the state's policy emphasis on addressing sexual offenses against children. This study illuminates the interplay between state policy frameworks, statutory language, and participation in federal crime reporting initiatives.

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Introduction

In the year 2021, approximately 3.66 million live births occurred in the United States, marking the celebration of new beginnings. Yet within this substantial number lies a disturbing concern—child sexual abuse. Unable to give consent, children experience victimization at a significantly higher frequency than adults. The harsh reality is that among the 3.66 million babies born in 2021, an estimated 500,000 are expected to experience sexual abuse before reaching the age of eighteen (United States Consensus Report).

Child sexual abuse encompasses a variety of crimes between an adult and a minor including sexual acts such as but not limited to: “...fondling, intercourse, sex trafficking, and child molestation,” as well as non-contact acts like, “... exhibitionism, exposure to pornography, and voyeurism” (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2007). In the realm of child sexual abuse, federal laws are narrowly applicable, leaving primary responsibility for prosecution to state or local authorities. Consequently, the classification of these crimes becomes increasingly complex due to variations in state legal frameworks, policy emphases, societal norms, and approaches to addressing such offenses. Ultimately, states classify child sexual abuse crimes differently due to variations in legal traditions, policy priorities, societal values, and perspectives on addressing such offenses. This inconsistency in classification gives rise to diverse definitions and categorizations of child sexual abuse, potentially impacting the legal framework.

Notable challenges arise in investigations due to the lack of offense-specific state statistical crime data. Although the federal Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program contributes to statistical crime data, its inherent limitations often result in the elimination or generalization of offenses, as it categorizes disparate criminal codes among states.

Moreover, the voluntary nature of states' participation in this federal program presents additional hurdles, such as effective data collection and measurability.

Regrettably, the majority of states in the United States fail to record any data on offense-based conviction rates for any period. Many states lack reporting regulations that mandate agencies to disclose offense-specific conviction rates, resulting in offenders slipping into legal oblivion. To contextualize this issue, the goal of this research is to identify factors explaining when state's will cooperate with the federal government in collecting and disclosing offense specific conviction rates.

Specifically, this research investigates factors explaining why states engage in the federal UCR program. Ultimately, why do some states have offense-specific reporting concerning sexual offenses against children, and others do not?

I argue that the degree of policy attention devoted by a state to addressing sexual offenses against children, as reflected in the specificity of state statutes on the topic, is a key factor explaining a state's engagement in the UCR program. As the specificity of states' statutes addressing sexual offenses against children increases, so does the probability of states' participation in the federal UCR program. Thus, as the percentage of states' statutes with detailed statutory language increases, their percentage of state-level participation in the UCR increases.

My study aims to highlight the urgency of addressing child sexual abuse and the inadequacy of current reporting strategies. By advocating for mandatory reporting regulations for sexual offenses against children and broader offense-based conviction rate documentation, this study seeks to inspire meaningful reform and informed policymaking, benefiting both law enforcement and the broader community.

Existing Literature and Scholarly Perspectives

The complex essence of cooperation between state and federal governments reveals a multifaceted landscape influenced by numerous factors. The institutional theory serves as the foundational framework for examining the intricate interplay of state-level cooperation with federal policy objectives, specifically scrutinizing the Uniform Crime Report (UCR) as a form of state-federal policy collaboration. Utilizing an extensive array of scholarly sources, this comprehensive literature review aims to deepen the understanding of how states unite to advance federal objectives. The nuanced scrutiny of this collaborative effort is sourced through historical methodologies, theoretical constructs, federal and state reporting initiatives, statutory analysis, and the specific context of sexual offenses against children. The culmination of these inquiries promises to yield valuable insights into the persistent challenges of obtaining accurate and comprehensive crime statistical data in the United States.

I. State-Federal Collaboration for Policy Achievement

The extent to which the state cooperates with the federal government in implementing a goal is a multifaceted aspect of governance that lies at the intersection of political science, public administration, and policy analysis. Comprehending this collaborative endeavor involves examining intricate relationships between elected officials, state institutions, bureaucratic agencies, and societal actors. Various theories and frameworks provide insight into the factors influencing collaboration, including fluctuating power dynamics, institutional arrangements, policy implementation mechanisms, and the interplay of interests within society. The investigation of these

aspects, allows for the comprehensive knowledge of how goals are pursued, policies are enacted, and governance is conducted within societies.

Scholarly literature concerning regulatory policy massively overlooks states' capacity to implement and consequently influence federal regulatory programs (Thompson and Scicchitano 1985, 687). Perpetuated through inadequate program-specific qualitative assessments, only results in inconclusive data. The lack of attention may be attributed, at least in part, to historical trends wherein prior to 1960, federal regulatory initiatives rarely delegated significant implementation responsibilities to states. Needless to say, perhaps a greater emphasis was given to crafting forthcoming standards rather than their enforcement. Hence, the scrutiny of state implementation endeavors within federal regulatory programs is notably restricted to a select few substantial federal-specific initiatives, serving as a crucial starting point for understanding this relationship.

Thompson and Scicchitano (1985) analyze the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 (OSHA), a significant federal regulatory initiative designed to enhance worker safety nationwide, in order to elucidate state implementation endeavors. OSHA aimed to bolster the federal law's focus on the prioritization of worker well-being by providing financial incentives that covered about half of the state program costs, thereby reinforcing its mission (Thompson and Scicchitano 1985, 688).

Despite federal incentives, states' participation remained as a dichotomous variable, reflecting their choice to engage or abstain. Participating states were mandated to establish and uphold an occupational safety and health program meeting or surpassing federal standards. Conversely, states declining participation resulted in OSHA assuming

responsibility for enforcing workplace safety regulations within their borders. Given these circumstances, many states chose not to participate, relieving their responsibility as the federal government assumed the role.

The second aspect of implementation effort, enforcement vigor, refers to the extent to which participating states oversee regulated enterprises and impose penalties for noncompliance (Thompson and Scicchitano 1985, 689). Enforcement vigor displayed notable disparities among participating states, reflecting the unique motivations behind each state's decision to participate or abstain. In some states, involvement may stem from the belief that enforcement will be more robust if conducted by state employees rather than federal inspectors. Conversely, other states may see participation as an opportunity to foster a business-friendly environment by tempering what they perceive as overly aggressive enforcement measures (Thompson and Scicchitano 1985, 689).

Thompson and Scicchitano (1985) propose multiple hypotheses regarding wealth, partisan, group, and organizational search, to explain the variations in state participation and enforcement.

The partisan hypothesis posits that the prevailing political party within a state exerts influence. The ideologies commonly upheld by Republican and Democratic leadership diverge concerning federalism and business regulation. Republican representatives are inclined to resist the centralization of authority in Washington and excessive governmental regulation of business activities (Thompson and Scicchitano 1985, 690).

The influence of centralist and pro-regulatory group pressures appears significant in elucidating state implementation efforts. Centralist pressures intensify when prominent

state groups perceive that their interests align with federal takeover of a program and advocate for such action. Conversely, pro-regulatory pressures escalate as groups advocate for stringent regulatory standards and their rigorous enforcement (Thompson and Scicchitano 1985, 691).

The organizational-search framework, as proposed by Cyert and March (1963), suggests that the level of implementation effort is influenced by the severity of the issue at hand. For example, states may be prompted to take action by factors such as the frequency of occupational injuries or illnesses, leading to the acknowledgment of an existing problem and the initiation of efforts to address it. Similarly, a continuous stream of employee complaints regarding health hazards in their workplaces could prompt similar action. However, despite states' attention to these matters, consistency in outcomes or policy initiatives is not guaranteed. Nevertheless, it is likely that states actively engaging in these issues would increase the intensity of enforcement efforts in response to the identification of occupational safety and health concerns (Thompson and Scicchitano 1985, 691).

As the federal government establishes broad policy objectives, particularly prevalent in social regulatory domains such as environmental protection or worker safety, state governments serve as primary implementing entities. State-level regulation constitutes a distinct set of policy making relationships compared to those at the national level, as political competition regarding bureaucratic outputs and decisions predominantly unfolds at the subnational level. Despite its significance, scholarly attention has predominantly focused on federal regulation, neglecting the examination of state-level regulation.

II. The Relationship between Federal and State Law

The legal framework of the United States involves a delicate balance between the federal government and the diverse array of laws and judicial systems across all fifty states. Governing this sophisticated relationship are a plethora of legal instruments, including constitutional provisions, federal and state statutes, and prudential doctrines such as federal-state comity (Lampe and Deal 2023, 1).

The core of the federal judiciary lies in Article III of the United States Constitution, which delineates the extent of federal judicial authority and establishes safeguards against political influence on federal judges. Congress is additionally conferred with the discretionary power to establish lower-level courts. Yet, in principle, federal laws maintain uniform applicability across state lines.

State courts may similarly be dictated by statute, but these courts possess a significantly greater degree of authority as they are established under individual state constitutions. This sovereignty is inherent within constitutional principles, to each state in the United States, granting them the autonomy to craft and regulate laws based on their respective requirements. The absence of constitutional safeguards for state court judges akin to those enjoyed by federal judges is noteworthy. State courts' configuration varies significantly; however, all states maintain trial-level courts and at least one appellate court responsible for reviewing lower court decisions.

Jurisdiction, central to the adjudicative process, endows courts the authority to resolve a case (Lampe and Deal 2023, 15). Manifesting in two forms: personal jurisdiction, the court's authority over the parties involved, and subject matter jurisdiction, the court's authority to address specific legal issues (Lampe and Deal 2023,

15). To render a decision on a case, a court must demonstrate both personal and subject matter jurisdiction. Within this federal framework, the American legal system navigates the complexities of governance through the intricate interplay of legal principles and institutions.

III. Variability in Statutory Language

Inherently political documents, statutes are shaped by compromise, negotiation, calculation, deliberation, strategic maneuvering, and chance (VanSickle-Ward 2010, 1). The precision of statutes is intricately tied to policy delegation. Statute specificity, which encompasses how precisely a policy delineates program parameters, such as those pertaining to affected individuals, allocation of funds, and consequences of noncompliance, serves as a clear indicator of effective decision-making and prioritization (VanSickle-Ward 2010, 4). A precise statute:

“...puts the government on one side as opposed to the other sides, it redistributes advantages and disadvantages, it slants and redefines the terms of bargaining...Laws set priorities. Laws deliberately set some goals and values above other” (VanSickle-Ward 2010, 4).

Ambiguous policies, conversely, signify the delegation of decision-making authority to administrative agencies and judges. This contradicts the very essence of the rule of law, as vague statutes render all government actions susceptible to political whims (VanSickle-Ward 2010, 4). Legislators, in shirking their responsibility, often avoid making difficult decisions and resort to compiling ambiguous policies to circumvent addressing the issue at hand. As Kenneth Culp Davis argues:

"...the reason why Congress makes policy without law and commits full discretion to administrative agencies is simply that we had to have each program and no one was willing or able to make a clear decision or set any guidelines" (VanSickle-Ward 2010, 4).

It is reasonable to hypothesize that states' gubernatorial powers wield a substantial influence over the shaping of legislation. State governors' motivations for shaping legislation may vary depending upon the degree of their control over the bureaucracy (VanSickle-Ward 2010, 9). For instance, a preference for less prescriptive statutes potentially is influenced by the governor's confidence in the loyalty of their agency heads. Hence, an additional layer of complexity emerges as most states function under the premise that statewide offices are elected independently, frequently representing divergent political parties, thereby exacerbating policy ambiguity.

Similarly, the implementation of term limits for state officials potentially results in what is deemed as a more "amateur" legislature, restricting the expertise of its members, and thus consequently diminishes the specificity of enacted statutes (VanSickle-Ward 2010, 10). Moreover, legislators' awareness that their tenure is limited, might discourage them from drafting specific bills, as they may not bear the consequences of ambiguity.

A significant variation in state legislatures' level of professionalization is exhibited, and often assessed by factors such as the size of legislators' staffs, their compensation levels, or whether legislative duties are full or part-time roles (VanSickle-Ward 2010, 9). Greater professionalized legislatures possess greater resources and expertise compared to those of less professionalization, resulting in the crafting of more detailed and specific policies. Scholars in congressional studies posit that a "transformative" legislature is defined by its articulation of interests with greater clarity, evidenced through a proactive advocacy role, in comparison to merely serving as a passive approval mechanism for executive actions. (VanSickle-Ward 2010, 9).

Consequently, the opportunity costs associated with drafting specific statutes, such as the commitment of legislators' staff, time, and resources, are lower for legislators serving in highly professionalized bodies compared to those in more citizen-oriented legislatures (VanSickle-Ward 2010, 10).

Statutes serve as the epitome of the United States' contemporary legal framework, functioning as a paramount element in shaping societal norms and behaviors. Crafted with the explicit aim of molding acceptable conduct within society, statutory law holds significant sway over the actions of citizens (Wood 2023, 1). Across centuries, the language embedded within statutory texts has wielded considerable power, directly influencing and delineating the legal rights and responsibilities of ordinary individuals.

While some jurisdictions boast an extensive repository of statutes meticulously detailing specific offenses, others adopt a more succinct approach, relying on overarching statutory provisions. This diversity in the communicative function of statutory texts is a subject of recognition and examination within both linguistic and legal spheres. Moreover, the evolution and interpretation of statutory language not only reflect societal values but also underscore the dynamic interplay between law, language, and social norms in shaping the legal landscape.

IV. Challenges in Categorizing Sexual Offenses Against Children

The notable impediment in defining, "child sexual abuse," thus stems from divergence in states' statutory language regarding sexual offenses against children. A comprehensive analysis of state statutes pertaining to sexual offenses involving individuals under the age of eighteen, as conducted by David Finkelhor in 1994, yielded a conceptualization. Finkelhor (1994) encapsulated the term, "child sexual abuse" as

encompassing, “sexual activities involving a child and an abusive condition, such as coercion or a large age gap between the participants, indicating lack of consensually” (32).

Theoretically, statutes assume paramount significance as they constitute the principal means through which Congress can assert influence over the interpretation and execution of the law, thereby ensuring alignment with congressional preferences (Randazzo et al. 2006, 1006). The extent of discretion embedded within statutes holds critical importance, possessing the capacity to impact the behavior of individual members of the judiciary.

Recognizing the imperative need for conceptual clarity in this expansive legal domain, concerns raised by Ben Mathews and Delphine Collin-Vézina in 2017 emphasized the necessity of affixing a label and delineating the concept of child sexual abuse. Profound advocates of a conceptual model, Mathews and Vézina (2017) contended that such a model would serve as a valuable tool in elucidating the “fundamental principles and features of the phenomenon” (25). This conceptual framework becomes particularly critical given the intricate intersectionality inherent in the terminology, necessitating nuanced consideration at an individual level.

The term, “child” demands a dual perspective that incorporates developmental capacity and legal age of adulthood. Meanwhile, the conceptualization of “sexual” should extend beyond physical contact to encompass noncontact acts pursued for the exclusive purpose of physical or mental gratification. Articulated by Mathews and Vézina (2017), the understanding of “abuse” is:

“...distinctive in possessing a heightened wrongfulness derived from the unconscionability of the acts, which in turn flows from four indicia: a

relationship of power, the child being in a position of inequality, the child's vulnerability being exploited to his or her detriment, and absence of true consent" (45).

The diversity among statutory definitions of "child sexual abuse" across the fifty states underscores the engagement and responsiveness of state legislators in addressing issues related to child protection and safety. By crafting and revising legislation that define and address the complexities of child sexual abuse, state legislators demonstrate a nuanced understanding of the challenges within this policy domain. This legislative variation reflects the diverse socio-cultural contexts, legal frameworks, and priorities across states, as well as the evolving understanding of child sexual abuse within the broader societal context. Ultimately, this variation in statutory language signals the dynamic and proactive role that state legislators play in shaping policies aimed at protecting vulnerable children and addressing the serious issue of child sexual abuse within their jurisdictions.

V. The Uniform Crime Report (UCR)

In the 1960s, mandatory reporting laws were implemented nationwide in the United States; however, the efficacy of these measures is undermined by a significant disparity stemming from the inception of the Uniform Crime Report (UCR).

The initiation of the UCR program's data collection can be traced back to its establishment by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) in 1927. The IACP formed the Committee on Uniform Crime Records to devise a system for gathering standardized police statistics. Initially, the Committee determined that tracking the number of offenses known to law enforcement, regardless of arrest, would best gauge the nation's criminal activity. Evaluating various crimes based on severity, frequency,

geographical prevalence, and likelihood of reporting to authorities, the Committee identified seven crimes for national reporting: felonious homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny-theft, and auto theft. Moreover, recognizing the disparities in criminal codes among states made a simple aggregation of state statistics impractical, as distinguishing between felony and misdemeanor crimes was challenging. To ensure uniformity in crime reporting across the nation, the Committee developed standardized offense definitions for law enforcement agencies to submit data, irrespective of local statutes.

In 1930, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) assumed responsibility for the program, which it has overseen ever since. Over subsequent decades, the FBI has served as the central coordinator for data on offenses known to law enforcement, gathering reports from approximately 18,000 local agencies through the UCR program.

The scope of the UCR Program has evolved significantly over the years, responding to recommendations from various law enforcement advisory bodies. For instance, in 1952, agencies began providing data on the age, sex, and race of arrestees. Additionally, in 1960, prompted by interest groups, the UCR Program began collecting national statistics on law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty.

By the 1980s, law enforcement advocates were calling for a comprehensive overhaul and modernization of the UCR Program, leading to the introduction of the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). NIBRS gathers data on each incident and arrests within 22 offense categories comprising 46 specific crimes known as Group A offenses. Furthermore, there are 11 Group B offenses for which only arrest data are collected. The goal of NIBRS is to leverage modern law enforcement records systems

to provide more detailed and meaningful data than those generated by the traditional summary UCR system.

VI. Charting the Course for Future Research

The thorough examination of existing literature brings to light the persistent challenges in achieving consistent national reporting practices across various domains. While the synthesized insights from scholarly sources provide a strong foundation, there remains a noticeable gap in research pertaining to statistical crime data on sexual offenses against children, emphasizing the urgent need for further investigation into what is influencing states' participation in federal mandatory reporting initiatives like the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program.

My research focus, centered on the variability in reporting practices among states, serves as a focal point for comprehensive discussions where inadequate data impedes societal progress. The central inquiry driving this study delves into the factors contributing to the divergence in reporting practices concerning sexual offenses against children, with a hypothesis suggesting that greater specificity in state statutes correlates with increased likelihood of UCR participation. By examining this aspect, the research aims to reinvigorate a longstanding dilemma from the 19th century for renewed national discourse and consideration.

Theory

The inquiry into the variance among states participation in the federal UCR program and their contribution of offense-specific reporting concerning sexual offenses against children is deeply rooted in the nature of state-federal cooperation. Within my

research, I delve into the intricacies of why certain states embrace offense-specific reporting while others abstain.

I posit that the propensity of states to adopt such reporting methodologies correlates with the intricacy of their statutory language, serving as a reflection of their policy commitment to combating sexual offenses against children. Ultimately, states characterized by detailed statutory provisions are more predisposed to engage in federal crime reporting initiatives, such as the UCR program.

Federalism, an enduring principle enshrined within the United States Constitution, retains its relevance in contemporary American governance. Under this framework, power distribution emphasizes the division between a central national government responsible for overarching governance and smaller subunits addressing localized concerns (Cornell Law School, 2022). This paradigmatic structure underpins the theoretical lens through which we analyze the nexus between states' decisions on offense-specific reporting and their engagement in federal crime reporting endeavors.

Despite the limited purview of the federal government in state-level crime matters, the discretionary nature of the UCR program underscores the role of federalism, granting states significant autonomy in shaping their legal frameworks and policy landscapes. Consequently, states wield the prerogative to delineate the granularity of their statutory language, signaling their prioritization of addressing child sexual abuse. This autonomy engenders divergent strategies among states, with some opting for offense-specific reporting while others pursue alternative avenues.

Moreover, federalism instills a sense of competition among states, wherein policy decisions are influenced by the actions and policies of neighboring jurisdictions as well

as federal initiatives like the UCR program. States endowed with comprehensive statutory language and a pronounced policy emphasis on addressing sexual offenses against children are more inclined to participate in federal reporting initiatives. This participation serves as a demonstration of their commitment to combating such crimes and ensures the uniformity and comparability of data across state boundaries.

Furthermore, institutional theory offers a complementary analytical framework, shedding light on the broader institutional norms, values, and practices shaping states' decision-making processes. I argue that the likelihood of states adopting offense-specific reporting is influenced by institutional pressures and expectations, with the level of statutory detail serving as a tangible manifestation of policy emphasis.

As prior scholarly literature has argued, the specificity of statutes serves as a reliable measure of effective decision-making and prioritization, as evidenced by program parameters such as fund allocation and consequences for noncompliance (VanSickle-Ward 2010, 1). States with a strong institutional commitment to addressing sexual offenses against children tend to enact comprehensive statutory provisions, reflecting their dedication to protecting vulnerable populations.

In cases of disagreement, statutes tend to be more ambiguous, whereas agreements lead to greater specificity. I contend that cooperation with the federal government stems from consensus at the state level regarding the issues they address, measured through the specificity of statutory language.

This multifaceted analysis, informed by previous scholarship and empirical evidence, underpins the formulation of my research hypothesis:

H1: As the percentage of states' statutes with detailed statutory language increases, the percentage of state-level participation in the UCR increases.

My hypothesis is directional, indicating a positive correlation between two variables: the percentage of states' statutes with detailed statutory language and state-level participation in the UCR. This hypothesis is grounded in the premise that states demonstrating alignment through comprehensive statutory language at the state level are also more inclined to align and participate at the federal level.

Research Design

This quantitative research explores the depth of collaboration between state and federal entities in achieving a common objective. The study specifically investigates the correlation between states' statutory language in combating sexual offenses against children and their participation in the federal UCR program. Acknowledging the wide range of offenses across states, this study examines all state policies regarding sexual offenses involving minors (individuals under 18) using the online legal research platform, WestLaw. Given the essential data that the UCR provides, analyzing state-level UCR participation yields valuable insights into individual states' perspectives and priorities regarding these crucial issues.

Independent Variable

The depth of statutory language reflects a state's policy emphasis in codifying laws related to sexual offenses against children, thus the independent variable in this study is State Statutory Language (SSL). To be quantified, a multi-step measurement process is employed.

SSL undergoes an initial ratio-level measurement by identifying and categorizing the total number of state statutes addressing sexual offenses against children. Consequently, each state is assigned a unique number based on the number of legislative policies they have enacted, as of 2016.

To streamline analysis, SSL undergoes a nominal level of measurement by categorizing states' statutes, as of 2016, on sexual offenses against children into two distinct categories: Detailed Statutory Language (DSL) and Broad Statutory Language (BSL). It's important to note the contextual significance of "level of detail" within this study. As such, statutes characterized by detailed language, with a word count exceeding 294 words, are labeled as "DSL." Conversely, statutes falling below this word count criterion are appropriately categorized as Broad Statutory Language and referred to as "BSL." Furthermore, this criterion provides the total number of DSL and BSL statutes for each individual state, contributing to the quantification of SSL.

The distinction between Detailed Statutory Language (DSL) and Broad Statutory Language (BSL) was determined by calculating an average word count of 293.2 words across all statutes related to sexual offenses against children in all 50 U.S. states. This average was rounded to 294 words, serving as the threshold for categorization.

Moreover, SSL is expressed through a unique percentage value. Each U.S. state yields an unique SSL percentage, derived through dividing the states' total number of DSL statutes by the states' overall total of statutes on sexual offenses against children

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in this study assesses the involvement of individual states in the federal UCR program, and is referred to as State Reporting Measures (SRM). Like

SSL, SRM undergoes multi-level measurement for accurate quantification and is examined under a three year time frame, from 2017 to 2020.

Initially, a nominal-level measurement is utilized as SRM yields binary outcomes based on states being categorized as participating or not participating in the federal Uniform Crime Report (UCR). In this study, for a state to be classified as participating in the UCR, its annual participation must encompass at least 75% involvement from all agencies within its jurisdiction. Conversely, if a state's participation rate falls below 75%, it is classified as failing to meet the threshold for participation in the UCR program. Therefore, SRM is quantified by all 50 U.S. states' annual participation rate and is demonstrated through individual states' unique percentage values.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Crime Data Explorer Database served as the primary data source for calculating and determining states' annual participation rate, as it identified the total number of state agencies as well as the number of agencies submitting data to the federal UCR program from 2017 to 2020.

Microsoft Excel streamlined the calculation of states' participation percentages by dividing the number of agencies annually submitting data to the federal UCR program by the total number of established state agencies for each calendar year. This method generated a SRM percentage for each state, indicating compliance or non-compliance with the 75% participatory threshold. Consequently, the analysis yielded 150 distinct SRM percentages throughout 2017 to 2020.

Unit of Analysis

At its core, the analysis delves into the intricate dynamics of states' engagement with the federal UCR program, scrutinizing their participation at the individual state

level. Thus, the unit of analysis in this study is the individual state, encompassing all 50 states of the United States. Each state serves as a distinct entity for data collection, analysis, and interpretation, allowing for a comprehensive examination of the relationship between SSL and SRM.

Population and Sample

The population of this study encompasses all statutes pertaining to sexual offenses against children in the United States. All 50 states have unique legislative approaches and priorities in response to sexual offenses against children, thus the inclusion of all states' statutes allows for the comprehensive representation of the diverse legal landscape in the United States.

Due to the vast number of laws in this policy domain, the sample for this study includes states' statutes concerning child sexual offenses as of the year 2016. By focusing on this specific subset of the population, I can accurately track states' participation in the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program before the timeframe when the dependent variable is measured. Aligning the sample timeline with the period of interest helps reduce potential biases and confounding factors, thereby enhancing the validity and credibility of the research findings.

Descriptive Quantitative Analysis

I employed descriptive quantitative analysis techniques to present data on the variables, SSL and SRM, in visually interactive ways, thereby offering a unique perspective and enhancing the understanding of the dataset. This involved using various graphical representations such as tables, bar charts, and maps to showcase different aspects of the data distribution and patterns. By utilizing these visual aids, I aimed to

provide a comprehensive overview of the dataset, making it easier for readers to interpret and derive insights from the dataset.

Independent Variable

As the analysis of gubernatorial powers, ideological disparities, infrastructure differences, and policy objectives serve as crucial factors in evaluating state level policy emphasis, I employ the variation in states' statutory language as a metric for assessing the degree of policy emphasis regarding sexual offenses against children (VanSickle-Ward 2010, 9). I meticulously curated my own dataset by leveraging WestLaw to conduct an in-depth examination of statutory provisions related to sexual offenses against children across all 50 states. This analysis yielded valuable insights into several key aspects, including the number of statutes enacted by individual states, the length of these statutes, the language used, and the associated policy objectives. Figure 1 below provides a comparative overview of the diverse number of statutes dedicated to addressing sexual offenses against children in each state as of the year 2016:

Figure 1: Comparison of the Number of Statutory Laws for Sexual Offenses Against Children Across the United States (2016)

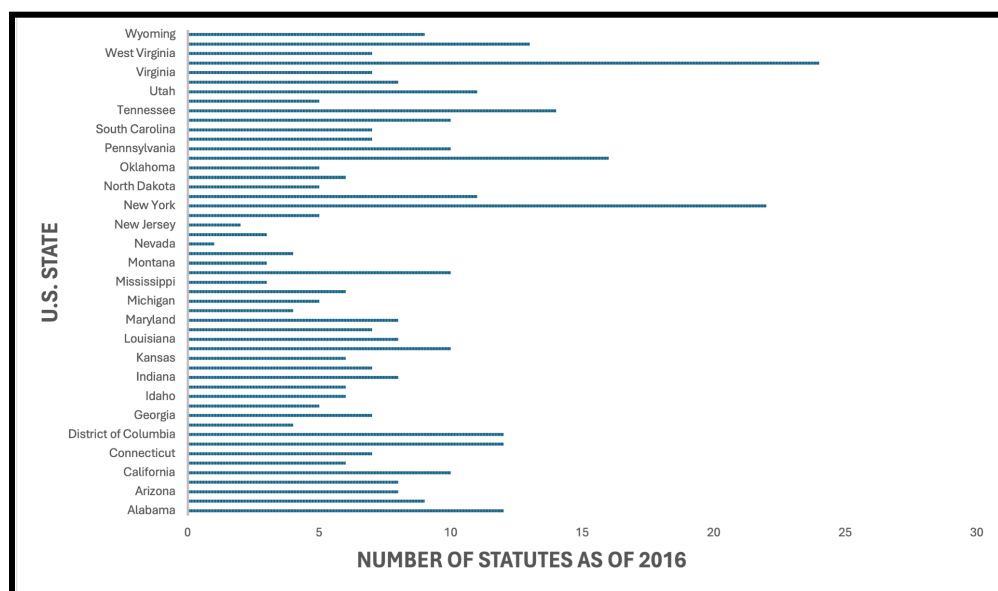
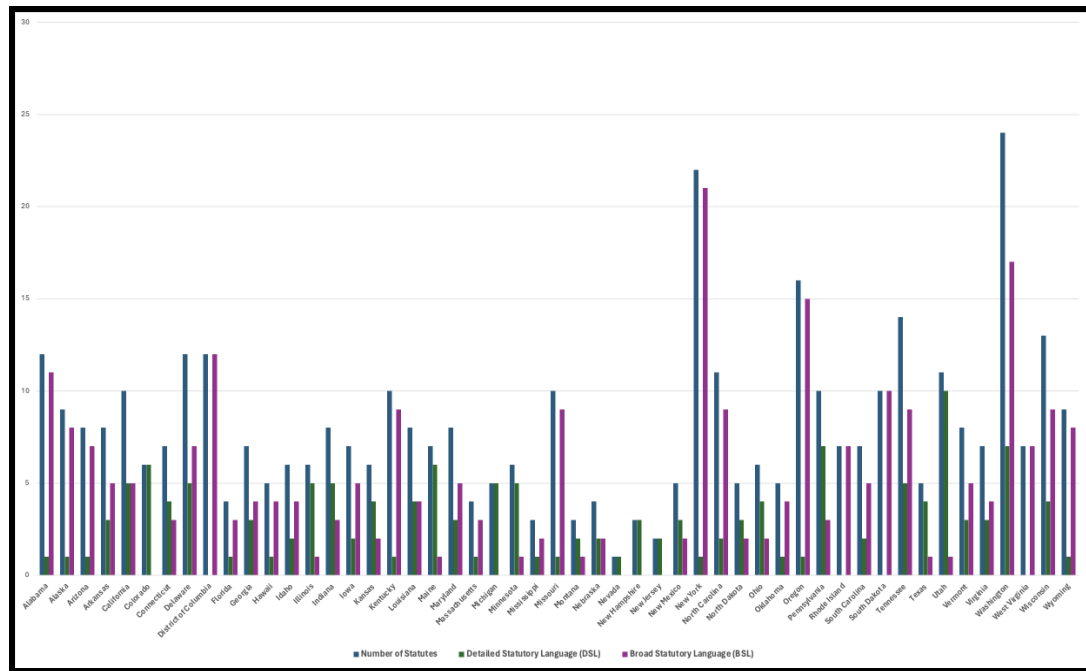


Figure 1 illustrates the extensive array of legislative strategies employed by states regarding policies related to sexual offenses against children. It does so by highlighting the total number of statutes enacted as of 2016, that specifically target such offenses. Washington leads with the most policies, boasting 24 individual statutes addressing these crimes, whereas Nevada has only 1 statutory provision. Significantly, the tally of total statutes on this subject matter, as illustrated in Figure 1, advances my research by offering a visual representation of the population size and providing valuable descriptive statistics for the calculation of the independent variable, SSL.

Expanding on prior scholarly literature that posits ambiguous policies imply a transfer of decision-making authority, I utilize the diversity in states' statutory language as a measure to evaluate the extent of policy emphasis concerning sexual offenses against children (VanSickle-Ward 2010, 4).

I utilized the total count of state statutes, as depicted in Figure 1, to capture an additional layer of descriptive statistical data. This data helped determine the total number of detailed statutes and broad statutes per state, as of 2016. As outlined in my research design, the threshold of 294 words was used to classify statutes as either Detailed Statutory Language (DSL) or Broad Statutory Language (BSL). Figure 2 reaffirms the number of statutes across all 50 states and further illustrates the total number of state statutes exhibiting DSL or BSL:

Figure 2: Comparison of the Level of Statutory Detail for Sexual Offenses Against Children Across the United States (2016)



For enhanced clarity and a more comprehensive presentation, the findings utilized in generating Figure 2 are expanded upon in Table 1:

Table 1: Comparison of the Level of Statutory Detail for Sexual Offenses Against Children Across the United States (2016)

State	Number of Statutes	Detailed Statutory Language (DSL)	Broad Statutory Language (BSL)
Alabama	12	1	11
Alaska	9	1	8
Arizona	8	1	7
Arkansas	8	3	5
California	10	5	5
Colorado	6	6	0
Connecticut	7	4	7
Delaware	12	5	7
District of Columbia	12	0	12
Florida	4	1	3
Georgia	7	3	4
Hawaii	5	1	4
Idaho	6	2	4
Illinois	6	5	1
Indiana	8	5	3
Iowa	7	2	5
Kansas	6	4	2
Kentucky	10	1	9
Louisiana	8	4	4
Maine	7	6	1
Maryland	8	3	5
Massachusetts	4	1	3
Michigan	5	5	0
Minnesota	6	5	1
Mississippi	3	1	2
Missouri	10	1	9
Montana	3	2	1
Nebraska	4	2	2
Nevada	1	1	0
New Hampshire	3	3	0
New Jersey	2	2	0
New Mexico	5	3	2
New York	22	1	21
North Carolina	11	2	9
North Dakota	5	3	2
Ohio	6	4	2
Oklahoma	5	1	4
Oregon	16	1	15
Pennsylvania	10	7	3
Rhode Island	7	0	7
South Carolina	7	2	5
South Dakota	10	0	10
Tennessee	14	5	9
Texas	5	4	1
Utah	11	10	1
Vermont	8	3	5
Virginia	7	3	4
Washington	24	7	17
West Virginia	7	0	7
Wisconsin	13	4	9
Wyoming	9	1	8

As illustrated in Figure 2 and Table 1, policies concerning sexual offenses against children predominantly feature broad statutory language. Interestingly, the District of Columbia, Rhode Island, and West Virginia do not have any statutes characterized by Detailed Statutory Language (DSL). Conversely, Colorado, Michigan, Nevada, New Hampshire, and New Jersey do not have any statutes with Broad Statutory Language (BSL). This highlights a noteworthy variation in the legislative approach across different states regarding the specificity of language in addressing these offenses.

Dependent Variable

SRM fulfills the role of identifying states' involvement in the federal Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program spanning from 2017 to 2020. As outlined in my research design, SRM generates a binary outcome based on whether a state achieves at least 75% participation from all agencies within its jurisdiction. Through the investigation of SRM during this timeframe, my objective was to demonstrate the correlation between states' participation and SSL. Analyzing post-2016 years allows for the observation of state-level engagement subsequent to the enactment of recent statutes. This methodology is vital because examining the dependent variable before 2016 would not have provided substantive insights due to the lack of detailed data.

Presented in Table 2 are the total count of state agencies, the number of agencies actively participating in the UCR, and the corresponding percentage of agency participation for the year 2017:

Table 2: U.S. State's Participation in the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program (2017)

State	State Agencies (#)	Participating Agencies (#)	State-Level Participation in the UCR (%)
Alabama	419	377	90%
Alaska	39	32	82%
Arizona	124	114	92%
Arkansas	310	297	96%
California	738	735	100%
Colorado	244	224	92%
Connecticut	107	107	100%
Delaware	62	62	100%
District of Columbia	3	3	100%
Florida	680	603	89%
Georgia	657	544	83%
Hawaii	4	4	100%
Idaho	112	112	100%
Illinois	927	757	82%
Indiana	373	271	73%
Iowa	251	242	96%
Kansas	414	372	90%
Kentucky	442	438	99%
Louisiana	226	196	87%
Maine	135	135	100%
Maryland	155	154	99%
Massachusetts	412	368	89%
Michigan	651	637	98%
Minnesota	409	409	100%
Mississippi	235	84	36%
Missouri	611	604	99%
Montana	113	109	96%
Nebraska	269	237	88%
Nevada	63	61	97%
New Hampshire	204	187	92%
New Jersey	576	576	100%
New Mexico	127	121	95%
New York	592	569	96%
North Carolina	531	392	74%
North Dakota	113	110	97%
Ohio	856	658	77%
Oklahoma	422	418	99%
Oregon	239	208	87%
Pennsylvania	1498	1489	99%
Rhode Island	49	49	100%
South Carolina	461	447	97%
South Dakota	141	122	87%
Tennessee	467	467	100%
Texas	1103	1062	96%
Utah	141	128	91%
Vermont	90	90	100%
Virginia	422	415	98%
Washington	274	259	95%
West Virginia	436	259	59%
Wisconsin	440	437	99%
Wyoming	70	57	81%

During 2017, most states surpassed the 75% threshold for state-level agency participation and successfully participated in the UCR. However, Mississippi, North Carolina, Indiana, and West Virginia fell short of this requirement and did not actively partake in the UCR.

Figure 4 provides a visual representation of states with 100% agency participation in the UCR, states actively participating in the UCR, and those that did not participate in the year 2017:

Figure 4: U.S. State's Participation in the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program (2017)

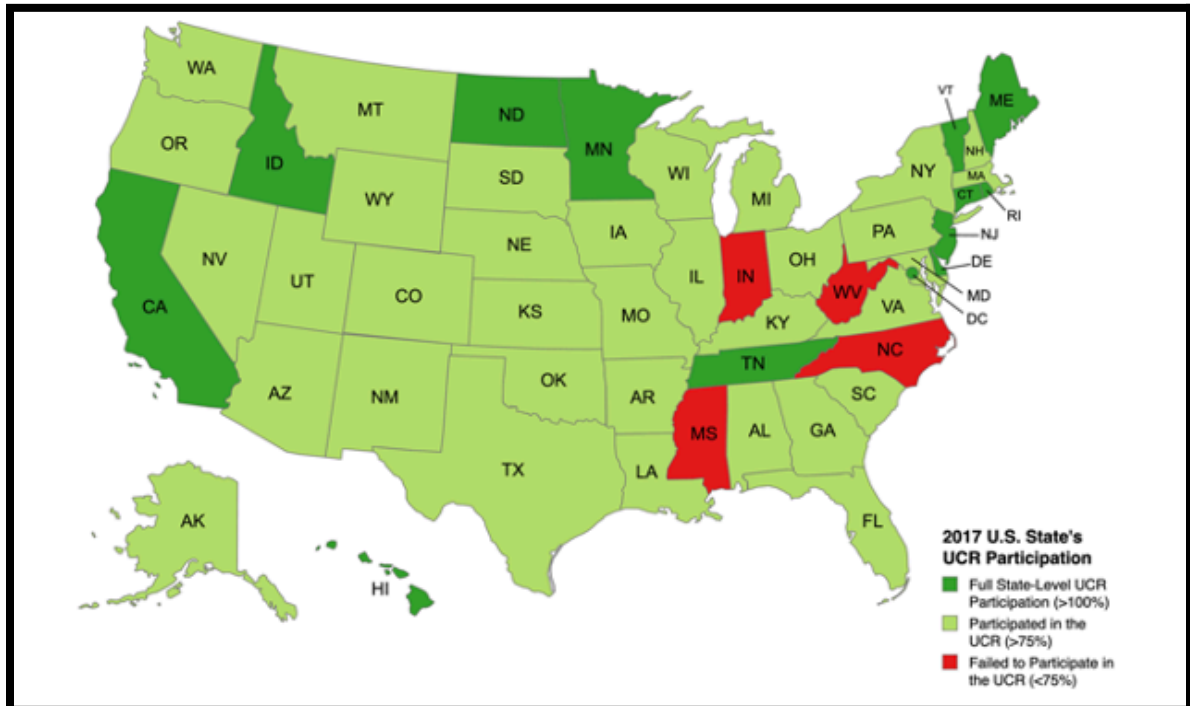


Table 3 depicts the total count of state agencies, the number of agencies actively participating in the UCR, and the corresponding percentage of agency participation for the year 2018:

Table 3: U.S. State's Participation in the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program (2018)

State	State Agencies (#)	Participating Agencies (#)	State-Level Participation in the UCR (%)
Alabama	426	376	88%
Alaska	39	33	85%
Arizona	124	116	94%
Arkansas	310	292	94%
California	741	737	99%
Colorado	245	223	91%
Connecticut	106	106	100%
Delaware	62	62	100%
District of Columbia	3	3	100%
Florida	682	672	99%
Georgia	654	536	82%
Hawaii	4	4	100%
Idaho	112	111	99%
Illinois	929	770	83%
Indiana	374	267	71%
Iowa	254	241	95%
Kansas	415	370	89%
Kentucky	482	413	86%
Louisiana	251	198	79%
Maine	135	135	100%
Maryland	155	154	99%
Massachusetts	413	369	89%
Michigan	655	642	98%
Minnesota	406	403	99%
Mississippi	235	78	33%
Missouri	603	591	98%
Montana	113	108	96%
Nebraska	270	234	87%
Nevada	64	64	100%
New Hampshire	205	187	91%
New Jersey	577	576	100%
New Mexico	127	119	94%
New York	593	576	97%
North Carolina	531	391	74%
North Dakota	109	109	100%
Ohio	854	634	74%
Oklahoma	429	425	99%
Oregon	236	228	97%
Pennsylvania	1502	1494	99%
Rhode Island	49	49	100%
South Carolina	465	447	96%
South Dakota	143	133	93%
Tennessee	464	463	100%
Texas	1122	1030	92%
Utah	144	130	90%
Vermont	88	88	100%
Virginia	422	417	99%
Washington	277	259	94%
West Virginia	439	262	60%
Wisconsin	443	438	99%
Wyoming	68	58	85%

Once again, during 2018, most states participated in the UCR program, surpassing the 75% threshold for state-level agency participation. However, Mississippi, North Carolina, Indiana, Ohio, and West Virginia fell short of this requirement and did not actively partake in the UCR. To illustrate this visually, Figure 5 delineates the states with

100% agency participation, states participating in the UCR, and those that did not participate in 2018:

Figure 5: U.S. State's Participation in the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program (2018)

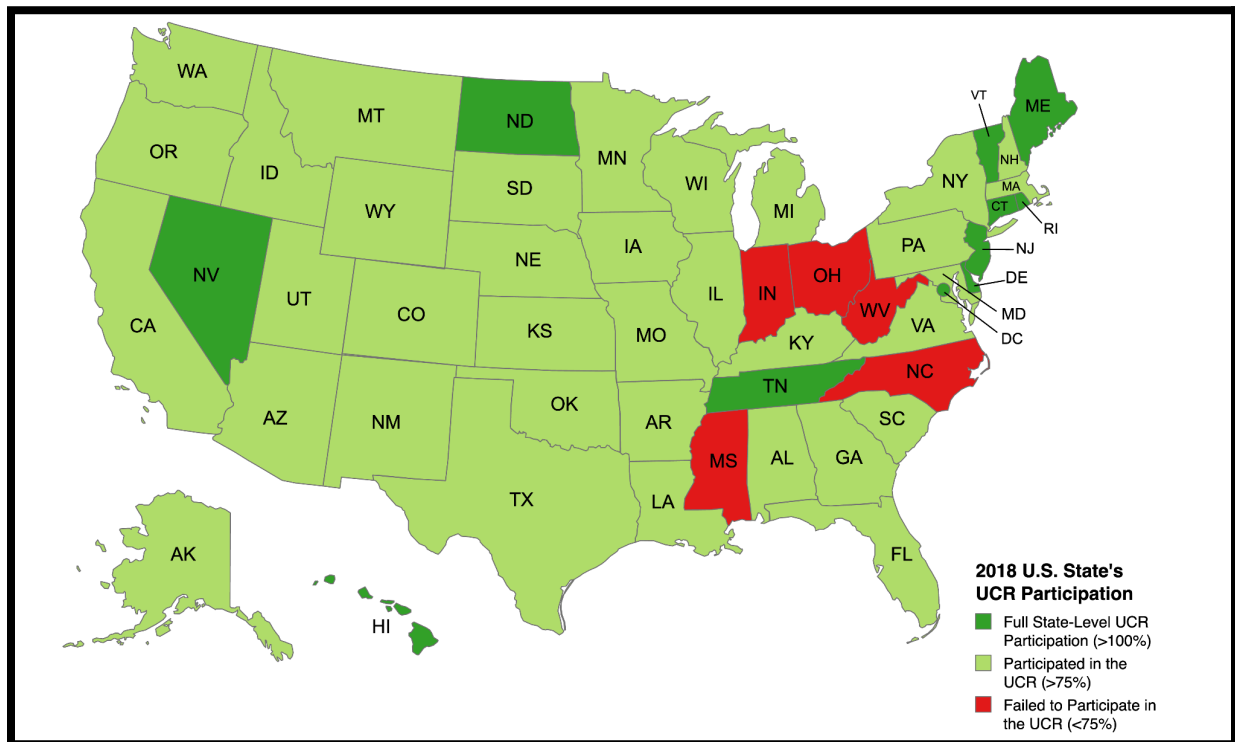


Table 4 displays the total count of state agencies, the number of agencies actively participating in the UCR, and the corresponding percentage of agency participation for the year 2019:

Table 4: U.S. State's Participation in the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program (2019)

State	State Agencies (#)	Participating Agencies (#)	State-Level Participation in the UCR (%)
Alabama	432	359	83%
Alaska	39	33	85%
Arizona	125	114	91%
Arkansas	308	287	93%
California	743	738	99%
Colorado	244	230	94%
Connecticut	107	107	100%
Delaware	62	62	100%
District of Columbia	3	3	100%
Florida	687	678	99%
Georgia	657	528	80%
Hawaii	4	4	100%
Idaho	113	111	98%
Illinois	934	761	81%
Indiana	413	292	71%
Iowa	257	247	96%
Kansas	414	378	91%
Kentucky	492	413	84%
Louisiana	350	191	55%
Maine	135	135	100%
Maryland	154	153	99%
Massachusetts	411	373	91%
Michigan	652	644	99%
Minnesota	410	407	99%
Mississippi	235	83	35%
Missouri	600	574	96%
Montana	113	106	94%
Nebraska	272	239	88%
Nevada	63	62	98%
New Hampshire	208	193	93%
New Jersey	577	577	100%
New Mexico	128	122	95%
New York	596	571	96%
North Carolina	534	387	72%
North Dakota	110	109	99%
Ohio	857	631	74%
Oklahoma	435	432	99%
Oregon	235	225	96%
Pennsylvania	1506	1481	98%
Rhode Island	49	49	100%
South Carolina	468	417	89%
South Dakota	143	130	91%
Tennessee	463	463	100%
Texas	1145	1056	92%
Utah	145	130	90%
Vermont	88	88	100%
Virginia	419	415	99%
Washington	275	257	93%
West Virginia	437	255	58%
Wisconsin	444	434	98%
Wyoming	68	55	81%

In 2019, most states participated in the UCR program, surpassing the 75% threshold for state-level agency participation. However, Mississippi, North Carolina, Indiana, Ohio, Louisiana, and West Virginia fell short of this requirement and did not actively partake in the UCR. To illustrate this visually, Figure 6 demonstrates the states with 100% agency participation, states participating in the UCR, and those that did not participate in 2019:

Figure 6: U.S. State's Participation in the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program (2019)

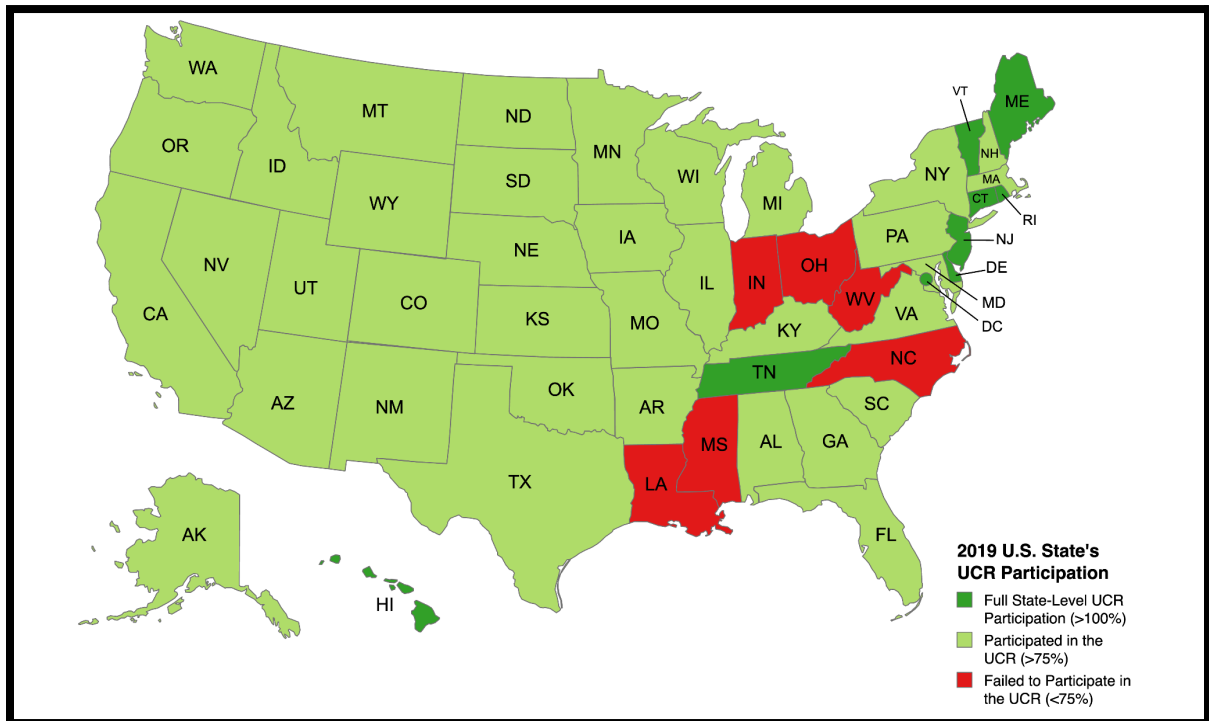


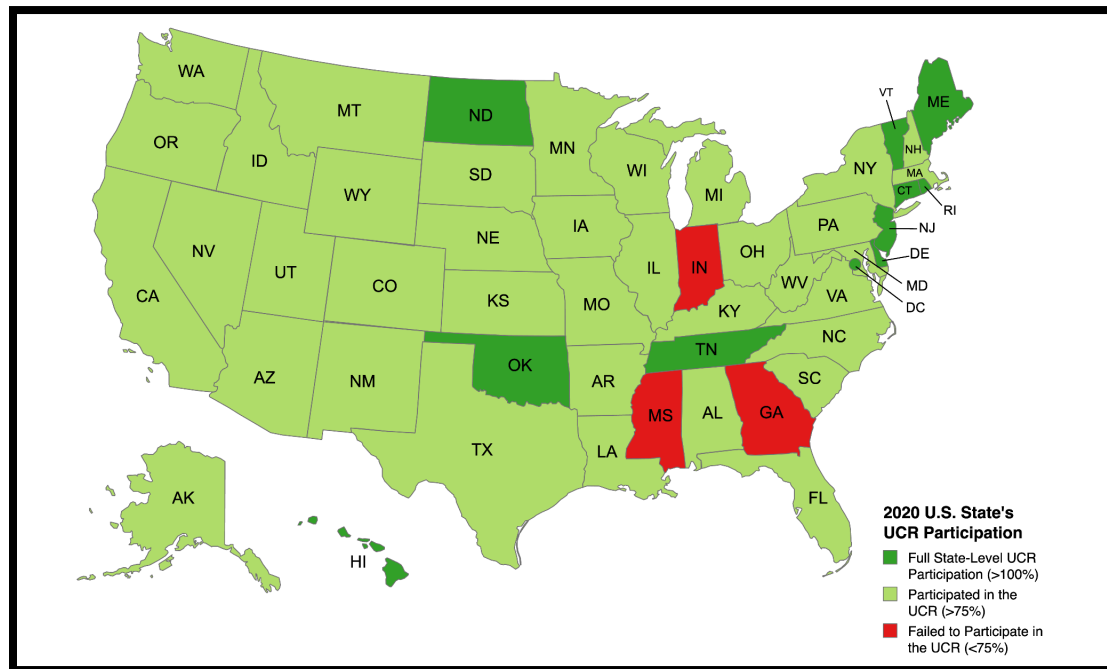
Table 5 depicts the total count of state agencies, the number of agencies actively participating in the UCR, and the corresponding percentage of agency participation for the year 2020:

Table 5: U.S. State's Participation in the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program (2020)

State	State Agencies (#)	Participating Agencies (#)	State-Level Participation in the UCR (%)
Alabama	434	367	85%
Alaska	39	33	85%
Arizona	125	110	88%
Arkansas	306	292	95%
California	740	732	99%
Colorado	246	232	94%
Connecticut	107	107	100%
Delaware	62	62	100%
District of Columbia	3	3	100%
Florida	687	679	99%
Georgia	655	444	68%
Hawaii	4	4	100%
Idaho	114	113	99%
Illinois	935	718	77%
Indiana	338	213	63%
Iowa	272	254	93%
Kansas	417	367	88%
Kentucky	466	427	92%
Louisiana	253	192	76%
Maine	133	133	100%
Maryland	153	152	99%
Massachusetts	412	374	91%
Michigan	648	638	98%
Minnesota	419	416	99%
Mississippi	256	132	52%
Missouri	593	551	93%
Montana	114	108	95%
Nebraska	272	240	88%
Nevada	63	60	95%
New Hampshire	211	195	92%
New Jersey	578	578	100%
New Mexico	128	121	95%
New York	593	563	95%
North Carolina	534	410	77%
North Dakota	110	110	100%
Ohio	859	647	75%
Oklahoma	443	441	100%
Oregon	234	215	92%
Pennsylvania	1504	1289	86%
Rhode Island	49	49	100%
South Carolina	470	410	87%
South Dakota	145	130	90%
Tennessee	463	463	100%
Texas	1157	1062	92%
Utah	145	131	90%
Vermont	88	88	100%
Virginia	422	416	99%
Washington	275	255	93%
West Virginia	463	436	94%
Wisconsin	448	434	97%
Wyoming	69	58	84%

By the year 2020, the majority of states continued to take part in the UCR program, exceeding the 75% threshold for state-level agency participation. From my analysis, 2020 stood out as the year with the highest state agency participation and the lowest number of state agencies abstaining from participation. Notably, Indiana, Mississippi, and Georgia were the only states that failed to meet this requirement and did not actively engage in the UCR. Figure 7 showcases the states that achieved 100% agency participation, those that participated in the UCR, and those that did not participate in the year 2020:

Figure 7: U.S. State's Participation in the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program (2020)



Quantitative Research Design Analysis

This quantitative study explores the complex dynamics of state policies on sexual offenses against children and state-federal cooperation through the lens of regression analysis. My main objective is to examine the relationship between the independent variable, State Statutory Language (SSL), and the dependent variable, State Reporting Measures (SRM). Regression analysis is pivotal as it uncovers statistical insights into how the specificity of statutory language affects state-level participation in the federal UCR program. This methodology goes beyond merely identifying correlations; it quantifies the influence of statutory language on achieving state-federal policy objectives, thereby offering valuable insights for policymakers and stakeholders in the field.

From 2017 to 2020, separate regression models were built using the statistical software Stata, each with a sample size denoted as 'N' and comprising 50 observations per

model. These observations, one for State Statutory Language (SSL) and one for UCR participation (SRM), represent all 50 states in the United States.

Quantitative Analysis Results

Table 6. Effect of Policy Focus on UCR Participation (2017)	
Dependent Variable: UCR Participation 2017	
Independent Variable	Model 1
<i>SSL</i>	0.08 (0.08)
<i>N</i>	51
<i>R</i> ²	0.0210
* <i>p</i> <0.05; ** <i>p</i> <0.01; *** <i>p</i> <0.001.	

Table 6 presents the regression model findings for the year 2017. The R-squared value of 0.0210 suggests that around 2.1% of the variability in states' UCR participation in 2017 can be explained by the states' percentage of detailed statutes addressing sexual offenses against children. This relatively low R-squared value implies that there could be additional factors influencing state-level participation that aren't considered in this analysis. However, it's important to note that this value alone doesn't offer enough insight into determining statistical significance.

To determine statistical significance, it is crucial to scrutinize the associated p-value of the coefficient, which in this model was 0.3104, rounded to 0.31. This value indicates that the observed data is not statistically significant. Typically, for a sample size of this nature, a p-value below 0.05 or 0.10 would be necessary to establish statistical significance. Given that the p-value exceeds these thresholds, there is inadequate evidence to establish a relationship between the percentage of state statutes incorporating detailed statutory language and the percentage of state-level participation in the federal UCR program. Thus, further investigation or consideration of other variables may be

needed to better understand the factors influencing UCR participation in states regarding sexual offenses against children.

Table 7. Effect of Policy Focus on UCR Participation (2018)	
Dependent Variable: UCR Participation 2018	
Independent Variable	Model 1
<i>SSL</i>	0.01 (0.01)
<i>N</i>	51
<i>R</i> ²	0.0104

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 7 showcases the regression model results for the year 2018, revealing that approximately 1.04% of the variation in state-level participation in the 2018 federal UCR program can be ascribed to the percentage of state statutes with detailed statutory language, as indicated by the R-squared value of 0.0104. Notably, this represents a decline in explanatory power compared to the previous year's findings (2.1% variability in 2017 dropping to 1.04% in 2018), highlighting a weakening relationship between the variables over time.

Moreover, the p-value associated with this model is 0.4769, rounded to 0.48, surpassing the threshold for establishing statistical significance or a substantial relationship between the percentage of state statutes incorporating detailed statutory language and state-level participation in the federal UCR program. This further underscores the limited impact of SSL on the SRM in this context.

Table 8. Effect of Policy Focus on UCR Participation (2019)

Dependent Variable: UCR Participation 2019	
Independent Variable	Model 1
<i>SSL</i>	0.06 (0.06)
<i>N</i>	51
<i>R</i> ²	0.0183

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 8 reveals the regression model results for the year 2019. The R-squared value of 0.0183, rounded to 0.02, signifies that 1.83% of the variation in state-level participation in the 2019 federal UCR program can be attributed to the percentage of detailed statutory language statutes pertaining to sexual offenses against children. This slight uptick, compared to Table 7, marks a stabilization in explanatory power from the previous year's decline (2.1% variability in 2017 dropping to 1.04% in 2018, and then increasing slightly to 1.83% in 2019), albeit still indicating an overall weak relationship between the variables.

Furthermore, Table 8's p-value of 0.3440, rounded to 0.34, suggests that while this model approaches the threshold for statistical significance (< 0.05 or 0.10), it falls short, indicating insufficient evidence to establish a significant relationship between the percentage of state statutes containing detailed statutory language and the percentage of state-level participation in the federal UCR program.

Table 9. Effect of Policy Focus on UCR Participation (2020)

Dependent Variable: UCR Participation 2020	
Independent Variable	Model 1
<i>SSL</i>	- 0.07 (-0.07)
<i>N</i>	51
<i>R</i> ²	0.0246

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 9 unveils the regression model outcomes for the year 2020. The R-squared value of 0.0246, rounded to 0.02, signifies that 2.46% of the variability in state-level participation in the 2020 federal UCR program can be attributed to the percentage of detailed statutory language statutes addressing sexual offenses against children. Despite this, the modest nature of this R-squared value suggests that the variation in state-level participation may not be fully captured by the percentage of states' statutes embodying detailed statutory language.

Nonetheless, this model boasts the highest R-squared value observed in this analysis, hinting at the potential for significant statistical findings if future years of state-level UCR participation were examined, although such an inquiry is beyond the scope of this study.

The model's p-value of 0.2713, rounded to 0.27, represents a slight move towards the threshold for establishing statistical significance (< 0.05 or 0.10). Yet, currently, there is insufficient evidence to establish a definitive relationship between the percentage of state statutes incorporating detailed statutory language and the percentage of state-level participation in the federal UCR program.

Conclusion

Driven by a profound passion to advocate for children's rights in cases of sexual crimes, my initial research journey aimed to uncover the factors influencing conviction rates for child molestation cases—a topic overlooked in much of scholarly literature. However, my exploration was abruptly halted when I encountered yet another significant gap in research: the alarming scarcity of detailed statistical data on sexual offenses

against children. This realization not only redirected my research focus but also intensified my dedication to advocating for child victims.

The absence of comprehensive crime data wasn't limited to offenses against children but extended across all areas. Uncovering that states had the discretion to report crime data to the federal government was eye-opening. This prompted me to delve into why certain states opted for reporting while others didn't, forming the foundation of my research. Specifically, I focused on understanding the motivations behind state level cooperation with federal policy goals. This led me to scrutinize states' involvement in the federal Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program, the sole federal initiative for nationwide crime data. Given the diverse policies across states, I analyzed individual states' statutory language as a key factor influencing their participation.

Statutory language plays a crucial role as an indicator of a state's policy priorities, showcasing the resources allocated to addressing specific issues. For my research, delving into the level of detail within statutes across all 50 states in the United States concerning sexual offenses against children was imperative. I anticipated that certain states would emerge, highlighting their heightened policy focus through their statutory language.

Through descriptive analysis, I uncovered a wide spectrum of policy initiatives across states in this realm. Despite each state having a varying number of statutes (ranging from 1 to 25) targeting sexual offenses against children, I knew that this alone couldn't act as the sole measure of policy emphasis. Furthermore, considering the vast difference in the length of statutes, from thousands of words to just a few, the examination of individual statutes' language was imperative.

Nevertheless, descriptive statistical analysis revealed that the majority of states opted for broad statutory language (BSL) in their legislation addressing sexual offenses against children. Such ambiguity often leads to decision-making authority delegated to administrative agencies and judges, perpetuating the issue (VanSickle-Ward, 2010, p. 4). Given the scarcity of specific statistical crime data on sexual offenses against children, this finding was unsurprising.

Despite expecting some states to have no participation due to data availability issues, I was surprised to find that all 50 states reported data to the federal UCR program from 2017 to 2020. However, measuring states' participation required a nuanced approach as the number of agencies within each state, and their participation, fluctuated over the years. For example, Georgia had 657 state agencies in 2017, which decreased to 655 by 2020. Meanwhile, the District of Columbia consistently achieved 100% statewide participation, while Mississippi consistently fell short of the 75% participation threshold from 2017 to 2020.

While further research could explore factors like states' populations to understand the variance in participating state agencies over time, my research timeline limited such investigations beyond the scope of this paper.

My quantitative regression analysis revealed a weak positive correlation between the percentage of states' statutory laws with detailed statutory language (DSL) and the percentage of states' participation in the federal UCR program. Although the correlation coefficient showed minimal variation from 2017 to 2020, it remained relatively consistent. Thus, the percentage of states with detailed statutory language did not offer sufficient insight to confirm or reject my hypothesis.

While my original hypothesis didn't yield definitive conclusions, one thing remains clear: there is a pressing need for future research to delve into the motivations and implications of state-level statistical crime reporting. While a state's statutory language may not be the sole influencing factor, there are underlying elements affecting states' contributions to this field that require exploration. Without further research, the enhancement of comprehensive crime statistical data is unlikely, and the crucial data needed for analyzing sexual offenses against children may never materialize. I hope this paper ignites in you the same passion it did in me to investigate the lack of statistical crime data and to influence future legislative agendas.

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