

Racial Disparities in Imprisonment Rates in Nebraska: A Case Study of Panhandle County

Ed A. Muñoz

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ABSTRACT

A racial/ethnic analysis of total adult male admissions in six Nebraska Department of Correctional Services (DCS) facilities for a 5-year period, from 1987 to 1991, shows Latino admissions almost doubling. Interestingly, the majority of Latino males sentenced to Nebraska penal facilities enter the system from Panhandle County, a sparsely populated rural agricultural county. Census data indicate that Latino prison admissions in Nebraska and, even more so, in Panhandle County are highly disproportionate to respective 1990 state and county population figures. In addition, a comparison of Latino imprisonment rates in eight counties with Latino populations of 1,000 or more shows Latinos entering the prison system at higher rates from smaller rural counties. Finally, bivariate and multivariate analyses of Panhandle County district court records point to a double standard of justice in Panhandle County favoring Anglos over Latinos and Native Americans. This publication was presented to the Graduate College faculty at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, in partial fulfillment of requirements for the Master of Arts degree. It was prepared under the supervision of Professor Jay Corzine, 1992.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Muñoz, a faculty member of Iowa State University's expanding Latino Studies Program, refers to himself as a "Nebrasqueno" — a Chicano born and raised in the heartland state of Nebraska. He earned his B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. in sociology and is an assistant professor at ISU. Dr. Muñoz currently teaches courses in race and ethnic relations, criminology and deviance, and social science research techniques. His primary area of research focuses on the racial/ethnic bias in the Midwest's rural criminal justice system, and the sentencing dispositions of Latinos within those systems.