



CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This final chapter motivates for writing and doing research on voting effects on public policy decision-making. It was noted how the subject matter was qualified by concentrating on public policy decision making as reflected in government spending for HIV/AIDS. In this final chapter more than anywhere else, opinions are expressed and recommendations are made, when possible supported by the data analysis.

It was noted how many of the independent variables turned out to be un-correlated to the dependent variable provincial government spending for HIV/AIDS. Such an occurrence may reflect the actual state of affairs, in that HIV/AIDS policy in South Africa is indecisive and appears to not reflect the input of key stakeholders. Notably, it was shown that voters could influence provincial government spending and decision making for HIV/AIDS. National government, however, has not shown its unqualified commitment to spending on HIV/AIDS prevention. It would do well to align itself, for example, with the TAC that has been more of an adversary than a partner in reducing the HIV/AIDS prevalence rate. With that in mind, further policy analysis is recommended to further understand the electorate's ability to influence public policy decisions.

6.2 MOTIVATIONS

When this dissertation was begun a little more than a year and half ago, the research was inspired by the work of Husted and Kenny. In those early days, there was a search for direction; direction was found through a brief communication [e-mail] from Professor



Husted. Mentioning this is not to express an endorsement, nor should it be construed that one was given. Rather, mention is made to reflect enthusiasm and desire to study voting patterns in the context of public administration and public policy. At that time, the research needed focus. Soon there was recognition of a need to study the HIV/AIDS crisis in South Africa in the context of public policy. After much thought, the title “The Effect of the Voting Franchise on Public Policy Decision Making and Provincial Government Spending for HIV/AIDS” was chosen and settled upon.

Admittedly, the initial hypothesis was that “voters had the ability to influence public policy decision making,” as reflected in government spending for HIV/AIDS. Indeed, the hypothesis was stated in the positive form because the convention seemed to be to state the hypothesis positively and then set off to prove or disprove the positive statement. With a fair amount of knowledge of how the Mbeki administration (more precisely the Minister of Health) had vacillated on HIV/AIDS policy, there was conviction that the voters did not have the ability to affect policy, or were having very little effect on HIV/AIDS by voting. The construed Mbeki statement, “HIV does not cause AIDS” and the Health Minister’s “beetroot prescriptions” seemed to support the notion that the government was not responsive to voters [constituents]. Notably, it was easy to fall into the trap of drawing a conclusion before concluding the research. As the research, writing and thought processes began, with the daily doom and gloom news of the HIV/AIDS state of affairs in South Africa, it seemed more appropriate to state the hypothesis in the negative. Indeed, by the time the third chapter was finished, a decision was made to state a negative hypothesis as opposed to a positive hypothesis. Surprisingly, the negative hypothesis was disproved and refuted that, at least at the provincial sphere of



government, that voters cannot influence public policy and for that matter government spending for HIV/AIDS. At the provincial level, the data tended to indicate that there is a positive [linear] relationship between voter turnout and government spending.

Although non-probability sampling was used, something [positive] has to be said of the quality of the secondary data. Rightly, the reliability and validity of [secondary] data collected by Statistics South Africa (SSA) should be suspect and viewed with a jaundiced eye. Thus, being pragmatic no weakness in the data was detected, at the least, in the quality of SSA's data – either in collection or presentation. At best, there is hope that another dimension has been brought to the analysis of SSA's data. Furthermore, it would be appropriate to be wary of manipulation and interpretation of the statistical output. Assuredly, there is no desire to paint the government of the day in a good light – this in recognition of its seemingly terrible track record on the matter of HIV/AIDS policy. There is no axe to grind and while not being a seasoned statistical analyst, the statistical approach taken and output is simple enough to interpret as “there being some relationship between the two variables concerned.” Where license is now taken is on the matter of making inferences and deductions based on the analysis of statistical output and the disproval and refute of the hypothesis.

6.3 CONCLUSIONS DRAWN: INFERENCES

Attention is first drawn to section 5.3.2 where national spending and voter turnout models were presented. Critics might argue that a conclusion should not be drawn on the matter of voters affecting policy and government spending for HIV/AIDS at the national sphere. The regression ran indicated no correlation between voter turnout and national spending for HIV/AIDS. Yet, considering the antipathy of the Minister of Health and the



reluctance to fully support antiretroviral therapy, it is not surprising that the statistical data indicates no correlation. There is a deduction that the data output confirms the absence of direction by the national government on HIV/AIDS policy. In contrast, the efficacy of voting is empirically supported as it relates to provincial public policy. Notably, had there been a positive linear relationship of variables at the national level, such finding would certainly be open to criticism, in light of the controversial response of the government of the day, as identified in chapter 4.

Returning to the provincial sphere, in section 5.3.2 it is seen that income was found to be negatively correlated to HIV/AIDS spending. It was expected that as the number of individuals having a need for income increased, provincial government would spend more. This, however, was not the case. Subsequently, it was deduced that provincial government does not make HIV/AIDS policy based on income. Such an inference is acceptable considering that it does not matter what income bracket an individual is in. HIV/AIDS cuts across all income levels and policy should not be made based on income. Assuming that this is the frame of mind within which provincial government makes policy, it is commendable then that provincial government does not consider income as a factor when making policy on HIV/AIDS. Again, when there is examination of the affects of income and need on national government spending for HIV/AIDS (section 5.3.4) the absence of a linear relationship of variables at the national sphere just seems to reinforce what is already know about national government's position and response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Revealingly, in the 2006 budget speech there is hardly a mention of government spending on HIV/AIDS by the Minster of Finance. It is then inferred that



the absence of a correlation of the need and income variables to National HIV/AIDS spending confirms the absence of political will.

Turning attention to inference based on multiple regression output, note that in table 5.8 (models 1-3) the variable provincial spending was regressed on national spending in an attempt to realise any explanatory effects on provincial spending by national spending. Interestingly, the variable immediately dropped out of the SPSS regression. It is therefore assumed that there was very little explanatory effect offered; this assumption is in line with the relationship and conflict between these two spheres of government. Recall that through transfers, national government contributed a minimum [mere] amount of .23 million rands to a province's fight against HIV/AIDS. It might then be expected that there would be little or no relationship between provincial spending and national spending for HIV/AIDS. Conclusively, an effective HIV/AIDS education and treatment programme without commitment and wholehearted coordination by the national government could hardly be expected. As much as provinces may be willing to go at it alone, the support of national [central] government will nevertheless be crucial.

Finally, a word about the latent group [TAC's] affect on government spending: There can be no doubt that the Treatment Action Campaign is the most vociferous group attempting to influence policy making on HIV/AIDS. A question that should be raised, if not by government, then by The TAC itself is: As a latent group attempting to influence policy, how effective is the TAC? The data seems to indicate to say that the TAC is not effective. Table 5.9 shows a negative beta indicating an inverse relationship between the TAC's activities and government spending. Thus it is inferred that the more the TAC engages in staying on the agenda and the more pressure it exerts on government, the less



government will spend in reaction to TAC activism. A different strategy of engagement by the TAC is required and there is recent indication that the rules of engagement are changing – i.e., TAC meeting and discussing policy with the Deputy President. Although the partial correlation coefficient is fairly high, it is in favour of an inverse and negative relationship to government spending. The inference will not be carried so far as to say that the TAC does not have a roll to play. Indeed, it has played a significant roll in forcing government to roll out an antiretroviral (ARV) HIV/AIDS treatment plan for pregnant women. The TAC's open criticisms of the Minister of Health, the adversarial nature of the relationship between the TAC and the government does not bode well for the fight against HIV/AIDS. If anything, that is what the data indicates – i.e., the negative correlation between the latent group variable and government spending. Surely, there must be some mid-ground where both can meet and form a collaborative strategy on the matter of making ARVs available to those who need treatment? Indeed, that mid-ground may have been met. Sadly, with the diminishing role of the Minister of Health being sidelined due to poor health and a liver transplant.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is somewhat surprising to see so many independent variables having little or no correlation to dependent variables. For example, section 5.3.1 reveals that population growth and AIDS prevalence are only marginally correlated to provincial spending for HIV/AIDS. It would be expected that such variables would significantly impact HIV/AIDS policy. Definitely, provincial government should consider these variables and respond by spending more in response to an increasing AIDS prevalence rate. Indeed, there is a positive relationship between the independent variable and the dependent



variable but a correlation coefficient (R) of .48 is construed as there being no significant correlation. Provincial HIV/AIDS policy should be made while paying close attention to the HIV/AIDS prevalence rate.

That so many independent variables were found to have no correlation to the dependent variable was especially true when national spending was regressed in bivariate models. Section 5.3.2 shows voter turnout to have no correlation to national spending. There was a discussion about the disconnection (perhaps a better word to use is disjuncture) between political incumbents and their constituents. The party list system that seems to exacerbate the disjuncture between those elected and their constituents was discussed as well. As recently as mid 2006 there was talk of introducing a constituency based voting system, doing away with the party list voting system (Moipone, 2006). This would require a significant change in the mindset of the ANC. Indeed, the ANC would have to subject itself to the prospect of losing some [ruling] power and control. It is not certain that scraping the existing electoral (party list) system is a solution. That those elected first owe their allegiance to the political party and then to their constituents is reflected in the data analysis – i.e., the disjuncture. It is highly recommended that the electoral system be analysed, overhauled and redesigned in some way that allows voters to directly vote for their elected officials. Only then will constituents [voters] be able to significantly affect public policy making by voting for party representatives that are responsive to the needs of their constituents.

Finally, there is a recommendation for further policy analysis relating to the electorate's propensity to influence policy decisions. For that matter, this relates to the contribution of this dissertation to the discipline of public [policy] administration. Public policy



decisions should be subjected to rigorous, scientific and methodical scrutiny and analysis. This dissertation has examined the public policy decision to not move expediently on providing universal HIV/AIDS treatment. There is a supportive argument in that public policy decisions should not be made in isolation. Some hesitancy and reluctance has its place – especially considering the potential toxicity of any HIV/AIDS treatment regimen. Nevertheless, the best policy decisions are those that reflect the input of voters, constituents and stakeholders. To a great extent, in South Africa consultation with the public on proposed legislation provides an opportunity for input on public policy decisions. Whether policy makers, politicians and the executive are merely going through the motions is an issue for debate.

6.5 CONCLUSION

There is great hope that this work reflects what has been learned and the ability for self-directed independent learning as a PhD student and a researcher. The objective has been to reflect on the many years of tertiary education that includes an undergraduate degree and two masters degrees. From those early days, those degrees were meant to be the foundation in preparation to commence and conclude this dissertation. Happily, there is a conclusion only to begin a new journey of discovery through research and investigation that, as a PhD, will contribute to the discipline of public management and administration.