Effect of State Policy on Prison

Kathryn Schwaeble
University of Dayton, stander@udayton.edu

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Effect of State Policy on Prison Population
Kathryn Schwaebel
Advisor: Dr. Grant Neeley

Sentencing Policy Trends
Sentencing policies often spread across the states, as lawmakers or interest groups see results in other states which have passed laws. In the early 1970s, indeterminate sentencing was widely in place, giving more discretion to judges. The rehabilitative goals began to be questioned, leading to a virtually nationwide shift to a determinate sentencing system, including tough on crime policies. After a trend of these get tough on crime policies which placed more and more offenders in prison, many states are turning to sentencing policies which reverse these tougher policies.

Justice Reinvestment
“A data-driven approach to improve public safety, reduce corrections and related criminal justice spending, and reinvest savings in strategies that can decrease crime” (CSG)

Research
Method: Data collected of various sentencing trends, prison population, and crime rates between 1979 and 2011 for all 20 states; statistical analysis used to determine effect of policies and whether statistically significant.

Independent variable: sentencing policy
Dependent variable: prison population
Control variable: crime rate

Hypothesis: If a state passes a justice reinvestment policy, there is expected to be a decrease in the prison population for the state.

Results: Justice reinvestment has the potential to lower prison population at the state level.

Case Study: Justice Reinvestment in Ohio
- Interviewing actors involved in Ohio’s enactment of HB86, the enacting legislation
- Studying how policies are implemented through looking at role played by legislators, bureaucrats, and independent agencies
- Goal to understand how different sentencing policies come about to gain greater understanding of sentencing policies in general as well as the specifics of JR

Truth in Sentencing
Mandatory Minimums
Three Strikes Laws
“Tough on Crime”