“Whack-a-Mole and What Works:
Reducing the Prison Population in the United States”

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Analysts now generally agree that changes in public policies—not dramatic changes in criminal behavior—propelled the decades-long prison boom in the United States. In short, it was about the time, not about the crime. But beyond that, Sabol contends, our understanding of how specific sentencing and corrections policies contributed to a rise in prison admissions and lengths of stay may still be too limited to offer any real guidance to politicians and policy-makers seeking ways to reduce the correctional population. This persistent uncertainty and lack of consensus about precisely what factors caused the explosive growth in the U.S. incarceration rate is an impediment to reversing the prison boom, Sabol implies. Among other things, they fuel fatalism about the possibilities for making major cuts in the correctional population.

But there is another way to read Sabol. In short, we actually know more than we think we do about what works best to safely reduce the prison population. Embedded in his analysis are key findings about the ways in which prosecutors, the war on drugs, and state-level differences in institutional and political factors affect the prison population. These findings have enormous implications for the development of successful public policies and political strategies to reverse the prison boom. They also suggest fruitful avenues for future research in this area.

The Preeminence of U. S. Prosecutors

A decade ago, Franklin Zimring argued that the era of mass incarceration that began in the 1970s was not a unitary phenomenon and could be broken down into three distinct periods driven by different engines of growth (Zimring 2001). From the 1973 to the mid-1980s, the main engine was a general rise in committing more marginal felons to prison, with few discernible patterns by type of crime or type of offender (Zimring and Hawkins, chap. 5). The 1985-1992
period was the heyday of the war on drugs when “the growth of drug commitments and drug sentences far outpaced the rate of growth of other offense commitments” (Zimring 2001, 162). Zimring tentatively suggested (because of insufficient evidence at the time) that longer sentences for a range of offenses due to a more punitive political climate that fostered penal innovations like “three strikes and you’re out” and truth-in-sentencing pushed the prison population upward in the third period, which began in the early 1990s. Sabol’s data and analysis provide a more precise account of what has been driving the prison population up since crime rates began dropping in the early 1990s.

In decomposing the various factors that have contributed to the rise in the state prison population since the early 1990s, Sabol makes a couple of key modifications to earlier models. First, he breaks this era down into two periods—1994 to 2000, a time of continued rapid increase in the prison population, and 2000 to 2006, when the incarceration rate stabilized somewhat. Like Blumstein and Beck (2005), Sabol includes measures for criminal behavior (offenses), police responsiveness (arrests), sentencing decisions and judicial responsiveness (prison admissions), and expected length of stay. But he adds one additional factor—the ratio of felony convictions to arrests. In other words, what portion of arrests resulted in a felony conviction.

This innovation allows him to isolate how prosecutorial behavior has contributed to a rise in the carceral population. What he finds—with some exceptions and qualifications—is that changes in prosecutorial behavior were the most significant contributor to the growing state prison population. As the violent crime rate started falling in the early 1990s, arrest rates for violent offenses remained relatively flat. But the number of violent offenders in prison escalated nonetheless because between 1994 and 2006 the felony conviction rate for violent offenders skyrocketed—from 21 per 100 arrests in 1994 to nearly 34 per 100 in 2006—an increase of
almost 60 percent (Sabol 2010, 11). Another contributing factor was a rise in the expected time served for violent offenses, which lengthened considerably in the 1994-2000 period (from 4.6 to 5.7 years), and then flattened out after that (Sabol 2010, Table 3, 36). During this entire time, the already high propensity of the courts to sentence violent offenders to prison did not change significantly. Sabol found a similar pattern of rising felony convictions for property offenses. But property offenders’ overall contribution to prison growth did not increase as dramatically because the expected time served for property offenders fell 2.1 years in 2006, or about what it had been in 1994, after escalating to 2.6 years in 2000 (Sabol 2010, Table 3, 36).

Sabol concludes that much of the growth in prison admissions was not the result of judicial decisions to increase the use of prison sentences. Rather, it was due to an increase in the number of violent offenses (and, to a lesser extent, property cases) brought forward successfully for prosecution and an increase in the time served by violent offenders. One of the unanswered questions for him (due to data limitations) is whether the rising conviction rates for violent and property offenses were due to changes in the nature and severity of cases, in offender types, or in the capacity, ability, and/or willingness of prosecutors to move felony cases to court, rather than diverting, downgrading, or dropping them.

Sabol’s analysis quantifies the critical contribution prosecutors have made to the escalating state prison population. As such, it complements previous case-level, qualitative, and historical studies as well as journalistic accounts documenting the central role that prosecutors have played in the prison boom. Indeed, his findings suggest that prosecutors have played the preeminent role in implementing the get-tough policies promoted by law-and-order legislators and other politicians and public officials.
Historically, U.S. prosecutors have had enormous power relative to prosecutors elsewhere (Jacoby 1980, Goldstein 1982, Gottschalk 2006, 91-98) and are arguably the most powerful officials in the U.S. criminal justice system (Davis 2007, 5). Most of their decisions are “totally discretionary and virtually unreviewable” (Davis 2007, 5). As states and the federal government revamped their sentencing structures in the 1980s and 1990s to curtail the discretion of judges (and, in some cases, the police), even more discretionary and other powers flowed to prosecutors. With the proliferation of mandatory minimum sentences and other get-tough policies, like three-strikes, and the contraction of legal resources for public defenders (Forman 2009, 364-65, Davey 2010), the already-enormous charging and plea-bargaining powers of U.S. prosecutors expanded even further. Several landmark court cases challenging prosecutors’ wide prerogatives that were decided in their favor further enhanced their powers. These decisions, among other things, upheld prosecutors’ immunity from civil lawsuits (Davis 2007, 128-29), their wide latitude in jury selection, and the “nearly impossible standards for obtaining the necessary discovery to seek judicial review of some forms of prosecutorial misconduct” (Davis 2007, 127).

Many analysts attribute U.S. punitiveness to the exceptional politicization of judges and prosecutors. The United States has long resisted creating a legal system founded on career prosecutors and career judges with special training and education. Unlike in many European countries, prosecutors in the United States bounce back and forth between the public and private sectors and academia and are generally not long-term civil servants (Fraxe and Weigend 1995, Savelsberg 1994, Gottschalk 2006, 98-101). Most district attorneys and attorneys general are elected or selected according to openly partisan criteria, and their roles are structured so as to make them highly vulnerable to the sway of public opinion and political passions (Tonry 2007, 35). At the county and municipal levels, 95 percent of all chief prosecutors are elected (Isaeff
1990, 15 cited in Davis 2007, 166[ck]). In forty-three states, the attorney general is an elected position (Misner 1996, 717 cited in Davis 2007, 166 [ck]). This helps explain why the political mobilization of the victims’ rights movement and law enforcement groups, including the police and prison guards’ unions, beginning in the 1970s was so effective in steering U.S. penal policies in a more punitive direction and pushing prosecutors to get tougher. Prosecutors not only got tougher but also created powerful local, state, and national organizations to represent their interests and coordinate their political activities. For example, the Texas District and County Attorneys Association, which has the largest membership of any prosecutors’ organization in the country, was a critical player in propelling the Texas prison boom, and many of its officers have been influential in the National Association of Prosecutor Coordinators (XXX, forthcoming).

What are the public policy implications of all this? To reduce the incarceration rate, prosecutors have to be cajoled or coerced into embracing a commitment to sending fewer people to prison and reducing sentence lengths. In some cases, binding legislation may be necessary to force prosecutors to relinquish some of their discretionary powers and to make their activities and decisions more accountable and transparent to the public. So far, prosecutors “have escaped the kind of scrutiny and accountability that we demand of public officials in a democratic society” (Davis 2007 15). To remedy that, Davis (2010, chap. 10) suggests several critical reforms, including mandating the establishment of independent prosecutorial review boards, requiring racial impact statements that examine how conscious and unconscious racial biases affect the prosecution process, mandating economic impact statements that analyze the long-term budgetary implications of certain practices, denying prosecutors unilateral authority to determine which cases should be diverted out of the conventional judicial system to drug courts, community
sanctions, or elsewhere, and restructuring the grand jury system, which tends to tilt heavily
toward the prosecution, especially at the federal level (Hall 2008).

Attorneys general and district attorneys have enormous authority to set “the tone and
culture of the office” and to determine the direction in which prosecutors working under them
exercise their discretion in individual cases (Davis 2007, 97). A recent report by the Justice
Project made several recommendations to improve prosecutor accountability, including
requiring prosecutors to enforce clearly defined policies and procedures spelled out in a written
manual so as to reduce the arbitrariness and apparent biases of their decision-making, to create
open-file discovery in criminal cases, and to document all agreements with witnesses and
jailhouse informants. The report also recommended that judges be required to report all cases of
prosecutorial misconduct (however trivial), preferably to an independent review board rather than
state bar associations, which have been notoriously ineffective in policing prosecutorial
misconduct (Franks 2010).

Legislation may be necessary in some cases to compel prosecutors to alter their behavior.
But it is important to recognize that prosecutors have not been uniformly obstructionist and
punitive. Moreover, just as many prosecutors have tended to use their discretion over the past
three to four decades to lean in a more punitive direction, that wide discretion also gives them
great latitude to shift now and embrace alternatives to incarceration. A handful of prosecutors
have done just that. They have become leading innovators in designing new mechanisms to
divert offenders from the penal system. For example, Charles Hynes, the longtime district
attorney of Kings County in Brooklyn, New York, pioneered the development of programs that
offer defendants drug treatment as an alternative to prison, expand services for victims of
domestic violence, and help former inmates re-enter society (Hynes 2008). His initiatives have
become a model for broader state-level reform in New York and nationally (New York State Commission on Sentencing Reform 2009, 81). Three chief prosecutors were key participants in the Vera Institute of Justice’s Prosecution and Racial Justice Project. Established in 2005, the project sought to help prosecutors use their considerable discretionary powers to reduce racial disparities in their decision-making process (Davis 2007, 192).

A growing number of district attorneys have become outspoken critics of what they consider excessively punitive policies that are socially and economically costly and that do not enhance public safety. In doing so, they have helped nudge the public debate in a less punitive direction. When law-and-order politics were at a fevered pitch during in New York City during the Giuliani years, Robert T. Johnson, the Bronx district attorney, engaged in a very public battle with Republican Governor George Pataki over whether to seek the death penalty in the 1996 death of a police officer (Davis 85-86). Over the years, Steve Cooley, the district attorney of Los Angeles County and California’s Republican nominee for attorney general in 2010, has denounced the excesses of the Golden State’s three-strikes law, which is the toughest in the country (Baseline 2010). San Francisco D.A. Kamala Harris, Cooley’s Democratic opponent, has strongly favored using a public-health model to combat crime and emphasizing crime prevention over punishment (Harris, 145-50). In 2004 she declined to seek the death penalty against a man charged with killing a police officer. In explaining her controversial stance, she said the district attorney “is charged with seeking justice, not vengeance” and detailed why in her view the death penalty is “deeply flawed” (Quoted in Davis 2007, 87-88). In Philadelphia, expectations are high that law enforcement polices will shift dramatically with the 2009 election of Seth Williams, the city’s first African-American district attorney. Williams was a long-time critic of Lynn M. Abraham, the city’s district attorney for more than two decades, who regularly boasted that she
was a “tough cookie.” Abraham garnered a national reputation for being the “deadliest D.A.” because of her enthusiasm for pursuing the death penalty whenever possible (Rosenberg 1995). In one of his first major acts as district attorney, Williams moved to decriminalize the possession of small amounts of marijuana for personal use (McCoy, Phillips, and Purcell 2010).

Growing prosecutorial skepticism of relying on mass incarceration to combat crime is not just a coastal or blue-state phenomenon. Prosecutors have been running on reform platforms in some unlikely places (Forman 2009, 370). After becoming the first African-American elected district attorney of any county in Texas history in 2006, Craig Watkins began using state funds to re-examine past convictions and supported the efforts of the Innocence Project of Texas to review cases dating back to the 1970s involving DNA evidence (Forman 2009, 370). His actions prompted Reason, the prominent libertarian magazine, to run a feature article on Watkins headlined, “Is This America’s Best Prosecutor?” Soon after she was elected district attorney of Houston in 2008, Patricia Lykos assigned two assistant district attorneys and an investigator to examine innocence claims in an effort to reverse the office’s longstanding reluctance to admit mistakes (McKinley 2010). Richard M. Romley, two-time country attorney of Maricopa County, which includes Phoenix, Az., has stridently supported some hard-line policies like truth-in-sentencing. But he has also has sought to curtail the excesses of Sheriff Joe Arpaio, the self-proclaimed “toughest sheriff in America” (Rubin 2010, Maricopa County Attorney 2010, Stern 2010, Finnegan 2009).

What incentives do prosecutors have to behave less punitively now? First, the Great Recession has dramatically opened up the question of whether the United States can afford to keep locking so many people up as states and homeowners struggle to stay afloat in a sea of red ink (Gottschalk 2010). As prisons and jails eat up more of state and municipal budgets,
prosecutors face the prospect of shrinking revenues to run their offices. For example, the budget for the Philadelphia Prison System remained largely untouched in 2009 and 2010 but the district attorney’s office faced significant back-to-back cuts (McCoy and Graham 2010).

Second, it is important to keep in mind that the term “mass incarceration” is really a misnomer. Incarceration rates and prison admissions have not been increasing uniformly across the board for all demographic groups. Rather, less educated, low-income African-American men and women and a rising number of Hispanics have been its main targets by far (Western 2006). Moreover, this hyper-incarceration has been geographically concentrated (Clear 2008, 103-05). For example, 40 percent of the inmates in Pennsylvania’s state prisons come from Philadelphia. National trends obscure “the profound variations in incarceration rates across states, cities, and especially local communities within cities” (Sampson and Loeffler 2010, 20). The incarceration rates for neighborhoods in near-west and south-central Chicago are some eight times higher (or more) than the rest of the city (Sampson and Loeffler 2010, 23). Changing the policing and prosecutorial behavior in major cities can thus have a profound impact on a state’s incarceration rate. Despite the drug law reforms of the past few years, many counties in New York State continue to send a high proportion of their drug offenders to prison (New York State Commission on Sentencing Reform 2009, Appendix [ck]. Apparently many of the state’s prosecutors have not fundamentally changed their behavior. But the imprisonment rate for drug offenders from the New York City area is so much lower than across much of the rest of the state and thus pulls down the state’s overall imprisonment rate. If mass incarceration is the leading civil rights challenge of this generation, as Benjamin Jealous, president of the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), has been arguing recently (Serwer 2009), then getting deeply involved in electoral contests for district attorneys and attorneys
general should be a top priority for civil rights and other community groups and is arguably as important--or even more important--than mobilizing for the quadrennial presidential elections.

Maverick district attorneys launched into office in major urban areas with the backing of broad penal reform coalitions have served as important beachheads to engineer broader statewide shifts in penal policy. For example, the upset victory of David Soales in Albany’s 2004 district attorney contest has been termed a “watershed event” in the fight to reform the strict drug laws of the Rockefeller era in New York State (Geene and Mauer 2009, 22). Drug policy reform was the central plank of his campaign, which drew support from both urban areas and affluent suburbs. The Pataki administration’s partial rollback of the Rockefeller laws in 2003-05 (the consequence of an immediate budget crisis and a decades-long political mobilization to “Drop the Rock”) and David Patterson’s assumption of the governorship after Eliot Spitzer resigned in disgrace in 2008 paved the way for the evisceration of what remained of the Rockefeller drug laws in April 2009. The New York legislature enacted the 2009 reform package in the face of strong opposition from the New York state association of district attorneys, which criticized it as “a serious threat to public safety in our state” (Confessore 2010). The demise of the Rockefeller laws was a central issue in the acrimonious Democratic primary race for attorney general in 2010. Kathleen A. Rice, Nassau County’s district attorney, claimed that she had been a longtime supporter of repealing the Rockefeller drug laws. Her opponents assailed that claim, charging that Rice only changed her views after deciding to run for higher office. In the primary race, opposition to the Rockefeller drug laws was seen as a signature issue to woo the votes of African Americans, a key constituency in traditionally low-turnout primaries (Confessore 2010). The “Drop the Rock” campaign centered on exposing the racial disparities in imprisonment created by enforcement of the Rockefeller drug laws.
The War on Drugs

Recently we have seen some other important policy retreats in the war on drugs. Congress and the Obama administration agreed in 2010 to reduce some of the sentencing disparity between crack and powder cocaine and are considering softening other drug laws. Several states and municipalities have designated enforcement of marijuana laws their lowest priority, and a number of states are debating marijuana decriminalization. In 2009 Minneapolis became the first major U.S. city without a narcotics squad when it disbanded its special drug unit to save money.

All the attention that opponents of the war on drugs, most notably the Drug Policy Alliance, have brought to bear on the excesses of the war on drugs have fueled the public perception that the country’s hard-line drug policies have been the primary engine of prison growth. Sabol’s findings challenge this widespread belief. He calculates that the contribution of violent offenders to the prison population dwarfs the contribution of drug offenders. Drug offenses accounted for 16 percent of the total increase in the state prison population from 1994 to 2000 and slowed to just 7 percent from 2000 to 2006 (calculated from Sabol 2010, Table 1). Overall, drug offenders were responsible for 13 percent of the growth in the state prison population from 1994 to 2006 (calculated from Sabol 2010, Table 1). By contrast, in the face of plummeting violent crimes rates, violent offenders accounted for almost two-thirds of the overall growth in state prisoners from 1994 to 2006.

These figures indicate that ending the war on drugs will not necessarily end mass incarceration in the United States because drug offenders have not been the primary driver of growth. There are a couple of important caveats here. First, Sabol does not break his findings
down by gender. We do know that female offenders have been the fastest growing segment of the prison population and have been disproportionately affected by the war on drugs (Talvi 2007, Kruttschnitt 2010). Ending the war on drugs may not make a major dent in the overall prison population, but it could have a significant impact on reducing the number of incarcerated women, who now comprise about 7 percent of the state and federal prison population (Kruttschnitt 2010, 32). Likewise, rolling back the war on drugs could spur a major reduction in the federal prison population, which is disproportionately comprised of drug offenders relative to the states.

Sabol’s analysis fruitfully illuminates the role of prosecutors in the war on drugs. It appears that prosecutors may have reached détente in the war on drugs. Apparently police—not prosecutors—are now the most committed soldiers in the war on drugs. The felony conviction rate for drug offenses remained relatively flat (with some qualifications) between 1994 and 2006, and expected time served was 1.9 years in 2006, compared to 2.3 years in 2006 and 2.1 years in 1994 (Sabol 2010, Table 3). Nonetheless, the number of prison commitments for drug offenses continued to rise because the police were arresting more people for drug violations. Sabol speculates that as crime rates for property and violent offenses plummeted, the police may have responded by devoting more resources and energy to drug arrests. This suggests that focusing primarily on persuading prosecutors to divert more drug offenders or otherwise pursue less punitive policies will not significantly cut the number of prison admissions for drug crimes unless the police change their behavior and reduce the number of drug arrests.

Some recent political strategies to garner support for less punitive drug sanctions have been premised on promises to get tough with the “really bad guys.” This quid pro quo could fuel even higher incarceration rates. The fact is that the United States, relatively speaking, is already quite punitive toward violent offenders and property offenders and has been for quite some time
now. Life sentences have become so common that about one out of eleven people in prison in the United States is serving a life sentence. About one-third of these lifers have been sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole (Nellis and King 2009). The total life sentenced population in the United States is about 141,000 people, about twice the size of the entire incarcerated population in Japan. This is a very conservative estimate of the number of people who will spend the rest of their lives in prison. It does not include so-called basketball sentences that exceed a natural life span. About 2,500 people are serving life sentences without the possibility of parole for offenses committed when they were juveniles. About one-fifth of these juveniles offenders are imprisoned Pennsylvania. JLWOP is a practice banned in almost every other country in the world. Only the United States and Israel are known to have people serving life sentences for crimes committed when they were children (Leighton and de la Vega 2007).

The granting of commutations and pardons, once a common practice by states and the federal government, is now extremely rare in the United States, meaning that many more inmates will eventually die in prison.

U.S. sanctions for property and other offenses are far more severe than in other industrialized countries and have been for a long time now. The typical prison sentence for robbery in the United States is 97 months, of which the typical time served is 60 months (including the pretrial time spent in jail), at a cost of approximately $113,000 (Austin 2010, 21). The median loss associated with a robbery reported to the police is $100 (Austin 2010, 21). A Bureau of Justice Statistics study of comparative sentencing found that people in the United States sentenced to prison for burglary served sentences two to four times as long as those sentenced for the same crime in Sweden, Scotland, England, and Wales (Farrington, Klangan, and Tonry 2004 ix-xii [ck]).
Sabol’s analysis appears to imply that we may have reached a dead end, or, to put it more gently, a natural end in our attempts to quantify and identify the overarching causal forces responsible for prison growth across the states. He concludes his brief review of the state-of-the-art research in this area by generally agreeing with Pfaff that empirical efforts to test various general theories of prison growth suffer from “important limitations that inhibit their ability to identify causal effects accurately” (Pfaff 2008, 548 quoted in Sabol 2010, 23). Those pesky endogeneity problems continue to confound almost every empirical analysis of prison growth. Moreover, due to the highly decentralized and highly politicized nature of criminal justice policy in the United States, “sentencing policies vary so much in their form, intent, and implementation that it is difficult to isolate the effects of broad categories of policies (such as determinate sentencing),” he explains (2010, 24).

Since patterns of growth vary so considerably across the states, qualitative and descriptive case studies at the state and local levels might be one of the most promising areas of future research, Sabol sensibly suggests. The past couple of years we have seen a renaissance of fine-grained historical, political, and institutional case studies of what propelled the prison boom in individual states (Gilmore 2007, Lynch 2010, Barker 2009, Page forthcoming, Schoenfeld 2010, Perkinson 2010, Miller 2008, XXX forthcoming). These new studies are shedding important light on which policy and political strategies are most likely to succeed in significantly reducing the incarceration rate in specific states. The new state-level studies are a sober reminder that
gaping budget deficits will not necessarily reverse the prison boom because a penal system is not only deeply embedded in a state’s budget but also in its political, cultural, institutional, and social fabric. These state-level case studies suggest that some states may be better able than others to reduce their prison populations in the future. Most likely, there will not be one path to cutting the prison population in the United States “but rather 51 paths for the states and federal government,” and each of these 51 strategies will have to be “tailored to fit the policy circumstances of the government in question” (Austin, 27).

New York State is a good case in point. As noted earlier, New York has garnered enormous attention recently for its success in reducing its prison population by 20 percent between 1999 and 2009. Drawing on Useem’s work (2010), Sabol attributes the New York decline to a coordinated response across the criminal justice system supported by key political figures. But a closer look at the New York case also reveals it is an outlier with respect to some of the general patterns in state prison growth that Sabol identified. Drug offenders have comprised a much higher proportion of New York’s prison population than the national average thanks to the draconian Rockefeller drug laws discussed earlier (Weiman and Weiss 2009). The recent retreat in the war on drugs in New York has had a more significant impact on the prison population than we might expect to see in many other states. In other ways, New York State is a very typical state when it comes to penal issues. Like public officials elsewhere, its legislators have been reluctant to support proposals to decrease the time served by violent offenders. In the penal reform package enacted in 2009, they rejected a recommendation from the New York State Commission on Sentencing Reform to extend “merit time” to a very limited pool of violent
offenders who would be eligible to have a few months at most shaved off their sentences. Many of these offenders have served decades in the system, have stellar behavior records, and have earned college degrees and/or other markers of rehabilitation.

Case-level studies of instances when governments have successfully orchestrated major decarcerations are a promising area of research. We have a handful of model cases, most notably for Germany and Finland [cites]. Zimring, Doob, and Gartner (forthcoming) analyze the remarkable story of how California slashed its incarceration rate by about a third in the 1960s when Ronald Reagan, who ran for office on a law-and-order platform, was governor.

Conclusion

Sabol appears to be extremely pessimistic about the possibility of achieving the central goal recommended to the Norval Morris Project of the National Institute of Corrections—cutting the U.S. incarceration rate in half over the next eight years by diverting certain groups of offenders and reducing sentence lengths across the board. This goal will remain elusive, he suggests, unless all components of the criminal justice system—police, prosecutors, judges, penal administrators, parole and probation officers—buy into the idea of the need for major reductions in the prison population and then coordinate their behavior to achieve that end. In some cases, the institutional context will facilitate that coordination, as in New York State. In others, it will thwart it, as in the case of California, where the probation system is under the control of the
counties and the parole system is under state jurisdiction, thus distorting the incentives to reduce the prison population (Weisberg 2010). Without that coordination, Sabol suggests, attempts to reduce the prison population will remain a complex and often futile game of Whack-a-Mole. Single-minded attention on "reforming" any one or two pieces of the criminal justice system to reduce the prison population will not necessarily have the desired result because the system is highly adaptive, according to Sabol. But his analysis suggests that prosecutors remain arguably the preeminent players in this game. By changing their actions and behavior, they can, under certain conditions, become important catalysts to facilitate the system-wide coordination and change in penal culture that are so critical to slashing the prison population.

References:


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