

Judicious Judges? Analyzing the Effects of Judicial Discretion and Crime Type on Sentencing Outcomes

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Abstract

In 2005, the Supreme Court case *U.S. v. Booker* (2005) increased judicial discretion (*U.S. v. Booker*, 2005). This paper analyzes the effects of that increase on sentencing outcomes. It adds to a body of literature assessing *Booker's* impact by delineating the different effects depending on crime type. Specifically, I ask how the effects from *Booker* vary by crime type. Because judges' personal experiences and ideologies may cause them to favor more or less punishment dependent on the type of crime, understanding the crime type variation in *Booker's* effects will lead to a more accurate understanding of the overall implications from *Booker*. Using federal sentencing data from the United States Sentencing Commission, I estimate the effect of the interaction between *Booker* and specific crime types on sentence length. Additionally, I divide the data into subsets by crime type and assess the effect of *Booker's* interaction with demographic variables for each subset. Generally, I find that *Booker's* effects do vary by crime type and that these variations also manifest in demographic variable interactions between crime types.