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The Importance of the Policy Entrepreneur in Policy Adoption

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Abstract

What factors influence the likelihood that a state will adopt a policy? I argue that the role of a policy entrepreneur is vital to policy diffusion and eventual adoption. Performing Event History Analysis, I investigate 28 states over 7 years that have adopted Erin's Law, a child abuse education policy. Preliminary findings suggest that the states in which Erin Merryn, the policy entrepreneur, visited increased the likelihood that the state would adopt Erin's Law. Recognizing the important role of a policy entrepreneur has valuable implications for the policy and diffusion literature.



I. Introduction

Policy literature is replete with discussions evaluating the importance of the policy entrepreneur. While the role of the policy entrepreneur has been thoroughly investigated, scant research has examined whether the actions of the entrepreneur leads to policy enactment. Analyzing the adoption of Erin's Law, a child abuse education policy, I suggest that policy entrepreneurs do matter, and I demonstrate how Erin Merryn played a critical role in the adoption of the law.

II. Research Question

Does a policy entrepreneur really matter when it comes to the diffusion and enactment of a state child abuse policy?

Variables that Influence Policy Adoption

Variables	Coefficients	Standard Error
Policy Entrepreneur	0.313*	0.159
Number of Reports	0.157†	0.091
Bordering States	-3.896*	1.679
Legislative Professional	2.844	4.434
Race	0.000*	0.000
Pregnancy	-0.018*	0.008
Unemployment	-0.253**	0.105

Note: N = 488; * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, † p < 0.10;

III. Methods

Employing Event History Analysis (EHA), I examine the likelihood that a state would adopt Erin's Law. EHA is a statistical method that allows for examination of different variables in an effort to understand the role each variable plays in influencing the likelihood of a state adopting Erin's Law. Recognizing

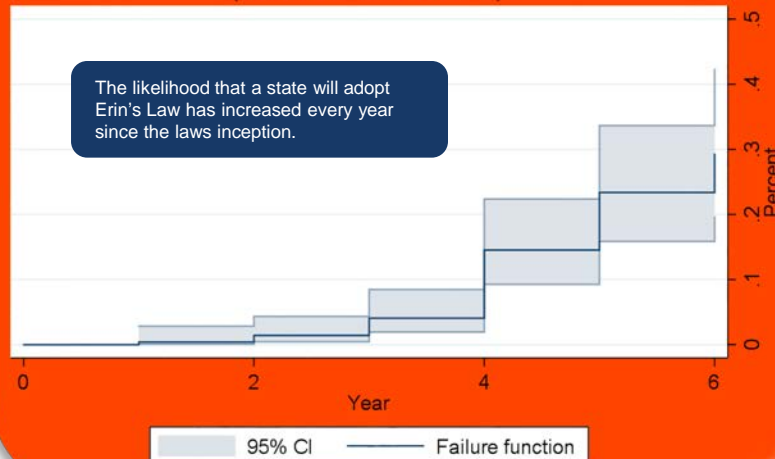
that Erin Merryn visited and spoke in some of these states as a policy entrepreneur, I can use her visits as a variable to help understand whether her efforts increased the likelihood that a state would adopt the law.

IV. Results

The results suggest that the role of the policy entrepreneur is instrumental to the success of Erin's Law. Specifically, when Erin Merryn visited a state it increased the likelihood that the state would adopt Erin's Law by 31.3% (p < .05). Additionally, there are other variables that also influence the adoption of the law. This includes the number of suspected child abuse cases reported within each state (p < .10). Beyond encouraging adoption, some factors may decrease the likelihood that a state adopts the law such as the state's pregnancy (p < .05) or unemployment rate (p < .01).

Likelihood of State Adoption

(95% Confidence Intervals)



V. Conclusion

These findings are important because they suggest that **POLICY ENTREPRENEURS** may influence the likelihood of policy adoption. The results demonstrate that when a policy entrepreneur commits to visiting legislatures or their states, that the legislators listen and are encouraged to adopt the promoted law.

While this finding may be limited directly to Erin's law, it is indicative of the need to study policy entrepreneurs further and to better understand if it is policy entrepreneur's visits or if there are personality factors of the entrepreneur that influence policy adoption.