

Does not completing high school increase criminal arrests? essay

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The article by Lochner (2004) discusses the influence of educational attainment and maturity on an individual's propensity to be involved in crime and therefore the likelihood of criminal arrests. The author argues that more educated men, except in cases of white collar crimes, are less likely to be arrested than men who failed to complete high school. He further argues that as an individual grows older he is also less likely to take part in criminal activities. The writer's arguments flow logically into the two hypotheses that he presents. Given that more educated and older men are least likely to become involved in criminal activities then it is only sensible to hypothesize that there is a correlation between age and participation in criminal activities and between high-school-completion status and involvement in those same activities. The research examines the variables of education, crime and age and these are measured using a National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) to determine age-crime correlation and a Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) matched with census data on school records to gauge education-crime correlation.

Since the data used for analysis was from instruments not developed or administered by the author there is no discussion on the validity of the data from which the analysis is done or inferences drawn. The research is explanatory in nature, seeking to analyze the nature of the interrelationship between two sets of variables - between age and crime in the first instance and then between education and crime in the second. For this study a national survey along with a crime report were used as the basis for retrieving data. The NLSY is a survey of 12, 686 individuals conducted periodically since 1979. Because the report does not specify how the sample

process for this initial survey was conducted it is difficult to assume that the results are indeed generalizable. What is apparent is that most respondents were about the same age therefore trends across particular age groups could be telling. The UCR appears to be very representative since it covers all reported arrests. Bukenya (2005) presents a report on the relative influence that a number of socioeconomic factors have on the patterns in criminal arrests.

The report establishes that it is important to determine the causes of criminal activity in order to inform policy decisions aimed at countering the negative effects of crime. The author uses research questions rather than a hypothesis. They are whether socioeconomic factors of education, unemployment or wage rates contribute to increases in criminal activities and if there are individually identifiable socioeconomic factors that have a greater influence on criminal activity. The variables that the author considers are age, unemployment status, race and education. The UCR reports are received from local law enforcement across the U.

S. districts. The research was specific to the county of Alabama and data on the criminal activities in are surrounding the county were retrieved from the report. The additional counties are included as the researchers feel criminals often participate in criminal activities outside of their districts.

There is reasonable analysis of the reliability of the data from the UCR report but this is not very extensive or scientific. The author mainly points out that the reports may not be truly representative. This is because reporting is

done by individual law enforcers and, though the officers are reliable, not all crimes in a district are reported. Additionally differences in the way officers collect and report data may cause different interpretations. The research is explanatory in nature seeking to identify interconnections between different socioeconomic variables and criminal activities among criminals in Alabama and aiming to explain the nature of those connections. The population of the survey is very representative. Data is collected on the criminal arrests in the district of Alabama and surrounding areas. Because data was used from surrounding districts the results cannot be generalized for Alabama.

While criminals from the district may have perpetrated crimes in neighboring areas the results are distorted by including figures for areas outside of the district. Chien-Chieh, Laing & Wang (2004) explores factors that motivate and deter individuals participating in criminal activities. The primary argument is that individuals who attain a good level of education and training would opt to engage in formal employment. Individuals who have not benefited from a complete high-school education are more apt to take on more informal type jobs and, because of the minimal capital rewards received, are more adept to participate in criminal activity. The researchers examine two hypotheses. The first is that a higher human capital advantage, i. e.

educational and skills attainment levels, functions as a deterrent to criminal activities. The second is whether a lack of such advantage would result in an increased propensity to commit crime. The research is primarily predictive. The researchers employ several variables in their study to determine the

relative effect of each. These are crime rate, level of educational attainment, employment and wage opportunities.

Using what the author describes as an 'occupational' choice model of crime the research employ a variety of mathematical calculations and predictions to determine the extent to which each of the variables listed have an effect on an individuals likelihood of being involved in criminal activities. The instrument utilized by the researchers is highly unreliable because it is presumptive in nature, functioning solely on the basis of assumptions and calculations. The researchers estimate how they anticipate two homogenous groups of individuals would react to certain educational or economic limitations. In the initial stage both groups are endogenous but are assumed to attain to different levels of educational attainment. Based on this individuals are assumed to choose dichotomously either crime or formal employment. The methodology of the research implies considerable limitations.

Additionally it assumes that individuals make a decided choice between either work or crime which often is never the case. Criminals have been known to be very actively employed. The findings are however informative. They predict, as have other researches pointed to in the literature, that there is indeed a significant correlation between educational attainment and an individual's likelihood of being involved in criminal activities. Freeman (1996) attempts to describe the factors that cause males to be involved in criminal activities and to prescribe methods of countering such problems.

The research discovers that individuals who do not complete their high school education are more likely to take up low-paying jobs requiring fewer skills. These individuals are therefore more likely to feel the strain put on by the decline in the job market for less skilled workers. Further these are therefore more likely to pursue criminal activity to cope with economic pressures. He concludes that attempts at reducing crime must therefore focus on improving the skills of young people particularly by ensuring they complete high school and receive further training. Freeman (1996) considers the variables of employment income earned legally, income earned through criminal activity, high-school completion status and number of criminal arrests. These variables are pitted against each other to determine instances of correlation. Using a qualitative approach to analyze data from a 1991 report captioned Survey of State Prison Inmates, and the NLSY Freeman (1996) notes the rate of inmates who were dropped out of high school.

This rate stood at 66%. Furthermore all other variables seem to have an equal impact on a criminal's inclination to crime. The most outstanding variable was, however employment income. Again since this report is an analysis of data selected from a NLSY report there is little indication as to reliability. The assumptions made about the results are, however, quite valid. This research further substantiates the view that failure to complete high school is highly connected with criminal activity and therefore may lead to increases in criminal arrests. The final research by Hill (1978) serves to give sound historical ground to the previous findings. He establishes the frequency of high school drop-outs even since the 1960s pointing that it has

been a perennial problem with as much as 25% of yearly cohorts failing to complete.

The researcher uses an early report of the NLSYM (National Longitudinal Survey of Young Men) and utilizing a predictive approach he seeks to estimate the probability of an individual dropping out of high school. A sample of youths from the NLSYM is pulled containing those aged 14 to 17 years who were enrolled in a high school as of 1966. Hill (1978) determines the probability of dropping out of school by using both this data and one in 1968, when the youths are aged 16-19. Drop-out rate is determined as a correlation of a youth enrolled in school in 1966, having been in school for a period of 12 years but who was no longer in school as of 1968. The results appear to be quite reliable though there is no indication of a reliability coefficient being used. However the equitable nature of the sampling to include both whites and non-whites lends much reliability to the instrument. However the results may not reflect true drop-out rates among the youths because it does not take into account individuals who may have reenrolled subsequent to 1969.

Moreover, this data is only generalizable for youths aged 14 to 19 years and is limited in predicting national characteristics. Manifestations of criminal activities may not occur immediately upon dropping out of school and since the sample does not cater for youths above the age of 19 the results cannot generalize beyond that level. REFERENCES Bukenya, J. O. (2005, Dec.). Crime trend and socio-economic interaction: A county-level analysis, 18(4), 365-378. Chien-Chieh, H.

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