Employment, Education and Crime During Emerging Adulthood

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Background

Previous research has found that employment can reduce participation in criminal activities in the lives of older adults. Conversely, the opposite effect is found concerning employment in the lives of adolescents. This study fills a gap looking at the time in-between for persons in emerging adulthood. I also examine whether the effects of education and employment on crime are additive or interactive, and explore whether the association between education, employment and crime is conditioned by neighborhood disadvantage.

Research Questions

- Are educational enrollment and employment during emerging adulthood associated with crime in adulthood?

- Does educational enrollment or employment interact with neighborhood disadvantage to predict crime in adulthood?

Data and Measures

National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health)
- 4 Waves of data (1995-2008)

Analytical Sample:
- Waves 1, 3, 4 (N = 14,800)

Key Measures:
Dependent Variable - Crime
- Count variable of crime participation at wave 4
- Range 0-9 with questions on stealing, breaking and entering, fighting, and weapon use

Employment
- Measure of if the respondent is working at least 10 hours per week

Education
- Measure of if the respondent is enrolled in any type of education.

Disadvantage
- Average of the proportion of low income families, proportion of families below poverty level, proportion of families receiving public assistance, proportion of families with a female head of household, and unemployment rate.
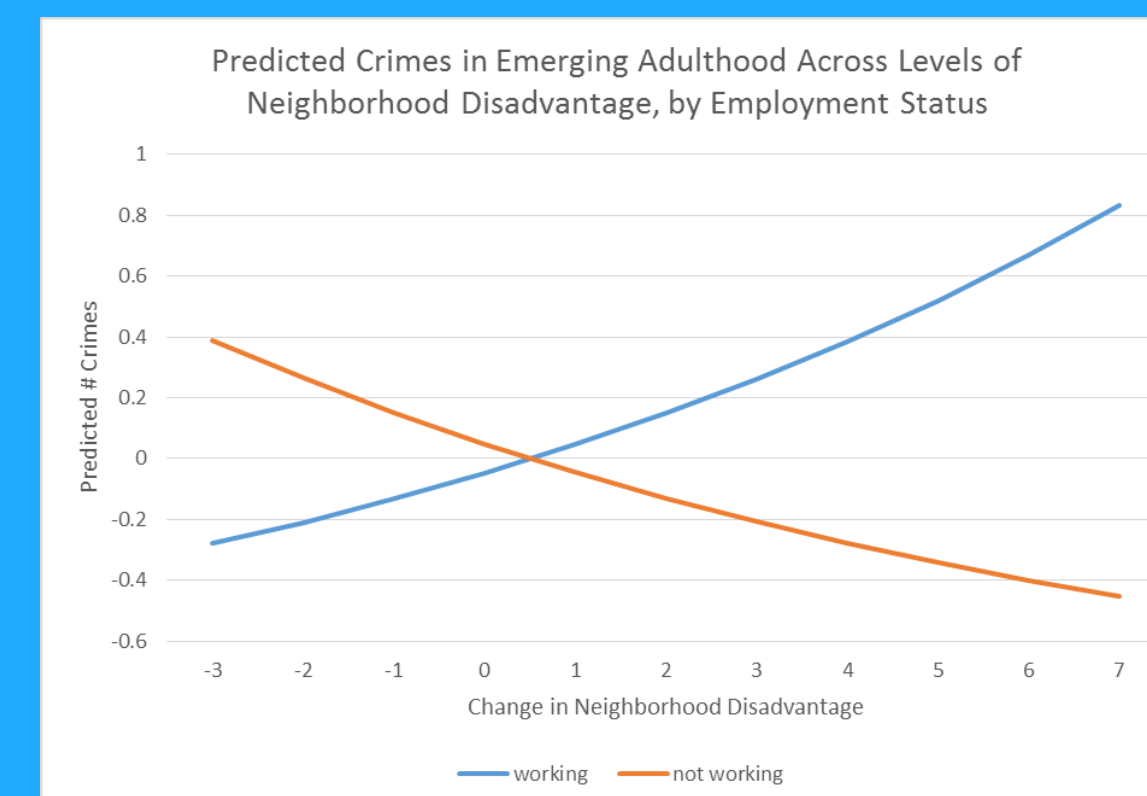
Negative Binomial Models

Crime regressed on education, work and neighborhood disadvantage (Negative Binomial Models)

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Currently in School	-.188*	-.120	-.137*	-.121	-.124
	(.073)	(.069)	.069	(.068)	(.068)
Currently Working	-.079	-.117	-.068	-.057	-.048
	(.073)	(.072)	(.069)	(.069)	.066
Male	.783***	.788***	.749***	.750***	.750***
	(.057)	(.056)	(.059)	(.058)	(.058)
Black	.310**	.325***	.272**	.211*	.214*
	(.098)	(.094)	(.087)	(.104)	(.104)
Hispanic	.146	.168	.156	.134	.137
	(.098)	(.088)	(.085)	(.085)	(.085)
Family SES (W1)	.021	-.011	.007	.012	.011
	(.122)	.012	(.013)	(.013)	(.013)
Highest level of education	-.209***		-.159***	-.154***	-.150***
	(.026)		(.026)	(.026)	(.026)
Married	-.476***		-.417***	-.421***	-.415***
	(.083)		(.092)	(.092)	(.092)
Have kids	-.127		.080	.073	.072
	(.088)		(.087)	(.087)	(.088)
Disadv. (W1)	.146***			.036	.017
	(.041)			.060	(.058)
Disadv. change (W3-W1)	-.091*			-.045	-.143**
	.038			(.040)	(.044)
Disadv. change x current work					.093**
					(.036)
Disadv. change x current school					.058
					(.040)
Intercept		-1.40***	-.984***	-1.03***	-1.05***
		.120	(.131)	.126	(.123)

N = 14,800
* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001
Note: Standard Errors in Parentheses

Interaction Effect

Predicted Crimes in Emerging Adulthood Across Levels of Neighborhood Disadvantage, by Employment Status

(x-axis: Change in Neighborhood Disadvantage; y-axis: Predicted # Crimes)
— working — not working

Summary of Results

- Neighborhood Disadvantage interacts with employment in emerging adulthood in its association with crime: Unexpectedly, increases in disadvantage are associated with a 13% reduction in crimes for those who are *not* employed during emerging adulthood. On the other hand, increases in disadvantage are associated with an *increase* in crimes for those who *are* employed in emerging adulthood.

- Enrollment in college during emerging adulthood is associated with fewer crimes in adulthood, though employment appears to be unrelated to crime in adulthood, at least as a main effect.

Next Steps

- Further analyses considering differences by crime type, number of hours working & enrollment type.