

Colorado Probation Research in Brief

"I Suck at Everything": Crime, Arrest, and the Generality of Failure

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Key Words: Crime; Arrest; Failure; Self-efficacy; Employment; Education; Substance abuse

Summary/Conclusions

This study aims to explore how arrest (failing at crime) impacts other areas of individuals' lives. Researchers utilized interview data to determine if being arrested was a predictor of other failures in life (e.g. education, employment, relationships, health). After analyzing the data, researchers found that individuals who reported being arrested acquired 15% more jobs, were fired 63% more, were 27% more likely to work less than 10 hours a week, 34% more likely to fail a grade level, 30% less change of being married, more likely to contract an STD, and 147% more likely to have problems related to alcoholism than compared to a population that was not arrested.

Limitations of Information

While researcher's controlled for factors (e.g. intelligence), there might be other aspects of someone's life that are tied to failure. The study determined there are links to arrest and general failure; however, it is not clear if the failures are a cause or a symptom of an arrest. It is not clear if any of these "general" failures hold more importance to individuals, which may impact self-efficacy differently.

Caveat: The information presented here is intended to summarize and inform readers of research and information relevant to probation work. It can provide a framework for carrying out the business of probation as well as suggestions for practical application of the material. While it may, in some instances, lead to further exploration and result in *future* decisions, it is not intended to prescribe policy and is not necessarily conclusive in its findings. Some of its limitations are described above.

The Importance of Highlighting Success

Being arrested can be a major life event for individuals. Researchers were interested in discovering the ties between arrest, failing at crime, and other life failures in areas employment, education, and health. In order to determine if arrest was correlated with other life failures, this study utilized survey data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health. The survey was conducted in four waves and included over 90,000 youth. Researchers analyzed a sample size of 12,589 involved in two separate interviews. Data collected from the interviews centered around demographics, arrests, delinquency, criminal behavior, education, employment, marriage, sexually transmitted diseases (STD), alcohol and drug use, intelligence, and self-control.

Statistical modeling discovered that arrest was statistically significant with almost all the identified life failure events. Individuals who had been arrested changed jobs 15% more than individuals who had not been arrested. Arrestees were fired more (63%) and more likely to work fewer than 10 hours per week (27%). Individuals who have been arrested also had more educational failures than those who have not. Arrestees had 34% greater chance of repeating grades and over twice the dropout rate (2.44). One of the only non-statistically significant life failures was divorce. Arrestees were 30% less likely to get married. When it comes to health failures, arrestees were more likely to report being diagnosed with an STD

and 147% more likely to report having problems with alcohol. The findings concluded that individuals who have been arrested experience many other life failures.

Practical Applications

- ✓ Express hope that probationers can change their lives and successfully complete probation.
- ✓ Ask probationers about their self-efficacy, especially when setting up case plan goals.
- ✓ Be sure to acknowledge case plan goal and action step completion.
- ✓ If a probationer discloses a number of life failure events, discuss with the probationer events in which they experienced success and use CBT techniques to help the probationer be successful in the future.
- ✓ Have probationers identify strengths and ways to leverage their strengths and protective factors.
- ✓ When addressing negative events (e.g. missed appointments, missed UA), focus on the behavior rather than the person.
- ✓ When trained, use SBC to identify meaningful responses for positive behaviors. This may help make successes more memorable for the probationer.
- ✓ Consider using the SBC event history to provide feedback to probationers about their progress on behavior changes.

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