Rejoinder

Isaac Ehrlich

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/ylj

Recommended Citation
Available at: http://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/ylj/vol85/iss3/3
I appreciate Professor Peck's undertaking to comment on my reply, published in the last issue of this *Journal*, to critics of my work on murder and capital punishment. I wish to address briefly only a few of his remarks.

Peck suggests that the results of my regression analysis concerning the ranking of estimated elasticities of the murder rate with respect to measures of apprehension, conviction, and execution risk could be consistent with alternative theories of crime. In principle, such a possibility never can be denied. I believe his criticism would have been more constructive had he identified what specific theories he has in mind. Unfortunately, he errs in stating that I have not examined this possibility myself. In my own study, I have addressed the issue of whether a theory of crime based upon incapacitating effects of punishment could produce the same ranking of elasticities observed in the study.¹

I believe that Peck mistakenly ascribes to me an argument that I have not advanced. I have not argued that "errors of measurement" can only work against the hypothesized deterrent effect. My reference to the classical case of "errors of measurement" has been quite specific. Curiously, contrary to his own argument, Peck's example in which errors of measurement in apprehension risk are positively correlated with the murder rate² does, of course, further illustrate why "errors of measurement" are likely to work against the hypothesized deterrent effect of apprehension. My basic point has been that if the variables used in the empirical analysis grossly misrepresent the theoretical variables that they purport to measure, then there is no reason to expect findings consistent with the detailed theoretical predictions.

I am glad Peck agrees with my criticism of statistical errors committed by my critics in their inferences from regression analyses of

---

¹ Associate Professor of Business Economics, University of Chicago; Research Associate, National Bureau of Economic Research.


Rejoinder

subperiods of the full sample. I do not agree with him, however, that my critics' work has addressed the issue of the stability of the regression equation, since they report no tests of stability. Nor do any of the works cited by Peck provide valid tests of stability. While I could not address this technical issue directly in my reply, I did indicate what I believe are the basic reasons for the apparent weak results obtained from analysis of certain specific subperiods.

Many difficulties in research on criminal behavior should rightfully occupy the thoughts of interested scholars, and skepticism is the essence of scholarly work. I am grateful to the editors of the Yale Law Journal for allowing me to express my skepticism on some aspects of the work that has been conducted in this area and to elaborate upon my own research.

3. Id. at 367.

It may also be of some interest to note that the test of optimal transformations in connection with the form of the regression equation—the Box and Cox procedure—that Peck suggests as the way of determining the efficiency of the logarithmic-linear form is the same one to which I have already referred in my reply. Compare id. at 361 & n.6 with Ehrlich, Deterrence: Evidence and Inference, 85 Yale L.J. 209, 218 (1975). Peck does not recognize, however, that the problem of treating zero values of variables can be overcome through an appropriate transformation.
The Yale Law Journal
Volume 85, No. 3, January 1976

JOHN W. SPIEGEL
Editor-in-Chief
EDWARD R. MULLER
Managing Editor
MARC L. BROWN
JOSEPH ISENBERGH
EDWARD D. KLEINBARD
GLEN A. REED
Article & Book Review Editors

RUTH N. GLUSHIEN
Executive Editor
MADELEINE A. KLEINER
Note & Project Editor
WALTER P. LOUGHLIN
THOMAS H. MILCH
GLENN M. REITER
MICHAEL E. ROBINSON
JEFFREY L. SCHULTE
Note Editors

T. ALEXANDER ALEINIKOFF  JEROME DAVIS  SIMEON M. KRIESBERG
LON S. BABBY  Business Manager  ALBERT G. LAUBER, JR.
GEORGE M. BEAL II  PETER FEUERLE  PAUL C. LEMBESIS
TOM A. BEAL II  ROBERT T. HAAR  CARLOS E. MÉNDEZ-PEÑATE
DONALD N. BERSOFF  CARL W. HERSTEIN  ROBERT C. POST
J. BRUCE BOISTURE  MARK D. HOFFER  WALTER F. PRATT
DANIEL H. BOOKIN  PETER R. JARVIS  STEPHEN E. ROTH
CHARLES G. BUSCHMAN  RICHARD A. JOHNSON  JONATHAN W. STILL
BENJAMIN I. COHEN  PETER T. JOSEPH  SETH P. WAXMAN
KEITH P. ELLISON  ROBERT N. WEINER

Secretaries to the Editors M. OLIVE BUTTERFIELD, PAMELA WILLMOTT

Student Contributors to This Issue

Ruth N. Glushien, Conrail and Liquidation Value: Creditors' and Stockholders' Entitlement in the Regional Rail Reorganization

Robert C. Post, National Security and the Amended Freedom of Information Act

Robert N. Weiner, Reform of Creditor Participation Procedures in Municipal Bankruptcy

370