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The Impact of Race and Offender Status on Small Business Hiring Decisions

Elle Gray Teshima

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERISTY

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of Science

School of Criminal Justice

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Dedication

To Jennifer Stewart and Act on Racism,

Words cannot express how much each and every one of you have touched my life and helped me grow into the scholar, and human, I am today. May you continue to be inspired to fight racism, inequality, and other isms wherever you land. I love you all.

E.T.

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Abstract

This research explores the impact of race and offender status on the hiring decisions of small business hiring managers. Cover letters, resumes, and surveys were distributed by mail to small business hiring managers in the Grand Rapids area to assess their reactions to and opinions of prospective applicants with varying racial and criminal backgrounds. The null hypothesis was supported. Respondents did not demonstrate a strong overall preference for candidates of a particular race group or offender status. The largest concern with this study is a limited sample size despite a fairly strong response rate. Social desirability bias may also limit the findings.

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Introduction

The re-entry process poses many challenges and obstacles for ex-offenders. Having some form of a support network and means to meet basic needs can mitigate some of the harsh realities ex-offenders face including stigmatization and psychological difficulties in adjustment to community living. Legitimate employment is one such factor that prevents recidivism by helping ex-offenders provide for their basic needs (e.g., housing, food) and strengthening their bond with society outside of prison. However, having a criminal record often prohibits these individuals from securing gainful employment.

The struggle of re-entry is amplified for ex-offenders of color, and not only because their levels of social support are often less than that of their white counterparts (Hochstetler, DeLisi, & Pratt, 2010). Research has shown that the job market often excludes people of color, even non-felons, which poses an immense barrier to obtaining gainful employment upon release from prison (Marbley & Ferguson, 2005). Previous studies have explored this issue by sending confederates “undercover” to potential employers with researcher-constructed credentials to collect data on hiring practices (see Pager, Western, & Sugie, 2009). The current research explores racial discrimination and biases against ex-offenders on a local, small-business level.

Literature Review

Crime rates in the United States remained relatively stable from the 1960's until the 1990's when they declined noticeably (Beckett & Sasson, 2004). However, incarceration rates have soared, resulting in the largest worldwide incarceration rate for the U.S. (Beckett & Sasson, 2004; Clear, Cole, & Rieseg, 2011). The burgeoning prison population is due in large part to political movements centered on "getting tough" on crime, and the subsequent implementation of policies such as mandatory minimum sentencing, "three strikes" laws, zero tolerance policies, and policing strategies that target public order and non-violent offenses (Beckett & Sasson, 2004). The War on Drugs, which swept up vast populations of individuals whose most serious offense is possession or sale of illegal substances, is a prime example of how being "tough on crime" led to the phenomenon known most commonly as mass incarceration (Beckett & Sasson, 2004).

Wacquant (2010) purported that the term mass incarceration is misleading in explaining the incarceration boom the United States has experienced in the last thirty years. He asserted that the term "hyperincarceration" is more fitting because incarceration affects specifically targeted areas of the general population (Wacquant, 2010). Wacquant holds that class is the first filter of selection for incarceration, followed by race, and lastly by place. In many cases, individuals are triple-selected by the cumulative effect of being a member of a low socioeconomic status, racial/ethnic minority, and disadvantaged neighborhood (Wacquant, 2010). He posited that "mass incarceration" is a socially acceptable term to define punitive public policies, as long as it continues to mask the finely targeted victims of this carceral movement and will not

actually reach the vast majority of American society. Ultimately, the sharp increase in incarceration the United States has recently experienced serves as a method of targeted social control, however it is lexicographically designated.

The social control of targeted groups, particularly racial minorities, under the guise of proactive efforts to keep drugs off the street was so strong that Alexander (2010) characterized this incarceration boom as a new racial caste system, much like the Jim Crow laws of the past. She argued this entrapment of black and brown people, literally and figuratively, occurs in three stages throughout the criminal justice system. First, vast numbers of people are swept up by police officers, who disproportionately monitor minority-dominated urban areas, without much regulation against utilizing race as a characteristic of criminality (Alexander, 2010). Next, arrested individuals are placed under formal control, often unable to obtain adequate legal assistance and impotent to challenge prosecution for racial bias (Alexander, 2010). Lastly, offenders are subjected to a sometimes lifelong process of invisible punishment. Even after their release from prison, something more than 93% of inmates are granted at some point (Clear, Cole, & Reisig, 2011), ex-offenders are trapped in a position of marginality, legally discriminated against for their ex-felon status, often for the rest of their lives (Alexander, 2010).

This increased marginality is particularly detrimental to already disadvantaged offenders of color who are systematically excluded from rights and privileges granted to their white counterparts. Exclusion from employment, housing, education, and other resources works to keep black and brown men in an urban underclass painted by the media as dangerous and inferior (Alexander, 2010). Unfortunately, most of these

individuals are unable to surmount the obstacles placed before them, and many will be imprisoned again at some point, perpetuating the cycle of marginality (Alexander, 2010).

> People who have been convicted of felonies almost never truly reenter the society they inhabited prior to their conviction. Instead, they enter a separate society, a world hidden from public view, governed by a set of oppressive and discriminatory rules and laws that do not apply to everyone else. (Alexander, 2010, p. 187)

Sampson and Loeffler (2010) described the reciprocity of community vulnerability and incarceration as follows: “Disadvantaged communities are more likely to be highly incarcerated communities, which increases their likelihood of becoming even more disadvantaged in the future…if communities disproportionately produce prisoners, they will disproportionately draw them back upon release” (p. 29). Thus, time spent incarcerated should focus on reintegrating offenders to help combat the hardships they are likely to face when returning so disadvantaged communities upon release from prison (Sampson & Loeffler, 2010).

Needs of Reintegrating Offenders

Establishing programs that assist offenders who are preparing to reenter the community is a critical step in the reintegration process; however, it is crucial to explore the needs offenders have in order to make these programs most effective. One group of researchers asked prospective participants of a re-entry program to identify their most salient needs from a pre-determined list (Morani, Wikoff, Linhorst, & Bratton, 2011). The most commonly identified needs among the ex-offenders they sampled were transportation, clothing, food, and housing (Morani et al., 2011). Gunnison and Helfgott (2007) found that community corrections officers’ (CCO’s) perspectives on the needs

and challenges of reentering individuals were closely aligned with the results of Morani et al. (2010). The CCO's sampled in the Seattle-Tacoma region of Washington State (n=132) ranked shelter/housing as the most important need of newly released offenders, followed by job placement services, knowledge of the crime cycle, having a realistic community plan, and understanding risk factors (Gunnison & Helfgott, 2007).

Substance abuse is one risk factor that plays a large role in recidivism and subsequent re-incarceration. Gunnison and Helfgott (2007) noted that CCO's identified returning to substance abuse as a serious challenge posed to reentering offenders, being outranked only by finding housing. Because substance abuse is widely recognized at many levels of the criminal justice system, attention to addressing drug and alcohol use is becoming more standard. A study by Bahr, Harris, Fisher, and Armstrong (2010) indicated that those who completed substance abuse education were less likely to be re-incarcerated than those who had not, regardless of whether the original conviction was drug related.

Bahr et al. (2010) also linked hours of post-incarceration employment with a greater likelihood of parole success. Though their findings did not show that employment did not play a critical role in parole success or failure, qualitative analysis suggested that having full-time employment can ease the period of transition from carceral settings to communities by providing structure and routine, as well as an alternative to reconnecting with deviant acquaintances (Bahr et al., 2010). In addition, employment, which generates income, often eases the burden of meeting the basic needs of offenders reported by Morani, et al. (2010). For convicted felons, however, obtaining conventional gainful employment can be a challenge because there is a

marked bias against hiring individuals with criminal convictions (Varghese, Hardin, Bauer, & Morgan, 2010).

Beyond these tangible and monetary needs are those that impact the social and emotional well-being of ex-offenders. Due to changes in sentencing policies such as mandatory minimums and truth-in-sentencing laws, the average duration of time in correctional facilities is lengthening (Travis & Petersilia, 2001). These longer sentences have caused offenders to be detached from their families and society for extended periods, which can weaken community connections upon release. Furthermore, many offenders are released into low income, culturally isolated, inner-city communities, which places these already underprivileged areas at further disadvantage (Petersilia, 2001). This is especially true for predominantly non-white areas plagued by the effects of racism and other types of disadvantage. As of 2003, 12.3% of the U.S. population was African American, but African Americans made up 44% of the U.S. prison population (Nixon, Clough, Staples, Peterkin, Zimmerman, Voight, & Clear, 2008).

Racial Disproportionality and the Impact of Incarceration

Numerous researchers have found racial discrepancies in the rates of incarceration among certain U.S. populations. For example, Hagan and Coleman (2001) reported that black children are nine times more likely than white children to have an imprisoned parent. Statistics from a few years later indicated that 7.5% of African American children, 2.3% of Hispanic children, and 1% of white children have a parent in prison, exhibiting roughly the same trend (Western, Pattillo, & Weiman, 2004; Foster & Hagan, 2009). Marbley and Ferguson (2005) noted similarly disproportionate numbers.

They found that black females were 2.5 times more likely than Hispanic females to be incarcerated and 4.5 times more likely than white females to be imprisoned.

Alarid (2000) purported two explanations for the disproportionality of offenders of color: crime patterns and contextual discrimination. The first rationale suggests that higher rates of African American incarceration stem from there being a larger number of violent crimes committed by members of this racial category (Alarid, 2000). However, she noted this argument does not account for the innumerable arrests resulting from America's "War on Drugs", which is a sizeable factor in augmented incarceration rates (Alarid, 2000).

Pratt (2009) agreed that the policy changes catalyzed during the war on drugs are blameworthy for the current racial disparities in United States prisons, particularly the increased number of incarcerated African American women. The most egregious example of the discriminatory policies is the differential sentencing practices between drug offenses involving crack cocaine and powder cocaine (Clear et al., 2011). The possession of crack cocaine carries a sentence far more severe than possession of the powdered version; however, the only difference between the two forms is that one (crack) is used mostly by inner-city folk and people of color, while the other (powder) is associated with white individuals (Clear et al., 2011).

This type of differential treatment ties into Alarid's (2000) second explanation for racial disproportionality in correctional facilities: contextual discrimination. Contextual discrimination suggests that offenders of racial minority groups are treated more harshly than their white counterparts at various stages of the criminal justice system (Alarid, 2000). Such treatment is evidenced by more frequent denial of bail among offenders of

color and increased sentencing to prison, especially if the victim of the crime was Caucasian (Alarid, 2000). However, the impact of racial disproportionality does not end at the disposition of an offender from the criminal justice system.

Nixon and her colleagues (2008) posited that communities whose residents are disproportionately imprisoned are not only disrupted by the removal of community members who contribute, but also are unable to respond effectively to those members' return post-incarceration. Alarid (2000) also noted that social structural factors serve as indicators of discrimination because racial minority groups are often overrepresented among the unemployed, undereducated, and impoverished.

The Impact of Race on Re-entry

The disproportional number of inmates of color in prisons is very likely to result in a disproportionately high number of people of color reintegrating into the community. Data indicate that 42% of all parolees successfully complete parole without re-offending or violating the conditions of their release; however, only 39% of African American offenders succeed on parole (Walker, Spohn, & Delone, 2012). There is a plethora of possible explanations for this discrepancy.

Research has shown that there are some added challenges for offenders of color to overcome during reintegration. For example, Marbley and Ferguson (2005) argue that the job market often excludes people of color, even non-felons, posing an immense barrier to gainful employment upon release from prison for these individuals. Hochstetler, DeLisi, and Pratt (2010) found that non-white offenders had lower levels of social support upon their release from prison than did white inmates. This pattern is not

surprising, given that there are innumerable stereotypes of people of color as well as racialized attitudes toward rehabilitation and re-entry.

Historically, stereotypes of offenders of color have centered on white supremacy; however, the perceived biological inferiority of people of color, particularly African Americans, has morphed into a more social bias (Percival, 2009). Society now views African Americans as a violent and crime-prone underclass, which can lead whites to fear or feel threatened by members of racial minority groups, thus diminishing their amenability to social services for offenders (Clear et al., 2011; Percival, 2009). Hirschfield and Piquero (2010) noted that white people's hostility toward offenders is bolstered by deeply ingrained racial prejudice brought on in part by these stereotypes that equate blackness with criminality. They also discern that African American people are more supportive of rehabilitation, overall, than are white or Hispanic people. Percival (2009) found that "states with greater racial diversity and states in which whites have less tolerant racial attitudes are less likely to provide prisoner re-entry services" (p. 192).

One group of researchers identified such phenomena as "population racism," which "devalues populations with practices that continually target and mark them as objects for surveillance, control, and life management beyond the prison" (Nixon et al., 2008, p. 22). Nixon and her colleagues (2008) argued that media portrayal of offenders equates being black with being criminal, and that mass incarceration deepens the racial divide. Percival (2009) noted that, in addition to media, actual demographic data linking African Americans to the criminal justice system disproportionately can bolster stereotypical perceptions of racial minorities. These attitudes extend to majority influence over policymakers, ultimately influencing a state's approach to crime and

punishment (Percival, 2009). The hostility and array of challenges ex-offenders of color, particularly African Americans, face is becoming a new institution of imprisonment beyond correctional facility walls (Nixon et al., 2008). Nixon and her colleagues (2008) declared a great urgency for researchers to examine how racism shapes re-entry. The current research seeks to extend the literature in this area by assessing the re-entry experiences of racial and ethnic minority groups so that future programs can incorporate strategies to address the unique needs offenders of color might have.

Aversive Racism

Overt acts of discrimination and clear instances of individual racism, while present in some cases, are not the primary cause of struggle for reintegrating offenders. In fact, most people will not express bias when they feel it will be noticeable to others (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000). Dovidio and Gaertner (2000) call these types of people aversive racists. “Aversive racism represents a particular type of ambivalence in which the conflict is between feelings and beliefs associated with a sincerely egalitarian value system and unacknowledged negative feelings and beliefs” about minority groups (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986, p. 62).

To test the aversive racism framework, Dovidio and Gaertner (2000) used two comparable groups of white undergraduate students (one from the 1988-89 academic year and one from the 1998-99 academic year). Participants completed surveys assessing their racial attitudes among other things, and then were asked to assess potential candidates for a peer counseling position. Interview excerpts of each candidate were manipulated to reflect one applicant with strong qualifications, one with

weak qualifications, and one with ambiguous qualifications. The race of each applicant was listed in the excerpts.

Dovidio and Gaertner (2000) found that race was not a significant predictor of hiring recommendations for those with clearly strong or clearly weak qualifications. "Bias against blacks in simulated hiring decisions was manifested primarily when a candidate's credentials for the position were ambiguous. When a black candidate's credentials clearly qualified him for the position, or when his credentials clearly were not appropriate, there was no discrimination against him" (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000, p. 318). In addition, self-reported expressions of prejudice decreased from 1988-89 to 1998-99 (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000). Though individual prejudice may be decreasing, or at least becoming more socially undesirable, racism continues to flourish through institutionalized means.

Institutional Racism

Many white people view racism simply as prejudice or individual attitudes, but for people of color, racism is systemic or institutionalized (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Sociologist Earl Babbie defines this type of racism as "an action which is not directly discriminatory but has a discriminatory effect, whether intended or not"; ultimately maintaining the status quo and upholding white privilege (Slayton, 2009, p. 1). While institutional racism is harder to identify and more difficult to combat than individual prejudice and overt acts of discrimination, it is crucial to resist this burgeoning mechanism of inequality in American society (Slayton, 2009). Institutionalized discrimination takes many forms in avenues like education and housing, as well as in employment, which will be discussed at length in a following section.

Plessy v. Ferguson. In 1896, Homer Plessy a 7/8 white American with fair skin, was arrested in Louisiana for sitting in a “white-only” car on a train. The car for people of color was full, and Plessy was causing no other disturbance aside from his failure to remain separate from white passengers (*Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1896). Justice John H. Ferguson found Plessy guilty of violating a state ordinance that proclaimed railroads had “separate but equal” accommodations for passengers of black and white racial standing (*Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1896) . The Supreme Court upheld the original ruling by Justice Ferguson, declaring that it was, in fact, constitutionally permissible for states to engage in racial segregation under the provision of “separate but equal” facilities.

The ruling sent a message to blacks and whites alike, showing wealthy people in power that segregation was permissible so long as there was an “equal” alternative for the non-favored racial group. According to Schaefer (2008), “the ruling of *Plessy v. Ferguson* provided legal justification for Jim Crow laws while fortifying notions of White supremacy and Black inferiority, and much of the South adopted these legislative premises” (p. 210). Ultimately, *Plessy* played a large role in defining race categories in the United States.

Sixty four years after the *Plessy* verdict, the notion of separate but equal was abolished in the U.S. education system with the 1954 Supreme Court ruling on *Brown v. Board of Education*. Separate but equal facilities existed in the theoretical design of the legal system, but in reality, racially segregated facilities were just separate. In Plessy’s case, the so-designated “white” cars of the railroad were cleaner and in better repair than those designated for folks of color. For the children of *Brown v. Board, “*separate

but equal" meant that black and white children attended school separately—but not equally.

Thurgood Marshall argued on behalf of the plaintiffs in this case that the school facilities for African American children were not equal to the educational institutions provided for white children and could not be made so (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954). Though children of all racial groups had access to education, white children still fared better because their education received greater financial support, a better teacher-student ratio, and more superior curricular offerings than the facilities black children were permitted to attend (Nieman, 1994; Wong, 2004).

The Supreme Court ruled that segregation based on race in the public education system denied black children equal protection under the law, as guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment, and overturned the precedent from *Plessy v. Ferguson* for public education only, holding that segregating children on the basis of race alone fosters a feeling of inferiority among black children.

Educational discrimination. Despite the call for racial integration by law, de facto segregation remained (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2010). Though schools could not legally separate students on the basis of race, segregation continued simply as a result of where students lived (see section on Housing Discrimination). Furthermore, educational inequality was perpetuated in communities of color by poverty and the unequal distribution of wealth (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2010).

Parents' finances, either directly or through taxes, often play a large role in funding their children's education in schools and via private tutors, savings accounts for college tuition, and other resources to enrich students' educational experiences (Desmond &

Emirbayer, 2010). Thus, white students in affluent areas tend to have greater access to educational opportunities, including those beyond the scope of the traditional classroom experience. This is not to purport that parents of color do not contribute to their children's schooling, but the social and historical domination led to and continues to support racialized economic inequality (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2010). Communities of color tend to be disproportionately affected by poverty and social disorganization, each of which can contribute to a less-than-ideal educational environment, especially when coupled with inadequate schools.

Schools that are underfunded do not often have the most qualified teachers to compensate for their lack of resources either. Not only do teachers lack things like computers, up-to-date textbooks, and opportunities for field trips or other enrichment activities, but they also lack a stable work environment. According to Desmond and Emirbayer (2010), the turnover rate for teachers in impoverished areas of the inner city is remarkably high; sometimes all teachers can do is maintain order in the classroom, protecting their students from violence and other crime in lieu of focusing on education. This is not an ideal situation for educators, and many move on to safer, more socially organized areas. Wealthier school districts can offer greater salaries, more classroom resources, and better benefits, all of which serve to attract the best teachers who are desperately needed elsewhere (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2010). Ultimately, white privilege is extended by the allocation of physical and human resources to affluent areas.

The *Brown* verdict may have ended the "separate" educational system for children of color, but it most definitely did not equalize it. In fact, even students in integrated

schools often had segregated experiences. The process of tracking often separated students on the basis of race despite the fact its proclaimed goal was to sort students into educational tracks based on ability (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2010). According to Desmond and Emirbayer (2010) the majority of students placed on accelerated or college prep tracks tend to be white or Asian, while those assigned to vocational or remedial tracks are disproportionately black or Hispanic. Furthermore, as a school's racial diversity increases, the presence of Hispanic and African American students in upper-level tracks actually decreases, indicating that those tracks are designated for white (and Asian) students (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2010).

This discrepancy widens the gap between white students and students of color; not only are there differences *between* schools in terms of the quality of education they can provide, but there are also marked inequalities *within* schools that, intentionally or unintentionally, provide disparate educational opportunities among race groups (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2010). However, tracking is not the only way in which the system is unfavorably biased toward students of color.

Many institutions of higher learning (e.g., colleges, universities) use standardized testing as a way to measure a student's potential for success. Placing students in a remedial or vocational track that lacks preparation for higher education does not promote student success on these measures, not only jeopardizing their chances of college acceptance, but also doing a disservice to their school. Even non-academic track students are still required to take state and/or national standardized tests in order to provide data on their school's progress and/or to secure funding for the school.

The detrimental effects of this testing are two-fold. First, the tests themselves are flawed, measuring cultural experiences rather than intellectual ability. Arewa (1977) argues that “these tests are only standardized on a mainstream cultural segment, thereby failing to recognize the existence as well as the integrity of various subcultural systems in America” (p. 154). This type of cultural racism will be discussed in more detail in a subsequent section; the main tenet of this argument in terms of education is that standardized tests of intellectual ability are only “standardized” for those who are fully enmeshed in mainstream culture, or possess enough cultural capital. Cultural capital is often measured by one’s connection to and experience with “high brow” culture: museums, classical music and opera, fine art, European literature, and other things generally associated with whiteness (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2010). This is not to say that African American and Hispanic subcultures or “low brow” white cultures do not have merit; their social capital however, does not have the same exchange rate for social clout that high brow culture does (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2010). The schism in educational testing is influenced largely by the isolation of these various cultural experiences.

The people of power in the educational system are the ones who develop tests, set curriculums, and allocate school funding, setting the standards for student achievement. Historically, these people have been white, and so the standards reflect their majority experiences. Thus, standardized tests will be borne of cultural experiences their creators deem necessary to propel one into positions of higher educational attainment. However, the true measure of intellectual ability of students from non-mainstream cultures may be stymied by questions loaded with racial or class

preference. Without experience in or appreciation for different cultural experiences, test creators are unable to account for varying experiences. In addition, sometimes these differential experiences result from the vastly unequal schooling children of color and impoverished white children have compared to affluent white children of the mainstream. The relationship is reciprocal, leading to the second fold of standardized testing's detrimental effects: the cyclical disadvantages that testing with flawed measures promotes.

Schools that serve primarily students of color, who often lack the cultural experiences measured by standardized tests, cannot provide a well-rounded education led by highly qualified teachers on their limited budgets (Desmond &Emirbayer, 2010). Thus, they are often labeled as underperforming when their students do not score as well as those of more affluent schools, resulting in stagnant or even decreased funding for the following year, feeding the cycle of disadvantage. Schools need more money and resources to improve the education they provide, but their failure to meet state and federal standards prevents them from gleaning government funding, and the children are the ones who suffer in the long run.

Unfortunately, the ramifications of standardized testing bias extend beyond elementary, middle, and high school. Many institutions of higher learning utilize standardized test scores as a factor in admission decisions. Some schools even have cut-off points, meaning they will not accept students who do not achieve at least a specified minimum score on a particular test. Even if a student of color manages to avoid being vocationally tracked and subverts testing bias, there are still additional hurdles in the college admission process.

Beyond a systemic lack of preparation for higher education and standardized tests biased against them, students of color also encounter institutionalized discrimination at the level of college admissions. Legacy admits, or the allocation of a certain number of spots in an incoming class for relatives of alumni, particularly in Ivy League schools, is another practice that perpetuates the privilege of wealthier white people. This system may appear race-neutral at face value; however, historically, only white men were allowed to attend such institutions, and thus, these prized placements in prestigious universities are ultimately reserved for more white students, extending the historical privilege granted to their ancestors (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2010).

The overwhelming preference given to white students, albeit unintentional at times, perpetuates a cycle of institutionalized racism and discrimination against people of color. Education has a symbiotic relationship with other lifestyle sectors, including housing. The education one attains often impacts where one can afford to live, and where one lives often dictates where one has the opportunity to attend school or to educate one's children. Thus, one cannot consider the system of education without examining the institutional discrimination found in housing as well.

Housing discrimination*.* Neighborhoods are known for their marked racial characteristics in many areas. This segregation is the result of numerous forces, but the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), which helps Americans become homeowners through moderate down payments and loan repayment over time, plays a large role in it (Shapiro, 2004a).

The process of homeownership includes three major phases that provide the opportunity for racial discrimination: access to credit, interest rates, and housing values

(Shapiro, 2004b). Shapiro (2004b) noted that black individuals seeking a mortgage are turned down 80% more than white mortgage applicants. Furthermore, when black Americans are granted mortgage agreements, they pay up to a third percent more interest which can average $11,756 over the life of the loan (Shapiro, 2004b). It literally costs more for a black family to own a house identical to one purchased by a white family. When black people move into a neighborhood, the property values decline. Homes in a neighborhood with a 10% black racial makeup lose more than 16% of their values, and the more segregation there is, the greater discrepancy in black-white home values (Shapiro, 2004b). As a result, it makes financial sense for white people to live among members of their own race group to preserve the value of their home, but a Detroit Area Study (DAS) found that most black people would ideally live in a neighborhood that was evenly integrated with 50% black residents and 50% white residents (Bonilla-Silva, 2006).

This ideal neighborhood makeup is unlikely to occur, however, due to a sociological phenomenon known as white flight. As communities become more integrated, white people tend to move out of the neighborhoods for fear of decreasing property values, deteriorating educational opportunities, and a perception of increased crime (Shapiro, 2004b). Then, as the neighborhood reaches a tipping point for becoming predominantly black, gentrification occurs. In other words, once white people have fled as far into suburbia as is practical for them, they return to the more urban areas closer to the heart of the city, increasing property values but displacing residents of color, thereby making the neighborhood predominantly white once again (Shapiro, 2004b).

White flight may not be an act of overt bigotry on the part of the government, but that does not make residential segregation devoid of structural inequality. Financial, social, and educational goal blockages exist more so for people of color than their white counterparts, resulting in homogenous populations often replete with myriad forms of disadvantage. This seemingly elected self-segregation is likely due, at least in part, to an extension of institutional racism known as cultural racism.

Cultural Racism

Cultural racism can be defined as “the systematic manner in which the white majority has established its primary cultural institutions”, like education, media, and labor markets, to advance Caucasian characteristics and achievement and to denigrate those of non-white people (Oliver, 2001, p. 4). This framework has a reciprocal relationship with institutional racism, both exemplifying and feeding into it. Cultural racism manifests in a variety of ways; however, the universal outcome of these manifestations is to devalue the cultural image and integrity of nonwhite racial and ethnic groups (Oliver, 2001). Oliver (2001) makes the distinction between institutional racism and cultural racism by *how* each produces social disorganization. Institutional racism, he argues, denies people of color equal access to legitimate opportunity structures, while cultural racism welcomes this disorganization via deliberate attacks on the images and cultural integrity of racial minorities, specifically African Americans (Oliver, 2001).

Contemporary America exercises this framework via racialized victim-blaming. For example, Caucasians may not consider people of color to be biologically inferior as in decades past; however, minority groups are berated for being lazy, lacking strong

family structures, and not putting forth effort to get themselves out of their second-class standing in society (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). People operating from a cultural racism frame may argue that the disproportionate number of African Americans under the control of the criminal justice system is due to “Black culture” teaching and encouraging criminal activity. In this way, subscribers to whiteness essentially attribute racism to the faults of those negatively affected by it. Furthermore, those operating from a cultural racism framework tend to dismiss victims’ claims of racism on the basis that marginalized people are “making excuses” for their lack of work ethic or for their unwillingness to “just go out and get a job” (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, p. 41). However, unemployment issues for people of color in the United States are a function of widespread systemic issues, despite a perceived lack of individual efforts to enter the labor force.

Employment Discrimination

Racism in the labor market. Pager and Karafin (2009) conducted 55 in-depth interviews with white New York City employers in 2004, asking interviewees about their general attitudes about African American males' employment issues, their experience with black applicants/employees, and the relationship between their experiences and their attitudes. They found that employers expressed strong negative views of African American men, but less than half of employers reported observing these characteristics among their own applicants and employees. Among these characteristics were lack of a work ethic, poor self-presentation (i.e., negative attitude, unsuitable appearance, and inappropriate conduct), and a threatening or criminal demeanor.

Pager and Karafin (2009) noted that more than 3/4 of interviewees mentioned individual explanations for black men's employment problems, and 60% of them cited

individual factors as the primary cause for such issues. Ultimately, the authors did not identify a link between direct experiences and general beliefs. Pager and Karafin (2009) ultimately suggested that employers do not seem to rely heavily on their own experiences when forming racial attitudes but make “no claims about the relationship between employers' attitudes and the ‘true’ characteristic of African Americans" (p.89).

Expanding this idea to include prospective Latino employees and a white control group, Pager, Western, and Bonikowski (2009) sent groups of matched (age, height, verbal skills, etc.) testers differing in race/ethnicity to apply for actual entry level positions in New York City with matching resumes. They found that employers prefer white and Latino applicants to equally qualified blacks. Specifically, white testers got callbacks or job offers 31.0% of the time; Latinos 25.2% of the time; and 15.2% of the time for black testers (Pager et al., 2009a).

Adding Offender Status and the Double Marginalization of Offenders of Color. Pager, Western, and Bonikowski (2009) conducted a second phase of their experiment to explore the impact of criminal convictions on hiring decisions. The racial hierarchy discovered by the first portion of their study was sustained, with criminal white testers receiving callbacks or job offers 17.2% of the time; non-criminal Latino testers 15.4% of the time; and non-criminal black testers 13.0% of the time (Pager et al., 2009a). Pager et al.’s (2009) results indicate that black applicants must search more extensively (often twice as long) than equally qualified white applicants before they get callbacks or job offers. Furthermore, white applicants with criminal backgrounds still fare better than their non-criminal minority peers (Pager et al., 2009a).

Other studies have corroborated that a criminal conviction has a disproportionately negative effect on offenders of color. Pager, Western, and Sugie (2009) conducted a large-scale field experiment finding that a criminal record negatively affected hiring outcomes and that the negative effect of a felony conviction is substantially larger for black applicants than their white counterparts. This large effect could be influenced by a lack of personal contact with potential employers.

Pager, Western, and Sugie (2009) discussed the mitigating effects of personal contact with employers related to criminal convictions, noting that there is an increased struggle for black applicants who are less likely to be invited for personal contact and thus have less of an opportunity to assuage employer concerns about their criminal histories. The researchers noticed that most employers provide ambiguous responses or no reaction to criminal record and that more of them respond sympathetically than negatively to ex-offenders (Pager et al., 2009b). Overall, applicants who received a favorable response from employers had the most callbacks and job offers. Ultimately, the researchers concluded that white ex-offenders were not overly affected by reduced communication with potential employers, but black individuals were faced with substantially lower prospects for employment (Pager et al., 2009b).

In their review of two field experiments in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and New York City, New York, Pager and Western (2012) explained "the remarkable consistency of Black-White disparities across the two cities suggests that racial discrimination in hiring is not the product of distinctive local cultures or labor market dynamics but rather a more generalized phenomenon" (p. 226). Thus, employment discrimination on the basis of race and offender status is worth further exploration.

The current research seeks to expand on the extant body of knowledge on the impact of race and offender status on employment opportunities. Specifically, the reactions to and attitudes of small business hiring managers toward white non-offender job seekers, black non-offender job seekers, white ex-offender job seekers, and black ex-offender job seekers are explored.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The current research explores three primary questions. Are applicants with a criminal background more likely to be dismissed from hiring pools than applicants without a criminal background? Are white applicants more likely to advance in the hiring process than black applicants, regardless of criminal background? Will a criminal background affect black and white applicants differently? These ideas will be investigated, as previously mentioned, through the use of mail surveys.

The following research hypotheses are based on the expected responses to these surveys:

> H_1: Individuals without a criminal record are more likely to advance in the hiring process than individuals with a criminal record.
>
> H_2 :White applicants are more likely to advance in the hiring process than black applicants, regardless of criminal background.
>
> H_3: Black applicants with a criminal record will be viewed least positively, while white applicants without a criminal record will be viewed most positively. A criminal conviction will have less of a negative impact on white applicants than on similarly situated black individuals.
>
> $H_{0:}$ Survey responses will be varied, showing no distinct preference for applicants of a particular race or criminal background.

In addition, this study looks at whether employers' hiring practices are dictated by their perceptions of a candidate's employability and whether their preference for no felony of misdemeanor convictions align with their likelihood to interview an applicant with a criminal background. It is hypothesized that perception of employability and preference for a clean criminal background will dictate hiring practices.

Methodology

Sample Selection/Rationale

The probability sample for this research was selected from the Business Directory of the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce (see Data Source section for more information). From a sampling frame (N= 1656) of small businesses in the Grand Rapids area, a simple random sampling procedure was used to select 579 businesses for inclusion in the study. A random number generator was used to assign each business to one of the six scenario groups. The unit of analysis for this study is small business hiring managers.

The purpose for selecting small business hiring managers to participate in this study is two-fold. First, large businesses or corporations that operate nationally are more likely to have formal policies or systematic processes related to hiring which may not reflect attitudes prevalent in the Grand Rapids area. Second, large, well-known businesses are likely to attract a much larger group of applicants and thus offenders may be screened out sooner in the hiring process than those businesses with fewer employees to consider. Furthermore, offenders tend to return to their home communities upon release from incarceration (Nixon et al., 2008). Given that most convicted felons come from areas with a moderate to significant degree of social disadvantage, it is more plausible they will be returning to areas with smaller scale employment opportunities as most large businesses do not choose to locate in impoverished, minority areas (Nixon et al., 2008).

Data Source/Data Access

Participants were collected from the Business Directory of the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber of Commerce draws its members primarily from Kent County, which, according to the 2011 U.S. Census, has a population of 608,453, 75.7% of whom are white (“County Profile”, 2014). The County reported an unemployment rate of 11.8% in July of 2009, but its website asserts this rate has declined over the last four years (“County Profile”, 2014).

For sample selection, a list was compiled of all of the area businesses that provided a physical address in Michigan. This list included the Chambers of Commerce in surrounding towns, which were excluded from the sampling frame. Business selection was limited to those from the Entrepreneur level. Membership in this category is “geared toward small companies (25 or fewer employees) looking to grow through networking and marketing opportunities” (See grandrapids.org/benefits--levels). From the time that the original sampling frame was compiled to the time that individual businesses were randomly selected, the nomenclature for the Entrepreneur level was adjusted to “Associate”. The full extent of the name change’s effects on the sampling pool was unclear, so randomly selected businesses that were no longer accessible within this level were eliminated from the sample and the next available business was substituted in its place. This occurred 19 times in all.

Research Design and Data Collection Plan

The preliminary design for this study is factorial, including cover letters and resumes featuring one of six prospective employees. The first job-seeker is a white male without a criminal record; the second is a white male with a criminal record; the

third is a black male without a criminal record; the fourth is a black male with a criminal record; the fifth and sixth are Hispanic/Latino males with and without a criminal record, respectively. Each applicant presented identical education and experiential credentials. A cover letter and resume featuring one of the six applicants was mailed to the hiring manager at a small business in the Grand Rapids area, accompanied by an instructional letter (see Appendix A) and survey (see Appendix B) to collect responses on the following variables as well as a variety of demographic information. A copy of resumes and cover letters provided to participants can be found in Appendices C and D, respectively.

Mail surveys were selected due to the ease of access to physical addresses for local businesses. In addition, mail surveys require less human capital on the part of researchers than in-person interviews or telephone surveys. Furthermore, by mailing the resumes, cover letters, and surveys, hiring managers are free to complete them at a time of their convenience. After completed surveys were collected, multivariate analyses were used to compare means both within and across groups. Descriptive statistics were used to account for demographic information about participants and businesses. Incomplete data were imputed based on participant responses when available (7.59% of cases, n=6) or random selection when participant responses were not available (7.59% of cases, n=6). Missing data remained incomplete when entire sections of the survey were omitted (1.3% of cases, n=1).

Independent variables. The manipulated independent variables for this study are race and criminal record. For the purpose of this study, the prospective applicant's race is differentiated between "African American", "Caucasian" , or "Hispanic" in the

scenario presented to respondents. Race was signaled in the scenario through the name of the candidate (Jamal, John, or Jose), the geographic area of their home address (a predominantly black neighborhood, white neighborhood, and Hispanic neighborhood, respectively), and stereotypical extracurricular activities, one each from fine arts, athletics, and social groupings (i.e., Black Student Union, European Student Senate, and Latino Student Union).

The prospective applicant's criminal record was indicated in the cover letter presented to respondents. The type of crime and candidate's prison conduct were not addressed in any of the materials presented to respondents. Sex and/or gender were not stated, but it was expected that respondents assumed all candidates are male. Age and marital status of job candidate were not disclosed.

The descriptive demographic variables for this study are split into two categories: business variables and personal variables. Business variables include business location, business size, business type, and business environment .For the purpose of this study, business location is defined as urban or rural. This variable is measured nominally, as identified by the participant through their selection of the "urban (city or suburbs)" or "rural (country or farmland)" category. Business size is defined by the number of employees self-disclosed by the participant. This variable will be measured using an interval level measure. Participants may select 1-15, 16-25, 26-49, or 50+.

In addition, business type is defined as primary type of work or service a business provides. Participants selected "Industrial/Manual Labor", "Food Service", "Healthcare", "Customer Service", "Retail", or wrote in a field of their choosing for

"Other". These categories were collapsed from a larger, more specific list of occupational categories listed in the Chamber of Commerce database. Lastly, business environment is defined as the primary type of venue in which a business operates. Participants selected "Office or Professional Building", "Outdoors", "Restaurant or Food Venue", "Store or Shopping Center", "Factory or Production Plant", "Residential Homes" or wrote in a field of their choosing for "Other". These categories were based on logistically appropriate locations for the various job types identified from the Chamber of Commerce occupational categories.

The personal variables in this study are respondent gender, respondent race, and respondent age. For the purpose of this study, respondent gender is defined as male, female or other. This variable was measured nominally, as identified by the selection of the "male", "female" or "other" category. Respondent race is defined as "Caucasian/White", "African American/Black", or "Other". Participants self-identified their race through selecting as many as apply from the categories Caucasian/White, African American/Black, Hispanic, Asian, Native American/American Indian, and Other. Respondents selecting a race other than African-American/Black or Caucasian/White, and those who identify as multi-racial were coded as "other" for the purpose of data analysis. Lastly, respondent age is defined as the age in years self-identified by the person completing the survey. Participants selected from the interval categories 18-24, 25-31, 32-38, 39-45, 46-52, or 53+.

Dependent variables. The dependent variables for this study are hiring practices and employer attitudes toward candidates. For the purpose of this study, hiring practices were measured through self-report scales of reactions to job

applicants. Participants were asked to rate their likelihood to hire, invite to interview, or turn down the applicant on a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is “definitely would not” and 10 is “definitely would”. Employer attitudes were measured through Likert scale items in which participants will indicate whether they “Strongly Agree”, “Agree”, “Mildly Agree”, “Mildly Disagree”, “Disagree”, or “Strongly Disagree” with statements related to their opinions about the prospective job candidate. See Appendix B for a copy of the survey provided to respondents.

Validity and Reliability of Measures

Measures of employer hiring practices have strong face validity because they measure the self-reported likelihood of actions the participants would take if presented with the applicant described. The construct validity of measures related to employer hiring practices is demonstrated through the exhaustive and mutually exclusive range of classifications for this category (anywhere from “definitely would not” to “definitely would”). The employer actions instrument measures exactly what it appears to measure, which demonstrates strong content validity.

Measures of employer attitudes have strong face validity because they measure the self-reported level of agreement with attitudes regarding the applicant described. The construct validity of measures related to employer actions is demonstrated through the exhaustive and mutually exclusive range of classifications for this category (anywhere from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”). The employer attitudes instrument measures mostly what it appears to measure, which demonstrates relatively strong content validity.

Measures of business and participant demographics have strong face validity because they measure what they intend to measure by asking straightforward questions directly related to participant race, gender, and age as well as business location, business type, business environment, and business size. They also measure exactly what they appear to measure, which demonstrates strong content validity. The construct validity of measures of participant race, gender, and age is demonstrated through categories that are all mutually exclusive and exhaustive, covering the range of classifications for these categories. The construct validity of measures of business location, business type, business environment, and business size is demonstrated through categories that are all mutually exclusive and exhaustive, covering the range of classifications for these categories (content validity). Reliability for these demographic measures is expected to be strong if test-retest methods are employed due to the relatively stable nature of these characteristics.

Human Subjects Protections

This research was approved by Grand Valley State's Human Research Review Committee (File number 13-175-H).

Informed consent. Informed consent is inferred through the return of the survey. It was also assumed that respondents were at least 18 years of age, as they were employed as hiring managers at local businesses.

Anonymity. None of the human subjects in this research were personally identifiable and were not required to provide any sensitive information. All data reported is in the aggregate form and individual responses are not distinguishable from the aggregate data.

Deception. The researcher was identified as such to participants. Subjects were informed that they have been selected to participate in a study about hiring practices, omitting disclosure of the key variables of race and offender status in order to avoid biased responses. After data collection was complete, those who elected to participate were debriefed (see Appendix E). Participation was indicated by the return of a postcard separate from survey responses. The postcard text is available in Appendix F.

Response Rates

A pilot study yielded 26 of 150 surveys, indicating a response rate of 17.33%. Satisfied with that return, the researcher sent out the rest of the surveys, totaling 579 invited participants. Ten survey packets were returned as undeliverable. The overall response rate was 16.52%, ultimately yielding 79 usable surveys to be coded for data analysis. It is interesting to note that response rates varied across candidates, sometimes drastically. For example, the white offender and Hispanic offender had response rates of 14.12% and 19.15% (highest overall) respectively, while the black offender responses were returned only 8.03% of the time (lowest overall). For non-offender candidates, the response rates for the white and Hispanic job-seekers were 17.65% and 14.89%, while the black candidate was 10.09%. These disparate response rates will be discussed further in a subsequent section.

Respondent Demographics

Participants. Of the 79 surveys coded for analysis, 78 participants elected to provide demographic information. The vast majority of respondents were white (89.9%, n=71), with only 8.9% of participants identifying as black (n=3) or another race/multi-racial (n=4). Gender breakdown revealed 47 female participants (59.5%) and 31 male participants (39.2%). No one identified as a non-binary gender, and one participant declined to respond. Participant age spanned the majority of intervals provided, with only the 18-24 age group failing to be represented. No respondents reported being younger than 25, but over half of participants (59.5%, n = 47) reported being over age 45.

Businesses. The vast majority of businesses were reported to be in urban settings (89.9%, n=71). Five hiring managers reported that their businesses were located in rural settings and 3 participants declined to provide this information. Business size varied within the sample. Most had 25 or fewer members (62.8%, n = 49), with 10 businesses reporting a size of 26-49 employees (12.7%). Due to the small sample size, surveys indicating 50 or more employees (24.1%, n=19) were allowed to remain in the dataset on the basis that the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce deemed them qualified for small business-level membership.

Business venue was largely office or professional buildings (53.2%, n=42), though all but one category (restaurant or food venue) was represented to some degree (6.3% each for outdoors and shopping center, 5.1% for residential homes, 15.2% for factory or production plant, and 12.7% for other venues not listed). Respondents struggled to describe the type of work or service their business provides within the

framework of provided categories. While 25.3% of participants categorized their work as industrial or manual labor (n=20), 43% of the sample characterized their work as “other” (n=34). Among the most common write-in descriptors were “consulting” (n= 3), “non-profit” (n = 4) and “financial”(n=3). Food service made up 1.3% of the sample (n=1), 11.4% of hiring managers worked in healthcare (n=9), and 17.7% of hiring managers (n=14) were in customer service or retail lines of work.

Results

Results from this study yielded mixed findings. Data analysis revealed consistency with some hypotheses, but not all. Ultimately, the findings are most closely aligned with the null hypothesis that participant responses were varied and showed no distinct preference for a particular race group or offender status.

Hiring Practices. Respondents reported, on average, that they "may or may not" remove the applicant from consideration based on the information provided (mean= 3.89 on 1 to 10 scale). Consistent with the initial hypothesis, applicants with a criminal background were more likely to be removed from the hiring pool, but only marginally so (non-offender mean= 3.87, offender mean= 3.92). This pattern was in the expected direction, though not statistically significant (F= .003, p=955).

However, when evaluating racial differences in removal from hiring pool, the results were entirely inconsistent with the initial prediction. Black applicants were actually *least* likely to be removed from consideration (mean= 3.68), followed by Hispanics (mean=3.76). White applicants were the most likely to be removed from the hiring pool (mean=4.19), contradicting earlier predictions. This finding also failed to reach statistical significance (F= .155, p=.857).

Examining the intersections of race and offender status in relation to (non-dismissal) hiring practices yielded mixed findings as well. Non-offenders were more likely to be interviewed for both entry level positions (mean= 5.58) and supervisory positions (mean= 2.46) than their offender counterparts (means 5.22 and 2.32 respectively). This pattern held for hiring in supervisory positions as well (offender mean= 1.71, non-offender mean= 1.92). However, contrary to earlier predictions, and

inconsistent with other findings, offender applicants were more likely to be hired for entry level positions (mean= 3.63) than their non-offender counterparts (m=3.57), with F =.010 and p=.921 (not significant).

When broken down by race, findings remain varied. The proposed ranking of preference was supported in hiring practices for both entry level and supervisory positions, with white applicants being slightly preferred over Hispanic applicants who were ranked slightly more favorably than black applicants. Surprisingly, this pattern was not found among interviewing practices. Respondents ranked black and white applicants equally in their likelihood to interview for a supervisory position, mean= 2.32 for both groups. Hispanics were actually the preferred group in this category, ranked on average 2.52 on the 1 to 10 scale; however, this finding was not statistically significant (F=.074, p=.929).

Perhaps most notable is the response to interviewing for entry level positions. Respondents ranked black applicants on average as the most likely to be interviewed (mean= 5.89), followed by Hispanics (mean= 5.39), and lastly by whites (mean= 5.07). These results were not largely disparate between groups. These results did not achieve statistical significance (F=.375, p=.689) but they indicate a deviation from anticipated hierarchies nonetheless.

Analysis of intersections between race and offender status for individual job candidates yielded inconsistent findings as well. The white non-offender applicant, originally hypothesized to be the most preferred out of the applicant group, was ranked lower than both black and Hispanic non-offender candidates on likelihood to interview for entry level and likelihood to interview for supervisory position. The white non-

offender candidate actually generated the lowest likelihood of all candidates, including offenders, to be hired for a supervisor position (mean= 2.14 on a 1 to 10 scale). Consistent with earlier predictions, however, the black offender applicant received the lowest ratings in all other categories of hiring practice, mean 5.00 at interviewing for entry level, mean 2.50 for hiring at entry level, and mean 1.50 at hiring for supervisory position. These results are depicted in Table 1. None of the findings related to combined race and offender status reached statistical significance. Results from the ANOVA test of statistical significant for these findings can are shown in Table 2.

As anticipated, having a criminal record influenced black and white applicants differently. The average ranking of all categories of hiring practice for black applicants was in the opposite direction than the difference between white offenders and non-offenders, and was of greater magnitude in most cases. While the overall pattern demonstrated was consistent with the original hypothesis that a criminal record would affect black applicants more negatively than white applicants, the surprising part of this analysis was that white offenders were actually preferred over white non-offenders.

When whiteness was coupled with offender status, likelihood to be interviewed for an entry level position increased .01 and likelihood to be hired for an entry level position increased .91. In addition, likelihood to be interviewed for a supervisory position improved by .41; the likelihood to be hired for a supervisory position also increased, but only by .29. Lastly, white offenders were rated 1.83 lower than white non-offenders as likely to be removed from consideration altogether.

The intersection of blackness with offender status did not resemble this trend in the least. Black non-offenders were preferred over black offenders in every category,

and the margins by which they were favored were larger, and sometimes remarkably so, than those seen between white applicants in all but one category. When blackness was coupled with offender status, likelihood to be interviewed for an entry level position dropped 1.55 and likelihood to be hired for an entry level position decreased 1.72. In addition, likelihood to be hired for a supervisory position decreased by .29 when these characteristics intersected. The likelihood to be interviewed for a supervisory position also decreased, but only by .11, the only category in which white applicants were affected by a criminal record on a greater scale. Lastly, black offenders were rated .98 higher than black non-offenders as likely to be removed from consideration altogether.

It is also interesting to note the willingness of hiring managers to refer job candidates to other business owners if they did not personally have jobs available for the prospective candidate. Respondents reported a greater likelihood of referring offenders (mean=5.72 on a 1 to 10 scale) than non-offenders (mean=4.74). In addition, they were, on average, least likely to refer white candidates regardless of criminal background (mean= 4.96) as compared to Hispanic and black applicants, means 5.45 and 5.20 respectively. Analysis of intersections in this case revealed a surprising hierarchy of applicants. The black offender applicant was ranked highest for referral (mean= 5.89) followed by Hispanic offenders (mean= 5.87), white offenders (5.42), then Hispanic non-offenders (mean= 5.00), and black non-offenders (mean= 4.64). The white non-offenders, originally predicted to be most favorable, was actually reported to be the least referred applicant with a mean of 4.57, more than a full point below the black offender applicant.

Attitudes. Hiring managers on average rated having no felony convictions as a relatively important characteristic in employees (mean= 8.22 on a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is not at all important and 10 is extremely important), They reported having no misdemeanor convictions as slightly less important (mean= 6.94). This attitude did not seem to dictate hiring practices, as most employers presented with an offender were, on average, willing to at least consider interviewing the candidate for an entry level position (mean= 5.22).

Conversely, according to participant responses, hiring behaviors were more reflective of perceptions of candidates as employable. For example, the black non-offender candidate was rated as the most employable of all candidates (mean= 5.64 on a 1 to 6 scale), and was also the most likely to be interviewed for an entry level position (mean = 6.55). Similarly, the black offender job applicant was rated as least employable (mean = 4.78) and was also the least likely to be interviewed or hired for an entry level position (means of 5.00 and 2.50, respectively).

Though the top and bottom of the candidate hierarchy matches with perception of employability and likelihood to interview for an entry level position, the positioning of white and Hispanic job-seekers was incongruent. For employability, the white offender and white non-offender were situated near the top of the scale (means 5.17 and 5.07 respectively) followed by the Hispanic non-offender and Hispanic offender (means 5.00 and 4.82 respectively). This sequence was inverted for likelihood to interview for an entry level position; for this hiring practice, the Hispanic offender and Hispanic non-offender (means 5.41 and 5.36 respectively) were preferred over the white offender and

white non-offender (means 5.08 and 5.07 respectively). Again, this finding did not reach statistical significance ($F = 1.163$, $p = .335$).

Discussion

Summary and Discussion of Findings

Overall, the findings of this study supported the null hypothesis that survey responses would be varied, showing no distinct preference for applicants of a particular race or criminal background. Hypotheses were based on extant literature's demonstration of racial hierarchies in hiring decisions and employer preference for those without criminal convictions (See Pager et al., 2009a; Pager et al., 2009b; Pager & Western, 2012). In some cases, the present study demonstrated limited confirmation of previous studies' findings.

The first hypothesis that applicants with a criminal background were more likely to be removed from hiring pools was supported; however, it lacked the marked distinction expected between categories. This lack of statistical significance is likely attributed to the small sample size, which will be discussed further in a subsequent section.

The findings in relation to other hypotheses were varied, resembling the predicted racial hierarchy in some cases but not others. Black job-seekers were ranked least likely to be hired, but among the most likely to be granted interviews. Offender status was not always a disqualifying factor either. Respondents demonstrated a greater willingness to interview non-offenders for both entry level and supervisory positions, but were more willing to hire offenders for entry level positions than they were job-seekers without criminal backgrounds. Statistical significance was not achieved in this case; a lack of a larger and representative probability sample made it impossible to extrapolate these findings as evidence of a larger trend.

Implications of findings

Ultimately this study did not identify a distinct trend of bias or discrimination based on race or offender status. The study was exploratory in nature and did not intend to generalize findings to a larger labor market beyond the Grand Rapids area. Though the present study cannot supply conclusive evidence to any of the original hypotheses, even within the local sector, it uncovered several unexpected points of interest.

First, study respondents' willingness to refer black offenders most often might indicate that hiring managers want offenders of color to have a job, but not at their own place of business. This interpretation speaks to a larger social trend colloquially referred to as a "not in my backyard" mentality. It is not unique to employers, and extends beyond the scope of the labor force.

A prime example of this mentality comes from the Detroit Area Study in which 58.5% of respondents reported accepting interracial marriage in theory, but number dropped (48.0%) when confronted with the prospect of their own child entering into an interracial marriage (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). Similarly, of the 234 people who reported supporting interracial marriage, only two of them ever had an interracial marriage of their own, and 47 had at one point been in an interracial relationship. Applying this concept to the current study, respondents may view a candidate as employable, just not at his/her own business.

The "not in my backyard" frame of thought may also apply to the magnitude differences between perceived employability and willingness to interview as well. As noted earlier, the black offender job applicant was rated moderately on the employability

scale (mean = 4.78) but was unlikely to be hired for an entry level position (mean = 2.50). This discrepancy was not as marked, or even in the same direction, across candidates, drawing attention to the fact that there are forces outside “not in my backyard” thinking at play. Most likely, social desirability was also a factor in haphazard responses. This bias will be discussed further in the Limitations section.

Furthermore, sometimes people simply do not want to discuss particular topics. This is highlighted in one of the most interesting results unrelated to the original hypothesis: the response rates for each applicant. Return rates for the black applicant, particularly with a criminal record, were much lower than for the other race groups. Eleven of 109 surveys were returned for the black non-offender (10.09%) and only 9 of 112 were returned for the black offender (8.03%).This limited return for the numerically greatest representation among sample scenarios is perhaps indicative of hesitancy or even unwillingness to discuss issues pertaining to race. One could also speculate that, in today’s quick-to-litigate society, respondents fear reprisal from patrons, applicants, or governing bodies if there is a potential for a discrimination claim.

This avoidance is interesting to consider in light of the racial makeup of the sample. In addition to its potential impact on the responses generated in this study, the vast whiteness of respondents in this study (89.9%) might speak to a larger social trend of hiring and promoting white people to supervisory positions more than their counterparts of color. Of course, it is impossible to calculate the racial makeup of the entire workforce in Grand Rapids and surrounding areas from the information collected, so one cannot make this claim with any degree of certainty.

Limitations

Like any social science research, this study is not without its shortcomings. The primary, and most fundamental, limitation in this study is the small sample size. The small dataset is a function of restricted funding and the return rate. Though 16.23% is a respectable response rate, limited finances prevented the current study from sampling a large enough group to yield a substantial number of responses for each variable to be analyzed. Though interesting to note, the limited number of responses for certain individual applicants did not facilitate strong statistical analysis.

In addition to small sample size, social desirability may have promoted the unexpected variance in responses. Race is a socially and politically loaded topic in West Michigan, and participants may have been reluctant to share their true opinions of candidates in fear of seeming politically incorrect or even immoral. Thus, it is likely some responses were generated to reflect what participants hoped the researcher wanted to hear, or as a means of self-preservation to avoid potentially negative views of oneself.

One other threat to internal validity was identified during the course of this study. Within the same calendar year that data was collected, the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce hosted a seminar on racism in the workplace. Participation in this event may have influenced hiring manager's perspectives on racial diversity or influenced their responses when faced with an applicant of color. However, it is impossible to tell which, if any, of the anonymous participants in this study attended this workshop.

Future directions

As an exploratory study in an unchartered labor market for this type of research, the current study may provide a starting point for other researchers or social interest groups that would like to explore the experiences of locally reintegrating offenders. Having a preliminary inventory of the employers' attitudes can shape future approaches to community partnerships for marginalized populations like racial minorities and ex-offenders.

Researchers with greater resources may wish to add job applicants of other races or engage in a second phase of the study during which meetings are set up with employers that report a willingness to interview candidates. Researchers could then send testers to these interviews, congruent with Pager et al.'s (2009) audit studies in New York and other areas.

In addition, future studies may wish to collect more demographic information in order to capture a better snapshot of respondents. Particularly, researchers should ask about any criminal convictions of the participant themselves or loved ones, as well as prior experiences hiring or working with former felons, to provide context for responses or perhaps explain unexpected favorability toward offenders.

Conclusion

Regardless of the results of this limited-scope study, institutionalized racism continues to thrive in a white-privilege laden society. Labor market discrimination is a harsh reality for re-integrating offenders, especially for people of color. American society must remain collectively conscious of such phenomena in order to effectively curtail racially codified practices and policies masquerading as race-neutral and equal and to sustain equal opportunity efforts to abolish socially constructed racial hierarchies.

If employment is a way to mitigate the challenges ex-offenders face, and may help reduce recidivism, as research suggests (see Bahr et al., 2010; Gunnison & Helfgott, 2007; Morani et al., 2001), policy and program efforts should focus on creating more consistent opportunities for ex-offenders to re-enter, or join for the first time, the conventional labor market. Securing gainful employment is not an isolated goal, however. Education, housing, and employment all have a symbiotic relationship with each other as well as crime and re-entry, so additional programming resources are needed in this areas as well.

Access to quality education influences both job opportunities and the ability to live in safe and non-criminogenic neighborhoods; having a lucrative job affords better residential opportunities, and where one lives affects the educational opportunities available to them and their children (see Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Desmond & Emirbayer, 2010; Shapiro, 2004b). This symbiotic reciprocity currently functions to perpetuate cycles of disadvantage. Only in tackling institutionalized discrimination in all of these sectors can contemporary society equalize opportunity for people of all races and offender statuses.

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Table 1: Comparative Means for Combined Applicant Status and Employer Hiring Practice

Comparative Means for Combined Applicant Status and Employer Hiring Practice

		Removed from consideration	Hired for Entry Level	Referred to another business	Interview for Supervisor	Interview for Entry Level	Hired for Supervisor
White non-offender	Mean	5.00	3.36	4.57	2.14	5.07	1.71
	N	15	14	14	14	15	14
	SD	3.317	2.373	3.390	2.476	2.840	1.684
White offender	Mean	3.17	4.27	5.42	2.55	5.08	2.00
	N	12	11	12	11	12	11
	SD.	3.512	2.832	2.575	2.252	3.175	1.612
Black non-offender	Mean	3.27	4.22	4.64	2.36	6.55	2.00
	N	11	9	11	11	11	11
	SD	2.970	3.667	2.111	2.292	3.012	1.949
Black offender	Mean	4.25	2.50	5.89	2.25	5.00	1.50
	N	8	8	9	8	8	8
	SD	3.955	1.852	2.759	3.151	3.071	1.414
Hispanic non-offender	Mean	3.08	3.36	5.00	2.86	5.36	2.07
	N	13	14	14	14	14	14
	SD	2.783	1.781	2.746	1.748	3.177	1.269
Hispanic offender	Mean	4.31	3.75	5.87	2.20	5.41	1.60
	N	16	16	15	15	17	15
	SD	3.945	2.864	2.232	1.474	3.709	1.121
Total	Mean	3.89	3.60	5.21	2.40	5.40	1.82
	N	75	72	75	73	77	73
	SD	3.399	2.571	2.642	2.133	3.142	1.475

Table 2: ANOVA Table for Combined Applicant Status Tests of Statistical Significance

ANOVA Table for Combined Applicant Status Tests of Statistical Significance

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig. (p)
Interview for Entry Level * Combined Status	Between Groups	(Combined)	18.610	5	3.722	.361	.873
	Within Groups		731.909	71	10.309		
	Total		750.519	76			
Hired for Entry Level * Combined Status	Between Groups	(Combined)	20.153	5	4.031	.592	.706
	Within Groups		449.166	66	6.806		
	Total		469.319	71			
Interview for Supervisor * Combined Status	Between Groups	(Combined)	4.878	5	.976	.203	.960
	Within Groups		322.601	67	4.815		
	Total		327.479	72			
Hired for Supervisor * Combined Status	Between Groups	(Combined)	3.299	5	.660	.288	.918
	Within Groups		153.386	67	2.289		
	Total		156.685	72			
Removed from consideration * Combined Status	Between Groups	(Combined)	41.438	5	8.288	.703	.623
	Within Groups		813.709	69	11.793		
	Total		855.147	74			
Referred to another business * Combined Status	Between Groups	(Combined)	21.074	5	4.215	.587	.710
	Within Groups		495.513	69	7.181		
	Total		516.587	74			

Appendix A: Instructional letter

Dear Hiring Manager:

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted about the perspectives of hiring managers at small businesses by Elle Teshima, a graduate student in the College of Community and Public Service at Grand Valley State University. This research is being conducted for a master's thesis under the guidance of Dr. Pakky Gerkin of the GVSU College of Community and Public Service.

Approximately **xxx** hiring managers will be invited to participate in this study in Grand Rapids and surrounding areas. If you agree to participate, please review the enclosed cover letter and resume and complete the attached survey **by [DATE]**. It is important that you mail the enclosed postcard *separate* from your self-mailing survey packet. Your responses will be totally anonymous. In other words, there will be no way to link you to your survey responses.

The survey will take approximately 15 minutes and is pre-stamped. To close the survey for return, fold along the dotted lines and tape edges. PLEASE DO NOT STAPLE.

Please do **NOT** write your name or your business's name on any part of the survey. Please do **NOT** write your return address on the envelope.

Thank you!

Appendix B: Survey Instrument Example

Directions: The following is basic information about a potential job applicant. Please respond to the items below based on the information provided.

On a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is "definitely would not" and 10 is "definitely would", please rate your likelihood to do the following:

1----------5----------10
Definitely would not Might or might not Definitely would

I would invite Jamal to interview for an entry-level position at my business. _____

I would hire Jamal for an entry-level position based on the information presented. _____

I would invite Jamal to interview for a supervisory position at my business. _____

I would hire Jamal for a supervisory position based on the information presented. _____

I would remove Jamal from further consideration based on the information presented. _____

I would refer Jamal to another business owner if I did not have a job opening for him. _____

The following section is about your general perception of the potential job candidate, not specifically related to your own business. For each of the following items, respond by circling *ONE* of the 6 choices:

SA-Strongly Agree
A-Agree
MA-Mildly Agree
MD-Mildly Disagree
D-Disagree
SD-Strongly Disagree

Jamal is employable.
SA A MA MD D SD

Jamal could excel in a customer service position.
SA A MA MD D SD

Jamal should work in a factory setting.
SA A MA MD D SD

Jamal has the potential to be in a management position someday.
SA A MA MD D SD

Jamal seems like a motivated individual.
SA A MA MD D SD

Jamal is probably a dangerous person.
SA A MA MD D SD

Jamal is likely to finish his bachelor's degree.
SA A MA MD D SD

Jamal is well-suited for manual labor.
SA A MA MD D SD

Jamal seems like a friendly individual.
SA A MA MD D SD

Hiring Jamal is likely to put employers at risk.
SA A MA MD D SD

Jamal is likely to thrive in an office environment.
SA A MA MD D SD

Jamal would be good for the food service industry.
SA A MA MD D SD

Hiring Jamal will negatively affect my current employees.
SA A MA MD D SD

Jamal is likely to attend graduate school.
SA A MA MD D SD

Jamal should apply to vocational training programs.
SA A MA MD D SD

Jamal would be a hard worker.
SA A MA MD D SD

Directions: Many employers desire some of the following characteristics in their employees. Please rate the following employee characteristics on a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is "not important" and 10 is "extremely important" in your decision to consider an applicant.

1----------5----------10
Not important Somewhat important Very important

punctuality ____
bachelor's degree ____
master's degree ____
computer proficiency ____
reliable transportation ____
basic math skills ____
good personal hygiene ____
physical strength ____
clean driving record ____
ability to work under pressure ____
high school diploma/GED ____
no misdemeanor convictions ____
no felony convictions ____
ability to work in a team ____
willingness to take a drug test ____
friendliness ____
self-motivation ____
attention to detail____
ability to work independently____
good time management ___

Directions: Please provide the following demographic information about YOUR BUSINESS.

What is the primary type of work or service your business provides? (Select ONE)

____ Industrial/Manual Labor
____ Food Service
____ Healthcare
____ Customer Service
____ Retail
____ Other (Please explain)_____

Which of the following best describes the primary type of venue your business operates in? (Select ONE)

____ Office or Professional Building
____ Outdoors
____ Restaurant or Food Venue

____ Store or Shopping Center
____ Factory or Production Plant
____ Residential Homes
____ Other (Please explain) _____

How many employees does your business have? (Select ONE)
____ 1-15 ___16-25 ___26-49 ___50+

What is your business's location? (Select ONE)
____Urban (city or suburbs) ____Rural (country or farmland)

Directions: Please provide the following information about YOU.

Which of the following best describes your gender (select ONE):
____Male ____Female ____Other

Which of the following best describes your race? (Select ALL that apply)
____ Caucasian/White ____African American/Black ____Hispanic/Latino
____ Asian ____ Native American/American Indian ____Other

Which of the following best describes your age? (Select ONE)
____ 18-24 ____ 25-31 ____32-38 ____ 39-45 ____46-52 ____53+

Thank you for your participation! Please email gerkinp@gvsu.edu or elleteshima@gmail.com with any questions.

Appendix C: Resumes

John Williams

5324 Lancaster Avenue NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504

616-555-1212

jwilliams@xyz.com

Education

- Kenowa Hills High School Grand Rapids, MI
    - High School Diploma June 2006
- Southwest Michigan University
    - Pursuing bachelor's degree August 2011 to present

Experience

- Donna's Kitchen and Bar August 2008 to November 2010
- Rocko's Restaurant April 2008 to August 2008
- Phil's Grocery Store June 2006 to March 2008

Extracurricular Activities

- European Student Senate August 2011 to present
- SMU Film Club August 2011 to present
- Community Tennis League July 2006 to present

Skills and Abilities

- Microsoft Word and Excel
- Valid Driver's License
- Cash register

References

Available upon request.

John Williams

5324 Lancaster Avenue NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504

616-555-1212

jwilliams@xyz.com

Education

- Kenowa Hills High School Grand Rapids, MI
  - High School Diploma June 2006
- Southwest Michigan University
  - Pursuing bachelor's degree August 2011 to present

Experience

- Prison Kitchen Staff August 2008 to November 2010
- Rocko's Restaurant April 2008 to August 2008
- Phil's Grocery Store June 2006 to March 2008

Extracurricular Activities

- European Student Senate August 2011 to present
- SMU Film Club August 2011 to present
- Community Tennis League July 2006 to August 2008

Skills and Abilities

- Microsoft Word and Excel
- Valid Driver's License
- Cash register

References

Available upon request.

Jamal Brown

23 Oakdale Street SE Grand Rapids, MI 49507

616-555-1212

jbrown@xyz.com

Education

- Ottawa Hills High School Grand Rapids, MI
  - High School Diploma June 2006
- Southwest Michigan University
  - Pursuing bachelor's degree August 2011 to present

Experience

- Harry's Barber Shop August 2008 to November 2010
- Rocko's Restaurant April 2008 to August 2008
- Phil's Grocery Store June 2006 to March 2008

Extracurricular Activities

- Black Student Union August 2011 to present
- SMU Gospel Choir August 2011 to present
- Community Basketball League July 2006 to present

Skills and Abilities

- Microsoft Word and Excel
- Valid Driver's License
- Cash register

References

Available upon request.

Jamal Brown

23 Oakdale Street SE Grand Rapids, MI 49507

616-555-1212

jbrown@xyz.com

Education

- Ottawa Hills High School Grand Rapids, MI
  - High School Diploma June 2006
- Southwest Michigan University
  - Pursuing bachelor's degree August 2011 to present

Experience

- Prison Barbershop August 2008 to November 2010
- Rocko's Restaurant April 2008 to August 2008
- Phil's Grocery Store June 2006 to March 2008

Extracurricular Activities

- Black Student Union August 2011 to present
- SMU Gospel Choir August 2011 to present
- Community Basketball League July 2006 to August 2008

Skills and Abilities

- Microsoft Word and Excel
- Valid Driver's License
- Cash register

References

Available upon request.

Jose Hernandez

14 Pleasant St SW Grand Rapids, MI 49503

616-555-1212

jhernandez@xyz.com

Education

- Central High School Grand Rapids, MI
  - High School Diploma — June 2006
- Southwest Michigan University
  - Pursuing bachelor's degree — August 2011 to present

Experience

- Nichols Landscaping — August 2008 to November 2010
- Rocko's Restaurant — April 2009 to October 2010
- Phil's Grocery Store — June 2006 to March 2008

Extracurricular Activities

- Latino Student Union — August 2011 to present
- SMU Ballroom Dance Club — August 2011 to present
- Community Soccer League — July 2006 to present

Skills and Abilities

- Microsoft Word and Excel
- Valid Driver's License
- Cash register

References

Available upon request.

Jose Hernandez

14 Pleasant St SW Grand Rapids, MI 49503

616-555-1212

jhernandez@xyz.com

Education

- Central High School Grand Rapids, MI
  - High School Diploma — June 2006
- Southwest Michigan University
  - Pursuing bachelor's degree — August 2011 to present

Experience

- Prison Grounds Crew — August 2008 to November 2010
- Rocko's Restaurant — April 2008 to August 2008
- Phil's Grocery Store — June 2006 to March 2008

Extracurricular Activities

- Latino Student Union — August 2011 to present
- Ballroom Dance Club — August 2011 to present
- Community Soccer League — July 2006 to August 2009

Skills and Abilities

- Microsoft Word and Excel
- Valid Driver's License
- Cash register

References

Available upon request.

Appendix D: Cover Letters

Dear Hiring Manager:

My name is John Williams and I am applying for employment at your place of business. I grew up on the West side of Grand Rapids and attended Kenowa Hills High School. After high school, I worked at Gary's Grocery Store and Rocko's Restaurant. During these experiences, I developed my customer service skills and learned how to operate a cash register.

I know most employers ask about prior criminal convictions, so I would like to let you know I was recently released from prison and am trying to get my life back together. While incarcerated, I worked in the prison kitchen, and I am now pursuing my bachelor's degree at Southwest Michigan University. I am currently involved in the European Student Senate as well as the Film Club at SMU. In addition, I have been a member of the Community Tennis League since 2006.

Attached is my resume. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
John Williams

Dear Hiring Manager:

My name is John Williams and I am applying for employment at your place of business. I grew up on the West side of Grand Rapids and attended Kenowa Hills High School. After high school, I worked at Phil's Grocery Store, Rocko's Restaurant, and most recently, Donna's Kitchen and Bar. During these experiences, I developed my customer service skills and learned how to operate a cash register. I am now pursuing my bachelor's degree at Southwest Michigan University. I am currently involved in the European Student Senate as well as the Film Club at SMU. In addition, I have been a member of the Community Tennis League since 2006.

Attached is my resume. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
John Williams

Dear Hiring Manager:

My name is Jamal Brown and I am applying for employment at your place of business. I grew up in the South East End of Grand Rapids and attended Ottawa Hills High School. After high school, I worked at Phil's Grocery Store and Rocko's Restaurant. During

these experiences, I developed my customer service skills and learned how to operate a cash register.

I know most employers ask about prior criminal convictions, so I would like to let you know I was recently released from prison and am trying to get my life back together. While incarcerated, I worked in the prison barbershop, and I am now pursuing my bachelor's degree at Southwest Michigan University. I am currently involved in the Black Student Union as well as the Gospel Choir at SMU. In addition, I have been a member of the Community Basketball League since 2006.

Attached is my resume. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Jamal Brown

Dear Hiring Manager:

My name is Jamal Brown and I am applying for employment at your place of business. I grew up in the South East End of Grand Rapids and attended Ottawa Hills High School. After high school, I worked at Phil's Grocery Store, Rocko's Restaurant, and most recently, Harry's Barber Shop. During these experiences, I developed my customer service skills and learned how to operate a cash register. I am now pursuing my bachelor's degree at Southwest Michigan University. I am currently involved in the Black Student Union as well as the Gospel Choir at SMU. In addition, I have been a member of the Community Basketball League since 2006.

Attached is my resume. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Jamal Brown

Dear Hiring Manager:

My name is Jose Hernandez and I am applying for employment at your place of business. I grew up in the Roosevelt Park area of Grand Rapids and attended Central High School. After high school, I worked at Phil's Grocery Store and Rocko's Restaurant. During these experiences, I developed my customer service skills and learned how to operate a cash register.

I know most employers ask about prior criminal convictions, so I would like to let you know I was recently released from prison and am trying to get my life back together. While incarcerated, I worked on the prison grounds crew and I am now pursuing my bachelor's degree at Southwest Michigan University. I am currently involved in the

Latino Student Union as well as the Ballroom Dancing Club at SMU. In addition, I have been a member of the Community Soccer League since 2006.

Attached is my resume. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Jose Hernandez

Dear Hiring Manager:

My name is Jose Hernandez and I am applying for employment at your place of business. I grew up in the Roosevelt Park area of Grand Rapids and attended Central High School. After high school, I worked at Phil's Grocery Store, Rocko's Restaurant, and most recently, Nichols Landscaping. During these experiences, I developed my customer service skills and learned how to operate a cash register. I am now pursuing my bachelor's degree at Southwest Michigan University. I am currently involved in the Latino Student Union as well as the Ballroom Dancing Club at SMU. In addition, I have been a member of the Community Soccer League since 2006.

Attached is my resume. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Jose Hernandez

Appendix E: Debriefing letter

Dear Hiring Manager,

Thank you for participating in the graduate student research study about the perspectives of hiring managers at small businesses. Elle Teshima is a master's level student in the School of Criminal Justice, and data from this study will be used in partial fulfillment of her master's thesis requirement. This study was focused particularly on the effects of race and offender status on small business hiring decisions.

582 hiring managers were invited to participate in this research, and each received a resume and cover letter for one fictitious job applicant. There were six applicants in all: a white offender, a white non-offender, a black offender, a black non-offender, a Hispanic/Latino offender, and a Hispanic/Latino non-offender. Your anonymous surveys have been collected and will be reviewed by the principal investigator and faculty committee in the coming weeks.

If you are interested in the findings of this study when data analysis is complete, please e-mail elleteshima@gmail.com indicating your request.

Again, thank you for your participation!

Sincerely,

Elle Teshima
MSCJ Candidate
Grand Valley State University

Appendix F: Respondent postcard

PLEASE SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON THE ENCLOSED SURVEY.

By returning this postcard, I am selecting to participate in this study. I understand that by mailing this pre-stamped postcard and the self-mailing survey separately, my responses will in no way be linked to me.