Journal of Criminal Justice 43 (2015) 108–121

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Criminal Justice

Criminal stigma, race, and ethnicity: The consequences of imprisonment for employment

Scott H. Decker [a,*], Natalie Ortiz [c,**], Cassia Spohn [a], Eric Hedberg [b]

[a] School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Arizona State University, 411 North Central Avenue, Phoenix AZ 85004, United States
[b] College of Public Programs, Arizona State University, 411 North Central Avenue, Phoenix AZ 85004, United States
[c] National Association of Counties, 25 Massachusetts Avenue, Washington, DC 20001, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Available online 23 February 2015

ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to assess the role of race/ethnicity and prior prison sentences on employment opportunities. Secondarily, we compare the impact of applying for jobs (in-person and online), and the role of education in securing employment. This work was conducted in a large southwestern city (Phoenix AZ) with high rates of imprisonment for blacks and Hispanics.
Methods: First, an audit test involving matched pairs of males within race/ethnicity categories (black, Hispanic, white) who applied for jobs in-person was conducted. More than 500 jobs were applied for by the audit testers. Second, a correspondence test was conducted using three pairs of résumés matched within race/ethnicity. In the correspondence test, over 3,000 jobs were applied for online. Each test used random assignment. Because of its importance for entry level employment, a separate analysis of food service jobs applied for online was conducted.
Results: Both sets of analyses were completed using cross-classified random effects (CCRE) models. Contrary to expectations, neither race/ethnicity nor prior prison record affected outcomes in the online application process. In contrast, both race/ethnicity and prison record had significant effects in the in-person audit analysis. The effect of a prison record was particularly strong for blacks.
Conclusions: Race/ethnicity and prior prison sentence remain important impediments to success in gaining employment. These results are particularly strong for in-person job applications and are somewhat smaller for online job applications.

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

> [The manager] pointed out my criminal record and right away told me that they couldn't go any further with the interview. I asked why and she just said that they couldn't hire me because of the criminal record. *Hispanic Male Ex-Prisoner.*

> [The manager] flipped over the résumé' and read the work experience and then said "I see you have been incarcerated let's first talk about that". He said unfortunately we are not looking to hire any parolees. The whole experience was less than 3 minutes. *Black Male Ex-Prisoner.*

> The interview was only 5 minutes long. [The manager] asked about my experience at [a restaurant] and then about the maintenance position at Arizona State Prison Complex - Winslow. It seemed like he started at the top of my résumé' and when he got to the Maintenance position at Winslow he stopped reading. *White Male Ex-Prisoner*

Introduction

Former prisoners face a variety of challenges upon their return to society. Securing adequate housing, mending weakened or broken family relationships and managing substance abuse and mental health issues all play pivotal roles in successful reintegration. But perhaps no challenge is greater or more important than finding employment. Prior research demonstrates that employment is a key – perhaps **the** key – factor affecting successful re-entry following imprisonment (Holzer, Raphael, & Stoll, 2002a; Waldfogel, 1994), largely because those who are unemployed are substantially more likely to return to crime than those who are employed (Burton, Cullen, & Travis, 1987; Clear, 2007; Freeman, 1994). Employment also integrates people into society, organizes their lives, and expands social capital. Although the benefits of employment may be more critical to the lives of returning prisoners, one of the collateral consequences of incarceration is the stigma that results from imprisonment, which negatively affects the likelihood of

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 602 496 2333.
** This research was not conducted in conjunction with the National Association of Counties (NACo) and the points of view expressed do not necessarily reflect the official position of NACo.
E-mail address: Scott.Decker@asu.edu (S.H. Decker).

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2015.02.002
0047-2352/© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

securing employment (Albright & Denq, 1996; Giguere & Dundes, 2002; Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010; Pager, 2007; Uggen, 2000; Uggen, Vuolo, Lageson, Ruhland, & Whitham, 2014). These consequences of imprisonment may be particularly salient for racial/ethnic minorities, who historically have faced more barriers and stigma in attempting to gain work than have whites.

Evidence of the consequences of incarceration for employment comes from Pager's (2003; Pager, Western and Bonikowski, 2009; see also Galgano, 2009; Lalonde & Cho, 2008) important work on the relationship between race/ethnicity, criminal record, and employment prospects. Pager used an audit strategy in which matched pairs of black, white, and Hispanic job seekers with and without criminal records applied for the same jobs. She found that imprisonment had a negative effect on finding a job, but she also found that the effects of race/ethnicity trumped the effect of imprisonment, as whites who had served time in prison fared better in the job market than matched blacks and Hispanics who had not served time in prison. These findings led Pager (2003) to conclude that "The employment barriers of minority status and criminal record are compounded, intensifying the stigma toward this group" (p. 959), such that "previous estimates of the aggregate consequences of incarceration may therefore underestimate the impact on racial disparities "(p. 961).

The goal of this study is to understand how race/ethnicity interact with a criminal record to affect employment prospects. Using an experimental design modeled on the work of Pager (2003), Pager, Western and Bonikowski (2009) and Galgano (2009), we assess whether job applicants matched by race/ethnicity (black, Hispanic, white) and criminal record (prior prison term, no prior prison term) receive a callback from a potential employer. We extend this body of research by comparing both the in-person and online job application processes and highlighting the food service industry.

Review of relevant literature

The relationship between race/ethnicity and imprisonment is hardly new. In 1918, the Bureau of the Census published a report on the "Negro Population" (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1918). The authors of the report noted that in 1910 blacks comprised 11 percent of the population but constituted 22 percent of the inmates of prisons, penitentiaries, jails, reform schools, and workhouses. The authors then posed a question that continues to generate controversy and stimulate research:

> While these figures . . . will probably be generally accepted as indicating that there is more criminality and lawbreaking among Negroes than among whites and while that conclusion is probably justified by the facts . . . it is a question whether the difference . . . may not be to some extent the result of discrimination in the treatment of white and Negro offenders on the part of the community and the courts (p. 438).

There is clear evidence that the racial disparities noted by the Census Bureau are worse today than they were a century ago (Carson & Sabol, 2012, Table 8). In 2011 the incarceration rate for black men (3,023/100,000) was six and a half times as high as the rate for white men (478/100,000); the rate for Hispanic men (1,238) was less than half the rate for black men but two and a half times as high as the rate for white men.

Prisoner reentry

More than 650,000 prisoners are released from U.S. correctional facilities each year[1] (Carson & Sabol, 2012). Individuals released from prison encounter a number of obstacles in their search for employment, including the reluctance of potential employers to hire ex-prisoners. Holzer et al. (2002a), for example, found that employers view ex-offenders as the least desirable applicants, in part because of concerns about the legal ramifications if ex-offenders deal inappropriately with the public or mishandle the public's property (Holzer & Stoll, 2001). Research also suggests that employers who do not conduct background checks are likely to avoid specific groups—namely, undereducated black men—because they stereotype them as ex-offenders without evidence to the contrary (Holzer, Raphael, & Stoll, 2002b; Holzer & Stoll, 2001; Pager, 2003). Visher and Kachnowski (2007) reported that although ex-offenders knew employment was important for their success and were optimistic about their prospects, their post-release employment rates remained low. Criminal convictions are inversely related to labor market success (Waldfogel, 1994) and ex-prisoners find fewer jobs and lower paying jobs (Western, 2006).

One approach to studying the factors that affect an individual's success in securing employment is an "audit strategy." In this design, the backgrounds and résumés of job applicants from different racial/ethnic groups are carefully constructed so as to be identical. The matched pairs (who differ only by race or ethnicity) present themselves to potential employers as legitimate job applicants. Differences in outcomes are attributed to differences in race or ethnicity. This work enjoys a long tradition in applied economics, where research consistently documents that blacks do worse than matched white job applicants (Bendick, Jackson, & Reinoso, 1994; Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004) and Hispanics fare worse than matched white applicants (Bendick, Jackson, Reinoso, & Hodges, 1991). More specifically, Bendick and colleagues' research on employment discrimination in Washington D.C. found that black and Hispanic males and females were disadvantaged at each stage of the hiring process (offers to interview, job offers and starting wages) compared to their matched white counterparts.

The audit strategy also has been used to independently assess the impact of a criminal record by matching prospective job applicants on race and varying the presence or absence of a criminal background. In its classic formulation, this design uses matched pairs of black and white males, and presents one member of each pair as having a criminal background, either a conviction or prison sentence. Each member of these pairs applies for the same jobs and submits a résumé that is identical except for race/ethnicity and whether the individual has a criminal conviction. The outcome variable in such studies is typically a callback from an employer who expresses interest in hiring the prospective job candidate or arranging a second interview.

This methodology has been applied most persuasively by Pager (2003, Pager, Western, & Bonikowski, 2009). In a carefully controlled experiment first conducted in Milwaukee, Pager sent matched pairs of black and white males to apply for jobs in-person. The pairs had identical résumés with regard to length of time in the job market, types of previous jobs held, and education level. One résumé within each race-matched pair, however, indicated to the employer that the tester applying for the job had served time in prison. Using callbacks from employers as the dependent variable, she found that black men without a criminal record were nearly three times as likely to get a callback as black men with a criminal record (14 percent versus 5 percent). The effects of a criminal record were not quite as stark for whites, as white men without a criminal record were twice as likely to get a call back (34 percent versus 17 percent). However, the between-race results remain the major finding from Pager's research; she found that white men *with* a criminal record were more likely to receive callbacks than black men who did not have a criminal record.

Pager et al. (2009) replicated this experiment in New York City, adding Hispanics to the design and examining differences between pairs of black, Hispanic, and white testers. The Hispanic group her research examined was Puerto Ricans; the largest group of Hispanics in the state of New York, though not the largest group of Hispanics in the U.S. (Ennis, Rios-Vargas, & Albert, 2011).[2] Pager and her colleagues found that Hispanic men were less likely than white men but were more likely than black men to get a callback from an employer.

Download English Version:

https://daneshyari.com/en/article/882648

Download Persian Version:

https://daneshyari.com/article/882648

Daneshyari.com