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Potential of Redemption in Criminal Background Checks:

Final Report to the National Institute of Justice, Grant Number 2007-IJ-CX-0041

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INTRODUCTION

Motivation

Background checking, especially checking of criminal-history records, is becoming increasingly ubiquitous in the U.S. Recent advances in information technology and growing concern about employer liability have combined to increase the demand for such background checks. Also, a large number of individual criminal records have accumulated and been computerized in state repositories and commercial databases. As a result, many people who have made mistakes in their youthful past, but have since lived a law-abiding life face hardships in finding employment.¹

The concern is evidenced by the report from the Attorney General sent to Congress in June, 2006 on criminal history background checks (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006). In the report, there is a recommendation for time limits on the relevancy of criminal records, which reflects the fact that the potentially lasting effect of criminal records is a common concern among many governmental and legal entities that have a say in this issue. Such entities include the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), which is concerned about discrimination based on criminal records because those with criminal records are disproportionately racial/ethnic minorities.² The American Bar Association (ABA) is also concerned about the negative lasting effect of criminal records in employment settings. Both these organizations are taking an initiative to broaden the discussion about the problem of the way in which criminal

¹ The concern has been raised at least since the 1970s (Maltz, 1976; Westin and Baker, 1972).

² For example, see here: <http://www.eeoc.gov/abouteeoc/meetings/11-20-08/index.html>.

records are currently used and to address how to regulate the use of criminal records, including a time limit on their relevancy.³

It is our goal in this project to provide guidance on the possibility of “redemption,” (which we define as the process of lifting the burden of the prior record), and to provide guidance on how one may estimate when such redemption is appropriate. Numerous studies have shown in the past that recidivism probability declines with time “clean,” so there is some point in time when a person with a criminal record who remained free of further contact with the criminal justice system is of no greater risk than any counterpart, an indication of redemption from the mark of an offender. We henceforth call this time point “redemption time.”

The following sections discuss the recent trends about the practice of criminal background checking, particularly by employers, and the volume of computerized criminal records that are available for such background checks. They also address the problem of the lack of guidelines that could help employers understand how the “age” of a criminal record relates to the level of risk of a new crime. By discussing the trends, we demonstrate that the problem of redemption is a pressing public concern, and that empirically based guidance on redemption is urgently needed.

Prevalence of Criminal Background Checking

With the recent advancement in information technology and the Internet, individuals’ criminal records have never been more easily accessible. The background-check industry is burgeoning. There are numerous companies that acquire and compile criminal justice information obtained from the police and the courts and assemble a database for commercial purposes (Barada, 1998; Munro, 2002). SEARCH (the National Consortium for Justice Information and Statistics) reports

³ For example, see here: http://www.abanet.org/abanet/media/release/news_release.cfm?releaseid=234

that, “in addition to a few large industry players, there are hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of regional and local companies” that compile and/or sell criminal justice information to the end users (SEARCH, 2005: 7). They provide background-check services to private employers at their convenience in a timely manner at decreasing costs (SEARCH, 2005). A recent survey of firms from multiple cities in the U.S. reveals that about 50 percent check the criminal background of job applicants (Holzer, Raphael, and Stoll, 2004). Surveys on human resource professionals indicate that 80-90 percent of large employers in the U.S. now run criminal background checks on their prospective employees (Society for Human Resource Management, 2004, 2010).

Some employers may conduct criminal background checks on job applicants voluntarily to identify those who may commit criminal acts in the workplace in order to minimize loss and legal liability of negligent hiring that could result from such acts (Bushway, 1998).⁴ For some job positions involving vulnerable populations, such as children and the elderly, laws require employers to conduct such background checks (Hahn, 1991). In addition, employers may use criminal history records to assess character flaws such as lack of honesty and trustworthiness (Kurlychek, Brame, and Bushway, 2007; Pager, 2007). Also, occupational licensing laws could disqualify many individuals based on the requirement of “good moral character” (Harris and Keller, 2005; May, 1995).⁵ As the use of criminal background checks by employers has become widespread, criminal records could have lingering effects on employment prospects as “invisible punishment” or collateral consequences of contact with the criminal justice system (Travis,

⁴ Criminal background checking is viewed as a routine practice by human resource professionals (Levashina and Campion, 2009).

⁵ We do not elaborate more on employers’ concern over whether a criminal record signals a lack of good character. The investigation of such considerations and its relationship with time clean warrant future research on employer judgments.

2002).⁶ Many employers show considerable reluctance to hire individuals with criminal records (Holzer, Raphael, and Stoll, 2003; Pager, 2003; Schwartz and Skolnick, 1962; Holzer, Raphael, and Stoll, 2004);⁷ others have shown the relationship between criminal records and poorer employment prospects (Bushway, 1998; Grogger, 1995; Nagin and Waldfogel, 1995; Western et al., 2001).

Prevalence of Criminal Records

In 2007, according to the Uniform Crime Report (UCR), law enforcement agencies across the U.S. made over 14 million arrests (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2008). On December 31, 2006, over 81 million criminal-history records were in the state criminal-history repositories (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008).⁸ The increasing automation of criminal history records in the repositories has increased the number of records that are electronically accessible. At the end of 2006, about 91 percent of the records were automated (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008).

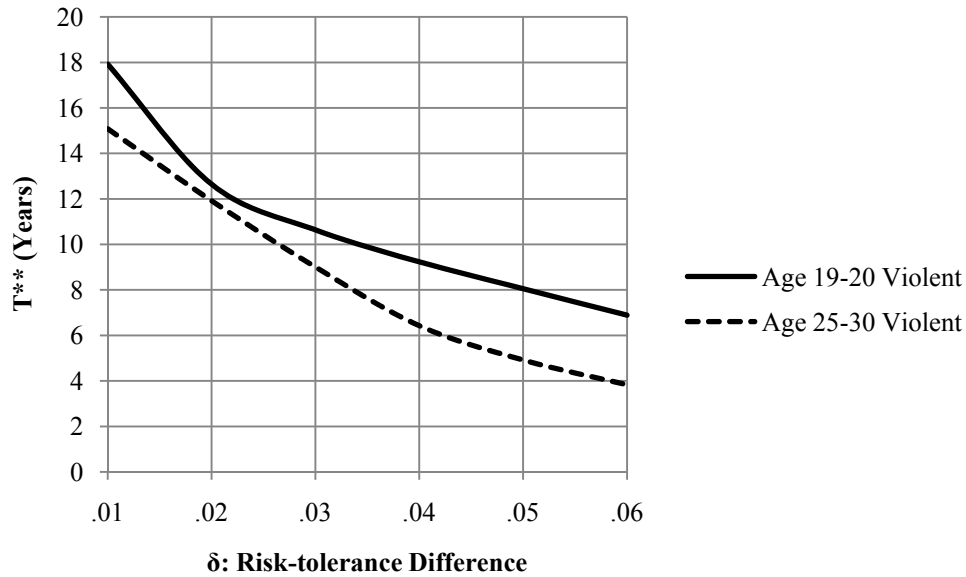
Prior research suggests that the general public's chance of being arrested in their life time is rather high. Over forty years ago, it was estimated that fifty percent of the U.S. male population would be arrested for a non-traffic offense sometime in their lifetime (Christensen, 1967). More recently, Uggen, Manza, and Thompson (2006) estimated that by 2004, there were

⁶ Collateral consequences of contact with the criminal justice system occur mostly outside the public view and affect ex-offenders beyond the imposed sentences (Travis, 2002: 16). They include restrictions on professional and occupational licensing, which are possibly important means for ex-offenders to increase their employment opportunities. The occupations that are affected by the restrictions range from health care, nursing, and education, to plumbing and barbering. Collateral consequences could also include denial of governmental benefits, such as welfare and public housing, termination of parental rights, and revocation or suspension of driver's licenses (Kethineni and Falcone, 2007; May, 1995; Petersilia, 2003; Samuels and Mukamal, 2004; Wheelock, 2005).

⁷ Some evidence suggests that the negative effect of criminal background checks on the hiring of ex-offenders is strongest for employers who are legally required to conduct such background checks (Stoll and Bushway, 2008).

⁸ An individual offender may have had records in multiple states.

Figure 8b. Tradeoff between δ and T^{**} (based on upper confidence interval of $h(t)$)



Out-Of-State Adjustment

In the previous sections, T^* was identified as the minimum duration of time clean in New York State for the recidivism probability to drop below the norm for New Yorkers of the same age. Also identified were approaches to estimating T^{**} , when the recidivism probability falls below any specified level compared to people who have never been arrested. It is possible, however that an individual who stayed clean in New York was arrested in another state. Thus, the estimates are lower bounds on T^* (and T^{**}) and the associated recidivism probability. One study on the recidivism of prisoners estimated that 7.6 percent of the released prisoners were rearrested out-of-state (Langan and Levin, 2002). Another finds that, among the prisoners who were released from eleven state prisons in 1983, roughly 10 percent of them have out-of-state arrests within three years of their release (Orsagh, 1992). The presence of geographic mobility has also been shown in a study that analyzes the effect of prisons in other states on crimes within a state (Marvell and Moody, 1998). Geerken (1994) showed that not taking into account the extent of

out-of-state arrests would bias the relationship between arrest rates and demographic variables such as age and race.

In order to address this concern about mobility, we have approached the FBI, which maintains a national index of rap-sheet records in the Interstate Identification Index (III).²⁷ We can present them with identification information of the individuals who have stayed clean in New York and should be able to obtain information on their arrests elsewhere in the nation. This adjustment will raise the $h(t)$ curve somewhat and so increase the value of T^* and T^{**} . The correction could be reasonably large for a state like New York, where the large fraction of offenders from New York City could easily commit other offenses in a neighboring state.

Data

We first select a sample of individuals from the original 1980 data and send it to the FBI. The FBI then informs us of the national criminal-history records of the sampled individuals, which include the crime events that occur in New York as well as those that occur elsewhere. We have obtained a sample of national criminal records of about 260 individuals. Due to confidentiality issues, the sample only consists of individuals whose first arrest in 1980 is unsealed. About 20 percent of the sampled individuals submitted to the FBI have a second arrest after 5 years of their first arrest, according to the New York records. Their FBI records confirmed that almost all of them indeed remained arrest free (both inside and outside of New York) until their NY second arrest. Given this finding, we obtained a follow-up larger sample of national criminal records from the FBI (approximately 1900 individuals), who appear to have no second arrest according to the New York records. Most of the FBI records were sent to us electronically in a PDF format, which were first converted to a text file and then were reformatted in an Excel file to be ready for

²⁷ The access to the FBI national criminal records was contingent upon our grant from NIJ.

analysis. The rest of the records were in paper form, which were entered into an Excel file manually.

Approach

Using the national arrest histories from the FBI, the hazard estimate can account for the occurrence of the out-of-state arrests in the following two steps: first, suppose that a variable I_{OutNY} is an indicator (0/1) of whether an individual has an out-of-state arrest at some time point. It can be modeled as a Bernoulli variable with the parameter, p = the probability of having an out-of-state second arrest at some point in time after the first arrest. p is given by the proportion of the FBI sample with an out-of-state second arrest. Second, given $I_{\text{OutNY}} = 1$ (the out-of-state arrest is present), the distribution of the time to the second arrest is approximated by the histogram of the time to the second arrest of the FBI sample who have an out-of-state second arrest.²⁸

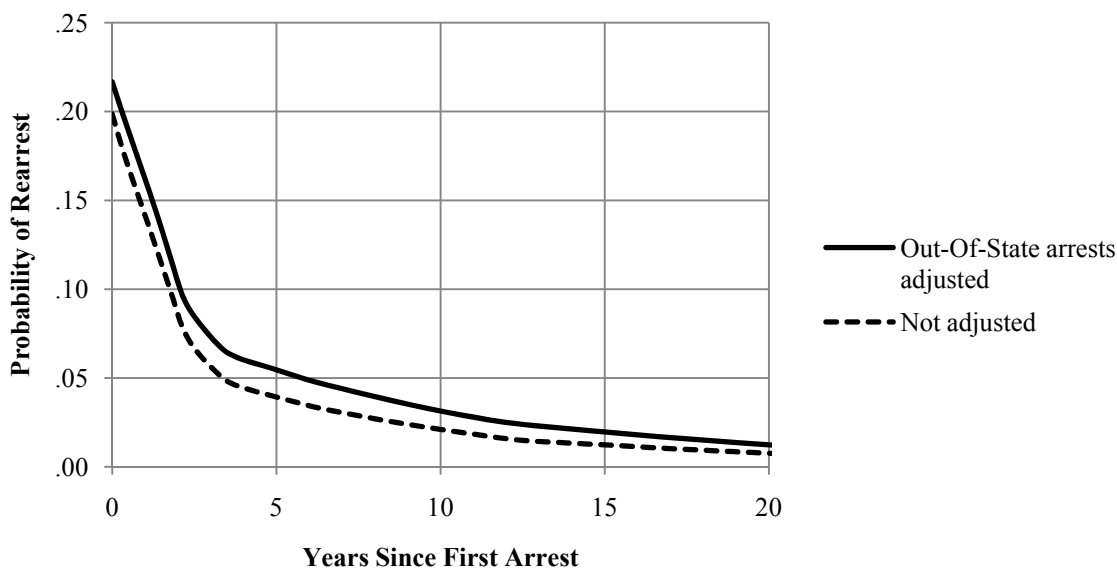
Results

Figure 9 shows the hazards for A1=19-30 with and without the adjustment of out-of-state arrests outlined above. The ratio of the adjusted hazard to the non-adjusted hazard ranges from 1.1 to 2.0, generally increasing with the years since the first arrest. The consequence of the adjustment may be negligible for the estimates of T^* since the age-crime curve would intersect the hazard where the hazard is rapidly declining. The effect of the adjustment on T^{**} may be appreciable because as the time since the first arrest increases, the hazard for the never arrested becomes

²⁸ The histogram of the time to the out-of-state second arrest is approximated by a Weibull probability density function (scale parameter= 2758.484, shape parameter= 0.898313).

close to parallel to the hazard for the redemption candidates and a small increase in the redemption candidate's hazard could result in a large increase in T^{**} estimates.

Figure 9. Hazard $h(t)$: Age 19-30 – adjusted for out-of-state arrests



ROBUSTNESS RE SAMPLING YEARS AND STATES

Robustness across Sampling Years

The results discussed so far are based on the analysis of the 1980 arrestee cohort, a sample of those who were arrested for the first time in 1980. Considering the dramatic swings in the levels of crime over the following 20 years, there is a possibility that the rearrest risk patterns of offenders first arrested in 1980 were different from those arrested more recently, so it is important that we generate robustness tests of the findings presented previously. To the extent that there is stability in hazard patterns across sampling years, it is possible to aggregate the datasets from different years and to estimate the hazard from the aggregated data. Employers

must routinely consider applicants with a record of arrest that occurred, not necessarily in 1980, but in other years. The data aggregation is directly motivated by the employers' need for robust, generalized guidance on redemption times. It is also important that, if the hazard patterns are dissimilar across years, the guidance on redemption times should account for those differences.

Changes in Crime Patterns over the Last Three Decades

The period from the second half of the 1970s to the late 1990s is marked by dramatic changes in the levels of crime. The rate of violent crime started rising in the 1970s's, experienced its first peak around 1980, declined until the mid 1980s, then sharply increased to another peak in the early 1990's, and then dropped dramatically until 2000 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006). During the same period, the rate of property crime has been steadily declining, whereas the rate of drug crime has been on a steady increase (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006).

The rise and fall of the rate of violent crime during the period between the 1970s through the mid 1980s is largely attributed to the fact that the baby boomers entered and left the high crime ages (late teens to early 20s) during the period (Blumstein and Wallman, 2006). The rise that started in the mid 1980s is most likely due to crack cocaine and the violence associated with its marketing (Blumstein 1995; Blumstein, Rivara, and Rosenfeld, 2000).

The growth of the crack markets might also be responsible for the simultaneous increase in robbery and the decrease in burglary as drug users switched from burglary to robbery in need of quick money (Baumer et al. 1998). The striking drop in the second half of the 1990s until 2000 can be a result of many factors including the shift of drug preference among youths, increased incarceration, and changes in policing strategies (Blumstein and Wallman, 2006).

The escalation of the “war on drugs” in the early 1980s dramatically shifted the focus and funding of law enforcement to drug related crimes and introduced stringent laws and policies against drug offenses, exemplified by the Rockefeller drug laws in New York. As a result, the number of arrests for drug offenses almost tripled from 1980 to 1997 (Federal Bureau of Investigation UCR, 1980-97). Between 1980 and 1990, the number of drug offenders admitted to state prisons increased roughly eightfold and the proportion of drug offenders in state prison populations tripled (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000). The impact of the war on drugs is long lasting, reflected by the fact that the arrest rates of drug abuse violations increased during the 1990s (Census Bureau, 2008), which contrasts with the fact that illicit drug use decreased and leveled off during that time (Department of Health and Human Services, 2002).

Data

The data we used consist of the criminal history of three cohorts of arrestees in 1980, 1985, and 1990 in New York State. Each cohort is a sample of individuals who were arrested for the first time as adults in each of the three years. Approximately 75,000, 76,000, and 74,000 individuals were recorded as experiencing their first arrest in 1980, 1985, and 1990 respectively.

Results

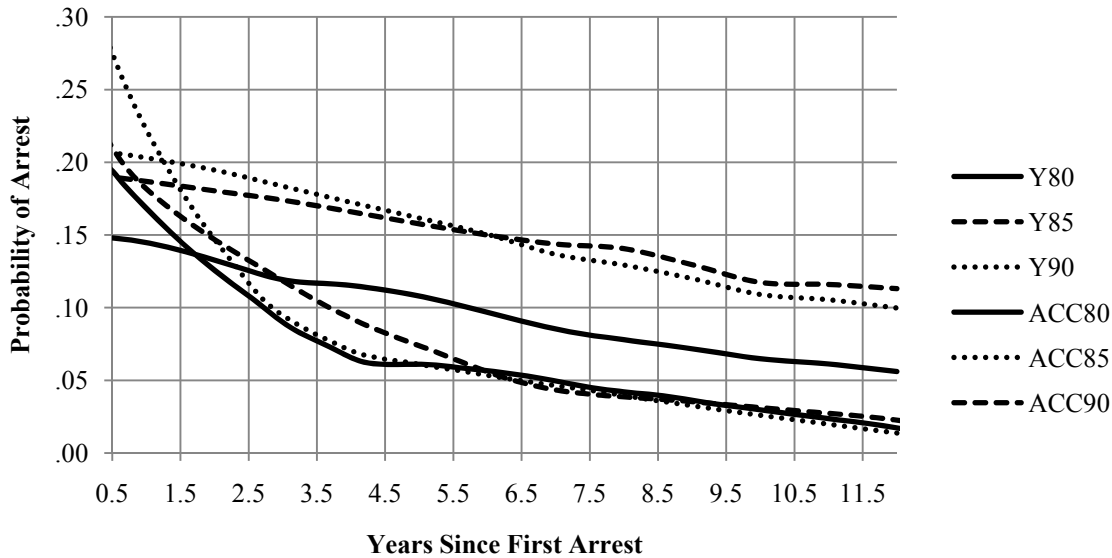
Figure 10 shows the hazards for A1=19-30 from the three sampling years in NY. They are reasonably close to one another, especially after about 5 years, suggesting that the overall patterns of recidivism are reasonably robust against variation in sampling years.

Figure 10. Hazards across three sampling years: Age 19-30



Figure 11 shows the hazards for A1=19-20, C1=violent, along with the age-crime curves for 1980, 1985, and 1990. Since the higher hazards correspond to the higher age-crime curves, the estimated T^* values for the three sampling years fall roughly within the range of 1-1.5 years. These estimates seem somewhat lower than we expected, and so will require further testing of these results. But the proximity of these estimates is encouraging regarding the robustness of redemption estimates from different sampling years.

Figure 11. Hazards across three sampling years: Age 19-20, Violent Compared with the General Populations



Robustness across States

We want to perform similar robustness tests with data from different states. There is a possibility that conditions in New York, from which our 1980 data came, are different from other states. It is likely that various factors that may affect arrest rates such as policing policies and labor market conditions differ from one state to another, and so it is important that we test the robustness across states of the hazard patterns and of the estimates of T^* and T^{**} findings presented earlier. To the extent that we find similar patterns, that would be very encouraging in terms of the generalizability of our results.

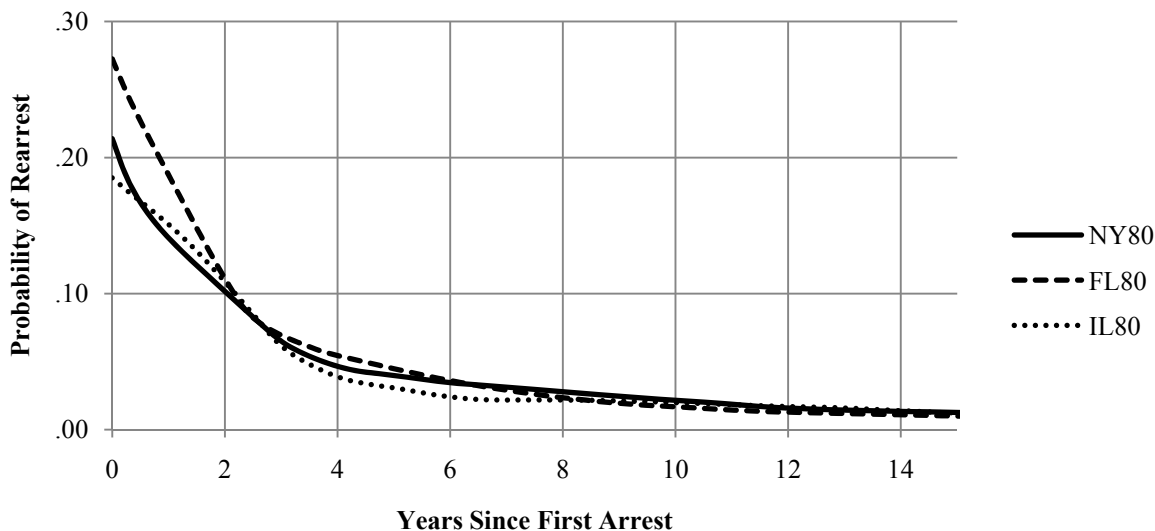
Data

We have so far received rap-sheet data that are similar to the NY data from two additional states, Florida and Illinois. The main features of the data from the two states are the same as the NY data; the information about the arrests such as times and crime types of the arrests, and the

information about the arrestees such as the date of birth, gender, and race. Since the data coding has been quite different in the different states, we have expended considerable effort to make the different states' data comparable. Our comparison focuses on unsealed conviction events for 1980 arrest cohorts aged 19 to 30 in the three states.

Figure 12 presents the hazards for the three states. It is clear that Florida cohort have a higher initial recidivism risk, but that all three converge very quickly so that the hazards at about $t=2.5$ are almost the same. Then the hazard for Illinois drops somewhat below the other two for about 4 to 8 and the three seem to converge very closely after $t>8$. We are pursuing further analyses to develop better estimates of their proximity in the face of considerable random fluctuation in the individual state data.

Figure 12. Hazards for New York, Florida, and Illinois 1980 first-time arrestees who were convicted



POLICY IMPLEMENTATIONS

Users of Criminal Records

Employers

Employers who run background checks on job applicants could be given a brief document informing them of the diminished value of records older than T* or T** years for risk assessment purposes.²⁹ Since employers have a strong concern about liability suits, a statute could protect them from such due-diligence vulnerability in case they hire someone whose last arrest was longer ago than T* or T**.³⁰ This would be a relief for employers who are otherwise willing to hire individuals with criminal records, and would add to the existing incentives such as Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) and Federal Bonding Program (FBP) (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010).

Such liability-protection statutes could also be applicable to employers that ask applicants about their criminal background, but would limit their inquiries to criminal involvements that occur within the last T* or T** years. This would be relevant to the concerns of the “ban the box” movement, but would stop short of prohibiting the “box”.³¹

²⁹ Users of background checks should base their decision not only on the information about criminal history but also on information about other important factors (such as employment history, marriage, and educational attainment), and especially actions taken by the redemption candidate since the last criminal-history event.

³⁰ Although such legal protections would most likely be welcomed by employers, their concern over possible damage to the organization’s reputation would not be eliminated (Fahey, Roberts, and Engel, 2006).

³¹ The “box” refers to a question on job applications that asks prospective employee whether they have ever been convicted of a crime. So far, the movements to “ban the box” have been largely limited to employment for city governments (Henry and Jacobs, 2007; National Employment Law Project, 2008).

Pardons Boards

The governor of each state is empowered to grant a pardon as an act of clemency and forgiveness. Most typically, a pardons board reviews relevant information about the individual seeking clemency and makes a recommendation to the governor. Although the length of the law-abiding period is often considered one of the most important factors in pardon applications, it is not clear whether pardon boards have reliable guidelines as to how long a law-abiding period is long enough for the individual to be deemed appropriate for pardon.³² Despite the fact that pardons are hard to obtain, especially for the poor, pardons have a significant restorative effect that signals that the pardoned individual is rehabilitated (Love, 2003, 2010).

On Distributors of Criminal Records

State Repositories

State record repositories could adopt a policy not to disseminate criminal record information older than T* or T** years. This could apply specifically to the states that make their criminal-history information publicly available on the Internet.³³ States are clearly moving in the direction of making individual criminal records more publicly accessible (Jacobs, 2006). However, given the lasting consequence of disseminated records on a large number of individuals, finding means to limit the dissemination would be a realistic approach to the problem.³⁴ The state could adopt a

³² For example, in Pennsylvania, the Board of Pardons (2005: 1) publicly states that the length of time free of crime after the offense is one of the best indicators of rehabilitation that the applicant can demonstrate.

³³ In 2001, 13 states (of the 38 that responded to the survey) provide public access to criminal history records through the Internet (SEARCH, 2001). [Samuels and Mukamal (2004) report that 28 states allow Internet access to criminal records.]

³⁴ Some employers might “statistically discriminate” based on correlating individual characteristics of a job applicant with generic covariates of criminal activity such as race and ethnicity. Presence of statistical discrimination implies that if the access to criminal records is limited, employers would infer the potential

policy to seal repository records of events older than T^* or T^{**} years in response to a request from a non-criminal justice agency. Such sealed records could still be accessible for criminal justice purposes. A more aggressive approach would be to expunge records older than T^* or T^{**} years.

Even though these judicial procedures tend to be more accessible and reliable than pardon, the popularity of sealing and expungement peaked in the 1970s and has severely declined since then in most jurisdictions (Love, 2003, 2006). Moreover, Love (2003, 2006) reports that there is no one standard in terms of what it means to have a record sealed, expunged, set aside, vacated, or annulled. A record being expunged does not necessarily mean that the record is literally destroyed; rather, the expunged records “almost always remain available for use by law enforcement agencies and the courts, and in some states they may be accessible to other public agencies and even to private investigative services hired to perform criminal background checks for employers” (Love, 2003). Furthermore, critics of sealing and expungement argue that the concealment of records and the denying of past wrongdoing are institutionalized deception and are not compatible with the pursuit of truth, the foundation of a legal system (Franklin and Johnsen, 1980; Kogon and Loughery, 1970).

Despite these criticisms, concealment and denial of criminal records after some “rehabilitation period” are common in many countries. For instance, in the UK, according to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, those who are convicted of certain crimes, after specified

employee’s probability of having a criminal record based on the accessible information about the person’s characteristics such as race. Thus, those who belong to groups that are associated with a high probability of having criminal records but do not themselves have records would be unfairly discriminated against. As a result, limiting employers’ access to criminal records could possibly have an adverse consequence for those without criminal records (Bushway, 2004; Finlay, forthcoming; Freeman, 2008; Holzer, et al., 2006; Pager, 2003; Raphael, 2006).

rehabilitation periods, are treated as though the crime never happened, and are not obligated to reveal the record when asked at employment settings.^{35, 36}

Commercial Vendors

Because many employers rely on background-check services provided by commercial vendors of criminal records, if states seal or expunge records older than T* or T** years, this should be accompanied by a process of requiring those old records also to be erased from commercial databases.³⁷

Certificate of Rehabilitation

The main criticisms of sealing and expungement include the compromise of governmental transparency as well as the possible adverse effect on non-offenders because of statistical discrimination. Certificates of rehabilitation and other similar means can circumvent the problem. Certificates of rehabilitation are designed to remove certain collateral consequences for eligible ex-offenders and can potentially enhance their employment prospects.³⁸ The certificates reward

³⁵ The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act of 1974 followed a report called *Living It Down: The Problem of Old Convictions*, which is a report of a committee chaired by Lord Gardiner (1972). The report shows that the longer a convicted person remains crime free, the less likely that the person will commit another crime.

³⁶ For more on the sealing and expungement of criminal records in the European Union, see Loucks, Lyner, and Sullivan (1998). There are also similar systems of sealing and expungement of criminal records in countries such as Canada and Australia (Lam and Harcourt, 2003; Ruddell and Winfree, 2006).

³⁷ Given the considerable discrepancy between the records from official sources (state repositories) and the records from commercial databases (Bushway et al., 2007), it is important that any update (i.e., sealing or expungement) that takes place on the official records is reflected on the records in the commercial sources. Jacobs and Crepet (2008) highlight the difficulty in forcing vendors to make such changes because their right to access the criminal records would be protected by the First Amendment of the Constitution.

³⁸ Criminal history records are regarded as “negative credentials” or a scarlet letter “A” (Nagin, 1998; Kurlychek, Brame, and Bushway, 2006) that signify “social stigma and generalized assumptions of untrustworthiness or undesirability” (Pager, 2007: 33; see also Jacobs, 2006 and Jacobs and Crepet, 2008),

good behavior of ex-offenders by explicitly acknowledging them as being rehabilitated rather than erasing the record of their contact with the criminal justice system. Thus, these certificates are similar to pardons in spirit but are relatively more accessible than pardons. Currently, only a handful of states issue such certificates (Love and Frazier, 2006; Samuels and Mukamal, 2004), but they could be used more widely by taking advantage of the empirical evidence of T* and T**.³⁹

OUTREACH

We are committed to the dissemination of our findings, and so have presented the results at various meetings and conferences targeting a wide range of audiences from academics to practitioners, and to policy makers. Mainly for academic audiences, we presented our results at annual meetings of American Society of Criminology (ASC) in 2007, 2008, and 2009. As part of the 2009 ASC meeting, we also wrote an essay that focuses on the policy implications of our research findings, which we presented at one of the sessions at the ASC meeting and was published as part of the conference proceedings. Our paper that describes the results appeared in the May 2009 issue of *Criminology*, the flagship journal of the ASC.

In order to further disseminate our research findings, particularly to the policy-maker community, we presented the findings at the 2009 NIJ conference in June, 2009. At the NIJ

whereas certificates of rehabilitation attempt to emphasize the progress made by the exoffender. Regarding more fair representation of riskiness by taking into account the positive factors, Bushway et al. (2007) mention that it is conceivable for the government to devise some score (like a credit score) that indicates the risk of offending, which can be affected by positive factors such as the length of crime-free time, completion of a drug treatment program, and vocational training, as well as negative factors such as committing another crime (for a similar approach, see Freeman, 2008).

³⁹ Bushway and Sweeten (2007) discuss policy implications regarding the diminished value of old criminal records in the context of collateral consequences.

conference, Attorney General, Eric H. Holder mentioned our research on redemption during his keynote address, describing it as “potentially transformative.” Also, as part of our efforts to disseminate our research, in response to a request from the *NIJ Journal*, we prepared an article that was published in the Journal’s issue of June 2009 (No. 263); that issue was widely distributed at the NIJ Conference.

We also presented at a conference convened by the American Bar Association’s Commission on Effective Criminal Sanctions titled “Fair Use of Criminal Records in Employment” in Washington, D.C. on January 12, 2008. The ABA conference was organized to facilitate the discussion about the increasing use of criminal background checks for employment screening purposes and the problems that it has started to cause for the individuals who have an isolated but stale criminal record. The conference was attended by individuals and organizations that have strong interests in the relevance of criminal history records in employment such as judges, attorneys representing individuals distressed by the use of background checks as well as hiring organizations using background checks, organizations that facilitate reentry, and background checking industry representatives. The participants at the conference were very interested in our results and anxious to see a copy of our paper with the results. This reflects the potential importance of our project.

We presented our results in 2009 at a conference titled, “Race, Criminal Records, and Employment: Legal Practice and Social Science Research,” which was organized by Cornell University School of Industrial and Labor Relations. The conference was attended by a wide range of organizations that facilitate the reentry of prisoners into the workforce, researchers, and lawyers, some of whom represent individuals with criminal records, while others represent firms

that consider applicants with criminal records. Our presentation attracted significant interests among the participants, and it shows the importance of our continuing research on redemption. We also presented our findings at the annual meeting of SEARCH, which was attended by the representatives of all the state criminal record repositories. Our presentation was well received by the representatives who are increasingly interested in the use of criminal history records by employers for the purpose of background checks.

In order to communicate our research findings to the practitioner community, we presented our results at the Occasional Series on Reentry Research in March that was organized by the John Jay College's Prisoner Reentry Institute. Our presentation was well received by both the academic audience and the practitioners who facilitate reentry of ex-offenders. In addition, we presented our results at the conference of the American Correctional Association. We also have received many inquiries about our work from many organizations, including state agencies, such as state correction departments. For such inquiries, we have made ourselves available by sending our article in the *NIJ Journal*, as well as our paper published in *Criminology*, to communicate our research findings.

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