

Criminal Records & College Admissions

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University of Minnesota

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BACKGROUND

QUESTIONS

CONTEXT

AUDIT DESIGN

WHAT I FOUND

IMPLICATIONS

Application for Freshman Admission, Fall 2010

Additional required information

The University of [REDACTED] is committed to maintaining an educational environment characterized by safety, respect, and integrity.

Have you ever been expelled from, suspended from, or placed on probation at any high school or college for reasons of academic dishonesty or because of an offense that harmed or had the potential to harm others, or are you ineligible to return to any high school or college you have attended?

☐ Yes ☐ No > If Yes, attach a detailed statement of explanation.

Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offense (felony, misdemeanor, or juvenile offense) other than a minor traffic violation, or is any such charge now pending against you?

☐ Yes ☐ No > If Yes, attach a description of the incident(s), including the date(s) and location(s).

Signature

I certify that the information I have provided on this application and on all other application materials is complete, accurate, and true to the best of my knowledge. I understand that withholding pertinent information requested on this application or providing false information will make me ineligible for admission, or subject to cancellation of registration if admission has occurred or dismissal from the [REDACTED] if already enrolled. I agree to notify the Office of Admissions if there are any changes to the information provided in my application. In addition, I authorize the release of my admission status to my high school.

[REDACTED]

applicant's signature

[REDACTED]

date

Don't forget to submit before the priority deadline of December 15, 2010.

Application for Freshman Admission, Fall 2010

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Context

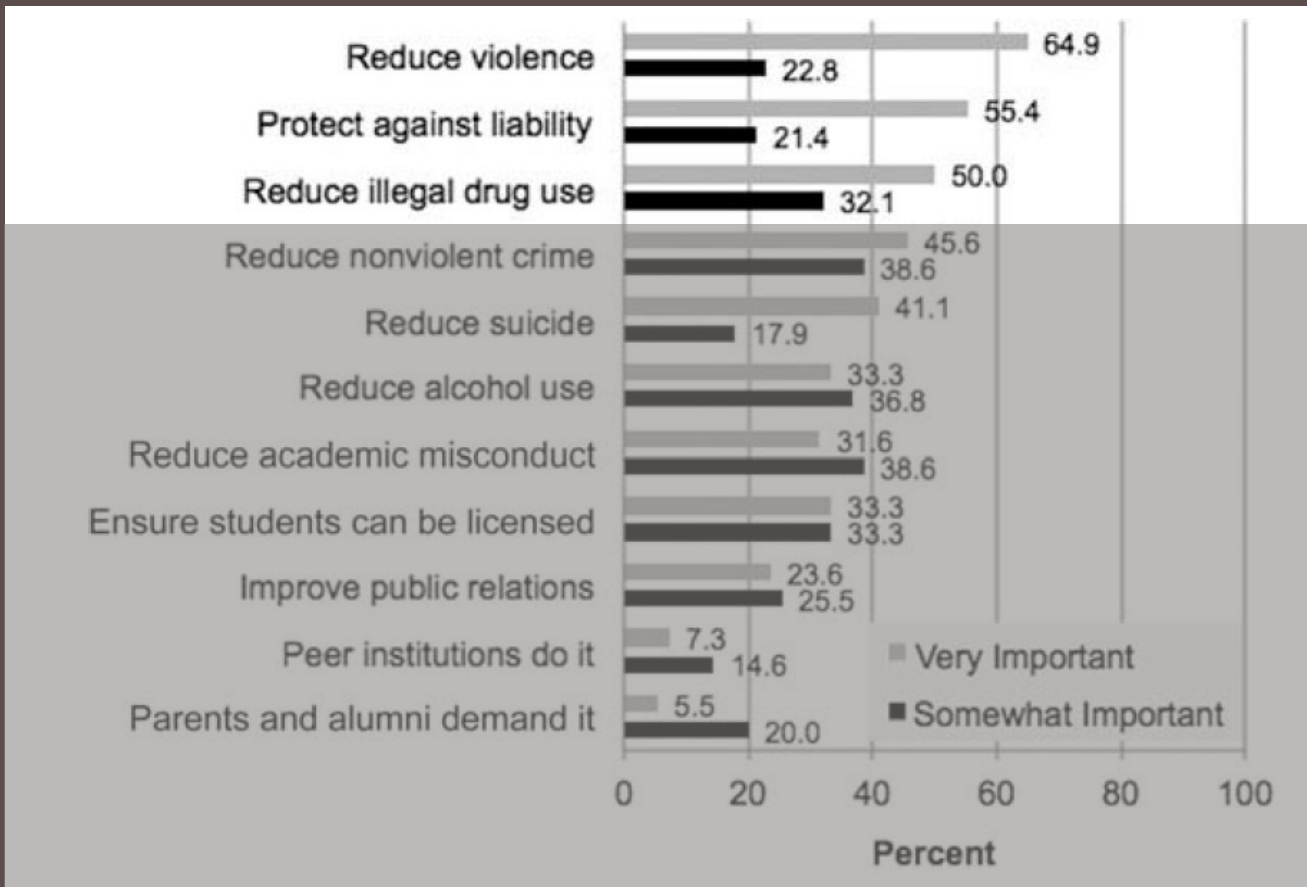


FIGURE 1 Reasons for collecting applicants' criminal history information.

(Pierce et al. 2014)

- “...*assessing the potential threat to the campus...*”
- “...*mainly safety...*”
- “...*it’s also reputational, for the university...*”

Motivation

If education is a driver of mobility (Hout), what if criminal record screening questions are preventing a whole group from accessing those benefits?

Questions

- 1. To what extent does a low-level felony record inhibit educational opportunity and access?*
- 2. Does this effect vary by race?*
- 3. How does discrimination operate in the admissions process beyond the admissions decision?*

Criminal records

- *Heavily racialized (Pettit; Western; Clear)*
- *By 23, Black males arrested 29% more than White males (Brame et al.)*
- *Adult male population w/ felony records: (Shannon et al.)*
 - ≈ 1 in 3 Black males*
 - ≈ 1 in 12 White males*

Mass Incarceration

(see, e.g.,
Garland,
Western,
Alexander,
etc.)

Mass Incarceration	Mass Probation/ Supervision
(see, e.g., Garland, Western, Alexander, etc.)	(see, e.g., Phelps)

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Phelps)

Mass Criminal Labeling

(see, e.g., Pager, Lageson,
Shannon et al, etc)

Mass
Incarceration

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Probation/
Supervision

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Phelps)

Mass Criminal
Labeling

(see, e.g., Pager, Lageson,
Shannon et al, etc)

Mass Punishment

Context

- *Traditional measures of racial progress miss people in the system (Pettit)*
- *Criminal records as inhibiting transition from CJ involvement (Pager; Western; Uggen, Vuolo, Lageson)*

Punishment

Record screening and Garland's "Crime complex"

- *Heightened, normalized fear of crime*
- *CJS is ineffective, must take proactive measures*
- *Prioritization of public safety*
- *Expansion of criminal record screening in employment, housing, education (Feeley & Simon)*

Punishment

Discrimination

Criminal stigma (Goffman)

- *Media portrayals of crime and online criminal records (Lageson)*
- *Formal and informal stigmatization*
- *Barriers that “pile on” (Uggen & Stewart)*
- *Negative credentials (Weber, Pager, Becker)*

Punishment

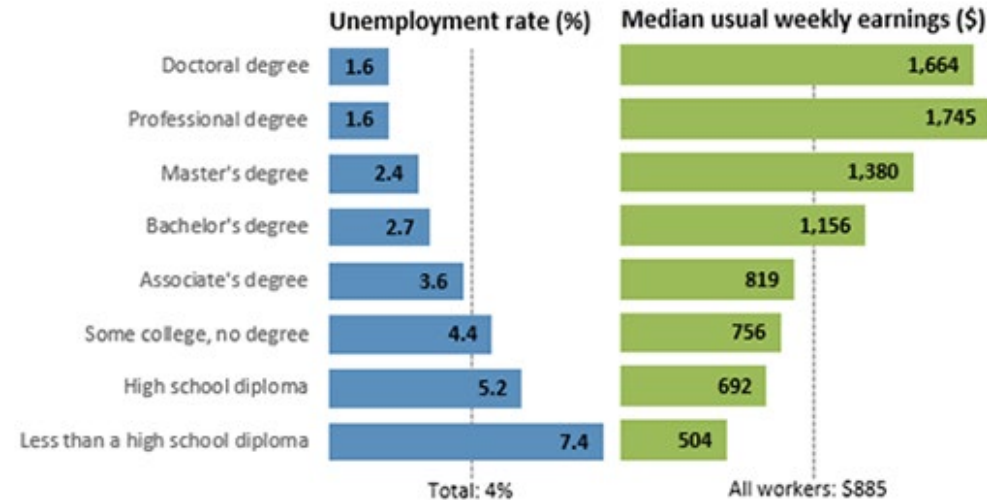
Discrimination

Stratification

Inclusionary ...

- *Promoting social inclusion and access to mobility through status group membership (Weber)*

Unemployment rates and earnings by educational attainment, 2016



Note: Data are for persons age 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

Punishment

Discrimination

Stratification

Inclusionary . . .

- *Role in desistance
(Ford & Schroeder)*

The Washington Post

Grade Point

**Federal government
urges colleges to
limit inquiries about
criminal records**

By Nick Anderson May 9 

Punishment

Discrimination

Stratification

Exclusionary ...

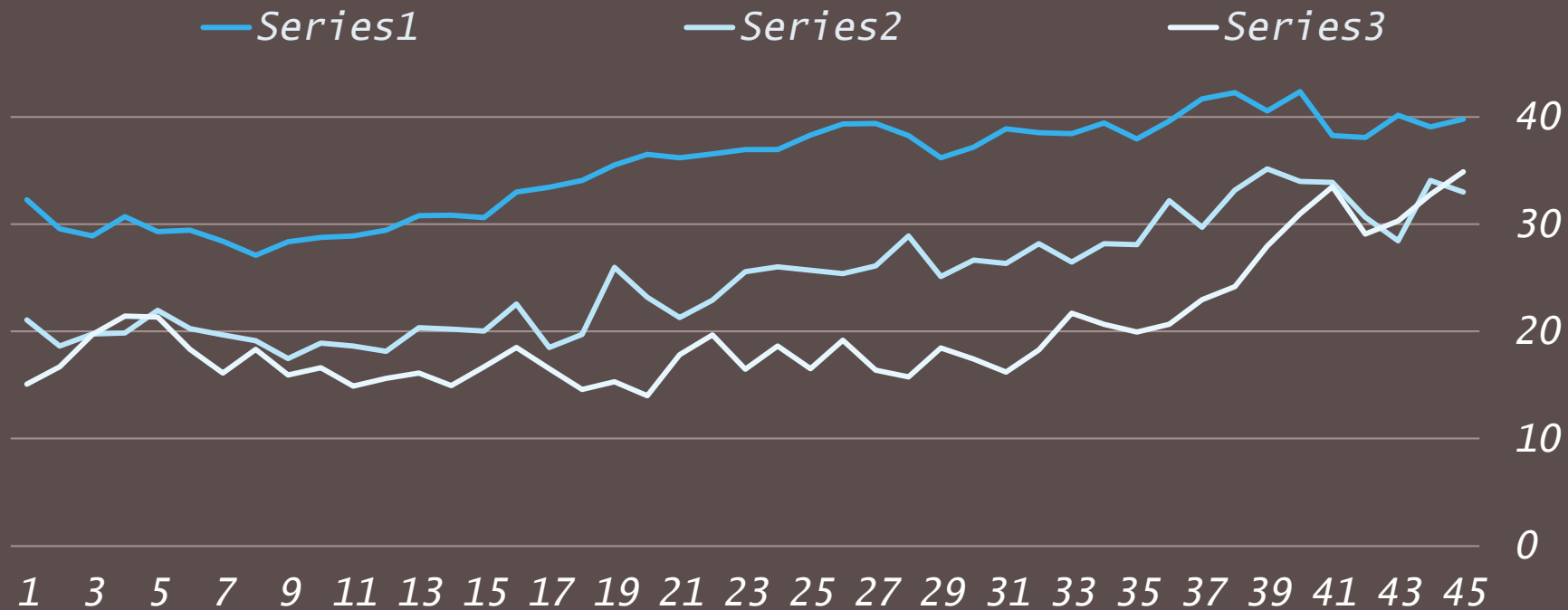
- *Sort and sieve (Sorokin, Jencks & Reisman; Meyer)*
- *Social reproduction (Bourdieu & Passeron; Lareau & Lamont; Collins; Perna & Titus)*
- *Appearance of neutrality (Bourdieu; Jencks; Lareau)*

Punishment

Discrimination

Stratification

*College Enrollment of 18-24 Males
by Race (US Dept of Ed 2018)*



Punishment

Discrimination

Stratification

Social Exclusion (Weber, Murphy, Collins, Parkin, Bourdieu)

In 1904, a student petitioned for a special examination on the grounds that a required entrance examination was offered only on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath.

When they gained a partial victory on that front in 1907, they agitated for the abolition of the \$5 fee imposed upon them for taking the examinations at a time other than that prescribed.

Source: Wechsler 2014

Questions

- 1. To what extent does a low-level felony record inhibit educational opportunity and access?*
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- 3. How does discrimination operate in the admissions process beyond the admissions decision?*

Audit Design

- *Pager (2003)*
 - *Significant reduction in employer callbacks*
 - *Pronounced racial differences*
- *Agan & Starr (2017)*
 - *Correspondence audit*
 - *Significant reduction in callbacks*



Audit Design - Sample

- *4-year colleges*
- *Excluded most selective*
- *Included colleges with and without criminal history questions*
- *Testing the admissions decision*

Audit Design - Testers

- *Real education credentials*
(high school GPA, ACT scores)
- *Real criminal histories*
- *Fabricated other materials*
(essays, extracurriculars, employment history)
- *Assigned race*

“Modified” Audit Design - Testers

Benefits:

- *External validity – more generalizable*
- *Reduce likelihood of detection*
- *Ethical issues*
- *Conservative estimate*



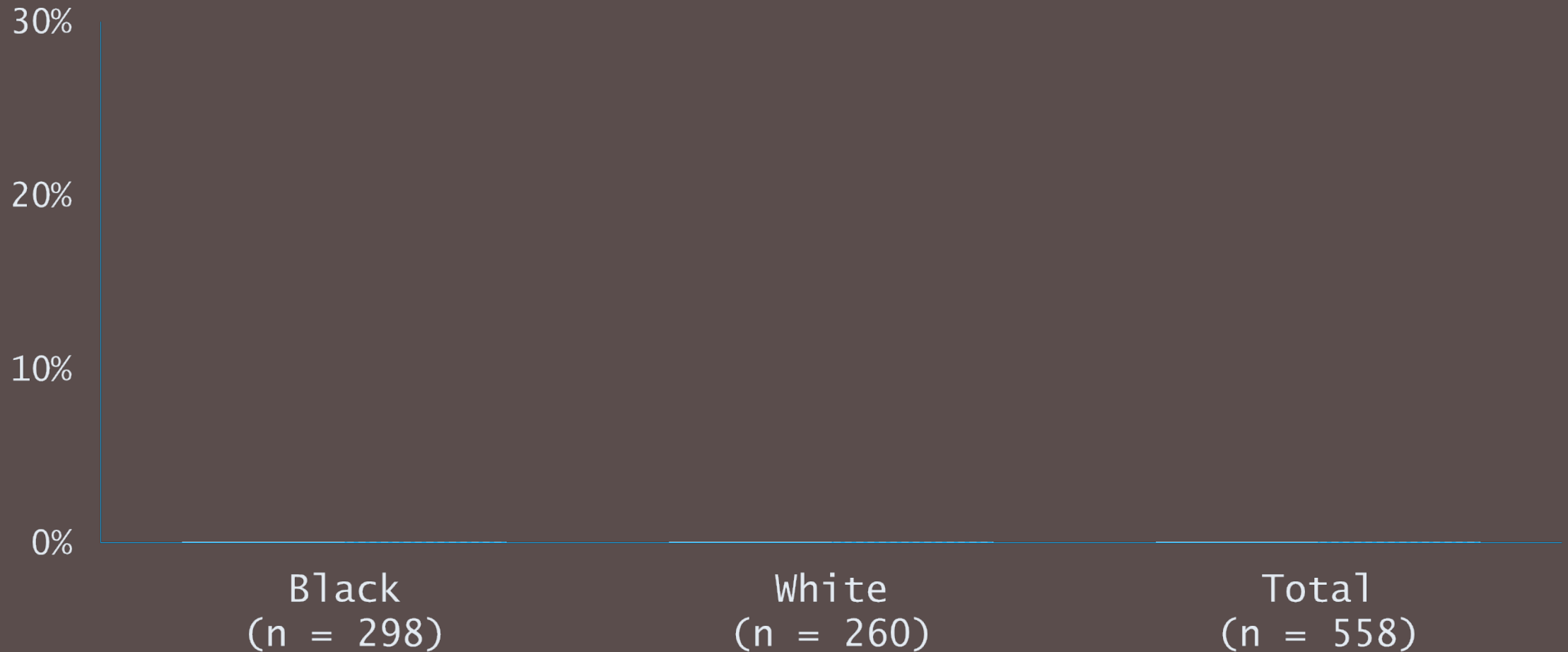
“Modified” Audit Design

- *Submitted from Dec 2015 – May 2016*
- *Same race pairs (no interracial pairs)*
 - *Same pairs applied as Black at some colleges and White at others*
- *Left field in September 2016*
- *279 completed pairs*
 - *(149 Black, 130 White)*

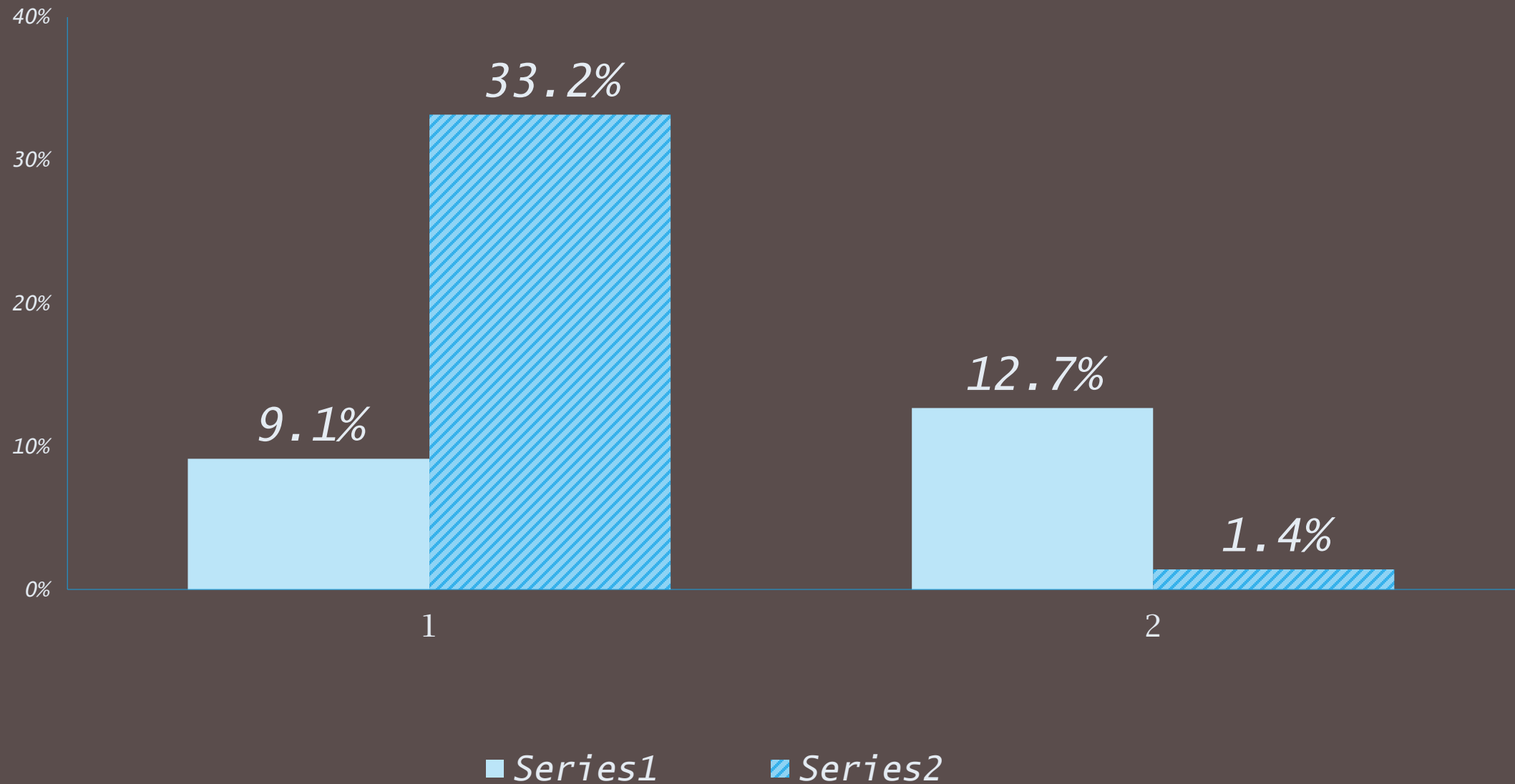
Findings - Descriptive

Proportion Rejected by Race and Felony Record

■ No Record ■ Felony Record



Percent Rejected by Criminal History Disclosure Requirement and Felony Record



Covariates - Institutional

- *Criminal history question*
- *Race conscious admissions*
 - *(from Collegeboard Annual Survey of Colleges)*
- *Institution type*
- *Admissions competitiveness*
- *College setting*
- *Institution size*
- *Campus crime rate*

Covariates - Institutional

- *Pct receiving Pell*
- *Pct UG Black; Pct UG White*
- *6-year graduation rate*

Covariates – Applicant

- *Applied first within pair*
- *More attractive pair*
- *Month submitted*

Logistic Mixed-Effects Regression for College Acceptance

N (colleges/applications)	Black (149/298)			White (130/260)			Pooled (279/558)			
Covariates	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10
<i>Fixed effects</i>										
Felony record	-1.27	-1.34	-2.85	-2.12	-2.09	1.22	-1.51	-1.51	-1.51	3.46
High crime (10+/1,000 students)		-0.32	-0.41		-0.93	-0.99			-0.32	0.42
Felony rec * Crim Question (Interaction)			***			-3.81				-6.17
Black								-0.22	-0.61	-0.83
Race conscious admissions		-1.10	-1.47		-0.19	-0.19			-0.58	-0.75
Criminal History Question		-1.26	1.29		-2.99	-1.03			-1.76	0.50
<i>Control (ref: Public)</i>										
Private Non-Relig		0.00	0.04		-2.59	-2.83			-0.94	-1.27
Private Relig		0.72	0.99		-1.03	-1.20			0.06	0.06
<i>Competitiveness (ref: Less)</i>										
Moderate		-0.87	-1.18		0.52	0.57			0.00	-0.01
High		-0.78	-1.08		-1.38	-1.46			-0.86	-1.19
<i>Location (ref: Rural)</i>										
Suburban		-0.39	-0.52		-0.43	-0.48			-0.52	-0.63
Urban		-0.12	-0.13		0.34	0.38			-0.16	-0.16
<i>Size (ref: Small)</i>										
Medium		-0.31	-0.45		-0.03	-0.10			-0.12	-0.19
Large		0.08	0.09		-2.86	-3.23			-0.90	-1.19
UG Enrollment: Black		0.02	0.02		0.06	0.07			0.03	0.04
UG Enrollment: White		0.03	0.04		0.06	0.07			0.04	0.05
Pct Pell Grant		0.02	0.02		0.08	0.08			0.03	0.04
Graduation Rate		-0.02	-0.04		0.01	0.01			-0.02	-0.02
More Qualified Pair		1.25	1.79		1.54	1.64			1.37	1.80
First in Pair to Apply		-0.22	-0.23		0.63	0.58			0.07	0.04
Month Submitted		0.19	0.27		0.03	0.09			0.07	0.12
(Intercept)	2.55	1.31	-0.63	4.62	-1.06	-3.31	3.14	3.26	1.17	-0.92
<i>Random effects</i>										
College (variance)	1.24	0.09	2.04	9.16	3.64	4.68	2.93	2.95	1.27	3.65
*** Omitted because of collinearity							p < 0.05	p < 0.01	p < 0.001	

Predicted Marginal Probabilities of Admission by Race for Record Status and Criminal History Question

	Black	White
No record, No Crim Question	0.941 (0.045)	0.992 (0.011)
No record, Crim Question	0.981 (0.014)	0.983 (0.013)
Record, No Crim Question	*	0.998 (0.004)
Record, Crim Question	0.695 (0.079)	0.852 (0.059)

Numbers in parentheses indicate SE.

* Omitted because of collinearity (i.e., no rejections in this condition)

LEFT



From submission to decision: 19 days

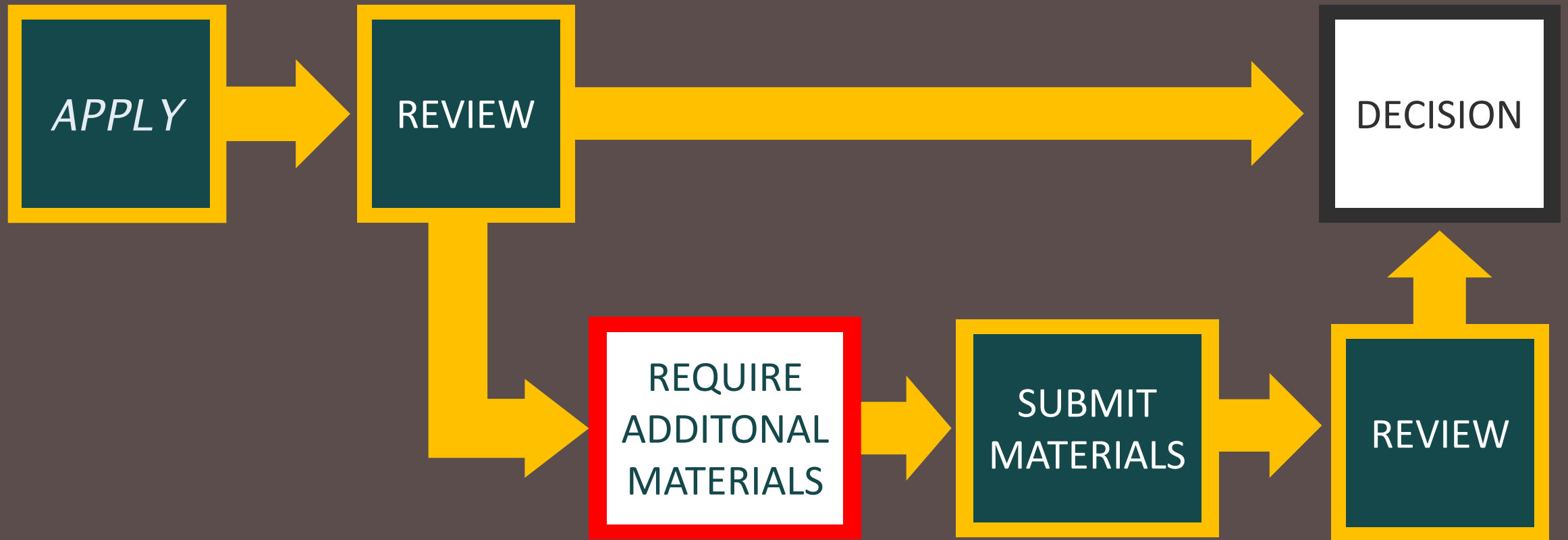


APPLY

REVIEW

DECISION

From submission to decision: 19 days



From submission to decision: 35 days (median)

Dear [redacted],



Director of Admissions

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Dear [REDACTED],

Your application for undergraduate admission was forwarded to me by the Admissions Office. The information you provided in your application for admission indicated that you had been convicted of, or pleaded no contest to, a crime other than a minor traffic violation.

Based upon your previous criminal history, your request to be considered for admission has been denied.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Student Conduct Advisor
[REDACTED].edu.

Hello [REDACTED],

Thank you for your interest in [REDACTED] College. My name is [REDACTED]. I am the Admissions Counselor responsible for Minnesota. I was looking over your application and noticed your prior conviction. It is [our] policy to not admit students convicted of felonies. Unfortunately, we will need to cancel your application. I will make a request to refund your application fee today.

Please let me know if you have any questions. I am happy to help in any way I can.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED], '13

Admissions Counselor

Questions

2. To what extent does this effect vary by race?

Different levels rather than different effects, but

Racial inequalities in CJS drive increased exposure

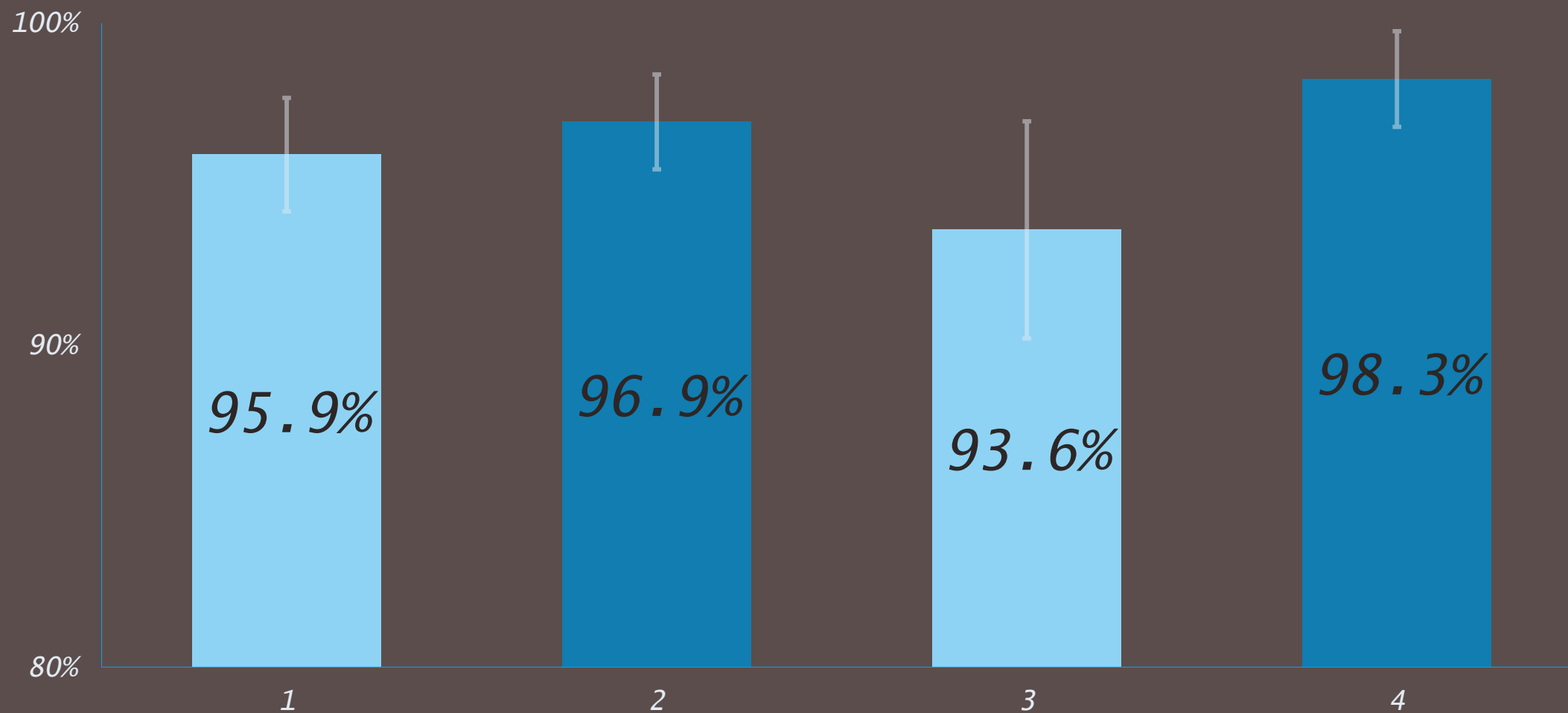
Questions

3. How does discrimination operate in the admissions process beyond the admissions decision?

Contributing to exclusion

Limitations

Predicted Marginal Probability of Acceptance for No-Record Applicants by Race with Covariates Constant at Means



Punishment

Discrimination

Stratification

Social Exclusion



I KNOW THERE IS A FOREST IN THERE SOMEWHERE...

Thank you!

Questions?
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University of Minnesota