

COVER LETTER

August 9, 20XX

Dr. First Name & Last Name, Search Committee Chair
School of Criminology & Criminal Justice
University

Dear Dr. Last Name and Search Committee,

I am writing to apply for the Assistant Professor position in the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice. I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Sociology at University specializing in criminology and social psychology under the direction of Dr. Bob Green. I am currently revising my final two chapters and have scheduled my defense for February. My research interests include criminological theory, justice, violence, and the intersectionality of race and gender. My dual specializations in criminology and social psychology allow me to draw upon both literatures to better understand how strains, emotions, and perceptions impact negative behaviors. Furthermore, being a part of a sociology department has strengthened my interests in the stratification of society and how status inequalities influence social interactions and behavior. Methodological training and practice have sharpened my analytical skills to address these components separately and in conjunction to enhance understanding of crime and deviance. My research brings gender and race central to the criminological literature by addressing how social psychological processes help explain the emergence of negative outcomes across age, class, gender, and racial lines.

My dissertation, "Racism & Crime: The Impact of Discrimination and Injustice on African American Offending," is among the first empirical assessments of the recent *Theory of African American Offending* (TAAO) (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011). Unnever and Gabbidon purport racial socialization conditions the unique African American experiences of racial discrimination and criminal justice injustices which increase their likelihood of offending. I empirically examine and expand this race-centered theory of crime using the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (PHDCN) data. In the first substantive chapter, negative binomial and logistic regressions reveal criminal justice injustices, negative emotions, and social bonds are significant predictors of serious offending; the buffering effects of positive racial socialization, however, are not presently supported. I was recently invited by *Race and Justice* to revise and resubmit a manuscript from this chapter. The second substantive chapter expands upon TAAO by incorporating elements of racialized general strain theory. I examine the effects of additional strains – economic, familial, and victimization – on African American offending along with the differential conditioning effects of anger and depression. I am presenting these findings at the American Society of Criminology conference in November. The final substantive chapter presents a more thorough analysis of the mediating effects of negative emotions and social bonds as well as the moderating effects of racial socialization drawing upon the methodologies of MacKinnon (2008) and Hayes (2013). Initial results suggest negative emotions partially account for the effects of racial discrimination and criminal justice injustices on offending; social bonds, however, do not impact this association. Preliminary analyses also find positive racial socialization does not significantly buffer the effects of discrimination and injustice on offending. This study is a conservative test of the central propositions of TAAO using secondary data analysis. This race-centered theory highlights unique mechanisms affecting African Americans, and the present project provides a firm empirical basis for further investigation into the distinct roles of racial discrimination, criminal justice injustices, and racial socialization on offending.

My research is firmly grounded in a general strain theory (GST) perspective. In the 2011 article "Does Victimization Reduce Self-Control? A Longitudinal Analysis" (*Journal of Criminal Justice*), Dr. Bob Green

and I, along with several colleagues, addressed the question of whether prior victimization – a central strain – impacts levels of self-control using five waves of the Gang Resistance Education and Training data. While pursuing my Master's at University, I developed and validated a measure of subjective strain and engaged in an assessment of gendered GST using primary data from a convenience sample of undergraduates. Results from each project were presented at the American Society of Criminology meetings. More recently, using the PHDCN data, I assessed macro-level GST in relation to collective efficacy focusing on one key strain – excessive use of force by the police. A manuscript from this project is currently under review at *Social Problems*. I also co-authored the book chapter, "Inequality: A Matter of Justice?" in the *Handbook of the Social Psychology of Inequality*, with Dr. First Name Last Name addressing the complex relationship between inequality and justice. These projects laid the groundwork for my future investigations into status inequality and crime, particularly my dissertation.

I am also deeply committed to mentoring and teaching. I have taught *Criminology* at University as well as been a teaching assistant for various sociology and criminology courses. I approach teaching as a collaborative learning experience linking research and practice with content through activities and projects in and outside the classroom. For instance, I use in-class discussions, homework assignments, group activities, short reflection writing assignments, television/film/music/news clips, documentaries, and guest speakers to facilitate the connections between abstract criminological constructs and real-world experiences. In the future, I plan to incorporate an experiential learning component to my current curriculum through a site visit to the local jail or by engaging in theoretically relevant service in the community.

I have demonstrated success in the classroom. In addition to strong teaching evaluations, I have also developed a positive rapport with many of my students. One emailed me saying, "I found your class to be incredibly compelling – it seems as if everyday (sic) I was exposed to different schools of thought that challenged my current understanding of society and crime." Beyond the classroom, having an undergraduate research assistant has been an invaluable opportunity to mentor and instruct on a one-on-one basis. She got to experience research in action, and I learned how to instruct in an applied situation. I hope to have the chance to continue to collaborate with students in the future.

I am particularly interested in teaching *Criminology*, *Race, Crime, & Criminal Justice*, *Women & Crime*, *Juvenile Delinquency & Justice*, and *Violence in America* at the undergraduate or graduate levels. I would be happy teaching introductory courses, theory, research methods, introductory statistics, and any substantive criminology or criminal justice courses.

The University is an ideal place for me personally and professionally. I seek a department that emphasizes the integration of theory and policy, champions issues of race, gender, and justice, as well as values teaching, which is the University. The wide network of potential and continued collaborations across the university and the region, the department's dual emphasis on rigorous theoretical scholarship as well as evidence-based policy initiatives, and the opportunity to contribute to the flourishing graduate program are everything I seek to grow as a scholar, educator, and mentor. As a State native and proud graduate of the University, I am deeply committed to the region and its public educational systems. Please feel free to contact me by email (address) or phone (number) to further discuss my qualifications. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Julia Jones