

**ASCRPTIVE INEQUALITIES OF EMPLOYMENT PRIOR TO AND DURING  
THE 2001 AND 2007 RECESSIONS IN GWINNETT COUNTY, GEORGIA**

by

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## Abstract

One of many indications of a recession is higher rates of unemployment and Georgia had one of the highest rates during the 2007 recession. The purpose of this study was to reveal if disparity exists for the employment of individuals with certain ascribed characteristics and if this disparity was more significant during a recession. Two research questions explored this relationship; the first question was: Is there an association between ascribed attributes of age, gender, and ethnicity and employment status in Gwinnett County, Georgia? The second research question was: Will the relationship between ascribed attributes of gender, age, and ethnicity and employment status significantly change during recession (2001 and 2008 to 2010) versus nonrecession (2000 and 2002 to 2007) years in Gwinnett County, Georgia? A quantitative ex post facto case study design utilized secondary data from the United States Census Bureau (CB) consisting of 16,899 surveyed participants. The analyzed data used three statistical analyses, a *t* test, cross tabulation with a chi-square test, and binary logistic regression to determine differences. A relationship was found between the independent variables of gender, age, and ethnicity, with the dependent variable of employment status ( $p = .000$ ). An additional finding was that there was a significant difference between both recession periods based on ascriptive characteristics and employment status ( $p = .000$ ). In addition, when comparing both recessions, there was a significant difference between the two periods based on ascriptive characteristics ( $p = .000$ ). The researcher addressed a gap in the research, which specifically looked at ascriptive employment status during designated periods of economic downturns in a specific location within the United States. In addition to looking at more than one independent variable and the impact during

recession and nonrecession periods over a 10-year span, the researcher included micro data collected by the CB for persons meeting employment and unemployment criteria. The results of this study were in agreement with the findings of previous studies and can provide material for continued research regarding the potential for eradication of employment inequality through policy change.

## **Dedication**

To God be the glory for the things that he has done in my life!

I dedicate my dissertation to my daughter E'lon Jarrett. I pray that you continue to excel in everything that you do, and live your life to the fullest, may you always feel that you are "living the dream." Thank you for your patients and the sacrifices you made to support me through my educational journey. Thank you for listening intently while I read my paper aloud. Although you did not always understand, you managed to ask all the right questions to challenge my critical thinking. I am so proud of the woman you have become. You are my shero!

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“I wouldn’t take anything for my journey now” (Dr. Maya Angelou).

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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

### Introduction to the Problem

Ascriptive inequality stemming from perceptions and stereotypes based on a person's assigned characteristics are an unfortunate reality in the United States (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Feagin, 2000, 2008; Reskin, 2003). Reskin (2003) defines ascriptive inequality as the unethical or unfair treatment of a certain group of people within a social system. Ascriptive inequalities encompass isms, biases, and segregation that commonly occur in hiring practices even today (Reskin, 2003). However, unrelenting challenges exist in understanding why ascriptive inequalities remain prevalent particularly those that effect employment during economic downturns (Reskin, 2003). Therefore, this study was undertaken to deliberate the question of whether ascribed inequalities, as they relate to employment, are more prevalent during recessionary periods.

The study of ascriptive inequality also encompasses the topic of stratification (Davis & Moore, 1945; Pfeffer, 1977; Ganzeboom, Treiman, & Ultee, 1991). Whereas, ascription refers to the social system that one is born into, specifically gender and race, stratification pertains to a social system from a perspective of layering based on one's station and position in life (Reskin, 2003). Society presumes ascribed attributes contribute to one's stratification, whether success is related to employment, housing, material attainment, or health benefits (Reskin, 2003). Champernowne and Cowell (1998) posited

economic inequality may not be the greatest crisis facing the world today . . . but economic inequality is clearly a persistent and pressing problem: one which arouses deep resentment, which can give rise to serious social and economic

upheavals, and which provokes strong differing views about the policies that might be adopted to regulate it. (p. 1)

Most individuals can survive the backlash of ascriptive inequality in the short run, but the longer the unprincipled treatment continues, the more harm is caused.

Ascriptive inequality research has focused mainly in the employment and income arenas (Bertola & Icmimo, 1995; Mocan, 1999; Piketty & Saez, 2003; Western & Pettit, 2005), the healthcare domain (Krieger, 2002; Sacker, Firth, Fitzpatrick, Lynch, & Bartley 2000; Wen, Browning, & Cagney, 2003), economic conditions including crime and incarceration (Blau & Blau, 1982; Burdett, Ricardo, & Randall, 2003; Glaser & Rice, 1959), and inequality as it relates to gender (Bosner, 2008; Ridgeway, 1997).

Researchers have explored ascription and social stratification from different perspectives of varying ascribed characteristics (Wilson & McBrier, 2005; Fine, Johnson, & Ryan, 1990). Inequalities run the gamut from age discrimination to ethical considerations (Wilson & McBrier, 2005). For this study, ascribed characteristics only referred to gender, age, and ethnicity.

High levels of unemployment are prevalent during a recession (Allegretto & Lynch, 2010; Belsie, 2010; Farber, 2010; Farber, 2004). In the 1920s, Wesley Clair Mitchell, the great business cycle analyst and founder of Business Cycle Theory, described a recession as the transition from prosperity to depression (Mitchell, 1927). This definition is a true description of the economic reality of many people throughout the United States who have lost the opportunity to live prosperous lives. When the economy became depressed in 2007, people were unable to find work or work specific to their particular skill set. Fawcett et al. (1994), Gilens (2009), and Hardee (2007) have



suggested that persons with disabilities, minorities, older adults, and women often feel powerless obtaining equal employment opportunities; they usually experience unfavorable circumstances disproportionate to others in society during a recession. Additionally, there appears to be a long-standing consensus in the literature that Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, youth, elderly, and the uneducated are specifically affected in greater numbers during economic downturns (Defreitas, 1986; Fawcett et al., 1994; Gilens, 2009; Hardee, 2007; Mong & Roscigno, 2010).

The National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), the agency responsible for declaring a recession in the United States, defines a recession as a “significant decline in economic activity lasting more than a few months” (Bruyere, Podgornik, & Spletzer, 2011, p. 1). However, this definition does not fully define the term recession because it does not explicitly factor in other economic variables such as the current national rate of unemployment, consumer confidence, and consumer spending (Elsby, Hobijn, & Sahin, 2010; Shimer, 2007). These variables are salient and impact income and employment.

Scholars have compared the current recession of 2007 to the Great Depression of 1929 (Feldstein, 2008; Field, 2009; Folsom, 2008; Jagannathan, Kapoor, & Schaumburg, 2009; Krugman, 2009; Meyerson, 2010; Roubini, 2008; Sierminska & Takhtamanova, 2010). Recessions present multiple challenges. A few constant challenges have been the high rate of unemployment, increased number of bank failures, dramatic stock market crashes, a loss of consumer confidence, an excessive number of business closings, and record high foreclosures (Gjedrem, 2010; Goldston, 1968; Judson, 2009; Krugman, 2009; Wilson & Paulson, 2010). All these events have the potential to affect employment status, either directly or indirectly.

By 2007, weakening business structures caused a wave of events that inevitably lead to a recession that spanned over two years (U. S. Economy & Global Economic Recession, 2010). Several large industries across the country were severely affected by the recession including travel, entertainment, textiles, construction, and small businesses with economic recovery a slow and arduous process (Roberts, 2009; Thompson, 2002). When these and similar businesses were negatively economically impacted, supporting markets were affected as well (Sum, Khatiwada, McLaughlin, & Palma, 2010). The outcome caused many people to become unemployed or underemployed from several months to years (Greenstone & Looney, 2010; Sum & Khatiwada, 2010). In the face of high levels of unemployment and underemployment during economic downturns, the question arises as to how different clusters of the population are impacted. At question is if employment of individuals with certain ascribed characteristics varies during recessionary periods.

The proposed objective of this ex post facto design, case study was to use secondary data collected from the United States Census Bureau (CB) to explore the percentage of difference in employment status for groups with the ascribed attributes of gender, age, and ethnicity during two recession periods 2001 and 2008-2010 in Gwinnett County, Georgia. Norušis (2006) pointed out it is oftentimes difficult to distinguish between urban legend and fact and data should be presented to give authenticity to the work. The author noted graphical displays were an important part of summarizing the data. Therefore, bar charts provide a visual of employment status for the ascribed characteristics, and periods. Using a *t* test, cross tabulation with a chi-square test, and a binary logistic regression analysis, the researcher explored the significance of differences

between the ascribed characteristics and employment status in Gwinnett County, Georgia during two recessionary periods. The impetus for this quantitative study arose from the desire to learn how economic conditions affect employability of people with different ascribed characteristics during recession versus nonrecession years in one local county of Georgia.

Georgia is located in the Southeast part of the United States. It was the last of the Thirteen Colonies to be founded by General James Oglethorpe who discovered it in 1733 (Georgia Commission on Equal Opportunity, n.d.). Georgia is the most populated state in the Southeast with a population in 2010 of over 9,687,600, which is significantly larger than the 2000 population of a little less than 8,190,000. Georgia is ethnically diverse with a 59.7% White, 30.5% Black, and 8.8% Hispanic demographic profile in 2010 (U. S. Census Bureau, 2012). Georgia's labor force population in 2010 was over 4,700,000, with over 4,230,000 employed and over 482,000, or 10.2%, unemployed (United States Census Bureau, 2012). The population, employment, and labor force numbers were impacted by both recessions, as well as population migrations due to the 2005 Hurricanes, Katrina and Rita (Barone, 2010; FEMA, 2007).

Georgia is the leader in the manufacturing of paper and board, tufted textile products, and processed chicken. Georgia companies are also manufacturers of transportation equipment, goods and products, apparel, and chemicals. Georgia is known for its production of peanuts and other agriculture products, such as, corn, cotton, tobacco, soybeans, eggs, onions, and peaches (Georgia Department of Economic Development, 2011a). It is also home to The Coca-Cola Manufacturing Company. Tourist attractions include Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, Andersonville Prison

Park and National Cemetery, Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park, and the Little White House at Warm Springs where President Franklin D. Roosevelt died in 1945.

Trade and service sectors provide the largest percentage of jobs in Georgia. Manufacturing and agriculture jobs are significant as well (Georgia Department of Economic Development, 2011a). Georgia has an economy output of over \$727 billion with almost \$69 billion generated by agribusiness. Because Georgia has mild winters and is known for its Southern hospitality and beautiful landscape, the state is considered an ideal vacation area. Thus, tourism generates more than \$45 billion dollars for the state of Georgia (Georgia Department of Economic Development, 2011b). There are several federal facilities located in Georgia including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Fort Benning, and Kings Bay Naval base. These federal facilities also contribute to the economy of Georgia. Georgia Tech Research Institute and other universities and technical colleges across the state contribute to advancing research and emerging technologies. Georgia clearly has a rich and diverse business and industry climate, an ethnically diverse population, as indicated in the demographic information in the next paragraph, and provides a useful setting for a study about recession, unemployment, and diversity.

Gwinnett County was established on December 15, 1818, from Creek and Cherokee Indian lands. The county covers over 400 square miles, and encompasses 280,000 acres of land (Gwinnet County Government, 2011). The county was named after signer of the Declaration of Independence, Button Gwinnett. It is located approximately 30 miles northeast of Atlanta. It is the second largest county in the state of Georgia with

a population of over 588,000 in 2000. By 2010, the county's population rose to just over 805,000 (73%). The population distribution in 2000 was 50.4% male, 49.6% female, 72.7% Caucasian, 13.3% Black, and 10.9% Hispanic (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). By 2010, the population had changed, with 49.3% male, 50.7% female, 53.3% Caucasian, 23.6% Black, and 20.1% Hispanic (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). This comparison indicates the male to female ratio remained relatively stable, there was a decrease in the number of Caucasians, and an increase in both Black and Hispanic populations. The overall labor force in Gwinnett County in 2000 was over 347,000, with more than 338,000 employment and 9,384 unemployment (2.7%). In 2010, the overall labor force bloomed to almost 423,000 (82%) the number employed was just under 385,000 (80%) and the number of unemployed was almost 39,000 or 9%.

At the time this study was undertaken, the county was made up of 15 municipalities and 10 cities, and it was home to the southeast's largest mall, Mall of Georgia (Gwinnett County Government, 2011). In 2010, goods-producing industries numbered over 3,000 firms, from construction to manufacturing. Service-providing industries numbered almost 19,000. Gwinnett County's educational system consisted of 133 public schools (Gwinnett County Public Schools, 2012), 40 private schools (Gwinnett County Private Schools, 2012), and 10 technical schools and universities (Education, 2011). In 2007, the median income was \$63,818 (Gwinnett County Government, 2011). Additionally, noted in 2007, was that 25% of Gwinnett citizens held a Bachelor's degree or higher (Gwinnett County Government, 2011).

Gwinnett County, Georgia was selected as the case study site because of its large ethnically diverse population and solid business and industrial base. These elements

make this location ideal for discerning vicissitudes of employment during recession versus nonrecession periods. An environment predominately populated by one ethnic demographic, with little to no business or industry would be a less appropriate setting and interpretations of findings would be limited. In Gwinnett County, the researcher believed the biggest effect of employment status with regard to ascriptive characteristics during a recession versus a nonrecession could be explored. Having a diverse population was imperative to the study because all of the selected variables of gender, age, and ethnicity needed to be presented consistently over the ten-year period. Georgia is also a historically confederate state, where some still wave a flag that symbolizes hate and discrimination for minorities. Ascriptive inequalities may be exacerbated in a state with a history of pronounced differences in equality. In addition, the survey data for all selected variables for Gwinnett County are readily available and complete in the CB database.

### **Background of the Study**

Over the course of the past decade, the United States has faced turbulent times (Box, 2011; Rampell & Schneiderman, 2009). Unemployment numbers skyrocketed because of two significant recessions occurring during the periods 2001 and 2008-2010. As a result, inequality in the workplace is still as relevant a focus in the twenty first century as it was in past decades (Cummings, 1987; Defreitas, 1986; Mong & Roscigno, 2010; Shaefer, 2011). In fact, Gilens (2009) suggested that government policies tend to favor the wealthy and thus contribute to problems in society.

Many factors determine recessions, and these factors are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. However, one cause posited by Stock and Watson (2003) was that the 2001

recession was attributed to cut backs in information technology in corporate America. Stock and Watson predicted that by the mid-2000s, decline in industrial production would begin the initial economic slowdown (2003). During the first quarter of 2001, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which measures goods and services that are produced by labor and/or property supplied by United States citizens, showed a weakening with a substantial decline of 1.6% in the third quarter (Stock & Watson, 2003). Changes in consumer spending were among the primary reasons why the NBER declared a recession in March of 2001.

Unfortunately, the effects of 9/11 influenced the economic downturn during 2001 even further. There was an even greater negative impact on unemployment after 9/11, along with a negative change in the psychosocial state of individuals (Shaefer, 2011; Mitchell, 2002). The tourism industry was hardest hit when people stopped traveling, especially by air (Roberts, 2009; Thompson, 2002). Hospitality and entertainment industries in every state and country were also negatively affected (Roberts, 2009; Thompson, 2002). Because of the monumental change, people were laid off from their jobs in these industries, and the cascading effect of unemployment continued. Roberts (2009) also suggested that the downturn caused a domino effect in manufacturing, retail, and restaurants as well as many other businesses. Bloom declared that these events appeared to be among the first main reasons the economy as a whole began to decline (2006). Indeed, the recession played a pivotal role on any business' sustainability, because consumers were afraid to spend money during 2007 causing the economy to continue to deteriorate (Meyerson, 2010) and unemployment rates remained staggeringly high (Wesbury, 2009). As businesses reduced staff or closed their doors, unemployment

numbers increased (Wesbury, 2009). Those left unemployed were obviously negatively affected. This increase in unemployment affected some clusters of the population more than others, to the extent that certain individuals were unable to find employment for longer periods (Wesbury, 2009). The Great Recession of 2007 (National Bureau of Economic Research, 2008a) shed new light on the disparity that continues to exist in employment opportunities related to individuals with certain ascribed characteristics.

During a recession, the gap of employment and economic inequality widens (Albelda & Kelleher, 2010). Therefore, a recession can be a direct cause of increased unemployment (Allegretto & Lynch, 2010; Farber, 2004, 2010; Smith, Vanski, & Holt, 1974). For example, the number of Georgia citizens' unemployed alone was a staggering 10.2% in 2010 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) database recorded that Georgia's unemployment rate prior to the recession of 2001, at the end of 2000 was 3.3% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). By the end of 2001, the unemployment rate increased to 4.6% (U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Data, 2010). After the recession in 2002, the unemployment rate was 4.9% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.). Prior to the recession of 2007, in 2006, the unemployment rate was only 4.7% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.). From 2007 until the end of 2010, the unemployment rate jumped to 10.4% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.).

Gjedrem (2008) asserted, "When confidence and optimism shifted to fear and uncertainty—and this can happen overnight—prices can rapidly plummet" (p. 2), which causes a domino effect on the economy. The domino effect forces businesses to restructure, merge, downsize, subcontract, furlough, outsource, or even close their doors



(Figura & Wascher, 2010; Wesbury, 2009). Consequently, the impact from these events causes massive unemployment.

As previously mentioned there was continuous population growth in Gwinnett County from 2000 to 2010. Despite this growth, however, several businesses closed their doors and numerous others downsized. Particularly hard hit were the entertainment industry, travel, construction, and major corporations (Roberts, 2009; Thompson, 2002).

Employment status is not as straightforward a concept as it first appears. For example, a state suffers in many ways when people become unemployed in large numbers and are unable to obtain employment. People tend to go where the jobs are; as a result, the State loses tax money needed for infrastructure, public schools, and government and community services (Greenstone & Looney, 2010). When people cannot find employment, they lose their homes (Greenstone & Looney, 2010). When unemployment increases and the need for nonprofit services increase, these organizations can quickly become overwhelmed and unable to assist the needy, thus adding to an already threatening situation.

Inequality in society has been a perennial problem (Purcell, 2007; Ragins, Townsend, & Mattis, 1998). Studies on recession employment based on ascribed attributes date back over 30 years (Smith et al., 1974). Due to the critical issues of inequality, the government and business entities have tried to fix the problem by creating executive orders, acts, amendments, laws, policies, and practices to address discriminative business practices (Gilens 2009; Reskin, 2003). In Georgia, for example, individuals can go to the Georgia Equal Opportunity Commission to file a complaint if they feel they are treated unjustly based on race, age, sex, disability, or national origin,

color or retaliation (Georgia Commission on Equal Opportunity, n.d.). Due to the high level of government and corporate intervention, there are those who would deny that a problem exists in the twenty-first century (Pager, Western, & Bonikowski, 2009; Williams & Jackson, 2005). However, there continues to be an ever-looming problem of social inequalities (Reskin, 2003, 2006). Pager et al. suggested, “Against this backdrop of persistent racial inequality, the question of employment discrimination has generated renewed interest” (p. 2). Blatant stereotyping and unequal treatment still exist among those with certain ascribed attributes (Purcell, 2007; Ragins, Townsend, & Mattis, 1998). At times, these inequalities are less conspicuous and things go unreported and unaddressed. Unfortunately, inequalities become more prevalent when the employment statuses of multiple ascribed characteristic populations are impacted significantly during recessionary periods. The imperative for a state government and/or a business is to identify injustices and take corrective action necessary to abolish these inequities.

The past reflects the inequalities that have existed for women, certain ethnicities, the elderly, the uneducated, and the disabled in society (Reskin, 2003). As previously discussed, although many of these issues have been addressed, there are still obstacles and stereotypes that exist today (Reskin, 2003). For example, a stereotype continues to exist in society that views men as the stronger sex and women as the weaker one (Gawronski, Deutsch, Mbirkou, Seibt, & Strack, 2008). In addition, men are considered more competent than women are (Ridgeway, 1997), and they continue to be perceived as the primary breadwinner with women as the primary care giver (Bosner, 2007; Cockburn, 1991; Joy, 2006). Due to these continued stereotypes, the same employment

opportunities are not always available for women as for their male counterparts (Bosner, 2007; Cockburn, 1991; Joy, 2006; Reskin, 2003).

During economic downturns, the desired in-group for employment is typically presumed to be male because society still believes men are the main provider for the family (Albelda & Kelleher, 2010; Reskin, 2003). Men are often considered smarter than women, for example, in the area of math and science (Kasi & Dugger, 2000; Steele, 1997; Tai & Sims, 2005).

However, Rampell & Schneiderman (2009), Wall (2009), and Sierminska and Takhtamanova, (2010), agree with past research findings that this current recession of 2007 appears to favor women. Nationally, men are not the first considered for employment anymore (Rampell, 2009; Sierminska & Takhtamanova, 2010; Wall, 2009). In 2009, this phenomenon has been termed *mancession* reflecting the idea that men are impacted more heavily during economic downturns than in previous periods (Rampell, 2009; Sierminska & Takhtamanova, 2010; Wall, 2009). This shift is seen clearly in those industries that are more heavily dominated by men (Rampell & Schneiderman, 2009; Sierminska & Takhtamanova, 2010; Wall, 2009).

The balance of employment has also changed in the area of education as well. In the 1970s and 1980s, a high school education was enough for a person to get a decent job (Card, 1999); now higher education is almost a necessity to survive in today's economy (Harvey, 1999; Sewell, 1971). Research indicated that a person's education could determine if they are qualified for a job (Brown, 2003; Brown & Adler, 2008; Harvey, 2000; Sewell, 1971). During an economic downturn, persons with higher levels of education typically take jobs they are over-qualified for because there are so few jobs to

choose from, which in turn leads to less job opportunities for those with lower education levels (Card, 1999; McDaniel, DiPrete, Buchmann, & Shwed, 2011; Green & McIntosh, 2007). Brown (2003) concurred that education plays a significant role in opportunities that exist thereby reinforcing the concept of social inequality. He pointed out that in a global economy, those with higher education have saturated the job market, which makes it more likely for those in a less desired ascribed category to be under employed or unemployed (Brown, 2003). In reality, there are a larger number of educated people than there are high-level jobs to accommodate them (McDaniel et al., 2011; Green & McIntosh, 2007).

There was also a time around the 1960s to the 1990s when the elderly could retire without having to return to the workforce; corporations wanted *new blood* and new ideas from a younger generation (Jolls, 1996). Additionally, there is a tendency for younger generations to discriminate against older generations (Branine & Glover, 1997; Nelson, 2005). Nelson (2005) contended there continues to be conflicting views of the elderly. During economic downturns, a propensity exists for not hiring the very young or very old; employers intentionally overlook them (Branine & Glover, 1997; Nelson, 2005). Finally, a lingering stereotype is that African Americans are lazy and not as smart or as hard of a worker as other races (Sigelman & Tuch, 1997). While stereotypes tend to change slowly from generation to generation, recent studies show the stereotypes placed on an entire group are hard to overcome (Andreoni & Petrie, 2004; Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2007; Mong & Roscigno, 2009). Thus, those facing employment deficiencies due to stereotypes even in times of nonrecession will ultimately be facing barriers that are even more pronounced during times of recession.

## Statement of the Problem

“Studies of workplace discrimination have typically focused on empirically unobservable motives to explain ascriptive inequalities associated with class, gender, and race” (Robert & Harlan, 2006, p. 566). Additionally, the literature supports the notion that ascribed attributes influence hiring practices (Elliot & Smith, 2004; Kalev, 2009; Reskin, 2003). At question was if ascribed characteristics impact employment status more during an economic downturn. Although, the literature denotes a relationship between ascribed attributes and employment (Elliot & Smith, 2004; Kalev, 2009; Reskin, 2003), the question remains if one group of individuals is more desirable to an employer than another is within Gwinnett County, Georgia. A secondary issue questioned was if the hiring of one group was more prevalent during two recessionary periods than during other periods within Gwinnett County, Georgia, possibly indicating ascriptive inequality.

Who gets what job is the product of the actions of individuals (who are motivated partly by the sex and race group to which they belong) and the organizational practices that to varying degrees constrain and are circumvented by individuals. (Reskin, 2000, p. 709)

Issues of inequalities due to one’s ascription and stratification in the workplace from past centuries have spilled over into the twenty first century. While research exists verifying social inequalities from aspects regarding class, gender, and race, there was very little emphasis on economic periods or specific locations (Robert & Harlan, 2006). A great deal of the current and past research regarding ascribed attributes of gender inequality in the workplace was dedicated to the gender wage gap (Bosner, 2007; Cockburn, 1991; Joy, 2006; Ridgway, 1997)

Smith et al. (1974) discussed recession and the employment of demographic groups, and Defreitas (1986) conducted a time series analysis of Hispanic unemployment. More recently, however, there has been a dearth of literature with emphasis on employment of certain ascribed groups and the potential inequalities in general looking specifically at the percentage of impact during times of economic crises.

Through the analysis of secondary data, insight on potential employment of certain ascribed characteristics can promote change in government and corporate laws, policies, and practices related to equality in hiring (Champernowne & Cowell, 1998). Champernowne and Cowell argued the field is wide open for further investigation and continued study. One of the questions they raised was, “Is there truth in the claim that contrast between the living standards of various economic, social, ethnic and national groups remain grossly unjust and a potential source of damaging conflict” (Champernowne & Cowell, 1998, p. 1)? The proposed research study provided an opportunity by providing statistical data, to further explore the relationship between ascriptive characteristics and employment inequalities during recession and if there was a significant difference to answer the claim and evoke continued discussion about conflict.

Reskin (2003), posited that in order for society to continue to change, it is imperative a closer look be taken at ascriptive inequalities of stereotypes, isms, bias, and segregation. Reskin proposed these factors play a significant role in what eventually happens in communities relating to hiring and firing practices (Mong & Roscigno, 2009). Since the 1960s, government has set policies, acts, and laws in place to address these issues such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination Employment Act of 1967, and most recently the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Bill of 2009 (Conger, n.d.; Palmore,

2006; Schuster, & Miller, 1984). Corporations have also tried to intervene with diversity initiatives and fair hiring practices (Pitts, Hicklin, Hawes, & Melton, 2010; Scott, 2007) as discussed further in Chapter 2.

Georgia had the second highest rate of unemployed individuals of all 50 States at 10.1% in 2010 (Georgia Department of Labor, 2010). Gwinnett County had a 9.3% rate of unemployment (Godbee, 2011). The question arises if there may be a significantly disproportionate or adverse number of individuals with specific ascribed attributes such as women, Blacks, Hispanics, and the young or the elderly impacted by social inequalities as reflected in unemployment numbers. It is unclear whether there were an equal number of these people hired or let go from jobs in Gwinnett County, Georgia with these ascribed attributes. The current study explored if there was a significant percentage gap between employment and unemployment data based on gender, age, and ethnicity before the recession of 2000, and during the recession of 2001, and the subsequent period before the recession of 2002-2007 and the recessions of 2008-2010. In addition, the study examined whether there were significant differences that could indicate whether ascriptive inequalities were still a monumental issue in the twenty first century.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to reveal if a greater disparity existed for the employment of individuals with certain ascribed characteristics and if this disparity is more significant during a period of recession versus a period of nonrecession in Gwinnett County, Georgia. This evaluation may allow local governments and businesses to develop appropriate policies to mitigate ascriptive inequality (Reskin, 2003). The aim of

the case study was to explore the possibility of ascriptive inequality in Gwinnett County, Georgia utilizing preexisting data from the United States Census Bureau (CB). The study will determine the percent of difference between employment status of the ascribed attributes of gender, age, and ethnicity during certain economic conditions of recession years 2001 and 2008-2010 and nonrecession years 2000 and 2002-2007 in the selected county of Gwinnett, Georgia. The researcher theorized there would be a significant and measurable difference in the employment status of those ascribed attributes of gender, age, and ethnicity during a recessionary period. The results of the study may help bring attention to the potential disparity in employment of those who possess certain ascribed attributes and create a theoretical framework in which government and corporations can develop strategies that are fair and equitable for all. In addition, the results of this study add to the body of knowledge in the disciplines of economics and sociology. The case study utilized secondary micro data from the CB. The purpose of using secondary data was to access archived data for the 10-year period required to accurately and reliably measure employment status for the previously mentioned ascribed characteristics in Gwinnett County.

### **Rationale**

Through the synthesis of the literature, the researcher found an opportunity to study the employment status of individuals with specific ascribed attributes during certain economic conditions in a central location. While the existing literature pointed to a connection between ascribed attributes and unemployment, there was little research directed towards ascribed attributes, economic conditions, and employment status outside



a national framework. For this reason, the local government and business community may be unaware that a situation of employment inequality exists and of how to deal with it. To address the gap in the literature, the current research study was conducted to explore ascribed attributes of gender, age, and ethnicity during recessionary periods of 2001 and 2007 to identify if there is a relationship between these variables and employment status in Gwinnett County, Georgia and how significant that difference may be during those periods. The research study provided an opportunity to explore this phenomenon in a county of varying diversity.

Ascriptive inequalities can be more prevalent during economic downturns (Reskin, 2003). Employers may see ascriptive inequalities as someone else's problem if it does not directly affect their business. However, ascriptive inequalities impact and affect almost every business in some way. The hope of exploring the relationship between certain ascribed attributes and employment status during a recession versus a nonrecession in one county within the state of Georgia was to bring awareness to officials that can influence change. The research study attempted to make three contributions to the literature. The first was to identify if a relationship exist between ascribed characteristics and employment in a central location. This was done by using secondary data from the CB. The second was to identify if a relationship existed between ascribed attributes and employment during two recessions. This was accomplished by retrieving and analyzing secondary data from the CB. Thirdly, the study built upon the national gender studies conducted by Rampell (2009), Sahin, Song, and Hobijn (2010), Sierminska and Takhtamanova (2010), and Wall (2009) as well as the national studies on age conducted by Barnett (2004), Levanon and Cheng (2011), and Nelson (2005). In

addition, this study built upon the national ethnic studies conducted by Mong and Roscigno (2009), and Weller and Fields (2011), as well as studies conducted on perceptions, stereotypes, and ascriptive inequality by Blau (1977), Reskin (2003), and Ridgeway (1997).

There was precedent in the literature for using a case study approach for this type of study. A case study approach has been used by several researchers exploring ascriptive inequality during certain economic conditions from varying perspectives (Bremberg, 2003; Brenner & Mooney, 1983; Hamilton, Austin, & Darity, 2011; Seale, 2010). A case study was appropriate for this study because a single case location was the focus of the study with a condition that interrelates with another (Cooper & Schindler, 2003; Creswell, 2009). Often the data is collected from multiple sources to build the case (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2002). However, for this study the data came from a single source - the CPS surveys. A case study is appropriate when a researcher wants to answer how an event occurs (Yin, 2002). The proposed research used a case study approach to examine how ascribed characteristic may have correlated with employment status over a ten-year period within the case location of Gwinnett County, Georgia.

### **Management Question**

Research has shown that ascriptive attributes can affect one's ability to seek and obtain regular employment (Reskin, 2000, 2003; Sierminska & Takhtamanova, 2010). For the current research study, however, the concern was with the existing relationship between the desirability of certain attributes of gender, age, or ethnicity and the individual's employability as measured by employment percentage in Gwinnett County,

Georgia. Of equal or greater concern was if ascriptive inequality was more significant during a recession within Gwinnett County, Georgia.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

Each of the hypotheses was selected to determine if a relationship exists between the ascribed attributes and employment status and if it does, was the significance of difference greater during a recession. The case study focused on Gwinnett County, Georgia.

Research Question 1 will be addressed using *t* test and cross tabulation with a chi-square and Question 2 will be addressed using a binary logistic regression. These two research questions are presented along with their hypotheses and nulls.

1. Is there an association between ascribed attributes of gender, age, and ethnicity and employment status in Gwinnett County, Georgia?

H1<sub>o</sub>: There is no relationship between ascribed attributes and employment status in Gwinnett County, Georgia as noted in the United States Census Bureau database.

H1<sub>a</sub>: There is relationship between ascribed attributes and employment status in Gwinnett County, Georgia as noted in the United States Census Bureau database.

2. Will the relationship between ascribed attributes of gender, age, and ethnicity and employment status significantly change during recession versus nonrecession years in Gwinnett County, Georgia?

H2<sub>o</sub>: There is no significant change in the relationship between ascribed attributes and employment status during the 2001 recession versus a nonrecession in Gwinnett County, Georgia as noted in the United States Census Bureau database.

H2<sub>a</sub>: There is a significant change in the relationship between ascribed attributes and employment status during the 2001 recession versus a nonrecession in Gwinnett County, Georgia as noted in the United States Census Bureau database.

H3<sub>o</sub>: There is no significant change in the relationship between ascribed attributes and employment status during the 2008-2010 recessions versus a nonrecession in Gwinnett County, Georgia as noted in the United States Census Bureau database.

H3<sub>a</sub>: There is a significant change in the relationship between ascribed attributes and employment status during the 2008-2010 recessions versus a nonrecession in Gwinnett County, Georgia as noted in the United States Census Bureau database.

H4<sub>o</sub>: There is no significant difference in the employment status based on ascribed attributes of individuals in Gwinnett County, Georgia between the two recession periods of 2001 versus 2008-2010 as noted in the United States Census Bureau database.

H4<sub>a</sub>: There is a significant difference in the employment status based on ascribed attributes of individuals in Gwinnett County, Georgia between the two

recession periods of 2001 versus 2008-2010 as noted in the United States Census Bureau database.

### **Significance of the Study**

Sierminska and Takhtamanova (2010) suggested that further study on demographic relationships to employment status is warranted. Therefore, contributing to the limited literature on employment status as it relates to ascribed characteristics and economic conditions will help fill this gap. Although the strategic objective of a business is to maximize profit and not employment, it behooves business owners to look broadly at how certain segments of society are employed or unemployed based on ascribed characteristics of gender, age, or ethnicity particularly during certain economic conditions of recession and nonrecession. The objective of the case study is to determine if there is a significant difference in employment levels for specific groups based on gender, age, or ethnicity in the recession of years 2001 and 2008-2010 versus nonrecession years of 2000 and 2002-2007 in Gwinnett County, Georgia. The results of the study provide an analysis that could prove to be beneficial for future study and the development of local government and business policies pertaining to ascriptive inequality. The gap in the literature provides an opportunity to look at a segment of a large diverse population to evaluate the past research findings.

## Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as to their meaning in the study.

*Ageism.* Ageism is the discrimination of someone based on his or her age; implying that some one of a different age is better, smarter, or more capable (Ageism, 2004).

*Affirmative Action.* Affirmative action refers to steps that were taken to provide for the equal treatment of the employment of minorities (Affirmative Action, 2001).

*Ascribed Characteristics.* Ascribed characteristics that are specific to the research study refer to gender, age, and ethnicity.

*Ascriptive/Ascription.* Ascriptive/ascription refers to persons who are part of a social system beyond their control (i.e., born into the social system)—part of a stratification system (Davis & Moore, 1945).

*Ascriptive Inequality.* Ascriptive inequality refers to the unethical or unfair treatment of a certain group of people within a social system (Reskin, 2003).

*Census Data.* Census data is data that looks at the whole population (Reich & Abraham, 2001).

*Discrimination.* Discrimination occurs when someone is not treated equally because they are part of a certain group (Discrimination, 2001).

*Employed.* As determined by the Current Population Survey, which is the survey by which the data is collected, employed refers to a person who is at least 16 years and older who has worked at least 15 hours during the reference week (Georgia Department of Labor, 2010). An employed person is counted only once; multiple jobs are not counted more than once (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Data, n.d.). Categories of

employment in this study do not include those persons in the military, farm workers, entrepreneurs, or seasonal workers. A person that works for someone other than himself or herself, and receives payment for full or part-time work is considered employed (Georgia Department of Labor, 2010).

*Employment Status.* Employment status refers to persons who are employed or unemployed (Georgia Department of Labor, 2010).

*Equality.* Equality refers to being equal in all respects regardless of race, creed, or gender (Equality, 2006).

*Ethnicity.* Ethnicity is a cultural identity that includes concepts such as race, nation, class, and religion (Ethnicity, 2004). For this research study, the terminology race will be used interchangeably with ethnicity and the word African American with Black and Caucasian with White, when referring to person of that ethnicity.

*Feminism.* Feminism is a social and political movement to examine positions of women in society and other areas for women's best interest (Feminism, 2006).

*Gross Domestic Product (GDP).* The GDP is the data that is used to determine economic conditions for a certain period (Landefeld, Seskin, & Fraumeni, 2008) The GDP is achieved by calculating market value of goods and services produced by a country (Landefeld et al., 2008). Information contained in the definition does not include immediate goods such as steel and plastic (GDP, 2003). "Optimal economic growth with full employment is considered to be in the range between 2% and 2.5%" (Gross domestic product, 2010, para. 2). A GDP below 2% for two consecutive quarters is considered a recession (Gross domestic product, 2010).

*Micro Data.* Micro data is data that is taken directly from census data.

*National Income and Product Accounts (NIPA).* NIPA is an economic measurement system designed to provide data for determining economic conditions (National Income and Product Accounts, 2006).

*Nonrecession Year.* Nonrecession year refers to the calendar years of January to December 2000 and January to December 2002 to 2007.

*Racism.* Racism is a show of prejudice behaviors or nonacceptance of someone of another race (Racism, 2000). Racism is a belief that one race or ethnic group is superior to another (Racism, 2000).

*Recession.* The Britannica Online defines recession as the decrease in the business cycle that causes a reduction in a decline in production and purchasing that result in a reduction in income and spending (Recession, 2011). Hall (2003b) defines recession as a “significant decline in economic activity lasting more than a few months” (p. 1)

*Recession Year.* Recession year refers to the calendar years of January to December 2001 and January to December 2008 to 2010.

*Segregation.* Segregation is term used for the separation of specific groups in the population (Segregation, 1991).

*Sexism.* Sexism is culturally defined as a man being superior to a woman, which is accepted as being deserved; the prejudice, discrimination, and stereotypes based on gender (Sexism, 1998).

*Social Inequality.* Social inequality refers to the unfair or unequal treatment of specific groups of the population because of their gender, age, ethnicity, or level of education (Inequality, 2001).



*Stereotype.* Stereotype is thinking or implying that specific groups of people are all the same and possess the same behavior traits; one's perception of another's behavior is the same as others within a particular group (Stereotype, 2009).

*Social Stratification.* Social stratification is an adjective that describes the building of layers within a social system or society (Social Stratification, 2006). Social stratification is referring to the hierarchical arrangement of individuals divided by power and wealth, with an emphasis on inequality between groups over time (Davis & Moore, 1945; Social Stratification, 2006).

*Uneducated.* Uneducated refers to those people who have a high school diploma and no college (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Data, n.d.).

*Unemployed.* As determined by the Current Population Survey, which is the survey by which the data is collected, unemployed defines an unemployed person as anyone 16 years and older who has not worked at least 15 hours during the reference week, but were available and seeking employment (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Data, n.d). Categories of employment in this study do not include those persons in the military, farm workers, entrepreneurs, or seasonal workers. A person is considered unemployed if they do not have a job, but are actively seeking employment and is available for work (Georgia Department of Labor, 2010; Murphy & Topel, 1997).

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

Constraints of finance and time of a doctoral dissertation place certain assumptions and limitations on the process. Listed are additional assumptions and limitations inherent in the study.

## **Assumptions**

1. The study was dependent on the accurate collection and processing of data by the Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics.
2. Assumed was that the selected databases are complete; persons that were interviewed by the Census representative were being honest; Census representatives are entering the data correctly in the fields.
3. Understood was that the data was approximated in some instances and not exact because CB and BLS make certain estimations on data collected with the Current Population Survey (CPS).
4. The topic of social inequalities is a sensitive subject and as a result, is not always reported accurately by the respondents.
5. Further assumed was that the research design selected for the study will allow a thorough exploration of the aforementioned hypotheses.

## **Limitations**

1. The recession years selected for the study were not complete calendar years from January to December. For the current study however, the researcher will treat those partial timeframes as complete calendar years from January 1 to December 31.
2. The collection of the original data could have been incomplete or recorded incorrectly.
3. The data collected and analyzed was limited to Gwinnett County, Georgia.

4. The current study was a secondary data study only where inferences are made based on statistical findings.
5. The internal validity for the independent variable of the nonexperimental study was uncertain because there could be significant other factors that cause the effect of the dependent variable not recorded or measured in the existing database.
6. There are limitations to external validity of the data collected because the results of this nonexperimental study could differ depending on the location and timeframes selected for the study.

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

Researchers most often apply conflict theory in sociological studies on ascriptive inequality (Kalev, 2009; Pfeffer, 1977; Purcell, 2007; Reskin, 2000; Robert & Harlan, 2006). Current research shows that the theoretical framework surrounding the roles that perceptions and cultural stereotypes play in society is complex (Jussim, Eccles, & Madon, 1996; Katz & Braly, 1933; Madon et al., 1998; Postman, 1953; Reskin, 2000, 2003; Robinson, 1983). Further, Reskin (2003) theorized that people's ascribed characteristics contribute to their stratification in life. Conflict theory of ascriptive inequalities denotes the concept that categories of what are often referred to as the in-group in the literature has a monopoly over scarce resources and material, which cause conflict with the out-group (Brief et al., 2005; Reskin, 2000, 2003, 2006). Ascriptive inequality as it relates to employment was based on ascribed attributes, suggesting that when a person is born they are placed into categories, which ultimately determines their

stratification (Reskin, 2003; Ridgeway, 2001). Reskin also posited that this is due in part to perceptions leading to stereotyping, which can then lead to isms, bias, and segregation of specific groups of people. Reskin theorized further that this occurrence is more prevalent during adverse economic conditions. Employment inequality varying from threats, discrimination, and practices of segregation of certain groups is still prevalent as observed in local news reports (ABC News, 2012; Henry, 2012; Kim, 2010; Ng, 2012). Ascriptive inequality, therefore, continues to be an issue in the twenty first century not only on a national level, but more importantly, on a local level (Billeaud, 2011; Kim, 2010; Lucie, 2011).

Figure 1 serves to provide a conceptual framework overview of the proposed link between the ascriptive attributes selected for the study. The independent variables included economic conditions of recession and nonrecession (nominal), ascriptive attributes of gender (nominal), age (interval), and ethnicity (nominal). The dependent variables included employment status of employed and unemployed (nominal).

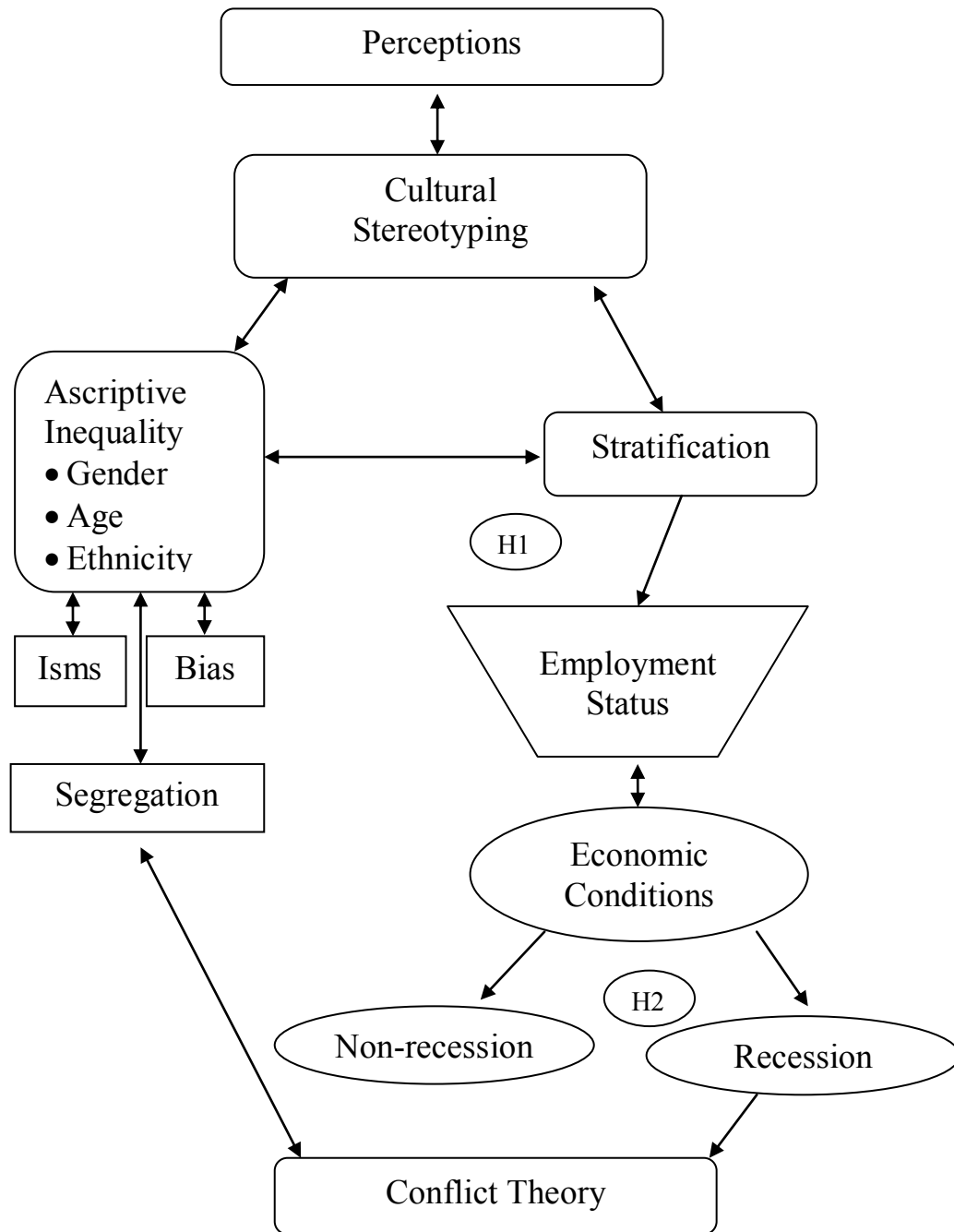


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The methodology for the case study was quantitative ex post facto (Creswell, 2009). Secondary data was used to explore existing data as provided by the United States Census Bureau for the state of Georgia, Gwinnett County. The relationship between the ascriptive categories of gender, age, and ethnicity and their percentage of employment and unemployment were analyzed using a *t* test, a cross tabulation with a chi-square, and a binary logistic regression. These variables were measured during two recessionary periods (January to December 2001 and 2008-2010) and two nonrecession periods (January to December 2000 and 2002-2007).

### **Organization of the Remainder of the Study**

The remaining chapters included in the research study are organized into four additional chapters. Chapter 2 includes a literature review focusing on the theoretical framework for the study. In Chapter 3, the focus was on providing a narrative of the methods, sample, and interpretive tool used to measure the employment status numbers prior to and during the recession years in Gwinnett County, Georgia. In Chapter 4, the data was analyzed and the findings presented. In Chapter 5 a summary and analysis of the findings was provided and suggestions for future studies were made.

## CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The proof of the Great Recession of 2007 was omnipresent. Little did it matter what one's particular position in life was, the Recession of 2007 touched or affected everyone in one way or another (Cash, 2010). Schwartz concurred that unemployment numbers are extremely high during times of a recession (2009). Rampell and Schneiderman (2009) compared the current recession to previous recessions and found that there were 11,000 jobs lost in November 2009 within the United States. Noted was that since the recession began in December 2007, there had been a net loss of approximately 5.18% of jobs in the United States (Rampell & Schneiderman, 2009). These numbers were based on persons who were not working, but were actively seeking employment (Rampell & Schneiderman, 2009). The Bureau of Labor Statistics showed the population of employed and those persons actually able to work in 2009 as 70% (Rampell & Schneiderman, 2009).

The face of the workplace has changed drastically because of previous recessions (Allegretto & Lynch, 2010). Witnessed, for examples, has been historic downsizing, thousands of furloughs, reduced bank financing for products or operating costs, and record number closings of many businesses (U. S. Economy & Global Economic Recession, 2010). With such challenges facing businesses in the twenty first century, understanding the effects of recessionary periods in America on employment of specific ascribed characteristics is important to both the employer and the employee. With an influx of different ethnic groups, cultures, and backgrounds into the workplace, new influences and broader perceptions are being introduced constantly. Each ascribed attribute brings their nurtured and environmental experiences into the workplace.

Cultural and experiential differences are often misunderstood causing conflict in the business environment (Patrick, 2011; Stainback & Irvin, 2011). Understanding these differences can lead to a more harmonious feeling of employment equality in the workplace, regardless of one's ascription or stratification. Additionally, employers tend to favor those ascriptive attributes to which they can most relate (Patrick, 2011; Stainback & Irvin, 2011).

The literature selected for the current research study takes a broad look at recessions including history and theories. Discussing not only what recession means and how it effects and impacts employees within the workplace, Chapter 2 will also encompass the overall impact of what the recession effect had on certain ascribed attributes including gender, age, and ethnicity. Employment status theories and methods are also discussed. In addition, the literature explores the past and present practices (problems) associated with perceptions and cultural stereotypes that lead to ascriptive inequalities within our society including isms, bias, and segregation. A closer look is taken at the aforementioned ascriptive and employment inequalities; government and corporate interventions are examined as well. Emphasis of the research is placed on the recessions of 2001 and 2007 as a part of the ensuing cause of unemployment. Economic downturns provide an opportunity for the country to take inventory, assess previous mistakes, and make positive changes to create a different future; one of equality free from biases.

### **Recession Methods**

There are many theories associated with the cause of a recession. Landefeld et al. (2008) addressed questions regarding the proposed methods of determining a recession



using Gross Domestic Product (GDP) including how it is calculated. Challenges arise when developing a framework regarding combining economic census data with a medley of monthly, quarterly, and annual economic indicators (Landefeld et al., 2008). The National Income and Product Accounts (NIPA) is a national accounting system that calculates value and composition, also referred to by the more familiar term, GDP (Landefeld et al., 2008). The NIPA was developed in the 1930's because of economic anomalies that were not easily identified during the Great Depression (Fox & McCully, 2009). Not having an accounting system in place made it difficult to determine what policies would best support economic recovery (Landefeld et al., 2008).

These accounting methods are not exclusive only to the United States. The GDP and the national accounts are calculated based on census data that is collected every ten years (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). During periods when census data is not collected, the GDP is determined by retail sales, housing starts, and manufacturer's shipments of capital goods amongst other data (Stock & Watson, 2003). Landefeld et al. (2008) found this problematic in the accuracy of the accounting. Another challenge Landefeld et al. pointed out in the research was that some data was missing from the initial estimates questioning if the figures may be off by large numbers due to the increase in foreclosures. Although the actual figures may vary greatly from those forecasted, the initial estimates provide a grim summary of what is happening in the economy. The information collected not only helps to determine if an economy is in a recession, but also help policy makers and governments to forecast future needs. In addition, these estimates help investors in technology and development as well as private sector businesses, planners,

and investors. The GDP aids these entities in adjusting for inflation and effectively forecasting budgets and investments.

Simon Kuznets, Nobel Prize winning economist, and his colleagues assisted with the restructuring during the Great Depression and introduced an accounting method that has since evolved through the years to be the reference model for determining economic conditions during a given period (Kapuria-Foreman & Perlman, 1995). In 1941, Kuznets wrote a paper titled *National Income, 1919-1938* (Landefeld et al., 2008). In this paper, Kuznets defines national income as the net value of labor, capital, and enterprise (Landefeld et al., 2008). He noted that the national income accounting system is not all-inclusive (Landefeld et al., 2008). Later in 1955, Kuznets wrote a book that questioned the inequality of income distribution during economic growth for what he refers to as resident and migrants, low and high-income classes (Landefeld et al., 2008).

Kuznets was instrumental in changing the way these reports were distributed to the Congress. In 1934, a report by the Bureau of Domestic and Foreign Commerce Statistics Division was created (Landefeld et al., 2008). However, these reports still used existing data from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) tax data, in addition to data from the economic census of 1929, the BLS employment and payroll data, regulatory and administrative data as well as some surveys (Landefeld et al., 2008). To improve the documentation of United States citizen's tax contribution, Kuznets and his colleagues took information and created an industry-by-industry estimate, thus developing the national income measurement (Landefeld et al., 2008). Some of the concerns that Kuznets and his associates had were about gaps in the data and "how dependent the

estimates were upon business accounting practices and tax data, such as the treatment of depreciation in estimating profits” (Landefeld et al., 2008, p. 195).

In addition, the initial process was hindered by time (Landefeld et al., 2008). For example, two years had passed from the time data was collected before Kuznets’ team delivered the data to Congress in 1934 (Landefeld et al., 2008). During this time, the concept evolved from *gross national expenditure* to *gross national product* (GNP; Landefeld et al., 2008). Then in the 1950s, the “conceptual framework for estimating the size of the economy by an income measure, by an expenditure measure, and also by a third method—the value added measure” was adopted into the process (Landefeld et al., 2008, p. 196). These measures are still relevant and used today. The Bureau of Economic Analysis gathers missing information to adjust the differences between tax data and financial accounting data to ensure that the data coordinates with economic accounting concepts (Landefeld et al., 2008).

Initial data collection of a Great Depression began with a “benchmark” (Landefeld et al., 2008, p. 196). Data was collected for ten years with the reference year being several years in the past (Landefeld et al., 2008). Census data is taken from the data that is mandatory every ten years (Landefeld et al., 2008). Business and individually paid employees complete census data; 95% of expenditures are included in the GDP (Landefeld et al., 2008). There are adjustments made to ensure that the final data collected from the census balances with the criteria of the national accounts (Landefeld et al., 2008).

The most viable theory that economists agree on is that when the GDP declines, the economy is negatively affected, which ultimately leads to a recession (Landefeld et

al., 2008). The GDP index determines if an economy is in recession (Landefeld et al., 2008). When the GDP is negative for two or more consecutive quarters, followed by a positive slight growth, then negative growth, a recession occurs (Landefeld et al., 2008). Between quarter one in 2008 and quarter three in 2009 the GDP dropped by 6.4% (Gregg & Wadsworth, 2010). Hamilton (1989) asserted that a 3% permanent drop represents the onset of a typical economic recession. Multiple indicators sound the alarm that a recession is imminent. Economists have tried through the years to develop a system that encompasses all viable accounting methods in order to provide as much warning as possible.

The GDP was first utilized to determine economic conditions in the 1930's (Field, 2009; Landefeld et al., 2008). The method was a solution to several issues associated with the National Income Product Account (NIPA). A survey of current businesses in 1991 featured GDP rather than gross national product (GNP) as the measure for production in the United States (Field, 2009). Both looked at goods and services produced, but used different criteria. The main difference between the two is the GDP measures goods and services that are produced by labor and property (Field, 2009). The GNP measures goods and services that are produced by labor and/or property supplied by United States residents and it does not matter if either is located in the United States or elsewhere (Field, 2009). The authors noted why it is important to use GDP instead of GNP (Field, 2009). The reason is that with the GDP the production is local, therefore better to analyze the United States economy, whereas, the GNP refers to the income available to United States residence due to their participation in production (Field, 2009). However, the estimated financial difference between the two methods is not great; for

example, the largest percentage difference was 1.8% in 1980, yet in 1990, the GNP was only .08% larger (Field, 2009).

Field (2009) challenged the accuracy of the GDP because of the use of the chained index method, which is a method that does not utilize all the available data (Whelan, 2002). The problem with comparing the “magnitude of output or its components at different times is that prices change, and calculations of growth vary depending on whether one uses current prices or prices of a previous year” (Field, 2009, p. 100). Field also notes that the Bureau of Economic Analysis offered a solution to fixing this problem by calculating last year’s prices and this year’s prices and taking a geometric average of these two periods. Although this procedure fixed the current problem, it created estimates that “do not necessarily sum to GDP” (Field, 2009, p. 100). During the Great Depression, even when GDP numbers started to recover, the unemployment rate remained high and this phenomenon occurred again during the 2007 recession (Field, 2009). By the end of 2009, the GDP numbers increased by 5.9% for the fourth quarter; however, unemployment numbers remained at 9.5% (Field, 2009). Field (2009) provided arguments that suggested solutions that were thought to fix the economic issues of the GDP as well as what policies should be considered to provide a solution for the current economic situation.

According to the U.S. Economy & Global Economic Recession (2010), a recession serves a purpose; it purges the economic system, it balances out the money supply, reduces interest rates, and minimizes inflation. What we do know is that if these variables are not balanced, a recession is imminent (Bruyere, Podgornik, & Spletzer, 2011; Stock & Watson, 2003). Tables 1 and 2 provide a snap shot of recessions from the

years 1929 to the present day recession and percentage of unemployment (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Data, 2010; U.S. Economy & Global Economic Recession, 2010). Not all states and countries suffer the impact of a recession or as severely as others and all industries are not adversely affected (U.S. Economy & Global Economic Recession, 2010). For example, during the current recession, Nevada was the hardest hit with unemployment numbers topping 12.7% by September 2009, whereas North Dakota only had unemployment numbers of 4.3% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Data, 2010).

Table 1. *Recessions through the Years 1929 to 1970*

	Oct 1929 to 1930s	Nov1948 to Oct 1949	July 1953 to May 1954	Aug 1957 to Apr 1958	Apr 1960 to Feb 1961	Dec 1969 to Nov 1970
Length of Time	Unknown	11 Months	10 Months	8 Months	10 Months	11 Months
Unemployment	3% to 25%	4% to 8%	2.9% to 5.5%	4.3% to 6.8%	5.5% to 6.7%	3.5% to 4.9%

Table 2. *Recessions through the Years 1973 to Present*

	Nov1973 to Mar 1975	Jan 1980 to Nov 1982	July 1990 to Mar 1991	Mar 2001 to Nov 2001	Dec 2007 to 2010
Length of Time	16 Months	22 Months	8 Months	8 Months	13+ Months
Unemployment	3.2% to 8.7%	7.1% to 9.7%	5.6% to 6.8%	4.7% to 4.8	5.0% to 9.6%

## **Recession Theory-Cataclysm of the Times**

Gjedrem (2008) stated, “Unexpected events can change the economic outlook, and often when you least expect it” (p 3). When confidence and optimism shift to fear and uncertainty, Gjedrem suggested that the shift can happen overnight and prices can rapidly plummet. As a result, businesses lose revenue and are forced to eliminate jobs. By the end of 2008, Gjedrem predicted that United States would continue to decline economically, and it did. Georgia is one among several other financially strapped states that have enforced government furlough days, ended government services and projects, and closed several State prisons (Georgia Department of Human Services, 2008; Quinn, 2011; Rooney, 2009). The standards of living have decreased because of decreasing job prospects (Cash, 2010). Although understanding how a recession affects the economy is significant, the crux of the research remains to determine how these factors impact employment status in Gwinnett County, Georgia for the ascribed attributes of gender, age, and ethnicity and if ascriptive inequalities in employment can be inferred.

Bowen (2008) pointed out, many companies have downsized in order to cut costs and make their organizations more efficient. However, during a recession it is more of a necessity and consequence, than a business strategy. During economic downturns, the notion that an organization is downsizing to become leaner and more efficient, but are still able to meet the needs of the consumer, is a fallacy (Bowen, 2008). In intense times, downsizing is not a deliberate choice, but a sound economic necessity for survival.

## **Impact of a Recession**

Because of the recession, some Americans who considered themselves middle class a few years ago can no longer use this label because of the economic collapse (Cash, 2010; Jagannathan et al., 2009). The division of Americans at the poverty level and the lower middle class has also narrowed (Tritch, 2006; Weller & Logan, 2009). A majority of the middle class leading into the latest recession could be found within the Baby Boomer generation, ages 36 to 59 (Pressman, 2010). The New York Times reported in July 2006 that the divisions between the richest Americans and the middle class grew drastically from 2003 to 2004 (Tritch, 2006). People with an average income of \$315,000 in 2004 grew by approximately 17% of the population (Tritch, 2006). However, there was only a less than 3% increase for the remaining 83% of the population (Tritch, 2006). This roughly translates to 1% of households enjoying 36% of all increases in income in 2004, an addition of 30% increase from 2003 (Tritch, 2006). The significant increase carried through to 2009 a vivid picture of a new class system (Tritch, 2006).

## **Industry Unemployment**

Evans, Lahart, and Bendavid (2009) reported in the Wall Street Journal that by November 2009 unemployment numbers were down from 10.2% to 10% in October 2009. However, there were still a significant number of people losing their jobs. The decrease was in part due to fewer layoffs (Evans et al., 2009). However, there were industries that grew significantly in November 2009, which were in the service-sector of education, health care, and some business services (Evans et al., 2009). The industries



that decreased significantly were construction and manufacturing (Evans et al., 2009). Employers were hesitant to hire due to the uncertainty of the current and future economy and, as a result caused an endless cycle of gross unemployment (Evans et al., 2009). By November 2009, there were fewer positions lost; however, it was the 23<sup>rd</sup> straight month of job loss (Evans et al., 2009). In November 2009 alone, 15.4 million people became unemployed (Evans et al., 2009). This was more than twice the number of those unemployed since the start of the recession (Evans et al., 2009). In addition, by November 2009, the duration of unemployment increased from approximately two weeks to 28.5 weeks (Evans et al., 2009). This was considered historical and with financial ramifications yet to be seen.

Additional industries that felt a significant impact were the computer industry, electrical, textiles, broadcasting, telecommunications, and air transportation just to name a few (Figura & Wascher, 2010; Greenstone, & Looney, 2010). The main reason these industries were impacted more severely than others was because of the increase in productivity outweighed the decrease in demand (Figura & Wascher, 2010). In 2009, Georgia alone had one of the highest unemployment rates at approximately 10%, up from 3.8 in 1999 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Data, 2010). Tough decisions have to be made when companies have to downsize, specifically, which personnel to retain and which to layoff. The current research study uses secondary micro data from the CB to explore if one ascribed attribute affects hiring more than another does during recessionary periods.

## **Recession Effects**

In an interview conducted by Strassberg (1990), Alan Caruba, the Executive Director of the National Anxiety Center, postulated that during the recession of 1990 many people felt more concerned about issues with leadership versus the state of the economy. Strassberg went on to say that the impact of that recession would affect a lot of people and this was evident when census figures during the recession showed households headed by persons under 30 had a 29% drop in real earnings from 1972 to 1987 (Strassberg, 1990). In 1986, the dollar amount for those families translated to greater than \$19,000 in 1973 to a little more than \$13,000 in 1987 (Strassberg, 1990). The poverty rates for those families were on the rise. The oil crises of 1973 played a significant role in the culmination of the 1973 to 1975 recession, and during this time, the significance of over consumption of gas was relevant (Strassberg, 1990).

The same factors continue to be relevant today, 37 years later. Thirty-seven years ago, affirmative action and equal right considerations were new, and the hiring practices did not favor women, minorities, the elderly, uneducated or the physically disabled to say the least (Strassberg, 1990).

Another concern, outlined by Adger (2006) in a qualitative study on vulnerability, only looked at existing research and the link between environmental changes on resilience of social-ecological systems. Adger noted, “The concept of vulnerability has been a powerful analytical tool for describing states of susceptibility to harm, powerlessness, and marginality of both physical and social systems, and for guiding normative analysis of actions to enhance well-being through reduction of risk” (p. 268). In other words, one’s inability to adapt to environmental changes can cause one to feel

vulnerable. Vulnerability is expressed with a negative connotation because it implies the susceptibility to be harmed (Adger, 2006). The popular definition for vulnerability is the degree to which a person is susceptible and is unable to cope with adverse effects (McCarthy, Canziani, Leary, Dokken, & White, 2001). This definition further suggests that how long persons remain unemployed depends on how they cope with the vulnerable position of having someone else determine their fate (McCarthy et al., 2001). The overall success of an organization is dependent upon understanding the impact of adverse economic conditions as well as how it can affect the vulnerability of its employees (McCarthy et al., 2001). Stress induced by feelings of vulnerability about employment not only affects those who lose their jobs, but also those that remain in the workplace.

### **Employment Status Theory/Methods**

There are many factors taken into consideration when determining a country's level of economic distress (U. S. Economy & Global Economic Recession, 2010). One indicator is employment status-vast and sudden spikes of unemployment (Figura & Wascher 2010; Murphy & Topel, 1997). Figura and Wascher posited that the recession in 2001 adversely impacted employment status. One of the ensuing bases for prolonged unemployment was caused by changes in industry (Greenstone & Looney, 2010). Today, as in 2001, there is a specialized and required shift in thinking and skill sets needed to become employable as the major job producing industries change.

John Maynard Lord Keynes was an English economist who played a significant role in theorizing unemployment (Brazelton, 2005; Fontana, 2010; Skidelsky, 2008). The Keynesian Theory is highly regarded, recognized, and debated by economist and scholars

in the twenty first century (Brakman & Van Marrewijk, 2007; Rogers, 2008; Thirlwall, 2007; Wray, 2007). Keynes not only wanted to find a way to explain unemployment, but to provide a remedy (Keynes, 1964; Minsky, 2008). He proposed in the twentieth century that unemployment should be analyzed only under the scope of macroeconomics because traditional economics attempted to explain unemployment in ways that were not sufficient (Fontana, 2010). Unemployment is, simply described by Keynes, as involuntary lack of paid employment (Minsky, 2008). The Keynesian Theory does not however cover every area of unemployment such as technological aspects that are now becoming more prevalent than ever before. Minsky postulated that there are two fundamental theories of employment. The first is that “the wage is equal to the marginal product of labour” (Minsky, 2008, p. 13). In other words, the pay received is comparable to the job performed. The second is that “the utility of the wage when a given volume of labour is employed is equal to the marginal disutility of that amount of employment” (Minsky, 2008, p. 13), which means that a person is no longer being paid a comparable wage for performing the same job that previously yielded more pay.

The method became known as Keynesian economics and was instrumental in advancing the science of econometrics (Brazelton, 2005; Fontana, 2010; Minsky, 2008; Skidelsky, 2008). In the mist of the Great Depression in the 1930’s, Richard Froyen (1988) noted that decision-making skills were also lacking. Presidents Hoover and Roosevelt used stock prices indices, freight car loading, and incomplete indices of industrial production to create policies to fight the impending Great Depression (Froyen, & Waud, 1988).

## Calculation of Unemployment

According to Elaine L. Chao, the Secretary of the BLS and Katherine G. Abraham (2001), the Commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment and unemployment data is provided annually from the Current Population Survey (CPS). The CPS is the official survey used to collect data for the labor force for the nation (Chao & Abraham, 2001). The data provided in the CPS consist of sample survey information collected from approximately 50,000 households (Chao & Abraham, 2001). The United States Census Bureau conducts these surveys for themselves as well as the Bureau of Labor Statistics (Chao & Abraham, 2001). For geographical data, the Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) program provides monthly estimates of total employment and unemployment for approximately 7,300 areas (Chao & Abraham, 2001). The LAUS in turn utilizes the estimates provided by a Federal-State cooperative venture that utilizes the concepts, definitions, and estimations gathered and recommended by BLS (Chao & Abraham, 2001). This report looked at all 50 States and the District of Columbia, 50 large metropolitan areas, and 17 central cities to provide statistical data on employment and unemployment (Chao & Abraham, 2001).

In 2010, 60,000 households were surveyed to determine the national unemployment rate (Chao & Abraham, 2001). The ascribed breakdown consisted of age, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and “economic characteristics of the employed and unemployed” (Chao & Abraham, 2001, p. 5). This information was based solely on surveys and not census data; therefore, there may have been sampling errors (Chao & Abraham, 2001). Concessions were made for these errors (Chao & Abraham, 2001).

Unemployment in the United States was calculated by dividing the number of unemployed workers by the total civilian labor force (Chao & Abraham, 2001). The BLS gathers the data and according to the data collected, the United States lost approximately 2.6 million jobs in 2008; this is the highest loss since 1945 (U.S. Bureau Labor Statistics Data, 2010). Although by mid-year 2009, the numbers of new unemployed declined, it still had risen to 9.4%, which is the highest it had been in 25 years (U.S. Bureau Labor Statistics Data, 2010). Economists predicted that the number of jobs lost would continue to decline, but it would still be extremely difficult for those that are unemployed to find employment (U.S. Bureau Labor Statistics Data, 2010). The numbers of unemployed have increased expeditiously since the recession at the end of 2007 (U.S. Bureau Labor Statistics Data, 2010). The BLS showed that by the end of 2008, the unemployment rate reached 7.2% with employers cutting 524,000 jobs from their payroll (U.S. Bureau Labor Statistics Data, 2010). Into the first quarter of 2009, the unemployment rate had reached 8.5%, this being the highest percentage since 1983 (U.S. Bureau Labor Statistics Data, 2010).

For another way of determining unemployment, Parker and Rothman (1998) offered a method utilizing a “current debt of the recession” (CDR) variable in addition to Gross National Product (GNP; Parker & Rothman, 1998, p. 151). Unlike GNP, CDR measures the “current debt of the recession” (Parker & Rothman, 1998, p. 151), which is the difference between GNP from the start of the sample to the current period; and the present “value of GNP, CDR, then takes on positive values during a recession and the early periods of a business-cycle expansion” (Parker & Rothman, 1998, p. 152). “This occurs because once GNP has reached a new peak and continues growing, CDR equals

zero” (Parker & Rothman, 1998, p. 152). CDR is relevant in that business-cycle indicators are factored into the process.

Carruth, Hooker, and Oswald’s (1998) quantitative study on unemployment equilibrium and input prices provided an explanation of the correlation between real prices of oil and real rate of oil and real rate of interest as a determining factor for the 1990 recession. Unemployment in the current research was referred to as being “a central object of study in macroeconomics” (Carruth et al., 1998, p. 621), although it is not fully implicit. Unemployment equilibrium was used in macroeconomics to explain “the cycle fluctuations in output and employment” (Woglom, 1982, p. 1). There have been many models used to determine why these fluctuations occur. The intent of the paper by Woglom was to develop a model that demonstrated the movements of business-cycle frequency in the equilibrium unemployment rate, using an efficiency-wage model (Woglom, 1982). This framework was selected because it provided a definitive explanation of the connection between unemployment, oil prices, and other prices that need to be considered (Woglom, 1982). As reflected in that study, there are always other variables involved in the scope of determining unemployment balance (Woglom, 1982).

### **Historical Perspective of a Recession and Ascriptive Employment Status**

Providing varying historical perspectives and definitions of a recession are important to understand how a recession can potentially affect individuals within a society. Researching the past and current economic downturn can lend itself to facilitating and understanding the need for change and possibly prevent another

occurrence of excessive unemployment. More importantly, studying recessions can aid in understanding employment dynamics during economic downturns as related to ascribed attributes.

The term recession has also been referred to in 1807 as the *Depression of* and in 1819 as the *Panic of* (U. S. Economy & Global Economic Recession, 2010). There have been many recessions recorded since this time and some have been more severe than others have been (see Tables 1 and 2). The 2007 recession has been termed the Great Recession (Blinder & Zandi, 2010; Elsby et al., 2010). The average length of a recession is ten months, such as the 2001 recession, but the 2007 recession lasted much longer than ten months (U. S. Economy & Global Economic Recession, 2010). Some economist would argue that the recession ended the summer of 2009, still making it one of the longest in recorded history (Magdoff, 2011). By the end of 2009, whether officially still in a recession or not, to the unemployed persons in the state of Georgia where the unemployment rate was at 9.8%, and Gwinnett County was at 9.2%, the remnants of a recession were still present. For the current research study, the recessions of 2001 and 2007 are looked at in complete calendar years from January to December. There have been definitions of a recession given from different economist perspectives; however, the unanimous inclusion is always the occurrence of spikes in unemployment (Allegretto & Lynch, 2010; Belsie, 2010; Farber, 2004, 2010).

Acs (2008) suggested that in order to figure out how to recover from the effects of a recession one must look at the past 35 years. Other scholars suggested one should look back as far as the Great Depression to address present day situations (Batra, 1988; Folsom, 2008). Acs pointed out that there were direct correlations between a recession



and the compared unemployment of individuals and families, and the dynamics of those who desired and willfully sought employment. From that perspective, he stated that those Americans in their mid 50's had their fair share of tough labor market discussions for half the years they had worked, between 1974 to present day (Acs, 2008).

Ascribed characteristics affect employment (Reskin, 2003). Gender, for example may affect employment status because jobs are often times considered gender specific and most require traits and life patterns specific to men (Albelda & Kelleher, 2010; Eichner, 1988; Ridgeway, 1977). In addition, Albelda and Kelleher (2010) found that Black and Hispanic women have an even higher unemployment rate during a recession. Age may affect employment status because age discrimination is still prevalent in the workplace; there are negative beliefs and attitudes towards age (Barnett 2004; Nelson, 2005).

Historically, there have always been connections between ethnicity and employment status (Reskin, 2003). Ethnicity and employment have been a point of contention dealing with employment numbers, which are often lower for Blacks and Hispanics of either gender (Albelda & Kelleher, 2010; Glenn 1985). The disparity appears to be even more prevalent during a recession (Albelda & Kelleher, 2010). While not the focus of this study, education and employment status are also connected (Card, 1999) because obtaining a higher education is often linked to the belief that there is a guarantee for better job opportunities (Brown & Adler, 2008). The study is new in that it proposes to look at a specific geographic location, Gwinnett County, Georgia, which has not been studied before. Georgia is a state with a large diverse population with one of the highest unemployment rates during economic downturns (Local area unemployment

statistics, n.d.). The study compares employment status using micro data from two different recessionary periods.

Sum and Khatiwada (2009) conducted a quantitative comparison study of the 2007 recession compared to the previous six recessions on a national level. They noted that from February through May the national unemployment numbers declined by 1.5 million people. The findings for the study were based on data from the CPS surveys and information obtained from the BLS for demographic education attainment and geographical groups. The study found that in 2009 the unemployment numbers from males were higher at 10% versus 7.2% for women. They too acknowledge as in previous studies that the gap in employment based on gender had not been this significant since post World War II. During this same period, Blacks unemployment rate was 14.3% and Hispanics were 11.1%. Underutilization rates by age were shown to be more significant for teenagers at 37.4% versus 26.3% for persons between the ages of 20 to 24 years old. Underutilization was lower for persons between the ages of 45 to 54 at 13.2%. The underutilization rate was higher for persons between the ages of 55 to 64 at 13.8% and even higher at 16.6% for 65 and older. Among the elderly men, education was identified as the cause for the employment numbers being higher than for women.

Wall (2009) compared the 2001 gender recession unemployment to the 2007 gender recession unemployment and found that men are impacted in greater numbers during a recession. This is not unusual because this has been the findings since the recession of 1969. "Between 1969 and 1991, male employment fell by an average of 3.1percent during the five recessions experienced during the period and female employment, on the other hand, actually tended to rise by an average of 0.3 percent

during recessions” (p. 6). He also noted that by the 2001 recession more women had entered the workforce, suggesting that this is why the 2001 recession is relevant in comparing with the 2007 recession. From the onset of the recession in 2001 to 2003, there were more than 2.6 million jobs lost. During this time, men accounted for 78% of the unemployment numbers, similar to the 2007 recession numbers. In this study, the numbers indicated that although male unemployment numbers remained significantly higher than for females, it was due in part to industry dynamics. He noted that education and other demographic characteristics should be factored into the equation.

In the quantitative study by Grown and Tas (2010) they argue against the concept of the *mancession*. Citing the simplicity of the arguments by Thompson (2007) and Wall (2009), they used data from the CPS to show that Black people and Hispanics of both genders, young females and single mothers were hit harder by the recession in the United States in 2007 than men. The study found that looking at a period from 1948 to 2010, the labor force numbers stayed constant for women until the 2001 recession and the beginning of the 2007 recession. Male unemployment declined during all the previous recessions. They found the proposed man-cession label could not hold up, because the data showed that women were unemployed from over 10 times more jobs than men were during the 2007 recession. The new man-cession label has misdirected attention from those most vulnerable demographics. As a result, the economic recovery policies are not helping those groups as much as it should.

Brown and Pagan (1998) conducted a quantitative study using CPS data for the demographic groups by gender for Mexican-Americans and other Hispanics, and non-Hispanics as well as White workers during 1990 to 1991 recession to explore the change

in employment status. The study looked at data from 1990 to 1992 to estimate employment and full-time and part-time employment status for each group using a bivariate probit statistical model. Only individuals between 18 to 65 years old were included in the study. Educational attainment was also factored in, showing that only 4.6% of Mexican-American males obtained a college education compared to 9.1% of other Hispanics and Black males 9.0% and non-Hispanic White males 17.3%. For Mexican-American females, the percentage was 5.5% with a 1.8% completion rate, whereas, Hispanic females were 11.3 and 4.5% respectively in comparison to 16.9% of non-Hispanic White females. This study also showed that Mexican-Americans were predominately located in western areas at 60%. Hispanics were found to be located at 41% in northeastern parts of the United States, and Blacks were found at 54% in southern parts. The study found that male Mexican-Americans were most affected by unemployment than female Mexican-Americans and other Hispanic. There was an actual increase in employment numbers for Hispanic females based on experience and education. However, the probability for Black males to gain employment showed a 92% decline whereas the probability for Mexican-American females to gain employment increased by 4.1%. The numbers for Black females did not increase. The study found that if mean human capital levels remained the same during 1989 and 1991, females in the other races would show a steady increase. The study ultimately found that men were unemployed in larger numbers in 1991 than in 1989.

Lastly, the quantitative study conducted by Bell and Blanchflower (2010), reviewed the employment and increase in unemployed across both OECD countries and by demographic groups during the 2007 recession. One objective of the study was to

highlight any disparity that existed based on age. The other was to reflect on the effects of unemployment on the well-being of the individual. These authors used Labor Force survey data and found that in Europe the age structure in employment changed dramatically during the recession. Employment fell by 5.1% for those persons between the ages of 15 to 24 between 2008 Q1 and 2009 Q3. The United States showed a decline of 15.5%. However, for those persons 50 and up, employment increased by 4% in Europe and increased by 2.5% for person 55 and older in the United States. The authors noted that this occurred in spite of a labor market loss of over 7 million jobs. The findings were attributed to older people continuing to work longer because the recession caused a decrease in retirement income. An additional speculation was that the age differential was due to a change in industry dynamics. The third reason noted was that more young people might be opting to return to school during times of recession in hopes of enhancing their chances for obtaining better employment. There was a 22% increase in university enrollment between 2009 and 2010. They posited that in the United States with its flexible labor markets youth might find themselves opting to continue their education as well. Because of the inability for the youth to infiltrate the job market there was an increase in college enrollment of 23% in the UK in 2010 for those persons 25 and up. Since 2007, there was a decline of adult enrollment overseas.

The researcher found that the literature reviewed focused primarily on gender employment during recession and showed that men are often times unemployed in larger numbers than women are. This was widely attributed to industries that are dominated by women tend to be less impacted during economic downturns. Also observed was that there were several studies focused on employment status during recessions in other

countries based on gender and age. In addition, there were also several studies pertaining to the effects ascriptive unemployment during recession on health and well being.

### **Perceptions**

The ideology of a groups perceived work ethic, mental prowess, and ability to produce can determine hiring potential is explored heavily in the field of sociology. A significant difference in the numbers between employment and ascribed characteristics could suggest the presence of ascriptive inequality. It is suggested that these perceived ideas and views could determine hiring potential. Although the objective of the study is only to compare and reveal the potential differences in employment of the ascribed characteristics of gender, age, and ethnicity during recession and nonrecession periods, the study theorizes that discriminative behaviors or practices start with perceptions. For this study, perceptions are looked at as the first tier leading into ascriptive inequalities. Perception is an awareness of one's surroundings that is produced by the operation of the senses (Perception, 2007). Professor Jonathan Dancy posited:

Perception is generally held to be our primary source of knowledge. The way in which this works, however, is disputed. Some hold that perception is the occurrence of sensory ideas in the mind, which in some way reveal the nature of their external causes. Others hold that perception is a direct awareness of the external, unmediated by prior knowledge of anything internal. There is a related debate about whether sensory experience is itself conceptual. If it is not, the world is not presented to us in conceptual form; rather, we impose such a form on what we receive, by categorization or conceptualization. (Perception, 2007, p. 1)

Talcott Parsons has been extolled as the father of sociological theory globally (Fox, Lidz, & Bershady, 2005; Habermas & Blazek, 1987; Mayhew, 1968; Turner 1989). The goal of Parsons' research was to evoke "conceptual schemes for sociology that could be applied to every society and historical epoch, and address every aspect of human social organization" (Fox et al., 2005, p. 2). Adger (2006) defined social-ecological systems as human actions and social structures that are an integral part of nature. The perceptions that an individual has of another can determine that individual's station in life—their stratification (Shepelak & Alwin, 1986).

On examination of the literature on perceptions, a common theme of self-perceptions was evident including how perceptions of one's self affect one's life (self-fulfilling prophecy; Bem, 1967, 1972; Jia, Zhang, Ge, & Jois, 2009; John & Robins, 1994; Jussim et al., 1996). Also noted in the literature was research on crime perception (Quillian & Pager, 2001) and perception as it relates to income disparity and reward allocation (Blazer, Sachs-Ericsson, & Hybels, 2005; Muntaner & Lynch 1999; Shepelak & Alwin, 1986). In addition to research on consumer perceptions, were effects on one's business (Harper & Makatouni, 2002; Yang & Jun, 2002). However, there was limited research on perception theory and perception as it relates to one's perceptions of another and how that perception may lead to social stereotypes, which may also lead to ascriptive inequality.

Seminal works on perception illustrated that stereotypes are not accurate because they are based often on a perceiver's prejudice (Madon et al., 1998). The concerns noted in most of these studies were that stereotyping creates social problems and powerful bias perception. There was a consensus in the literature that bias causes one to judge another

based on ambiguous and identical characteristics (Madon et al., 1998; Mong & Roscigno, 2009; Reskin, 2003; Ridgeway, 2001). However, Robinson (2004) suggested that perceptions a person has of another person are not based usually on unfounded justifications. He theorized, “That people’s perceptions of class and racial inequalities arise from (1) their differential placement in the stratification system and the experiences that derive from that, (2) their acceptance or rejection of dominant ideologies about inequality, (3) their differential educational experiences, and (4) the historical conditions prevailing when their attitudes were being formed” (p. 344). Robinson presumed that inequality has a lot to do with the beliefs that one has about what others are receiving.

Postman’s 1953 qualitative study on perception, motivation, and behavior posited that one could not look at the theory of perception solely without looking at behavior because one represents the other (Shepelak & Alwin, 1986). Postman’s study was based upon information obtained from a symposium on Cognitive Theory and Personality Functioning held in 1952 (Shepelak & Alwin, 1986). Behaviors an individual displays are steeped in belief of the differences that one has about another individual or group (Shepelak & Alwin, 1986).

Scholars also theorized that stratification placed on an individual was based on how individuals act or react in certain situations and over time was the behavior consistent (Pearson Education, 1995; Snyder, Tanke, & Berscheid, 1977). As a result, individual and group perception of others is innate in one’s thought process. Acker (2006) contended that perceptions of gender differences greatly influence workplace behaviors. Although no one would argue that perceptions of gender are not prevalent and



common practice, the issue is the harm it can cause an individual or group. These behaviors overtime cause labels to be placed accordingly.

Swann (1984) argued that perceivers are not concerned with being right about their perceptions of others in all situations or times. He suggested that people are typically okay with formulating ideas about behaviors of others when there is direct interaction with those others (Swann, 1984). The maxim, however, that held true in most of the reviewed literature was that perceptions play a significant role in society, whether there is direct or indirect association (Swann, 1984). Consequently, these perceptions lead to stereotyping others. Although these perceptions may not always produce negative stereotypes, most often times they do (Swann, 1984).

Several of the studies selected for review for this research study approached the subject of perceptions within the framework of Eleanor Rosch's theory of natural categories, which takes the approach of coding concepts into categories (Brewer, Dull, & Lui, 1981; Freeman, 1992; Kanwisher, McDermott, & Chun, 1997). Looking at the concept of colors, shapes, and sizes being placed into categories and how the human mind deciphers the information and verbalizes the association (Brewer et al., 1981; Freeman, 1992; Kanwisher, McDermott, & Chun, 1997). Another theoretical concept offered by Eleanor Rosch is cognitivist theory (Rosch, 1999). This theory relates to how humans process information categorically (Rosh, 1999). "Humans live in a categorized world; from household items to emotions to gender to democracy, objects and events, although unique, are acted towards as members of classes" (Rosch, 1999, p. 61). Studies that have used the Rosch theory conceptualized that there are innate hierarchies that exist (Brewer et al., 1981; Freeman, 1992; Kanwisher & McDermott, 1997).

For this researcher, as the literature was reviewed, the question arose about one's perception of another being reality based on truth and fact or based on presumptions and fiction. Madon et al. (1998) suggested that most experiments conducted to determine *Person Perception Stereotypes* are often inconclusive. Jussim et al., (1996) argued that it appeared that some scholars found that experiments conducted to assess bias and stereotypes based on perceptions were skewed. As a result, several scholars embarked on determining the accuracy of these experiments (Jussim et al., 1996; Madon et al., 1998). The findings indicated that education played a significant role in perceived class and racial inequality (Jussim et al., 1996; Madon et al., 1998). The findings suggested that if someone believed they would succeed in life, their perceptions of class and racial inequality was less than those that did not feel they had a bright future (Jussim et al., 1996; Madon et al., 1998).

Population numbers may affect perceptions because there is an opportunity for more varying classes and races (Robinson, 1983). In addition, professions are another factor that can greatly affect perceptions (Jussim et al., 1996; Madon et al., 1998). A study conducted regarding teacher's perceptions by Jussim et al. (1996) and Madon et al. (1998) found that in most cases teachers tended to be fair in their assessment of students. However, it was found that as human beings with learned experiences, there were some prejudgments assessed at times to different groups within the classroom (Jussim et al., 1996; Madon et al., 1998).

Just as an educated person is perceived as being smart, intelligent, and capable of being a leader, perceptions are not oftentimes based in fact (Snyder, Tanke, & Berscheid, 1977). One's perception of someone does not make it his or her reality (Snyder et al.,

1977). Prejudices are formed from misguided perceptions (Snyder et al., 1977). This prejudiced thinking can cause anger and unwarranted retaliation against an individual or group (Snyder et al., 1977). There are consequences when preconceived ideas are formed of others based on our environment and experiences (Snyder et al., 1977).

A great example of how environmental perceptions' leading to stereotypes and discrimination was the informal qualitative experiment conducted by Jane Elliott in 1968 (PBS/Frontline, n.d.). After watching the assassination of Martin Luther King on the news, this third grade teacher conducted an exercise with her class called *Blue-eyed, Brown-eyed* (PBS/Frontline, n.d.). The exercise consisted of Elliott putting her class into two groups, those with blue eyes, and those with brown eyes (PBS/Frontline, n.d.). Each group was given a label; the blue-eyed children were told that they were smart and the brown-eyed children were told that they were not (PBS/Frontline, n.d.). The blue-eyed children were given privileges during the course of the activity that the brown-eyed children were not (PBS/Frontline, n.d.). As a result, the blue-eyed children started to feel superior and the brown-eyed children felt sad, dumb, and depressed—self-fulfilling prophecy (PBS/Frontline, n.d.). Each group started to believe the labels that were placed on them. They started to believe what they were told, and therefore, their perception of persons that were different from themselves formulated discriminatory behaviors (PBS/Frontline, n.d.).

In researching the literature on perceptions leading to stereotypes, the question is clearly not, whether ascriptive inequalities exists because of these variables, but to what extent ascriptive inequality still exist. The findings showed that non-Whites tend to perceive more racial inequality than Whites do (Defreitas, 1986; Fawcett et al., 1994;

Gilens, 2009; Hardee, 2007; Mong & Roscigno, 2010; Reskin, 2003). In addition, young people perceived more class inequality (Greenstone & Looney, 2010). However, there was no difference in perception of young or older people regarding racial inequality (Biggs & Powell, 2001; Branine & Glover, 1997; Jolls, 1996; Mirowsky & Ross, 2001; Rhodes, 1983, Rupp, Vodanovich, & Creed, 2006). Robinson (1983) concluded that class sentiments in the United States are not as relevant as racial inequality “in part because the working class is racially divided” (p. 361).

Prejudices are often formed from misguided perceptions (Snyder et al., 1977). There are consequences when preconceived ideas are formed of others based on environment, learned, and unlearned experiences (Snyder et al., 1977). Although this division is recognized in our society, is it more prevalent during times of economic hardship (Reskin, 2003; Snyder et al., 1977).

### **Cultural Stereotypes**

“Stereotypes are generalized impressions of groups, acquired by individuals from a number of sources, including sometimes direct experience with members of the stereotyped groups. For the most part, however . . . stereotypes appear to be learned by word of mouth or from books and films” (Karlins, Coffman, & Walters, 1969, p. 1). Stereotypes in general, add to any perceived ideas of cultural, gender, and ethnic similarities or sameness (Jackson, Hodge, & Ingram, 1994). Sargent (1981) asserted that stereotypes start early in life and continues to be reinforced into adulthood. There are scholars who argued that there is little evidence available to support the accuracy of many of the stereotypes that exist (Jussim et al., 1996). Finkelstein, Burke, and Raju (1995)

and Brewer et al. (1981) posited that stereotypes are the categorization of people. Many paths can lead to the formulation of stereotypes according to Finkelstein et al. (1995). Fiske, Neuberg, Beattie, and Milberg (1987) suggested that opinions of another person are formulated as soon as one person meets another.

Reskin's (2000) qualitative study on discrimination explored the concept of stereotyping including the how and why stereotyping occurs. Reskin offered that in the twentieth century scholars hoped that if they brought certain discriminative practices to the forefront that those who had power to create change would do so. Although, the change desired was not born out of these findings, what did occur was the development of techniques to ascertain a degree of employment discrimination questioning why in the twenty first century discrimination is still prevalent (Reskin, 2000). Reskin suggested that discrimination occurs because of unconscious cognitive processes as well as the more deliberate negative treatment of people of color and White women.

A more recent thought process about discrimination centers on conflict theory. In conflict theory, those of certain stratification protect their position by using their resources to not only control, but also exclude those who are in subordinate groups (Reskin, 2003). The explanation of this theory was presented by Reskin as "strategic, self-interested actions by members of privileged groups who intentionally exclude and exploit subordinate-group members to protect or advance their own interest" (2000, p. 320). The conflict theory falls short in determining specific motives, variations in employment discrimination, or a way to prevent it from happening (Reskin, 2003). However, conflict theory is acceptable for this research study as one of the cause of

inequality. The objective of this research study is not to offer a solution, but to determine the extent at which the problems of inequality still exist.

Reskin (2000) further stated, “Stereotypes are unconscious habits of thought that link personal attributes to group membership” (p. 322). Brewer et al. (1998) suggested that categorizing people in to groups allows discrimination to happen. When this happens, one group is in opposition to another. The group dynamics are determined often by the person’s attraction to a particular group with whom they seek to be treated equally (Baron & Pfeffer, 1994). Therefore, no matter what group one finds themselves a part of, they feel more comfortable with that group and try to avoid the other.

### **Gender Stereotypes**

Up to the 1950’s, men and even some women believed that a woman’s role in society, also referred to as *feminine* ways, was as wives, mothers, sisters, mistresses, secretaries, maids, waitresses, nurses, and sex objects (Sargent, 1981). One of the primary stereotypes, specifically for women, is that of primary care giver within the home (Bosner, 2008; Sargent, 1981). With an influx of women entering the workplace, some companies have found a problem with women taking time off from work to attend to their care giving duties (Bosner, 2008; Sargent, 1981). Another stereotype for women is that they do not have the mental capacity to hold certain positions because they are considered emotionally unstable (Curseu & Boros, 2008) and that they lack effective workplace communication skills (Fine, 1991). Unfortunately, these rooted stereotypes can lead to discrimination when women seek employment. Studies on gender stereotypes found that women are still being stereotyped and therefore discriminated against in the

twenty first century for many of the same reason they were in previous centuries (Acker, 2006; Bosner, 2008; Curseu & Boros, 2008).

### **Age Stereotypes**

There are stereotypes presumed for both sides of the age spectrum (Bernstein, 1990; Biggs & Powell, 2001, Brewer et al., 1981, Finkelstein et al., 1995; Greenstone & Looney, 2010; Williams & Nussbaum, 2001). For example, an older person may perceive a younger person having a disheveled appearance as a degenerate and assume that they are aggressive and on drugs (Williams & Nussbaum, 2001). Whereas, on the other hand, older people are perceived by a younger person as being slow, less creative, less flexible, and more resistant to change, not interested in training, more likely to become ill, and accident-prone (Rhodes, 1983). McCann and Giles (2002) also suggested that within society and the workplace, older people are considered naggers, irritable, decrepit, cranky, weak, feeble-minded, verbose, and cognitively deficient. Another, more positive, stereotype associated with age is that with age comes wisdom, that an older person maybe wiser and more in control of themselves (Nelson, 2005).

Finkelstein et al. (1995) posited that stereotyping is most often associated with age discrimination. Older persons in the literature often refer to persons between the ages of 55 and 65 years; young persons are considered those persons between the ages of 30 and 54 years. Younger persons referred to persons ranging in age from 17 to 29. In this quantitative study, Finkelstein et al. meta-analytically tested four primary hypotheses. They found that young people are more likely to discriminate against older people when assessing job qualifications and potential for development than the other way around

(Finkelstein et al., 1995). They speculated that this was due to an older person having life experiences that have crossed many age ranges (Finkelstein et al., 1995). Therefore, an older person can empathize with the transitions that life brings. These blatant stereotypes lead to bias, unfair discrimination, and prejudicial behaviors towards either cohort—young or old—ageism.

### **Ethnic Stereotypes**

Stereotypes associated with ethnic groups are based oftentimes in false perceptions from conservatism/traditionalist thinking. People are not born with preconceived ideas; they are fostered (Reskin, 2003; Robinson, 2004). Therefore, only time can contribute to changing groupthink. Some common stereotypes associated with Black people, for example, have been that they are lazy, uneducated, superstitious, happy-go-lucky, ignorant, musical, ostentations, very religious, stupid, physically dirty, naïve, slovenly, unreliable, and criminals (Katz & Braly, 1932; Quillian & Pager, 2001). Other stereotypes associated with Black people are that they lack work ethics and morals (Dixon & Rosenbaum, 2004) and that Black people are not as smart as other ethnicities (Steele, 1997). Stereotypes associated with Hispanic people are that they are all lazy and morally inept (Dixon & Rosenbaum, 2004). There are also stereotypes associated with White people, such as, that they are superior, entitled, intelligent, ambitious, progressive, pleasure loving, alert, efficient, straightforward, practical, and sportsmanlike (Katz & Braly, 1933). Although most of these stereotypes were from a study conducted in the early twentieth century, since these are learned stereotypes they are passed down through the generations. Therefore, most, if not all of these stereotypes are still associated with



these ethnicities today. In addition, there were more stereotypes levied against Black people than any other ethnicity (Dixon & Rosenbaum, 2004; Katz & Braly, 1932; Quillian & Pager, 2001).

Perceptions, cultural stereotypes, and ascriptive inequalities are all linked together in one way or another. Perceptions of others, based in truth or fiction, lead to cultural stereotypes of individuals categorically stratifying them into groups. These beliefs of others then lead to actions, which are oftentimes negative and destructive—ascriptive inequality.

### **Ascriptive Equality and Inequalities**

Equality is theorized as a topic of political and western philosophy (Equality, 2006), but the debate of the equal treatment of individuals in a society has been ongoing for centuries. Cultural stereotypes that lead to ascriptive inequalities can be broken down into several categories. Normative theories suggest that all people should be equal just because they are human beings and that equality is a statement of fact and truth (Equality, 2006). The contrast between the normative view and the experiential condition of inequality continues to allow leeway for discussion on social change.

Karl Marx was a renowned spokesperson for equality and held the position that human beings were created equal before there was any private ownership or capitalization (Equality, 2006; Turner, 1989). Marx's name is associated with socialism because he believed that equality would be restored through innovative change in society (Equality, 2006; Turner, 1989). Marxism, as it was referred, is related to the equal treatment and best interest of workers because implied is that workers are the only ones

who can influence change and have a voice for social causes (Equality, 2006; Turner, 1989). Marx referred to these workers as a social class (Socialism, 2006). “Although Marxists see capitalism as an immoral system, socialism is not merely ethically desirable, but historically necessary” (Socialism, 2006, p. 1). This thinking proposes that unless issues of inequality are addressed, there will continue to be future ramifications.

Ascriptive inequality is not a new topic in our society. There are many who have defined ascriptive inequality as the majority group in a class society, mistreating, and excluding a minority group. Reskin (2006) posits that race and gender play a significant role in obtaining employment. Acker (2006) stated, “All organizations have inequality regimes, defined as loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within particular organizations” (p. 443). Eventually over time, leadership and management significantly affect the culture of an organization with their prejudicial beliefs.

The discipline most closely associated with ascriptive inequalities is sociology, which is the study of human behavior (Sociology, 2008). Sociology was not recognized as a field of study until the 1880’s, when universities offered it as a course (Sociology, 2000). This field of study focuses on analyzing individuals and organizations (Stewart, 1983). In review of the literature, there were several themes that were used to describe social inequality; ascriptive and stratification were two of them. The term ascriptive refers to a person that is born into a social system beyond their control and social stratification refers to societal economic layering, which may lead to stereotypes being placed on a group(s) of people (Davis & Moore, 1945). During turbulent times, when

opportunities and resources are limited, perceptions and cultural stereotypes garner a more significant role in decision making by those who wield the power.

Discussions on inequality do not pertain just to those of race relations. Inequality spans the range of age, ethnicity, education, and disabilities. Many strides have been made towards rectifying certain social inequalities (Kalev, 2009; Reskin, 2002), which are largely based on moral theories. There have been times when government and corporate interventions proved to be somewhat effective (Kalev, 2009; Reskin, 2002). Other times, any strides made towards equality have faltered (Reskin, 2003). Therefore, the processes, policies, practices, and attitudes must be re-examined.

### **Bias of Gender in Society and the Workplace**

There are different variations of gender-based inequality, as noted on the Department of Labor website (U.S. Department of Labor, 2003). Noted is that the reported data reflects a difference in the treatment of White women versus Black women in the workplace (U.S. Department of Labor, 2003). Palmore (2006) and Marlowe, Schneider, and Nelson (1996) suggested that there is a vast difference in treatment between younger women versus older women and there have been instances where physical attributes are a factor that determines which female is hired. Women have been undervalued in the workplace whether it is in initial hiring practices or for promotion opportunities (Bosner, 2008; Cockburn, 1991). These underpinnings of noted research highlight the significant role of gender and the workplace. There have been significant contributions to the research on gender inequality not just for male versus female, but also for female ethnicity and appearance differences (Palmore, 2006; Marlowe,

Schneider, & Nelson, 1996). The terminology used for these biases are feminism and sexism (Bosner, 2008; Cockburn, 1991).

Kramarae and Treichler (as cited by Brant, Mynatt, & Doherty, 1999) define sexism as “behavior, policy, language, or other actions of men or women which expresses institutionalized, systematic, comprehensive, or consistent views that women are inferior” (p. 85). Further stated was that several authors suggest that the research on sexism focuses on and fits into three categories (Brant et al., 1999). The first category was the assessment of the presence and frequency of sexism in various situations (Brant et al., 1999). The second category was how personality and behavioral assessments correlate to sexism (Brant et al., 1999). The third category was development of scales to measure sexism (Brant et al., 1999). The research has been somewhat tempered due to recent government and corporate interventions because it was presumed that these interventions have rendered the issue irrelevant (Reskin, 2003). However, sexism remains overtly present in the workplace.

Early attempts by women to change sexist behavior only resulted in more disrespect, disregard, and discrimination (Sargent, 1981). Initially, the more women tried to change the status quo, the more they were met with resistance. Sargent (1981) offers several ways that women attempted to name and abolish sexist behavior including the organization of several women groups.

Through the years, there have been numerous women, in particular, who have taken the lead in garnering rights for women (Sargent, 1981; Taylor, 1989). These, like other movements, were brought to the forefront in the 1960's (Taylor, 1989). Sexist bias, discrimination, and segregation are only marginally better for women in the workplace.

However, even with all efforts of those before, there are issues that still exist in the workplace of the twenty first century.

For many years, women were not allowed to work; this practice changed as result of basic need. During World War I, women were forced to take the jobs and responsibilities of the male figures in the home and the workplace (DuBois, 1978). Many women had to work the farms, even in the war factories, which were unheard of in the early part of the twentieth century. Change for women in society and the workplace started occurring in the 1920s (DuBois, 1978, Murphy, n.d.).

Early efforts and positive strides for equality for women started with the suffrage movement in the 1830s, but began to reach momentum between 1900 and 1920 (Taylor, 1989). A decline in efforts occurred after a suffrage amendment passed (Taylor, 1989). In 1920, the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment was added to the Constitution, which allowed men and women equal voting rights (Murphy, n.d.).

While women are still grossly under paid for the same work as their male counter parts (Bosner, 2008), there appears to be a shift in recent times where men are unemployed in greater a numbers than women (Sahin, Song, & Hobijn, 2010; Sierminska & Takhtamanova, 2010). A study conducted by Sahin et al. (2011) on the unemployment gender gap during the current recession utilized secondary data from the BLS with the objective being to calculate employment in and out flows based on gender. They found that men were impacted in greater numbers than women were (Sahin et al., 2011).

In addition, Sahin et al. posit the reason for the increase employment of women in the workplace. Their findings showed that the industries that showed growth during the recession were industries dominated by women, such as education and the health industry

(Sahin et al., 2011). The composition of employed to unemployed was approximately 60% higher for women (Sahin et al., 2011).

## **Sexism**

The first hurdle for women in the workplace was to usurp the notion that there were gender specific jobs that existed (Kanter, 1977). The initial government intervention to address this issue was Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex and national origin (Civil Rights, 2000). Stereotypes have also been congruent to perpetuating the problem of women being thought of as the weaker sex and the primary care giver in the home (Bosner, 2008; Brown, 1981; Glenn, 1985). They were also paid considerably less than their men counterparts because men were not only thought of as the bread winner in the home, but they were also considered as providing main source income and being the payer of the household bills (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.).

Another positive stride for women was that women's caucuses were established as a means to allow women to express themselves about sexism, sexual politics, and other topics in an environment free from men (DuBois, 1978; Sargent, 1981). In addition, there were women chairs, which gave women an opportunity to gain leadership experience and public speaking (DuBois, 1978; Sargent, 1981). Unfortunately, there were instances that powerful men would select certain women to be chair; women they were having relations with or wanted to have relations (DuBois, 1978; Sargent, 1981). Men would then proceed throughout the meeting to provide or guide women on what they were to say. There were several other platforms positioned to give women a voice

such as women speakers, women strategists, women staff leaders, taking turns cleaning the office, and women talking in meetings (DuBois, 1978; Sargent, 1981).

In any instance, men would only hear and do what was good for them (Sargent, 1981). When a woman spoke about what was deemed women things, men may listen, but when a woman spoke about politics, men tuned it out (Sargent, 1981). In those times, an assertive woman was referred to as a lesbian and if thought to be a lesbian, was not listened to at all (Sargent, 1981)

Bosner (2008) suggested there are three theories that should be considered when discussing gender inequalities: critical theory, person-centered theory, and feminist theory. All of these theories are interwoven in the Marxist theoretical concepts, which lends itself to the implication that women are treated fairly and as equals (Bosner, 2008). Ridgeway (2001) offered the two theories, the expectation states theory, and the social-role theory to address gender inequality.

Issues faced by women in the twenty first century still hover around equal pay, glass ceiling, and gender bias (Bosner, 2008; Ridgeway, 2001). The gender wage gap and the glass ceiling have been researched extensively throughout the years by several scholars (Bosner, 2008; Ridgeway, 2001). In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a wider gap in gender pay differentials than there is today (Alksnis, Desmarais, & Curtis, 2008). The gap was predominately due to the lack of experience and education (Alksnis et al., 2008; Posadas, 2010). Unfortunately, changing this inequality has been a challenge. A comparison of experience and education was called the composition effect (Smith & Ward, 1989). Researchers Smith and Ward (1989) studied this measurement. They studied wage differentials by observation of wage equations that were based on estimates

that separated groups by gender and age (Smith & Ward, 1989). Blau and Kahn (1997, 2006), in more recent research, used a measurement called Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition in their quantitative study. This method, championed by Blinder (1973) and Oaxaca (1973) was used to study the mean outcome of varying groups. It is a popular method used in analyzing gender and ethnic wage gaps, specifically utilizing longitudinal data (Blinder, 1973; Oaxaca, 1973). Posadas (2010) used several models investigating gender differences in the workplace comparing cohorts and found that using longitudinal data to compare gender wage gaps was the most beneficial. The fight for employment equality is far from the only issue. The focus of this study, however, is that obtaining employment in diverse times should be the initial focus; unless one has a job, wage is not relevant.

### **Ageism**

The term ageism was coined in the twentieth century, even though throughout history age has always played a significant role in society (Ageism, 2004). Societal roles are as prevalent with age as any other social dynamic. Age inequality is often based on preconceived stereotypes (Issacharoff & Harris, 1997). When it comes to age in the workplace, one would assume older is better, more experience and wisdom (Williams & Nussbaum, 2001). However, in the United States that belief has become passé. Those persons of an older age are discriminated against often because of perceived reduced mental and physical prowess (Acker, 2006). Therefore, employers now often prefer younger people with more current education and less experience, so they can be molded or shaped for their current needs (Acker, 2006).



The literature showed that a great deal of age discrimination still exist (Bernstein, 1990; Finkelstein et al., 1995; Williams & Nussbaum, 2001). Through the years, being older has not always been a problem, in particularly for older White males (Bernstein, 1990; Finkelstein et al., 1995; Williams. & Nussbaum, 2001). In addition, there are jobs that have justified age limits (Bernstein, 1990; Wilkening, 2002). For example, servers in restaurants that serve liquor must be at least 18. In the work place, generational biases need to be addressed, not only for the health of the organization, but also for the consequences that it can present to the workers themselves (Bernstein, 1990).

Generations differ in many ways because of socialization (DuBrin, 2005; Siebert, 2008). Generations differ by cohort, whether on the cusp of a war such as in 1953, 1990, or 2008 or tragedies such as that of 9/11. McMullin, Comeau, and Jovic (2007) suggested that there are several factors that make up generational identity affiliation such as, shared cultural elements, music, political ideals, individual beliefs, and other shared forms of popular culture. These generations also share major social upheavals like specific generation memories or decolonization during years of development (DuBrin, 2005; McMullin et al, 2007; Siebert, 2008). Sujansky (2004) and Zemke, Raines, and Filipczak (1999) suggested that baby boomers are the largest generation, right now with over 80 million people. However, generation Y, also known as the millennial generation, represents 80 million people and consequently currently entering the workforce, they are on course to surpass the number of baby boomers on becoming the largest generation represented in the workplace (Wilkening, 2002). However, due to the current state of the economy that predication will quite possibly be delayed because the baby boomers and generation X have to work jobs that historically were worked predominately by

generation Y (Wilkening, 2002). Williams and Nussbaum (2001) posit that by 2020, 39.1% of the workforce will be over 55 years of age.

The “attitudes and beliefs about the ageing work population are of critical importance to the quality of work life” (Finkelstein, Burke, & Raju, 1995, p. 1). There has been a great deal of much needed research conducted on age discrimination based on the number of complaints filed each year under the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 and the 1992 American Association of Retired Persons (Finkelstein et al., 1995). Ageism is one of the isms that are oftentimes placed categorically separate from the other isms (McCann & Giles, 2002). Finkelstein et al. contend, “Intergenerational communication plays a central, though as yet understudied, role in workplace ageism” (1995, p. 164).

Rupp et al. (2006) conducted a qualitative study on age and the severity of recommendations made on employee performance errors to determining if ageist managers would engage in age bias behaviors. The study proposed that differential attributes played a significant role in performance errors of older versus younger workers (Rupp et al., 2006). The findings showed that there were more severe ramifications for older employees that received poor performance evaluations (Rupp et al., 2006). The study also found that ageist attitudes were prevalent in determining performance recommendations as well (Rupp et al., 2006).

Finkelstein et al. (1995) also conducted a qualitative study on age bias on performance evaluations. They found that a younger manager would give an older worker a poor rating with little or no information or knowledge about the job being evaluated (Finkelstein et al., 1995). The literature showed that age could affect not only

performance evaluations, but also one's ability to obtain employment (Finkelstein et al., 1995).

On the other hand, Biggs and Powell (2001) as well as Palmore (2006) assert that there are scholars that would argue that age discrimination is not necessarily a bad thing when it comes to subscribing to mandatory retirement. For one, it opens positions for other groups that have commonly been discriminated against like women and minorities (Biggs & Powell, 2001; Palmore, 2006). Another reason given was that it reduces cost to an employer because of potentially increased health cost (Biggs & Powell, 2001; Palmore, 2006). This researcher would argue that there is never a legitimate reason to discriminate against anyone for any reason.

### **Ethnicity, Racism, and Discrimination**

For the study, ascriptive inequality related to ethnicity refers specifically to persons of African American, Hispanic, and Caucasian persuasions. The researcher does not imply that these ethnicities are affected exclusively or impacted by ascriptive inequalities in the past or in the present. The premise for inclusion of racial dynamics is to present a historical foundation for the significance of this study. Unfortunately, there are times when racism is not blatant; there are often times when subtle behaviors exist in the workplace environment (Hamilton et al., 2011; Robert & Harlan, 2006). For example, verbal remarks or comments that are made by one ethnic group about or to another being insensitive to the fact that the statement was considered racist. Subtle racisms that exist in the workplace provide companies with an opportunity to explore organizational behaviors (Fine, Johnson, & Ryan, 1990). It is important to understand

the broad spectrum that diversity awareness covers and the importance of sensitivity training as well as acceptance of all differences.

In the anonymous article, *Black Unemployment: United States: Not So Colour-blind* (2009) highlighted that during the recession of 1983, Black unemployment surpassed that of Whites by 21%. The BLS showed the 2009 rate of Black unemployment at 16 % and White unemployment at fewer than 10% (“Black Unemployment,” 2009). In addition, Black males’ unemployment numbers were lower than their White male counter parts at over 10% respectively to over 18% and nearly half of young Black males that did not have a high school diploma were unemployed (“Black Unemployment,” 2009). Some explanations offered for these gaps, were that some of the higher unemployment rates were in States that have higher Black populations, where as the low unemployment States do not (“Black Unemployment,” 2009).

An additional theory offered for higher unemployment among Blacks was that neighborhoods that are predominately Black are located further from job opportunities and the fact that some of them did not have vehicles available or limited public transportation (“Black Unemployment,” 2009). These factors limit Blacks ability to find gainful employment. There was also mention of limited networking opportunities to find employment because there is not the same network of family businesses as in the White and Latino areas (“Black Unemployment,” 2009). This explanation accounts for as much as 70% of the difference in Black and White unemployment (“Black Unemployment,” 2009). The recession by no means is the reason in totality for the disproportionate number of Black community unemployment. Nonetheless, a recession appears to compound the situation.

The most primitive way to define racism is the suggestion that the mistreatment of someone is simply based on race (Racism, 2000). The concept or practice of racism has been evident since the beginning of time. However, the term *race* only dates back to the 13<sup>th</sup>, or some documents write the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Racism, 2000; Racism and Racially Motivated Attacks, 2005). By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Western Europe held the belief that humankind was divided into different races and that belief was embraced in both the political and academic world (Racism, 2000; Racism and Racially Motivated Attacks, 2005)

In a quantitative study conducted by Fox and Stallworth (2003) on the link between bullying and racism in the workplace, researchers used a written survey issued to four different ethnic groups: Asians, African-Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, and Whites. Two hundred and sixty two respondents completed the survey (Fox & Stallworth, 2003). The 262 participants were broken down into groups of 28 Asian, 138 African-Americans, 27 Hispanic/Latino, 71 White, and four listed under other (Fox & Stallworth, 2003). Found was that 97% of the participants had experienced some form of bullying that they felt was attributed to racism (Fox & Stallworth, 2003).

In the quantitative article, *The Black and White Labor Gap in America* by Weller and Fields (2011), utilizing secondary data, reaffirmed the disparity that exists in employment of African Americans based on gender, education, and age. The study focused on the current recession as well as two previous recessions (Weller & Fields, 2011). They note that the unemployment numbers for Black people has not been this high since 1984 (Weller & Fields, 2011). By the end of 2007, the average rate of unemployment for Black people was 8.4% and White people unemployment was only

4% (Weller & Fields, 2011). They showed by gender that Black women had unemployment rates of 14.1% to that of White women at 7.4% in 2011 (Weller & Fields, 2011). On the other hand, Black male unemployment was 18.3% compared to that of White males at 8.3% (Weller & Fields, 2011). These authors suggest that education plays a significant role in the significant difference in percent of unemployment (Weller & Fields, 2011). The study showed that 26% of men with high school diploma were unemployed, compared to 12% of White men without (Weller & Fields, 2011). Black men with a high school diploma were 15.9% and White men 8.4% (Weller & Fields, 2011). For those black men with a college degree the unemployment rate was 6.9% and White men 3.9% (Weller & Fields, 2011). When age was factored into the scenario, Black people between the ages of 35 to 44 had an unemployment rate of 12.6% and Whites at 6.5% (Weller & Fields, 2011). Those Black people age of 65 and over was 9.4% and White persons at 5.9% (Weller & Fields, 2011). The article highlighted the fact that discrimination is still a looming problem in the twenty first century that must continue to be addressed by government policy makers.

### **Segregation**

The study of gender and race segregation is steeped in the psychological and sociological disciplines. Each discipline brings different beneficial approaches to the question of gender and race inequality. Alksnis et al. (2008), Caiazza, Shaw, and Werschkul (2003), and Stroh, Brett, and Reilly (1996) assert that many of the jobs that pay a higher wage are traditionally male-dominated positions such as engineering and finance. More males are in leadership position (Wright, Baxter, & Birkelund, 1995).

Ridgeway and Correll (2004), and Sherif (1982) posited that the theoretical frameworks for both psychology and sociology regarding gender is complex and favors men and male characteristics, which influences social systems in society. Unfortunately, this has been considered the norm within our cultures and societies since the beginning of time.

In Alksnis et al. (2008) quantitative study on the gender wage gap, they examined gender segregation and its impact on salaries given according to their gender specific jobs. They looked at three positions to see participant assignment of what they considered male or female work (Alksnis et al., 2008). The measures used were compensatory dimensions, which consisted of a nine scale measuring systems that measured the four underlying compensatory dimensions that were available in performance evaluations (Alksnis et al., 2008). The annual salary was the key variable for the study (Alksnis et al., 2008). The results showed that a small minority of students (22 out of 260) did not want to assign a gender to a given position (Alksnis et al., 2008). Out of the 260, 15 of those said that the gender could be either (Alksnis et al., 2008). As a result, those participants were excluded from the study (Alksnis et al., 2008). Out of the 238 participants that remained, 82% agreed with the hypothesis that there are gender specific jobs that affect wage (Alksnis et al., 2008). Sexism plays a significant role in the gender wage gap and employment considerations (Alksnis et al., 2008). Note was that though the gap has narrowed over time, it is still an important issue and it still needs to be addressed (Alksnis et al., 2008). As long as men stand in the dominant, leadership position in society, they will wield control over who has and who does not.

Since the days of slavery and segregation, education has been looked upon as the stepping-stone to a better future (Woodson, 2006). Up until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, African

Americans were not allowed to attend school of any form (Woodson, 2006). The thought was that an educated Negro would be able to think for themselves, causing the White masters problems (Woodson, 2006). By the 18<sup>th</sup> century, African Americans were allowed to attend Christian oriented schooling (Woodson, 2006). Women were not allowed to advance their education past secretarial school or some other gender equivalent education/occupation either (Woodson, 2006).

Public schools were established in 1632 (Lindsey, 2009). By 19<sup>th</sup> century, African Americans were allowed to attend segregated schools (Lindsey, 2009). The level of education that was provided in these African American segregated schools paled in comparison to their Caucasian counter-parts and in 1954, public schools became desegregated (Bell, 1980). This happened due in part to the case of Brown versus Board of Education (Bell, 1980). As a result, education became equal for all ethnicities, thereby, creating an opportunity for all ethnicities to be equally successful (Bell, 1980). However, the education system in the United States has not been the best at preparing its youth to compete in a global economy.

Although segregated education was abolished in 1954 (Bell, 1980), there are still those persons who prefer to separate themselves from certain groups of people. This is evident when people send their children to private schools instead of public (Bell, 1980). Segregation is also evident when people join country clubs that are ascriptively restrictive (Bell, 1980). Unfortunately, there are companies in our communities that still predominately employ individuals of one ethnicity. The question becomes is one intentional excluded based on ethnicity.



In a study by Hamilton et al. (2011) on occupational segregation, found was that, segregation remains an ever-looming issue in America. The focus of the study was Black males (Hamilton et al., 2011). Categories of employment were obtained from the American Community Survey, which included 468 of the 469 respondents (Hamilton et al., 2011). A simple binary regression was used with crowding scores as the dependent variable an average occupational wages as the independent variables (Hamilton et al., 2011). The study found that Black men were under represented in occupations that require soft skills (Hamilton et al., 2011; Rampell, 2009; Sierminska & Takhtamanova, 2010; Wall, 2009).

## **Education**

Due to the current state of the economy, post- secondary attendance has reached record highs (Ruiz, 2010). There are many persons, young and old, who are returning to school to learn a new craft or skill or to obtain an undergraduate or advance degree. The high school diploma was not sufficient to get a decent wage paying position because of this shift (Card, 1999). A bachelor's degree is equivalent to a high school diploma, and an advanced degree of some kind is almost required to obtain gainful employment (Green & McIntosh, 2007). Although, education still plays a significant role in employment status, in most instances the educated person will get the job over someone that is not, and will stay employed during layoffs (Green & McIntosh, 2007). There are instances, especially during adverse times that the candidate for the job was over qualified (Brynin, 2002; Green & McIntosh, 2007). This could almost be considered a form of reverse discrimination and it has been justified by most companies suggesting that if they were to

hire someone for a position for which they are over qualified that this will do them and the company a disservice (Brynin, 2002). Presumed is that the employee would quickly become discontent or bored with the position and leave the job (Brynin, 2002). This places the employer back in a position of using resources to hire someone new.

Companies are hiring those that are over qualified for positions and paying them less money because the pool of qualified candidates has grown tremendously (Brynin, 2002; Green & McIntosh, 2007). This practice, in turn causes many to be underemployed as well.

Although hard work and education has been the recipe for success in our society, it does not seem, in recent times, to be a sure determinate in leading to a successful career (Lindsey, 2009). Education alone is no longer the springboard to opportunity for many.

### **Conflict Theory**

This research study suggests that the culmination of all the previously mentioned concepts can lead to conflict within a society for those who belong to certain ascribed groups. Karl Marx is touted as the father of social conflict theory, with his belief that all stratified societies have two major social groups: one that rules and one that follows (Sociology.com, 2011). Studies around conflict theory encompass social, political or material inequality of social groups (Brief et al., 2005). This theory draws attention to differentials of class and historically dominant ideologies (Collins, 1971). Per Blalock (1957), and Reskin (2003) the conflict theory contends that the group considered the dominate group or the haves; use their socio-economic advantage to maintain their stratification status. Another perspective, referred to as intergroup conflict theory,

focuses on “patterns of individual prejudice and discrimination along with the motivational sequences of interpersonal interaction” (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 33).

Brief et al. (2005) used a mix methodology to explore realistic group conflict theory in their study regarding diversified relationships in organizations and communities. The authors for this research study used data from the 1991 General Social Survey (GSS) and the National Organizations Survey (NOS). The GSS is a research database that contains survey data collected by the National Opinion Research Center, which allows for a researcher to access qualitative survey information. The authors used these sources to explore four hypotheses for two studies. The purpose of the first study was to examine the relationship of diverse groups in organizations and communities. Out of 727 respondents there were, only 148 White, full-time employees with an average age of 40, with 56.6 percent male, the average years of formal education was 14 were used for the study. The total family income of participants was an average of \$40,000 to \$75,000 a year. These respondents had also been with the company for 7.8 years, they lived in various regions (40 percent in the north, 38.8 percent in the south, and 20.3 percent in the west). Using a hierarchical regression analyses, these authors found that proximity to Blacks was not related to the quality of work relationship. However, the negative relationship between racial diversity and Whites reported work relationships became stronger as the proximity to Blacks in their communities increased (p. 835).

In the second part of the study by Brief et al. (2005), the hypotheses explored the possibility that Whites are less attracted to positions that are more ethnically diverse. The fourth hypothesis explored the relationship between an organization’s diversity and its attractiveness being moderated by perceptions of community-based intergroup conflict:

as perceptions of conflict increase, the relationship becomes stronger (p. 836). The procedure used for these hypotheses were questionnaires that were given to junior and senior level undergraduate students at a university in the southwestern United States, consisting of 88 White participants, with an average age of 21.5, and 38.2 percents male. The findings of the second study found that Whites perceived more conflict if there was an increase of Hispanics within the community. This study used a *t* test to test significance. The findings for studies one and two supported the studies use of realistic group conflict theory. This study is relevant to the studies conducted around employment inequality and conflict because it showed that the emotional mind-set of a group perceived threat from another spills over into the workplace. These findings and the theoretical framework outlined in the study by Brief et al. (2005) confirms the concept of conflict theory.

Farmer (1997) explored conflict theory in his study on discrimination of elite colleges. The study suggested that admission to elite schools were based on social class and not academic ability. There were found to be clear plots for some elite schools to keep Jews out or to control the number accepted. Their study addressed the conflict that ensued because of these discriminative practices.

Evans, Kelley, and Castles (2004) conducted another study on conflict theory, which looked at how to reduce class conflict comparing six European coordinated market economies to the United States and four other largely free market economies. They analyzed data from 18 surveys with over 24,000 participants. They found that market coordination reduced conflict between the rich and the poor. In the study, they questioned if the thought process in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century about class conflict had changed or

if conflicts between rich and poor, between middle and working class, between workers and managers remain. They found that it depended on ones perception of the social climate.

In the article by Dahrendorf (1958) on social conflict, he posited:

To begin with a commonplace observation: The problem of conflict is no less complex than that of integration of societies. We now know that the attempt to reduce all actually occurring conflicts among social groups to a common principle, say that of classes, is sterile. It leads either to empty generalizations (such as “Every society experiences social conflicts”) or to empirically unjustifiable oversimplifications (such as, “The history of all societies so far has been a history of class struggles”)... (p. 170).

In other words, it may not be fair to say that all societies experience conflict. However, inequality of any kind within a society that differentiates based on ones ascription may lead to conflict, which can cause an environment that is conducive to discontentment and crime.

### **Government Intervention**

The BLS noted that statistically White males have always been employed in greater numbers (Local area unemployment statistics, n.d.). From the Great Depression, males have always been employed at a considerable percentage higher than White women have or any other race (Local area unemployment statistics, n.d.). As an incentive for companies to hire minorities, the government has offered tax breaks and other incentives (Local area unemployment statistics, n.d.).

“Government is a formal organization that shapes political action” (Government, 2001, p. 1). In the United States, we live in a democracy; in an environment where the people have a voice in decision making within a governing system (Government, 2001). This free-market society can also result in individuals making decisions based on what will most benefit them. These decisions often lead to ascriptive inequality. Government can and has played a vital role in eradicating inequalities (Reskin, 2003). A few of the agencies and laws created to do this are discussed in this literature review.

The US Department of Labor was established on March 4, 1913 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2003). The mission is “to foster, promote, and develop the welfare of the wage earners, job seekers, and retirees of the United States; improve working conditions; advance opportunities for profitable employment; and assure work-related benefits and rights” (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d., p. 1). To aid those persons who become unemployed, the Social Security Act (SSA) of 1935 included a provision to provide financial assistance through the federal-state unemployment compensation (UC) program (Doughton, 1935). This program was established to provide unemployed citizens with monetary assistance to ensure that the essentials of life could be sustained including shelter, food, and clothing. This compensation serves as a temporary, partial wage replacement and was also important help sustain the economy (Doughton, 1935). Employer taxes, either federal or state, predominately fund this program (Doughton, 1935).

## **Civil Rights**

Civil Rights have been loosely defined throughout the centuries (Civil Rights, 2000). Prior to the Civil War, Civil Rights were extremely vague (Civil Rights, 2000). Civil Rights were defined as having rights within ones social medium (Civil Rights, 2000). The definition was expanded to include the right of a person to do activities that were lawful within a particular ethnic group (Civil Rights, 2000). In 1787 when the US Constitution was written, it did not, however, include a Bill of Rights until 1789 when Congress proposed ten amendments that became known as the Bill of Rights, this was authorized in 1791 (Civil Rights, 2000).

The United States government has served to rectify discriminative behaviors more directly since the 1930's, although Civil Rights became a national law in 1866 (Civil Rights, 2000). The purpose of this Law was to ensure the rights of all and not deny anyone equal protection of the law (Civil Rights, 2000). Subsequent civil rights movements have changed the dynamics of approaching individual rights in the United States with constitutional amendments and legislation (Civil Rights, 2000).

The Fourteenth Amendment was established in 1868 (Civil Rights, 2000). This amendment served to ensure that states do not deprive individuals the right of life, liberty, or property without due process of law (Civil Rights, 2000). After a proposal by the National Woman's party campaign efforts in 1923, came the Equal Rights Amendment in 1972 (Civil Rights, 2000). Due in part to these efforts, a person not only has the right to sue someone for criminal damages, they can also wage civil suits (Civil Rights, 2000).

## **Affirmative Action**

From the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s came Affirmative Action initiatives (Affirmative Action, 2001). Affirmative action terminology was used in an executive order given by President John F. Kennedy in 1961 (Affirmative Action, 2001). From that order, the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity was established (Affirmative Action, 2001). In the beginning, the concepts covered under Affirmative Action were vague and not heavily enforced (Affirmative Action, 2001). Title VII of the Civil Rights Act created the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC; Affirmative Action, 2001). The role of this commission is to investigate and enforce federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1998). Since then several other measures have been taken. These measures include Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, the Equal Pay Act of 1963, Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the Civil Rights Act of 1991 (Affirmative Action, 2001; Age Discrimination, 2002; Americans with Disabilities Act, 2004; Equal Pay Act, 2006).

## **Gender Bias**

In response to the gender wage gap, the government has intervened by continuing to explore ways to resolve this problem. The most recent action was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Bill that President Barack Obama signed into law on January 28, 2009 (Conger, n.d.). This legislation came about due to the injustice that was realized 31 years later for Lilly Ledbetter, a woman from Alabama who worked for Goodyear Tire and Rubber



Company from 1979 to 1998 (Conger, n.d.). After retiring, she realized that she had been paid less than 15 fellow male counterparts (Conger, n.d.). She took the company to court and won, however, the verdict was later overturned 5-4 by the Supreme Court this bill was named after her (Conger, n.d.).

## **Age**

To address the issues related to age, in 1967, the Age Discrimination Employment Act (ADEA) was passed in the United States (Palmore, 2006; Schuster & Miller, 1984). This Act was passed to provide a means where complaints against another person or company could be made by anyone that felt that had been treated unfairly due to age (Age Discrimination, 2002).

## **Georgia's Government**

One of the many results of all the champions of the Civil Rights Movement in the state of Georgia was the establishment of the Equal Opportunity Georgia Commission (Georgia Gov., n.d.). This commission has been in place since 1978 enforcing the Georgia Fair Employment Practices Act of 1978, which makes it unlawful to discriminate based on race, sex, age, disability, national origin, color, or retaliation (Georgia Gov., n.d.). Another important agency is the Georgia Department of Labor. This department established in 1911 was first known as the Department of Commerce and Labor (Georgia Gov., n.d.). Part of the many responsibilities of this department was to enforce labor laws (Georgia Gov., n.d.). Because of the Wagner-Peyser Act of 1935, mandating a federal-state partnership for operation of employment services, the General Assembly created the

Employment Security Law of 1937, which led to the creation of the current Georgia Department of Labor (Georgia Gov., n.d.). The goal of this department is to work with public and private employers to contribute to Georgians economic prosperity (Georgia Gov., n.d.).

### **Corporate Intervention**

A company's responsibility to an employee is to provide a work environment that is conducive to optimal performance. Distractions such as discriminative or racist behaviors or practices, and harassment of any kind can affect morale and job performance. It is important that companies address this issue with policies and practices. Most often times there are catalyst to the necessity of these changes. The impetus for the sexual harassment focus for companies was the Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill case in 1991 (Fitzgerald, Swan, & Fischer, 1995). That landmark case led to government and corporate interventions. In addition to sexual harassment in the workplace, stereotypes and discrimination as a result affects individuals in the workplace, therefore, many companies have implemented diversity initiatives to address these potential problems. Most diversity initiatives not only address discriminative practices based on age and race, it also looks at other aspects such as gender.

Since 1991, many companies have addressed these issues and others (Fine, Johnson, & Ryan, 1990; Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999; Patrick, 2011; Pitts, Hicklin, Hawes, & Melton, 2010). The Coca Cola Company has a Code of Business Conduct that the company created to address discriminative issues (Coca Cola Company, 2008, p. 3). This was issued in conjunction with the company's Workplace Rights Policy (Coca-Cola

Company, 2006). The Code of Business Conduct addresses such things as expectations of everyone and managers as it pertains to acting with integrity (The Coca Cola Company, 2008). The Workplace Rights Policy addresses respect, communication, rights, trust, dignity, and community (The Coca Cola Company, 2008). This policy specifically addresses discrimination, noting that they are committed to maintaining an environment that is free from discrimination or physical or verbal harassment because “of race, sex, color, national or social origin, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, political opinion or any other status protected by law” (The Coca Cola Company, 2008, p. 1).

Mars Incorporated has also been sensitive to the need to address discriminative behaviors and practices (Diversity and Inclusion, 2012). Their innovative diversity initiatives have been instrumental in the quest to eliminate discriminative practices within their company (Diversity and Inclusion, 2012). These initiatives consisted of incorporated policies, procedures and best practices, and developing diversity classes for both nonexempt and exempt associates. The nonexempt associates attend a required four-hour course and the exempts are required to attend an all-day class. Both classes included activities that would emphasize the subtle prejudices that we all possess.

### **Summary**

The literature review showed what causes a recession from a historical perspective, its impact, and effect on the economy. The literature review showed that the impact of a recession causes high levels of unemployment and that those numbers are often times higher for ascribed attributes. In addition, the theory and methods for

employment and unemployment were introduced. The literature showed that ascriptive inequalities remain a problem in the twenty first century in the United States. Krugman (2009) believed that as Americans, history should be analyzed to prevent future mistakes. The literature reviewed how the government and corporations have evoked change in the area of ascriptive inequalities (Affirmative Action, 2001; Civil rights, 2000; Georgia Gov., n.d.; Coca-Cola Company, 2006).

## CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

In Chapter 3, the purpose of the study is reiterated; the management and research questions as well as the hypothesis to be tested are presented. The research methodology and design are also presented. The population, sampling frame, and sample for the study are introduced. The ascribed variables for conducting the study are described, and database measurement, collection, and analysis process for the selected ascribed variables are outlined. Validity and reliability of the data collection process performed by the United States Census Bureau (CB) are examined. Ethical considerations, permissions, and potential risk for the study are outlined and analyzed. Lastly, a summary for the presented information is given.

The purpose of this quantitative research was to analyze secondary data for employment status of the ascribed attributes of gender, age, and ethnicity for a period of ten years from 2000 to 2010. In addition, the aim of the study was to reveal if there were a disproportionate number of ascribed attributes affecting one group more than another during recession (2001 and 2008-2010) versus nonrecession periods (2000 and 2002-2007). Specifically, was there a relationship between ascribed attributes and employment status and was it greater during a recession, which may infer ascriptive inequality.

### Management Question

A review of the literature indicated that ascribed attributes could play a role in who gains employment and who does not (Elliot & Smith, 2004; Kalev, 2009; Reskin, 2003). In question, was if ascribed inequalities as they relate to employment are more prevalent during an economic downturn. Although, the literature denoted a relationship

between ascribed attributes and employment (Elliot & Smith, 2004; Kalev, 2009; Reskin, 2003), the question remained if one group of individuals were more desirable to an employer than another was within Gwinnett County, Georgia. A secondary issue questioned if the hiring of one group was more prevalent during two recessionary periods than during other periods within Gwinnett County, Georgia possibly indicating ascriptive inequality.

Ascriptive inequality, relating to employment practices, is illegal and against equal right laws (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d). Business owners and managers who hire based on ascriptive attributes put their organizations at risk for possible legal action, fines, and negative exposure. On the other hand, equal opportunity promotes diverse strategic thinking that has the potential to affect positively the organizations revenue flow. Additionally, organizations that support a diverse workforce have a more positive effect on employee morale and production (Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999), even attracting consumers from the ascribed group to promote further business opportunities.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

In question was if ascribed attributes affect employability of individuals within Gwinnett County, Georgia. Specifically, the study aimed to explore if the gap between ascriptive related employability is of greater significance during two recessionary periods of 2001 and 2008 versus nonrecessionary periods of 2000 and 2002-2007 in Gwinnett County, Georgia based on ascribed attributes of gender, age, and ethnicity.

Two selected research questions and four hypotheses were analyzed using two statistical methods. To answer Question 1 and its hypothesis a *t* test cross tabulation with chi-square test were used. A binary logistic regression was used to answer Question 2 and its three hypotheses and its nulls.

1. Is there an association between ascribed attributes of gender, age, and ethnicity and employment status in Gwinnett County, Georgia?

H1<sub>o</sub>: There is no relationship between ascribed attributes and employment status in Gwinnett County, Georgia as noted in the United States Census Bureau database.

H1<sub>a</sub>: There is relationship between ascribed attributes and employment status in Gwinnett County, Georgia as noted in the United States Census Bureau database.

2. Will the relationship between ascribed attributes of gender, age, and ethnicity and employment status significantly change during recession versus nonrecession years in Gwinnett County, Georgia?

H2<sub>o</sub>: There is no significant change in the relationship between ascribed attributes and employment status during the 2001 recession versus a nonrecession in Gwinnett County, Georgia as noted in the United States Census Bureau database.

H2<sub>a</sub>: There is a significant change in the relationship between ascribed attributes and employment status during the 2001 recession versus a nonrecession in Gwinnett County, Georgia as noted in the United States Census Bureau database.

H3<sub>o</sub>: There is no significant change in the relationship between ascribed attributes and employment status during the 2008-2010 recessions versus a nonrecession in Gwinnett County, Georgia as noted in the United States Census Bureau database.

H3<sub>a</sub>: There is a significant change in the relationship between ascribed attributes and employment status during the 2008-2010 recessions versus a nonrecession in Gwinnett County, Georgia as noted in the United States Census Bureau database.

H4<sub>o</sub>: There is no significant difference in the employment status based on ascribed attributes of individuals in Gwinnett County, Georgia between the two recession periods of 2001 versus 2008-2010 as noted in the United States Census Bureau database.

H4<sub>a</sub>: There is a significant difference in the employment status based on ascribed attributes of individuals in Gwinnett County, Georgia between the two recession periods of 2001 versus 2008-2010 as noted in the United States Census Bureau database.

### **Research Methodology and Design**

Selecting the correct research design is imperative to determining and answering the research questions and for framing, proving, or disproving the hypothesis (Miller & Salkind, 2002). A quantitative ex post facto research design, case study was employed to test the stated hypotheses using publically accessible micro data containing aggregated data sets (Creswell, 2009) obtained through the United States Census Bureau website.



Census data looks at a whole population where the size of the group is not a factor (Reich & Abraham, 2001). An ex post facto design was appropriate for this research study because significant micro data exist from a respected source for answering the proposed research questions and hypotheses (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). This design type is common for examining census data that has been collect for various purposes (Ex post facto, 2009). Historically, the information obtained through the CB and the BLS database websites has been trusted to be complete and accurate indicated by its use in several published studies (Davis & Haltiwanger, 1998; Smith et al., 2005; West, Butani, Witt, & Addns, 1989).

As noted in Chapter 1, a case study approach is appropriate for this research study because it examines a condition that interrelates with an occurrence over a defined amount of time (Cooper & Schindler, 2003; Creswell, 2009). Specifically, in the research, a case study was used to examine how ascribed characteristics affect employment status in Gwinnett County, Georgia. In addition, a case study was appropriate for this study because data was collected from multiple data cells to build the case and answer research questions (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2002).

### **Sample**

A sample is defined as “a subset set of a population selected to represent and draw inferences about that population” (Sample, 2000, para. 1). Sample data is often preferred because less errors are produced, it less time consuming, and less costly (Sorensen, Sabroe, & Olsen, 1996). The sample is a small group of the secondary data used for details that are more specific (Cooper & Schindler, 2003).

Gwinnett County, Georgia was selected because it has a large, diverse labor force population (Gwinnett County Government, 2011). Table 3 shows labor force numbers for years January to December 2000 to 2010 for Gwinnett County, Georgia. By the end of 2010, Georgia had an unemployment rate of 10.2%, which was higher than the National average of 9.4% (U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Data, 2010).

Table 3. *Georgia's Gwinnett County Labor Force Population 2000 to 2010 (Numbers in thousands)*

Year	Annual Labor Force Population
2000	347,878
2001	358,390
2002	366,780
2003	370,742
2004	382,396
2005	400,947
2006	410,908
2007	418,468
2008	420,894
2009	415,825
2010	409,675

### **Population and Sampling Frame**

The population included persons living in Gwinnett County, Georgia who were noninstitutionalized between the ages of 16 to 80 as recorded by the United States Census Bureau (Kromer & Howard, 2011). The sampling frame for the study was all individuals included in the CB database for Gwinnett County, Georgia who were employed or unemployed, who were actively seeking full-time employment, and those that voluntarily completed the Current Population Survey administered by the CB for a

ten-year period from 2000-2010. This included data reflecting the ascribed characteristics of gender, age, and ethnicity (Velkoff, 2005). The current study did not include persons who were in the military, seasonal, or farm workers.

### **Instrumentation/Measures**

The Instrumentation and measures section includes the data collection source and process. It includes what survey is used by the government, as well as, the criteria for both the employed and unemployed participants. Lastly, discussed is the statistics that are created by the Census Bureau from the collected survey data.

#### **Census Bureau Database**

Data was collected from the Census Bureau database. Sorensen, Sabroe, and Olsen supported the use of secondary data in research (1996). Secondary data is information that was collected with no specific research plan determined (Sorensen et al., 1996). This is true for the data collected by the Census Bureau. The Census Bureau collected data is used by many scholarly disciplines including public and private sectors (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009; Wallace, 1998).

A major benefits of using secondary data is that it already exists. This data is commonly collected for use by management, claims, administration, healthcare, surveillance, research, and planning (Sorensen et al., 1996). Associated costs of using secondary data are also less (Sorensen et al., 1996). Other advantages include a larger sample size where the probability for bias is less likely due to matters such as recall, nonresponse, or misconstruing questions (Sorensen et al., 1996). However, a

disadvantage of using secondary data is the lack of control on how the data was selected and who it was selected from, which at times makes the data impossible to validate (Sorensen et al., 1996). Nevertheless, a study using secondary data should be approached with the same rigor as any other study with the intent to reduce both systematic and random errors (Sorensen et al., 1996).

For more than four decades the CB has collected and supplied data from surveys to the American public, scholars, congress, Federal agencies, and State departments (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009; Wallace, 1998). The CB is the main fact-finding agency for the Federal Government in the fields of labor economics and statistics (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). This agency also acts as a statistical resource to the Department of Labor (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). In addition, the media often report unemployment statistics from this database (U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Data, n.d.). The CB is a reliable secondary data source (Haley, 2003) for providing the information needed to test the hypotheses for the study.

### **Current Population Survey**

The government collects census data for employment status using the Current Population Survey (CPS; U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) data for individual States comes from the information collected from the CPS (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Frankfort-Nachmiar and Nachmias (1992) agreed that the CPS is a valid form of data collection. Data for this study was compiled directly from micro data queried from the CB database where individual participant information was compiled from the CPS survey.

The United States Government conducts a monthly survey called the Current Population Survey (CPS) in an effort to obtain the most accurate labor force information (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). The survey process has been used since the 1940's (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011); however, in 1994, the survey underwent a major redesign (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). According to U.S. Census Bureau, (2011) survey and collection methods need to be modified as geographical areas, populations, and technology change. This survey was designed to reflect the civilian noninstitutional population of the United States. The labor force data was only collected for those persons 16 years and older (Kromer & Howard, 2011). Persons under the age of 16 are excluded because child labor laws prohibit inclusion (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Also excluded were those persons on active duty in the United States Armed Forces (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). The census also excludes persons who are in penal and mental institutions and homes for the aged and infirm (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006).

Methods for measuring unemployment such as probability sampling were initially developed towards the end of the Great Depression in the 1930's (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Data collected during the Current Population Survey's development stage did not meet the standards of objectivity that many technicians felt was warranted (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). By the 1940's the survey was modified to address these concerns (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). In 1942, the responsibilities for this survey were transferred to the Census Bureau and the name of the survey was changed to the Monthly Report on the Labor Force (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). The name was changed again in 1948 to reflect the more characteristic name of Current Population Survey (CPS; U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). In 1959, the responsibility for maintaining, analyzing, and

publishing the data was given to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. However, the Census Bureau still has the responsibility for collecting the data (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006).

Local governments use statistical information collected for planning and budgetary purposes (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). This information is also used to determine the needs of local employment and training services (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Currently, monthly estimates of employment and unemployment statistics are prepared for approximately 6,700 geographic areas in which all State Labor Market Areas (LMA's), counties, cities with populations of 25,000 or more are included (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). The information for CPS is collected each month from a probability sample of a 60,000 households, which is made up of approximately 110,000 individuals (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). The provision of the obtained information is voluntary (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). On average, approximately 4% of the population refuse to participate and another 4-5% do not participate based on failure to contact (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). The surveys are distributed on a calendar week to ensure that the information collected is current (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). The calendar week consist of Sunday through Saturday that includes the 12<sup>th</sup> day of the month and is considered the reference week (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). The actual survey is conducted during the following week, during the 19<sup>th</sup> day of the month (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006).

So as not to burden a household in the sample every month, one-fourth of the households sampled are changed (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). No household is interviewed more than four consecutive months (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). After eight months that household is interviewed again before being eliminated from the list

altogether (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). The system is designed to ensure that 75% of the sample remains the same from month to month, and 50% remains the same from year to year (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006).

The Census Bureau has 2,200 employees that collect data for the BLS database (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). The information is collected from 60,000 sample households with persons who are holding jobs or seeking a job (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). The information that is usually collected during the week that includes the 12<sup>th</sup> of the month is collected and transferred via laptop to the Census Bureau's central computer in Washington, D.C. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). The interviewer, after determining the number of members in the household, asks personal characteristic questions such as date of birth, sex, race, ethnicity, marital status, educational attainment, veteran status to cite a few (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006).

### **Employed Criteria**

The criteria for those that are placed in the category of employed are those persons who have a job. A person is considered employed if they work part-time, temporary, or regular full-time, year-round (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). A person is counted as employed if they are temporarily out of work for reasons such as being on vacation, illness, child birth or child care issues, maternity or paternity leave, inclement weather, and work related dispute (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). In addition, a person is considered employed if they are at least 16 years of age and work at least 20 hours a week doing chores or working part-time in a family business (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006).

## **Unemployed Criteria**

The criteria for unemployed are those persons who are jobless, actively looking for jobs for the previous four weeks, and are currently available for work (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). A person is actively looking for work if they are contacting an employer directly or interviewing with one; if they are contacting a temporary agency, friends or relatives, or a school or university employment center (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). A person is also actively looking for work if they are sending out resumes or filling out applications, placing or answering advertisements, checking union or professional registers, or performing some other means of active job search (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006).

## **Local Area Unemployment Statistics**

The Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) data, which is created from the CPS data collected by the CB, is a Federal-State Cooperative endeavor in which State employment security agencies prepare estimates mainly used by Government entities (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). The Local Area Unemployment (LAU) is a program that produces monthly and annual employment, unemployment, and labor force data for Census regions and divisions, States, counties, metropolitan, and many cities, by place of residence (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). This encompasses employment and unemployment information being prepared for approximately 7,300 areas (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). The underlying concepts and definitions for the LAU program come from the BLS (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). This program combines current and historical



data from the CPS and two other sources including the Current Employment Statistics (CES) and the State Unemployment Insurance (UI) systems (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006).

### **Measurement**

The micro data collected from the CB database was being measured for this research study. The aggregated data used in this research study came from the data collected by CB for the BLS, which is an agency within the United States Department of Labor (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). This information was collected via surveys through interviews conducted in person and over the phone by a CB representative using the CPS (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006).

### **Independent Variable**

The independent variable is that which is hypothesized to affect the outcome of the dependent variable (Cooper & Schindler, 2003; Sekaran, 2003). For example, does a person's ascribed characteristics (independent variable) impact employability (dependent variable)? Cooper and Schindler defined independent variable as having a presumed cause. Noted was, "There are no preordained variable waiting to be discovered 'out there' that are automatically assigned to one category or the other" (Cooper & Schindler, 2003, p. 47). In other words, the researcher assigns the relationship between the independent and dependent variables (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). However, simply finding an association in this one to be able to presume a cause and effect relationship.

## **Geographical Location**

Gwinnett County, Georgia was the target location of the study from which the secondary micro data were retrieved. Established in 1818, Gwinnett County had a population of 596,544 in 2000 (Gwinnett County Government, 2011). In 2010, the population had grown to 820, 869 (Gwinnett County Government, 2011).

## **Ascribed Attributes**

Ascribed attributes as defined by Reskin (2003), are assigned at birth. Noone has control over the group to which they are assigned (Ridgway, 2003). Several scholars refer to these groups as being categorized into the *in-group* or the *out-group* (Brief et al., 2005; Reskin, 2000, 2003, 2006; Rosch, 1999). Data from the CPS was collected for the ascribed variables of gender (men/women), age range (16-90), and ethnicity (White, Black, or Hispanic).

## **Economic Conditions Consideration**

This research study looked at recession years 2001 and 2008-2010 because they were within the 10-year designated period between 2000-2010. The ten-year period was divided by two recessionary periods: January to December, 2001 and two years spanning from 2008-2010) and two nonrecession periods (January to December 2000 and six years spanning from 2002-2007).

Recessions are one way that economic downturns are termed and measured (Hall, 2003a).

A recession is a significant decline in economic activity spread across the economy, lasting more than a few months, normally visible in real GDP, real income, employment, industrial production, and wholesale-retail sales. A recession begins just after the economy reaches a peak in activity and ends as the economy reaches its trough. Between trough and peak, the economy is in an expansion. Expansion is the normal state of the economy; most recessions are brief and they have been rare in recent decades. (National Bureau of Economic Research, 2008b, para. 2)

### **Dependent Variable**

According to Cooper and Schindler (2003), dependent variables are the presumed effect of the independent variable. Sekaran (2003) defined the dependent variable as “the variable of primary interest to the researcher. The researcher’s goal is to understand and describe the dependent variable, or to explain its variability, or predict it” (p. 88). Therefore, the dependent variable was a viable factor in quantifying or measuring the outcome based on the independent variable.

### **Employment Status**

Employment status for the study referred to both the employed and unemployed. The study consisted of those persons that were employed full-time, nonseasonal, and unemployed persons who were seeking full-time employment. The study excluded part-time, entrepreneurs, farmers, and seasonal workers.

## Data Collection

The secondary data collected used for this research study came directly from CPS. Micro data was collected to assess the statistics shown in Table 4. From this data, bar charts were created for each variable over the ten-year period.

Table 4. *Data collected for ascribed attributes and employment status for the geographical area of Gwinnett County, Georgia*

	Total Population Noninstitutionalized	Employed	Unemployed	Total Civilian Labor Force Population
Gender				
Men	X	X	X	X
Women	X	X	X	X
Ethnicity				
White	X	X	X	X
Black	X	X	X	X
Hispanic	X	X	X	X
Age				
Range (16 to 80)	X	X	X	X

To extract the micro data from the CPS, the Federated Electronic Research, Review, Extraction, and Tabulation Tool (FERRETT) was used (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). DataFerrett is a data analysis and extraction tool that was created by the CB (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The tool allows the researcher to develop a myriad of customized spreadsheets and reports. The tool also helps the researcher locate and retrieve the desired data. The FERRETT tool is accessed through the CB website, clicking on data tools, dataferrett followed by data~run (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The

ascribed variables for each geographical location and predetermined year was collected and downloaded into SPSS® for statistical analysis. The data was queried by selecting the year range, labor force variables, geographical variable, and ascribed variables. Subsequently, the individual variables of race, gender, employment status, and geographical location were selected. Hispanic ethnicity was queried separately because it categorized under origin in the database and not race.

### **Data Analysis**

To analyze the data collected for the nonexperimental, ex post facto case study the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) software program was used to run a *t* test, a cross tabulation and chi-square test for Question 1 and Hypothesis 1. A cross tabulation was selected to determine the number of instances that certain ascribed characteristics were unemployed during specific points in time (Norušis, 2006). A chi-square is used to determine if a relationship exist between two categorical variables (Norušis, 2006). Chi-square was used on the statistics subcommand of the cross tabulation command to obtain the test statistic and its associated *p* value (Norušis, 2006). The current research study determined the relationship between employment status and ascribed attributes. The expected *p* value is 5 or higher. If the *p*-value is less than 5, there is no statistically significant relationship between the variables.

In addition, SPSS was used to run a binary logistic regression statistical analysis. A binary logistic regression was selected as the best analysis to evaluate Hypotheses 2,3, and 4. Binary logistic regression was used to evaluate relationships between categorical independent and dependent variables seeking significant differences (Norušis, 2006).

Binary logistic regression was an excellent choice for the study because there were specific fixed points in time (January 2000 to December 2010) being studied, with categorical independent variables of the same unit (attributes of gender, age, and ethnicity, economic conditions of recession and non-recession; Borgen & Seling, 1978; Bray, Maxwell & Cole, 1995). In addition, the study warranted the use of a binary logistic regression analysis because the study sought to explore the impact of the independent variables of ascribed attributes and economic conditions on two normally distributed dependant variables of employed and unemployed (Cronk, 2006). Specifically, determining if three attributes of gender, age, and ethnicity varied significantly for the dependent variable of employment status of employed and unemployed during the independent variable of economic condition within two time frames, recession and non-recession.

The descriptive statistics for the employment status of each ascribed characteristic are presented in bar charts (Norušis, 2006). Table 5 outlines the ascribed variables, scale and measure, code, and illustration of the data. Of note was the geographical location of Georgia was given a code of 13 by the CB.

Table 5. *Statistical Variables*

Ascriptive Variable	Scale of Measurement	Code	Illustration
Gender	Nominal	1 = Male 2 = Female	Bar chart with employed and unemployed over 10 years by gender

Table 5. *Statistical Variables(Continued)*

Ascriptive Variable	Scale of Measurement	Code	Illustration
Age	Interval	Age in years from 16 to 80	Bar chart with employed and unemployed over 10 years by age
Ethnicity	Nominal	1 = White 2 = Black 3 = Hispanic	Bar chart with employed and unemployed over 10 years by ethnicity
Employment Status	Nominal	1 = Employed 2 = Unemployed	
Years	Nominal	1 = First Prosperity 2 = First Recession 3 = Second Prosperity 4 = Second Recession	
Recession Years Only	Nominal	1 = First Recession 2 = Second Recession	

The data analyses for these functions are outlined in Tables 6-8 for answering each hypothesis. Descriptive statistics were used to ensure accuracy of data input, to flag any missing data, outliers, and determine adequacy of fit for this method of investigation (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005). The individual responses for each attribute were entered into SPSS to correlate the data as it relates to relationships and inference of ascriptive inequality.

Bar charts depicting the employed and unemployed for years 2000-2010 were created for gender, age groups, and ethnicity with X axis for employment percentage rate, and Y axis for year, and one bar representing each variable per year. Each age group for

both men and women combined, for each year from 2000-2010 showing the numbers of each age group hired with six bar charts were created.

Table 6. *Hypothesis 1 and Measurements*

Hypothesis	Variable	Independent or Dependent	Scale of Measurement	Test or Measurement to be Used
H1: There is relationship between ascriptive attributes and employment status in Gwinnett County, Georgia as noted in the United States Census Bureau database.	Employment Status –	Dependent	Nominal	<i>t</i> test
	Employed			Cross Tabulation
	Unemployed			Chi-square
	Attributes –	Independent		-observed
	Gender		Nominal	-expected
	Age		Interval	
	Ethnicity		Nominal	

Table 7. *Hypothesis 2 and Measurements*

Hypothesis	Variable	Independent or Dependent	Scale of Measurement	Test or Measurement to be Used
H2: There is a significant change in the relationship between ascriptive attributes and employment status during the 2001 recession versus a nonrecession in Gwinnett County, Georgia as noted in the United States Census Bureau database.	Employment Status –	Dependent	Categorical	Binary Logistic Regression
	Employed			
	Unemployed			
	Attributes –			
	Gender	Independent	Categorical	
	Male			
	Female			
	Age in years from 16 to 90	Independent	Interval	



Table 7. *Hypothesis 2 and Measurements (Continued)*

Hypothesis	Variable	Independent or Dependent	Scale of Measurement	Test or Measurement to be Used
	Ethnicity White Black Hispanic	Independent	Categorical	
	Economic Condition Recession 2001 Non-recession 2000	Independent	Categorical - 2 groups recession vs. non-recession	

Table 8. *Hypothesis 3 and Measurements*

Hypothesis	Variable	Independent or Dependent	Scale of Measurement	Test or Measurement to be Used
H3: There is a significant change in the relationship between attributes and employment status during the 2008-2010 recessions versus a nonrecession in Gwinnett County, Georgia as noted in the United States Census Bureau database.	Employment Status – Employed Unemployed	Dependent	Categorical	Binary Logistic Regression
	Attributes – Gender Male Female	Independent	Categorical	
	Age in years from 16 to 80	Independent	Interval	
	Ethnicity White Black Hispanic	Independent	Categorical	

Table 8. *Hypothesis 3 and Measurements (Continued)*

Hypothesis	Variable	Independent or Dependent	Scale of Measurement	Test or Measurement to be Used
	Economic Condition Recession 2008 to 2010 Non-recession 2002 to 2007	Independent	Categorical - 2 groups recession vs. non-recession	

Table 9. *Hypothesis 4 and Measurements*

Hypothesis	Variable	Independent or Dependent	Scale of Measurement	Test or Measurement to be Used
H4: There is a significant difference in the employment status based on ascribed attributes of individuals in Gwinnett County, Georgia between recession periods of 2001 versus 2008-2010 as noted in the United States Census Bureau database.	Employment Status – Employed Unemployed	Dependent	Categorical	Binary Logistic Regression
	Attributes – Gender Male Female	Independent	Categorical	
	Age in years from 16 to 90	Independent	Interval	
	Ethnicity White Black Hispanic	Independent	Categorical	
	Economic Condition Recession 2008 to 2010 Non-recession 2002 to 2007	Independent	Categorical - 2 groups recession vs. non-recession	

## Validity and Reliability

The CB and BLS is considered a reliable and valid source for supplying population data (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006; Wallace, 1998). This measure scale is valid because it measures the collected data that it was intended to measure (Wallace, 1998). The information collected for the research study was from a third party, therefore researcher bias was removed. This nonbias strengthens research impartiality of the results. The data collected from the participants was given voluntarily and during specific periods. The method and the process of data collection have been consistent throughout the years (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). However, there are occasions when adjustments are necessary in the process (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). When that occurs, any changes are noted within the database. The change and the date of the change are also noted. As previously stated, there are several databases that share, analyze, and report the data, this also ensures that the collected data is valid through crosschecking. The surveys used for the data collection are from database that have been tested, validated, and revised throughout the years as necessary (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.). The criterion and available information for each database is presented on the BLS website. Error percentages, although small, exist and are factored into the population for incorrect information and human error (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006).

More specifically, the study sought to analyze patterns of employment status during two defined periods. The patterns were assimilated based upon the contents of and data obtained from the CPS. The patterns for each variable were described. Collecting and disseminating data from the selected state allowed the researcher to

analyze the disparity of employment in a metropolitan location (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006).

### **Ethical Consideration**

Authorized persons who have taken a pledge of confidentiality collect the data for BLS (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). To maintain data integrity the data prepared for release to the public must be cleared for release and personal identifiable information of participants is only accessible to those who are authorized (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). An authorized person includes only those who are responsible for the collection, processing, or use the data to further statistical purposes (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). In addition, authorized persons sign a contract/document that gives them permission to receive data (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). These documents state the purpose for which the data was used and that the BLS confidentiality policy was followed (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006).

More specifically, the aggregate data used for this study collected by the U.S. Census Bureau assures the participants that any personal information collected during the person-to-person interview is confidential and only accessible by authorized personnel. In addition, variable coding is changed to keep the integrity of the data being anonymous (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Due to the data used for this study was retrieved from public information, there was no human participants, ethical constraints that pertain to the data collection process or analysis of the data were minimal.

## **Permission**

The BLS and CB websites give written permission, as stated in BLS's mission statement (see Appendix A) and in the CB's mission statement (see Appendix B). Therefore, the public has permission to download and manipulate the data at will. Furthermore, permission to conduct the research through Capella University Internal Review Board (IRB) was requested using the IRB Records Based Research Application.

## **Summary**

In Chapter 3, an explanation of the research problem was presented along with the questions to be answered and the hypothesis linked to each question. The research design and data collection section outlined what collection method was used and permissions required. The hypotheses were designed to determine if there were a disproportionate number of ascribed characteristics impacted during a recession versus a nonrecession in Gwinnett County, Georgia. The results of this study are presented in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5, the results are reviewed with conclusions and recommendations expressed for future study.

## **CHAPTER 4. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

Chapter 4 provides a comprehensive analysis of data collected from the United States Census Bureau (CB) database related to the research questions of this study. Descriptive statistics are provided for the population of the study along with statistical analysis of the data related to the four hypotheses. The purpose of this ex post facto design case study with a quantitative methodology was to explore the relationship between key ascriptive characteristics and employment status in Gwinnett County, Georgia. Additionally, evaluated was the significance of change between ascriptive characteristics and employment status in Gwinnett County, Georgia during two recessionary periods compared with two non-recessionary periods. Both recessionary periods were further examined for significance of differences in relationship to ascribed characteristics compared with employment status in Gwinnett County, Georgia. A summary of the data results are presented in Chapter 5.

### **Data Collection Tool/Preparation**

Data was extracted from the CB database using the Federated Electronic Research, Review, Extraction, and Tabulation Tool (FERRETT). The data was collected for three different categories: gender, age, and ethnicity during a ten-year period (2000 to 2010). During the decade from 2000 to 2010, 16,899 people met the criteria of employability as outlined in Chapter 3.

The data collected from the CB database was analyzed using SPSS 20. Table 10 shows the description of the variables used when setting up the database in SPSS. All 16,899 participants for the 10-year period were included in the study.

Table 10. *Description of Study Variables*

Variable	Description
Gender	1 = Female 2 = Male
Race	1 = White 2 = Black 3 = Hispanic
Age	Chronological Age in Years (16-80)
Recession/Nonrecession (Early/Late)	1 = 2000 First Prosperity 2 = 2001 First Recession 3 = 2002-2003 First Prosperity 4 = 2004-2007 Second Prosperity 5 = 2008-2010 Second Recession
Recession (Yes or No)	1 = Recession Year 2 = Nonrecession Year
Employment Status	1 = Employed 2 = Unemployed

### Ascriptives Statistics by Year

This section evaluates ascriptive characteristics by year. The ascriptive statistics were obtained for the years 2000 to 2010 as listed in Table 11. Of those completing the census over the decade (16,899), there were slightly more males than females. Over the ten-year span, 55.4% ( $N = 9,358$ ) of the subjects were male and 44.6% ( $N = 7,541$ ) were

female (see Table 12). Table 13 provides descriptive information for gender for each individual year, which shows there were more men than women.

Table 11. *Ten-Year Population Distribution*

Years 2000 to 2010 of Population Distribution				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
2010	1951	11.5	11.5	11.5
2009	1798	10.6	10.6	22.2
2008	1834	10.9	10.9	33.0
2007	2004	11.9	11.9	44.9
2006	2164	12.8	12.8	57.7
2005	1698	10.0	10.0	67.7
2004	1237	7.3	7.3	75.1
2003	1005	5.9	5.9	81.0
2002	1048	6.2	6.2	87.2
2001	1051	6.2	6.2	93.4
2000	1109	6.6	6.6	100.0
Total	16899	100.0	100.0	

Table 12. *Gender Distribution*

Gender					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	9358	55.4	55.4	55.4
	Female	7541	44.6	44.6	100.0
	Total	16899	100.0	100.0	



Table 13. *Gender Distribution 2000 to 2010*

Years 2000 to 2010 * Gender Cross Tabulation				
		Gender		
		Male	Female	Total
Years 2000 to	2010	1,058	893	1,951
		54.2%	45.8%	100.0%
2010	2009	954	844	1,798
		53.1%	46.9%	100.0%
	2008	988	846	1,834
		53.9%	46.1%	100.0%
	2007	1,066	938	2,004
		53.2%	46.8%	100.0%
	2006	1,293	871	2,164
		59.8%	40.2%	100.0%
	2005	997	701	1,698
		58.7%	41.3%	100.0%
	2004	685	552	1,237
		55.4%	44.6%	100.0%
	2003	533	472	1,005
		53.0%	47.0%	100.0%
	2002	549	499	1,048
		52.4%	47.6%	100.0%
	2001	587	464	1,051
		55.9%	44.1%	100.0%
	2000	648	461	1,109
		58.4%	41.6%	100.0%
Total		9,358	7,541	16,899

Over the decade, as the number of males and females fluctuated, the change appeared to be at the same rate of approximately 1.1% to 1.2%. There appeared to be a slight decrease in the number of census participants in 2003. In 2005, there was an increase of both males and females. However, the number of females was still approximately two-times less than that of males in 2006. This difference continued to

increase up to 2007. The recession years of 2008 to 2010 looked similar to previous years in that the percentage of gender participants was less overall, but the difference between male and female participants remained constant. The peak year for male participants was 2006 and the peak year for female participants was 2007.

Age distribution ranged from 16 to 80 years (see Table 14). The mean age was 39, the median age was 38, and the mode was 33, with a standard deviation of 12.32. With a mean age of 39, the statistics suggest that Gwinnett County is home to career aged people.

Table 14. *Statistics for Chronological Age*

		Age
N	Valid	16,899
	Missing	0
Mean		39.00
Median		38.00
Mode		33
Std. Deviation		12.322
Minimum		16
Maximum		80

Upon evaluation of ethnicity, there were significantly more Whites than either Blacks or Hispanics. Table 15 shows the ethnicity distribution: 65.2% ( $N = 11,019$ ) White, 20.4% ( $N = 3,444$ ) Black and 14.4% ( $N = 2,436$ ) Hispanic. The years with the greatest participation in the census were 2006 and 2007. The years with the least number of participants in the census were 2002 and 2003. It is important to note that the increase

in participation during 2006 and 2007 was possibly influenced by a population increase during those years.

Table 15. *Ethnic Distribution*

		Ethnicity			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	White	11,019	65.2	65.2	65.2
	Black	3,444	20.4	20.4	85.6
	Hispanic	2,436	14.4	14.4	100.0
	Total	16,899	100.0	100.0	

Table 16 provides descriptive data and percentages for ethnicity from 2000 to 2010. The data indicated there was a higher number of Whites at 65.2%. This documents that although the overall population is diverse, Caucasians still predominately populate Gwinnett County. In several instances, such as in 2000 and 2003, the numbers of Black and Hispanic participants increased. Although the number of census participants increased in 2005, the number of Whites did not significantly change, but there was a sustained increase in the number of Blacks and Hispanics from 2005 forward.

Table 16. *Ethnicity Distribution 2000 to 2010*

		Years 2000 to 2010 * Ethnicity Cross Tabulation			
		Ethnicity			Total
Years 2000 to		White	Black	Hispanic	
2010		1,151	493	307	1,951
		59.0	25.3	15.7	
2009		1,110	438	250	1,798
		61.7	24.4	13.9	
2008		1,106	438	290	1,834
		60.3	23.9	15.8	
2007		1,204	442	358	2,004
		60.1	22.1	17.9	
2006		1,277	440	447	2,164
		59.0	20.3	20.7	
2005		1,027	375	296	1,698
		60.5	22.1	17.4	
2004		829	215	193	1,237
		67.0	17.4	15.6	
2003		746	159	100	1,005
		74.2	15.8	10.0	
2002		834	175	39	1,048
		79.6	16.7	3.7	
2001		826	159	66	1,051
		78.6	15.1	6.3	
2000		909	110	90	1,109
		82.0	9.9	8.1	
<b>Total</b>		<b>11,019</b>	<b>3,444</b>	<b>2,436</b>	<b>16,899</b>

### Employment Status Statistics by Year

This section looks at employment status by year from 2000 to 2010. Employment status of persons employed and unemployed remained stable between years 2000 and 2005 (see Table 17). In 2000, the data revealed the number of persons employed was

1,109. By 2006, that number had increased to 2,164. However, as the 2008 recession began, that number decreases by 210 (9.32%) to 1,951.

Table 17. *Employment Status and Unemployment from 2000 to 2010*

Years 2000 to 2010 Employment Status				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
2010	1,951	11.5	11.5	11.5
2009	1,798	10.6	10.6	22.2
2008	1,834	10.9	10.9	33.0
2007	2,004	11.9	11.9	44.9
2006	2,164	12.8	12.8	57.7
2005	1,698	10.0	10.0	67.7
2004	1,237	7.3	7.3	75.1
2003	1,005	5.9	5.9	81.0
2002	1,048	6.2	6.2	87.2
2001	1,051	6.2	6.2	93.4
2000	1,109	6.6	6.6	100.0
Total	16,899	100.0	100.0	

### Hypothesis Testing and Data Analysis

This section outlines the research questions and hypotheses and provides the statistical analysis used, the rationale, and the results. SPSS statistics 20 Grad Pack was used to run all statistical analyses. The specific statistics used will be discussed with each individual hypothesis.

## Research Question 1

Is there an association between ascribed attributes of age, gender, and ethnicity and employment status in Gwinnett County, Georgia?

H1<sub>o</sub>: There is no relationship between ascribed attributes and employment status in Gwinnett County, Georgia as noted in the United States Census Bureau database.

H1<sub>a</sub>: There is a relationship between ascribed attributes and employment status in Gwinnett County, Georgia as noted in the United States Census Bureau database.

## Age

A *t* test was used to test Hypothesis 1 to test for an association between age and employment status. A *t* test was selected to determine if there was a relationship between age and employment status because the mean and standard deviation were known (Gamble, 2001). A *t* test was appropriate for this study because it is a commonly used method to evaluate the differences in means between two groups, one nominal and one measurement variable (McDonald, 2009). A *t* test looks for the association between variables, not causality. For example, “You could do a t-test, comparing the cholesterol levels of the women who had heart attacks vs. those who didn't, and that would be a perfectly reasonable way to test the null hypothesis that cholesterol level is not associated with heart attacks...” (McDonald, 2009, para. 3). Table 18 shows the variability between the group statistics of employment status and age. The average age of individuals employed in the decade was 39 years old ( $N = 15,815$ ). Whereas, the average age for

those unemployed was 37 years old ( $N = 1084$ ). The Levene's test  $F$  value, as noted in Table 19, was 1.157 with a  $z$  value of 4.757 and the sig. of .000 is not significant. The  $p$  value of 000 is less than  $\alpha = .05$  between the mean of two groups of employed and unemployed. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative was accepted.

Table 18. *Group Statistics Age Showing the Mean (Average), Age of Samples, Employment and Unemployment*

Group Statistics				
Employment Status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Age Employed	15,815	39.12	12.281	.098
Unemployed	1,084	37.28	12.787	.388

Table 19. *t Test Age*

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		$t$ Test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff	Std. Error Diff	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Upper	
A	Equal variances assumed	1.157	.282	4.755	16897	.000	1.838	.387	1.081	2.596
	Equal variances not assumed			4.591	1223.942	.000	1.838	.400	1.053	2.624

## Gender

A cross tabulation was selected as the appropriate analysis for testing the association between employment status, gender, and ethnicity because it is the quantitative method that analyzes relationships between two or more variables (Norušis, 2006). A cross tabulation is used in conjunction with the chi-square test for two reasons: to test for nominal (categorical) data and because it also serves to determine whether a relationship exist between two categorical variables (Norušis, 2006). To test for gender and ethnicity in Hypothesis 1, Norušis (2006) also suggested using a cross tabulation test to determine the number of instances of an occurrence during a specific amount of time. Therefore, to determine the number of instances that certain ascribed characteristics of gender and ethnicity were unemployed during specific points in time, a cross tabulation analysis was run (see Table 20). To determine if a relationship existed between two categorical variables a chi-square analysis was used to validate the assumption (Norušis, 2006). A Pearson chi-square with a value of 10.488 with a significance  $p$  value of .001, which is less than the alpha of .05, indicated a significant relationship between gender and employment status (see Table 21). There were greater percentages of females unemployed at 7.7% to males at 5.9%.

The cross tabulation and chi-square test showed that there is a significant association between gender and employment status. The cross tabulation showed that there were more males employed than there were females. The chi-square validated the significance in the relationship between gender and employment status. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between ascribed attributes and employment



status in Gwinnett County, Georgia as noted in the United States Census Bureau database was rejected.

Table 20. *Cross Tabulation Gender*

Gender * Employment Status Cross Tabulation				
		Employment Status		
		Employed	Unemployed	Total
Gender	Male	8,809	549	9,358
	Female	7,006	535	7,541
Total		15,815	1,084	16,899

Table 21. *Chi-square Gender*

Chi-Square Tests					
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.488 <sup>a</sup>	1	.001		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	10.285	1	.001		
Likelihood Ratio	10.437	1	.001		
Fisher's Exact Test				.001	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	10.488	1	.001		
N of Valid Cases	16,899				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 483.72.  
b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

## Ethnicity

A cross tabulation with a chi-square validation was also used to determine the relationship between ethnicity and employment status. Table 22 shows the cross

tabulation for ethnicity. Over the decade of focus for this study, there were 10,500 Whites, 3,100 Blacks, and 2,250 Hispanics employed. There were 532 Whites, 360 Blacks, and 192 Hispanics unemployed. Table 23 shows the Pearson chi-square results of 148.501 with a significance  $p$  value in of .000, which is less than the alpha value of .05, indicating that a significant relationship exists between employment status and ethnicity. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative was accepted.

Table 22. *Cross Tabulation Ethnicity*

Ethnicity * Employment Status Cross Tabulation				
		Employment Status		
		Employed	Unemployed	Total
Ethnicity	White	10,487	532	11,019
	Black	3,084	360	3,444
	Hispanic	2,244	192	2,436
Total		15,815	1,084	16,899

Table 23. *Chi-square Ethnicity*

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	148.501 <sup>a</sup>	2	.000
Likelihood Ratio	137.960	2	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	81.195	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	16,899		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 156.26.

The overall findings for Hypothesis 1 are that there was a relationship between ascribed attributes of gender, age, and ethnicity, and employment in Gwinnett County, Georgia. In this instance, the null hypothesis was rejected for the independent variables of gender, age, and ethnicity. The statistical analysis showed that the unemployment number based on gender was not as that significantly different. However, over the ten-year period it appears that men are unemployed in larger numbers than women. Upon closer examination, taking variation of numbers of participants, women had a higher rate of unemployment at 7.1%, whereas male unemployment was 5.9%. The unemployment rate was higher for those who were 37, which was the mean age. Analysis of the data revealed unemployment for Blacks throughout the ten-year period was higher at 1.05 percent compared to the other two ethnicities of White and Hispanic, which were .48% and .79% respectively.

## **Research Question 2**

Will the relationship between ascribed attributes of gender, age, ethnicity and employment status significantly change during recession versus nonrecession years in Gwinnett County, Georgia?

H2<sub>o</sub>: There is no significant change in the relationship between ascribed attributes and employment status during the 2001 recession versus a nonrecession in Gwinnett County, Georgia as noted in the United States Census Bureau database.

H2<sub>a</sub>: There is a significant change in the relationship between ascribed attributes and employment status during the 2001 recession versus a

nonrecession in Gwinnett County, Georgia as noted in the United States Census Bureau database.

H3<sub>o</sub>: There is no significant change in the relationship between ascribed attributes and employment status during the 2008-2010 recessions versus a nonrecession in Gwinnett County, Georgia as noted in the United States Census Bureau database.

H3<sub>a</sub>: There is a significant change in the relationship between ascribed attributes and employment status during the 2008-2010 recessions versus a nonrecession in Gwinnett County, Georgia as noted in the United States Census Bureau database.

Several models were examined to determine which model would be suitable to analyze Question 2 and to test the hypotheses. To assess the significance of difference in the relationship of the independent variables of gender, age, ethnicity, and time period (predictor variable of employment status) upon the dependent variable (studied outcome), Hartman (2000) suggested that a binomial logistic regression was appropriate. This method is used for modeling of dichotomous categorical outcomes, such as employed versus unemployed (Guido, Winter, & Rains, 2006) in addition to looking at, in this instance, the relative probability that gender, age, ethnicity, and year have on the affect of employment status. This analysis was also selected because the dependent variable and some of the independent variables are categorical (Tranmer & Elliot, 2008). A binary logistic regression analysis generates several output tables. However, only the output tables applicable to the analysis of this study are presented.

Table 24 indicates the probability of obtaining a chi-square probability of 374.026 if there is no effect of the independent variables taken together on the dependent variable (Anderson, 1982). It also indicates how well the model fits the data. In this instance, the *p* value of .000 indicates the model is statistically significant. More specifically, that the independent variables of gender, age, ethnicity, and years predict the dependent variable of employment status well. Table 25, the model summary shows how variance was allotted for in the model. Table 26 shows the Wald chi-square significance statistic *p* value less than the alpha of .05. Once again, the null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, there was a significant change in the relationship between ascribed attributes and employment status during the 2008-2010 recessions versus nonrecession years of 2004 to 2007 in Gwinnett County, Georgia as noted in the United States Census Bureau database. Hypothesis 4 was examined separately.

Table 24. *Probability Fit Model*

	Chi-square	df	Sig.
Step	374.026	7	.000
Step 1 Block	374.026	7	.000
Model	374.026	7	.000

Table 25. *Model Summary*

Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
1	7677.525 <sup>a</sup>	.022	.058

a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 6 because parameter estimates changed by less than .001.

Table 26. *Variables in the Equation*

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Gender(1)	-.149	.064	5.355	1	.021	.862
Age	-.011	.003	17.037	1	.000	.989
Race			93.206	2	.000	
Race(1)	-.414	.090	21.117	1	.000	.661
Step 1 <sup>a</sup> Race(2)	.280	.096	8.542	1	.003	1.323
RecNonRecYear			216.365	3	.000	
RecNonRecYear(1)	-1.105	.108	104.375	1	.000	.331
RecNonRecYear(2)	-.998	.168	35.357	1	.000	.369
RecNonRecYear(3)	-.869	.071	149.326	1	.000	.420
Constant	-1.466	.131	124.654	1	.000	.231

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Gender, Age, Race, RecNonRecYear.

Looking at the Cox & Snell R square value of .022, the four independent variables in the logistic model together account for 2.2 percent of the explanation for whether a person is employed or not. The pseudo R-square indicates there may be other significant factors involved when determining employment status not included in this model, which indicates how much each of the independent variables contribute to variation in the dependent variable when controlling for other variables. When looking at the independent variable gender, controlling for differences in age, race, and period of time, the likelihood of being a female and unemployed increases by .862. When looking at the independent variable of age, each year older in age the likelihood of being unemployed controlling for factors of difference in race, and period of time, increased by 98.9 percent. The likelihood of being unemployed increased for Blacks by more than half at 1.323 when controlling for difference in gender, age, and period of time.

#### Hypothesis 4

H4<sub>o</sub>: There is no significant difference in the employment status based on ascribed attributes of individuals in Gwinnett County, Georgia between the two recession periods of 2001 versus 2008-2010 as noted in the United States Census Bureau database.

H4<sub>a</sub>: There is a significant difference in the employment status based on ascribed attributes of individuals in Gwinnett County, Georgia between the two recession periods of 2001 versus 2008-2010 as noted in the United States Census Bureau database.

A binary logistic regression analysis was also used to evaluate Hypothesis 4. Table 27 shows the probability of obtaining a chi-square of 113.946 if there was no effect of the independent variables being related to the dependent variable (Anderson, 1982). Additionally, it indicates how well the model fits the data. This table shows that the independent variables are related to employment status. In Table 28, the model summary shows how variance was allotted for in the model with a 2-log likelihood of 4073.08, a Cox and Snell R square of .017, and a Nagelkerke R square of .036. Table 29 shows the Wald chi-square of 2.506 with a significance statistic *p* value of .113, which is greater than the alpha of .05, indicating that gender is not significantly related to employment status for either recessionary period (2001 or 2008 to 2010). Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted. The Wald chi-square significance statistic *p* value .077, which is greater than the alpha of .05, indicates that the ethnicity of one group is not significant to employment status for either recessionary period (2001 or 2008 to 2010). Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted. In other words, the selected variables are irrelevant to

determining employment status. However, some variables such as race were more significantly related than gender, age, and specified period in determining employment status in Gwinnett County Georgia.

The Wald chi-square significance statistic  $p$  value for age was less than the alpha value of .05 at 0.24. In this instance, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate accepted, which means that age was a major determining factor and that there were significant differences between age and employment status during both the recession year of 2001 and the recession years of 2008 to 2010 in Gwinnett County, Georgia. In addition, the  $p$  value for the first and second recession is less than the alpha value of .05. Taken into consideration with the  $p$  values of the other three variables of gender, age, and ethnicity, there was a significant difference between employment statuses of ethnicity and age between both recessionary periods. However, there was not a significant difference between one predictor variable of gender and that of age and ethnicity. There was, however, a significant difference in employment during both recession years based on ascriptive characteristics of .000, which is less than the  $p$  value of .05. The fourth null hypothesis was rejected, although, gender did not show as significantly determining employment status during both recessions with a  $p$  value of .113. The null hypothesis was rejected, however, because the subsequent  $p$  values were less than the alpha of .05 as well as for the first and second recessionary periods. The significance of difference in employment status was based on ascribed attributes between the two recession periods, the  $p$  value of .000 for the first and second recessions were less than the alpha of .05. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted.



Table 27. *Probability Fit Model*

		Chi-square	df	Sig.
	Step	113.946	5	.000
Step 1	Block	113.946	5	.000
	Model	113.946	5	.000

Table 28. *Model Summary*

Step 1	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
	4073.084 <sup>a</sup>	.017	.036

a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 6 because parameter estimates changed by less than .001.

Table 29. *Variables in the Equation*

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Gender(1)	.135	.086	2.506	1	.113	1.145
Age	-.008	.004	5.114	1	.024	.992
Race			45.083	2	.000	
Step 1 <sup>a</sup>						
Race(1)	-.406	.119	11.566	1	.001	.666
Race(2)	.225	.127	3.131	1	.077	1.252
FirstSecondRec	1.013	.168	36.285	1	.000	2.753
Constant	-3.750	.370	102.643	1	.000	.024

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Gender, Age, Race, FirstSecondRec.

## Summary

There were four hypotheses tested for this study.  $H1_0$  was tested using a  $t$  test with Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, chi-square, and a chi-square and was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted.  $H2_0$  through  $H4_0$  were tested using a binomial logistic regression. The outcome of these analyses was that  $H2_0$ ,  $H3_0$ , and  $H4_0$  were rejected and the alternate hypotheses were accepted. These analyses will be further discussed and summarized in Chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

The objective of this study was to determine if there was a significant difference in employment levels for specific groups based on ascriptive characteristics of gender, age, or ethnicity in the recession of years 2001 and 2008-2010 versus immediately preceding nonrecession years in Gwinnett County, Georgia. It was proposed that if significant differences were found, organization hiring practices and state and federal laws could be reviewed and possibly changed to address employment inequalities. Chapter 5 includes a summary of the results, a discussion of the results of the four hypotheses used to answer the two research questions, a discussion of limitations, and recommendations for future study.

Although studies have been conducted on employment status and ascriptive characteristics of gender, age, and ethnicity (Albelda and Kelleher, 2010; Eichner, 1988; Ridgeway, 1977; Williams, 1985), these studies have been national in scope, and few have focused on how those variables changed during recessions (Bell & Blanchflower, 2010; Berthoud, 2009; Elsbj, Hobijn & Sahin, 2010; Grown & Tas, 2010; Sum & Khatiwada, 2009; Sierminska & Takhtamanova, 2010; Wall, 2009; Weller & Fields, 2011). To address these research gaps, this study focused on one specific county within the United States. Gwinnett County, Georgia, was the county chosen for the study, which was undertaken to compare ascriptive characteristics and employment between nonrecession and recession periods.

Understanding the relationship between variables is the basic goal of scientific analysis (StatSoft, Inc., 2011). This quantitative case study utilized secondary analysis of census data available from the CB. This study was supported by, and added to the

understanding of conflict theory (Brief et al., 2005; Reskin 2003), national gender studies (Rampell, 2009; Sahin, Song, & Hobijn, 2010; Sierminska & Takhtamanova, 2010; Wall, 2009), research about aging and employment (Barnett, 2004; Levanon & Cheng, 2011; Nelson, 2005), employment and ethnicity (Mong & Roscigno, 2009; Weller & Fields, 2011), as well as employment research that considered factors of perceptions, stereotypes, and ascriptive inequality (Blau; 1977; Reskin, 2003; Ridgeway, 1997).

### **Presentation of Hypotheses and Discussion**

This section contains a review of each of the four hypotheses with a discussion of the findings from statistical analyses. Each hypothesis will be provided, followed by a short recap of the analytical findings from Chapter 4. Each recap will be followed by an overview of the significance of the findings.

#### **Hypothesis 1**

The first hypothesis sought to determine if a relationship existed between ascribed attributes and employment status in Gwinnett County, Georgia. As discussed in Chapter 4, a significant relationship between ascribed attributes of gender ( $p = .001$ ), age ( $p = .000$ ), and ethnicity ( $p = .000$ ), with employment was found. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected and it was accepted that there is a significant relationship between ascribed attributes and employment status in Gwinnett County, Georgia.

This finding was interesting and enlightening because the results were quite similar to studies conducted on the national level that also found a relationship between ascriptive attributes and employment practices (Brief et al., 2005; Purcell, 2007; Reskin,

2000, 2003; Sum & Khatiwada, 2009; Wall, 2009; Williams, 1985). Research (Patrick, 2011; Stainback & Irvin, 2011) indicates that since employers tend to favor familiarity when hiring, this may be more pronounced in a recession and contribute to a marginalization of specific groups due to age, gender, and ethnicity.

Highlighting a statistically significant relationship between ascribed attributes and employment status on a more local level may be of importance for employers, particularly in an area such as Gwinnett County, Georgia. As discussed previously Gwinnett County is an area with a large agriculture industry, a Coca-Cola Company plant, and a large retail and tourist attraction with the Mall of Georgia. These industries are large employers, of course, but what also needs to be taken into account are the supportive State and County support necessary for these industries to remain viable, particularly the maintenance of roads and other infrastructure. Because males are more often employed in construction and heavy machinery laden jobs than are women, males they are also more negatively impacted during a recession.

Where there are large industries and employers such as those in Gwinnett County, recessions will likely affect many people and ascriptive characteristics have been found to be at the heart of social and work conflict (Tarantelli & Willke, 1981). The theoretical framework of this study suggests that a domino effect occurs when a person perceives something about another, which may lead to cultural stereotyping based on one's ascription (Jussim, Eccles, & Madon, 1996; Katz & Braly, 1933; Madon et al., 1998; Postman, 1953; Reskin, 2000, 2003; Robinson, 1983; Swann, 1984). Obviously, unaware organizations could be at risk of litigation or labor strikes if they remain oblivious that they may be making decisions based on ascriptive characteristics. Additionally, these

practices can lead to isms, bias, and segregation, thereby affecting a person's position in society. Such stratification could be exacerbated during economic downturns, affecting a person's overall ability to gain employment (Brief et al., 2005; Reskin, 2003).

### **Hypotheses 2 and 3**

The second and third hypotheses were advanced to determine if there was a significant relationship between ascribed attributes of gender, age, and ethnicity with regard to employment status during recession years versus nonrecession periods specifically within Gwinnett County, Georgia. The second hypothesis focused on the 2001 recession period and the nonrecession period one year before and two years after 2001. The third hypothesis focused on the 2008 recession period and the nonrecession period preceding 2008. Binary logistic regression analyses, as discussed in Chapter 4 indicated significant relationships existed with regard to employment status during recession versus a nonrecession periods in Gwinnett County, Georgia. Thus, the null hypotheses were rejected and the alternative hypotheses were accepted that there is a significant relationship between ascribed attributes of gender, age, and ethnicity with regard to employment status during recession versus a nonrecession periods in Gwinnett County, Georgia. A binary logistic regress analyzed the significance of relationship between all four independent variables of gender, age, ethnicity, and recession and nonrecession years. Each ascribed attribute will be discussed below for recession years 2001 and 2007 together.

**Gender.** Wall (2009) pointed out that studies on recession and employment status related to gender have been conducted since 1969, providing evidence of a continual interest in and awareness of the relationship between these two variables. Results of statistical testing for this study indicated a significant relationship between gender and unemployment during economic downturns, and this finding aligned with previous research. For example, studies on gender employment in the literature showed that a greater percentage of woman than men were employed in the United States during the 2001 recession comparing it to the 2007 recession (Rampell, 2009; Sierminska & Takhtamanova, 2010; Wall, 2009). One such study conducted by Wall (2009) compared the 2001 gender recession unemployment rate to the 2007 gender recession unemployment rate and found that men were negatively impacted in greater numbers during recession periods. Wall (2009) also noted that by the 2001 recession more women had entered the workforce, suggesting that the 2001 recession is a more relevant baseline to compare with the 2007 recession. His study indicated that although male unemployment numbers remained significantly higher than for females, it was due in part to industry dynamics that favored females working in lower paying jobs. A reason noted for this disparity was that women were more likely to work part-time jobs as well as jobs that require soft skills such as, sales, secretarial, or customer service positions (Hamilton et al., 2011; Rampell, 2009; Sierminska & Takhtamanova, 2010; Wall, 2009).

Male-dominated and higher paying careers such as those in manufacturing, construction, and engineering were more vulnerable to cutbacks during recession periods. Since these same careers are dominant in the focus area of Gwinnett County, Georgia, it follows that men would be more affected than women during recession periods. The

percent of men unemployed (4.1%) was higher than women (3.4%) during the 2001 recession period and unemployment for men (11%) was higher than women (10.2%) during the 2007 recession period. Another interesting study indicated men would be negatively affected before women were affected (Albelda & Kelleher, 2010). This finding is interesting in relation to Gwinnett County because if the higher paying positions were held by men, and men would be the first unemployed, the recession would likely be felt more strongly at a time more closely related to the beginning of the recession, with a gradual lessening due not simply to fewer unemployed later on, but to a smaller amount of salary lost by women who were affected later.

**Age.** Previous researchers had indicated a relationship between employment and age groups existed during economic downturns (Bell & Blanchflower, 2010; Sum & Khatiwada, 2009; Weller & Fields, 2011). Thus, as discussed previously, age was an area of focus as a factor during recession periods in Gwinnett County, Georgia. During the 2001 recession year in Gwinnett County, there were 1,051 participants in the CB database. The age group with the highest employment was between 26-35 years old at 27.3%, and the lowest between 66-75 years old at 1.3%. This outcome could be due in part to the variation in ages of participants in the database from 1 to 53 participants per age range from 16-80. During the 2008 - 2010 recession years in Gwinnett County, the age group with the highest employment was between 36-45 years old at 27.2%, and the lowest between 76-80 years old at .2%. This outcome could be due in part to the variation in ages of participants in the database from 8 to 1,493 participants per age range



from 16-80. This study's findings are in line with the previous literatures showing a significant relationship found between age and employment status during recession. Those persons employed in higher numbers during a recession between the ages of 26-35 may indicate a desire by employers for the optimum balance of recent education, years of experience and maturity for those of that age group (Lahey, 2006). This is also the age range that where employees are settling into a career and starting a family, which could cause an employer to favor hiring or keeping that person (Lahey, 2006). Interestingly, the age group with the highest employment shifted from the 26-35 age range to the 36-45 age range almost a decade later and during the next recession period. This could indicate those who were between the 26-35 age range during the first recession were those that were able to stay employed even during the next recession. It would be logical for a company to keep those employees who have almost a decade of company knowledge and lay off those who have less, employees who are younger than 36, and those employees with higher salaries, or those over 46. It may also be that the group that was 26-35 in the first recession were the more technologically savvy, and more highly educated than those who were entering the workforce during the second recession. As discussed by Gregory (2001), how long someone remains in the workplace voluntarily after 55-65 often depends on education level obtained. The age group with the lowest employment during the 2001 recession was 66-75. This group would also be most likely to not have as much technological knowhow. This supposition is given strength by Forte and Hansvick (1999) who found that a perception by employers of a lack of newer technical skills was a reason for age discrimination. Additionally, the literature supports age discrimination targeted towards the elderly as a cause of unemployment for the elderly (Barnett 2004;

Bernstein, 1990; Finkelstein et al., 1995; Forte & Hansvick, 1999; Johnson & Kawachi, 2007; Nelson, 2005; Williams & Nussbaum, 2001).

**Ethnicity.** The findings of Hypotheses 2 and 3 indicate a significant relationship exists between ethnicity and unemployment during economic downturns, and are aligned with the previous findings cited below. For example Brown and Pagan (1998), found that during the 1990 to 1991 recession, male Mexican-Americans were affected more by unemployment than female Mexican-Americans and other Hispanics. Interestingly there was an increase of 4.1% in employment numbers for Hispanic females that appears to be based on experience and education. Black males showed a 92% decline in their contribution to the labor force statistics during the 1990-1991 recession in the United States. Weller & Fields, (2011), who found that during the 2007 recession Black males were oftentimes unemployed in larger numbers than any other ethnicity concurs with the Brown and Pagan (1998) study. Interestingly the number of employed Black females during the 1990-1991 recession did not follow the pattern of the Hispanic females and show an increase, but the data are unclear as to why this is the case. The present study did not find an increase in Black females and concurs with this finding.

More removed studies such as Williams (1985) found that the employment status of minorities during the 1981 recession was higher for Whites at 46.7% than for minorities at 33.5%, with the exception of teenagers. These findings are interesting considering the time frame of the study in that in 1981 the lack of affirmative action policies would have predicted that more minorities would have been unemployed. Interestingly, the findings of this study do not align with those found by Williams (1985).

This study showed unemployment numbers of 4.8% for Whites and 9.4% for minorities over the 10-years (2000-2010). During the 2001 recession in Gwinnett County, Georgia specifically, Whites were unemployed at 3.6% and minorities at 4.4%, which provides evidence for the direct impact of a recessionary period by ethnicity. Gilens, 2009, Mong & Roscigno (2010) suggest that these findings might indicate an employer preference for a certain ethnicity in hiring during economic downturns. In addition, some minority groups once impacted by unemployment may have a harder time reentering the job market because of location and transportation constraints (“Black Unemployment,” 2009). It is important to note also that perceived discrimination could cause minorities to opt out of completing the CPS.

Weller and Fields (2011) utilizing secondary data found that by the beginning of the 2007 recession Black people had a higher unemployment rate at 8 % to 4% for White people in the United States. However, Sum and Khatiwada (2009) found that at the end of the 2007-2009 recession, Black unemployment had increased to 14% and 11% for Hispanics. White people more heavily populated Gwinnett County, Georgia during the decade of 2000 to 2010 with almost 8,000 Caucasians and 5,000 minorities. This dissertation study showed the unemployment percentage for Blacks was 11%, almost 9 % for Hispanics, and Whites were unemployed at almost 6%. During the 2008 to 2010 recession, the unemployment percentage for Black people was 15%, 13% for Hispanics, and 8% for Whites.

As discussed previously, if groups of people with certain ascribed characteristics are unemployed in larger numbers during specific periods such as recession periods, discriminative practices may be involved (Hamilton et al., 2011; Robert & Harlan, 2006).

Inequalities will tend to persist when an employer has a preference to familiarity in hiring (Patrick, 2011; Stainback & Irvin, 2011). Also as previously discussed, the continued disparity over time may cause conflict.

#### **Hypothesis 4**

This section examines the significance of difference of employment status based on ascribed attributes of individuals during the two recession periods of 2001 and 2008-2010. How other recession comparison studies compare to the results and outcome of this study and the potential opportunity presented in those findings will also be discussed.

The binary logistic regression analysis indicated there was a significant relationship between the 2001 recession versus the 2008-2010 recession ( $p = .000$ ) due to ascribed attributes. However, the independent variables of gender, age, and ethnicity had  $p$  values that were higher than the alpha value of .05 indicating that there was not a significant difference between employment and ascriptive characteristics when both recessionary periods were compared. These results were not surprising in that the study looked at two distinctly different recessions from the perspective of severity. The 2008-2010 recession impacted unemployment numbers more than the 2001 recession. This could have been due, in part, to the number of employable persons increasing from 2001 to 2008 from just over 1,000 to almost 2,000. This finding is supported by Sum and Khatiwada (2009), who found that there were significant differences in employment status of people with ascribed characteristics during each of the six recessions analyzed in their study. This finding of Hypothesis 4 provides additional evidence that each economic downturn provides its own distinct relationship between employment and

employment due to ascribed characteristics. This study, along with previous literature on the effects of recession supports the idea that a relationship continues to exist in varying ways between recession and employment status.

### **Implication of the Study Results**

Economic downturns are part of the economic landscape (U. S. Economy & Global Economic Recession, 2010). There will always be ebbs and flows in the economy. Of concern is how economic conditions unequally impact the employment status of those with certain ascribed characteristics (Reskin, 2000, 2003; Sierminska & Takhtamanova, 2010). Even more concerning is the inequality that exists due to discriminative practices of isms, bias, and segregation. The management question posed by the researcher suggested that desirability of certain ascribed attributes, specifically age, ethnicity, and gender can influence one's employability. For example, gender may be a factor in construction opportunities (Rampell, 2009; Sierminska & Takhtamanova, 2010; Wall, 2009), age may be a factor in positions that require that alcohol be served, firm retirement policies, or eligible programs offered by the government based on age (Bernstein, 1990; Wilkening, 2002) or higher level of technological skills (Forte and Hansvick, 1999) and ethnicity may be a factor in companies that are predominately one race or serve a specific sector in the community (Hamilton et al., 2011).

Several previous studies explored the connection between economic downturns and employment status in general (Allegretto & Lynch, 2010; Belsie, 2010; Brief et al., 2005; Farber, 2010; Farber, 2004; Purcell, 2007; Sum & Khatiwada, 2009). These studies showed high levels of unemployment are prevalent during recessions based on

ascribed characteristics. This research added to these findings by supporting the claim of a relationship between ascribed characteristics and employment status during recession, and it extended the existing research by focusing on one county, Gwinnett County, Georgia. As discussed previously, Gwinnett County, Georgia, an area with a history of discriminatory practices. These results may assist government and corporate entities about the heightened possibility for isms, bias, and segregation during recessions.

Continuing to assess the role that ascriptive characteristics and employment status plays in society during recession can help government and corporate entities explore ways to curtail the negative impacts of inequality during economic recessions. If possible, having anti-discriminatory policies or programs in place may limit the possibility of discriminative practices in the event of an economic downturn and thus ensure equality in hiring. The key will be to determine what interventions can be implemented to help maintain employment that is more equitable during future economic downturns. With respect to the theoretical framework exploring conflict theory, this awareness and understanding of how ascriptive characteristics affect employment opportunities during a recession may reduce the potential of societal conflict. The findings provide evidence that disparity amongst ascribed groups and unemployment is still significant.

### **Limitations of the Study**

When comparing this dissertation research study to the study conducted by Sum and Khatiwada (2009), both were quantitative comparison studies of ascriptive employment during recessionary periods. These authors compared six recessions on the

national level and found significant relationships between ascriptive characteristics, recession, and employment status. This points out a limitation of this dissertation study in that it only looked at two recessions. Looking at several recession periods would have allowed for more comparisons. However, this was not possible due to time and funding constraints. Comparing ascriptive employment over several recessions provides an opportunity to explore a trend of behavior over time. As evident in this and previous research, the fact that there is a significant relationships between the variables and employment slanted towards higher unemployment rates for minorities provides evidence that discriminative practices still exist.

The CB database yielded a sample of almost 17,000 cases with limitations. The research was conducted in Gwinnett County, GA, which although a diversely populated county, the database did not fully reflect this. Specifically there was an overrepresentation in the database of White males, leading to higher percentages of unemployed White males over the 10-year period covered by the database. In this research study, White people represented 82%, Black people 9.9%, and Hispanics 8.1% of the participants in the database. In addition, there were only three independent variables selected for the study. While these variables are identified in the literature as being key, restricting the study to these variables limits the conclusions that can be drawn. Other factors such as the selected location could have caused the effect of the dependent variable.

There are limitations using secondary data (Kiecolt & Nathan, 1985; Sekaran, 2003). For one, there may be errors in the database because of human error in compiling and entering the data. Second, the participants completing the surveys may not answer

all the questions or answer them honestly due to fears or embarrassment (Tourangeau & Yan, 2007). Third, the way the survey was created, may not contain all the variables of interest, thus presenting a limitation in providing data to completely answer the proposed research questions. Finally, the overuse of the same existing secondary data could prove problematic in advancing scientific progress, resulting in limited scope of social science research (Kiecolt & Nathan, 1985; Sekaran, 2003).

Specific to this research study, another limitation was that using secondary data, the study was limited in the scope as well as location. The use of preexisting data for this study did not allow for a human element or interaction, it was strictly data driven. The external validity of the research study was limited in that the results could be significantly different if conducted in other locations and timeframes.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

While research from varying perspectives exists on employment status during economic downturns, opportunities for additional future research are suggested in this section. Other variables such as education, or urban versus rural locations should be considered. In addition, various occupations, locations, and timeframes that might contribute to changes in employability during recessionary periods should be documented. Exploring various occupations based on ascriptive characteristic can give a better perspective regarding occupations/industries that are most impacted by gender, age, or ethnicity, during economic downturns.

Future research studies should be conducted comparing specific geographical locations with differing demographics, because this will allow a more cohesive



understanding of the underlying relationship between ascriptive characteristics and employment status during recessions. In addition, it would be interesting to conduct a comparison study of randomly selected states or locations within the same states and data from standardized population surveys. The benefit would be in providing an opportunity to compare national findings to specific geographical areas, population sizes, and diversified groups. In addition, randomly selecting the locations will add an element of external validity.

Another recommendation would be to conduct interviews. Qualitative interviews add additional value to the study by allowing participants a voice and the ability to describe experiences related to seeking employment. This would add knowledge regarding the more subtle perceptions of how ascriptive characteristics play a part in being hired, or not being hired in specific situations.

### **Conclusion**

Thomas Jefferson (1776) wrote the following in the Declaration of Independence:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and

organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to affect their Safety and Happiness. (p. 1)

The fact that employment equality is still an ongoing discussion in the 21<sup>st</sup> century confirms that more research needs to be conducted. Ascriptive inequality may or may not be due to discriminatory practices or based on discriminatory behaviors; it could simply be personal preference. There is a tendency for people to feel more comfortable with those with whom they have something in common. However, the negative outcomes for those with less in common remain the same. Unemployment based on ascriptive characteristics during economic downturns may perpetuate a problem of inequality that exists in society based on fact or fiction. This means that discriminatory behaviors by those who wield power often make decisions based on, what this researcher terms, the “lifeboat theory.” In times of distress, individuals are saved based on kinship, status, or sameness. This proposed theory stems from what happened during the Titanic catastrophe. On April 15, 1912 when the Titanic sank, first class passengers were considered of more value than those who were in steerage or were workers on the ship. This stratification benefited those at the top because when resources became scarce the ability to acquire those resources shifted towards the favored group. In the instance of the Titanic, shelter from the sinking ship in one of the limited lifeboats became paramount to one’s survival. Yet, in the face of death, discriminatory behaviors were still prevalent. The leaders on the ship determined who would get a seat and who would not, based solely on a passengers ascription and stratification.

Also believed by this researcher and other’s is that one’s perception of other’s is developed early in life (Madon et al., 1998; Mong & Roscigno, 2009; Pearson Education,

1995; Reskin, 2003; Ridgeway, 2001; Robinson, 2004; Snyder et al., 1977. As children, situations are ingrained that can produce a poor or superior self-image and self-worth causing one to be stereotyped or to stereotype others (Fiske et al., 1987; Jackson et al., 1994; Karlins et al., 1969; Sargent, 1981). No matter what ascribed group one fits into, commonalities exist, not just with his or her ascribed group, but the collective.

Inequality, of any kind, should not continue into the next century. More studies, such as that conducted here can illuminate this inequitable situation. In the case of this study and those to come, employment inequality can be addressed.

It is imperative that in the 21st Century employment diversity efforts be continued. Acceptance, inclusion, and equality must be the new mantra as we move forward as a country. Language barriers and fear of differences in skin color, ethnicity, age, or gender, has perpetuated longstanding inequalities in our society. However, those factors can no longer be an excuse for isms, bias, and segregation. The benefits of diversity far outweigh the challenge of overcoming those barriers. One benefit is an opportunity to be exposed to a different perspective, to see life through a different lens, and to be exposed to a wealth of different life experiences. A second benefit is experiencing the different traditions and cultures of different ascribed groups. A third benefit is that diversity opens doors collectively and individually, blending and building stronger relationships over time.

Every human, despite where they come from or how they are different, is valuable. Opening up to diversity can result in an increased possibility for joyous, rich, and peaceful existence among humans. Diversity initiatives have been identified, and adopted within society and the workplace. However, as long as inequality persists there

is a long road ahead to achieving true diversity, not just in the United States, but also throughout the world. Diversity speaks; it is a primal example of nonverbal communication. Diversity is often expressed through our actions. Diversity needs to be modeled in our society by individuals and leaders. This researcher hopes that each individual can step outside their personal comfort zone and do their part in accepting, embracing and experiencing our differences.

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## **APPENDIX A. UNITED STATES BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS MISSION STATEMENT**

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) of the U.S. Department of Labor is the principal Federal agency responsible for measuring labor market activity, working conditions, and price changes in the economy. Our mission is to collect, analyze, and disseminate essential economic information to support public and private decision-making. As an independent statistical agency, BLS serves its diverse user communities by providing products and services that are objective, timely, accurate, and relevant.

Last Modified Date: April 13, 2010



## **APPENDIX B. UNITED STATES CENSUS BUREAU MISSION STATEMENT**

The Census Bureau serves as the leading source of quality data about the nation's people and economy. We honor privacy, protect confidentiality, share our expertise globally, and conduct our work openly. We are guided on this mission by our strong and capable workforce, our readiness to innovate, and our abiding commitment to our customers.

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