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THE IMPACT OF FORMAL EDUCATION, SPECIALIZED TRAINING, AND
OFFENSE TYPE ON PERCEPTIONS OF EMPLOYABILITY: CAN BIAS TOWARD
HIRING A PERSON WITH A CRIMINAL HISTORY BE MITIGATED?

by

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A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate School,
the College of Education and Human Sciences
and the School of Psychology
at The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

Gaining employment for returning citizens has been shown to reduce recidivism and contribute to a successful community reintegration. Yet, many employers remain skeptical when it comes to hiring formerly incarcerated job candidates for a variety of reasons. Though hesitations are often related to assumptions about a person's dangerousness, there remain legitimate reasons, such as limited formal education and basic skills, that prevent returning citizens from finding work. Further, previous research suggests that hiring decisions are confounded by offense type, even if an employer would otherwise consider a person with a criminal history. Thus, it is unclear whether returning citizens' level of education or training can mitigate barriers related to their offense history. Therefore, using hypothetical case vignettes of a formerly incarcerated job applicant, this study aimed to address this gap in the literature by examining whether hiring decisions are influenced by the presence (or absence) of basic education, specialized training, and offense type. A between-subjects design with a sample of 223 individuals were recruited via MTurk. Main effects and interactions were examined using a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA). Results yielded non-significant findings for the examining offense type by education. Results examining offense type, having a GED, and having a vocational certificate, yielded significant findings for vocational certificate status, however there were non-significant results for offense type, GED status, or interactions of GED and vocational certificate. These findings demonstrated the continued stigmatization that persons with a criminal history face when trying to obtain a job, as this study shows that having no formal education, a GED, or a GED and vocational certificate does not matter for hiring decisions. Yet, findings suggest

that individuals with a vocational certificate are viewed to exhibit more positive work expectations. Implication and future directions are provided in the discussion.

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CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

As of 2017, approximately 1.4 million people make up the United States prison population and 418,000 people were admitted on new court commitments (Bronson & Carson, 2019). Around 95% of inmates are eventually released (Atkin & Armstrong, 2013), which results in a large influx of the prison population returning to society, with approximately 80 percent released to parole supervision (Hughes & Wilson, 2020). An enormous amount of research has been devoted to examining recidivism rates, most of which have suggested largely consistent rates over the past two decades. For example, Langan and Levin (2002) conducted a national study examining over 272,000 inmates released in 1994 and found that around 68% of released offenders were re-arrested within three years of being released. A 2018 update of prisoner recidivism found rates similar to those identified by Langan and Levin (2002) over twenty years ago (Alper et al., 2018). These estimates continued to suggest that about 68% of those released re-offend within 3 years, 79% within 6 years, and 83% within 9 years (Alper et al., 2018). Additionally, Nally and colleagues (2014) conducted a 5-year follow-up study from 2005-2009 and found that 32.7% of 684 offenders eventually committed a new crime. Further, they found that an offender's education and post-release employment correlated significantly with recidivism. These findings suggest that returning citizens face many obstacles that increase the likelihood of reoffending if not overcome. As evidenced by Nally et al. (2014), one of the most salient challenges for justice-involved individuals is finding and obtaining legitimate employment. Securing employment after being released directly contributes to a successful transition back into society, reduces the chance of reoffending,

and is essential in their long-term desistance from criminal justice contacts (Atkin & Armstrong, 2013; La Vigne & Kachnowski, 2005).

Effectively managing recidivism among justice-involved persons is a high priority for correctional administrators, policymakers, and the general public. The Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR; Andrews et al., 1990) model has become the most evidence-based model of risk assessment and management. The RNR model is divided into three principles that aim to identify an offender's overall level of risk (and therefore intensity and dosage of interventions required), determine changeable (i.e., dynamic) factors (or needs) that can be targeted in treatment, and deliver interventions in a manner best suited to the learning style and other unique characteristics of the offender (responsivity). The Risk principle of the RNR model (Bonta & Andrews, 2017) is based on research that has identified the variables most predictive of criminal behavior. These factors have been referred to as the "Central Eight" (2017). The "Central Eight" are further divided into the "Big Four" (i.e., criminal history, antisocial personality disorder or traits, antisocial cognitions, and antisocial peer influence) and the "Moderate Four" (i.e., poor work or educational achievement, substance abuse, family or marital problems, and unproductive leisure/recreation time). While core antisocial characteristics are the driving force behind continued criminal activity, poor work or educational achievement is a consistent, significant predictor of recidivism and a number of scholars have underscored that obtaining employment is a key factor for reducing recidivism (Brenda et al., 2005; Sampson & Laub, 2003; Tripodi et al., 2010). When followed, the RNR model has shown to be effective in reducing recidivism among a variety of offender types by up to

35% (e.g., Andrews & Bonta, 2007; Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Andrews & Bonta, 2012; Taxman et al., 2006).

Beyond research supporting the importance of work for successful reintegration into society, most returning citizens on community supervision are mandated to obtain full-time employment within a certain timeframe or risk violating the terms of their supervision, which could lead to fines or reincarceration. Yet, returning citizens may experience difficulty in obtaining employment due to a variety of reasons, including biases held by employers when reporting their criminal record (Graffam et al., 2008), lack of educational requirements (e.g., GED or certifications) and relevant job skills (Ju & Pacha, 2012), or limited accessibility of resources (e.g., transportation, internet access; Batastini et al., 2019). The present study aims to better understand the association between education and training, offense type, and perceptions of employability for job applicants who are justice-involved. The following sections will summarize relevant factors associated with a returning citizen's ability to obtain employment post release and consider the role of offense type.

Bias as a Barrier to Employment

While stable and legal employment plays a crucial part in ensuring a person with a criminal history does not re-offend, the unemployment rate for individuals with a criminal history is significantly higher than the general unemployment rate. This discrepancy was highlighted in a recent Prison Policy Initiative report titled "Out of Prison & Out of Work" in which it was reported that the unemployment rate for those with a criminal history was 27.3% compared to only 5.2% for the general public within the same year (Couloute & Kopf, 2018). One factor contributing to these higher rates of

unemployment are employer perceptions of job applicants with criminal records (e.g., Graffam et al., 2008; Marvin, 2006; Pager, 2003). Research has shown that employer biases toward returning citizens, such as a belief that they lack interpersonal skills and training or would make coworkers and customers uncomfortable, may be contributing to lower rates of employment for this group (Giguere & Dundes, 2002). Therefore, employer bias is a legitimate barrier to obtaining employment among applicants with a criminal history.

Stigma, prejudice, or discrimination is not an uncommon experience for many groups; however, individuals with offense histories are arguably among the most ostracized populations. Previous research has shown that individuals who associate negative attitudes and thoughts with people with a criminal history are more likely to exclude them from social gatherings and are far less likely to want to hire them (Pager, 2003). The stigma that these individuals experience has the potential to cause detrimental personal, social, and economic effects such as being passed over for a job and, consequently, turning to illegal means of work. Illegitimate work opportunities place returning citizens (especially when under community supervision) at higher risk for reincarceration, thereby increasing taxpayer dollars to house them behind bars. Alternatively, individuals may not work at all, resulting in increased free time (which is problematic as unproductive leisure time is a component in the Central Eight factors of criminal behavior), financial hardship that impacts secure housing, the ability to pay required supervision fees, and a host of other basic needs.

In general, people tend to view those with a criminal history as a homogenous group and often make assumptions about how an individual from this group is likely to

behave based on pre-existing beliefs (Snider & Reysen, 2014). For instance, a belief that all people with a criminal history are dangerous, or manipulative, is likely to generalize to judgments about any returning citizen. As a hypothetical example, imagine Sarah has been exposed to sensationalized media coverage of people committing heinous crimes or watches a lot of Law and Order. Due to the way justice-involved individuals are often portrayed, Sarah may be more likely to attribute negative connotations to any individual who she learns has a criminal record. In fact, the manner in which the media tends to report about or showcase offending populations can inform perceptions and create negative public attitudes (Rosenstiel et al., 2011). Employers are not exempt from holding these generalist perceptions. More specific to the job setting, employers may view returning citizens as a potential liability of harm towards other employees and customers (Hickox, 2011). Undoubtedly, this perceived liability makes it harder for returning citizens to obtain and maintain employment when they may have otherwise been qualified for the position.

Negative public perceptions are an inherent problem when a returning citizen's criminal history is revealed. With the requirement by many employers to report criminal history, it is a status that is difficult to hide. Research supports that employers are unlikely to hire people with a criminal background based on biased beliefs related to their criminal status. For instance, Batastini, Bolanos, and Morgan (2014) found that hypothetical job applicants described as having a criminal background and a history of mental illness were deemed the least desirable applicant to hire. Extending this research, results of a follow-up study (Batastini et al., 2017) again indicated that individuals with both a criminal record and a known mental illness were far less likely to be hired,

followed by the job applicant described as only having a criminal history. Interestingly, despite a lower desire to hire the criminal history applicant (without a mental illness), this applicant was nonetheless perceived by participants to be as good of a potential worker as the control applicant. It appears that some factors may help minimize employer bias. In Batastini et al. (2014), for example, a training component highlighting the benefits of employment of returning citizens improved the chances that the applicant with a criminal history would be hired, such that participants were just as likely say they would hire the returning citizen as the person without a criminal history. Notably, this finding was not replicated in Batastini et al. (2017) when the sample consisted of individuals with hiring experience.

Additional research has shown that, while employers are reluctant to hire individuals with a criminal history, they tend to feel more comfortable hiring them if significant time passes since the commission of the crime and if they have some previous work experience (Fahey et al., 2006). Furthermore, employers who do hire returning citizens despite their criminal record, tend to report that the individual is just as hardworking as the general population (Lutman et al., 2015). Perhaps employers are willing to hire someone with a criminal background provided that the individual possess the skills needed to be successful in the position, such as having educational training.

Educational and Training Gaps for Returning Citizens

Importantly, barriers to seeking employment for justice-involved or formerly justice-involved persons are not isolated to the negative perceptions of employers; some concerns employers have about hiring individuals with criminal histories are legitimate. Previous studies have demonstrated that persons with a criminal history are more likely

to return to criminal behavior because they lack the training and educational skills necessary to obtain employment (e.g., Kachnowski, 2005; Tyler & Kling, 2006). In the current labor market, most jobs require a high school diploma, work skills relative to the position, and/or prior work experience (Holzer & Lerman, 2009). Over 40% of inmates in the United States are estimated to lack a high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) degree, compared to only 18% of the general population (Contardo & Tolbert, 2008). In addition to general educational qualifications, employers report that basic job skills are another essential component of quality work performance (see Carnevale et al., 1990; Holzer, 1996; Ju & Pacha, 2012) as most jobs require proficient reading, writing, and mathematical abilities. However, a previous study found that only 3 out of 10 inmates are proficient in these skills (Petersilia, 2001). According to the National Adult Literacy Survey, roughly 70% of incarcerated adults cannot read beyond a 4th grade level (Troyatms, 2016). Given that most people who come in contact with the criminal justice system are undereducated and unskilled compared to the general population, opportunities to secure employment are therefore more limited (Contardo & Tolbert, 2008). Further, previous research has shown that an individual's coping skills and ability to sustain employment decreases the more time spent in prison (Contardo & Tolbert, 2008). Lengthier detention periods are associated with more serious convictions. Therefore, a lack of training and educational skills coupled with longer incarceration times are perhaps especially damaging to the future employability of returning citizens, ultimately placing them at higher risk for recidivism. The present study aims to better understand the importance of educational level and specific job skills to employment decisions for persons with a criminal history, particularly when the applicant's offense

history is violent. The following sections review the necessity, general availability, and efficacy of educational, general job preparation, and specific vocational training opportunities afforded to incarcerated persons. Of note, the availability and quality of these types of programs can vary widely across institutions.

General Job and Employability Skills Training

The U.S. Department of Labor Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills acknowledged three skill sets that employers value in their employees: basic skills, thinking skills, and personal qualities (Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, 1991). Basic skills include academic abilities such as reading, writing, and mathematical skills, as well as interpersonal skills like good communication and social skills (Cerda et al., 2015; Varghese, 2009). Thinking skills focus on the potential that an applicant can learn new tasks, follow instructions, and make decisions (Robinson, 2000). Lastly, personal qualities include the ability to be honest, show respect, be on time, and value safety procedures (Ju & Pacha, 2012). According to Robinson (2000), these employability skills are imperative for gaining, upholding, and performing well on a job. Therefore, it is important that correctional systems assist returning citizens in acquiring or refining these baseline skills before hitting the job market.

However, returning citizens may not necessarily agree about the extent to which education and these basic skills are necessary for job attainment. One qualitative study using semi-structured interviews with 12 individuals with criminal histories and 22 non-offender professionals who frequently interact with justice-involved persons (i.e., as employees within the criminal justice system, accommodation and housing sectors, employment support services, and offender rehabilitation programs) examined

respondents' perceptions towards variables that affect successful community reintegration (Graffam et al., 2004). Professionals were specifically asked to report on the factors they believed affected an offender's transition into society, while offenders were asked to report on the factors they believed promoted success or failure back into society. Notable differences emerged across groups in terms of the factors deemed most crucial. Several offenders acknowledged that readiness to change was a key factor while professionals made no acknowledgement of readiness. For example, one respondent with a criminal history reported that "Readiness is the factor, more than education, social skills, finance, even motivation" (Graffam et al., 2004, p. 156). In fact, none of the justice-involved participants mentioned lack of education or poor academic skills as important. Contrary, several professionals identified that a lack of education (e.g., literacy) or poor academic skills were factors that were important and potentially could impede successful reintegration (Graffam et al., 2004). This difference in opinion between offenders and professionals demonstrates that, while offenders may think education and basic skills are less significant, professionals' value these qualities as important to reintegration (Graffam et al., 2004). Importantly, while it appears justice-involved persons did not view formal education as necessary in and of itself, many considered it a step toward increasing their readiness or resolve for change. Readiness to change has been shown to be important for returning citizens in both job acquisition and retention (Graffam et al., 2004).

Correctional settings commonly offer reentry preparation programs in which basic job and interpersonal skills, such as those described above, are taught to the returning citizens. Severson et al., (2012) examined a total of 357 individuals; 125 of whom did

not complete a reentry program and 232 who completed a reentry program between 2006 and 2009. Results indicated that program completers were statistically significantly less likely to recidivate compared to individuals who did not complete the reentry program, suggesting these programs are beneficial. Other studies (e.g., Braga et al., 2009; Clark & Duwe, 2015; Duwe, 2012) have found similar outcomes when assessing the efficacy of re-entry programs. In addition to baseline skill development, incarcerated individuals often have the opportunity to obtain formal education and training through academic-focused programs and specialized vocational certifications.

Academic-focused Programs

Most jobs require at least a high school diploma or a GED and many jobs for which returning citizens are being prepared (e.g., automechanics, HVAC installation, welding) also require certification. According to Travis (2011), approximately two out of five inmates fall below the literacy level compared to one of five in the general population. According to the National Former Prisoner Survey (2018), over a quarter of returning citizens do not have a high school diploma or GED. This lack of basic education and literacy skills posits several obstacles for returning citizens, including barriers to employment.

Currently in the US prison system, there are a variety of prison education programs that aim to assist prisoners in obtaining the necessary education and training to aid their release back into society and obtain employment. Literacy programs, for example, help prisoners prepare for the GED exam. GED courses require inmates to study at least 240 hours, including a practice test, before taking an official test (Harlow, 2003). Throughout the United States, including federal, state, and private facilities,

around 90 percent of correctional institutions offer some type of educational program, including GED classes (Coley & Barton, 2006). GED programs allow inmates to acquire marketable skills and increase their potential for employment after release.

Participating in GED programs while incarcerated can be advantageous, as research has shown earning a GED reduces recidivism rates. As an example, Nuttall et al., (2003) compared recidivism rates for inmates who a) had a high school diploma or GED before incarceration, b) inmates who did not obtain a GED while incarcerated, and c) inmates who obtained a GED while incarcerated. Results indicated that inmates who participated in a GED program while incarcerated returned to custody at a significantly lower rate compared to those who did not obtain a GED (Nuttall et al., 2003). Specifically, 68.2 percent of inmates who earned a GED did not return to custody. Additionally, previous studies (Brennan et al., 2009; Jensen & Reed, 2006) have found that education (e.g., obtaining a GED) is linked to lower levels of recidivism.

Vocational-Specific Training in Correctional Settings

Beyond academic-focused programs, research has shown that specific job skill trainings, often obtained through vocational certifications, can lessen the barriers of obtaining employment for returning citizens. According to Atkin and Armstrong (2013), an estimated one-third of inmates have no work history six months before being incarcerated, and inmates who did have prior work history typically reported jobs in auto mechanics, food industries, maintenance, and construction. The Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) and most state prison systems currently offer inmates the opportunity to participate in vocational training, also known as career technical education programs, to develop skills in a specific field (e.g., aeromechanics, cosmetology, cooking). Duwe and

Clark (2014) examined the effectiveness of vocational training programs on recidivism and employment outcomes for 9,394 released inmates from Minnesota prisons between 2007 and 2008. Contrary to what might be expected, a secondary degree (e.g., GED) significantly increased the chances of obtaining employment, but earning a post-secondary degree in a specific vocation while in prison did not significantly increase the odds of obtaining employment. However, results showed that those who earned a post-secondary degree were more successful at maintaining employment once hired. On the contrary, Davis and colleagues (2013) found that individuals who participated in either academic or vocational training during incarceration had greater rates of employment (e.g., 13% higher) post-release, while those with vocational training specifically had the highest rates (e.g., 28% higher) of obtaining employment compared to inmates who did not participate in vocational training.

More recently, a 2018 study by Formon et al., initially hypothesized that individuals with a criminal history would still lack the ability to obtain employment even with vocational training. However, their hypothesis was unsupported. Instead, they found that individuals who had completed vocational training, regardless of whether they had a criminal history or not, were able to secure employment with no significant differences in starting salary or their ability to hold employment for one year. Their findings suggest that vocational training aids in the process of obtaining employment for offenders and non-offenders alike. Although there is evidence that vocational programs may help overcome hiring biases, other potentially relevant factors such as the type of criminal conviction (e.g., violent vs. non-violent) or the length of time spent in the community since release may influence employer hiring decisions.

Factors Associated with Employer Willingness to Hire a Person with a Criminal History
The Effect of Criminal Offense Type

While obtaining employment is the key factor for returning citizens and limited education, lack of job skills, unstable work histories, and access to resources clearly serve as barriers in this process, research has also pointed to more static influences on hiring decisions. That is, factors for which the offender cannot work to change. One such factor is the severity of the offense(s) on an applicant's criminal record. Broadly speaking, there are two general categories of criminal activity: violent and non-violent. Violent offenses are those that cause or threaten harm against another person and include sexual assault, robbery, assault, and murder, among others. Non-violent offenses are those perpetrated against property without the use of threat or bodily harm towards a specific person or so-called victimless offenses like drug possession or prostitution. Non-violent crimes also include vandalism, arson, theft, and burglary. Research findings are mixed on employer willingness to hire persons with a criminal history, but one consistent finding is that the type of offense matters in hiring decisions (Atkin & Armstrong, 2013; Giguere & Dundes 2002; Varghese et al., 2010). Giguere and Dundes (2002) examined employer attitudes towards hiring an ex-offender and how offense type, length of incarceration, and gender affected employer decisions to hire. Results indicated that employers were more likely to overlook non-violent offenses and drug-related charges, while applicants with a violent offense history (i.e., murder, robbery, rape) were passed over entirely. Atkin et al. (2013) found evidence that, on average, 80% of employers expressed an unwillingness to hire an ex-offender with a violent offense history across a range of offenses; however, a comparatively lower percentage (53%) were unwilling to hire an ex-offender with a non-

violent burglary offense. As discussed, educational and job-specific qualifications may help an ex-offender obtain employment; however, to what extent are these programs useful when someone has a violent criminal past?

The Possible Interaction Effect of Acquired Education and Job Skills

Decades of previous literature on employer attitudes toward hiring a person with a criminal history have examined the impact of a variety of variables and situations (e.g., race, gender, age, offense type, years incarcerated, previous work experience vs. no experience). While findings have been mixed (see Cerda et al., 2015; Giguere & Dundes, 2002; Varghese et al., 2010), it is clear that returning citizens who have higher qualifications (e.g., GED, certifications, job skills) are more likely to obtain employment post release, suggesting these qualifications are crucial in the decision to hire a person with a criminal history. Yet, there may be an important interaction between education, job qualifications, and past offense history. One study found that having basic skills, such as reading and writing skills, increased employability for applicants with a misdemeanor (typically non-violent offenses) while qualifications (i.e., high school graduate, previous work experience, completion of 10th grade) did not increase employability for individuals with a felony charge (Varghese et al., 2010). While this study sheds light on the employer's willingness to hire persons with a misdemeanor offense history, further investigation is needed to understand why specialized qualifications did not help the applicant with a felony charge. More recently, however, the work of Formon et al. (2018) demonstrated that the completion of vocational training may be able to diminish any differences in hiring based on offense type. In their study, comprised of 1,075 ex-

offenders, having a felony or a misdemeanor offense if paired with a vocational certificate, did not impact employability.

In another study on job-specific qualifications, Cerda et al., (2015) found that hypothetical applicants applying for a cashier position with a violent offense history and high qualifications for the position received lower employability ratings compared to applicants with high qualifications and a nonviolent offense type. In this study, having high qualifications was operationalized as having previous work experience as a cashier at CVS pharmacy for 1.5 years; low qualifications was operationalized as previous work experience as a janitor at Burger King for 1.5 years. These findings suggest that possessing more relevant job qualifications do not necessarily help applicants with violent criminal histories but may help applicants with nonviolent histories. The current study will add to this literature by examining whether the presence of a violent or non-violent felony charge differentially effects participants' willingness to hire a person with a criminal history and whether any difference by offense type can be mitigated by educational and vocational training. By evaluating the interaction between educational training and offense type, we will have a clearer sense about the extent to which individuals are in fact experiencing barriers to employment even when they possess the necessary job qualifications.

CHAPTER II – PRESENT STUDY

Given the difficulties many returning residents have in re-entering the workforce successfully, the primary aim of this study was to expand the field's understanding about whether particular training and educational opportunities improve the likelihood of hire when the applicant reports a criminal background. Furthermore, because literature suggests that having a violent offense history negatively influences employers' willingness to hire applicants with a criminal history (Albright & Denq, 1996, Holzer et al., 2007), this study examined the influence of offense type (i.e., violent vs. nonviolent) on hiring decisions. Specifically, this study addressed felony charges as a barrier to employability as previous literature has identified that most employers are unwilling to hire applicants with a felony criminal past (Giguere & Dundes, 2002; Holzer et al., 2007; Varghese et al., 2010).

Using standardized vignettes of a hypothetical applicant described as having either a violent (i.e., threat or force towards a victim) or non-violent (i.e., no threat or force towards a victim) conviction, this study also varied the applicant's training and educational background across conditions. Regarding specialized training and/or education, the job applicant was described as either having (1) only a General Educational Development (GED) degree, the equivalent to a high school diploma, (2) only a job-specific certification (i.e., for automechanics), (3) both a GED and certification, or (4) neither a GED or certification. Participants were randomly assigned to one of these eight conditions and asked to provide their perceptions of the applicant and how likely they would be to hire him. Therefore, this study represents a 2 (violent, non-violent) x 4 (GED, certification, both, or neither) between-subjects design.

Because education and job-specific training tend to lead to successful employment (Erisman & Contardo, 2005), it was first hypothesized that the applicant with both a GED and an automechanics certificate would be rated as more likely to be hired, perceived to exhibit more positive work-related behaviors, and warranted less need for social distance than the applicant with only a GED or a certificate, regardless of offense type. Second, because having a violent offense history often negatively influences employers' willingness to hire, it was hypothesized that the applicant with a violent offense type, regardless of education or training, would be rated as least likely to be hired, perceived as having more negative work-related behaviors, and warranted greater social distance than the applicant with a nonviolent offense. Third, an interaction between training/education and offense type was expected such that applicants with neither a GED and an automechanics certificate and a violent offense history would be rated as least likely to be hired, perceived as having more negative work-related behaviors, and warranted greater social distance than the applicant with a nonviolent offense.

Our main goal was to gain a better understanding of the effects of education and determine the importance of offense type in relation to obtaining a job post-release. Results from this study presents fundamental ideas underlying stigma towards individuals with a criminal history and potentially inform programming efforts on creating more readily accessible educational and certificate trainings while incarcerated.

CHAPTER III - METHOD

Participants

A total of 223 surveys were analyzed. A majority of participants identified as a man (65.3%) and White/Caucasian (71.6%). The mean age of participants was 38.66 years old. Participants for this study were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk), a crowdsourcing site owned by Amazon allows individuals to complete human intelligence tasks (HITs) for a fee. MTurk has been shown to yield diverse national samples (Heen et al., 2014). Participants were eligible to complete the study if they were 18 years of age or older and were fluent in English. Participants who do not meet these criteria were ineligible to participate. The estimated sample size of 179, determined using G*Power assuming a medium effect size of 0.25 and power of 0.80 with a total of eight conditions and two dependent variables, was exceeded to account for missing or unusable data.

Procedure

Approval from the University of Southern Mississippi's human subjects review board was obtained prior to initiating the main study (Appendix A) and pilot testing the hypothetical vignettes. The survey was developed using Qualtrics, an online survey platform.

On the MTurk page, participants were provided with brief details about the study, opportunities for compensation, estimated survey length, and eligibility criteria. Additional MTurk controls were set to include Masters only workers (i.e., those who have a 95% HITs approval rate), and have completed over 50 HITs. Additionally, IP addresses within the United States only were allowed as Kennedy et al. (2020) found that

most fraudulent responses were individuals outside of the U.S. Individuals meeting these criteria and who were interested in participating were instructed to click a unique hyperlink that redirected them to the qualtrics-hosted study. First, participants were provided a full informed consent form (see Appendix E), and by clicking “I consent and wish to participate in this study,” indicated their consent. After consenting to participate in the study, participants were asked the following eligibility questions:

1. How old are you? (values under 18 were ineligible to participate)
2. Are you fluent in English? (“no” responses were ineligible to participate)

Participants who answered appropriately to both eligibility questions were then randomly assigned to one of the eight conditions that varied based on the type of crime (violent vs. nonviolent) and the level of education/training (GED only, auto mechanic certification only, both, or neither).

After random assignment, participants read and listened to an auto-recording of a hypothetical vignette about a potential applicant for an entry-level automotive technician (See Appendix E). Given that most individuals with a criminal history are male, the gender presented in the vignettes suggested a male by using the pronoun “he” and the name Wesley, which was created from an online random name generator set to average popularity. To control for potential biases related to race and ethnicity, Wesley’s racial identity was not specified. All information presented in the vignette was identical across conditions except the offense type (i.e., burglary or robbery) and extent of education/training (GED only, Auto Mechanic certification only, both, or neither). Burglary and robbery were chosen for this study because both offenses involve theft; however, robbery is considered a violent offense given the fact that the theft involves

direct threat or harm towards a person while burglary is committed without direct harm towards a person. Therefore, the use of these offenses minimized extraneous differences that may otherwise be attributed to the intent or purpose of the act.

Prior to the main analyses, a pilot study was conducted using a sample of undergraduate students ($N = 104$) recruited through the researcher's university's Sonasystems account to ensure the two offense types presented in the vignettes were in fact perceived differently; that is, that the violent offense (robbery) was rated as a more serious behavior than the non-violent offense (burglary). Results suggested that the violent offense was viewed as more severe than the non-violent offense type ($t = -2.515$, $p = .013$).

For the study, all eight vignettes presented indicated that the individual was released on parole due to good behavior. After reading the hypothetical vignette, participants were instructed to answer several questions specific to their perceptions of Wesley and his appropriateness for the job. Participants were asked to respond to these questions as if they were in charge of deciding whether to hire Wesley. After answering employment-specific questions, participants completed a basic demographic questionnaire. Manipulation checks and validity items were also randomly placed throughout the survey to ensure attentiveness. Participants were compensated \$1.00 for completing the study. This rate was based on the U.S. federal minimum wage and estimated completion time. Compensation increased to \$1.80 to increase speed of data collection as allowable given financial support through a small grant. Participants were informed that if they did not complete the survey in its entirety, no compensation would be provided.

Measures

This study included an experimenter-derived question about employability, the Generic Work Behavior Questionnaire (GWBQ; Michon et al., 2004), the Social Distance Scale (SDS; Link et al., 1987), manipulation and validity checks, and a demographic form. The experimenter-derived employment item, the GWBQ, and SDS were counterbalanced; however, the demographic questionnaire appeared last in all conditions to avoid priming effects associated with extraneous individual characteristics.

Manipulation check and validity items. To ensure attention to the manipulation, the following multiple-choice questions were presented after exposure to the vignette: (1) “which of the following best describes Wesley’s educational background?” and (2) “for what crime did Wesley serve time?”. Participants who answered both validity items wrong for their study condition were removed from the survey (n = 60), not included in analyses, and were not compensated. During data cleaning, individuals answering one of the validity items incorrectly also were dropped from analyses (item 1 n = 33, item 2 n = 30), for a total of 123 responses deemed invalid.

Experimenter derived employment question. Participants were asked to rate how likely they would be to hire Wesley presented in the vignette on a scale from 0 to 100; with 0 indicating “not at all willing” and 100 indicating “completely willing” (See Appendix G).

Generic Work Behavior Questionnaire. To assess participants’ perceptions of the hypothetical applicant’s likely work performance, a modified version of the Generic Work Behavior Questionnaire (GWBQ; Michon et al., 2004) was used (see Batastini et al., 2014; Batastini et al., 2017). The GWBQ is an 18-item measure that includes four

subscales of work performance: task competence, initiative/self-confidence, dependability, and social work behavior. Items are presented on a bipolar scale and responses are from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating the applicant would not have the skills/quality to do this task and 5 indicating the applicant would have the skills/quality. Sample items include statements such as “Fit in easily with others (5) or not fit in easily with others” (1) and “Always follow the rules (5) or often disobey the rules (1).” The GWBQ was originally created to examine perceptions of work performance for individuals with mental illness, however, the GWBQ was used in this study to examine perceptions of work performance for persons with a criminal history (Michon et al., 2004). Participants were asked to answer these questions on how well they believe the hypothetical applicant, Wesley, would perform. Total scores were used to test the primary hypotheses. Higher total scores indicated more positive work performance expectations. This measure is reported to have good to excellent internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha ranging from .73 to .83) across subscales and total scores with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.88 (Michon et al., 2004). Further, Batastini et al. (2017) also found a strong internal consistency with their study for GWBQ total scores (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.94). For the current study, an alpha of .92 was found (Table 1).

Social Distance Scale. The Social Distance Scale (SDS; Link et al., 1987;) was used to measure the amount of social distance participants would want to have between them and the applicant described in the vignette. Social distance refers to the degree in which an individual is willing to establish or maintain social contact and closeness with members of a traditionally marginalized group such as those with a criminal background or mental illness. The SDS is a seven-item measure and uses a 4-point response option

(Penn et al., 1994) with higher scores indicating less desired social distance from the applicant. The SDS was initially developed to investigate stigmatizing perceptions towards individuals with mental illnesses (Corrigan et al., 2001). However, items were edited to reflect criminal history instead of mental illnesses, as done in previous research (Batastini et al., 2014, 2017). An example of an edited item is: “How willing would you be to introduce the applicant to someone you are friendly with?” Even with these minor changes to the measure, Batastini et al. (2014, 2017) reported good internal consistency with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.91, as was the case for the current sample ($\alpha = .90$; Table 1)

Demographic Questionnaire. The demographic questionnaire (see Appendix G) asked questions about participants’ gender, race, ethnicity, age, educational background, previous criminal history, marital status, and whether they have ever had the responsibility for hiring employees.

Data Preparation and Preliminary Analyses

After screening for failed validity checks ($n = 123$) or survey incompleteness ($n = 4$), responses from a total of 223 participants were used for analyses. Using SPSS Missing Data analysis, no data were missing at random. Univariate outliers were assessed for the SDS and the GWBQ measures by converting total scores into standardized z-scores. No cases had z-scores greater than 3.29, indicating no outliers (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Assumptions of normality, linearity, and homogeneity of covariance matrices were assessed, and no violations occurred.

Prior to the main analyses, preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure there were no significant between-group differences on demographic variables. A Bonferroni correction to account for multiple comparisons was used to assess for significance. No

significant between-group differences for gender, age, racial identity, and previous criminal justice involvement were found. However, there appeared to be a significant between-group difference for the interaction between previous responsibility for making hiring decisions and participant race ($p = .003$), such that there is an association between race and experience with making hiring decisions. Suggesting that White participants with hiring experience were less likely to hire the person.

Additionally, mean differences on the dependent variables (e.g., willingness to hire, SDS, and GWBQ scores) given participant demographics were examined to consider possible covariates. An independent-samples t-test was performed to determine significant differences for gender on the dependent variables. No significant differences were found for GWBQ total scores ($p = .285$), SDS total scores ($p = .525$) or willingness to hire the applicant ($p = .516$). A one-way ANOVA test was performed to determine if there were significant differences for previous criminal justice involvement on the dependent variables. Significant differences were found for SDS total scores ($p = .012$) given prior justice involvement; however, no significant differences were found for GWBQ total scores ($p = .900$) or willingness to hire the applicant ($p = .239$).

Comparisons across categories for prior justice involvement showed a significant difference for individuals with no criminal history versus those who reported having a violent misdemeanor charge on SDS scores ($p = .003$), suggesting that those who identified as having a violent misdemeanor history, expressed less desired social distance towards the applicant. A one-way ANOVA test was also performed to determine significant differences for previous hiring experience on the dependent variables. Significant differences were found for SDS total scores ($p = .005$) and willingness to hire

the applicant ($p = .044$); however, no significant differences were found for GWBQ total scores ($p = .751$). Comparisons across categories for prior hiring experience showed a significant difference for individuals with previous hiring experience versus those who reported having no hiring experience on SDS scores ($p = .006$), suggesting those who identified as having previous hiring experience expressed more desired social distance towards the applicant. Comparisons across categories did not show a significant difference for individuals with previous hiring experience versus those without experience on willingness to hire ($p = .092$).

Finally, another one-way ANOVA test was performed to determine significant differences across racial categories finding no significant differences for GWBQ total scores ($p = .580$) or SDS total scores ($p = .362$). There was a significant difference for willingness to hire the applicant ($p = .030$) across participant race. Comparisons across categories for race showed a significant difference for individuals who identified as African American or Black versus individuals who identified as Asian American ($p = .029$), suggesting those who identified as African American or Black expressed more willingness to hire the applicant. Given these findings, prior criminal history, prior hiring experience, and race were used as covariates in study analyses. An alpha level of less than 0.05 was used to determine statistical significance for all analyses.

Primary Analyses

A 2 x 4 factorial multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) procedure was performed to test the effects of education, training, and offense type, on participant's rating of how likely they would hire the hypothetical applicant, GWBQ total scores, and SDS total scores, while accounting for the covariates of previous criminal justice

involvement, past responsibility of hiring employees, and race. Pertaining to covariates, results showed a significant multivariate effect for responsibility of hiring [$\lambda = .939$, $F(3, 210) = 4.526$, $p = .004$], but no significant multivariate effects for prior criminal history or race. Between-subjects effects for responsibility of hiring yielded significant effects for participants' rating of how likely they were to hire the hypothetical applicant ($p = .020$) and for SDS total scores ($p = .002$). Suggesting that individuals with previous hiring experience were more likely to hire the applicant and have less desired social distance.

It was expected that applicants with both a GED and certificate would be rated as more likely to be hired, perceived to exhibit more positive work-related behaviors, and warranted less need for social distance compared to the applicant with only a GED or a certificate, regardless of offense type. Contrary to hypotheses, results found no statistically significant multivariate effects for education between conditions [$\lambda = .929$, $F(9, 511) = 1.752$, $p = .075$]. Between-subject tests also found that education did not have a significant effect on willingness to hire [$F(3, 212) = 1.47$, $p > .05$] or SDS scores [$F(3, 212) = .694$, $p > .05$]. There was a significant effect of education for GWBQ scores [$F(3, 212) = 3.925$, $p = .009$]. Pairwise comparisons noted a significant difference in the mean GWBQ score for the no education condition (e.g., experience only; $M = 57.91$, $SE = 1.31$) versus the auto certificate condition ($M = 63.78$, $SE = 1.44$), or both certificate and GED ($M = 63.29$, $SE = 1.32$), when accounting for covariates.

Second, it was hypothesized that the applicant with a violent offense type, regardless of education or training, would be rated as least likely to be hired, perceived as having more negative work-related behaviors, and warranted greater social distance than

the applicant with a nonviolent offense. Significant multivariate differences were not detected for offense type [$\lambda = .994, F(3, 210) = .404, p = .750$]. Between-subjects effects found that offense type (e.g., burglary versus robbery) also did not independently relate to willingness to hire [$F(1, 212) = .297, p > .05$], SDS scores [$F(1, 212) = 1.162, p > .05$], or GWBQ scores [$F(1,212) = .298, p > .05$].

Additionally, a 2 x 2 x2 factorial multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was performed to test the effects of education (GED versus no GED), training (vocational certificate versus no certificate), and offense type (burglary versus robbery) on participants' ratings of how likely they would be to hire the hypothetical applicant, GWBQ total scores, and SDS total scores. Contrary to hypotheses, MANCOVA results found no statistically significant multivariate effects for offense type, [$\lambda = .994, F(3,210) = .404, p = .750$], GED education status [$\lambda = .989, F(3,210) = .801, p = .495$], or any two-way interactions, or the three-way interaction between offense type, GED, and vocational certificate [$\lambda = .995, F(3, 210) = .346, p = .792$]. There was a significant multivariate effect for vocational certificate [$\lambda = .960, F(3, 210) = 2.918, p = .035$]. Between-subject tests found that having a vocational certificate did not have a significant effect on SDS scores [$F(1, 212) = .238, p > .05$] or willingness to hire ([$F(1, 212) = .3368, p = .068$]. Yet, there were a significant between-subject effect for GWBQ scores [($F(3, 212) = 7.064, p = .008$] for having a certificate. Pairwise comparisons of the estimated means, accounting for covariates, found a significant difference ($p < .01$) for GWBQ scores between conditions where the applicant did not have a vocational certification ($M = 59.94, SE .93$) versus conditions where the applicant did have a vocational certificate ($M = 63.53, SE = .98$). See Table 2 for means by condition.

It was hypothesized that an interaction would occur between training (having a vocational certificate) and education (having a GED or not) and offense (burglary versus robbery) such that applicants with neither a GED and an automechanics certificate and a violent offense history would be rated as least likely to be hired, perceived as having more negative work-related behaviors, and warranted greater social distance than the applicant with a nonviolent offense. Contrary to this hypothesis, results showed a non-significant multivariate effect [$\lambda = .995$, $F(3, 210) = .346$, $p > .05$] as well as non-significant between subject effects for willingness to hire, SDS scores, and GWBQ scores.

CHAPTER IV – DISCUSSION

Estimates suggest that 68% of those released from prisons in the United States reoffend within 3 years, 79% within 6 years, and 83% within 9 years (Alper et al., 2018). The inability to obtain employment for justice-involved or formerly justice-involved persons has consistently been supported as a significant predictor of recidivism (Bonta & Andrews, 2007; Brenda et al., 2005; Sampson & Laub, 2003; Tripodi et al., 2010). Further, negative perceptions from employers and the public contribute to the difficulties people with criminal histories can have getting hired, and in turn, increases one's likelihood of remaining in contact with the criminal justice system or reduces the chances of successfully completing stipulations of supervision. This study aimed to identify factors of a hypothetical job applicant that may outweigh the stigmatizing beliefs held by employers for job seekers with a criminal history. The current study was unique in its inclusion of offense history (i.e., violent versus nonviolent) and a training component (i.e., GED, vocational certificate, both, or no education).

Although other studies (e.g., Cerda et al., 2015; Pager et al., 2009) suggest factors such as basic skills, thinking skills, personal qualities, interactional styles, education, and training may positively influence employers to hire applicants with criminal histories, current results suggest otherwise. For example, Duwe and Clark (2014) examined the effectiveness of vocational training programs on recidivism and employment outcomes for 9,394 individuals released from Minnesota prisons between 2007 and 2008. Overall, they found that a secondary degree (e.g., GED) significantly increased the chances of obtaining employment, but earning a post-secondary degree in a specific vocation while

in prison did not significantly increase the odds of obtaining employment. Other studies (e.g., Albright & Denq, 1996; Atkin & Armstrong 2011; Cerda et al., 2015 Giguere & Dundes, 2002; Holzer et al., 2004), also showed that educational factors influenced hiring decisions. Contrary to hypotheses, the current study showed these education factors may not matter in hiring decisions.

No significant differences in willingness to hire were found for the applicant with a GED versus the applicant with experience only. Previous studies have found earning a GED or a vocational certificate increased employability; however, it is important to highlight that several of those studies were investigated more than a decade ago. It is possible that societal changes regarding educational expectations have changed regarding the baseline of education attainment (Rampell, 2014). Yet, it is important to note that the total means in this study suggest that there is still hesitation on willingness to hire, regardless of educational or training preparation, as means were in the 60s on a 1-100 willingness to hire scale (see table 2).

However, while no significant multivariate effects were found for having any educational experience (e.g., GED, or GED and vocational certificate) on hiring decisions, significant differences were found in GWBQ total scores based on education. Specifically, ratings of expected work skills were higher for those with a vocational certificate versus those with experience only, regardless of offense. This suggests that individuals previously incarcerated who have a vocational certificate are viewed as exhibiting more positive work-related behaviors versus individuals without this certification. Interestingly, having a GED alone was not significantly different than experience only which raises the possibility that employers are viewing specific field-

related training are more relevant to job skills than a general educational background. This result is perhaps not surprising, as a vocational certificate allows for individuals to have specific technical skills needed for a job and is therefore more specialized than a general education certificate.

Results of this study support other studies that investigated the role of a vocational certificate on hiring outcomes, suggesting that obtaining a vocational certificate does positively increase some aspects of employability (Davis et al., 2013; Formon et al., 2018). Despite increased expectations of performing well in the job via having a vocational certificate, results showed that participants were still unwilling to hire the applicant at a higher rate than those without this training, as such it appears that participants were making hiring decisions based not on the skills of the applicant, but instead on their perceptions of someone with a criminal history.

When comparing the violent and non-violent offense conditions, results again suggested that factors previously shown to influence hiring decisions did not affect hiring decisions in this study. This is inconsistent with previous studies (e.g., Atkin & Armstrong, 2013; Cerda et al., 2015; Giguere & Dundes 2002; Varghese et al., 2010). Specifically, Cerda and colleagues (2015) used the same 0 (not at all) to 100 (very much) to rating system as used in this study to rate the extent to which one would hire the hypothetical applicant in a sample collected from MTurk. In Cerda et al. (2015), ratings of willingness to hire were significantly different between an individual with a prior nonviolent ($\bar{x} = 50.59$, $SD = 24.06$) versus violent crime ($\bar{x} = 23.77$, $SD = 24.34$), which was not found in the current study.

A number of reasons may explain this non-significant finding regarding willingness to hire individuals with a violent versus non-violent criminal history. It is possible participants viewed the offenses as the same rather than robbery as a violent and burglary as a non-violent offense as they both involve theft. Although piloting of the vignettes suggested individuals rated robbery as a more severe crime, this data was not collected on the final sample in MTurk. For example, the MTurk sample was primarily White males who were middle-aged (i.e., 35-40s) while the pilot sample was primarily younger-aged White females (i.e., 18-24). Although both offenses may have been viewed the same, it is important to highlight that non-significant differences in willingness to hire regardless of the severity of the crime likely reflect preconceived notions people have towards people with offense histories regardless of the offense or other positive attributes, such as education and specialized training, these individuals' possess (Corrigan et al., 2001; Pager, 2003). Despite non-significant differences for willingness to hire by offense type, overall means for each condition were higher than the means reported in Cerda and colleagues' study (2015) as noted above. Means found in this study for the non-violent and violent conditions were similar to the means reported for the non-violent condition in Cerda et al., 2015 study (e.g., around 50); suggesting the possibility that participants in this study viewed both crimes included in this study as non-violent. However, perhaps individuals' willingness to hire applicants with criminal histories has increased since the 2015 study was published, regardless of the applicant's original offense type. One possibility is that participant's judgments were influenced by their own personal history. Preliminary analyses found that persons with prior hiring experience were more willing to hire applicants with a criminal history and desired less

social distance from them. Perhaps these individuals have hired or worked with a person with a criminal past and had a positive experience. For example, Atkin and Armstrong's (2013) research suggests that hiring managers at businesses that had previously hired an individual with a prior criminal history were more likely to hire those with criminal histories.

Limitations

This current study has several limitations related to sampling and measurement which should be considered before generalizing the results. First, findings are unable to generalize directly to justice-involved individuals or people making hiring decisions, rather they must be considered as contributing factors that could influence their employability. The participants of this study were recruited from a crowdsourcing site, MTurk. Almost 40 percent of participants did not have any experience with hiring decisions, and differences may have been found if this study was replicated with hiring managers. Replicating this study with hiring managers will allow for results to be generalized to real-world situations. In fact, the subgroup of participants who had previous hiring decisions were more likely to hire applicants with a criminal history. Other researched studies have examined similar variables in the context of hiring managers and have higher rates of willingness to hire (Atkin & Armstrong, 2013). It is possible that hiring managers with previous exposure hiring or working with persons previously incarcerated may be more likely to hire them (Atkin & Armstrong, 2013; Young & Powell, 2015).

Secondly, potential limitations related to the experimental prime and measurement also should be considered. Although the hypothetical vignettes were pilot

tested prior to the study, their external validity may have been limited, as such it is unclear if offenses were viewed differently from one another in the final sample. Related to measurement, this study used a 0-100 rating scale for one's likelihood of hiring the hypothetical applicant; however, other studies (Batastini et al., 2014; Batastini et al., 2017; Varghese et al., 2010) have either used a Likert scale or dichotomous yes or no question. Although other studies have used other scales to measure willingness to hire, the 0-100 rating scale was utilized in Cerda et al., 2015 and found to be a successful rating scale. Yet, it may be that while this type of rating scale allows participants greater precision in measuring their willingness to hire, there is not a clear point on this scale that reflects the decision to hire or not hire the applicant. For example, the 0-100 scale is a bit unclear as we do not know definitively a cut-off score that indicated if the participant was or was not willing to hire the applicant. Using a more definitive response option to determine if the hypothetical applicant would be hired or not, which may increase external validity of the study.

Lastly, the lack of a control condition for an applicant without a criminal history is a potential limitation. The hypothetical vignettes used in this study were varied by education, training, and offense type, thus each condition portrayed Wesley as having a criminal history. As such, it is unclear if results of this study would have varied with the inclusion of a control condition (i.e., a vignette that described Wesley as having no prior criminal history). Thus, findings can speak to the lack of differences for willingness to hire across educational qualifications or offense type for those with a criminal history, but cannot conclude about potential differences in willingness to hire attributed specifically to having a criminal history cannot be drawn. .

Implications and Future Directions

The current study supports the need for future research on employability for those with criminal histories and the extent to which educational and training are beneficial. Discrimination has been shown as one of the main causes of unemployment for persons with criminal histories (Fletcher, 2001), and that pre-existing stigma, prejudice, and discrimination experienced by these individuals are perhaps the result of being categorized as a devalued group and seen as unemployable. While this study aimed to evaluate the role of education in mitigating discrimination and increasing employability, results showed increased educational or vocational preparation did not affect hiring ratings which suggests that the stigma related to having a criminal history has a larger impact on hiring decisions than educational or vocational preparation.

While results from the current study suggest that having an education did not impact whether the applicant was hired or not, although the applicant with a vocational certificate was perceived to be a better worker. Although this is an important finding, it does not address the problem of persons with a criminal history getting hired in the first place, rather it speaks to expectations about their performance once hired. Reducing discrimination on initial applications and increasing the likelihood of these individuals obtaining a job interview is necessary. If education and specialized training is not aiding in the applicant being hired, though they may help retain employment and reduce recidivism (Maier, 2018), correctional agencies must turn to other factors that perhaps can help decrease the discrimination applicants receive from their initial employment application.

Correctional agencies (e.g., jails, prerelease programs, post-release programs) may benefit from partnering with employment agencies to help released individuals in obtaining employment and aid in a successful reintegration into society. Potentially changing the current standards of Postsecondary Correctional Education Programs (PSCE) to include development of other skills, such as job interview skills, which may include how to discuss a criminal past, interview role-playing, resume building, and character development skills may be more efficacious for promoting hiring. Job applicants are frequently asked questions regarding their criminal history (Henry, 2008), and it is possible that stigma is associated with the applicants during the early selection process. As an example, Swanson et al., (2012) found through surveying actual hiring managers, that an applicant with a criminal past has better hiring outcomes if the applicant is prepared to discuss their qualifications for the job in an in-person interview. More recently, Graber and Zitek (2021) investigated the role of explaining a criminal record on an application versus waiting during the interview to disclose such information. Overall, they found that an applicant was more likely to be hired if an interview occurred. These findings suggest employers may be more inclined to hire an individual after an interview has been conducted versus not offering an interview after learning in their application that they have a criminal offense history. It may be beneficial for future researchers to explore the role and timing of disclosure of a criminal history has in one's willingness to offer an interview or making hiring offers to understand at which points in the application process, individuals with criminal histories are more likely to be removed from consideration.

Furthermore, reframing reentry programs and including development of prosocial values also seems like a promising avenue for reducing stigma for those with criminal histories to get them hired. In a series of experimental studies by Snider and Reysen (2014), they found that individuals were more likely to hire a hypothetical applicant with a criminal history who had completed a global citizen program rather than not. The global citizen program was framed as teaching prosocial values, social justice, and responsibility to act for the betterment of the world. Moreover, the applicant who had completed the global citizen program was rated as more honest, more likable, less desired social distance, and importantly, viewed as more similar to oneself. They concluded that increasing perceptions of an applicant as a global citizen, although with a criminal history, reduced discrimination towards applicants and blurred the line between recognizing the applicant as an in-group or an out-group member, thus increasing willingness to hire. While the participants in the study endorsed more willingness to hire the applicant, it is unclear if these programs result in higher employment offers in real life. Additionally, how reentry programs like this are best communicated to potential employers has not been explored. Therefore, future research is needed to examine the advertisement of these programs to potential employers and if prosocial skill development results in individuals with a criminal history obtaining a job at higher rates.

When it came to rating applicants regarding their expected work performance, those with a vocational certificate, regardless of education or criminal offense, were rated to have better expected work skills. Interestingly, the applicant with only a GED or both the GED and vocational certificate were not rated to have better expected work skills, suggesting that participants viewed that having a GED would not increase productive

work performance. This finding also suggests that while participants rated the applicant with only a vocational certificate as expected to have better work skills, it did not translate to being more willing to hire the applicant, to begin with. Moreover, considering that participants did not perceive the applicant with a vocational certificate and a nonviolent offense to have better work performance (compared to the applicant with a violent offense), suggests that participants may have not considered prior criminal activity as an impediment to job performance. Taken together results of the current study, and the existing research, suggest that perhaps correctional programs need to expand on vocational and skill-based reentry programs to incorporate other skill development, such as prosocial skills and job interview skills, to increase the likelihood of being hired. Additionally, maintaining vocational training programs that lead to better work performance and reduced recidivism (Brennan et al., 2009; Duwe & Clark., 2015; Jensen & Reed, 2006) is still likely a worthwhile investment.

More real-world investigation of the difficulty for those with criminal histories to be hired is needed. Because this study did not explicitly target hiring managers, future studies should investigate the differences in hiring perceptions between individuals who consistently make hiring decisions (e.g., hiring managers, supervisors) versus those who do not, or perhaps those who may be working with the individual (e.g., co-workers, the general public). For example, Batastini et al., (2014) explored willingness to hire applicants with a criminal history with lay-person participants and conducted a follow-up study in 2017 with hiring managers (Batastini et al., 2017). Means for the 2017 study with people who reported experience hiring employees were higher than those without such experience. Thus, examining the effects of education on hiring decisions with

samples of individuals who consistently make these decisions is needed. Moreover, utilizing hiring managers across different occupations would help to determine if willingness to hire a person with a criminal history depends on who is making the decisions, individualized factors of the person, or occupational context. There may be potential differences in the willingness to hire those with prior criminal histories based on the occupational educational requirements, such that occupations requiring less prior education, are low skill, do not require direct customer service (e.g., construction or custodial work) or only require basic on-the-job training may place more value on having additional education as these are beyond the minimum job requirements.

Conclusion

The current study sought to determine if educational attainment, specifically a GED or a vocational certificate, increased participant's willingness to hire a person with a previous criminal background. This study is unique in its inclusion of a nonviolent and violent offense. Previous research has shown that people are more likely to hire persons with a nonviolent criminal history versus those with a violent offense, as well as an increase in willingness to hire those with previous training, specialized training, and a high school diploma or the equivalent. However, this study demonstrated that, regardless of the applicant's historical offense type, having a GED and/or vocational training certificate did not appear to impact hiring decisions; despite the fact that the applicant with a vocational certificate was estimated to perform better at the job. Despite few significant differences between conditions, these findings demonstrate the importance of continued research related to the employability of persons with a criminal history as previous studies have shown that obtaining a job post-release is one of the key

indicators of recidivism. Future research would benefit from dismantling which factors are important for overcoming stigma related to having a criminal history in the hiring process to work towards solutions for reintegrating these persons into the workforce and decreasing their chances of recidivating.

– IRB Approval Letter

Office of
Research Integrity



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NOTICE OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD ACTION

The project below has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services regulations (45 CFR Part 46), and University Policy to ensure:

- The risks to subjects are minimized and reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered involving risks to subjects must be reported immediately. Problems should be reported to ORI via the Incident template on Cayuse IRB.
- The period of approval is twelve months. An application for renewal must be submitted for projects exceeding twelve months.
- Face-to-Face data collection may not commence without prior approval from the Vice President for Research's Office.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: IRB-20-461

PROJECT TITLE: The impact of formal education, specialized training, and offense type on perceptions of employability: Can bias toward hiring an ex-offender be mitigated?

SCHOOL/PROGRAM: Psychology

RESEARCHER(S): Rheanna Standridge, Melanie Leuty

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Approved

CATEGORY: Expedited

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: November 5, 2020

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Donald Sacco".

Donald Sacco, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chairperson

–Electronic Informed Consent Pilot Study

Please read this consent form carefully before you decide to participate in this study.

Purpose:

The goal of this study is to further understand employers' willingness to hire an ex-offender.

Description of Study:

You will be asked to imagine that you are responsible for making hiring decisions at your Auto mechanic shop. You will be asked to read a hypothetical vignette of a potential applicant and then be asked to answer a few questions about the applicant. You will be asked questions directly after reading the vignette to ensure you understand what is being presented to you. Failure to answer those questions correct will prompt dismissal from the study and compensation will not be provided. You will also be asked basic demographic information about yourself, none of which will be identifying.

Time required: The study should take between 5 to 10 minutes.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you for participating in the study.

Risks: We do not anticipate any risks associated with participating in the study.

Compensation:

SONA SYSTEM: You will receive 0.5 research credit for your participation in this study.

Confidentiality: Your identity will be kept confidential and your name will never be used to identify any of the information given by you. Your information will be identified by a code.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating.

Right to withdraw from the study: During the study, you have the right to withdraw from participation. However, withdrawal before completion will result in not being compensated the research credit.

Participants' Assurance:

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB ensures that research projects that involve human subjects follow federal regulations.

Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the IRB at 601-266-5997.

Any questions about the research should be directed to the Principal Investigator, Rheanna Standridge, B.S. at Rheanna.standridge@usm.edu.

–Pilot Study Hypothetical Applicant Vignettes

1. Burglary Control

PLEASE NOTE: When reading the following description about a job applicant and responding to questions about the applicant's job-related qualifications or performance, please assume the role of the business manager at your auto mechanics shop who is responsible for making hiring decisions.

Wesley is applying for an entry-level automotive technician position at your auto mechanic shop. Wesley has previous experience working part-time at a family-owned auto mechanic shop for approximately 1 year as an apprentice. On the initial application form, Wesley endorsed having a previous felony conviction. You nonetheless decide to interview Wesley. During your interview with Wesley, he was forthcoming in revealing that he was recently released on parole due to good behavior after serving 2 years of a 5-year prison sentence for burglary. Burglary is defined as unlawfully taking property from a person or place without the use of threat or force towards another individual. Wesley is now applying to your entry-level position because he believes this will be a good fit considering his past job experience.

2. Robbery Control

PLEASE NOTE: When reading the following description about a job applicant and responding to questions about the applicant's job-related qualifications or performance, please assume the role of the business manager at your auto mechanics shop who is responsible for making hiring decisions.

Wesley is applying for an entry-level automotive technician position at your auto mechanic shop. Wesley has previous experience working part-time at a family-owned auto mechanic shop for approximately 1 year as an apprentice. On the initial application form, Wesley endorsed having a previous felony conviction. You nonetheless decide to interview Wesley. During your interview with Wesley, he was forthcoming in revealing that he was recently released on parole due to good behavior after serving 5 years of an 8-year prison sentence for robbery. Robbery is defined as unlawfully taking property from a person or place using threat or force towards another individual. Wesley is now applying to your entry-level position because he believes this will be a good fit considering his past job experience.

Validity Check Items

1. Which of the following best describes Wesley ’s educational background?
 - a. Wesley has a GED.
 - b. Wesley has a certificate in Auto Mechanics.
 - c. Wesley has both a GED and a certificate in Auto Mechanics.
 - d. Wesley has neither.

2. What crime did Wesley serve time for?
 - a. Robbery
 - b. Vehicle Theft
 - c. Aggravated Assault
 - d. Burglary

3. What was Wesley’s original sentence length?
 - a. 5 years
 - b. 6 years
 - c. 7 years
 - d. 8 years

Experimenter Derived Question

1. Rate the seriousness of the crime: In your opinion, how serious is the crime Wesley committed?
 - a. 0-100 (0 = indicating not at all serious; 100 = indicated extremely serious)

Demographic Questionnaire

1. What is your age?

2. What is your gender?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Other

3. Which race/ethnicity do you most identify with?
 - a. African American or Black
 - b. Hispanic or Latino American
 - c. Asian American
 - d. European American/Caucasian
 - e. Native American
 - f. Pacific Islander American
 - g. Middle Eastern American
 - h. Other (please specify)

4. What is the highest educational degree you've obtained?
 - a. Not applicable - No degree earned
 - b. High school diploma or equivalent
 - c. Vocational Certifications
 - d. Associate's degree
 - e. Bachelor's degree
 - f. Master's degree
 - g. M.D.
 - h. Ph.D.
 - i. Other (please specify)

–Electronic Informed Consent Main Study

Please read this consent form carefully before you decide to participate in this study.

Purpose:

The goal of this study is to further understand employers' willingness to hire an ex-offender.

Description of Study:

You will be asked to imagine that you are responsible for making hiring decisions at your Auto mechanic shop. You will be asked to read a hypothetical vignette of a potential applicant and then be asked to answer several questions about the applicant. You will be asked questions directly after reading the vignette to ensure you understand what is being presented to you. Failure to answer those questions correct will prompt dismissal from the study and compensation will not be provided. You will also be asked basic demographic information about yourself, none of which will be identifying.

Time required: The study should take between 10 to 15 minutes.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you for participating in the study.

Risks: We do not anticipate any risks associated with participating in the study.

Compensation: You will receive compensation of \$1.00 after full completion of the study. Failure to answer all questions or exiting the survey early will prompt dismissal and compensation would then not be provided.

Confidentiality: Your identity will be kept confidential and your name will never be used to identify any of the information given by you. Your information will be identified by a code.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating.

Right to withdraw from the study: During the study, you have the right to withdraw from participation. However, withdrawal before completion will result in not being compensated.

Participants' Assurance:

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB ensures that research projects that involve human subjects follow federal regulations.

Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the IRB at 601-266-5997.

Any questions about the research should be directed to the Principal Investigator, Rheanna Standridge, B.S. at Rheanna.standridge@usm.edu.

1. Robbery + GED + Training

***PLEASE NOTE:** When reading the following description about a job applicant and responding to questions about the applicant’s job-related qualifications or performance, please assume the role of the business manager at your auto mechanics shop who is responsible for making hiring decisions.*

Wesley is applying for an entry-level automotive technician position at your auto mechanic shop. Wesley has previous experience working part-time at a family-owned auto mechanic shop for approximately 1 year as an apprentice. On the initial application form, Wesley endorsed having a previous felony conviction. You nonetheless decide to interview Wesley because he completed his General Educational Development (GED) course (a credential considered equivalent to a high school diploma) and holds an 1860-hour training certificate in Auto Mechanics. During your interview with Wesley, he was forthcoming in revealing that he was recently released on parole due to good behavior after serving 5 years of an 8-year prison sentence for robbery. Robbery is defined as unlawfully taking property from a person or place using threat or force towards another individual. Wesley also shared that he earned his GED and Auto Mechanics certificate while incarcerated. Wesley is now applying to your entry-level position because he believes this will be a good fit considering his past job experience, meeting educational qualifications, and specialized vocational training.

2. Robbery + GED

***PLEASE NOTE:** When reading the following description about a job applicant and responding to questions about the applicant’s job-related qualifications or performance, please assume the role of the business manager at your auto mechanics shop who is responsible for making hiring decisions.*

Wesley is applying for an entry-level automotive technician position at your auto mechanic shop. Wesley has previous experience working part-time at a family-owned auto mechanic shop for approximately 1 year as an apprentice. On the initial application form, Wesley endorsed having a previous felony conviction. You nonetheless decide to interview Wesley because he completed his General Educational Development (GED) course (a credential considered equivalent to a high school diploma). During your interview with Wesley, he was forthcoming in revealing that he was recently released on parole due to good behavior after serving 5 years of an 8-year prison sentence for robbery. Robbery is defined as unlawfully taking property from a person or place using threat or force towards another individual. Wesley also shared that he earned his GED while incarcerated. Wesley is now applying to your entry-level position because he believes this will be a good fit considering his past job experience and meeting educational qualifications.

3. Robbery + Training

***PLEASE NOTE:** When reading the following description about a job applicant and responding to questions about the applicant's job-related qualifications or performance, please assume the role of the business manager at your auto mechanics shop who is responsible for making hiring decisions.*

Wesley is applying for an entry-level automotive technician position at your auto mechanic shop. Wesley has previous experience working part-time at a family-owned auto mechanic shop for approximately 1 year as an apprentice. On the initial application form, Wesley endorsed having a previous felony conviction. You nonetheless decide to interview Wesley because he holds an 1860-hour training certificate in Auto Mechanics. During your interview with Wesley, he was forthcoming in revealing that he was recently released on parole due to good behavior after serving 5 years of an 8-year prison sentence for robbery. Robbery is defined as unlawfully taking property from a person or place using threat or force towards another individual. Wesley also shared that he earned his Auto Mechanics certificate while incarcerated. Wesley is now applying to your entry-level position because he believes this will be a good fit considering his past job experience and specialized vocational training.

4. Robbery Control

***PLEASE NOTE:** When reading the following description about a job applicant and responding to questions about the applicant's job-related qualifications or performance, please assume the role of the business manager at your auto mechanics shop who is responsible for making hiring decisions.*

Wesley is applying for an entry-level automotive technician position at your auto mechanic shop. Wesley has previous experience working part-time at a family-owned auto mechanic shop for approximately 1 year as an apprentice. On the initial application form, Wesley endorsed having a previous felony conviction. You nonetheless decide to interview Wesley. During your interview with Wesley, he was forthcoming in revealing that he was recently released on parole due to good behavior after serving 5 years of an 8-year prison sentence for robbery. Robbery is defined as unlawfully taking property from a person or place using threat or force towards another individual. Wesley is now applying to your entry-level position because he believes this will be a good fit considering his past job experience.

5. Burglary + GED + Training

***PLEASE NOTE:** When reading the following description about a job applicant and responding to questions about the applicant's job-related qualifications or performance, please assume the role of the business manager at your auto mechanics shop who is responsible for making hiring decisions.*

Wesley is applying for an entry-level automotive technician position at your auto mechanic shop. Wesley has previous experience working part-time at a family-owned auto mechanic shop for approximately 1 year as an apprentice. On the initial application form, Wesley endorsed having a previous felony conviction. You nonetheless decide to interview Wesley because he completed his General Educational Development (GED) course (a credential considered equivalent to a high school diploma) and holds an 1860-hour training certificate in Auto Mechanics. During your interview with Wesley, he was forthcoming in revealing that he was recently released on parole due to good behavior after serving 2 years of a 5-year prison sentence for burglary. Burglary is defined as unlawfully taking property from a person or place without the use of threat or force towards another individual. Wesley also shared that he earned his GED and Auto Mechanics certificate while incarcerated. Wesley is now applying to your entry-level position because he believes this will be a good fit considering his past job experience, meeting educational qualifications, and specialized vocational training.

6. Burglary + GED

***PLEASE NOTE:** When reading the following description about a job applicant and responding to questions about the applicant's job-related qualifications or performance, please assume the role of the business manager at your auto mechanics shop who is responsible for making hiring decisions.*

Wesley is applying for an entry-level automotive technician position at your auto mechanic shop. Wesley has previous experience working part-time at a family-owned auto mechanic shop for approximately 1 year as an apprentice. On the initial application form, Wesley endorsed having a previous felony conviction. You nonetheless decide to interview Wesley because he completed his General Educational Development (GED) course (a credential considered equivalent to a high school diploma). During your interview with Wesley, he was forthcoming in revealing that he was recently released on parole due to good behavior after serving 2 years of a 5-year prison sentence for burglary. Burglary is defined as unlawfully taking property from a person or place without the use of threat or force towards another individual. Wesley also shared that he earned his GED while incarcerated. Wesley is now applying to your entry-level position because he believes this will be a good fit considering his past job experience and meeting educational qualifications.

7. Burglary + Training

***PLEASE NOTE:** When reading the following description about a job applicant and responding to questions about the applicant's job-related qualifications or performance, please assume the role of the business manager at your auto mechanics shop who is responsible for making hiring decisions.*

Wesley is applying for an entry-level automotive technician position at your auto mechanic shop. Wesley has previous experience working part-time at a family-owned auto mechanic shop for approximately 1 year as an apprentice. On the initial application form, Wesley endorsed having a previous felony conviction. You nonetheless decide to interview Wesley because he holds an 1860-hour training certificate in Auto Mechanics. During your interview with Wesley, he was forthcoming in revealing that he was recently released on parole due to good behavior after serving 2 years of a 5-year prison sentence for burglary. Burglary is defined as unlawfully taking property from a person or place without the use of threat or force towards another individual. Wesley also shared that he earned his Auto Mechanics certificate while incarcerated. Wesley is now applying to your entry-level position because he believes this will be a good fit considering his past job experience and specialized vocational training.

8. Burglary Control

***PLEASE NOTE:** When reading the following description about a job applicant and responding to questions about the applicant's job-related qualifications or performance, please assume the role of the business manager at your auto mechanics shop who is responsible for making hiring decisions.*

Wesley is applying for an entry-level automotive technician position at your auto mechanic shop. Wesley has previous experience working part-time at a family-owned auto mechanic shop for approximately 1 year as an apprentice. On the initial application form, Wesley endorsed having a previous felony conviction. You nonetheless decide to interview Wesley. During your interview with Wesley, he was forthcoming in revealing that he was recently released on parole due to good behavior after serving 2 years of a 5-year prison sentence for burglary. Burglary is defined as unlawfully taking property from a person or place without the use of threat or force towards another individual. Wesley is now applying to your entry-level position because he believes this will be a good fit considering his past job experience.

8. Robbery Control

***PLEASE NOTE:** When reading the following description about a job applicant and responding to questions about the applicant's job-related qualifications or performance, please assume the role of the business manager at your auto mechanics shop who is responsible for making hiring decisions.*

Wesley is applying for an entry-level automotive technician position at your auto mechanic shop. Wesley has previous experience working part-time at a family-owned auto mechanic shop for approximately 1 year as an apprentice. On the initial application form, Wesley endorsed having a previous felony conviction. You nonetheless decide to interview Wesley. During your interview with Wesley, he was forthcoming in revealing that he was recently released on parole due to good behavior after serving 5 years of an 8-year prison sentence for robbery. Robbery is defined as unlawfully taking property from a

person or place using threat or force towards another individual. Wesley is now applying to your entry-level position because he believes this will be a good fit considering his past job experience.

Validity Check Items

1. Which of the following best describes Wesley ’s educational background?
 - a. Wesley has a GED.
 - b. Wesley has a certificate in Auto Mechanics.
 - c. Wesley has both a GED and a certificate in Auto Mechanics.
 - d. Wesley has neither.

2. What crime did Wesley serve time for?
 - a. Robbery
 - b. Vehicle Theft
 - c. Aggravated Assault
 - d. Burglary

Experimenter Derived Question

1. How willing would you be to hire this applicant?
 - a. 0-100 (0 = being not at all willing; 100 = completely willing)
2. What factors contributed to your employment decision regarding Wesley?

Demographic Questionnaire Main Study

1. What is your age?

2. What is your gender?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Other

3. Which race/ethnicity do you most identify with?
 - a. African American or Black
 - b. Hispanic or Latino American
 - c. Asian American
 - d. European American/Caucasian
 - e. Native American
 - f. Pacific Islander American
 - g. Middle Eastern American
 - h. Other (please specify)

4. What is the highest educational degree you’ve obtained?
 - a. Not applicable - No degree earned
 - b. High school diploma or equivalent
 - c. Vocational Certifications

- d. Associate's degree
 - e. Bachelor's degree
 - f. Master's degree
 - g. M.D.
 - h. Ph.D.
 - i. Other (please specify)
5. Do you have a previous criminal history? Select all that apply. (All answers are kept confidential)
- a. No criminal history
 - b. Yes, a non-violent misdemeanor charge
 - c. Yes, a violent misdemeanor charge
 - d. Yes, a non-violent felony charge
 - e. Yes, a violent felony charge
 - f. Rather not disclose
6. What is your current marital status?
- a. Single, never married
 - b. Married
 - c. Domestic Partnership
 - d. Widowed
 - e. Divorced
 - f. Separated
7. What is your political affiliation?
- a. Democrat
 - b. Republican
 - c. Independent
 - d. Libertarian
 - e. Other
 - f. None
8. Have you ever been responsible for making hiring decisions?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not sure
9. Do you personally know someone (e.g., spouse, family member, friend, child, work colleague) who has been convicted of robbery?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
10. Do you personally know someone (e.g., spouse, family member, friend, child, work colleague) who has been convicted of burglary?
- a. Yes

b. No

APPENDIX H–Table 1 and 2

Table 1 *Means and Correlations for dependent variables*

Measure	Mean (SD)	GWBQ Total	SDS Total	Willingness to Hire
GWBQ Total	61.48 (9.98)	.917		
SDS Total	7.21 (5.00)	.456**	.901	
Willingness to Hire	64.71 (26.73)	.544**	.697**	†

Note. ** denotes significance at the 0.01 level. Reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) is reported on the diagonal, † Not applicable

Table 2 Means (Standard Deviations) across conditions for study variables

Condition	Willing to Hire	GWBQ	SDS
Nonviolent (burglary)			
Total	65.22 (26.71)	61.48 (9.87)	7.58 (5.03)
Neither	57.42 (31.81)	56.73 (8.91)	7.06 (6.09)
GED	65.90 (23.30)	63.00 (9.84)	8.29 (4.62)
Certificate	66.55 (23.81)	64.65 (9.24)	6.90 (4.63)
Both	73.96 (23.81)	64.08 (9.73)	7.96 (4.35)
Violent (robbery)			
Total	63.76 (26.84)	61.48 (10.14)	6.82 (4.99)
Neither	65.04 (29.90)	59.24 (9.76)	6.44 (4.98)
GED	59.48 (23.66)	61.00 (9.90)	6.52 (5.40)
Certificate	65.03 (26.14)	62.79 (9.44)	6.86 (4.85)
Both	65.12 (28.24)	62.48 (10.14)	7.29 (5.00)

Note. Possible ranges for outcome measures are as follows: Willing to Hire (0 to 100), GWBQ (18 to 90), SDS (0 to 21).

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