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# Education and Post-Release Employment: An Exploratory Study of Offender Perceptions

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EDUCATION AND POST-RELEASE EMPLOYMENT: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF  
OFFENDER PERCEPTIONS

by

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B.S. May 2014, Old Dominion University

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## ABSTRACT

### EDUCATION AND POST-RELEASE EMPLOYMENT: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF OFFENDER PERCEPTIONS

Frank R. Wood, Jr.  
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Employment is an essential component of the reintegration process for returning offenders. As one of the eight criminogenic needs, improving employment opportunities for returning offenders increases the ability of returning offenders to reintegrate back into the community, as well as decreases the potential threat of recidivism. However, further research is needed to examine how an offenders' prospectus from educational experiences influences their perceptions of finding legal employment after release. The current study contributes to current literature by explaining why employment is a barrier to offender reentry, specifically, how educational factors influence an offender's belief that he or she will find legal employment after release. Travis Hirschi's social bond theory provides the theoretical framework guiding this study. Results from the current study suggest that an offender who believes that he or she can return to go school and further his or her education generates positive perceptions of finding legal employment after release. As well, results suggest that an offender who has access to social networks and resources perceives his or her ability to find legal employment after release negatively. Based on findings from this study, policy makers should consider integrating more educational programs that afford offenders the opportunity to return to school and enhance their human capital into criminal justice reform policies, as well as socialize offenders on how to effectively utilize networks and resources within their respective communities.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Those we fail to educate, we incarcerate, and as so eloquently stated by Nelson Mandela, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” As a source of change, education possesses the vigor for improving quality of life by engendering positive life outcomes such as employment. Moreover, the total population of offenders currently incapacitated within correctional institutions in the United States is slightly more than 2 million individuals (Carson, 2015). In terms of literacy, an analysis of the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) reported that compared to the general population of non-incarcerated individuals, incarcerated populations have lower levels of literacy (Greenberg, Dunleavy, & Kutner, 2007). Additionally, in terms of gender differences, results from the 2003 NAAL revealed that a greater percentage of female offenders scored lower in terms of basic quantitative literacy, defined as the knowledge and skills necessary in identifying and computing numbers, compared with male offenders (47 percent and 39 percent respectively) (Greenberg et al., 2007). Moreover, compared to the general population of non-incarcerated males and females, who were more likely to have proficient levels of literacy across the three categories, which included prose, document, and quantitative literacy, incarcerated populations were less likely to have literacy levels that were considered proficient (Greenberg et al., 2007).

As well, the proverbial school-to-prison pipeline, defined as the pushing out of students into the criminal justice system, contributes to an increase in the prison population, irrespective of age, as well as undermines their ability to achieve academically (Nelson & Lind, 2015). According to the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights while African Americans account for approximately 27% of students referred to law enforcement and 31% of students subjected to school-related arrest, compared to Whites who account for 41 percent and 39 percent respectively, African American



students are disproportionately suspended and expelled at higher rates than White students (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). More specifically, African American students are expelled and suspended at a rate three times greater than White students with African American girls showing the highest rates of expulsion and suspension (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). More revealing are the findings that disabled students, especially African American students with disabilities, experience expulsion and suspension, as well as mechanical restraints at higher rates than White students (Cook, 2015). Though only constituting just 12 percent of the student population, students with disabilities comprise a quarter of students arrested and referred to law enforcement (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Right, 2014).

In the words of Former Assistant Majority Leader and Illinois State Senator, Kimberly Lightford, “Constantly suspending and expelling ... kids that need to be in school...counter-productive practices [...]” (Illinois Senate Democratic Caucus, 2015: para.2). Senator Lightford further states that the need to retain students within educational institutions is paramount to reinforcing their ability to succeed through school and not off of the street corner where the primary education taught reinforces how best to end up in prison (Illinois Senate Democratic Caucus, 2015: para.2).

In addition, research literature examining the educational experiences of offender populations underscores a lack of educational attainment for these individuals. For example, in 2003, Steurer & Smith compared correctional education participants and non-participants within different correctional institutions in three states (Maryland, Minnesota, and Ohio) in order to assess the impact on both recidivism and postrelease employment. Aside from findings indicating that an offender’s participation in correctional education programs engenders positive postrelease outcomes, such as reduction in recidivism and higher wages, pre-release surveys revealed that over 62 percent of respondents who participated in correctional education programs did not complete high school and the average offender

did not have a literacy competency level of ninth grade in math, reading, or language (Steurer & Smith, 2003). Additionally, Visher, La Vigne, & Travis (2004a), examining the reentry experiences of returning offenders to the city of Baltimore, found that prior to their prison term; approximately 42 percent of offenders had completed high school with the largest share completing their education up to the 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> grade. Despite the 13 percent of offenders whose education levels improved while incarcerated, the remaining 87 percent maintained similar education levels as those reported before being incarcerated (Visher, La Vigne, & Travis, 2004a). Similarly, findings from Taylor Green, Polzer, & Lavin-Loucks (2006), examining offender reentry within Dallas, Texas amongst 29 offenders, revealed that only 47 percent of the sample possessed an educational level greater than a High School Diploma/GED, thus 53 percent of offenders within this study did not possess an educational level greater than a High School Diploma/GED. Likewise, findings from Sumter, Monk-Turner, & Rougier (2013), an exploratory study examining the perceived reentry needs of offenders under the custodial care of the Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service, revealed that approximately 34 percent of respondents completed primary school and approximately 51 percent had a secondary education.

Educational attainment affords individuals with access to a variety of opportunities within society, specifically, employment opportunities that foster positive life outcomes. Yet, for some offender, finding legal employment proves challenging. Prior available research literature suggests that returning offenders oftentimes encounter challenges in securing legal forms of employment upon release due to poor educational backgrounds and little work experience (Visher et al., 2004a). Additionally, while Visher et al. (2004a) found that most offenders were employed prior to incarceration (65 percent), most forms of employment offered to returning offenders were not continuous or full-time, the pay was not sufficient to meet basic needs, and the type of employment had no long-term career prospects (Visher et al., 2004a). For example, Visher et al. (2004a) found that prior to incarceration; offenders were concentrated in low-wage labor markets, such as the food

service industry, construction, and factory jobs that provided little upward mobility. Furthermore, offenders oftentimes experienced job instability due to terminations in employment (Visher et al., 2004a). For female offenders returning to Houston, Texas within La Vigne, Brooks, & Shollenberger (2009), while over half of female offenders were employed prior to incarceration, these offenders were concentrated in low-wage jobs, such as food service, received little full time opportunities, and received depressed wages. For employment, available research literature indicates that similar to the effects of incarceration on education, incarceration further undermines the marketability and employability of returning offenders, specifically decreasing the amount of work experience, thus accrued skills and knowledge essential in the labor market (Schmitt & Warner, 2010). As one of the criminogenic needs, an offenders' ability to secure legal employment after release reduces their opportunity to recidivate and fosters some degree of conventionality given their involvement in the workforce. As such, the nature of education and employment outcomes for marginalized populations, in particular offender populations, warrants exploration.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine the role education plays on an offender's perception of finding legal employment upon release from prison. Four central research questions guide the current study.

1. Does being comfortable with seeking teacher's opinion on personal matters influence how sure an offender believes that he/she can find a job that is legal upon release from prison?
2. Does completing higher levels of education influence how sure an offender believes that he/she can find a job that is legal upon release from prison?
3. Does spending time outside of school with other students who excelled in school influence how sure an offender believes that he/she can find a job that is legal upon release from prison?

4. Does being sure that you can further your education if you wanted to influence how sure you are that you can find a job that is legal upon release from prison?

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Employment is an essential component of the reintegration process for returning offenders. As one of the eight criminogenic needs, improving employment opportunities for returning offenders not only affords these individuals a degree of attachment, but employment further enhances their ability to commit, increases their overall involvement in conventional society, and boost their belief in their ability to successfully reintegrate into their respective communities. Through legal forms of employment, the likelihood of an offender successfully reintegrating increases and the potential threat of recidivism diminishes. This research will add to current literature by explaining why employment is a barrier to offender reentry, specifically, how education influences an offender's belief that he/she will find legal employment after release from prison.

The next chapter will review research literature examining offender reentry barriers, as well as, provide an overview of the theoretical framework guiding the current study.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses research examining barriers to offender reentry. The chapter begins with a discussion of research addressing the ecological conditions of the community, substance abuse and mental health conditions, criminal history, reentry preparation and release, and economic well-being as barriers to offender reentry. Afterwards, an overview of social bond theory, the theoretical framework guiding the study, is discussed. This chapter concludes with a summary and critique of the literature and a presentation of the research questions.

A survey of the literature reveals barriers to offender reentry; among those identified are the ecological conditions of the community, substance abuse and mental health conditions, reentry preparation and release, and criminal history (Nelson, Perry, & Charlotte, 1999; Altschuler & Brash, 2004; Visher et al., 2004a; La Vigne, Visher, & Castro, 2004; Visher, Kachnowski, La Vigne, & Travis, 2004; Freudenberg, Daniels, Crum, Perkins, & Richie, 2005; La Vigne & Kachnowski, 2005; Visher, Baer, & Naser, 2006; Chung, Schubert, & Mulvey, 2007; Visher, Visher & Courtney, 2006; Visher & Courtney, 2007; Mallik-Kane & Visher, 2008; Visher, Debus, Yahner, 2008; Winnick & Bodkin., 2008; Bloom & Brown, 2009; Hannon & DeFina, 2010; Gunnison & Helfgott, 2011; Lebel, 2012; Sumter, Monk-Turner, & Rougier, 2012; Sumter et al., 2013). Additionally, prior research identifies economic well-being, which includes housing, employment, family, financial problems, and education, as a significant barrier to offender reentry (Nelson et al., 1999; Steurer & Smith, 2003; Altschuler & Brash, 2004; Visher, La Vinge, & Travis, 2004a; Visher et al., 2004; Freudenberg et al., 2005; Naser & La Vinge, 2006; Visher et al., 2006; Visher & Courtney, 2006a; Visher & Courtney, 2006; Chung et al., 2007; Visher & Courtney, 2007; Mallik-Kane & Visher, 2008; Brown & Bloom, 2009; La Vinge et al., 2009; Gunnison & Helfgott, 2010; Hannon & DeFina, 2010; Sumter et al., 2012; Sumter et al., 2013).

## ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS OF THE COMMUNITY

Research presented in this section discusses the ecological conditions of the community as a barrier to offender reentry.

Prior research suggests individuals released from prisons and jails return to communities plagued by high levels of concentrated social and economic disadvantages that exacerbate reentry challenges and further undermine their ability to successfully reintegrate (Visher et al., 2004a). These disadvantages include high levels of unemployment, percent female-headed households, and percent families living below poverty level, as well as, incorporating high rates of poverty [and] crime (Visher et al., 2004a). In 2001, Visher et al. (2004a) examined the reentry process amongst a pre-release sample of 324 male and female offenders (235 males and 89 females respectively) returning to the city of Baltimore. Findings from Visher et al. (2004a) revealed that approximately 95 percent of offenders, who returned to only 6 out of 55 Baltimore communities that were characterized as having below average levels of median household income, rates of unemployment that were double averages reported by the state of Maryland (8 percent and 4 percent respectively), and considerable levels of residence living below the poverty line (23 percent) “*agreed or strongly agreed*” that their neighborhoods were not conducive to finding a job (Visher et al., 2004).

Similarly, findings from La Vigne et al. (2004) which examined the reentry experiences of 400 returning offenders prior to their release from prison and following their release from prison, showed that a vast majority of respondents returned to 7 of Chicago’s 77 communities, each possessing above-average rates of unemployment, female-headed households, and families living below federal poverty level. However, only a small percentage of respondents felt that these communities were a good place to find a job (26 percent) (La Vigne et al., 2004). Findings from La Vigne et al. (2004:16) also revealed that in communities considered to be “cohesive and less disorganized” released offenders were able acquire jobs, as well as remain drug and crime free.

Also, findings from Visher & Courtney (2006:14), which examined pre-release and post-release experiences of 324 male offenders in order to formulate potential rationales that explain failures and successes in reentry outcomes, showed that approximately 34 percent of offenders returned to communities characterized as exceeding citywide average rates of unemployment and the percentage of individuals living below the federal poverty level. Moreover, findings from post-release interviews revealed that while respondents considered these communities as a safe neighborhood” and as “a good place to live (77 percent and 70 percent respectively) respondents also reported that drug dealing was a major problem (48 percent) and approximately 41 percent of respondents *agreed or strongly agreed* that these communities were not good places to find jobs (Visher & Courtney, 2006). According to findings from Visher & Courtney (2007:3), which examined the post-release experiences of the 324 male offenders released in Visher & Courtney (2006) a year later, respondents indicated low to moderate levels of disorder, such as drug sales, dangers, opportunities for trouble, within their communities that they returned to. Almost half of respondents (49 percent respectively) reported that drug selling was a major problem within their communities, as well as the lack of employment opportunities as suggested by the 60 percent of respondents who felt their neighborhood was not a good place to find a job (Visher & Courtney, 2007).

In another study, findings from Hannon & DeFina (2010), utilizing panel data techniques applied to annual U.S. state data covering years 1978 to 2003 examined whether aggregate economic conditions moderate the relationship between societal reentry, defined as the size of the reentry population, and crime rates, revealed that communities with “weak regional economies” engender challenges for low-skilled individuals, specifically in acquiring quality jobs with decent pay. Furthermore, Hannon & DeFina (2010) note that spending on support services is depressed in these areas. As a result, these communities are incapable of absorbing released offenders (Hannon & DeFina, 2010).

Additionally, findings from Gunnison & Helfgott (2011), which examined the perceptions of 132 CCOs (Community Correctional Officers) from Seattle-Tacoma, Washington on how offender-officer social distance influences both offender-officer relationships and offender reentry, as well as, situational and contextual factors that influence offender reentry, showed approximately 70 percent of CCOs felt that disadvantaged neighborhoods plagued by crime engender failures in offender reentry, namely employment and housing opportunities.

## SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

The research presented in this section examines substance abuse and mental health conditions as barriers to offender reentry.

### *Substance Abuse*

Nelson et al. (1999), examining the reentry outcomes amongst 49 individuals recently released from correctional institutions within New York City, found that 46 out of 49 respondents abused alcohol or used illicit drugs on a daily basis within the year prior to their incarceration and considered their habits as an extremely serious problem. After release, Nelson et al. (1999) found that seven former substance abusers who completed the study relapsed, as well as four study participants who dropped out of the study and relapsed. According to the findings of Nelson et al. (1999), most respondents who relapsed after release had lower levels of familial support compared with respondents who reported remaining drug free, and were more likely to have no particular interest in treatment and accept ones' drug use. Additionally, Nelson et al. (1999) found that for 71 percent of respondents who relapsed after release, a lack of consistency in attending substance abuse treatment was a contributing factor.

In another study, Altschuler & Brash (2004), using context analysis examined the seven domains known to have an effect on the adjustment process of adolescent offenders as they reenter



the community, found that adolescent offenders with substance abuse problems persist in their use of alcohol and drugs if a treatment originally started while in a facility is discontinued after release. This discontinuity was found to be due to shortages in the available slots for treatment in the community (Altschuler & Brash, 2004). However, Altschuler & Brash (2004) noted that treatment models in correctional institutions and community-based substance abuse treatment programs are ineffective in successfully treating youth offenders given the focus of these programs on adult substance abuse treatment and the difference in developmental age between adolescents and adults.

Also, findings from Freudenberg et al. (2005), examining the experiences of 476 adult women and 491 adolescent males released from New York City jails between 1997 and 2001, revealed that residing with an individual who uses drugs or alcohol contributed to postrelease substance abuse amongst youth offenders. This was supported by the finding that only 4% of young men indicated frequent use of hard drugs such as crack, cocaine, or heroin after release (Freudenberg et al., 2005).

Furthermore, Visher & Courtney (2006), examining prerelease and postrelease experiences amongst a prerelease sample of 424 male offenders, noted that prior to their incapacitation, many offenders consumed alcohol and used illicit drugs, such as marijuana and cocaine. Findings from Visher & Courtney (2006) revealed that over half of respondents used illegal substances daily” with more respondents using marijuana than cocaine on a daily basis (27 percent and percent respectively). During postrelease interviews, conducted one to three months after release, only 23 percent of the men in the study indicated drug use or intoxication (Visher & Courtney, 2006). Findings from Visher & Courtney (2006) revealed that a history of substance abuse, which engendered consequences such as relationship problems and arguments at home, as well as reports of incapacitation, increased the likelihood of postrelease drug use.

In 2007, Visher & Courtney conducted a follow-up of the 300 adult male offenders released from prison and found an increase in the use of illegal substances, such as drugs and alcohol, amongst

the sample of released male offenders. More specifically, findings revealed a rise in drug use alone from 14 percent in the month after release to 25 percent a year after release (Visher & Courtney, 2007). Additionally, Visher & Courtney (2007) found that a quarter of drug users and about 10 percent of alcohol users reported problems a year after release with the most common cited problems being relationship problems and problems at home.

Mallik-Kane & Visher (2008) also found that prior to incarceration approximately 80 percent of all respondents, with more women (83%) than men (75%), reported histories of substance abuse. Also, findings from Mallik-Kane & Visher (2008) revealed that while a substantial percentage of offenders indicated histories of substance abuse relatively few received substance abuse treatment while incarcerated with 4 in 10 offenders participating in some treatment services during prison and just one-quarter of men and 14 percent of women participating in formal drug or alcohol treatment program while incarcerated. In terms of continuity of substance abuse treatment after release, findings from Mallik-Kane & Visher (2008) showed a decline with 30 percent of all returning offenders participating in substance abuse treatment programs immediately following release and 20 percent participating in the first year after release. Additional findings from Mallik-Kane & Visher (2008) found that returning offenders with substance abuse histories experienced relapse with 40 percent of respondents reporting current use, defined in this context as drug use or alcohol intoxication within 30 days of the study interview. Substance abuse was also reported amongst respondents who did not have a history of substance abuse (Mallik-Kane & Visher, 2008).

In examining the reentry experiences of 142 women released Texas state prisons and jails in 2005, La Vigne et al. (2009) found that prior to their incarceration, approximately 83 percent of women indicated illegal drug use in the six months before prison with nearly 30 percent of women reporting their use as heavy. After release, La Vigne et al. (2009) found that a small percentage of women were involved in treatment, such as AA/NA, and intensive inpatient or outpatient treatment program (21

percent and 7 percent respectively). Moreover, findings from La Vigne et al. (2009) indicated that returning offenders experience relapse in that over a third of the women interviewed were using illegal drugs or being intoxicated with almost one-third of offenders considering themselves as heavy users eight to ten months after release from prison. La Vigne et al. (2009) also found that women serving time in state jail for drug related offenses, as well as women with extensive histories of substance use were more likely to engage in frequent substance use during the eight to ten months after release from prison. This relapse was found to engender problems for female offenders who reported arguments, as well as problems with their relationships (11 percent and 10 percent respectively) (La Vigne et al., 2009). Arrest, as a result of ones' substance use illustrates another problem experienced by women who used illegal substances (6 percent respectively) (La Vigne et al., 2009).

#### *Mental Health Conditions*

For some offenders, in this case juvenile offenders, receipt of mental health treatment while incarcerated is the first time individuals received any form of treatment or medication for a mental health condition (Altschuler & Brash, 2004). For Altschuler & Brash (2004), if treatment or medication prescribed and taken while incarcerated is not continued upon release, conditions of mental disorders, such as schizophrenia, major depression, and bipolar disorder, most likely return or even worsen, thus engendering problems for juvenile offenders returning to the community, such as impaired decision making skills (Altschuler & Brash, 2004).

Findings from Visher et al. (2004a), in addition, revealed that small percentage of respondents in the study successfully completed a general counseling program while incapacitated (11 percent respectively). More respondents, however, indicated a greater need for treatment postrelease with 50 percent desiring help obtaining counseling and 30 percent wanting help acquiring mental treatment (Visher et al., 2004a). Additional findings from Visher et al. (2004a) revealed that a significant number of offenders' experience serious depression and anxiety which could impact their ability to obtain and

maintain employment, or restore relationships with friends and families.

In addition, findings presented in La Vigne et al. (2004) also revealed that returning offenders suffer from mental health conditions in that 4 percent of released offenders experienced mental health problems, predominately depression, as well as symptoms illustrative of PTSD (10 percent and 4 percent respectively). In addition, findings revealed a lack of continuity in mental health treatment for returning offenders with 8 percent receiving a referral to community health services, and offenders on medication are no more likely than other prisoners to be referred to a community health service provider (La Vigne et al., 2004). Additional findings showed that respondents suffering from depression were more likely to report using drugs or being intoxicated after release, respondents with PTSD were more likely to be reconvicted. (La Vigne et al., 2004).

Furthermore, Mallik-Kane & Visher (2008) found that of respondents diagnosed with a mental health condition about 6 in 10 were in receipt of mental health treatment while incarcerated; however, following their release, rates of mental health treatment declined roughly to 50 percent and remained relatively constant in the eight to ten months after release. Compared with men, Mallik-Kane & Visher (2008) found that the continuity of prescription for women was greatly disrupted following their release with most receiving prescription medications regularly while incarcerated, yet showing signs of discontinuation after release. For example, in the months immediately after release 74 percent of men and 60 percent of women reported using a similar regimen of medication prescribed while incarcerated while eight to ten months after release rates of usage declined for both men and women (59 percent and 40 percent respectively). When asked the reason for discontinuing ones' medication regimen, women reported the cost associated with their prescribed medications as a reason for their declining usage (Mallik-Kane & Visher, 2008). As a result of limited mental treatment, about 4 in 10 respondents suffering from mental health conditions experienced problems with employment and the performance of other activities (Mallik-Kane & Visher, 2008).

Additionally, Gunnison & Helfgott (2011) reported that for mentally ill offenders a severe lack of placement options exists in effectively treating these individuals when they return to their respective communities. As a result, one CCO in Gunnison & Helfgott (2011:297) stated that the “limited cognitive abilities of mentally ill offenders cause them to revert back to what they do well, crime, drugs [...]”

## REENTRY PREPARATION AND RELEASE

Research presented in this section underscores resources and networks, namely the accessibility and availability of community-based resources and services, as well as resources and services within correctional institutions as barriers to offender reentry.

### *Resources and Networks*

Nelson et al. (1999), examining the post-release experiences of 49 returning offenders to the New York City metropolis, found that release procedures that release offenders during nighttime hours postpones their access to parole and public services due to these particular agencies only taking in clients during daytime hours. Also, due to arrival times and destinations of returning offenders being unknown and unpredictable the ability for family members and others, such as program representatives, to connect with returning offenders and initiate contact is made more difficult (Nelson et al., 1999).

For Visher et al. (2004a), findings revealed that a greater proportion of returning offenders, roughly 56 percent, were released during afternoon hours between the hours of 12 noon and 6 pm., Furthermore, the vast majority of released offenders were released during daylight hours (91%) (Visher et al., 2004). For Visher et al. (2004a), these timings of respondents’ release proved advantageous, for the immediate needs of returning offenders were more likely to be met, and community-based agencies and services were more likely to be open, and transportation is more readily

accessible. However, for respondents released from prison between midnight to 6am and 6pm to midnight when community-based agencies and services are less likely to be operational and transportation is limited, accessibility and availability of these resources are hindered (Visher et al., 2004a).

In addition, while findings reveal offender participation in in-prison programs, such as employment readiness, substance abuse, job training, life skills, GED/basic education, anger management, parenting skills, counseling, some offenders did not participate in such programs due to simply not being offered such programs, being ineligible, or not being qualified (25%, 22%, and 18% respectively) (Visher et al., 2004a). Likewise, Visher et al. (2004a) found that due to the large percentage of offenders within Maryland Division of Corrections being short-termers, whose shorter terms inhibits their ability to participate in pre-release programs and in-prison programs, a larger share of offenders are returning to communities without having the benefit of programming. Additionally, as a result of fiscal constraints, Visher et al. (2004a) found that accessibility and availability of prison-based programs is limited, thus many offenders are placed on waiting lists for programs and oftentimes are released before being able to partake in these programs.

Also, La Vigne et al. (2004) found that relatively few of the respondents who participated in prerelease programs obtained referrals to potential jobs, continuing education, substance abuse treatment, or financial assistance in the community. Likewise, findings from La Vigne et al. (2004) found fewer respondents receiving referrals to health care, housing, and counseling services.

In another study, Visher & Courtney (2007) found that despite the challenges that emerge during the transition from prison to home, a degree of continuity remains in terms of accessing programs and services, for example, about two-thirds of male offenders indicated participating in at least one program since release with the most common program being substance abuse treatment, employment skills or job training, and general counseling. Compared to non-participants, respondents

who participated in counseling while incarcerated were less likely to abuse illegal substances in the months after release (Visher & Courtney, 2007).

## CRIMINAL HISTORY

The following section examines criminal history, incorporating prior history and stigmatization of incarceration, as a barrier to offender reentry.

### *Prior History*

Visher et al. (2004a) reported prior involvement with the criminal justice within 84 percent of respondents who had at least one previous conviction and had extensive criminal histories. Furthermore, findings revealed that over two-thirds of respondents were previously incarcerated (Visher et al., 2004). Findings from Visher et al. (2004a) also showed high levels of optimism about from respondents relative to staying out of prison after release despite extensive criminal histories (78 percent). However, findings indicated that roughly one-third of respondents were rearrested for a new criminal act, such as drug charges which accounted for half of reconvictions after prison release (Visher et al., 2004). Additionally, Visher et al. (2004a) noted that during prerelease interviews with offenders, prior criminal justice involvement, operationalized as having one or more prior convictions, influenced an offenders' ability to handle reentry issues, in particular, gaining social acceptance. For offenders with prior convictions, being socially accepted was perceived as being harder for these individuals (Visher et al., 2004a). Also, findings of Visher et al. (2004a) revealed that for 68 percent of returning offenders their criminal records had either some or a lot of effect on their ability to find employment.

Similarly, findings from La Vigne et al. (2004) revealed that an extensive history of criminal involvement was evident within a large percentage of the study sample (87 percent). Moreover, over one-third of respondents in the study indicated at least four prior convictions (La Vigne et al., 2004).

Respondents who reported extensive criminal histories were inclined to the commission of new crimes, mostly drug possession and drug sales (52 percent and 12 percent respectively); however, other crimes, such as burglary, robbery, criminal trespassing, and parole violations, were prevalent amongst respondents who returned to prison four to eight months after release (La Vigne et al., 2004). As a result of these new crimes, La Vigne et al. (2004) found that over half of returning offenders in their study were reconvicted following their release from prison (52 percent).

Visher & Courtney (2006) also reported that most male offenders in their sample had long histories of criminal justice involvement with two-thirds serving time prior to their current conviction and almost half having been detained to a juvenile correctional facility (83 percent and 44 percent respectively). Additionally, findings from Visher & Courtney (2006) revealed that a relatively small percentage of released male offenders, roughly six percent, committed a new crime while another six percent were rearrested. Given these findings, Visher & Courtney (2006:13) posited that men who did not violate any law or conditions of supervision, as well as men who were older and had less extensive criminal histories were more likely to reintegrate into the community.

For Visher & Courtney (2007:10), a history of juvenile delinquency, operationalized as time spent within a juvenile facility, increases reports of postrelease criminal involvement that engenders arrest. Findings from Visher & Courtney (2007) study revealed that almost three in ten returning offenders committed at least one new crime following their release with a majority of new crimes being attributed to drug possession and drug dealing (51 percent and 32 percent respectively). Also, Visher & Courtney (2007) found that 40 percent of respondents indicated being arrested at least once since their release.

In another study, Chung et al. (2007) found that 35% of 413 offenders became involved with the criminal justice system after their release. According to Chung et al. (2007), younger offenders with prior petitions to court and who participated in a variety of both aggressive and income offenses



were more likely to report being arrested or having an overnight stay of at least 7 days in a residential or rehabilitative setting, such as a detention center or drug and alcohol facility.

Additionally, La Vigne et al. (2009) reported that over 75 percent of female offenders in their study had prior criminal convictions (81 percent respectively). Furthermore, after their release, approximately one-third of female offenders in the sample engaged in criminal activity, with the most common form being drug possession (La Vigne et al., 2009). Also, within eight to ten months after their release, 35 percent of women reported being arrested with a majority indicating violations of parole opposed to the commission of a new crime as the reason (La Vigne et al., 2009:14). For remaining cases of reincarceration, drug possession, drug distribution, and property crime were identified as contributing factors (58 percent, 18 percent, and 9 percent respectively) (La Vigne et al., 2009:14).

#### *Stigma of Incarceration*

According to Altschuler & Brash (2004), juvenile records prevent juvenile offenders from acquiring certain jobs and prove discouraging to the job searching process. Additionally, given that juvenile records are not confidential, this further prevents juvenile offenders from finding employment (Altschuler & Brash, 2004:82).

Visher et al. (2008) also reported that a majority of offenders perceived their criminal record as a barrier to their ability to acquire employment. According to these individuals, background checks inhibited their ability acquire a job, and offenders believed that employers did not want to hire someone with a criminal record. (Visher et al., 2008).

In addition, findings from La Vigne et al. (2009) underscore stigmatization of incarceration, especially amongst female offenders who showed concern that finding social acceptance would be difficult (24 percent respectively). More specifically, La Vigne et al. (2009) reported that for nearly a quarter of the women interviewed postrelease their criminal record had been an obstacle in their ability

to secure housing.

Winnick & Bodkin (2008), examining the experiences of 450 adult male offenders' with the marked label of ex con, found that over 80 percent of respondents held the perception that most people would reject ex-convicts both as teachers and childcare providers. Furthermore, respondents perceived a general resistance from employers in employing ex-offenders (Winnick & Bodkin, 2008). Furthermore, Winnick & Bodkin (2008) found that perceived difficulty in getting a job was strongly related, though mediated by educational attainment and pre-conviction employment, to devaluation/discrimination.

Lebel (2012:101), examining the perceptions of stigma amongst 229 male and female offenders, found that approximately a quarter of the sample experienced stigmatization often or very often in employment and housing.

Also, Sumter et al. (2012) noted the presence of stigmatization within their sample of 50 offenders. Specifically, respondents indicated a need for minimizing social stigma and increasing community embracing in order to dismantle the use of stigma that disqualifies someone from a position (Sumter et al., 2012). According to one respondent, "the community should accept me and my skills for who I am not who I have been." (Sumter et al., 2012:304).

## ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

Research literature presented in this section examines empirical studies addressing various themes related to an offender's economic well-being as a reentry barrier.

### *Housing*

Nelson et al. (1999) reported that nearly 82 percent (40 out of 49) of returning offenders resided with a relative or with their spouse or partner after their release. However, for approximately 10 percent (5 out of 49) of released offenders who did not have a home to return to or could stay with

relatives, shelters served as an alternative form of housing (Nelson et al., 1999). For respondents residing in shelters after release, the conditions of the shelters, such as the presence of alcohol and drugs, were characterized as being not conducive of staying drug free (Nelson et al., 1999). For respondents who do not get out of shelters, Nelson et al. (1999:9) reported that these individuals quickly succumb to the environment.

Prior to incarceration, approximately half of all respondents within Visher et al. (2004a) study resided with someone else in their house or apartment. For individuals living on their own, only 39 percent resided in their own home or apartment prior to being incarcerated (Visher et al., 2004a). Findings from prerelease interviews indicated a greater percentage of female offenders who expected to live with their family members after release (75 percent and 63 percent respectively) (Visher et al., 2004). Visher et al. (2004a) found that approximately 67 percent of all offenders in the study sample expected to reside with family members after their release from prison. Furthermore, about 71 percent of respondents held high expectations relative to finding a place to live after release, associating their abilities of finding housing to be *pretty easy or very easy* (Visher et al., 2004a). Postrelease findings, reported by Visher et al. (2004a), showed that the largest share of respondents resided with someone else while only less than one-fifth resided in their own home, yet the remaining sample of returning offenders resided in transitional housing and residential treatment facilities” (7 percent and 3 percent respectively). Further examination of findings from Visher et al. (2004a) revealed that a quarter of respondents were living with someone else who had been in prison at some point and used illegal drugs (9 percent) (Visher et al., 2004a:137). According to Visher et al. (2004a), such living arrangements can lead to reoffending, as well as parole violations.

In La Vigne et al. (2004), findings also revealed that prior to release, nearly half of respondents expected to reside with a family member (47 percent). After release, La Vigne et al. (2004) found that prerelease expectations about housing were realized with 73 percent of respondents living with a

parent and/or spouse or intimate partner. Additionally, findings revealed that public housing and Section 8 housing provided returning offenders with an alternative to securing housing after release from prison (6 percent) (La Vigne et al., 2004). Nonetheless, La Vigne et al. (2004) found that housing restrictions oftentimes bar certain convicted offenders from utilizing public housing. Specifically, La Vigne et al (2004) found that 5 percent of respondents reported difficulty in finding suitable housing given their criminal record.

In the Freudenberg et al. (2005) study, findings revealed that more female offenders emphasized a degree of difficulty associated with finding housing compared with adolescent offenders within the study (71 percent and 18 percent respectively). Freudenberg et al. (2005:1733), examining case management and social interventions designed to reduce drug use and arrest, found that housing policies create complications for offenders returning to the community. Specifically, findings from Freudenberg et al. (2005) revealed that New York City Housing Authority mandated evictions for families housing recently incarcerated persons; as a result, families were placed in a dilemma of losing their home or forcing their returning son or daughter into homelessness.

For Visher & Courtney (2006), findings revealed that immediately after release from prison, almost half of respondents slept within the homes of family members (48 percent respectively). Findings from Visher & Courtney (2006) also revealed that 84 percent of respondents anticipated a place to live as essential in staying out of prison. Additionally, over three-quarters of respondents reported residing with a family member or an intimate partner one to three months following their release (Visher & Courtney, 2006:15). However, for 7 percent of returning offenders within the study, finding housing was difficult due to their criminal records which oftentimes barred certain offenders from utilizing housing services such as, public housing and Section 8. (Visher & Courtney, 2006). Additionally, findings from Visher & Courtney (2006) indicated that returning offenders resided with other recently released offenders and with individuals who often drank to the point of intoxication

and used illegal drugs.

In a follow-up study, Visher & Courtney (2007) found that immediately after release only 18 percent of respondents resided in their own homes while 25 percent of respondents lived on their own one year after release. Moreover, Visher & Courtney (2007) found that one in ten men reported trouble finding housing as a result of their criminal history. By the end of the year, more than a third of respondents indicated living with a family member (Visher & Courtney, 2007).

For Mallik-Kane & Visher (2008), findings showed that compared with the general population of returning offenders, offenders suffering from mental health problems had more housing difficulties. More specifically, returning offenders with mental health problems were less likely than other returning offenders to be housed with their family members and were more likely to be homeless after release (Mallik-Kane & Visher, 2008).

In another study, findings from La Vigne et al. (2009) revealed that prerelease expectations about housing for most women were realized upon release (83 percent respectively). Specifically, most female offenders resided with family while the remainder resided with friends, or some resided in their own homes immediately after release (40 percent, 17 percent, and 27 percent respectively). However, for one in three women residing with another previously incarcerated person, or with an individual who abuses both drugs and alcohol provided an alternative means of housing (19 percent and 22 percent respectively) (La Vigne et al., 2005)

Additionally, based on the reflections of 132 CCOs within Gunnison & Helfgott (2011) offender's recent or previous convictions further hamper their ability to find housing once released into the community. As one CCO stated, "a barrier to reentry success is due to the offender being [...] unable to find housing with felony conviction." (Gunnison & Helfgott, 2011:297).

In Sumter et al. (2012), findings revealed that housing was a significant barrier for offenders seeking to reintegrate into the community. One respondent identified housing as an essential need,

and felt that housing was a crucial element to their reentry (Sumter et al., 2012:303). In addition, Sumter et al. (2013) found that 44 percent of all respondents associated high levels of anxiety with finding shelter upon release. Compared to female and youth offenders, male offenders within Sumter et al. (2013) expressed more anxiety about finding shelter (50 percent, 38 percent, and 42 percent respectively).

### *Employment*

Nelson et al. (1999), examining postrelease experiences of 49 returning offenders, revealed that the primary focus for these individuals was finding and securing employment. Findings showed that people were consistently preoccupied with finding work than avoiding drugs and other illegal activity with a greater share of respondents reporting full or part-time jobs in the mainstream market by the end of the first month after release (18 out of 49 respectively) (Nelson et al., 1999). Despite the 18 respondents within Nelson et al. (1999) who acquired employment, 31 respondents did not find jobs. According to Nelson et al. (1999), looking without success, postponing the search, and not looking contributed to returning offenders not finding jobs, in particular, of those who were looking without success, five were conducting uninformed searches while others, namely fifteen participants, were aware of employment assistance, such as job training or job development programs, and failed to utilize them. Nonetheless, for many of respondents who indicated postponing the search the need to take care of fundamental problems trumped beginning a job search (Nelson et al., 1999).

Also, in Visher et al. (2004), findings showed that before entering prison approximately two-thirds of respondents were employed; however, individuals experienced high turnover rates and poor job records with 42 percent possessing high school diplomas and a similar share experiencing terminations at least once (45 percent respectively). While in prison, Visher et al. (2004) noted that a third of offenders actively participated in various employment programs, such as employment readiness and job training. Also, while incarcerated, one-third of offenders participated in work release

programs that lasted for 17 weeks (Visher et al., 2004). Postrelease findings indicated that 64 percent of offenders were involved in some form of employment and 44 percent were working at least 40 hours per week during the week after their release (Visher et al., 2004). However, Visher et al. (2004a) found that for 66 percent of returning offenders their criminal histories had some or a lot of effect on their ability to search and find employment, more so for respondents who had not worked than respondents who had worked (64 percent and 26 percent respectively).

La Vigne et al. (2004) reported that prior to imprisonment, a substantial share of respondents were employed, though mostly within food service, construction, and maintenance jobs (61 percent respectively). Additionally, La Vigne et al. (2004) found that offenders within their study were engaged in programs, such as employment readiness programs, job-training programs, and work release, to improve job skills and prepare for postrelease employment (39 percent, 11 percent, and 9 percent respectively). Findings during postrelease interviews revealed the limited success in finding employment for returning offenders, for example, forty-four percent worked for at least one week after release and less than 30 percent of offenders reported being employed during the postrelease interview (La Vigne et al., 2004). Regarding job satisfaction, La Vigne et al. (2004) found that despite overall job satisfaction, such as getting along with supervisors and coworker, as well as being treated fairly, the majority of respondents were dissatisfied with their wages, earning, on average, \$9 an hour, a wage lower than expected before being released (35 percent were satisfied respectively). Also, findings revealed that in communities where drug selling was a problem respondents worked significantly fewer weeks after release compared with communities that were good places to find a job (La Vigne et al., 2004).

La Vigne & Kachnowski (2005) reported that prior to incarceration, 56 percent of respondents possessed income derived from illegal activity and 53 percent were terminated from their jobs at least once prior to their incarceration. Of the 580 respondents interviewed, a substantial percentage of

respondents indicated a need for *some help or a lot of help* finding a job (87 percent respectively) (La Vigne & Kachnowski, 2005).

In Visher & Courtney (2006), findings revealed that despite the majority of respondents who reported working more than 40 hours a week, during the few months after release, only thirty-nine percent of respondents were employed at some point while less than one-third were employed at the time of the interview.

In another study Visher & Courtney (2007) found that in urban areas returning offenders experienced challenges to finding employment, for only 37 percent of the study sample were employed full-time by one year after their release, though this does show an increase from the 21 percent employed full-time just one-month release, thus revealing limited success in finding employment.

In Taylor Greene (2006:54), findings suggest that securing employment is further complicated given prevailing gender norms. As stated by Patricia, a respondent in the study, “it is easier for men to get a job because they do physical labor and employers don’t care if you have a record – they can get you cheaper.” Moreover, findings suggest that a majority of offenders within the study lack job skills and training given the 56 percent of respondents who believed such programs would ease their transition experiences (Taylor Greene et al., 2006). As a result, failure to acquire such skills and training would further complicate the reentry process, in particular, securing employment on the outside (Taylor Greene et al., 2006).

In addition, findings from Mallik-Kane & Visher (2008) revealed that offenders with mental health conditions, when compared to the general population, were less likely to find any employment, worked for fewer postrelease months, and were unemployed during the time of the first postrelease interview. For mentally ill individuals, Mallik-Kane & Visher (2008) also found that only 36 percent of men and 26 percent of women suffering with a mental illness found employment with 59 percent



of mentally ill men and 49 percent among women securing employment during the eight to ten month postrelease period

For Bloom and Brown (2009:319), findings revealed that nearly 55%” of women had inadequate education that would qualify them for employment opportunities other than low-wage workers (Bloom & Brown, 2009). Likewise, out of the overall 240 women sampled within the study, only 37% attained full-time status during which 18% held more than two or three different jobs and roughly four women held more than 4 jobs during the 16-month parole period (Bloom & Brown, 2009).

Additionally, results from La Vigne et al. (2009) revealed that only 36 percent worked two or four months after release. For the two-thirds of women not employed after their release, respondents indicated that being permanently disabled, havin] difficulty finding a job, childcare responsibilities, and only part-time positions available inhibited their ability to partake in employment (20 percent, 22 percent, 5 percent respectively) (La Vigne et al., 2009).

For Gunnison & Helfgott (2011:297), findings indicated that approximately 90 percent of CCOs attributed the inability of offenders to successfully reintegrate on employment, in particular, CCOs indicated that offenders who were unemployed and underemployed experienced failures in their ability to reintegrate. One CCO noted that diminished employable skills produce unemployment which creates an atmosphere that causes offenders to revert back to what they do well, crime (Gunnison & Helfgott, 2011).

Sumter et al. (2012:) reported that twenty-one respondents expressed the need for assistance in finding employment, as well as noted their criminal history as a potential barrier in obtaining suitable employment. Similarly, findings from Sumter et al. (2013) revealed that amongst adolescent offenders the concern for obtaining employment proved taxing with 50 % of youth offenders indicating high levels of anxiety about finding a job compared with adult males and adult females (28% and 36%

respectively).

### *Family*

Nelson et al. (1999:10), examining postrelease experiences of 49 offenders returning to the New York City metropolis, found that family strength scores, operationalized as a 5-point scale that rates levels of family support, correlated strongly with individual success scores, operationalized using a 5-point scale that measured successes such as having a job, staying away from illegal activity and drug use, making new friends, and securing stable housing. Nelson et al. (1999) interpreted this correlation as indicating that individuals with strong, supportive families are more likely to succeed than those with weak or no family support. Furthermore, Nelson et al. (1999) found that acceptance was the most valuable contribution that a family can make for individuals returning to the community. However, Nelson et al. (1999:11) found that not every family welcomes relatives home openly, for example, one study participant, Reggie, who, upon his release went to his grandmother's house where she let him in but refused to hug him, and when he cried she stated, "You did this to yourself." Even when Reggie's family returned home and allowed him to stay, they had not given him a key. (Nelson et al., 1999).

Visher et al. (2004a) found that for eighty-nine percent of respondents' familial support plays a critical role in providing returning offenders with tangible, financial, and emotional support. Likewise, roughly 77 percent of respondents revealed a degree of closeness with their family before entering prison (Visher et al., 2004a). However, Visher et al. (2004a) found that nearly two-thirds of respondents had family members with criminal histories with more female offenders than male offenders indicating that "someone in their family [was] convicted of a crime (65 percent and 58 percent respectively). Similarly, for intimate partner relationships, Visher et al. (2004a) found that more female offenders indicated having spouses with criminal histories compared with male offenders (23 percent and 3 percent respectively). For Visher et al. (2004a), the threat of not successfully

reintegrating is greater for returning offenders whose families have criminal histories or are involved in crime compared with offenders whose families are not. Additionally, Visher et al. (2004a) found that while respondents indicated that remaining drug-free and not using alcohol (70 percent and 52 percent respectively) would guarantee them staying out of prison, a vast majority of offenders returned to families where at least one family member had a drug or alcohol problem (71.5 percent). According to Visher et al. (2004) dysfunction and discord can limit how much support the family is able to provide returning offenders once released from prison.

Family support subsequent ones' release from prison precipitates positive reentry outcomes for returning offenders. Visher et al. (2004a) found that family support after ones' release from prison contributed to nearly roughly 49 percent of respondents sleeping at a family member's home their first night out of prison. Moreover, during both PR1 and PR2, Visher et al. (2004a) found that more than 80 percent of respondents stated that they were currently residing with family members when interviewed. For employment opportunities, findings from the initial postrelease interview revealed that 48 percent of female and 47 percent of male respondents utilized family members as means of finding employment (Visher et al., 2004a). However, for respondents with lower levels of familial support and who are not close to their families, their ability to find employment is hindered, thus resulting in these individuals not working after release (Visher et al., 2004a). Also, findings from Visher et al. (2004a7) revealed that returning offenders reporting a lack of employment after release had higher mean scores on Negative Partner Support scale, which measures levels of support from spouses. Furthermore, for drug use, Visher et al. (2004a) found that drug use was more associated with returning offenders reporting lower mean Family Relationship Quality Scale scores, which assesses how close an individual feel to ones' family, compared with respondents whose mean Family Relationship Quality Scale scores were higher (3.18 and 3.39 respectively).

In La Vigne & Kachnowski (2005), findings suggest the importance of the family in fostering

positive postrelease outcomes for returning offenders, especially for offenders involved in intimate partner relationships. For these offenders, having an intimate partner resulted in employment for more weeks on average compared with offenders who did not have a partner (La Vigne & Kachnowski, 2005). Additionally, La Vigne & Kachnowski (2005) found that respondents whose familial relationships involved family members who threatened or hurt them prior to imprisonment had a greater likelihood of being reconvicted or reincarcerated after release.

Visher & Courtney (2006) found that 43 percent of men expressed having seemingly close relationships with their family members prior to their incarceration with rates stabilizing during their incapacitation and tremendously showing increase following their release from corrections (42% and 59% respectively). Findings from Visher & Courtney (2006:7) revealed that only one-half of men identified family as a source of financial support. Also, during the first month after their release 78 percent received at least one month of familial support, either financially or emotionally, with 52 percent equating said support as more helpful than anticipated (Visher & Courtney, 2006). Additionally, respondents from Visher & Courtney (2006:7) indicated that support from family and spending] time with children proved essential in their ability to remain out of prison and successfully reintegrate back into society (63% and 46% respectively). However, Visher & Courtney (2006) found that for a majority of men in this particular study having family members with a history of incarceration and convictions, as well as family members who use drugs and alcohol fosters not always positive outcomes, thus exacerbating reentry challenges (62%, 64%, and 64% respectively).

Mallik-Kane & Visher (2008) found that compared to other returning offenders, offenders with mental health conditions receive less tangible and emotional support from their families. This outcome precipitates from the diminished capacity for a family to provide assistance to these individuals due to familial problems with substance abuse, as well as threats of domestic violence perpetrated by both the family and the returning offender (Mallik-Kane & Visher, 2008). In another

study, findings from La Vigne et al. (2009) revealed that nearly two-thirds of returning female offenders expressed that the degree of familial support afforded to them “exceeded their expectations”, especially in the case of financial support, housing, and securing employment (54 percent, 50 percent, and 42 percent respectively). Likewise, results indicated that more women garnered financial support from intimate partners compared with returning male offenders; however, no significant association between familial support and reentry outcomes was evident within the study (40 percent and 26 percent respectively) (La Vigne et al., 2009). Findings also revealed that a vast majority of women received substantial emotional support in the form of levels of closeness and extent of positive involvement in ones’ life on behalf of ones’ family (83 percent respectively) (La Vigne et al., 2009). However, for the 24 percent of women who lacked familial support, La Vigne et al. (2009) found that these women faced negative family influences that did not foster a successful reintegration process. More specifically, given the lack of assistance, these women resided with people who abused drugs and alcohol and suffering from depression and other mental health problems (La Vigne et al., 2009).

In Gunnison & Helfgott (2011), findings revealed that approximately 70 percent of the 132 CCOs surveyed within the study associated a lack of immediate family support as attributable to failures of offender reentry. Likewise, offenders within Sumter et al. (2012) identified family as a barrier to their successfully reentry, but the need to involve family and social environment within their incarceration process as a way to minimize stigmatization and improve acceptance.

Also, findings from Sumter et al. (2013) revealed that 54 percent of respondents associated little concern or worry in terms of receiving support from family after release, though more male offenders, compared with female and youth offenders, indicated higher levels of anxiety about the absence of support from family (32 percent, 23 percent, and 25 percent respectively).

#### *Financial Problems*

Visher et al. (2004a) found that upon release from prison returning offenders are already

disadvantaged due to scarce financial resources and many financial obligations. In particular, findings revealed that at the time of release, the primary sources of money were derived from “prison or work release jobs, money family sent, and/or money from a prison account” (49%, 36%, and 16% respectively). Though financial support from family was found to be substantive during the first months after release for returning offenders (32 percent), subsequent months revealed a drop in the amount of financial support accrued from the family with only 10 percent of respondents receiving monetary support from family members 6 or more months after release (Visher et al., 2004a). For financial obligations, Visher et al. (2004a) reported that approximately 62 percent of respondents had some debt or other financial obligation with amounts owed ranging from \$15 to \$7,040. The total amount of debt owed for respondents in the study ranged between \$40 to \$100,600, with child support constituting approximately 90 percent or more of total debt owed (Visher et al., 2004a). Though no statistically significant difference was found, findings suggest, according to Visher et al. (2004a), that respondents whose debts were substantive engaged in economically motivated crime after release in order to mitigate effects of ones’ debt, thus leading to their higher percentage of reincarceration and reconviction.

La Vigne et al. (2004) also found that approximately one-fifth of respondents indicated owing money to child support, fines/restitutions/court costs, supervision fees, and other costs. Findings from La Vigne et al. (2004:10) revealed that for three quarters of the study sample, paying off debts accrued while incarcerated would be hard; likewise, findings underscored the difficulty returning offenders faced in financially supporting themselves. Furthermore, La Vigne et al. (2004) stated that despite their employment status, offenders who owed money were more than twice as likely to have used drugs or been intoxicated compared with offenders who did not owe money.

In Visher & Courtney (2006), findings revealed that 80 percent of men in their study indicated owing money for child support, fines/restitutions/court costs, supervision fees, and other costs.

Furthermore, Visher & Courtney (2006) found that 59 percent of offenders perceived that paying off their debts had been hard and that it would be even more difficult to survive financially and make enough money to support oneself (58 percent and 66 percent respectively).

For La Vigne et al. (2009), findings showed that nearly two-thirds of female offenders indicated their family as sources of financial support with less than a third relying on legal employment. Additionally, results from La Vigne et al. (2009) revealed that aside from the 30 percent of respondents who faced challenges with keeping housing, finding food for themselves and their families, almost half of female offenders within the study were burdened with debt, the most common forms of debt involving supervision fees, consumer debt, fines, and child support (23 percent, 14 percent, 8 percent, and 7 percent respectively).

### *Education*

Findings from Steurer & Smith (2003) study, examining the influence of participation in correctional education on recidivism and post-release employment amongst 3170 offenders, revealed that non-participants of correctional education programs experienced slightly higher rates of employment than participants of correctional education programs (81.4% and 77.3% respectively). In addition, findings reveal that for each successive three years in which respondents of the study reported their wages, individuals participating in correctional education earned higher than non-participants (Steurer & Smith, 2003). Nonetheless, findings showed that offenders participating in correctional education program were less likely to be rearrested, reconvicted, and reincarcerated than non-participants (Steurer & Smith, 2003).

According to Altschuler & Brash (2004), nearly a quarter of youth offenders are diagnosed with learning disorders that undermines their educational capabilities. Furthermore, given their involvement with the criminal justice system, Altschuler & Brash (2004) argue that incarceration

exacerbates the effects of learning disorders presenting juvenile offenders with a challenging and frustrating education experience.

According to findings from the Visser et al. (2004a) study, prior to their incarceration less than half of respondents earned a high school or GED diploma with the largest share of respondents, approximately 38 percent, completing up to the 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> grade. In addition, for a majority of respondents, their education level remained the same while they were in prison (87 percent respectively) (Visser et al., 2004a). Additionally, compared to offenders who were not reconvicted after release, convicted offenders were significantly less likely to have graduated high school or obtained their GED (Visser et al., 2004a).

Findings from Chung et al. (2007) revealed that about 21% of offenders reported completion of high school prior to the aftercare period. Moreover, of those youth eligible to attend school, a vast majority reported at least a full month of school attendance without missing more than 5 days (71 percent respectively) (Chung et al., 2007). Furthermore, results from Chung et al. (2007) further indicated a statistically significant relationship between median age, substance use, and school attendance. More specifically, younger aged participants whose likelihood of being diagnosed with substance use disorders is minute are more likely to attend school regularly compared with older aged participants with a substance use diagnosis (Chung et al., 2007).

Findings from Sumter et al. (2013) revealed that of the 50 offenders interviewed within the study, 34 percent indicated completion of primary school and 51 percent indicated completion of secondary school. Comparably, a greater percentage of female offenders and youth offenders attained higher levels of education compared with adult male offenders (11.14%, 10.18%, vs. 9.36% respectively). Furthermore, in terms of offenders' perceptions of programs and services needed to prepare for release in the community, a higher percentage of female and youth offenders, compared with adult male offenders, perceived that basic educational programs were *very much* needed in order



to prepare them for release into the community (86%, 83%, vs. 56% respectively) (Sumter et al., 2013:130).

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The following section provides an overview of social bond theory. As such, the section begins with a brief discussion of social process theory. Next, the section discusses social control theory. Finally, the section concludes with a discussion of social bond theory.

### *Social Process Theory*

Social process theory examines crime at the individual level (Winfree, Jr. & Abadinsky, 2003; Barlow & Kauzlarich, 2009; Akers & Sellers, 2013). According to social process theory criminal behavior emerges from individuals' responses to social interactions; therefore, crime is viewed as a product of social processes, which are any identifiable, repetitive patterns of interaction within the context of basic human interaction, interactions between groups, or interaction occurring within a social context (Winifree Jr. & Abadinsky, 2003). A variety of social process theories exist, each examining criminal behavior differently. However, despite this difference, each social process theory reinforces the importance of social processes as contributing factors to criminal behavior.

To begin with, social learning theory states that criminal behavior is learned. More specifically, criminal behavior is learned from an individuals' exposure to and the adoption of definitions favorable to crime, as well as imitation and differential reinforcements. (Cullen & Agnew, 2013). Reinforced throughout social control theory, in addition, is the idea that societal constraints are critical in fostering conformity and obedience to norms and value systems, and that in the absence of these constraints, deviancy emerges. For social reaction or social labeling theory, crime results from labeling an act or behavior as criminal. Thus, individuals who engage in said acts or behavior are considered criminal and over time, the internalization of this criminal label occurs, promoting more acts of deviancy.

### *Social Control Theory*

Social control theory examines the role of informal social controls, such as family and members within the community, and formal social controls, such as the criminal justice system and schools, in regulating the behaviors of the individual in order to promote conformity and obedience to the moral underpinnings, mostly in the form of laws and normative standards of behavior, of a given society (Traub & Little, 1999; Winfree Jr. & Abadinsky, 2003; Barlow & Kauzlarich, 2009; Akers & Sellers, 2013; Cullen & Agnew, 2013). Compared with other criminological theories that focus primarily on why individuals break the law or why individuals seek to undermine the moral order within society through acts of deviancy, social control theory emphasize the importance of societal constraints that function to restrain an individuals' natural inclination for criminal behavior (Traub & Little, 1999; Akers & Sellers, 2013).

Moreover, according to proponents of social control theory, conformity, therefore, obedience to and adherence of the moral foundations of society results from the presence of social controls (Akers & Sellers, 2013). Thus, as a source of control or regulation, social controls inhibit humanity's natural inclination to deviate from societal norms and values, thus forestalling our involvement in criminal behavior. This underscores Durkheim's assertion in the strength of morality in restraining an individual from embracing egoistic impulses for more gratification. Reinforced throughout social control theory is that people are motivated to conform given various forms of social controls (i.e. family, peer groups, school, etc.); however, the tendency to violate the law, or the tendency to deviate from normative standards and values within society represents a uniform tendency that expands across groups (Akers & Sellers, 2013). However, given the social nature of humanity, our natural tendency for deviance remains suppressed due to regulative function of these special circumstances, referred to as social controls, which constrain our natural inclination for deviancy (Traub & Little, 1999; Barlow & Kauzlarich, 2009).

Reinforced throughout various social control theories is the premise that crime results from a lack of adequate constraints within the lives of individuals. First, Reiss's theory of personal control states that the failure of personal controls, which are internalized, forms of control that restrain ones' involvement in criminogenic activity, results in delinquency (Akers & Sellers, 2013). In addition, Toby's stake of conformity states that when ones' stake of conformity, defined as ones' investment in conventionality that is compromised when an individual becomes involved in action that violate the rules governing a particular society, weakens, delinquency results. Nye's theory of social control, an expansion of Reiss's theory of personal control, also postulates that when both external and internal controls weaken and alternative routes to goal achievement are restrained, delinquent behavior emerges (Traub & Little, 1999). According to Reckless's containment theory, inner and outer containments function as mediators and restrainers; these containments prevent individuals from engaging in acts of deviancy; therefore, containment stabilizes an individual, thus thwarting the influence of push factors and pull factors. Push factors are internal pressures that function to dissuade an individual from actions that reinforce societal norms (Barlow & Kauzlarich, 2009). Pull factors, in contrast, seek to pull individuals away from behaviors buttressing societal norms and values (Winfrey Jr. & Abadinsky, 2003).

Furthermore, Sykes and Matza's techniques of neutralization and drift theory state that individuals develop subterranean values that rationalize deviancy as a means of escaping the restraints of morality (Akers & Sellers, 2013). For the present study, social bond theory is used to examine how education influences an offenders' perception that he/she will find legal employment upon release from prison.

#### *Social Bond Theory*

Social bond theory states that acts of delinquency result when an individuals' bond to society is weak (Traub & Little, 1999). Social bonds represent forces within the social and physical context of

the individual that “connect an individual to society” (Winfrey Jr. & Abadinsky, 2003). Such forces act to constrain an individual from engaging in nonconformist acts, or behaviors that deviate from prevailing normative standards and values. For Cullen & Agnew (2013), an essential element for explaining why some individuals break the law and others conform is the variations in control and not the variation in motivations, thus for proponents of social bond theory, the impact of motivations on the commission of criminal acts is not warranted.

Furthermore, as a micro-level theory, social bond theory explains phenomenon transpiring at the level of the individual, social bond theory accounts for the influence of social processes operating within the framework of society at large (Cullen & Agnew, 2013). Unlike other social control theories, the emphasis on the bond of the individual to society afford proponents of social bond theory will the opportunity to examine most forms of aberrant behavior (Traub & Little, 1999).

Social bond theory incorporates four fundamental elements that underscore the core premise of social bond theory, which states that stronger elements of social bonding promote increased levels of control over ones’ behavior, thus engendering conformity. These bonds include attachment, involvement, commitment, and belief. When these bonds are weakened or broken, deviancy occurs (Winfrey Jr. & Abadinsky, 2003). The likelihood of deviancy or criminal activity, additionally, is increased when the bonds are weakened.

Attachment is connections between the individual and other social groups, such as family, peers, or teachers (Traub & Little, 1999; Winfrey Jr. & Abadinsky, 2003; Barlow & Kauzlarich, 2009; Akers & Sellers, 2013; Cullen & Agnew, 2013). For returning offenders, high levels of attachment with immediate family members, fellow associates, or any other individual fosters a connection to society (i.e. the family or education). The stronger these attachments, the less likely the returning offender engage in unconventional behaviors, and the more likely the returning offender will successfully reintegrate back into their respective community.

Commitment is an individuals' investment of time and energy in conformity affirming activities that buttress societal norms and values (Traub & Little, 1999; Winfree Jr. & Abadinsky, 2003; Barlow & Kauzlarich, 2009; Akers & Sellers, 2013; Cullen & Agnew, 2013). As a rationally driven component of social bond theory, commitment involves weighing the cost and the benefit associated with deviating from societal norms and values. The more an individual invests in conventional activity, the less likely an individual becomes involved in criminal behavior due to benefit of conforming. For returning offenders who acquire legal forms of employment upon release from prison, the cost of engaging in criminal behavior outweighs the benefits accrued from violating societal norms, thus returning offenders are more likely to remain invested in their jobs as opposed to committing criminal acts and increasing their likelihood of reincarceration. Contrastingly, returning offenders who acquire legal forms of employment, but are dissatisfied with their wages and reside in disenfranchised communities where drug selling is prevalent are more likely to weigh the cost and benefits of minimum wage earnings and the earning accrued from drug selling. In this case, the benefits of drug selling outweigh legal employment, thus less time and energy is invested in legal employment and more commitment is given to engagement in drug selling as a source of income and livelihood.

Involvement describes an individuals' participation in conventional activity (Traub & Little, 1999; Winfree Jr. & Abadinsky, 2003; Barlow & Kauzlarich, 2009; Akers & Sellers, 2013; Cullen & Agnew, 2013). Reinforced in the theoretical concept of involvement is the proverb, Idle hands are the Devil's workshop, thus when individuals are constantly immersed within conventional activities, such as school or work, the opportunity to involve oneself in criminal behavior is reduced (Winfree Jr. & Abadinsky, 2003). For returning offenders who acquire legal employment upon release, their likelihood of recidivating decreases, for such engrossment safeguards returning offenders from activities or groups that thwart their overall reentry process. Essentially, these individuals are too busy, too preoccupied, or too consumed in conformity affirming activities to associate or engage themselves

in activities that reinforce criminal or non-conforming behaviors (Akers & Sellers, 2013).

Finally, belief is the adoption of societal norms and values, in particular the belief that rules and laws governing a society or group(s) are morally grounded and ones' obedience is necessary (Traub & Little, 1999; Winfree Jr. & Abadinsky, 2003; Barlow & Kauzlarich, 2009; Akers & Sellers, 2013; Cullen & Agnew, 2013). Collectively, ones' belief system further forestalls an individual's inclination to commit acts of deviancy and enhances their overall conformity. However, the nature of one's belief system further influences the inclination of an individual to commit crime. According to Winfree Jr. & Abadinsky (2003), when one's attachment to the moral fibers governing society becomes insignificant or gradually loses its potency, deviancy results. Similarly, Akers & Sellers (2013) state that when one's belief in the effectiveness of laws and rules becomes questionable or the value placed on these rules and laws dissipates, the likelihood that an individual will violate said laws and rules intensifies. Thus, the overall endorsement of these generalized rules and laws depends upon an individual's willingness to accept said laws and rules as morally correct and deserving of their obedience (Akers & Sellers, 2013).

Each of these four theoretical concepts serve as foundational elements in the overall construction of the research questions presented below.

## SUMMARY AND CRITIQUE OF THE LITERATURE

Based on the research presented in this review, various themes emerged that discussed how these unique barriers hamper an offenders' ability to successfully reintegrate back into the community. Available research literature discussed in this review addressed how the ecological conditions of the community in which offenders return, such as concentrative disadvantages or high rates of unemployment, poverty, and crime, discourages an offender from successfully reintegrating into their respective communities. Additionally, research examining substance abuse and mental health

conditions revealed how histories of substance abuse and mental health problems undermine postrelease experiences of returning offenders, especially in terms of parole violations and accessing resources and networks within the community. Research also addressed how reentry preparation and release, in particular resources and networks within ones' community, as well as within correctional institutions hinder offenders from accessing services that foster positive reentry outcomes, such as acquiring employment or affording offenders with linkages to community-based services and programs. Research literature addressed how criminal history, such as prior criminal history, contributed to ones' involvement with the criminal justice system, as well as created barriers in terms of finding and acquiring employment and suitable housing. As discussed within the available literature, the stigmatization of incarceration proved disadvantageous to returning offenders actively seeking legal forms of employment, as well as obtaining housing and continuing their education. Lastly, the research literature presented in this review revealed how an offenders' economic well-being further influenced the reentry process. Research literature showed how oftentimes offenders are dependent on family for housing, as well as for networking purposes for finding employment and as a source of instrumental and expressive support. Research literature related to economic well-being also addressed the influence of financial problems and education on the reentry process. In sum, the barriers identified by the available research literature engender difficulty for offenders as they transition back into the community. These barriers collectively shape the reentry experiences of offenders, as well as foster additional challenges for the community in which an offender returns to. However, limitations with the available literature were evident. First, despite the richness and depth added by qualitative research, few studies utilized a mixed methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative research in order to provide rich descriptions of reentry experience and quantify these experiences in order to show possible relationships between particular barriers or other factors. Another limitation within the available literature coincided with the lack of longitudinal analysis which captures variations

in reentry experiences over extended periods of time and takes into account various turning points, relapses, as well as continued progress. The main limitation is that despite the identification of various reentry barriers within the available research literature, few studies accentuated how societal and individual level structures and processes foster the development of identified barriers.

A survey of the research literature indicates employment is a significant barrier to offender reentry. As such, the present study will contribute to this growing body of research literature by examining how educational factors influence perceptions of finding legal employment upon release from prison for a sample of 352 males, female, and juvenile offenders under the custodial control of the Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service (ITPS). Delineated below are the research questions that will guide the current research project.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This section summarizes the research hypotheses for the current study which examines the influence of education on returning offender's perceptions of finding legal employment upon release from prison. The elements of social bond theory guide the research questions for this study.

### A. Attachment

- a. Does having a close relationship with ones' teacher both inside and outside of school influence how sure an offender believes that he/she will find a job that is legal upon release from prison?

### B. Commitment

- a. Does completion of higher levels of education influence how sure an offender believes that he/she can find a job that is legal upon release from prison?

### C. Involvement

- a. Does spending time outside of school with other students who excelled in school influence how sure an offender believes that he/she can find a job that is legal upon release from prison?

### D. Belief

- a. Does being sure about furthering ones' education if one wanted to influence how sure an offender believes that he/she will find a job that



is legal upon release from prison?

This chapter provided a review of the research literature examining offender reentry barriers, as well as, provided an overview of the theoretical framework guiding the current study. The next chapter will present the research methodology employed by the current study.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology that guided this study. The chapter begins with a discussion of the research design, followed by a presentation of the research questions. Next, the data source is discussed, then the variables in the study and concludes with a discussion of the data analysis employed.

#### RESEARCH DESIGN

This research is an exploratory, cross-sectional research design exploring the influence of education on an offender's perception of finding legal employment upon release from prison. The sample consisted of approximately 352 offenders under the custodial care of the Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service (ITPS) and of those offenders surveyed, 82 percent of respondents were housed in prison facilities housing largely male offenders. These facilities included Golden Grove (28%), Maximum Security Prison (26%), Port of Spain (16%), and the ECRC (11%). Offenders housed in the Women Prison and the Youth Training Centre comprised the remaining 18 percent of offenders surveyed in the study. The sample size includes a gender distribution in which a vast majority of respondents are males compared to females (90 percent and 10 percent respectively). Additionally, 48 percent of respondents are of African descent with a greater percentage of female respondents, compared with male and youth offenders, identifying their ethnic origin as being of African descent. The remaining 52 percent of respondents within the study identified their ethnic origin as mixed (29 percent) and East Indian (21 percent). Comparatively, a greater percentage of youth offenders (48 percent) than male and female offenders (27 and 28 percent respectively) identified their ethnic origins as mixed. For respondents identifying their ethnic origin as being of East Indian descent, a vast

majority were male offenders (24 percent) compared with female and youth offenders (9 percent and 7 percent respectively). Additionally, only 0.3 percent of offenders, largely male offenders (0.2 percent), identified their ethnicity as Asian and 2 percent of all offenders, mostly female offenders (9 percent) compared with male offenders (1 percent), identified their ethnic origin as Other. For age, the average age of the sample was 37 years of age with the average age for both male and female offenders equaling 37 years of age. For youth offenders, the average was reported as 18 years of age. Approximately 97 percent of the sample was 18 years of age and older. Compared to all other age categories, a greater share of respondents (23 percent) were aged 18-24 and 25-34. For male respondents, approximately 72 percent of male respondents were aged 18 to 54. For female respondents, approximately 85 percent of female respondents were aged 25 to 54. The greatest concentration of youth offenders (94 percent) were aged 17 or younger.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study is designed to explore the influence of education on an offender's perception of finding legal employment upon release from prison. To explore this relationship, the following research questions guide the current study:

1. Does being comfortable with seeking teacher's opinion on personal matters influence how sure an offender believes that he/she can find a job that is legal upon release from prison?
2. Does completing higher levels of education influence how sure an offender believes that he/she can find a job that is legal upon release from prison?
3. Does spending time outside of school with other students who excelled in school influence how sure an offender believes that he/she can find a job that is legal upon release from prison?
4. Does being sure that you can further your education if you wanted to influence how sure you are that you can find a job that is legal upon release from prison?

## DATA SOURCE

The data for this research study is taken from a larger study designed to examine the reentry barriers anticipated by a sample of offenders incarcerated at the Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service (TTPS). The study took place in April of 2012 at various TTPS prison facilities, which included the ECRC, Golden Grove, Maximum Security Prison, Port of Spain, the Women Prison, and the Youth Training Centre, and data was collected by TTPS specialists under the leadership of Dr. Melvina Sumter with the assistance of Dr. Ingrid Whitaker and Dr. Elizabeth Monk-Turner, as well as graduate assistants Dianne Berger-Hill, Lindsay Upton, and Jennifer Turner.

In order to carry out the study, the research specialists of TTPS sent out a notice to the Programs Department at each prison facility requesting volunteers for the research study. Program staff provided the offender population with an overview of the research study, and advised offenders that their participation was voluntary and results from the study would remain confidential. They were also advised that offenders who participated and successfully completed the entire questionnaire would be presented with a raffle ticket for a drawing that would commence at the conclusion of the study, following the administration of the questionnaire. For the drawing, at each of the prison facilities there were three raffle items. The first prize raffle item was a \$300.00 TT commissary voucher, which is equivalent to \$50.00 U.S. The second prize raffle item was a \$150 TT commissary voucher, which is equivalent to \$25.00 U.S. The third prize raffle item was a \$75 TT commissary voucher, which is equivalent to \$15.00 U.S.

The total population of approximately 352 males, female, and youth offenders under the custodial care of the TTPS volunteered to participate in the study. Approximately 82 percent of offenders participating in the study were housed in prison facilities that consisted largely of male offenders. These facilities included Golden Grove (28%), ECRC (11%), Maximum Security Prison

(26%), and Port of Spain (16%). The remaining 18 percent of offenders were housed in the Women Prison (9%) and the Youth Training Centre (9%). Demographically, a vast majority of respondents were males compared to females (90 percent and 10 percent respectively). Additionally, demographics for the total population identified the following ethnicities: African Descent (48%); East Indian (21%); Asian (0.2%); Mixed (29%); and 2 percent identified their ethnicity as Other. In terms of age, the average age of the sample was 37 years of age with the average age for both male and female offenders equaling 37 years of age. For youth offenders, the average age was 18 years of age. Approximately 97 percent of the sample was 18 years of age and older. Compared to all other age categories, a greater share of respondents (23 percent) were aged 18-24 and 25-34. For male respondents, approximately 72 percent of male respondents were aged 18 to 54. For female respondents, approximately 85 percent of female respondents were aged 25 to 54. The greatest concentration of youth offenders (94 percent respectively) were aged 17 or younger. Marital statuses of offenders participating in the study revealed that 48 percent of the population had never been married of which youth offenders comprised approximately 71 percent of those never married. Additionally, 29 percent of offenders were living with their partners; a greater percentage of male offenders (32%) compared with female and youth offender (7 percent and 26 percent respectively). While the vast majority of offenders had never married roughly 9 percent of offenders were currently married with more female offenders (19 percent), compared with male offenders (8 percent respectively), indicating being married at the time of the study, and approximately 12 percent of respondents being separated or divorced with more female offenders than male offenders indicating this marital status (19 percent and 13 percent respectively). Roughly 3 percent of the population were widowed with both male and youth offenders identifying themselves as widowers. Approximately 59 percent of offenders participating in the study indicated that they have children. A greater share of female offenders (72 percent) than male and youth offenders indicated having children (62 percent and 19 percent respectively). The total number of

children, moreover, averaged about three children for the total population of offenders within the study. For offenders with children, approximately 62 percent of offenders participating in the study indicated that their children were residing with their mothers. A higher concentration of youth offenders, compared with female offenders, indicated that their children were residing with their mothers (71 percent and 70 percent respectively). Approximately 14 percent of all offenders in the study indicated that their children were residing with their grandparents. Of those whose children were residing with tier grandparents, a vast majority were female offenders (29%) compared with male offenders (12 percent). For religion, approximately 53 percent of offenders indicated Christianity as their religious preference. More specifically, a greater percentage of female offenders (78%), compared with male and youth offenders, indicated a religious preference as Christianity (51 percent and 47 percent respectively). Likewise, offenders indicated Islam (14%) and Other (14%) as religious preferences. For Islam, compared with youth offenders (13 percent), more male offenders indicated their religious preference to be Islam (16 percent). For Other, a greater percentage of female offenders (16 percent), compared with male and youth offenders (13 percent respectively), indicated a religious preference of Other.

## VARIABLES IN THE STUDY

### *Dependent Variable*

The dependent variable for this study is perceptions of finding legal employment upon release from prison. As a scale level of measurement, the dependent variable is operationalized using responses from respondents to the question “How sure are you that you can find a job that legal?”

### *Independent Variables*

The independent variable, education, was constructed using the four theoretical concepts of social bond theory. These theoretical concepts include attachment, commitment, involvement and

belief.

The theoretical construct attachment measures how attached the offenders were to school. Attachment is a scale level of measurement which was created by loading the questions “How much you agree or disagree that I was comfortable with seeking my teacher’s opinion on personal matters” “How much you agree or disagree that I valued the opinion of my teachers”, “How much you agree or disagree that you talked with teachers outside of the classroom”, and “How much you agree or disagree that you liked school” into a factor analysis which yielded a factor of one. Given that “How much you agree or disagree that I was comfortable with seeking my teacher’s opinion on personal matters” “How much you agree or disagree that I valued the opinion of my teachers”, and “How much you agree or disagree that you talked with teachers outside of the classroom” had the highest factor scores for that one factor these were combined into a scale (0.856, 0.843, and 0.808 respectively). Next, a scale reliability analysis, which shows how consistent each indicator measures the construct of attachment, was performed (Sweet & Grace-Martin, 2012). The scale reliability analysis revealed a Cronbach alpha of 0.812 ( $\alpha=0.812$ ), and provided that the Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha=0.812$ ) is greater than 0.70, the overall scale, which incorporates the three indicators identified above, possesses “reasonably good reliability” (Sweet & Grace-Martin, 2012:91).

The theoretical construct commitment measures how committed the offenders were to school. Commitment was measured using responses from respondents to the question “What is the highest level of school, including any vocational/technical school you have completed?” and coded as 1=Primary; 2=Secondary; 3=Tertiary; 4=University.

The theoretical construct involvement measures how involved the offenders were in school. Involvement was measured using responses from respondents to the question “How much you agree or disagree that you spent time outside of school with other students who excelled in school”.

Responses were coded as follows: 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Slightly Disagree; 4=Neither

Agree or Disagree; 5=Slightly Agree; 6=Agree; 7=Strongly Agree.

The theoretical construct belief measures how much the offenders' value their education. Belief is measured using responses from respondents to the question "How sure you are that you can go further with your education if you want to". For belief, the coding was as follows: 1=Not sure at All; 2=Not Very Sure; 3=Somewhat Sure; 4=Very Sure; 5=Extremely Sure.

#### *Control Variables*

The control variables in this study are social networks/resources, employment, and criminal history.

Social networks/resources measure the offenders' ability to access networks and resources upon release from prison. Social networks/resources were measured using responses from respondents to the question "How much you agree or disagree that you need to work with someone to find out what I need to do to successfully reenter the community". For social networks/resources, the code was as follows: 1=Not sure at All; 2=Not Very Sure; 3=Somewhat Sure; 4=Very Sure; 5=Extremely Sure. Employment measures the offenders' past employment history, as well as their ability to return to a previous form of employment. Employment is a scale level of measurement which was created by loading the questions "In the year prior to your conviction, did you have a job?"; "In the last five years before your current conviction, how much did you hold a steady job?"; "If you had a job in the year prior to your current conviction, will you be able to return to that job?"; and "Do you have a job prospect when you are released from prison?" into a factor analysis which yielded a factor of one. For the one factor that was extracted, the indicators "In the year prior to your conviction, did you have a job?"; "In the last five years before your current conviction, how much did you hold a



**Table 1. Variables in the Study**

DEPENDENT VARIABLE	OPERATIONALIZATION	CODING
<i>Employment</i>	How sure are you that you can find a job that is legal?	Scale
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES		
ATTACHMENT		
<i>Relationship with teacher</i>	How much you agree or disagree that you talked with your teachers outside of the classroom, were comfortable with seeking and valuing the opinion of your teachers on personal matters?	Scale
COMMITMENT		
<i>School Completed</i>	What is the highest level of school, including any vocational/technical school you have completed?	1=Primary;2=Secondary; 3=Tertiary; 4=University
INVOLVEMENT		
<i>Extracurricular Activity</i>	How much you agree or disagree that you spent time outside of school with other students who excelled in school?	1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Slightly Disagree; 4=Neither Agree or Disagree; 5=Slightly Agree; 6=Agree; 7=Strongly Agree
BELIEF		
<i>Continuing Education</i>	How sure you are that you can go further with my education if you want to?	1=Not sure at All; 2=Not Very Sure; 3=Somewhat Sure; 4=Very Sure; 5=Extremely Sure
CONTROL VARIABLES		
SOCIAL NETWORKS/RESOURCES		
<i>Preparation</i>	How much you agree or disagree that you need to work with someone to find out what you need to do to successfully reenter the community?	1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Slightly Disagree; 4=Neither Agree or Disagree; 5=Slightly Agree; 6=Agree; 7=Strongly Agree
EMPLOYMENT		
<i>Prior employment and job return</i>	In the year prior to your conviction, did you have a job and will you be able to return to that job?	Scale
CRIMINAL HISTORY		
<i>Prior convictions</i>	How true is it that you have prior convictions?	1=Definitely not true; 2=Somewhat true; 3=Definitely true

steady job?"; and "If you had a job in the year prior to your current conviction, will you be able to return to that job?" had the highest factor scores; they were all above 0.70 (0.844, 0.721, 0.827 respectively), thus these indicators were combined into a scale. In order to attest the consistency of these indicators in measuring the construct of employment, a scale reliability analysis was performed. The scale reliability analysis revealed a Cronbach alpha of 0.627 ( $\alpha=0.627$ ). Given that this is below 0.70 this would not be a considered a reliable scale, thus when "In the last five years before your current conviction, how much did you hold a steady job?" was removed from the scale, the new Cronbach Alpha was 0.704 ( $\alpha=0.704$ ), an indication of a reasonably good scale for measuring the construct of Employment.

Criminal history measures the offenders past criminal history. Criminal history was measured using responses from respondents to the question "How true is it that you have prior convictions?" and coded as: 1=Definitely not true; 2=Somewhat true; 3=Definitely true.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Several statistical techniques were utilized in this study to provide descriptive, bivariate, and multivariate analyses.

### *Descriptive Statistics*

The measure of central tendency, the mean, as well as the measure of dispersion, the standard deviation, is the most appropriate statistics for interval level variables.

### *Bivariate Analysis*

For bivariate analysis, Pearson's correlation coefficient, which summarizes the linear relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable, is the statistical technique used in this study (Knoke, Bohrnstedt, Mee, 2002). The Pearson correlation coefficient illustrates a statistical technique appropriate for variables measured at the interval level (Norušis, 1997:435). Given

that the dependent variable, finding legal employment upon release from prison, is an interval scale variable this statistical technique is the most appropriate.

### *Multi-Variate Analysis*

For multivariate analysis, multiple linear regression is used to examine the relationship between the dependent variable, the independent variables, and the control variables. This statistical technique is the most appropriate because the dependent variable is scale. Furthermore, multiple linear regression accounts for the effects of each independent variable on the dependent variable while holding all other variables constant, thus adjusting for the potential confounding effects of other variables in the analysis (Sweet and Grace-Martin, 2012). Multiple linear regression allows for more than one independent variable to be regressed on the dependent variable also.

Two separate models were used in this analysis. The first model, Model 1, examined the relationship between the independent variables, attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief, and the dependent variable of finding legal employment upon release from prison. This model is used to assess the relationship between each independent variable and the dependent variable. The second model, Model 2, reassessed the relationship between the independent variables, attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief, and included the control variables on the dependent variable.

### *Significance Level*

Based on prior research literature, the p-value for this study, which reveals the likelihood that chance explains observed patterns within a data set, is 0.05 (Sweet & Grace-Martin, 2012).

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Several limitations were present within this study. First, the study utilized secondary data that examined reentry barriers anticipated by a sample of incarcerated persons within the custodial care of the Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service. As such, the ability for this study to be generalizable to

offenders in the United States and elsewhere is hampered given the specific focus on a certain place and certain sample of offenders. Also, the cross sectional design of this study, which focuses on a particular point in time, limits the establishment of causality in that offenders' perceptions are subject to change over time depending on contextual and individual-level factors. Another limitation of the study is that in utilizing secondary data the indicators used are not as concise; therefore, it is difficult to conceptualize concepts.

This chapter presented the research design, research questions, the data source, the variables in the study, the data analysis and the limitations of the study. The next chapter will present the findings for this research study.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings from this research designed to examine the relationship between education and finding legal employment after release from prison. The chapter begins with a discussion of the descriptive statistics, followed by a discussion of the bivariate analysis, and concludes with a discussion of the multivariate analysis.

#### DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table 2 provides an overview of variables included in the study. The results from the descriptive statistics reveal that approximately 82% of offenders surveyed in this study were housed in predominately male facilities, with 28% being housed in the Golden Grove facility. Aside from Golden Grove, these facilities included Maximum Security Prison, Port of Spain, and the CRC. For demographics, results reveal that 90% of the sample consisted of male offenders while 10% consisted of female offenders. In addition, the results indicate that approximately 48% offenders in the study were of African descent. The remaining 52% of the sample identified their ethnicity as East Indian, Asian, Mixed, and Other. For age, results show that the average age of offenders in the study was found to be 35 years of age. For male and female offenders alike, the average age was found to be equal. For marital status, results indicate that approximately 48% of offenders in the study never married. In addition, approximately 52% of offenders in this study were either currently married, separated or divorced, widowed, or living with their respective partner. Approximately 53% of offenders indicated Christianity as their religious preference. This is in comparison to approximately 47% of offenders indicating their religious preference as Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Other, or having no religious preference.

For the dependent variable, finding legal employment upon release from prison, results reveal that 79% of offenders are at least somewhat sure of their ability to find legal employment upon release from prison, with 55% of that group being extremely sure. Findings also reveal that 21% of offenders are unsure of their ability to find legal employment upon release from prison.

For the independent variable attachment, on a scale of 3 to 21 with 3 representing no attachment and 21 representing extreme attachment, results reveal a mean score of 13.83 for the indicator “How much you agree or disagree that you talked with your teachers outside of the classroom, were comfortable seeking and valuing the opinion of your teachers on personal matters?” For the independent variable commitment, 62% of offenders earned a secondary education as their highest level of education. Comparatively, 24% of offenders earned a primary education while 11% earned a tertiary education and 3% earned a university level education. Also, results reveal that approximately 45% of offenders did not spend time outside of school with students who excelled while approximately 46% of offenders did spend time outside of school with students who excelled in school. Findings also show that only 9% of offenders were neutral on whether or not they spent time outside of school with other students who excelled in school. Finally, for belief, results reveal that approximately 84% of offenders are at least somewhat sure of their ability to further their education after release. Contrastingly, approximately 16% of offenders were at least not very sure of their ability to further their education after release.

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables**  
(n=352)

DEPENDENT VARIABLE	Frequency	Valid Percent	Mean	Median	Mode	S.D.	N
Employment			3.92	5.00	5.00	1.43	335
	<i>Not sure at all</i>	38					
	<i>Not very sure</i>	31					
	<i>Somenbat sure</i>	34					
	<i>Very sure</i>	48					
	<i>Extremely</i>	184					
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES							
Attachment Scale			13.83	15.00	21.00	5.68	299
Commitment			1.92	2.00	2.00	0.68	323
	<i>Primary</i>	78					
	<i>Secondary</i>	199					
	<i>Tertiary</i>	37					
	<i>University</i>	9					
Involvement			4.00	4.00	1.00	2.20	307
	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	60					
	<i>Disagree</i>	43					
	<i>Slightly Disagree</i>	33					
	<i>Neither Agree or Disagree</i>	29					
	<i>Slightly agree</i>	43					
	<i>Agree</i>	40					
	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	59					
Belief			3.87	4.00	5.00	1.23	309
	<i>Not sure at all</i>	21					
	<i>Not very sure</i>	29					
	<i>Somenbat sure</i>	45					
	<i>Very sure</i>	89					
	<i>Extremely sure</i>	125					

**Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Demographics**  
(n-352)

DEMOGRAPHICS	Frequency	Valid Percent	Mean	Median	Mode	S.D.	N
Facility			4.02	4.00	4.00	1.49	352
	<i>Youth Training Centre</i>	32	9.1				
	<i>Women Prison</i>	33	9.4				
	<i>CRC</i>	39	11.1				
	<i>Golden Grove</i>	98	27.8				
	<i>Maximum Security Prison</i>	93	26.4				
	<i>Port of Spain</i>	57	16.2				
Gender			1.10	1.00	1.00	0.30	352
	<i>Male</i>	318	90.3				
	<i>Female</i>	34	9.7				
Ethnicity			2.17	2.00	1.00	1.34	345
	<i>African Descent</i>	165	47.8				
	<i>East Indian</i>	72	20.9				
	<i>Asian</i>	1	0.3				
	<i>Mixed</i>	100	29.0				
	<i>Other</i>	7	2.0				
Age			35.45	35.00	24.00	12.50	343
Marital Status			3.76	4.00	4.00	1.23	330
	<i>Currently Married</i>	28					
	<i>Separated and Divorced</i>	40					
	<i>Widowed</i>	10					
	<i>Never Married</i>	157					
	<i>Living with Partner</i>	95					
Religious Preference			3.10	1.00	1.00	2.62	338
	<i>Christianity</i>	180	53.3				
	<i>Judaism</i>	2	0.6				
	<i>Islam</i>	48	14.2				
	<i>Buddhism</i>	1	0.3				
	<i>Hinduism</i>	29	8.6				
	<i>Confucianism</i>	4	1.2				
	<i>Other</i>	46	13.6				
	<i>No preference</i>	28	8.3				



**Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Control Variables**  
(n=352)

CONTROL VARIABLES	Frequency	Valid Percent	Mean	Median	Mode	S.D.	N
Social Networks/Resource			4.18	4.00	7.00	2.37	318
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>							
<i>Disagree</i>	73	23.0					
<i>Slightly Disagree</i>	37	11.6					
<i>Neither Agree or Disagree</i>	19	6.0					
<i>Slightly Agree</i>	32	10.1					
<i>Agree</i>	30	9.4					
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	41	12.9					
	86	27.0					
Employment Scale			3.33	3.00	3.00	1.16	341
Criminal History				2.00	3.00	0.895	324
<i>Definitely not true</i>	128	39.5					
<i>Somewhat true</i>	65	20.1					
<i>Definitely true</i>	131	40.4					

For the control variable social networks/resources, results reveal that 49% of offenders in the study did need to work with someone in order to successfully prepare for reentry back into the community. Comparatively, approximately 41% of offenders did not need to work with someone in order to successfully prepare for reentry back into the community. Findings show that the remaining 10 percent of offenders were neutral on whether or not they needed to work with someone to prepare for reentry. For the control variable employment, on a scale of 2 to 5, where 2 represents an offenders' inability to secure employment in the year prior to their conviction, as well as their inability to return to their job, and 5 represents an offenders' ability to secure employment in the year prior to their respective conviction and their ability to return to said job, results reveal a mean score of 3.33 for the indicator "In the year prior to your conviction, did you have a job and will you be able to return to that job?" For the control variable criminal history, findings reveal that approximately 40% of offenders did not have prior convictions and approximately 60% of offenders did have prior convictions.

Presented below are findings from the bivariate analysis. Pearson's  $r$  coefficients and significance levels of each variable are presented in Table 3.

#### BIVARIATE ANALYSIS

Table 3 provides the bivariate analysis examining the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent and control variables. Findings show a positive and significant relationship between attachment and an offender's belief that he or she can find a job that is legal upon release from prison ( $r=0.132$ ,  $p=0.024$ ). In addition, findings reveal a positive and significant relationship between an offender's belief in his or her ability to continue their education upon release from prison and the belief that he or she can find a job that is legal upon release from prison ( $r=0.369$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). Additional findings show that the commitment construct ( $r=0.048$ ,  $p=0.399$ ), which measures the highest level of school completed by an offender, and the involvement construct ( $r=0.075$ ,  $p=0.195$ ), which measures whether or not an offender spent time outside of school with students who excelled in school, are not statistically significant.

For the control variables, the findings show a negative and significant relationship between social networks/resources, operationalized as an offenders' ability to access networks and resources upon release from prison, and an offender's belief that he or she can find a job that is legal upon release from prison ( $r=-0.132$ ,  $p=0.016$ ). Also, findings reveal a negative and significant relationship between employment, operationalized as an offender's past employment history and his or her ability to return to a previous form of employment, and an offender's belief that he or she can find a job that is legal upon release from prison ( $r=-0.128$ ,  $p=0.021$ ). Results also reveal that criminal history, operationalized as an offender's having prior convictions, is not statistically significant ( $r=-0.035$ ,  $p=0.539$ ).

**Table 5. Pearson's r Coefficient. Education and Post-Release Employment**

	Pearson's r	Sig.	N
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES			
Attachment Scale	0.132*	0.024	293
Commitment	0.048	0.399	307
Involvement	0.075	0.195	300
Belief	0.369**	0.000	308
CONTROL VARIABLES			
Social Networks/Resources	-0.132*	0.016	315
Employment Scale	-0.128*	0.021	325
Criminal History	-0.035	0.539	319

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01

Presented below are findings from the multivariate analysis. The Beta coefficients, standardized coefficients, and significance levels are presented in Table 4.

#### MULTI-VARIATE ANALYSIS

Table 4 provides the multiple linear regression analyses of the two models included in the study. Model 1 presents the regression of the independent variables, attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief, on the dependent variable. The model is statistically significant making this a good model fit ( $F=10.893$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). The Cox and Snell R-Square of Model 1 is 0.158 which indicates that approximately 15.8 percent of the variance in an offender's belief in finding legal employment upon release from prison is explained by each of the four independent variables within Model 1. For the theoretical constructs, results in Model 1 reveal a positive and statistically significant relationship

between the belief variable and an offender's belief in finding legal employment upon release from prison. The variables attachment, commitment, and involvement were not found to be statistically significant. Results reveal that the independent variable, belief, remained statistically significant from the bivariate analysis while the independent variable, attachment, did not remain statistically significant from the bivariate analysis. Akin to the bivariate analysis, the variables commitment and involvement continues not to be statistically significant.

Model 2 shows the regression of the independent variables on the dependent variable with the inclusion of the control variables. The model is statistically significant making this a good model fit ( $F=7.563$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). The Cox and Snell R-Square for Model 2 is 0.201 which indicates that approximately 20 percent of the variance in an offender's belief in finding legal employment upon release from prison is explained by the independent and control variables in the study. With the inclusion of the control variables, this model explains approximately 5 percent more of the variance in an offender's belief in finding legal employment upon release from prison. For the independent variables, while controlling for the control variables, results reveal a positive and statistically significant relationship between the belief variable and an offender's belief in finding legal employment upon release from prison. For the control variables, while controlling for the independent variables results reveal a negative and statistically significant relationship between social networks/resources and an offender's belief in finding legal employment upon release from prison. While controlling for all other variables, results indicate that attachment, commitment, and involvement are not statistically significant. Akin to Model 1, the belief variable continues to be significant and the variables, attachment, which was significant in the bivariate analysis, is no longer significant, and commitment and involvement are still not statistically significant. The results also reveal that, while controlling for the independent variables, the variables employment and criminal history are not statistically significant.

**Table 6. Multiple Linear Regression Predicting Offender's Belief in Finding Legal Employment Post-Release**

(N=352)

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	Model 1				Model 2				
	B	Beta	S.E. B	Sig.	B	Beta	S.E. B	Sig.	
Attachment Scale	0.006	0.025	0.423	0.669	0.012	0.045	0.017	0.493	
Commitment	0.103	0.049	0.126	0.415	0.058	0.027	0.137	0.671	
Involvement	0.052	0.083	0.040	0.197	0.061	0.096	0.042	0.147	
Belief	0.451*	0.072	0.378*	0.000	0.461*	0.381*	0.075	0.000	
CONTROL VARIABLES									
Social Networks/Resources					-0.108*	-0.177*	0.039	0.006	
Employment Scale					-0.090	-0.075	0.075	0.234	
Criminal History					0.015	0.009	0.101	0.881	
Constant	1.638		0.423	0.000	2.277		0.605	0.000	
Cox & Snell R-Squared	0.158				0.201				
F	10.893**			0.000	7.563**			0.000	

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01

Results show that the control variable, social networks/resources remained statistically significant from the bivariate analysis while the employment scale measure did not remain statistically significant.

This chapter presented the descriptive, bivariate, and multivariate analyses for this study. The next chapter provides a discussion of the findings from this study.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the findings from this study designed to examine the relationship between education and an offender's perception of finding legal employment upon release from prison. This chapter begins by discussing the multivariate findings, followed by the limitations of the study, and concludes with future research recommendations.

To begin with, two models were regressed. The first model regressed the independent variables, attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief against the dependent variable, an offender's perception of finding legal employment upon release from prison. In this model, an offender who holds the view that he or she can further his or her education if he or she wanted to was found to be statistically significant. This finding suggests that offenders who believe they can continue their education have a positive perception of finding legal employment upon release from prison. This result reinforces the Taylor Greene et al. (2006) study which revealed that a majority of returning offenders lack job skills and training, and that failure to acquire these skills engenders further complications in securing employment on the outside. As such, with the opportunity to return to school and continue their education, offenders are provided the chance to enhance their human capital, as well as gain necessary job skills and training essential to compete in the job market. For example, an offender who has earned a Doctoral Degree in Economics discovers that the demand for advanced degrees in Economics has declined, and the demand for a Bachelor's Degree in Finance Management has increased. With the opportunity to go back to school, the offender can acquire a Bachelor's Degree in Finance Management, which can boost his or her competitive edge to become more marketable for prospective employers. Hence, the perspective that education can be continued provides the offender with a sense of hope and a positive outlook on obtaining legal employment.

The second model regressed the independent variables, attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief against the dependent variable and included the control variables, social networks/resources, employment, and criminal history. In this model, while controlling for the independent and control variables, two variables were found to be statistically significant, belief and social networks/resources. For the control variable, social networks/resources, findings suggest that offenders who have access to available social networks and resources have a negative perception of finding legal employment upon release from prison. While beneficial for offenders to have access to social networks and resources, such as support staff, it could be that the more offenders rely on support staff for resources, the less confident they feel about their own ability to find legal employment. This significant finding reinforces the Visher et al. (2004a) study which revealed that returning offenders who accessed social networks and resources while in prison and after release experienced positive postrelease outcomes, such as securing employment. However, in having knowledge of available social networks and resources, offenders need to be socialized on how to function on their own and how to utilize these resources.

In essence, findings from the current study suggest that irrespective of an offender's prior convictions, an offender's prior employment and his or her ability to return to a previous job, one's past comfort in talking with teachers about personal matters, one's level of school completed, and the time an offender spent outside of school with other students who excelled in school, as long as the possibility exist for an offender to return to school and further his or her education, then it is not the end all to be all. For, the opportunity to further one's education produces positive perceptions of finding legal employment upon release from prison, as suggested by the findings from the study.

The findings from this study suggest that correctional facilities should consider providing returning offenders with information about education programs within the community in order to provide these individuals with the chance of furthering their education. Also, as one of the eight



criminogenic needs, by addressing education, evidence-based practices have shown significant declines in recidivism rates (Andrews, Bonta, & Wormith, 2006). Therefore, it is critical for policy makers to integrate education into criminal justice reform policies, so that offenders can gain a sense of hope in knowing that no matter what obstacles they have faced or should happen to face, they have the option to return to school and improve themselves. In doing this, the phrase, “those we fail to educate, we incarcerate”, evanesces as we gradually adopt the phrase, “those we educate, we reintegrate.”

### LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In the current study, limitations were present. First, the current study utilized a secondary data source in order to examine the relationship between education and an offender’s perception that he or she can find legal employment upon release from prison. As such, the measures that were used to operationalize the independent variables, attachment, commitment, and involvement, as well as the control variable, employment may not have accurately measured the indicators; therefore, issues of content validity were evident. Also, in using a secondary data source, findings from the current study may not be generalizable to other offender populations or correctional facilities, producing issues of reliability. Furthermore, the current study did not account for differences in gender or age as it pertains to the relationship between education and an offender’s perception of finding legal employment upon release from prison. As well, in the current study, factor analysis was used in the construction of the scale variables, attachment and employment. The small number of indicators comprising each of these scale variables might not accurately reflect the desired constructs, thus reducing their significance (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 2009). Finally, the current study only used two multiple regression models to assess the relationship between education and an offender’s perception of finding legal employment upon release from prison. The first model examined the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The second model

examined the relationship between the independent variables, control variables, and the dependent variable. It would have been beneficial to have an additional model to regress the control variables against the dependent variable before Model 2 was estimated.

## FUTURE RESEARCH

Recommendations for future research are provided based on the findings from this study. As mentioned in the limitations, the current study used a secondary data source with indicators that may have not been the best measures for the independent variables, attachment, commitment, and involvement, as well as the control variable, employment. As such, future research should consider developing indicators that directly measure these concepts in order to alleviate potential issues of content validity. Also, given that the current study examined different offender populations, to include male, female, and youth offenders, it would be beneficial for future research to examine differences in gender and age as it pertains to the relationship between education and an offender's perception of finding legal employment upon release from prison. For factor analysis, future research should consider adding more indicators into the attachment and employment scale in order to enhance levels of significance and address issues of content validity, making sure that indicators reflect the desired concepts and are reliable measures. The current study utilized two multiple regression models in order to examine the relationship between education and an offender's perception of finding legal employment upon release from prison. The first model regressed the independent variables against the dependent variable while the second model incorporated control variables. In future research, it would be beneficial to include an additional model that regresses the control variables on the dependent variable. This is important because, in adding another model, one can determine if any of the control variables are significant, as well as note any changes when both the independent and control variables are regressed against the dependent variable.

Finally, to address the issue of external validity, future research should consider replicating the original study in different correctional facilities with a different composition of offenders in order to assess if any similarities or differences in findings emerge, thus strengthening the reliability of the current study.

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Recipient of the Presidential Citation, National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice (NABCJ), July 2016.

Presented “Justice Reinvestment: Divesting in the School-to-Prison-Pipeline (S2PP)” at the 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice (NABCJ) Conference and Training Institute, July 2016.