2018

Reentry Practitioners' Perceptions of Constraints During Ex-offenders' Job Search Process

Crystal Raquel Francis
Walden University

Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Crystal R. Francis

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Anthony Fleming, Committee Chairperson,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. Hilda Shepeard, Committee Member,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. Olivia Yu, University Reviewer,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2018

Abstract

Reentry Practitioners' Perceptions of Constraints During Ex-offenders' Job Search

Process

by

Crystal R. Francis

MS, Towson University, 2010

BS, University of Maryland Eastern Shore, 2007

Dissertation Submitted in Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

August 2018

Abstract

Unemployment among formerly incarcerated citizens is a complex problem that continues to grow. Previous reentry studies describe the collateral effects of incarceration on employment from the perspective of formerly incarcerated individuals, yet little academic research exists regarding reentry practitioners' perceptions of constraints during the job search process. Using Goldratt's theory of constraints as the foundation, the purpose of this case study of reentry and employment in a mid-Atlantic state was to explore from the perspective of practitioners, the types of constraints individuals with criminal records face during the job search process, the most difficult phase of the job search process, and recommendations on improving employment outcomes. Data for this study were obtained from 20 reentry professionals in Maryland, who completed an online, open-ended response survey. Data were inductively coded and subjected to thematic analysis procedure. The results showed that practitioners perceived the background check to be the most difficult phase in the job search process, and that external and environmental constraints such as employer bias and social stigma prevent individuals with criminal records from securing job offers. The results also showed that reentry professionals support automatic record expungement, record shielding, employer partnerships, and employment programming that provides job leads, resume building, and mock interview assistance. The positive social change implications stemming from this study include policy recommendations to policy makers to include centralizing and expanding the location of statewide employment centers, record shielding under the Second Chance Act, and fair education access through Ban-the Box for state colleges.

Reentry Practitioners' Perceptions of Constraints During Ex-offenders' Job Search

Process

by

Crystal R. Francis

MS, Towson University, 2010

BS, University of Maryland Eastern Shore, 2007

Dissertation Submitted in Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

May 2018

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to individuals that hope the stigma of their past will not be a roadblock to their future. The research findings offered in this study are dedicated to policymakers who are making positive strides to enhance public policy and are creating paths to employment for individuals with criminal records. The recommendations are dedicated to reentry advocates, leaders, and organizations that are working tirelessly to ensure that all Americans have equal access to education and employment.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my dissertation committee chair, Dr. Anthony Fleming, for his leadership and guidance throughout the various phases of this research study. Without his support this dissertation would not be possible. I would like to thank my committee members, Dr. Hilda Sheppard and Dr. Oliva Yu for their expertise in research and scholarship. I would like to offer special thanks to the reentry advocates, volunteers, and practitioners across Maryland that participated in this study. Their commitment will help advance positive social change for individuals impacted by mass incarceration. I would like to acknowledge my late mother, Sonya Yvette Francis, a United States veteran who taught me the importance of using my influence toward the enactment of policies that improve disadvantaged communities. Special thanks to my family for their continued words of encouragement and support throughout the phases of this study. I would like to acknowledge the Sorors of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated who shared vital resources with me and encouraged me to stay the course. Finally, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to Roadtrip Nation, for giving me an opportunity to travel across the nation to interview doctoral leaders who are making a positive impact in the world. Special thanks to fellow road-trippers Kylie Yearwood and Dr. Jason Vanfosson-Williams for their encouraging words and belief in my potential to succeed. I encourage everyone that is pursuing a doctoral degree to watch the powerful documentary *Degree of Impact*, at www.degreeofimpact.com.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

This study on prisoner reentry and employment explored reentry practitioners' views on constraints in the job search process for ex-offenders. Reentry practitioners are advocates, case managers, reentry program staff, volunteers, or service providers that help ex-offenders find resources and devise plans to stay out of jail. This study attempted to identify the most difficult phase in the job search process that block ex-offenders' chance of securing employment. The study expected to advance positive social change by recommending ways to enhance job search activities for individuals with criminal records. This chapter discusses the following topics: the background, problem statement, purpose, guiding questions, conceptual framework, methodology, key terms, assumptions, scope, limitations, and significance.

Background

Mulmat and Burke (2013) reported that "one in every 100 adult Americans is behind bars" (p.24). On average about 650,000 inmates return home from incarceration each year since 2013 and about two-thirds recidivate (Farabee, Zhang, & Wright, 2014). A criminal record calumniates the employability of a significant subset of Americans that want to re-enter the workforce after release. Thus, researchers view employment as a concern for all prisoners (Decker, Ortiz, Spohn et al., 2015; Swensen, Rakis, Snyder, & Loss, 2014; and Nally, Lockwood, Ho, & Knutson, 2014). Reentry organizations recognize the critical role that jobs have in successful reintegration and offer programs that focus on job readiness (Flowers, 2013).

A gap exists in the reentry literature regarding the difficulties that ex-offenders encounter throughout the job search process (Swensen, Rakis, Snyder, & Loss, 2014). Many barriers constrain ex-offenders' ability to reintegrate into society, such as inadequate education and minimal job skills, but the most common barrier is finding a job with a criminal conviction (Decker, Ortiz, Spohn et al., 2015). The unemployment rate for former prisoners is significantly higher than that of the general population (Nally, Lockwood, Ho, & Knutson, 2014). Unemployment is associated with higher rates of recidivism; thus, researchers saw a need to understand how to improve the employment outcomes of ex-offenders.

Problem Statement

Unemployment is a complex problem for ex-offenders that continues to grow. Limited data exist on reentry practitioners' views of the constraints that ex-offenders encounter seeking employment. Previous studies examine barriers to reentry, but no researcher has attempted to classify constraints within the job search process. A consensus exists in the reentry literature about the significance employment has on successful reintegration (Nally et al., 2014; Decker et al., 2015). Latessa (2012) argued that jobs help individuals develop self-worth and prosocial behavior. Researchers drew attention to the correlation between unemployment and high recidivism rates within the first year of release from prison (Nally et al. 2014; Jones Young & Powell, 2015).

According to the National Employment Law Project (2018), the 31 states that adopted ban-the-box laws to provide individuals with arrest and convictions records a fair chance at employment by delaying background checks and removing conviction history

questions from job applications. Although policymakers have passed ban-the-box (laws that prohibit employers from asking applicants questions about their criminal history on job applications), ex-offenders continue to be undesirable candidates in competitive job markets (Decker et al., 2015.).

Over the past five years, reentry and employment studies have explored ex-offenders' experience participating in transition jobs, job readiness courses, and work release programs. Researchers have identified challenges that hinder ex-offenders' ability to receive a job offer, such as substance abuse, homelessness, anti-social behavior, and mental health issues (Decker et al., 2015). Scholars discovered that significant racial disparities exist, and discrimination has a major influence on the unemployment rates of minorities (Decker et al., 2015). Research has shown that systematic legal and social barriers exist that prevent ex-offenders from securing jobs following their release from a penal institution. Moreover, an applicant's level of employability varies according to the type of crime he or she committed.

There is a meaningful gap in the academic literature concerning ex-offenders' job search constraints. Ban-the-box legislation was enacted to reduce the limitations ex-offenders encountered during the application phase. Since policymakers have exploited constraints in the application phase, research has shown that the constraints have shifted to other phases in the job search process. This study sought to add to the knowledge on reentry and employment by describing all the constraints that are present in the job search process. This study also attempted to shed light on reentry practitioners' recommendations on improving ex-offenders' job search experiences.

Purpose of the Study

The research paradigm for this study is rooted in continuous improvement. The ontology of continuous improvement focuses on instances in which individuals use proven processes to achieve a goal but are unsuccessful; constraints are blocking goal achievement. As a result, linear, sequential improvement within the existing process is initiated by the practitioner, who is viewed as the expert closet to the problem and better equipped to provide a resolution (American Society for Quality, 2018). The purpose of this study was to explore reentry practitioners' perceptions of ex-offenders' job search constraints and how to improve ex-offenders' employment outcomes. The phenomenon of interest was the job search. The job search is a sequential process that ex-offenders engage in with the goal of finding employment. By identifying all possible constraints, policymakers can deliver more effective policy resolutions to bridge the gap between reentry and employment.

Guiding Questions

Three questions borrowed from Goldratt's theory of constraints guided the case study:

R1. What do reentry practitioners perceive as the most difficult phase in the job search process for ex-offenders?

R2. What change is necessary to remove constraints in the job search process?

R3. What recommendations do reentry practitioners have on how to improve employment outcomes for ex-offenders?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this case study was Goldratt's theory of constraints (TOC). TOC is a goal management philosophy that explains the most efficient way to solve a problem. The theory compares any process to a linked chain. TOC assumes that processes are no stronger than the weakest link in the chain (Taylor, Moersch, & Franklin, 2003). Thus, the most efficient way to solve a problem is to isolate the core constraint then apply solutions to the cause of the constraint and not its effects (Cooper & Loe, 2000). TOC uses a thought process that asks three questions which reveals what to change, what to change to, and how to change a process (Cooper & Loe, 2000). The response to the three questions above identifies the constraint and a resolution.

Researchers initially used TOC to investigate processes within the manufacturing industry. Over time, researchers used TOC to study process-related problems in many industries, including business, marketing, and employment. This study used TOC as a lens to explore reentry practitioners' perceptions of ex-offenders' job search constraints which reduce their chance of receiving a job offer. This study also used TOC to analyze practitioners' views about what change is needed to improve ex-offenders' employment outcomes.

Finding employment has been a challenge for formally incarcerated Americans. Two theories explain unemployment and recidivism among ex-offenders but were not the appropriate lens for this study. The strain theory presumes that the unemployed engage in criminal behavior because of limited opportunities to maintain a desired lifestyle through legitimate means (Agnew, 2014). The negative stigma attached to a criminal record and

the public's perception puts a strain ex-offenders' and limits their ability to find employment (D'Alessio, Stolzenberg, & Eitle, 2014). This school of thought places emphasis on the individual's decision to engage in crime because of limited access to employment. (Featherstone & Deflem, 2003, p. 480). The theory does not account for the percentage of ex-offenders that continue to seek legitimate means of work despite the odds. Also, the theory focuses more on the individual (the ex-offender) instead of the process. Therefore, the theory was not practical for this study.

The disparate impact theory, another school of thought, views unemployment as an inequitable outcome. The theory presumes that employers' discriminatory hiring adversely affects ex-offenders and blocks their access to employment (Loafman & Little, 2014). This theory assumes that unemployment is a result of policies that perpetuate discrimination. This school of thought views unemployment as an outcome of structural racism. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits employment discrimination against protected classes and minority groups (Stenger, 2015). The Act does not consider ex-offenders as a protected class, so civil rights lawyers have used the disparate impact theory to argue against discriminatory hiring practices (Pettinato, 2014). Since the theory does not account for employment denials that are not a result of discrimination, this theory although ideal, was outside the scope of this case study.

Although the theories above were relevant for explaining crime and unemployment, TOC was the most appropriate theory to explore constraints in the job search process. TOC presumes that constraints block goal achievement and stakeholders must exploit each constraint to improve a process (Cooper & Loe, 2000). This study

focused on identifying internal and external constraints that make it difficult for ex-offenders to advance through the job search process successfully. For this study, goal achievement refers to ex-offenders ability to receive a job offer. This study attempted to describe ex-offenders' job search constraints and pinpoint effective ways to eliminate barriers to employment. TOC aligns with the scope of this case study, which focuses on improving processes to secure employment.

Nature of the Study

This qualitative study used an open-ended survey to ask 30 reentry practitioners about their perceptions of ex-offenders job search constraints. The sample population consisted of females and males that self-identified as reentry professionals in Maryland. The sample population included reentry advocates, case managers, service providers, and reentry program staff that had experience assisting ex-offenders with reentry. The sample excluded legal professionals, correctional officers, law enforcement personnel, or criminal justice practitioners with no reentry experience.

The qualitative case study design was used to address the research questions. Qualitative case studies explore contextual data regarding a phenomenon from the perspective of those involved (Connelly, 2014). Qualitative researchers design the data collection instrument, facilitate data collection through focus groups, interviews, observations, or surveys, and analyzing the data by synthesizing narrative responses or field notes (Lewis, 2015). Qualitative researchers respond to the study's guiding questions by examining the themes that emerge from the data collection phase (Connelly, 2014).

The qualitative tradition was the most appropriate choice for this study. Qualitative research was more suitable for inquiries such as "what" and "how" or studies that wish to provide a rich description of a phenomenon (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015, p.537). In contrast, quantitative research tests a hypothesis. Quantitative research is more suitable for studies that ask "how many" or "how much" or aims to generalize or measure results (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015, p. 573.).

The case study design was ideal for the study since the data analysis focused on identifying themes construed as either internal or external limitations in the job search process. Researchers use qualitative case studies to explore people, institutions, groups, activities, processes, or "a single problem" (Ingham-Broomfield, 2014, p.39). This study did not focus on exploring ex-offenders' perspective of employment constraints but rather reentry practitioners' views about ex-offenders job search constraints. Exploring = reentry practitioners' views was essential because practitioners help ex-offenders find employment during the reentry process and were expected to have an unbiased opinion about personal, external, and environmental limitations ex-offenders experience.

Other qualitative designs such as phenomenology and ethnography were not appropriate for this study because the guiding questions did not explore the culture of unemployment or ex-offenders' account searching for work with a criminal record (Kahlke, 2014). Grounded theory and historical studies were not appropriate because the guiding questions did not ask about the historical significance of the phenomenon and did not attempt to establish a theory regarding reentry and unemployment (Ingham-Broomfield, 2014).

Definitions

Reentry is a broad subject that contains a variety of definitions, interchangeable terms, and key concepts. The six terms defined below are fundamental to this study.

Reentry: The reintegration process ex-offenders experience after incarceration that involves returning home (Miller, 2014).

Reentry services: Comprises treatment, resources, programs, and other assistance provided to ex-offenders and inmates reduce their risk of recidivism (Hunter, Lanza, & Lawlor et al., 2015).

Reentry practitioner: Includes professionals, volunteers, advocates, or service providers whose work involves helping ex-offenders find resources or devising a plan to stay out of jail (Hallett & McCoy, 2014).

Ex-offender: Ex-offenders are ex-offenders who served time in a correctional institution for a criminal conviction (Miller, 2014).

Job search: A process job seekers engage in to find work, which includes activities such as finding a job opening, preparing a resume, and interviewing (Osborn, Kronholz, Finklea, & Cantonis, 2014).

Assumptions

Reentry practitioners make up a diverse group of professionals that assist individuals who have served time in a correctional facility or convicted of a criminal offense. Experts believe that finding employment is the most critical part of the reentry process, and reentry professionals are known to counsel ex-offenders through the job search process. This study considered reentry practitioners to be informants with in-depth

knowledge of ex-offenders' employment constraints. The study assumed that some

practitioners (mainly reentry advocates) might have had personal experiences finding

work with a criminal record. These assumptions pinpointed the sample population for the

case study.

This study made assumptions about reentry practitioners' field of practice. Service

providers and case managers render assistance by providing resources that help ex-

offenders navigate the job market. Program administrators and volunteers manage the

day-to-day activities of reentry programs that ease an ex-offender's transition to

employment. Reentry advocates lobby policymakers for funding and the passage of laws

that provide upward mobility for ex-offenders. The study also assumed that the term ex-

offender was not offensive and was the most appropriate term to describe individuals

with criminal records.

Scope and Delimitations

This study addressed unemployment among ex-offenders by exploring constraints

in the process used to secure employment. It was important to describe the personal,

external, and environmental limitations that affect ex-offenders' employment outcomes to

devise relevant solutions. Earlier researchers explored the unemployment by identifying

racial and gender disparities as well as the frequency at which ex-offenders received

callbacks for job interviews. This study limited the exploration to job search constraints

to exploit process related limitations. The study's findings provide more efficient policy

resolutions than ban-the-box (which removed some (but not all) all the constraints

associated with the application phase) because it exploits all constraints in the job search process and recommends solutions that should be applied simultaneously.

The study was limited to the state of Maryland because legislators enacted ban-the-box laws that required employers to remove the checkbox on employment applications asking job seekers disclose if their criminal conviction status (Maryland General Assembly, 2013). During the time the study was developed, the unemployment rate in Maryland (5.3%) was comparable to the national average (5.5%) (Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation, 2015). The study assumed that employment opportunities in Maryland were comparable to the national average since the unemployment rates were equivalent.

Since the study focused on Maryland, the findings cannot be generalized. To test the study's findings with larger populations, researchers should concentrate on states with ban-the-box laws and comparable unemployment rates. It is important to note that the reentry agenda in Maryland centers on providing ex-offenders with access to a continuum of services from the time an offender enters prison throughout their first year of release into the community (Jones & Forman, 2016). The reentry agenda may be related to the types of recommendations the findings produce which also impact transferability.

Delimitations

The study assumed that professionals who lacked reentry experience would be unclear about the barriers ex-offenders experience during the job search process. Study participants needed to be well versed in the topic of reentry to provide a descriptive narrative about the types of barriers that limit ex-offenders' chance securing job offers.

Practitioners who did not have experience assisting ex-offenders with employment

development or job searching would not be able to describe the most difficult phase of

the job search process. As a result, practitioners with no reentry experience were

excluded.

Transferability

While the concern about unemployment among ex-offenders is widespread, this

study only explored the opinions of reentry practitioners in Maryland. Thus, the findings

would be transferable to states with similar legislation agendas. Evidence suggests that

fair hiring policies have the potential to level the playing field for ex-offenders (ban-the-

box). Unemployment rates and the availability of reentry program also influences the

transferability of the study's findings. Chapters 4 and 5 discuss Maryland 's reentry

agenda and second chance initiatives.

Limitations

The study recruited a sample of reentry practitioners in a state that mostly

supports democratic policies. The most relevant source of bias likely to be present was

partisan affiliation. A participant's political ideology may have influenced their

recommendations to policymakers. The data collected described ex-offenders' job search

constraints to gain a better understanding of the unemployment problem. The study did

not establish controls for participants' partisan affiliation. It is possible that reentry

professionals may be inclined to advocate for policies that align with their political base.

If the policy resolutions are based on democratic ideology they may not transfer to states

that support Republican policy agendas. Nevertheless, the results were triangulated with

open source data, and the recommendations proposed in this study are expected to gain bipartisan support in Maryland. Word frequencies and patterns were analyzed to determine if a consensus was present among reentry professionals within different areas of practice. Since the findings were not tested for statistical significance, the study's results do not demonstrate a consensus among all stakeholders.

There are ambiguities in the literature regarding the most appropriate word to describe individuals with criminal records. This ambiguity was also discovered during this study's member checking session. Some practitioners viewed "ex-offender" as a negative term and preferred the word "returning citizens." Other practitioners believed that the term "ex-offender" was appropriate because a returning citizen is a person that has spent time in jail and all offenders are not sentenced to a correctional facility. For that reason, the study used the term ex-offender because it was more inclusive when describing individuals with conviction records.

Significance

The unemployment rate among ex-offenders continues to be an issue in the United States. Swenson and colleagues (2012) reported that 73% of companies request background checks so there are limited opportunities in which ex-offenders can land jobs without disclosing their criminal status. This study was significant in the describing the personal, external, and environmental limitations that ex-offenders experience during the background check and the other phases in the job search process. Research on ex-offenders' job search constraints was significant to reentry policy and practice because the findings provide service providers and policy makers contextual data that is relevant

in targeting employment interventions that meet ex-offenders' employment needs. The study's results identify what employment interventions are needed, describe what reentry practitioners can do to improve their job readiness courses, and provide suggestions on what policy resolutions are needed to advance the reentry and employment agenda. The research was significant in advancing positive social change by uncovering the need to promote the second chance mind-set among employers in every job industry.

Summary

Although policymakers in Maryland support fair hiring practices, more research was needed on the types of challenges individuals with criminal records face finding employment. This qualitative case study gave reentry practitioners a voice in the literature by exploring 30 practitioners perspectives on ex-offenders' employment constraints. Goldratt's theory of constraints provided the conceptual framework from which the study analyzed and described the most challenging phase of the job search process. The results described the type of constraints, identified the job search phase that was impacted by the constraint, (searching phase, application phase, interview, background check, or job offer), and provided a recommendation for removing each constraint. The study advances positive social change by providing policymakers, researchers, and reentry stakeholders with solutions. The study's findings can be used to improve employment readiness programs and launch policy resolutions comparable to Maryland's Justice Reinvestment Act. The results shed light types of interventions reentry professionals intend to build support around.

Chapter 2 reviews the previous reentry literature that has explored ex-offenders' experiences finding work and distinguished the sequential segments of the job search process. This will be followed by a discussion of the research method, data collection, and data analysis plan in chapter 3, and a review of the research findings and the conceptual framework in chapter 4. The dissertation concludes with a discussion of the study's results and its relevance to reentry practice and public policy, and recommendations for future research in chapter 5.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Unemployment among ex-offenders creates barriers to successful reentry. The embitterment expressed by ex-offenders regarding legitimate attempts to return to the labor market can lead to a relapse in criminal activity and complications living as a law-abiding citizen. The purpose of the qualitative study was to explore reentry practitioners' perceptions of constraints faced by ex-offenders during the job search and how to make the process more efficient.

Barriers to employment, including those related to social stigma and employability, as well as legal barriers that block ex-offenders access to specific job markets, are reviewed. I discussed the impact incarceration has on employability and employer bias as it relates to types of offenses. I examined the significance of reentry programs, vocational programs, and other interventions that increase ex-offenders access to education and create pathways to employment. Unemployment is deeply rooted in crime, poverty, and structural racism and is a collateral consequence of incarceration. If not addressed, unemployment can lead to high rates recidivism.

Policy interventions prohibiting discriminatory hiring practices have been essential for protected classes such as African Americans, women, individuals with disabilities, and other minorities. Since ex-offenders are not a protected class of citizens, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act does not offer robust protection for this group. Accountability for employers who refuse to hire ex-offenders has been the focus of policymakers' in states that have implemented ban-the-box laws. The principal theme of

local and state policy aiming to increase employment for ex-offenders is successful

reentry. This includes reducing the risk of recidivism and increasing public safety. The

primary theme for the ban-the-box policy was to prevent employment discrimination and

to give individuals with criminal convictions a fair shot at getting a job. The job search is

necessary to find post-release opportunities for ex-offenders. To resolve the

unemployment problem for ex-offenders it was important to identify the constraints that

are preventing ex-offenders' from advancing to various stages in the job search.

Earlier scholars criticized the literature on reentry for being scattered around

multiple disciplines, mostly quantitative, and lacking a description about what

interventions genuinely reduce recidivism (Petersilia, 2004; Bahr et al., 2005; Wilson &

Davis, 2006; Latessa, 2012). The same is true for research on prisoner reentry and

employment. A review of the literature showed that limited data exists on ex-offenders'

job search experiences. No studies focus on identifying constraints that are specific to the

stages in the job search process. This reinforces the need for more research in this area.

This chapter discusses the following topics: the introduction, literature search strategy,

conceptual framework, literature related to key concepts, and conclusion.

Literature Search Strategy

To identify prospective, peer-reviewed articles and books, the following

databases- Academic Search Premier Complete, Criminal Justice Database, Google

Scholar, LexisNexis, Political Science, Sage Journals, Science Direct, and Taylor and

Francis Online- were searched for the years 2012 through 2017. Since the initial strategy

did not provide enough resources to support the guiding questions, articles published

before 2012 were included to ensure that the literature review was exhaustive. The reference lists of cited articles were also reviewed for relevant publications.

Online repositories, such as the Council of State Governments Justice Center (CSGJC) and the National Reentry Resource Center (NRRC), provided state-specific publications and white papers on themes that were absent from the scholarly literature. The following keywords were used: reentry, employment, unemployment, ex-offenders, jobs, recidivism, ex-convicts, programs, and barriers. I used the Boolean operators, AND and OR to optimize the results. Abstracts were used to judge an article's relevancy to the guiding questions.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the study builds on the TOC. Goldratt coined TOC in his book, "The Goal", published in 1984 (Pretorius, 2014). Goldratt used the theory to explain problem-solving methods in the manufacturing industry, and TOC has been widely accepted across many disciplines (Naor, Bernardes, & Coman, 2013). The primary hypothesis of TOC is that organizations and people are goal seekers and constraints exist that prevent goal achievement (Pretoria, 2014). The theory suggests that solving process related problems requires goal identification and an understanding of the location of the constraint. TOC assumes that a constraint exists anywhere a bottleneck or limitation is present, which is as the primary problem preventing goal achievement (Cooper & Loe, 2000). The theory references a continuous five step strategy for exploiting constraints.

To exploit a constraint, stakeholders must establish a consensus about the cause of the problem and then agree on the direction of the solution, which is the first two steps in the improvement process (Cooper & Loe, 2000; Noar et al., 2013). The third and fourth steps focus on the use of internal and external resources to support the resolution and eliminate the constraint (Sadat, Carter, & Golden, 2012). The fifth step identifies additional constraints by starting the process again from the beginning until stakeholders exploit all constraints that exist one at a time (Sadat, Carter, & Golden, 2012). In the fifth step, there is an indication that constraints can shift when exploited. There is also an indication that goal achievement is not possible until all constraints have been addressed, which justifies TOC's continuous improvement process.

In 2003, a team of scholars used TOC as a lens to analyze public safety hiring practices in the Odessa, Texas, Police Department. The researchers explored constraints related to the employment process and recommended solutions for overcoming policy limitations (Taylor et al., 2003). The authors justified the use of TOC as a framework to evaluate hiring practices and argued that "TOC is not limited to manufacturing processes or for-profit organizations; it applies to any problem in any organization" (Taylor et al., 2003, p.367). The police department's goal was the hire a certain percentage of applicants each year, but the department failed to fill job vacancies timely (Taylor et al., 2003). Researchers explored each phase of the hiring process and found bottlenecks at the background investigation stage (Taylor et al., 2003). In this case, a departmental policy prevented managers from moving a candidate's application to the next phase until a full scope background check was completed; the researchers provided recommendations for

streamlining the background check process, which reduced applicants' wait time (Taylor et al., 2003). The study similarly uses TOC. TOC is the lens they study used to examine reentry practitioners' view about constraints ex-offenders during the job search process.

It is apparent that America has not solved the unemployment problem for ex-offenders. Although policy endeavors such as ban-the-box appear to level the playing field for this population, no resolutions are available to ensure that ex-offenders will find employment after release from incarceration (Wells, 2014). Previous studies show that ex-offenders with high educational attainment and a continuous work history still struggle to find work (Pager & Quillian, 2005). The problem appeared to be inside the process one used to find a job in the first place-the job search. No studies explore phases within the job search process with a purpose of identifying barriers in the actual process.

The study presumes that ex-offenders engage in the job search activities to look for work. TOC is the lens through which the study explores barriers in the job search process. The study assumes that ex-offenders goal is to find adequate employment. Goldratt postulated that stakeholders should ask "what to change, what to change it to, and how to change it" (Cooper & Loe, 2000). TOC's theoretical inquires formed the guiding question for this study.

Literature Related to Key Concepts

The study's primary concepts in are related to prisoner reentry. The independent variable and focus of exploration is the job search process. The research formed around the notion that an ex-offender's chance of securing employment was dependent on how well he or she advanced through the job search process. Researchers view unemployment

as a state of being that occurs when a person is not earning income and actively searching for work (D'Alessio, Stolzenberg, & Eitle, 2014).

There was not enough information available linking all possible challenges to a specific phase in the job search. For example, policies like ban-the-box exploit constraints in the application phase. Moses (2014) inferred that more research on ex-offenders' odds of receiving a job offer was significant, which is the last phase of the job search process. It was essential to explore the barriers in each phase of the job search to determine ex-offenders' employment constraints. Hlavka, Wheelock, and Cossyleon (2015) reported that unemployed is the most cited reentry need but little is known about the job search endeavors of ex-offenders. In an article about barriers to employment, an ex-offender shared his experience searching for work. The respondent stated, "I have had numerous interviews and sent out more than 200 resumes for jobs which I am more than qualified; I have had denial after denial because of my felony" (Solomon, 2012, p. 42). Previous research has approached unemployment from the perspective of employability.

Several factors affect employability, a key concept for this study. Empirical studies support the notion that social stigma, which consists of the public's attitude toward ex-offenders, has the greatest impact on employability (Rade, Desmarais & Mitchell, 2016). Several researchers have discovered that employers are unwilling to hire ex-prisoners (Burt, 2014; Cerda et al., 2015; D'Alessio et al., 2014; Adams et al., 2016). Some qualitative narratives identify some employers who are willing to hire applicants that have served time in jail (Cantora, 2015). However, the second chance attitude is not widespread throughout the labor market.

Pager (2003) conducted an audit study on 350 entry-level employers in Milwaukee to evaluate the impact a criminal record had on race and employability. Researchers grouped four testers with a similar appearance, background, and education by race (two black males and two white); and one tester in each pair was randomly assigned a criminal record each week (Pager, 2003). The audit findings revealed that white ex-offenders received more callbacks than black applicants did with no criminal record (Pager, 2003). The study concluded that having a criminal record negatively affects employment outcomes. This data compares to the findings in a more recent audit study conducted by Decker and colleagues in 2015.

Using a similar field experiment, a team of researchers measured the impact race, and a criminal record had on employment outcomes for ex-offenders that applied for jobs online and in-person (Decker et al., 2015). The findings suggested that race and criminal history not affect interview opportunities for online applicants but affected outcomes for individuals that applied for jobs in-person. Decker and colleagues' conclusion is consistent with the findings in Pager's (2003) study supports the view that some employers have negative perceptions of a person with a criminal record, affecting an applicant's level of employability. A respondent in Decker's study shared his experience during a job interview when a manager refused to follow through with an interview after learning about the applicant's criminal record. "The manager pointed out my criminal record and right away told me that they could not go any further with the interview; they could not hire me because of my criminal record" (Decker et al., 2015, p. 108).

Previous research also focused on the collateral effects of incarceration. Low educational attainment, poor interpersonal skills, and no work history were the foundation for ex-offenders' lack of employment success (Visher et al., 2010; Schmitt & Warner, 2011; Pryor & Thompkins, 2012; Nally et al., 2014; and Cerda et al. 2015). When considering an applicant's qualifications, ex-offenders that have higher levels of education, training, and experience had higher rates of employability (Cerda et al., 2015). Hlavka and colleagues (2015) used in-depth interviews to explore participants experience looking for work with a criminal record. Researchers classified respondents as either realists or optimist depending upon how they perceived challenges finding work (Hlavka et al., 2015). The optimistic job seeker appeared to maintain a positive outlook throughout their job search experience. Optimists credited their limitations for their trouble finding employment; limited work experience was the most frequently mentioned challenge (Hlavka et al., 2015). In contrast, the realistic job seeker appeared to have a critical view of their job search experience. The realist attributed environmental constraints for their difficulty finding work; the economy and discrimination were the most cited challenges for this group (Hlavka et al., 2015).

Many entry-level jobs appeal to applicants with limited high school education and no work history, which explains researchers' interest in employers' attitudes toward hiring ex-offenders. Swanson and colleagues (2012) used semi-structured face-to-face interviews to administer a survey that asked employers about their view about hiring ex-felons. The findings showed that employers consider an applicant's qualifications, skills, experience, and overall interview performance when making a hiring decision, even if the

applicant has a criminal record (Swanson et al., 2012). Some companies have policies that prohibit the hiring of ex-felons, which - why some ex-offenders are denied employment after a company has learned about their criminal past.

In a research study conducted by Cantora (2015), researchers explored the job-search experience of women participating in a work-release program and living in a halfway house. Through in-depth interviews, the researcher discovered that respondents were typically embarrassed when disclosing their criminal status during an interview (Cantora, 2015). Some respondents alleged that disclosing their criminal status prevented them from receiving job offers (Cantora, 2015). One respondent stated that she only disclosed her criminal status because it was a requirement for the halfway house and would not have done so if she were living on her own (Cantora, 2015). The participants in Hlavka and colleagues' (2015) study reiterated similar feelings; one respondent suggested that he ought to lie about having a criminal record so that he can receive a job. Since ex-offenders face a variety of personal barriers, scholars began to examine interventions that could reduce recidivism and close the unemployment gap at the same time.

According to the literature, the most effective correctional programs are vocational training, work release, and halfway houses because they have been effective at reducing recidivism (Seiter & Kadela, 2003). Bushway and Apel (2012) found that some vocational programs were unable to reduce recidivism or increase job outcomes for participants. In a field experiment conducted with two groups of formally incarcerated individuals, researchers found no significant difference in the employment outcomes,

housing stability, and recidivism rates of participants in a reentry program that focused on career development and non-participants (Farabee et al., 2014). The treatment group participated in an employment program that offered job readiness training, soft-skills training, employment placement, and access to computer labs (Farabee et al., 2014). The control group only received a list of community resources (Farabee et al., 2014).

After comparing participants' outcomes, the findings showed no significant difference in the treatment or the control groups' rate of employment, recidivism, or housing stability (Farabee et al., 2014). Although researchers were disappointed in the findings, they concluded that their findings were consistent with similar experimental studies on reentry and recidivism (Farabee et al., 2014). The scholars contended that even though the employment program had an insignificant impact on recidivism, the program helped secure jobs for 85% of its participants (Farabee et al., 2014).

Duwe (2015) conducted a meta-analysis that examined post-release employment outcomes and recidivism rates of EMPLOY participants (a prisoner reentry program). A regression analysis showed that recidivism decreased by 32% to 63% and employability increased by 72% (Duwe, 2015). Not enough detail was provided to distinguish between the different findings of studies that examined recidivism. It is unclear why some reentry programs that offer vocational training produce better outcomes than programs that offer comparable services. A better description regarding how reentry programs are implemented including the setting is necessary. Some researchers presume that behavior therapy has the most significant impact on recidivism rates; therefore, employment programs that incorporate this feature in their models may have better outcomes (Latessa,

2012). It is also unclear why ex-offenders with the same qualifications, education, and criminal conviction have fluctuating rates of employability. Researchers contend that race and length of incarceration play a role. The literature can benefit from more information on how ex-offenders experience different phases of the job search process.

Previous Research Approaches

Few qualitative studies exist on ex-offenders' unemployment problem, and most focus on ex-offenders' perception of barriers to successful reentry. Much of the research on ex-offenders' employment problem is quantitative consists of evaluation studies that build the foundation around what interventions reduce recidivism rates. Audit studies, meta-analyses, and surveys are the most common methods researchers have used to investigate hiring practices and consider the role of employment in criminal desistance.

Audit studies were useful when triangulating data and validating research assumptions, but this methodology has its limitations. Prior researchers used audits studies to measure employment outcomes, specifically "a callback for a job interview" (Pager, 2003; Decker et al., 2015). The limitation in Pager (2003) and Decker and colleagues (2015) study was the decision to bound employment outcomes to callbacks, instead of extending the audit to the point where applicants either received an employment offer or a denial letter. The decision may have been due to time constraints. Qualitative studies have revealed that many employers turn ex-offenders down from a job after discussing their criminal past during the interview phase (Hlavka et al., 2015; Cantora, 2015). Other findings suggest that securing a job may be more likely after the

applicant has had face-to-face contact with the employer; however, this is not a guarantee (Ispa-Landa & Loeffler, 2016).

To arrive at more reliable conclusion researchers might have considered "job offers" as the employment outcome. Pallais (2014) used an experimental study to measure employment outcomes in entry-level job markets. The researcher considered a job offer, hourly wage, hours worked, and employment status (such as full-time, part-time, and temporary) as measures of employment (Pallais, 2014). Another limitation of the audit studies was researchers' use of fictitious resumes and trained actors (or auditors) as applicants (Wells, 2014). Survey research revealed various qualities employers look for in applicants during the job interview. A previous study found that employers' judge an applicant's interpersonal skills, enthusiasm, and how well they "sell themselves" during a job interview (Swanson et al., 2012). Using ex-offenders as participants could have provided data on their experience and level of performance during the interview phase.

Surveys are flexible instruments and popular among researchers leading studies on reentry. Researchers have been able to gauge the rate of employability for applicants with a criminal record and measure employers' attitudes toward hiring ex-offenders. Surveys have also helped researchers dismiss assumptions about the employment process and the significance of job interviews (Swanson et al., 2012). Scholars have collected quantitative and qualitative data on ex-offenders' feelings regarding reentry challenges, social stigma, and the impact of incarceration. A major limitation of survey research is trustworthiness. In a previous study, researchers surveyed employers' feelings toward

applicants with a criminal record and discovered that some employers might be inclined to seem fair and respond liberally on hiring ex-felons (Swanson et al., 2012). In other words, employers may communicate a greater willingness to employ ex-felons than practiced. Respondent bias is a limitation inherent to all self-reported studies (Wolff, Shi, & Schumann; 2013). To strengthen the findings researchers could have initiated an audit of each company's hiring practices before or after administering a survey.

Meta-analyses are also standard in the literature on reentry and frequently assess the scientific rigor of program evaluation studies (Jonson & Cullen, 2015). Duwe (2015) noted that the literature in meta-analyses is often outdated and fails to include a contemporary sample of participants. This limitation affects the ability to generalize the study's findings. Studies that measure reductions in recidivism when other factors (such as enhancing employability) are the primary aim of a program affect reliability.

According to Lynch (2006), there needs to be a broader view of what constitutes successful reentry; this also relates to the definition of reentry program success. The researcher argued that "recidivism is too unreliable" to be a concrete measure for successful reentry (Lynch, 2006, p.406). Recidivism refers to an ex-offender's rate of incarceration and does not account for individuals that get away with committing a crime. Recidivism is relevant but, Lynch (2006) argues that it is a better measure of supervision. Successful reentry is dependent on a few factors such as the ability to obtain housing, employment, and treatment. Other types of data frequently found in the literature include ex-offenders' narratives on the challenges they face reentering society.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is occasionally found throughout the literature on reentry and employment. A few studies explore criminal justice professionals' opinion about the impact incarceration has on employment. Goulette and colleagues (2014) used a survey to explore criminal justice practitioners' opinion of the collateral consequence ex-offenders face after release from prison. One conclusion suggested that unemployment is a major consequence of imprisonment and having criminal record bars imamates from public service and obtaining certain licensure (Goulette et al., 2014). Social stigma also affects ex-offenders' ability to compete in many skilled and professional job markets (Goulette et al., 2014).

Fewer qualitative studies explore the job search process as the main subject. One study explored ex-offenders experienced searching for work and included a couple of statements from a reentry program volunteers. One practitioner stated that "employers just flat out say they do not hire felons." (Hlavka et al., 2015, p.221). The respondent echoed the same concerns about employers' use of the background check and suggested that laws were constraining ex-offenders' employment opportunities (Hlavka et al., 2015).

Another study reported similar findings regarding employers' lack of consideration of the length of time that has elapsed since the applicant's conviction (Blesset & Pryor, 2013). There appears to be a sense of limited accountability for employers' use of the background check results. Similar studies draw attention to the challenges job seekers face during the interview and background check phases. No

current qualitative studies are available that use open-ended surveys to explore reentry practitioners' perceptions of job search constraints.

Rationale for Key Concepts

Reentry continues to be a pressing issue in the United States; it is also the construct of interest for studies related to reintegration and recidivism. Travis shed light on the importance of reentry in his book, But They All Come Back. The number of inmates released each year (over 600,000 annually since 2012) raised concerns about the reentry process. Reducing ex-offenders risk for recidivism is a frequent topic in the literature (Jonson & Cullen, 2015). A previous study assessed the impact of the reentry concept and found that public safety has been the driving force for discussions around reentry (Steen et al., 2012). Nonetheless, scholars and policy stakeholders have diverse views on how to address the recidivism problem in the U.S. (Steen et al., 2012).

Practitioners conceptualize reentry and recidivism with two broad philosophies, rehabilitation or retribution (Steen, Lacock & McKinzey, 2012). Some stakeholders believe that the best way to reduce recidivism is through supervision while others argue that rehabilitation and treatment prevent future offending (Steen et al., 2012). Scholars contend that reentry programs are effective interventions for recidivism and reintegration (Steen et al., 2012). The debate about what methods are more effective in reducing recidivism and what programs achieve reentry goals led to the "what works" in prisoner reentry era. Policymakers wanted to with invest in evidence-based practices that reduce recidivism because lower recidivism rates ensure safer communities, reduced correctional costs, and a diminished burden on taxpayers (Petersilia, 2004; Listwan, Cullen, &

Latessa, 2006; Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2013). For policymakers to invest federal and state funds into reentry programs they needed to know what programs work and for whom (Visher, Lattimore, Barrick, & Tueller, 2016).

A recent study explored how high-risk offenders perceive reentry and how satisfied they were with reentry programs. Bender, Cobbina, and McGarrell (2015) reported that ex-offenders primary concern was finding housing and employment, which are critical aspects of reentry. One conclusion suggested that ex-offenders believe that social stigma is the most significant barrier to success and having a criminal record limits their employment opportunities (Bender et al., 2015). The study reported that participants were generally pleased with reentry programs but frustrated because no real opportunities were available in society (Bender et al., 2015).

The qualitative literature provides a better description of how ex-offenders view their reality after release from prison. The literature is lacking reentry practitioners' voices and a vivid description of how to overcome systematic barriers such as unemployment and social stigma. Gunnison and Helfgott (2011) explored correctional officers' awareness of the challenges ex-offenders face after release. The respondents echoed similar challenges found in other reentry studies. What was valuable was practitioners' ability to describe the reality of environmental factors that hinder reentry success, something ex-offenders have not articulated richly in the literature (Gunnison & Helfgott, 2011).

Another study explored legal practitioners' views about the effectiveness of the juvenile justice system and recommendations for improving juvenile policy and practices

(Mears, Shollenberger, Willison, Owens, et al., 2010). The literature can benefit from more qualitative exploration that focuses on finding policies that remove systematic barriers that prevent successful reentry outcomes (Council of State Governments, 2016). Limited research is available on the processes ex-offenders to engage in to achieve reentry goals (Miller, 2014).

Successful Reentry

Due to the past criticism about the literature's lack of reliability and scientific rigor (MacKenzie, 2000); the most recent studies have measured other predictors of successful reentry (such as employability and housing stability) instead of recidivism rates (Leshnick, Geckeler, Wiegand, & Foley, 2012). Studies ought to assess all program goals to determine success and not just recidivism rates. If a participant finds employment and stable housing (for example) and still battles with drug addiction, did the reentry program have a substantial impact? If a reentry participant manages to stay out of jail but fails to find stable housing or employment, has he or she successfully reintegrated?

Scholars argue that the literature on reentry focuses too narrowly on programs, deeming them unsuccessful or promising if participants' recidivism rates are not significantly reduced (Lynch, 2006). Environmental factors can have a stronger impact on reentry outcomes and affect the impact a program has on an individual. For example, if no employment opportunities exist because a state is in a recession, can we deem an employment program unsuccessful if the participant cannot find a job. One could argue that the program was successful because the participant learned a skill they did not have,

and that skill increased their overall employability. It was essential to explore variables

that are associated with successful reentry and gain a better understanding of what

interventions work for specific offenders. For example, how are programs connecting ex-

offenders to family and legitimate social networks; what processes are successful in

connecting individuals to affordable housing and healthcare, as well as educational

institutions and the labor market?

Reentry Needs

The most common need inmates face upon release from prison is adequate

housing (Harding, Morenoff & Herbert, 2013). Many suburban communities turn down

applicants who have felony convictions and many ex-offenders return to deteriorated

communities with high crime rates (Vigne, Davies, Palmer, & Halberstadt, 2008).

Depending on the availability of services and resources, many reentry programs do not

have enough funding to offer housing or enough space to satisfy the demand. Reentry

programs that do not offer housing as an incentive provide participants with information

for homeless shelters, affordable housing programs, and subsidized housing.

The second immediate need inmates face upon release from prison is

employment. Unemployment increases an individual's chance of engaging in criminal

activity and ex-offenders face many barriers finding stable employment (Varghese,

Hardin, Bauer, & Morgan, 2010). Employment is the most cited barrier ex-offenders face

and finding a professional or skilled job that pays more than a minimum wage is far from

reach. Individuals that found employment after release reported earning 40% less in

wages (CSGJC, 2013, pp.1). Participants who can maintain adequate employment increase his or her chance of successful reintegration (CSGJC, 2013).

Education is a significant reentry need. Statistics show that many prisoners qualify for employment but the ability to compete for lucrative salaries and is dependent upon an individual's educational attainment (Vigne et al., 2008). After administering a survey, researchers found that 48% of inmates in Baltimore did not graduate high school, 31% had high school education, and 21% had some college education (Flower, 2013). Large portions of professional jobs require a high school diploma. Studies show that participating in a correctional education program decreased inmates' likelihood of returning to jail by 43% (CSGJC (2013).

Transportation is another essential need for ex-offenders. The urgency for transportation increased as the individual's length of incarceration decreased. Researchers in a previous study discovered that inmates incarcerated for less than 30 days recorded transportation an immediate need (Flower, 2013). Access to reliable transportation is necessary to maintain employment. Some reentry organizations provide bus tokens or transit vouchers to increase participant's engagement in a program (Vigne et al., 2008). Similarly, access to food, clothing, healthcare, and personal effects such as identification is an essential part of reentry.

Reentry Programs

The worldview regarding reentry programs has evolved. Twenty-five years ago, reentry programs were pointless according to some scholars. Researchers' perspective regarding the need and effectiveness of these programs has advanced from "nothing

works," to "reentry works," to "some things work" (Wilson & Davis, 2006; MacKenzie, 2000). Martinson's 1974 publication on rehabilitation coined the "nothing works" perspective (Petersilia, 2004). Martinson reported in his findings that evaluation studies were unable to show a positive relationship between rehabilitation and recidivism (Martinson, 1974). He concluded that prisoner rehabilitation methods during the 1960's could not yield desired results (Martinson, 1974). Two decades later, researchers began to criticize Martinson's conclusion that nothing worked. Scholars argued that Martinson's findings exclude data that revealed a positive relationship between rehabilitation and recidivism in some cases (Sarre, 1999; MacKenzie, 2013).

Once researchers published international studies on successful post-release rehabilitation methods, the worldview shifted to "reentry works." Gendreau and Ross' 1979 publication challenged Martinson's "nothing works" perspective on prisoner rehabilitation (Petersilia, 2004). Researchers investigated the effect of incarceration and established the "revolving door" concept to illustrate the frequency in which ex-offenders return to prison (Wright, Zhang, & Farabee, 2014). With the inception of the Second Chance Act in 2007, community-based organizations began to establish programs with federal grants to support reentry efforts. Scholars began to differentiate between deterrence and rehabilitation, and policymakers offered incentives for organizations to create programs that focused on post-release rehabilitation.

Researchers were interested in exploring the impact reentry programs' had on recidivism. Scholars supported the "reentry works" position in the literature, and program evaluation studies showed statistical reductions in recidivism rates for participants. Some

researchers discovered that although reentry programs had the potential to reduce recidivism, not all programs produced the same results (National Institute of Justice, 1997; Severson, Bruns, Veeh & Lee, 2011). These findings logically shifted researchers' view to "some things work" (Jones & Castleberry, 2013, p.44).

A few studies found essential differences in post-release outcomes for reentry program participants. Severson and colleagues (2011) examined a reentry program in the Midwest using a quantitative study that compared participants and nonparticipants recidivism rates and urine analysis results. The authors concluded that the intervention group recidivated more frequently but had better urine analysis test results than the control group (Severson et al., 2011). In a similar study, another team of researchers found that in some cases non-participants had better post-release outcomes than program participants (Wilson & Davis, 2006). A few studies have reported finding no significant difference in the recidivism rates of program participants and non-participants; however, the most recent literature infers that program participants have a better chance finding leads for employment and housing (MacKenzie, 2013; Farabee et al. 2014).

Reentry programs deliver services that smooth the reintegration process (James, 2011). A variety of factors can affect a reentry program's level of success. For example, scholars have mentioned that program delivery and voluntariness are important variables that affect program success. How a program is implemented can also affect participants' ability to achieve reentry goals. Wikoff and colleagues (2012) inferred that poorly implemented programs have a significant impact on participant's recidivism rates. Researchers propose that programs should focus on sequencing services and deliver them

in phases (such as the strategic planning phase, the service delivery phase, and the evaluation phase).

Unsuccessful Programs

Many organizations implement a basic model for reentry with essential service components. Some programs prioritize behavioral change over practical skills, but the overarching reentry objective is to make sure participants find employment, housing, treatment, and other resources. Torbett (2010) found that some programs focus on the "work first" concept since employment correlates with criminal desistance (p.62). Project Greenlight, a study that researchers regularly reference in the reentry literature, provides a comprehensive model of reentry program services (such as job training, drug treatment, education, housing assistance, and family support) (Wilson & Zozula, 2012).

Researchers discovered that even with access to a variety of reentry resources, Project Greenlight participants had higher recidivism rates after participating in the program. The program evaluation study indicated that Project Greenlight' s program modifications were statistically significant in yielding the negative outcomes (Wilson, 2011). Having a larger class size and shortening the length of time participants spent in behavior therapy and other reentry services created adverse outcomes for participants (Wilson & Zozula, 2012). Researchers' discovered that participants in a post-release program had better recidivism outcomes than pre-release program participants (Wilson, 2011).

At first, the findings appear to suggest that post-release programs may be more effective than pre-release programs. Although this may have been the case for the Project

Greenlight study, the Pathways reentry program (a voluntary pre-release reentry program in Louisville) reported that participants' recidivism rate dropped from 95% to 20% in 14 months (Zundel, 2009, p.35). So, why did the Pathways pre-release program have a greater impact on recidivism than Project Greenlight? Scholars believe that program success depends on how well the risk-needs-responsivity (RNR) framework is implemented (Wilson & Zozula, 2012).

Listwan and colleagues (2006) introduced the effective correctional intervention concept as a key factor in reentry program success. Programs that deliver reentry services according to the participant's risk, needs, and learning style have the greatest impact (Listwan et al., 2006). The RNR model requires organizations to align program delivery with a participant's level of receptiveness (Gideon & Sung, 2011). Organizations that use the RNR model usually arrange individualized reentry plans for each program participant (MRDC, 2013). Reentry programs had a greater impact when programs were tailored services to the participant's specific need.

Distinguishing a participant's level of risk helps case managers design individualized plans. The overall goal of reentry is to reduce the ex-offenders risk of returning to jail (Taxman, 2011). Many reentry plans focus on providing ex-offenders with access to a continuum of services (Jones & Forman, 2016). In other words, reentry services would be provided incrementally during their period of incarceration and through the reintegration phase (Gideon & Sung, 2011; Churchill, 2011). Wright, Zhang, Farabee, and Braatz (2013) reported that recidivism rates vary by type of offense.

Researchers discovered that nonviolent offenders and violent offenders have the highest risk of returning to jail (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1994).

Reentry and Employment

Mass incarceration in the United States has been a major concern among researchers. An article described the United States as "the global leader in imprisoning its citizens" (Kim, Tripodi & Bender, 2016, p.3). Countless articles on prisoner reentry begin by highlighting the number of Americans impacted by the mass incarceration. America has arrested and imprisoned approximately one in every one-hundred citizen for a crime (Gottschall & Armour, 2011, p.31). Studies report that correctional facilities release roughly 650,000 inmates each year (about two-thirds of the prison population) back into the community (Morani, Wikoff, Linhorst & Bratton, 2011). This fact shows the number of Americans that have a criminal record and will ultimately face difficulties finding employment.

A consensus exists in the literature regarding the need for employment among ex-offenders. Without employment, it is hard to acquire adequate resources such as housing. A previous study inferred that employment was a preventive measure and found that ex-offenders with jobs were less susceptible to criminal behavior (Nally et al., 2012). A more recent study explored the association between employment and recidivism and that found that parolees in Texas were reincarcerated sooner when they were unemployed (Kim, Tripodi & Bender, 2016). It is unclear if ex-offenders continue to seek work after numerous employment denials or if they give up at some point after no success with the

job search process. The literature does not provide an accurate description of ex-offenders' engagement in the job search process.

Scholars believe that a correlation between employment and recidivism exists, but experimental studies do not find a significant relationship between the variables (Farabee et al., 2014). The most recent studies have used two-group experimental or quasi-experimental designs to analyze the various difference in ex-offenders' reentry outcomes. Researchers have not discussed the probability that a third variable that could be affecting the correlation between employment and recidivism. Trochim (2006) cautioned researchers about a third variable in correlation studies. If a third variable is affecting the outcome of a relationship and the researcher is unaware and does not control for all variables in the study, the findings would lack reliability (Trochim, 2006). Latessa (2012) argues that cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) is another variable to consider when evaluating reductions in recidivism rates. There is a possibility that CBT is a third variable affecting the correlation between employment and recidivism. Therefore, behavior therapy in addition to employment assistance may lower ex-offenders' recidivism rates (Latessa, 2012).

Post-release recidivism has been the primary measure for successful reentry. Other factors such as employment, housing, treatment, and education are also predictors of recidivism. Unemployment is a barrier to successful reentry and studies show the ex-offenders who remain unemployed after release have a higher risk of recidivism (Kim, Tripodi & Bender, 2016). Nally and colleagues (2014) initiated a 5-year longitudinal study that measured post-release employment outcomes and recidivism rates of ex-

offenders released from a state correctional facility. The study reported that

approximately 50% of ex-offenders released from prison returned within the first year

(Nally et al., 2014). Approximately 37% of ex-offenders were unemployed after release,

and the average rate of recidivism was 48.9 % (Nally et al., 2014).

Researchers presume that there is a correlation between employment, recidivism,

and the type of offense an ex-offender commit (Nally et al., 2014). Non-violent offenders

had the highest unemployment rate (38.2%) and sex offenders had the highest recidivism

rate (Nally et al., 2014). One conclusion suggested that education increased ex-offenders'

employability and was a significant factor in post-release employment outcomes (Nally et

al., 2014). A logical regression analysis showed that education correlated with post-

release employment and lower recidivism rates (Nally et al., 2014). Since education and

prior work experience increased the speed of employability, experts believe that the

reentry agenda should focus on increasing inmates' access to education and vocational

training inside correctional facilities (Wells, 2014).

Impact of a Criminal Record

According to Wells (2014), employers prefer to hire applicants without a criminal

record. Policymakers in some states have passed ban-the-box legislation, which prohibits

employers from asking an applicant questions about their criminal background until they

receive an opportunity to interview (Maryland General Assembly, 2013). In Hawaii,

employers cannot ask an applicant about their criminal background until they make a

conditional offer of employment, which they can withdraw if the conviction is relevant to

the job duties (D'Alessio et al., 2014). Ban-the-box legislation was expected to increase

ex-offenders' employment outcomes and prevent employers from screening applications

for criminal convictions. Studies have shown that many employers do not comply with

ban-the-box legislation. For example, a survey revealed that only 4 of 20 employers

surveyed in Hawaii complied with ban-the-box laws (D'Alessio, Stolzenberg & Flexon,

2014).

A criminal record negatively impacts an applicant's employability. Pager and

Quillian (2005) explored employers' willingness to hire ex-offenders for entry-level jobs

using a survey that measured attitudes around hypothetical hiring situations. The

researchers used audits to triangulate employers' survey responses with their actual hiring

practices. The survey showed that companies reported a higher willingness to hire ex-

offenders than practiced (Pager & Quillian, 2005). The findings also suggested that

having a criminal record blocked employment opportunity. Although employers are

generally reluctant to hire ex-offenders due to potential liabilities, this attitude is likely

dependent upon the type of offense a person committed (Swensen et al., 2014).

Type of Offense

The type of offense an ex-offender commits is a major theme in discussions on

recidivism and employability. Data on recidivism rates for specific offenses shows that

nonviolent offenders have higher recidivism rates than violent offenders, and the

difference may be dependent on the length of incarceration (Bureau of Justice Statistics,

2013). The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2013, p.1) reported that recidivism rates were

highest for motor vehicle theft (78.8%), possessing or selling stolen property (77.4%),

larceny (74.6%), burglary (74%), robbery (70.2%), and possessing or selling illegal

weapons (70.2%). For nonviolent crimes, individuals that committed property offenses had the highest recidivism rate (73.8%) (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2013). Individuals that committed drug crimes had the second highest recidivism rate (66.7%) (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2013). The differences in recidivism rates might be dependent on an ex-offender's ability to secure employment after committing a specific crime. Qualitative studies have revealed that employers have shown greater empathy toward drug offenders.

Cerda, Stenstrom, and Curtis (2015) used a quantitative study to measure the employability of applicants with a criminal record by surveying participants that pretended to be employers. Participants ranked their probability of hiring an ex-offender for a specific job (Cerda et al., 2015). Respondents received information about the job description, the applicant's criminal history, and their resume (Cerda et al., 2015). The researchers assessed underlying factors that influenced a hiring decision. The study found that the type of offense a person committed, and their work qualifications influenced employability. When measuring the impact of each variable independently, the type of offense committed had the most significant impact on a hiring decision (Cerda et al., 2015).

Greater social barriers exist for individuals that commit dangerous, violent, or sexual offenses. Individuals that committed violent crimes had significantly lower ratings of employability than non-violent offenders did (Cerda et al., 2015). When comparing "violent offenses" and "high qualifications" to "non-violent offenses" and "high qualifications," the findings showed that higher qualifications increased a non-violent offenders' employability (Cerda et al., 2015). Higher qualifications had no impact on a

violent offenders' employability because the nature of the offense overshadowed an applicant's credentials. Employers were less likely to hire violent offenders because there was a presumption of dangerousness. Overall, employers thought that individuals with criminal records would have poor personal qualities (such as limited interpersonal skills, poor reliability, no integrity and poor punctuality), even when no evidence existed regarding the person's qualities (Cerda et al., 2015). These facts reveal the social stigma one must overcome and illustrates how employer bias can affect ex-offenders' employment outcomes.

Guiding Questions

The study builds on the literature on reentry and employment by addressing questions regarding reentry practitioners' awareness of constraints ex-offenders experience throughout the job search process. The job search is a sequential process that job seekers engage in with a goal to find employment. For a person to be unemployed, he or she must be out of work and actively job-hunting (Hederman, 2010). The job search process consists of five fundamental steps initiated by either the job seeker or the employer. These steps include the searching phase, application phase, the interview, background check, and the job offer (Cantora, 2015). The employer initiates the interview, background check, and job offer. Although participants cannot control the outcome of the background check or the job offer phases, they can influence the employment outcome during the interview phase.

Searching Phase

Obtaining a job within the first year of release is critical to reentry success. Cantora (2015) used a qualitative study to examine the job search experience of 33 work-release participants and identified barriers to employment. The researcher explored how participants prepared for the job market and identified the challenges they faced while searching for work (Cantora, 2015). During in-depth face-to-face interviews, work-release participants revealed their frustration and anxiety with the job search process. Many expressed the significance of having job leads for employers that were willing to hire people with criminal records (Cantora, 2015). The study revealed that the most significant resource a job seeker could have is access to a professional or social network. Participants with access to social networks found job opportunities and referrals from friends, family members, and past employers (Cantora, 2015). Access to a professional network is critical for individuals with minimal work experience and limited education. In the study by Cantora (2015), a participant that had access to professional networks found jobs faster than those who did not have access to a network.

Ex-offenders with limited access to professional networks benefited from employment centers that had job leads for employers that were willing to hire ex-offenders. Many participants' felt they wasted time applying for jobs with employers that were unwilling to hire anybody with a criminal record (Cantora, 2015). Access to jobs leads and employment counseling can ease the searching phase, especially for individuals who are unfamiliar with a geographical area.

Application Phase

Once a job seeker finds a career opportunity, the next step in the job search process is to complete an application and submit a resume. Currently, an overwhelming majority of companies utilize electronic hiring processes that require job seekers to submit resumes and applications online (Bigda, 2015). Access to the internet and a computer is essential for ex-offenders and is a personal constraint for individuals that lack these resources. Local libraries and some employment centers give patrons access to computer labs. Access to community resources helps ex-offenders who do not have access to personal computers at home.

Other constraints may be present during the application phase for states that have not implemented ban-the-box legislation. When an employer asks a person to disclose their criminal background during the application phase, that information can hinder the applicant's chance for a job interview (Moses, 2015). Expanding ban-the-box legislation helps ex-offenders "get their foot in the door" and minimizes the impact of the criminal record to some degree (Cerda et al., 2015; Moses, 2015, p. 16). For states that have implemented ban-the-box, it was assumed that more ex-offenders are receiving callbacks for an interview.

Interview Phase

Researchers conducted a study to measure the rate of callbacks for white and black ex-offenders with similar educational attainment and work history (Pager & Quillian, 2005). The study found that companies pursued fewer callbacks for African Americans, a statistically significant difference in businesses practice of hiring black ex-

offenders. About 61% of employers reported that they were "very likely" to hire a black

and white ex-offender (Pager & Quillian, 2005). In practice, companies only extended

interview offers 5% of the time to black ex-offenders and 17% of the time to white ex-

offenders (Pager & Quillian, 2005). The findings suggested that employers were not

honest about their hiring practices and that social stigmas may be blocking African

Americans from the interview phase. Swensen et al. (2014) reported that 63% of

employers felt more comfortable hiring an ex-offender after having open discussions

about the individual's criminal record during an interview. This fact reveals the

importance of the interview phase and the importance of training ex-offenders on how to

respond to employer's questions about their criminal past.

Background Checks

The literature on job search process describes the background checks as a

common barrier to employment for ex-offenders. A recent study found that "ex-offenders

were frequently kept from employment due to criminal background checks" (Nally et al.,

2014, p. 17). In states with ban-the-box laws, it appears that employers are now rejecting

ex-offenders later in the job search process, during the interview and background check

phases. There have been instances in which an employer has hired an individual with a

criminal record then retroactively terminated them after receiving the background check

results.

An employer offered a work-release participant a job in a receptionist in a dentist

office, then fired her after the background check results revealed the nature of her

criminal conviction (Cantora, 2015). The South Eastern Pennsylvania Transportation

Authority (SEPTA) hired a man then fired him after his background check results showed

that he committed a felony when he was as a juvenile (Moses, 2014). SEPTA terminated

the employee even though the crime occurred over 20 years ago even though no other

crimes were listed on the employee's record. Similarly, Ohio's legislature passed a bill in

2008 that mandated every public-school system perform background checks on all

employees. The state considered employees with any criminal convictions unfit for

employment and retroactively terminated employees that had certain criminal convictions

(Moses, 2014). The state penalized two employees that worked for over 20 years in the

school system and forced them into retirement after a background check revealed crimes

they committed over a decade ago (Moses, 2014).

Job Offer

Employment is a predictor of successful reentry. However, societal barriers such

as employer bias, public perception, and the stigma associated with certain types of

offenses have a more significant impact on an ex-offender's employability. Many

employers are apprehensive about hiring ex-offenders because of the unknown risks and

negative perception of co-workers, stakeholders, or customers. Ex-offenders are more

successful at securing jobs with past employers and those that are empathic and believe in

a second chance (Cantora, 2015).

The type of offense a person commits has a substantial impact on an employer's

hiring decision. Studies show that employers were more willing to offer jobs to non-

violent offenders (Cerda et al., 2015). A survey revealed that 76% of employers were

unwilling to hire a person that committed a violent crime and 88% were reluctant to hire

a person convicted a sex offense (Cerda et al., 2015). Within the violent crimes categories, companies were more likely to hire a person that committed property offenses versus offenders that committed crimes against people (Cerda et al., 2015). While a criminal record can affect a person's employability, work experience and education also influenced hiring decisions (Swenson, Rakis, Snyder, & Loss, 2014). Many ex-offenders received offers for low wage, entry-level jobs which they are overqualified (Cantora, 2015). Ex-offenders who found professional jobs had higher educational attainment and consistent work history (Cantora, 2015). Although securing professional work took longer than an entry-level job, skilled workers reported earning salaries above the minimum wage (Cantora, 2015).

Making Reentry More Efficient

Researchers classified reentering citizens as an "unstable group" because two-thirds return to jail within three years of release (Listwan et al., 2006, p.20). The quote infers that jail is not a sufficient means of rehabilitation. The consensus among reentry practitioners is that jail does not adequately prepared offenders to function as members of the community but socializes them to a life behind bars (Visher & O'Connell, 2012). The stigma associated with incarceration makes it difficult for offenders to achieve many reentry goals (Visher & O'Connell, 2012). Without community-based interventions, some offenders will not be able to overcome the challenges they will face upon release. Researchers suggest that successful reintegration depends on an ex-offender's ability to live a crime-free life (James, 2011).

Community collaboration is essential for reentry success. Many reentry organizations lack the resources to provide individualized reentry plans (Flower, 2013). Community collaboration and partnership can help overcome this barrier by facilitating resource sharing. The Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) formed a partnership with the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA). The MTA allows ex-offenders who are transitioning back into the community use an identification card provided by DPSCS to obtain free bus fare (Payne, 2007). Programs that lack housing, transportation, food, clothing, and healthcare service, help participants find needed amenities by collaborating with nearby social service organizations (CSGJC, 2013). Researchers found that 79% of successful reentry organizations reported establishing formal partnerships with other government, private, and nonprofit agencies (Vigne et al., 2008, pp.68). Duran (2007) suggested that organizations establish reentry advisory councils to communicate reentry needs, policy barriers, goals, and accomplishment. Advisory councils can increase the public's sense of worth regarding reentry missions and encourage broader political support (Duran, 2007).

Since the inception of the Second Chance Act, the demand for reentry services has continued to grow, but resources remain limited. Reentry programs deliver services based on the participant's level of risk. In Maryland, the reentry agenda focuses on delivering services to medium and high-risk offenders who have the highest risk of returning to jail (Flower, 2013). A reentry program in Los Angeles, California used inmates' level of risk and motivation to participate as a method to manage reentry resources (Flower, 2013). Many programs value an individual's level of commitment to

change. High-risk offenders that lack the motivation to change are not likely to benefit from reentry programming.

Summary and Gap in Literature

Unemployment is a predictor of recidivism, and about 60% of ex-offenders are out of work during the first year of release (Nally et al., 2014). Studies showed that individuals with legitimate jobs are less likely to commit a crime (Cerda et al., 2015). Employment allows individuals to contribute to the economy and having a meaningful job builds self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-worth (Latessa, 2012; Harding, Wyse, & Morenoff, 2014). Hiring ex-offenders is a vital part of public safety, lower recidivism rates, and reduced correctional costs. Many reentry programs focus on improving ex-offender's access to education, work release opportunities or transitional jobs that enhance their resumes (Cerda et al., 2015). Higher job qualifications increase an ex-offender's employability, but social, societal, and systematic barriers block their chance of securing a career.

Researchers are pushing for support for other policies that hold employers accountable for discrimination. Depending on the type of offense and severity of the crime some ex-offenders are denied housing, employment, and public assistance. Reentry advocates vying for support from the public and private sectors on second-chance initiatives to eliminate policies that perpetuate discriminate against ex-offenders. The rationale behind the second chance debate was the notation that formerly incarcerated individuals should not experience punishment after their time is served. Many ex-offenders felt like the stigma of having a criminal record is a lifetime punishment. Some

efforts have been made to provide employers incentives for hiring ex-offenders. The literature recommended expanding employer tax credits. For example, a company could earn up to a 2,400-dollar tax credit in individual states for hiring supplemental security income recipients through the Federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit (Vigne et al., 2008).

Criminal records negatively impacted employers' hiring decision. Employers were reluctant to hire ex-offenders because of potential liabilities (Nally et al., 2014). Reentry programs have formed pathways to employment, but more research is needed. Murray (2012) stated that employment must be viewed as the central spine to prisoner rehabilitation and supported by other interventions (p.27). A study revealed that having a job decreases the risk of recidivism by 30-50% (Murray, 2012). Researchers discovered that two out of three ex-offenders were unemployed at the time of incarceration, 13% of inmates never had a "paid job," and 68% believe that having a job lessens a person's engagement in crime activity (Murray, 2012, p.27). About 75% of ex-offenders were not able to find a job before leaving jail, and 21% managed to find employment after release (Murray, 2012).

The literature on reentry suggested that employment reduces ex-offenders risk of returning to jail because many criminals are unemployed at the time of arrested (Burt, 2014). A recent study showed that employment had the most significant influence on non-violent offenders' recidivism rates and this group had the highest rate of employability (Cerda et al., 2015). Successful reentry was dependent upon an ex-offender's access to employment, education, housing, and treatment (Harding et al., 2014). Researchers argued about the importance of expanding educational programs in

correctional facilities to help increase inmates level of employability (Harding et al., 2014; Cerda et al., 2015). Many reentry programs focused on increasing participants' employability but lacked services to help reduce other criminal risk factors such as substance abuse (Latessa, 2012).

Limited work opportunities exist for ex-offenders, and only one-third of the population manages to find a job after a conviction (Solinas-Saunders & Stacer, 2015). The stigma related to criminal records creates bias against the hiring ex-offenders. Employers reported that potential liabilities exist around hiring ex-offenders that can negatively impact the business' reputation (Solinas-Saunders & Stacer, 2015). Swenson and colleagues (2012) reported that 73% of companies request background checks so there are limited opportunities in which ex-offenders can land jobs without disclosing their criminal status. A significant portion of the research on reentry and employment focuses on preparing ex-offenders for work. Which includes preparing ex-offenders for interview questions that ask about their criminal background.

A gap exists in the literature on reentry and employment. A small portion of the literature focused on identifying immediate solutions to eliminate systematic constraints that hinder an ex-offender's ability to progress through the job search process. The literature suggested that there is a need to make the pathway to employment more efficient so that ex-offenders can find work within the first year of release (Wells, 2014). Studies have recommended that policymakers create incentives for employers to hire more ex-offenders. What is not discussed thoroughly in the literature is how ex-offenders overcome the social stigma and discrimination they experience in the labor market.

Drawing from Blessett and Pryor (2013), ex-offenders are invisible and absent from discussions about diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Since minorities, (particularly black males) are disproportionally affected by mass incarceration and unemployment in America (Morenoff & Harding, 2014), it is imperative for practitioners and researchers to begin to connect the challenges ex-offenders face finding work to specific stages in the job search process. This study intended to build that foundation and fill the gap in the literature using a qualitative case study. The study hoped to advance positive social change by giving reentry stakeholders and policymakers a better description of the challenges that are preventing ex-offenders from receiving job offers. Chapter 3 discusses the research design and rationale for the methodology of the study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

This study explored reentry practitioners' perceptions of constraints in the job search process for ex-offenders who were actively seeking employment. The study sought to identify barriers in the job search and to ascertain recommendations for how to make the process more efficient for ex-offenders. Chapter 3 discusses the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, the sampling strategy, and the participant recruitment strategy. The chapter also discusses the research instrument, data analysis plan, and the study's ethical procedures.

Research Design and Rationale

The following questions guided the focus of this study and encompassed themes that were not addressed in the available literature on reentry and employment:

R1. What do reentry practitioners perceive as the most difficult phase of the job search process for ex-offenders?

R2. What change is necessary to remove constraints in the job search process?

R3. What recommendations do reentry practitioners have on how to improve employment outcomes for ex-offenders?

The qualitative, descriptive case study approach was used to identify barriers that ex-offenders face during each stage of the job search. Based on the time and available resources, purposeful sampling was the most convenient strategy to recruit 30 reentry practitioners in Maryland and describe their perceptions of the phenomenon. Reentry practitioners consisted of case managers, service providers, advocates and program staff

and volunteers that had experience working with individuals with formerly incarcerated individuals. The study used an open-ended online survey to collect data

Role of the Researcher

This study used a researcher-developed open-ended survey instrument to gather data that addressed the guiding questions. In the role of the researcher, participants were recruited, and data were collected, coded, and analyzed. Personal bias was eliminated through member checks. No professional ties existed between the researcher and the participants. Each participant expressed understanding about the voluntary nature of the study and provided consent to participate. A stratified sample of reentry practitioners from different fields of practice was purposively selected to minimize sample bias.

Methodology

Reentry practitioners have experience providing transitional services and resources to formerly incarcerated individuals. Practitioners' understanding of constraints during ex-offenders' job search process lacks specificity in the academic literature. Reentry practitioners offer a variety of services to ex-offenders in diverse settings and have different opinions about employment barriers. This study used a purposeful sampling strategy to recruit participants from different reentry fields.

The stratified purposive sampling method provided a richer understanding of the research topic and accounted for the differences among participants (Robinson, 2014). Stratified sampling was ideal for recruiting participants in the following categories: (a) case manager, (b) service provider, (c) mentor, and (d) advocate. Although the study did not intend to generalize the findings, the controls were established for participants' gender

and filed of practice to eliminate sample bias. The participant sample included men and women as different employment barriers exist between genders.

The stratified purposive sampling method provided a richer understanding of the research topic and accounted for the differences among participants (Robinson, 2014). Stratified sampling was ideal for recruiting participants in the following categories: (a) case manager, (b) service provider, (c) mentor, and (d) advocate. Although the study did not intend to generalize the findings, the controls were established for participants' gender and filed of practice to eliminate sample bias. The participant sample included men and women as different employment barriers exist between genders.

Participant Selection

Recruitment fliers were emailed to reentry organizations, placed on community bulletin boards, emailed to reentry professionals listed in public directories, and posted on organizations' social media sites. The plan to advertise the recruitment announcement in local newspapers and on the radio was considered in instances when recruitment but not used. The participants in the study were self-identified professionals that had experience assisting formerly incarcerated individuals in Maryland with the reentry process. Surveys were only distributed to practitioners that expressed interest in participating in the study. Data was collect from individuals that provided informed consent to take the survey.

Sampling Strategy

According to Morse (2015), diverse samples require larger sample sizes, and researchers should achieve saturation before ending data collection. The sample for this study attracted a diverse subset to obtain a richer description about the phenomenon. The

study selected a sample of participants from similar fields of practice which confirmed

the need for smaller sample sizes for each group (see Table 1). Qualitative researchers

contended that data saturation is expected to be reached with a sample size of 3 to 6

participants for homogenous samples and 20-30 for heterogeneous (Palinkas, Horwitz,

Green, Wisdom, et al., 2013). This study aimed to recruit three to five participants for

each professional reentry category listed in Table 1.

Data saturation drives the data collection efforts in qualitative research. Saturation

means that no new themes or categories emerge from the data collection and researchers

can stop collection efforts (Robinson, 2014; Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, et al., 2013). Data

saturation was expected to be reached between 12 and 15 participants because the sample

was limited to reentry practitioners in Maryland. The study planned to collect and analyze

data until no new themes emerged from the survey responses and member checking

sessions.

Table 1

Participant Sample

Participant category	Men N=15	Women N=15
Reentry service provider	4	4
Reentry case manager	3	3
Reentry program staff or volunteer	4	4
Reentry advocate	4	4

Instrumentation

The survey instrument consists of a 10-question, self-administered electronic survey. A survey is an inexpensive tool that gathers data concurrently. Questionnaires are flexible tools and participants can take a survey online and send it electronically, or complete it in person, at home via mail or email, or over the telephone. The researcher designed the questionnaire then vetted it among reentry practitioners during a reentry hackathon in Washington, District of Columbia. Two academic professors on the researcher's dissertation committee peer-reviewed the final survey instrument.

During the hackathon, the researcher asked five reentry practitioners to give feedback on the research instrument. Each practitioner gave verbal feedback regarding the order of inquiry, reading ease, and time it took to respond. Practitioners also gave feedback on their preference for responding to the questions. All practitioners suggested that the researcher use an online survey versus a face-to-face interview for convenience. The practitioners estimated it would take about 45 minutes to complete the questionnaire, depending on the level of detail the respondent gives. Some practitioners felt that the original set of questions could be simplified.

The researcher reorganized the order of questions and used simpler vocabulary terms suggested by the peer reviewers. The purpose of using an open-ended survey is to collect detailed narrative style responses that address the guiding questions. The researcher used questions from an original intended semi-structured interview script and created an open-ended survey. Practitioners alluded to the fact that participants may rush through the interview due to time constraints and will not have a chance to respond

thoroughly to the questions. They also indicated that some case managers are bogged

down with casework and may not volunteer to interview during work hours but could

access a survey on their own free time. With this consideration in mind, the researcher

created an open-ended survey. The survey questions aligned with the study's guiding

questions and listed in Table 2 to confirm the instrument's sufficiency.

Table 2

Data Collection Table

Data collection table	
Guiding questions	Survey questions
R1. What do reentry practitioners perceive as the most difficult phase of the job search process for ex-offenders?	Q1. When searching for a job, what challenge(s) do ex-offenders (ex-offenders) face most often?
	Q2. Which phase(s) of the job search process do ex-offenders' have the most trouble completing successfully? Why? (1) Searching Phase (2) Application Phase (3) Interview Phase (4) Background Check (5) Getting a Job Offer
	Please explain your choice using as much detail as possible.
	Q3. Which phase(s) of the job search process do ex-offenders have greater success or ease completing? Why?
	(1) Searching Phase (2) Application Phase (3) Interview Phase (4) Background Check (5) Getting a Job Offer
	Please explain your choice using as much detail as possible.

	Q4. What challenges and constraints do ex-offenders face phase during the searching phase? Why?
	Q5. What challenges and constraints do ex-offenders face phase during the application phase? Why?
	Q6. What challenges and constraints do ex-offenders face phase during the interview phase? Why?
	Q7. What challenges and constraints do ex-offenders face phase during the background check phase? Why?
R2. What change is necessary to remove constraints in the job search process?	Q8. What challenges and constraints do ex-offenders face receiving a job offer? Why? Q9. Referring to your response to questions 2,4,5,6,7, and 8, what changes are needed to remove all constraints or challenges you identified in the job search process and improve employment outcomes for ex-offenders. Please explain your choice using as much detail as possible.
R3. What recommendations do reentry practitioners have for how to improve employment outcomes for ex-offenders?	Q10. Referring to your response to question 9, how should policymakers implement the changes you suggested?

Instrument Development

The motivation for creating a survey that explored reentry professionals perspective of constraints in the job search process originated during a reentry hackathon event held in Washington, D.C. The theme of the hackathon was re-building reentry. The purpose of the think-tank session was to brainstorm ways in which the reentry community could become more efficient at helping formerly incarcerated individuals transition back to successful members of the community. During a hackathon pitch, the

idea of developing a survey that explored reentry professionals' perspective of the employment challenges formerly incarcerated individuals was presented. The reentry coalition showed an overwhelmingly positive sense of support and many practitioners offered their assistance. Five coalition members extended an offer to review the survey instrument and provided feedback about the data collection method and the instrument. After considering the coalition's feedback that an online survey was selected as data collection instrument instead of semi-structured interviews.

Using TOC as the foundation, ten open-ended survey questions were developed. The survey questions concentrated on three topics derived from TOC's assumptions; what to change, what to change to, and how to change (Pretorius, 2014). No previously published survey instruments explored constraints during the job search process, so this study created a survey. Peer-reviews helped to establish the validity of the instrument.

During the reentry hackathon, the five reentry professionals provided verbal feedback on the relevance, clarity, readability, consistency, and soundness of the survey. The feedback influenced how the questions were organized and the vocabulary terms. The term ex-offender appeared throughout the original instrument. The researcher used the term "ex-offender" as an inclusive term, which included individuals with criminal records that did not served time in a penal institution for a criminal conviction. The term "returning citizen" referred to individuals with who served time in correctional facilities. The peer-reviewers provided feedback on how to distribute the survey instrument to the participants, via email invitation with a hyperlink that provides access to an online survey portal.

The final version of the survey had ten questions because the peer-reviewers felt that survey with more than ten questions would reduce participants' response rates. Since the study op-ed for a narrative response, the reviews took into consideration the time it would take to complete the survey and provide detailed responses without burdening participants. Four individuals examined the instrument to determine how long it would take to submit a response, which was estimated to be 45-minutes. The reviewers did not complete the survey but gave an educated guess based on the narrative response format. One review took the survey in 20 minutes. Therefore, the level of time it took to complete the survey was determined by the level of detail the responded provided. Two academic professors completed the final review to validate the instrument's ability to capture data to respond to the guiding questions. The dissertation committee were the reviewers for the final version of the survey tool (refer to Appendix A).

Research Procedures

The electronic survey instrument was accessible online via a survey site. To participate in the survey participants had to express their interest to participate and provide informed consent to online before proceeding to the questionnaire. The survey's cover page listed a statement about the purpose of the study, confidential nature of data collection, voluntary nature of participation, and ability to withdrawal without consequence. Participants will not disclose their name or any identifiable information on the survey. Part one of the survey asked participants to respond "yes" or "no" to the informed consent statement. Part two of the survey asked specific questions about practitioners perception of constraints during ex-offenders job search process.

Once participants have access to the survey link, they are asked to submit their responses within 48 hours of accessing the survey link. Data collection was expected to commence on a rolling basis, over the course of 60 days. After receiving the proper consent, the researcher sent participants that met the sampling criteria an email invitation with a hyperlink to the survey. Survey Monkey, an internet-based survey site, embedded a unique identifier in each participant. The survey remained open until the participant submitted his or her response. Once a participant submitted his or her survey response, the survey link was disabled. This level of security was implemented to prevent duplicate survey responses by the same participant. If a participant voluntarily withdrew from the study, rejected the invitation, or answered "no" to the informed consent question, and the survey site automatically deleted any responses or data from the participant from the database.

The survey data were electronically stored on Survey Monkey's website and accessed via a password-protected login portal. The survey submissions were analyzed on a rolling basis, and member-checking sessions were scheduled with participants within 72 hours of receiving their complete submission. After the data collection period closed, the responses were exported to a password protected cloud drive and stored for seven years. When the recruitment results did not yield 30 participants, attending public meetings, and reentry forums to discuss the research study was helpful in recruiting more participants.

Data Analysis Plan

The first phase of the data analysis plan consisted of examining each survey for completeness. The survey was the data collection source for each guiding question. The

peer-review process analyzed the survey to assure that each response would address the guiding questions. Before coding the data, survey responses were analyzed for completeness. A respondent could choose to skip a question. However, 7 of 10 question had to be answered for the survey to be complete. If a respondent was uncertain about the answer a question, he or she had the opportunity to provide a verbal response during the member-checking session.

Thematic coding.

The study used two thematic coding procedures, axial coding, and open coding. Opened-coding was used to develop the preliminary codes. Words and phrases were extracted directly from the text and codes were assigned line-by-line throughout the transcript (Thomas & Harden, 2008). Words and phrases that described various types of constraints in the job search process were highlighted with different colors. A codebook was used to store the preliminary codes, colors, and phases, and included notes about the meaning and source of each code.

The next phase of data analysis consisted of non-hierarchical axial coding. Axial coding grouped codes by similarities and difference and assigned themes and subthemes that described the subject (Koh, Lee, Tan, et al., 2014). After generating the themes and documenting where patterns occurred participants reentry classification organized the results. Text analysis software was used to identify word frequencies and to determine if a consensus was present. Qualitative studies are exploratory and use inductive reasoning (Trochim, 2006). The inductive analysis allows to the codes and themes emerge from the

data. The research findings answered the guiding questions and fit with the conceptual framework.

Issue of Trustworthiness

Researcher use our techniques to build trustworthiness and rigor in qualitative research; these strategies were credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Houghton et al., 2013). These techniques were adopted in this study. Members checks were applied to establish the credibility of the interpretations that emerged from participants' survey responses. Member checks helped confirm that the themes that emerged from the data depicted the respondents' perspectives.

Transferability, a method used to establish reliability, deals with other researchers' ability to apply the study's findings to a similar situation (Thomas, & Harden, 2008). The study's findings were triangulated against the most recent academic literature to determine if the results confirmed, disconfirmed or extending findings in similar reentry and employment studies. Descriptions regarding the data collection procedures, instrumented development, recruitment, and data analysis plans were outlined in the study to establish dependability and confirmability. Moreover, notes about research decisions, recruitment challenges, and factors that may impact bias were recorded in an audio reflexivity journal. Prior researchers used reflexivity journals to assure dependability and confirmability (Lub, 2015). The journal included a rationale behind how the data was analyzed, coded, and interpreted.

Ethical Procedures

Walden University's Institutional Review Board approved the procedures in this study before participant recruitment, and data collection activities commenced. Upon receiving IRB approval (Approval No. 04-11-17-0303846), a research flyer was disseminated to reentry organizations, community leaders, and practitioners in Maryland requesting participants. The flyer provided information about the purpose and subject of the case study, outlined who was eligible to participate, and how to contact the researcher to volunteer.

There were no concerns related to the recruitment materials. Individuals who expressed interest in the study provided their informed consent before taking the survey. Participants' understanding of the voluntary nature of the study and their ability to withdraw at any time was also confirmed. Data collected from participants were electronically stored on a password protected cloud drive that was only accessible by the researcher. Participants' confidentiality was maintained, and each was assigned a participant number that the study used to track and reference them.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

In summary, this study used qualitative methods to execute the case study. The study's research design consists of a descriptive case study that used purposeful sampling to recruit 20 reentry practitioners in Maryland. An open-ended, online survey instrument was used to collect data that addresses the study's guiding questions. Inductive analysis and thematic coding procedures were applied to collect, analyze, and code data. Member checks, triangulation, codebooks, and an audio reflexivity journal were used to establish

credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability of the research findings. The study upheld all ethical standards outlined by Walden University and maintained the confidentiality of the research participants. Chapter 4 describes and discusses the findings from the data collection.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This qualitative case study explored reentry professionals' perceptions of the constraints that individuals with criminal records face during the job search process. The job search process consists of five phases: the searching phase, the application phase, the interview, the background check, and the job offer. The research results addressed three guiding questions:

R1. What do reentry practitioners perceive as the most difficult phase in the job search process for ex-offenders?

R2. What change is necessary to remove constraints in the job search process?

R3. What recommendations do reentry practitioners have on how to improve employment outcomes for ex-offenders?

Chapter four outlines this study's research findings, setting, participant demographic, data collection and analysis results, evidence of trustworthiness, and summary.

Research Setting

The data collection setting varied since reentry professionals had the liberty to complete the online survey without the presence of the research in a location that was personally convenient. Participants were able to take the survey at home, at work, at a public location, in transit, or during their leisure. The survey was accessible via a computer or mobile device and required participants to have access to the internet. Reentry professionals received an email invitation with a unique link to the Survey Monkey database.

Survey responses were not limited to a specific set of words or characters. Participants responses varied from a few words to a few paragraphs. The quality and breadth of participants' responses also varied. Some practitioners listed their responses in bullet format or textese, while others used formal essay style sentence structure or story-telling. During the member-check, participants clarified if they completed the survey on a computer or mobile device. The device the participant chose to use seemed to influence the quality of their survey responses. For example, participants that used listing or textese in their responses completed the survey on a mobile device at work, in transit, or in a location where they experienced interruptions. Participants that used formal sentence structure completed the survey on a computer in a location where they were not exposed to many distractions. Participants' knowledge, experience, and passion about a subject in a survey question seemed to affect the breadth of their responses. Based on the member checks, participants with uncertain views or limited knowledge regarding a topic in a survey question abbreviated their responses. Reentry professionals that were well-informed or had personal experience with a topic in a question gave lengthier responses and examples to illustrate their view. Internal factors such as work schedules, personal availability, and passion for the research topic appeared to influence a reentry professional's decision to participate in the survey and the member-checking session. About seventy percent of the participants attempted the survey. Sixty percent completed the survey, and fifty percent completed the survey and member check session. The average response time to complete the survey was 15 minutes.

The member check consisted of a 15–20-minute, researcher-led phone conversion regarding reentry professionals' survey responses. Participants who did not participate in the member check had scheduling conflicts or no availability to participate in a phone call. During the member check, survey respondents had the opportunity to expound on their survey response and provide more clarity regarding a probing question. The purpose of the member check was to validate the initial codes, themes, and research assumptions that emerged from coding participants' survey submissions.

Organizational conditions did not appear to influence participants' experience or involvement at the time of the study. However, conditions such as caseloads, government furloughs, and the size of an organization's staff influenced the study's ability to recruit practitioners. External influence such the state's political climate influenced reentry experts' recommendations on increasing employment (referenced in survey questions 9 and 10). Several reentry professionals cited pending legislation that Maryland policymakers should support such as banning-the-box on college applications, bail reform, automatic expungement, and transportation expansion bills. During the member checks, a couple of participants discussed their desire to lobby the Maryland General Assembly for support regarding the policy resolutions they recommended in responses to questions related to improving employment outcomes for ex-offenders.

Demographics

The study attempted to recruit 40 research participants. Only 30 reentry professionals agreed to participate in the study and complete the survey. Of the 30 practitioners, 17 were females, and 13 were males. All participants were adults (age 18 or

older). Race, age, education, and socioeconomic status were not relevant to the guiding

questions, so the study did not collect that data. The demographic data that was relevant

to addressing the guiding questions was collected via the participant application and

recorded in Table 3 (Participant Sample).

Table 3

Participant Sample

Participant category (N) = 30	Men (N) =13 Missing = 7	Women (N) = 17 Missing = 3
Service provider	3, *(-2)*	4, *(-1)*
Case manager	3, *(-2)*	5
Reentry program staff or volunteer	2, *(-3)*	3, *(-2)*
Reentry advocate	5	5

Each participant recruited to the study identified themselves as a reentry

professional that either worked or volunteered in Maryland and had experience assisting

ex-offenders with the reentry process. These reentry practitioners had a diverse set of

experiences that ranged from policy advocacy, program administration, case

management, and reentry service providers. Of the 13 male participants, 5 were reentry

advocates, 2 were reentry program staff, 3 were reentry service providers, and 3 were

reentry case managers. Of the 17 female participants, 5 were reentry advocates, 4 were

reentry service providers, 3 were reentry program staff, and 5 were reentry case

managers.

The reentry advocates were mostly volunteer workers for non-profit organizations

and non-partisan alliances. The reentry advocates were primarily responsible for

garnering legislative support around criminal justice policy reform and finding ways to minimize the collateral effects of incarceration. The advocates' primary agenda focused on finding ways to increase returning citizens' access to employment, housing, education, healthcare, and food.

The reentry program staff volunteered as mentors or were paid to assist residential and non-residential reentry programs in some capacity. The reentry program staff were responsible for administering transitional housing, work release, and ensuring that incarcerated clients had access to resources as they prepared for release from a facility. The reentry service providers worked for state-sponsored or nonprofit reentry organizations that provided direct services to individuals with criminal records. The reentry services offered include job placement, education and training, substance abuse treatment, faith-based counseling, money management, expungement and other legal aid, and mentorship.

Finally, case managers worked for nonprofit, state, local, or municipal organizations. The case managers were responsible for managing ex-offenders probation or parole requirements and monitored their progress finding stable housing and employment. Although participants' field of reentry practice varied, patterns and trends still emerged from their survey responses during the data collection and analysis phase.

Data Collection

The study attempted to recruit 40 reentry professionals in Maryland to take part in an online survey. The survey asked questions about reentry professionals view on the challenges that ex-offenders face through the job search process. Data collection began

on April 27, 2017 and concluded on December 23, 2017. Recruitment flyers were disseminated to reentry organizations via email, at public meetings, and posted social media sites. A total of 30 study participants were recruited and consented to take the online survey.

Of 30 practitioners, the study collected data from 28 participants. Three participants voluntarily withdraw due to non-responsiveness. Of the participants that attempted the survey, 20 submissions were received. Eight surveys were incomplete and therefore excluded from the results. Survey submissions that did not meet the 70% response threshold (7 of 10 questions answered) were incomplete. Of the 20 respondents that completed the survey, 15 participated in the member checking session. The study reached data with the first 12 participants. Data saturation was determined when no new codes, categories, or patterns emerged from the survey response and member checks. The findings from the 12 respondents that completed the questionnaire and member check made up the study's research results.

The survey was self-administered and accessible via a link to Survey Monkey's website. Participants received an email or social media invitation to provide informed consent and a link to access the questionnaire. Data from the survey responses were electronically collected on a rolling basis for approximately eight months. The survey asked ten questions. Consent was embedded into the first survey question and gathered at the time the participant opened the email invitation. Of the remaining items: two were multiple choice, and eight were open-end and required a narrative response. The

questions focused on recognizing the constraints ex-offenders experienced during each phase of the job search process and how to remove obstacles in the process.

The member check sessions were scheduled via email within 72 hours of receiving a survey submission. The conversations took place via phone and lasted about 20 minutes. During each call, participants were debriefed then asked a series of probing questions to expound on their answers and survey experience. The member check was not mandatory. Shorthand notes were recorded and converted to an audio file for the reflectivity journal.

The study experienced a slight change in the data collection plan presented in Chapter 3. Initially, the survey tool was expected to remain open until participants submitted their responses. Once a participant sent their submission, the survey link was disabled so practitioners could not revise their responses. During data collection, participants revealed that the survey format displayed differently on mobile devices versus a computer. Participants that used a mobile device to complete the survey could only view one question at a time. Participants that took the survey on a computer device could see all the survey questions on the first screen. Participants that used mobile devices had to click "next" for the computer to direct them to the next question. During the member check, some participants that use mobile devices reported prematurely clicking the "submit" button before answering all survey questions. Participants could not access the questionnaire once the survey was submitted, so the settings were revised to allow participants to revise their response after submission. Survey access was disabled once the data collection phase was complete.

Data Analysis

Data analysis occurred in three phases on a rolling basis as participants completed the survey and member checks. Before coding the data, each survey was analyzed for completeness and either included or excluded from the data analysis. A survey was complete if participants responded to at least 7 of 10 questions. Respondents had the opportunity to provide a verbal response to unanswered questions during the member check session. If a participant's survey was incomplete, they received a reminder email to complete the survey. If the participant's final submission was incomplete, the survey was not included in the study's results.

The next phase of the data analysis consisted of open-coding. Each completed survey response was coded line-by-line via the text analysis software that was available through a paid Survey Monkey web subscription, then exported to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. A word or phrase, and color code was used to highlight the overall theme that emerged from a participant's response to the survey questions. The overall all themes consisted of a description of significant constraints in ex-offenders job search process. Member checks helped validate the initial codes that emerged from the survey responses. During the member checks, participants confirmed if the interpretations were correct, or provided clarification regarding their responses to inform the development of an accurate code. A codebook was created to list the initial codes and incorporated any revisions.

The third data analysis phase involved thematic coding. Survey Monkey's text analysis software detected patterns in the coded survey responses and showed the word frequency. Axial coding was used to compare themes that emerge from the data. The

codes were categorized, color-coded, then grouped by subject. The source of each code, theme, and color, was included in the research findings and recorded in the codebook.

Research Codes

Each completed survey response was analyzed and coded individually. The first survey question (Q1) obtained reentry professionals' consent to participate in the study. Each practitioner that expressed interest in the study consented to take the survey and participate in the member check. The next set of survey questions (Q2-Q8) explored descriptions of ex-offenders job search process constraints. The last two questions (Q9-Q10) consisted of practitioners' recommendations on removing the identified constraints and improving ex-offenders employment outcomes. Table 4 (Constraints) highlight the codes, categories, and themes that emerged from data collected on each survey questions.

Table 4

Constraints

Survey question/code explanation	Code	Category	Theme
Q2- Most problematic job search phase	Background check Searching phase Application phase Interview Job offer	Personal External External Personal Environmental	Criminal record Willing employers Screening out Explaining past Stigma
Q3-Least problematic job search phase	Job offer Searching phase Application phase Interview	Personal Personal Personal Personal	Accepting offer Access to leads Access to computer Preparedness

Q4-Searching Phase constraints	Criminal record	Personal	Self-doubt
	Willing	External	Second
	employer	Personal	chance
	Job leads	Personal	Professional
	Limited	Personal	Network
	resources		Access to
	qualifications		Resources
			Training
			Education
Q5-Application phase constraints	Limited	Personal	Access to
	resources	Personal	resources
	computer	Personal	Training
	savvy	Personal	Education
	Literacy	Environmental	Resume prep
	Poor resume	External	Stigma
	Criminal		Employer
	record		bias
	screening-out		
Q6-Interview phase constraints	Interview skill	Personal	Training
	Appearance	Personal	Education
	Employer bias	External	Self-Doubt
			Stigma
Q7-Background check phase constraints	Criminal record	Environmental	Stigma
		External	Risk/fear
	Employer bias	External	Second
	Screening-out		chance
Q8-Job offer phase constraints	Transportation	Environmental	Improve
	Will take	Personal	public transit
	anything	Environmental	Job
	Low wages	Personal	placement
	Job readiness		$15
			minimum
			wage
			Education
Q9-Recommendations to remove constraints	Create	External	Job
	partnerships	External	placement
	Job center	Personal	Information
	location	Environmental	hubs
	Access to		Collaboration
	resources		Second
	Employer		chance
	incentives		
Q10-Recommendations to policy makers	Enforce ban-the-box	Environmental	Improve
		Environmental	enforcement

	Environmental	Automatic
Record Shielding	External	expungement
$15 minimum wage	External	Increase minimum wage
Fund the red line		Improve Public Transit
Appropriate funds from the Justice Reinvestment Act		Allocate funding to improve employment outcomes

The first survey question (Q2) asked reentry practitioners to identify the most problematic phase(s) in the job search process. The codes that emerged from the data included the background check phase, the searching phase, the application phase, the interview phase, and the job offer phase. All the survey respondents identified the background check as the most problematic phase of the job search process for individuals with a criminal record. One respondent stated that "once an employer finds out that you have a record, they do not want to hire you." The most frequently cited word was "record" (criminal record).

Several respondents described the impact of a criminal record, the stigma associated with a criminal conviction, its impact on employers perception. One respondent mentioned that some employers require applicants "to pass the background check" as a prerequisite for employment consideration, and "felony convictions disqualify many applicants from employment consideration" (P12). Another participant stated that "the details regarding a crime can negatively impact hiring managers perception of the job applicant" (P2). Although most participants cited the background

check as the most problematic phase of the job search process, a couple of practitioners described more than one job search phase as problematic.

About 50% of the respondents identified the Searching Phase as problematic, and 30% described the Application Phase as problematic. Several respondents indicated that access to a computer and the internet made the searching and applying for a job difficult. More than half of the respondents cited computer literacy as a challenge. One participant stated, "unless individuals have access to a computer course while incarcerated, the ability to efficiently and effectively apply for jobs in industries that are becoming increasing online driven is difficult" (P4). A few practitioners viewed access to an email address as problematic for the application, interview, and job offer phases since having an email address if a requirement when applying for jobs online. Practitioners cited limited access to a phone or email address as a limitation because it hinders an employer's ability to contact the job seeker to extend an invitation to interview or discuss an employment offer. About 20% of the respondents described the interview and job offer phases as problematic.

The third survey question asked reentry professionals to identify the least problematic phase(s) in the job search process for individuals with criminal records. The codes that emerged from the data were the job offer, searching, application, and interview phases. Approximately 80% of participants described the job offer as the least challenging phase of the job search process. Most respondents stated that accepting an offer of employment was the least challenging part of the job search process and only required an applicant's confirmation and acceptance of the employment terms. One

reentry practitioner argued that although the job offer is the least challenging part of the job search process, "jobs are only offered to those that are employable" (P6).

A few respondents acknowledged that receiving a job offer meant the applicant "overcame extreme obstacles and was able to secure a job despite having a criminal record" (P7). Another practitioner talked about the impact receiving job offers have on formerly incarcerated job seekers; "the excitement of receiving a job offer tends to propel the job seeker into a positive, confident, and energized frame of mind" (P10). Reentry professionals described the searching (20%), application (20%), and interview phases (20%) as achievable with the proper training, education, and resources. No practitioner described the background check phase (0%) as being least problematic.

The next set of survey questions (Q4 through Q8) asked reentry professionals to describe constraints that were present in each job search phase. Each survey question focused on a subsequent phase of the process, and data were analyzed independently. Question Q4 asked reentry professionals to describe the challenges that job seekers with criminal records face during the searching phase. Five codes emerged from reentry practitioners' responses, which described the limitations that formerly incarcerated individuals experience while searching for work. These codes included criminal record, willing employers, job leads, qualifications, and limited resources.

A consensus was present in participants' statements concerning the limited opportunities that exist for job seekers with criminal records. Reentry professionals described limited job opportunities as a constraint. Employers unwillingness to hire individuals with criminal records contributed to this challenge. Reentry professionals

argued that very few employers promote the fact that they hire individuals with criminal records. Participants described instances in which some employers will post announcements that state "all applicants must pass a background check for consideration" but do not reveal what is considered "passing." As a result, job seekers become discouraged and do not apply because they assume that they will fail the background check. Practitioners called statements like "required to pass a background check" as inequitable and a way to circumvent ban-the-box laws. One practitioner asserted that "statements such as these have the same chilling effect as checking the box" (P7).

Since some markets prohibit employers from hiring applicants felony convictions, reentry professionals described job seekers in this category as uncertain about what career path to pursue. According to participants, many formerly incarcerated citizens do not possess the level of education, skill, and experience needed to qualify for jobs that pay more than a minimum wage. Practitioners described limited access to job leads and the lack of knowledge about which employers are willing to hire applicants with records as a constraint.

Reentry professionals contend that there is a firm reliance on community resources, reentry programs, and employment development centers. However, many programs have outdated employer listservs and lack market diversity with job leads. One reentry professional contended that "there is not much diversity with job opportunities" (P11). The participant reported that ex-offenders typically secure physically challenging jobs in the construction, commercial driving, warehouse stocking, public sanitation management, janitorial, landscaping, or fast food service industries. Reentry programs are

eager to find employers in professional and sedentary industries that are willing to hire individuals with a criminal past.

Participants noted that job seekers who are preparing for release from correctional facilities have the most significant difficulty searching for jobs while incarcerated. Reentry experts called access to the internet and a computer non-existent behind bars. Participants also considered limited resources such as access to a phone, email address, and an appropriate mailing as job search constraints. Online searches engines require applicants to register before applying for a vacancy announcement. According to participants applicants must have an active email address to register and create employment profiles. Practitioners cited limited resources as constraints in the searching and application phases.

The next survey question (Q5) asked reentry professionals to describe the constraints that ex-offenders face during the application phase. Six codes emerged from the data which include limited resources, computer savvy, literacy, poor resume, employment gap, and criminal record. The most frequently cited phrase practitioners used to describe the constraints during the application phase was "access to a computer," which was categorized as a limited resource. Participants also cited computer savvy as a constraint during the application phase and described formerly incarcerated individuals as unaccustomed to apply for jobs online.

Survey respondents described computer access and internet access as critical components of the application phase because most 21 century employers only accept job applications online. Some employers allow applicants to print the online job application

and email or fax the necessary documents, but access to a computer network is still needed to print, email, and or fax the documents. Reentry professionals also related employment gaps, marginal educational attainment, and poor resumes to constraints during the application phase. Participants drew attention to the need to train inmates about how to create a functional resume before release.

A few survey respondents cited literacy is a common constraint among formerly incarcerated individuals who did not finish high school. Reentry professionals contended that employers assess applicants communication skills by how well they prepare a resume and respond to the application and interview questions. Reentry professionals argued that applicants with numerous employment gaps and no high school education not desirable candidates in competitive labor industries. As a result, poor resumes were coded as a constraint during the application phase.

Reentry practitioners described employment gaps as a constraint that steamed from imprisonment. During the application phase employers ask questions to screen-out unfavorable applicants. Questions that ask applicants to disclose information about their criminal before being offered an interview violate ban-the-box laws and were coded as constraints during the application phase. Reentry professionals described questions that ask job seekers to explain their employment gaps as a constraint during the application phase. Reentry advocates suggested questions such as these force applicants that disclose their incarceration status during the application phase, and as a result, formerly incarcerated job seekers are screened-out of employment consideration and not offered an opportunity to interview for the job. Reentry advocates describe pre-screening

employment questions as a way for employers to circumvent the ban-the-box law.

Practitioners also described job seekers that served a significant sentence (5 years or

more) as inclined to lie about their incarcerated status for fairer employment

consideration.

The next survey question (Q6) asked practitioners to describe constraints that

individuals with criminal records face during the interview phase. Three codes that

emerged from the data which include appearance, employer bias, and interview skills.

Respondents cited interview skills the most common constraints during the interview

phase. Reentry professionals described interview skills as having confidence, poised body

language, eye contact, a firm handshake, assertiveness, concise communication, and

abstaining from the use of slang words.

Several practitioners reflected on the ability to explain one's criminal past in a

way that would bring about employer remorse and not bias. One practitioner stated that

one must "explain past mistakes in a way that does not create a negative impression"

(P6). Another respondent mentioned that importance of mastering the ability to discuss

one's criminal past and drawing attention to the lessons learned and not the criminal act.

Participants noted the importance of being specific about their skills, qualifications, how

they changed, and what makes them an excellent candidate for employment.

Physical appearance was defined as a constraint during the interview phase.

Practitioners associated physical appearance with professional attire and good hygiene

(groomed hair, skin, nails, and teeth). One practitioner specified that employers establish

perceptions of applicants within 30 seconds of the interview. According to reentry service

providers, applicants that have overcome drug addiction or homelessness may have visible scarring, missing teeth, and do not own a suit. Job seekers with prior gang affiliations may have inappropriate body tattoos on their body face, arms, legs, hands, or neck. Reentry professionals argued that employers associate outward presentation with personal professionalism. Employer bias, the third constraint, was described as a generalization about a job seeker's character. Participants argued that employers assumptions about individuals with criminal records stem from social stigmas and personal knowledge or interactions with the applicant.

Survey question Q7 asked reentry professionals to describe the constraints during the background check phase. Three codes emerged from the data (criminal record, stigma, and screening-out). Reentry professionals described criminal records as a constraint that limited the kinds of jobs that are available to ex-offenders. Specific laws prohibit convicted felons from obtaining state licenses that are needed in some job industries. Depending on the type of crime a person committed, employers can legally screen-out applicants with qualifying records from job opportunities in schools, hospitals, and vulnerable populations such as children or the elderly. One practitioner stated that "felony convictions eliminate many jobs" (P10).

Survey respondents suggested that although a job seeker's criminal offense may not be relevant to the duties of the job they are seeking, the stigma of having a record overshadows the applicant's skills. As a result, qualified applicants with unfavorable background check results are screened-out. Three reentry advocates shed light on the fact that some employers have been known to hire a person with a record, then fire them once

the background check results are received. One advocate told a story about a client that was charged with a crime when he was 16 years old, and even though the applicant was never convicted the employer still fired him because the charged showed up on the background check. About half of the reentry advocates surveyed described similar accounts of employers conducting internal background checks via public record searches and did not consider the conviction results. Reentry professionals noted that many applicants are inadvertently screened-out of the job search process because employers misconstrue public records and do not take into consideration if the criminal charges were dropped, dismissed, or overturned.

Several reentry professionals shared stories about instances in which an employer would hire an applicant as a full-time employee then reduce the employee to part-time hours because of the background check results. Since that the need for employment is so high among ex-offenders, practitioners believe that the fear of rejection compels some job seekers to lie about their criminal past. Reentry professionals are concerned that employers are not willing to look beyond an applicant's criminal past and view them as a liability or risk.

Survey question Q8 asked reentry professionals to describe the constraints that job seekers with criminal records face during the job offer phase. Four codes emerged from the data which include the willingness to accept anything, job readiness, transportation, and low wages. Low wages, transportation, and job readiness were the most frequently cited constraints during the job offer phase. A consensus was present among participants concerning how difficult it was for ex-offenders to secure a decent

job offer. Since applicants with criminal records do not frequently matriculate to the job

offer phase and employment is a requirement for some ex-offenders, many are "willing to

accept anything" for the sake of having a job. Survey participants claimed that self-doubt

and the lack of bargaining power cause applicants with criminal records to accept jobs

that pay low wages, no benefits, and no opportunity for advancement.

"Low wages" was cited as a constraint in 20% of the responses regarding the job

offer phase. Respondents associated low wages with the inability to secure basic needs

such as food, clothing, shelter, healthcare, and transportation. Reentry advocates believe

that an acceptable living wage is $15 per hour for full-time workers and assert that

individuals who make less than a living wage cannot maintain the basic standard of living

in Maryland. Reentry service providers described low wages as a collateral effect of

incarceration and a barrier to job retention especially for individuals who are returning

home from correctional facilities and have no income on reserve. Practitioners argue that

many ex-offenders cannot afford to purchase the identity documents they will need to

initiate the employment process this includes copies of birth certificates and state

identification cards.

Inadequate public transportation was another frequently cited constraint

associated with a job offer. Reentry service providers asserted that access to

transportation is overlooked as a barrier to employment and is perpetuated by low wages.

Many companies located in rural and suburban areas are not easily accessible by public

transit lines. Reentry advocates recalled stories about clients whose commute from the

inner city to the suburbs via public transportation exceeded 3 hours each way. Reentry

case managers described the challenge that applicants with have no income reserves have finding ways to supplement the cost of transportation during the first two weeks of employment while awaiting the first paycheck.

Job readiness was the final challenge described in the job offer category. Practitioners related social skills, technology savvy, and the ability to perform the duties of the position to job readiness. Participants viewed applicants incarcerated for 5-10 years as non-proficient with today's technology. As a result, ex-offenders lack essential skills such as interpersonal skills, proficiency in computer software, and the ability to multitask (P11). A reentry advocate that was a former ex-offender noted that "you lose so much time in lock-up, while in jail they do not spend time showing you the most recent technology " (P1).

Survey question Q9 inquired recommendations reentry professionals had for removing the constraints they described in questions Q2 through Q8. The four codes that emerged from practitioners' responses which include creating partnerships, expanding access to employment development centers, improving access to resources, and employer incentives. The primary constraint that individuals with criminal records face during the searching phase is finding employers that were willing to hire them. Some reentry programs and employment centers developed relationships with "ex-offender friendly" employers and provide job referrals for individuals who meet the employment qualifications. Reentry case managers and service providers reported that there is a lack of job diversity and not enough employer partnerships to satisfy the demand. There is a

need to expand partnerships, so reentry organizations have access to job lead for employers in every industry.

The primary constraint that ex-offenders encounter during the application and interview phases is a lack of skills, qualifications, or preparation to market themselves as viable candidates for a job. Reentry professionals believe that existing employment development centers should expand their reach or new nonprofits should emerge to focus solely on employment. One participant noted that organizations should consider creating satellite offices or information hub in community spaces such as libraries, motor vehicle facilities, social services buildings, malls, or co-work spaces need social security and vital records offices, and shopping centers (P11). Reentry professionals also believe that employment centers should create interactive courses on resume development, interview preparedness, computer courses, social skills course, and provide job counselors that work exclusively with the ex-offender population.

The primary challenge that ex-offenders encounter during the background check phase is the stigma associated with having a record. Reentry professionals believe that employer incentives and marketing are needed to encourage more industries to adopt the second chance mindset. According to participants, employers are concerned about the potential risk of hiring a person with a criminal background. Practitioners recommend the state provide education and marketing around the protections that employers may qualify for such free fidelity bonds and immunity from negligent hiring lawsuits (P9). Reentry advocates also support tax credits for employers that hire individuals with criminal records.

The fundamental constraint impacting the job offer phase is access to resources such as professional attire, transportation, and education. Reentry professionals agree that better marketing, community collaboration, and information sharing needs to be done by organizations that provide aid to the ex-offender population. Some organizations have difficulty meeting the demand for service while others have difficulty connecting to the population that can benefit from their services. Reentry advocates and service providers agree that more information sharing is needed across the reentry community so that no citizens are turned away or left behind.

The last survey question (Q10) asked reentry professionals to provide recommendations to policymakers on improving ex-offenders employment outcomes. Six codes emerged from the data which include better enforcement of ban-the-box laws, record shielding, automatic expungement, increasing the minimum wage, centralized job centers, and funding to support reentry and employment initiatives. To address the constraints related to the background check phase practitioners offered recommendations on improving ban-the-box enforcement.

Ban-the-Box laws prohibit employers from collecting information about an applicant's criminal history before the interview phase. Reentry professionals shed light on ways employers circumvent the law by asking similar questions such as explanations for employment gaps. Practitioners referenced the fact that ban-the-box laws prohibit employers from inquiring about criminal convictions and arrest records, but no provisions exist that prevent an employer from asking questions that may cause a person to reveal information about their formerly incarcerated status. The most cited example was

inquiring about applicants' employment gaps. Individuals will experience gaps in employment if they remain incarcerated.

Ban-the-box laws also prohibit employers from conducting criminal background checks before the first interview. Reentry advocates contend that there is no way to prevent an employer from conducting a public record search which produces similar results. Reentry advocates recommend that lawmakers pass legislation to implement record shielding. Reentry advocates are lobbying lawmakers to pass automatic record expungement laws for qualified in which charges were overturned, dismissed, or withdrawn. Also, advocates hope to establish bills that will shorten the timeframe in which qualified records are expungable.

To address constraints related to the job offer phase, reentry professionals provided recommendations related to increasing the minimum wage. For the past two years, advocates across Maryland have been working on the "Fight for 15" campaign to encourage lawmakers to vote on a bill that will increase the minimum wage from $9.75 to $15.00 per hour by 2022. Reentry program staff and advocates believe that the current wage limits in Maryland do not reflect the cost of living. Practitioners report that more than half their reentry program participants live below the federal poverty line.

The second recommendation reentry professionals provided to address job offer constraints was creating more efficient public transit routes in low-income communities. According to reentry advocates and case managers, the current transportation structure in Maryland does not provide efficient access to job hubs in suburban areas (P1, P11, P12). Access to efficient transportation is essential for keeping a job. Reentry professionals

hope that Maryland lawmakers will find a way to fund the Red Line transportation plan, a project that was created to expand Maryland's light rail train system from the inner city of Baltimore to suburban districts. Governor Larry Hogan canceled the red line rail transportation expansion plan and replaced it with the City Link bus expansion plan. Reentry advocates argued that City Link made Baltimore's mass transit problem worse. Practitioners reported that access to buses became more efficient in affluent communities in and less efficient in low-income communities. Participants' defined efficient transportation as the time it took to commute to and from work.

The final recommendation reentry professionals provided to address constraints in the job search process was funding to increase job opportunities for the ex-offender population. The Maryland Generally Assembly passed the Justice Reinvestment Act, a bi-partisan bill to "improve public safety, reduce correctional costs, and reinvest savings in evidence-based strategies to reduce crime and recidivism"(Governor's Office of Crime Control & Prevention, 2017, para. 1). The law became effective on October 1, 2017. Practitioners would like to see a portion of the reinvestment funds explicitly used toward increasing ex-offenders' employment outcomes. Reentry professionals believe more funds can be used to improve access to training, employment development, computers, resume prep, and job readiness. Several practitioners suggested that the state distribute funding in the form of grants to new and existing reentry organizations that are providing the necessary resources and services.

Category and Themes

Each code described in Table 4 fell into one of three categories, which described the type of constraints that job seekers with criminal records encounter throughout the job search process. The categories that emerged from the data were: personal constraint, external constraint, and environmental constraints. The categories were obtained based on the themes that emerged from participants' survey responses. To illustrate the type of constraints each category was assigned a color (green, yellow, or red). The colors depict a traffic light, a metaphor that was used by a reentry service provider to describe the pace that ex-offenders are matriculating through the job search process.

The traffic light theme is relevant to eliminating bottlenecks or congestion in a systematic process. Traffic lights were created to facilitate movement and manage the orderly flow of traffic. According to the study's conceptual framework, when stakeholders apply solutions to constraints in the systematic process, it helps to facilitate movement. The traffic light metaphor illustrates how barriers slow down or impeded ex-offenders ability to advance from the searching phase to the job offer phase. Table 5 (Types of Constraints) exemplifies the themes that emerged from the data concerning the types of job search process constraints.

Table 5

Types of Constraints

Red category	Yellow category	Green category
Environmental constraints	External constraints	Personal constraints

Limitations controlled by societal forces such as: social stigmas, the second chance mindset, minimum wages, and the risk associated with criminal records.	Limitations controlled by outside forces such as: employer bias, fear, screening-out, unwilling employers, low wages, and access to resources.	Limitations controlled by the individual such as: self-doubt, lack of educations, limited skills and qualifications, lack of job readiness, interview preparedness, having a criminal record, and limited resources.
Impacts the background check and interview phases.	Impacts the application, interview, and background check phases.	Impacts the searching, application, and interview phases.

In the first set of survey question (Q3-Q6), reentry professionals described the several constraints as personal limitations. Personal limitations such as self-doubt, lack of education, limited skills and qualifications, lack of job readiness, interview preparedness, criminal record, and limited resources were coded as personal constraints and color-coded green. Constraints assigned to the green category were viewed by participants as somewhat easy to overcome with access to resources. Green represents movement and job seekers can individually overcome personal constraints with access to resources. Practitioners described most of the limitations impacting the searching, application, and interview phases as personal constraints.

The constraints described by practitioners in the second set of survey questions (Q2, Q7, and Q9), were controlled by external forces and defined as external constraints. Codes assigned to the external constraint category were viewed as somewhat difficult to change, and participants perceived the solution to be dominated by external forces. Job seekers can influence external forces through personal interaction and persuasion and improve their ability to move from the application phase to the interview phase.; therefore, this category was color-coded yellow. Many of the limitations described during the application, interview, and background check phases were external constraints.

The source of the constraints described in the third set of survey questions (Q8 and Q10) occurred based on societal forces that were beyond the job seekers control. Participants recognized societal barriers such as stigma, risk, fear, minimum wage, inefficient public transportation, and access to resources as environmental constraints. Participants viewed the codes assigned to the environment constraint category as difficult and sometimes impossible to change without building coalitions around a policy resolution. Since environmental constraints can change over time and are dependent on public perception, social norms, and political or economic conditions, the category was color-coded red. Practitioners viewed the limitations impacting the job offers and the background checks as environmental constraints.

Discrepant Cases

Upon analyzing practitioners' response to questions Q4 through Q10, the descriptions regarding the constraints that ex-offenders encounter during the job search process were conforming. Discrepant cases were present in participants' response to

questions Q2 and Q3. When describing the most problematic phase of the job search

process, 60% of participants were able to narrow down their response to one phase (the

background check). Thirty percent of participants described two or more phases in the job

search process as problematic, which included the background check phase. The

remaining 10% selected every phase in the job search process as problematic, which also

included the background check phase. Although some participants described more than

one phase in the job search process as problematic, the discrepant cases still validated the

pattern citing the background check as the most problematic. The discrepant cases also

broadened the scope of analysis and revealed the fact that some reentry professionals

view multiple job search process phases as equally problematic.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

To confirm credibility and ensure the research findings were supported by the

data, triangulation and members checks were performed. During the member checks,

participants responded probing questions to verifying the validity of the research

interpretations. The findings were compared to other participants' responses and

triangulated against existing open source data (such as white papers, blogs, and articles)

available on the what works in reentry clearinghouse and the collateral consequences

resource center.

Transferability

To confirm transferability and external validity regarding the findings ability to be

generalized or applied to diverse populations or settings, descriptions regarding the data

collection and analysis were documented and recorded in the audio reflexivity journal. The descriptions consisted of the rationale behind the research subject, population, political climate, relevance among participants, and recruitment barriers. Information regarding how data was collected, analyzed, coded, and interpreted was also reported.

Dependability

To establish dependability and confirm that the study's ability to be replicated, the research was peer-reviewed. Walden University's dissertation research committee consisted of three academic scholars with expertise in the research topic, methodology, and ethics. The research committee comprised a chairperson, with expertise in the content and topic under investigation; a committee member with expertise in qualitative research methods, and an ethical review with expertise in the ethical procedures on human research subjects. An audio journal was used to record experiences as a researcher. Initially, the journal was intended to use a written. However, it was personally more suitable to create audio files as experiences occurred.

Confirmability

The rationale behind decisions made throughout the research study was documented in an audio reflexivity journal to establish confirmability and ensure the findings emerged from the data. The journal contained entries about research obstacles and accomplishments that influenced the research decisions, the experience as a qualitative researcher, and the desire to advance positive social change.

Research Results

Three questions guided the case study and focused on identifying the challenges that job seekers with criminal records face searching for work. The first guiding question (R1) asked: What do reentry practitioners perceive as the most difficult phase of the job search process for ex-offenders? Based on overall perception of participants, the most challenging phase of the job search process was the Background Check Phase. A combination of external and environmental limitations contributed to the level of difficulty applicants faced during the background check.

All participants identified criminal records as the most common barrier to employment. Participants felt that the stigma associated with a criminal record makes it challenging for applicants make it past the interview phase. Some participants argued that an employer may ban-the-box on the employment application but will use language such as "must pass a background check" and "must explain employment gaps," which have the same effects as checking the box (P7, P11). Ten respondents noted that once an employer discovers that an applicant has spent time in prison, a job offer is no longer a possibility (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P8, P10, P11, P12).

Although many participants identified the background check as the most problematic phase, three participants described two or more phases as the most problematic. P5 described the searching and application phases as the most problematic stages in the job search process. The rationale behind P5's response was access to a computer, job leads, and training is extremely difficult for applicants who are behind bars and cannot successfully engage in the job search process before release. P6 described the

application and job offer phases as the most problematic. The participant viewed resume preparation as a barrier among ex-offenders who have significant gaps in employment because of the time spent in a correctional facility. P6 also described job readiness as a constraint in the job offer phase for the same reasons: incarceration, lack of education, limited training, and inadequate preparation.

The respondent shed light on the fact that job retention is also a problematic factor, and for some applicants receiving a job offer is more attainable than keeping the job. P9 described the job offer phase as a problem for the following reasons: limited training, inability to perform the duties, no identity documents, no access to transportation. Some jobs require that applicants have a valid driver's license, and some require access to a car.

One participant described all the phases in the job search process as equally problematic. P7 felt that each phase was problematic for a different reason. The participant noted that searching for a job is nearly impossible for job seekers who are preparing for release from inside a correctional facility because access to the internet, computer, the phone is not guaranteed. The participant described computer literacy and proficiency with online job applications as a barrier for individuals that do not have experience applying for jobs online.

P7 described the Interview Phase as problematic for ex-offenders because many do not have a reliable way to contact an employer when before release. The participant shed light on the fact that state prisons do provide basic training on how to present one's self during an interview. The participant discussed the lack of interview preparation as it

relates to appearance and how to display confidence and assertiveness when answering interview questions. P7 noted that many ex-offenders are uncomfortable discussing their criminal past. Finally, the participant viewed the Job Offer Phase as problematic for the following reasons: lack of transportation, lost identity documents, literacy, and the inability to complete employment forms such as the W-4 Income Tax Withholding form. When comparing participants responses based on reentry specialization, similarities were present in the description of the most problematic phase of the job search process.

The second guiding question(R2) asked: What change is needed to remove constraints in the job search process? The general perspective participants had about what to change focused on addressing a combination of personal and external limitations. To ensure that applicants perform better at each stage in the job search, participants saw a need for reentry programs and employment development centers to provide: access to education, adequate training, and financial resources.

For example, P6 discussed the importance of facilitating mock interviews to help applicants practice answering questions about their skills, qualifications, and criminal past in a manner that demonstrates assertiveness and confidence. P5 described the lack of diverse training opportunities in Maryland job centers. According to the finding, many programs focus on preparing job seekers for construction, sanitation, janitorial, and commercial driving opportunities. P12 discussed the importance of providing opportunities "to prepare ex-offenders for tomorrows jobs." The participant shed light on the fact the today's reentry programs do not provide training in careers that pay hirer wages. P9 discussed the importance of applicants to gain skills in careers that are in

significant demand such as nursing, physical security, information technology, project management, accounting, sales, and customer service. P2, P5, and P12 agreed on the importance of gaining skills in science, technology, math, and agriculture or learning an entrepreneurial trade in culinary arts, cosmetology, digital media, interior design, and architecture.

To improve access to resources, survey participants discussed the importance of collaboration and information sharing among stakeholders. P2 shed light on the fact that most employment development centers are understaffed and cannot meet the demand for individualized service. Access to computer labs is limited, and resources like laptop rental, on-demand counseling, and personalized employment support are non-existent. Participants believe that reentry organizations should collectively address the demand by sharing resources and services through agency referrals. P2 noted that if one organization is unable to provide a resource or service on demand, it was feasible to refer the client to a nearby organization that can provide the resource or service the same day.

To improve the location of employment development centers, survey respondents recommended creating satellite or extension offices in central locations for job seekers with no access to transportation. Examples include providing employment services inside local libraries, nearby motor vehicle administration offices, social services offices, malls, and shopping centers that are within walking distance to low-income neighborhoods (P7, P8, and P10). Participants highlighted the importance of a job center's location. Many ex-offenders do not have a source of income and cannot afford to purchase a bus ticket (P1).

P1 noted that no job centers are not within walking distance to low-income

neighborhoods whose residents would benefit from the service the most.

To improve access to job opportunities, participants recommended that reentry

organizations establish partnerships with employers and ensure industry diversity.

According to P3, job seekers can benefit from the relationships that community

organizations have with employers. Establishing robust partnerships can result in

consistent job placement opportunities that are as simple as a phone call to report the date

a qualified applicant can start (P4). Practitioners also discussed the importance of

providing incentives to employers for hiring individuals with criminal records. One

practitioner described providing an onsite case manager to be responsible for monitoring

an ex-offender successful transition to the workplace and resolving any conflicts that

arise as an incentive (P11). P1 and P9 recommended providing employers with tax

incentives and work opportunity tax credits. P12 suggested that policymakers look at

expanding the Ticket to Work Program to employers that provide full-time job

opportunities to ex-offenders.

The third guiding question(R3) asked: What recommendations do reentry

practitioners have on how to improve employment outcomes for ex-offenders? The

overall perception regarding how to improve employment outcomes for ex-offenders

consisted of resolutions, minimized personal, external, and environmental constraints.

Survey participants suggested the following: stronger enforcement of ban-the-box laws,

record shielding, automatic record expungement, increasing the minimum wages,

improving public transportation, and funding employment initiatives through the Justice Reinvestment Act.

To address the issue concerning employers screening-out applicants with records from the employment consideration process, participants recommended better enforcement of ban-the-box laws by the state government. P11 indicated that Maryland's ban-the-box laws only apply to employers with fifteen or more employees. P7 argued that laws do not prevent employers from using language on vacancy announcements that suggest that individuals with a criminal background cannot apply. P2 echoed the similar statements, "nothing prevents employers from advertising that an applicant must pass a background check and without defining what criteria must be met to pass the background screening." Some practitioners noted that the only to circumvent the stigma associated with criminal records is the enforce record shielding for a non-certified background check company and provide automatic record expungement if a conviction is not rendered (P1, P2, P7). P10 noted that employers have the right to know if an applicant has committed a crime that is relevant to the duties of the job, however, more work must be done to encourage employers to adopt a second chance mindset.

To address the inefficient transportation problem in low-income communities, P4 recommended that the state fund create a reliable transportation plan for everyone. P2 and P3 suggested that policymakers put pressure on the next administration to fun the Red Line transportation plan and expand light rail access to central job hubs. To improve employment outcomes for ex-offenders, participants recommended that reentry programs provide training in life skills, job readiness, resume writing, and interview preparation

(P6 and P8). To improve access to resource respondents suggested that the policymakers support the state-wide campaign to increase the minimum wage in Maryland to $15 per hour to reflect the 21st-century cost of living adjustment (P2 and P11).

Despite the difference in reentry professionals specialization, a consensus was present among participants regarding that the Background Check Phase as the most problematic phase of the job search process. Differences were present in the findings regarding reentry professionals' perception of what to change and how to improve employment outcomes. Reentry advocates and volunteers appealed to a politically oriented approach and prescribed policy to address constraints in the job search process. Reentry service providers and case managers considered more training, education, and community collaboration would be useful in eliminating the constraints in the job search process. Table 6 illustrates the patterns that emerged in the data to address the guiding questions and are grouped by participants' reentry specialization.

Table 6

Guiding Question(RQ) and Findings Based on Participant Classification

RQ	Service provider	Case manager	Reentry advocate	Reentry program staff or volunteer
R1	Searching Phase Application Phase Interview Background Check Job Offer	Background Check	Background Check	Background Check Job Offer
R2	Incentives Training Education Partnerships Collaboration	Incentives Training Education Job Placement	Incentives Training Education Work Release Information Hubs	Incentives Training Education Job Referrals Collaboration

R3	Improve Transit Funding Expungement	Shared Resources		
		Improve Transit Funding Record Shielding	Improve Transit Increase Wages Record Shielding	Job Center Location Increase Wages Expungement

Summary

This case study explored reentry practitioners' perceptions of the constraints that ex-offenders face during the job search process. The study also aimed to understand practitioners' opinion about how to improve employment outcomes for the affected population. Three questions guided the study. The first guiding question asked reentry professional to describe the most difficult phase of the job search process. Practitioners viewed the Background Check Phase as the most challenging step in the job search process due to the stigma of having a record.

The second guiding question asked practitioners to describe what to change to remove constraints in the job search process. The overall perception among participants was the need to build more significant partnerships between employers and the reentry community. Reentry program staff hope to identify employers in every industry that are willing to hire job seekers with the criminal record because the demand for jobs is so high. Reentry professional saw a need to educate employers on the protections that exist for companies that are concerned about the risks and liabilities associated with hiring applicants with a criminal past.

The third guiding question asked reentry professionals to describe how to improve employment outcomes for ex-offenders. The general perspective was to: offer employer

incentives, provide record shielding, automatic record expungement, increase the minimum wage, improve access to the resource, and improve public transportation. Practitioners saw a need to include employment as an approach to reducing Maryland's prison and a goal of the Justice Reinvestment Act. Chapter 5 discusses the following topics: interpretation of findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This study explored reentry professionals' perspective of the constraints that job seekers with criminal records face during the job search process. The study explored practitioners' views about the how to improve employment outcomes. It used an open-ended survey instrument that asked participants to describe the challenges that ex-offenders encounter during each stage of the job search. The study achieved its purpose to give reentry professionals a voice in the literature and to provide more in-depth descriptions of the difficulties ex-offenders experience in securing employment.

This case study contributes to the research on reentry and employment by classifying each limitation described by practitioners as personal, external, or environmental. The study links each constraint to a specific phase in the job search process and provides a solution to remove the constraint. No other study in the literature on reentry and employment pinpoint the exact location of job search constraints and prescribe a relevant policy resolution from the perspective of reentry experts. This chapter discusses the interpretation of the study's findings, limitations, recommendations for future research, implications for reentry policy and practice, and implications for positive social change.

Interpretation of Findings

The results of this study confirm the knowledge about the collateral effects of incarceration, barriers to employment, and the stigma associated with having a criminal record. The results confirm the findings of Nally et al. (2014) and Cerda et al. (2015)

about personal limitations (such as low educational attainment, limited skillset, employment gaps, and poor social skills) and their negative impact on ex-offenders' employability. The study extended the knowledge about applicant's limitations and categorized them as constraints in the Application Phase. The result classified ex-offenders' challenge to find willing employers as a constraint in the Searching Phase.

The research results draw attention to employers' reluctance to hire applicants with criminal records (Burt, 2014; Cerda et al., 2015; D'Alessio et al., 2014; and Adams et al., 2016). While some studies found that some employers are willing to hire applicants with criminal records (Cantora, 2015), results from this study confirm the significance of job leads. The results extend the knowledge of social stigma and confirm that the second chance mindset is not widespread: Many employers are not willing to hire applicants with criminal records (Hlavka et al., 2015).

Second Chance Mindset

Contemporary research highlights second chance as a theme among ex-offender-friendly employers (Cantora, 2015). Earlier studies have shown that approximately 20% of ex-offenders can secure jobs after incarceration (Murray, 2012). The current research study found that ex-offenders are willing to accept any job offer because of the limited opportunities. The results show that ex-offenders were obtaining jobs that they were overqualified for and were significantly underpaid. The results confirm the CSGJC (2013) findings regarding formerly incarcerated individuals potential to earn low wages after release. The current study classifies job seekers' inability to find a full-time job that pays more than minimum wage as a constraint of the job offer phase. Reentry

professionals viewed the inability to compete for competitive salaries as a collateral effect of incarceration. Other studies have not addressed the nature of the work and the salary as a barrier to employment. Many quantitative studies focus on estimating the number of ex-offenders that secure employment and the type of work as significant.

The literature on reentry highlights the challenges that job seekers with criminal records face discussing their criminal past with employers (Decker et al., 2015). The current study confirms Cantora (2015) findings regarding applicants' feelings of self-doubt and discomfort when they must reveal details about their criminal past during an interview. The study also extends Hlavka and colleagues' (2015) findings by associating the desire to lie about a criminal background with fairer employment consideration. Similar studies draw attention to the challenges that job seekers encounter during the background check.

Several studies found that laws that limit ex-offenders' ability to work in certain industries or around vulnerable populations (Hlavka et al., 2015; Moses, 2015; Cantora 2015). Other studies report on employers' failure to consider the time lapse during the background check (Nally et al., 2014; Swensen et al., 2014; Blesset & Pryor, 2013). The current study classified the criminal record as constraints in the background check phase, making this phase the most problematic step in the job search process.

The study disconfirms the hypothesis that ban-the-box laws prevent employers from screening ex-offenders out of the job search process. Instead, this study shows that screening-out happens later in the process, even after an employer extended a job offer. The study expanded the knowledge on ex-offenders' job search challenges and filled the

gap in the academic literature regarding reentry professionals' opinion regarding
appropriate policy resolutions.

Theory of Constraints

The study used the TOC as the foundation to address the guiding questions. The
study used TOC as a tool to explore experts' description of the problems in the job search
process. The primary hypothesis of TOC is that people are goal seekers and constraints
exist and prevent goal achievement (Pretoria, 2014). The theory suggests that a constraint
is present anywhere that bottlenecks represent. Consistent with the TOC, stakeholders
shall identify the goal that must be accomplished during the process, the location of the
constraints in each phase of the process, then simultaneously apply resolutions to prevent
the constraint from shifting to another phase in the process.

The process explored in this study was the job search process, a sequential five-
step course of action that job seekers embark upon to secure employment. According to
reentry practitioners, job seekers' goal is to obtain quality work that pays a living wage
despite having a criminal record. However, personal, external, and environmental
limitations prevent ex-offenders from successfully moving to each phase of the job search
process. The primary guiding question in this study addressed the first step in TOC, to
identify the location of the bottleneck. After each constraint is classified, stakeholders
must agree on the cause of the problem and the direction of the solution.

Reentry professionals described the Background Check Phase as the most
challenging step in the job search. Based on the findings, reentry practitioners believe
that a criminal record creates a bottleneck in the process and prevents ex-offenders from

advancing to the Job Offer Phase. Remembering the traffic light metaphor in chapter 4, job seekers with criminal records are stuck at a red light when they approach the background check. There is little to no movement beyond this phase. Since every ex-offender has a record that will likely show up on a background check, many job seekers do not receive job offers.

The results show that a variety of external and environmental limitations exists that causes the bottleneck at the Background Check Phase. Reentry professionals view criminal records as a personal constraint that negatively impacts an applicant's employability. Employer bias and screening-out contribute to ex-offenders inability to advance to the job offer phase. Environmental constraints like social stigmas contribute to an employer's bias. A combination of external and environmental constraints such as laws, risk, and internal human resource policies cause employers to screen applicants out of the hiring consideration.

The second guiding question in the case study addresses the next phase of TOC, establishing an agreement on the direction of the solution. In other words, stakeholders shall decide what to change and how to change the process so that job seekers can achieve the primary goal. Based on the findings, reentry professional believe that employers must adopt the second chance mindset to prevent what they classify as discriminatory hiring practices. Reentry professional are relying on policymakers to do a better job enforcing ban-the-box and to hold employers accountable.

Finding employment within the first two years of release is necessary for successful reentry. Reentry professionals suggest that courts should reduce the

expungement period and grant record shielding to ex-offenders that are actively seeking employment. Reentry professionals also recommend that courts automatically expunge records that are overturned, dismissed, or never prosecuted. The rationale behind practitioners' recommendations is that America will not solve the unemployment problem for ex-offenders until policies are created to level the playing field for this population.

Limitations of the Findings

There were three limitations associated with this study's research findings. The results describe practitioners views in a state that widely supports ban-the-box laws and generally favors democratic policies on justice reform. The findings represent views from reentry professionals that had experience assisting ex-offenders with the reentry process. Although the study did not intend to recruit ex-offenders, one participant (a reentry advocate) was a formerly incarcerated citizen that later pursued the reentry field.

Prisoner reentry is a narrowly focused field of practice and small terms of the number of organizations that exist and the size of the staff. The field of reentry is also unpredictable. An organization's stability and longevity depend on the availability of funding for reentry activities that are provided by grants and donations. In many cases, an organization's existence depends on to the political climate. Many of the participants were actively involved in partisan organizations and faith-based groups.

In 2016, when the preliminary research for the study occurred, approximately 12 reentry organizations were operating in Maryland. By the time the study reached the data collection phase in 2017, four reentry organization were no longer operating. The

member checking phase revealed the fact that many nonprofit organizations were funded solely through federal or state grants. Organizations closed their door because the sponsors did not renew the grants. A reentry organization's stability became a limitation and impacted the study's ability to recruit the original sample size of 40 practitioners. Of the eight remaining organizations, five were non-profits, and three were government entities.

The findings originated from the opinion of 20 reentry practitioners from five non-profits and one government agency. Since the sample size was small, data saturation was met early during the data analysis phase (12 participants), which is consistent with the literature on appropriate sample sizes for qualitative research. The open-ended survey tools gave participants the autonomy to write a much or a little as they desired. The bulk of the richness of the data came from member check sessions. If the study were to be attempted again, semi-structured interviews or a focus group session would have been more beneficial. These limitations impact the findings generalizability. Since the research was exploratory, the limitations did not undermine the overall trustworthiness of the results. The results are expected to transfer to mid-Atlantic states with similar political climates, reentry agendas, and ban-the-box laws.

Recommendations

Prior research on reentry and employment revealed the collateral effects of incarceration, which are the fundamental challenges an ex-offender experience during the reintegration process. Unemployment is a collateral effect of incarceration, and the current study has identified the constraints that are relevant to each phase of the job

search process. This study also connects a solution to the problem by providing

recommendations for how to remove each constraint in the job search process with a goal

of increasing employment outcomes for the affected population. There is a significant

theme in the literature that Joan Petersilia coined in 2004 known as "what works." The

theme was created to highlight evidence-based solutions for overcoming many reentry

challenges, which is still relevant today.

Researchers that would expand this study's results ought to explore the opinions

of reentry professionals in other state on how to increase employment outcomes for

formerly incarcerated citizens using semi-structured interviews or focus group sessions.

To further extend this study's findings, future research should focus on finding a

consensus within the national reentry community on ex-offenders job search process

challenges. Future researchers ought to consider a quantitative study that uses the Likert

scale and a survey tool to determine how likely practitioners are to agree or disagree with

the identified constraints in the job search process. Alternatively, a case study could be

used to explore the risks employers associate with hiring formerly incarcerated

individuals to obtain an industry level perspective regarding employers' unwillingness to

hire ex-offenders. Finally, one might consider testing the recommendations that reentry

professionals provided on removing the constraints in the job search process. Researcher

could use Petersilia's "what works" as a conceptual framework to present evidence that

supports or refutes the current study's recommendations.

Implications

The study lays the foundation for forming policy resolutions around the challenges present in the most problematic phase of the job search process. The study advances social change by giving policymakers and stakeholders a better description of the difficulties that prevent ex-offenders from receiving job offers. The study reveals limitations in each job search process phase and provides suggestions on how to make the process of more efficient for job seekers with records. The conceptual framework shed light on the importance of continuous improvement, which should be put into practice by policymakers, reentry organizations, and other stakeholders.

The study is expected to help policymakers pinpoint flaws the ban-the-box laws and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the negative impact background checks have on employment. The recommendations are expected to be used by reentry stakeholder as a roadmap to prioritize spending as it relates to employment development initiatives for ex-offenders. The study expects to set the tone to encourage stakeholders, employers, and the reentry community to build a partnership and tackle the unemployment problem together. The positive social change implications stemming from this study include policy recommendations to policymakers to include centralizing and expanding the location of statewide employment centers, record shielding under the Second Chance Act, and fair education access through Ban-the Box for state colleges.

Conclusions

In closing, statistics show that 95% of prisoners eventually return home. To be successful at any reentry endeavor policymakers and the reentry community must invest

in the solution. As a society, we ensure that our communities remain safe when ex-offenders are successful and employed. This study has laid the foundation for how policymakers and the reentry community can work together to improve employment outcomes for ex-offenders.

Using Goldratt's theory of constraints as the foundation, this case study of reentry and employment in a mid-Atlantic state explored from the perspective of practitioners, the types of constraints individuals with criminal records face during the job search process, the most difficult phase of the job search process, and recommendations on improving employment outcomes. Data for this study were obtained from 20 reentry professionals in Maryland, who completed an online, open-ended response survey. Data were analyzed and coded via thematic analysis procedure. The results showed that practitioners perceived the background check to be the most difficult phase in the job search process and that external and environmental constraints such as employer bias and social stigma prevent individuals with criminal records from securing job offers. The results also showed that reentry professionals support automatic record expungement, record shielding, employer partnerships, and employment programming that provides job leads, resume building, and mock interview assistance.

The findings describe the complex challenges that ex-offenders face throughout the job search process. The idiom "pull yourself up by the bootstraps" illustrates the all-encompassing problems ex-offenders experience and the significance of social stigmas. One reentry practitioner stated that "society expects ex-offenders to pull themselves up by the bootstraps, which is impossible without help." After reviewing reentry

professionals' description of the complexities that ex-offenders and their inability to secure jobs, one can envision ex-offenders wanting to improve themselves, but lacking the resources to do so (e.g., boots without bootstraps). The findings from this research study offer suggestions on how to help ex-offenders "get their bootstraps back." Society must work together as a whole to adopt the second chance mindset, or researchers will be discussing the unemployment problem among ex-offenders for next 20 years.

References

Agnew, R. (2014). Social concern and crime: Moving beyond the assumption of simple

self-interest. Criminology, 52(1), 1–32. https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9125.12031

American Society for Quality (2018). *Continuous improvement.* Retrieved from

http://asq.org/learn-about-quality/continuous-

improvement/overview/overview.html

Bahr, S. J., Armstrong, A. H., Gibbs, B. G., Harris, P. E., & Fisher, J. K. (2005). The

reentry process: How parolees adjust to release from prison. Fathering, 3(3), 243-

265. https://doi.org/10.3149/fth.0303.243

Bales, W. D., & Piquero, A. R. (2012). Assessing the impact of imprisonment on

recidivism. Journal of Experimental Criminology, 8(1), 71-101.

https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-011-9139-3

Bender, K. A., Cobbina, J. E., & McGarrell, E. F. (2015). Reentry programming for high-

risk offenders' insights from participants. International Journal of Offender

Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 60(13), 1479-1508.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X15578204

Bigda, C. (June 2015). How to get a job in today's market. Kiplinger's Personal Finance

Magazine, 69(6), 11-12. Available at

https://www.kiplinger.com/article/business/T012-C000-S002-how-to-get-a-job-

in-today-s-market.html

Bouffard, J. & Bergseth, K. (2008). The impact of reentry services on juvenile offenders'

recidivism. Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice, 6(3), 295-318.

https://doi.org/10.1177/1541204007313384

Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2013). Reentry trends in the united states: Inmates returning to the community after serving time in prison. [Data file]. Retrieved from http://www.bjs.gov/content/reentry/reentry.cfm

Bureau of Justice Statistics (2013). Recidivism. Retrieved from http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=tp&tid=17

Burt, Rose M. (2014). More than a second chance: An alternative employment approach to reduce recidivism among criminal ex-offenders. Tennessee Journal of Law & Policy, 16(1), 1-37. Retrieved from http://trace.tennessee.edu/tjlp/vol6/iss1/3

Cantora, A. (2015). Navigating the job search after incarceration: The experiences of work-release participants. Criminal Justice Studies, 28(2), 141-160. https://doi.org/10.1080/1478601X.2014.947032

Cerda, J. A., Stenstrom, D. M., & Curtis, M. (2015). The role of type of offense and work qualifications on perceived employability of former offenders. American Journal of Criminal Justice, 40(2), 317-335. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-014-9244-8

Churchill, R.C. (2011). Offender assessment utilizing the risk-need-responsivity model [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from http://www.rsat-tta.com/Files/Webinars/Offender-Assessment-Utilizing-the-Risk-Need-Respon

Connelly, L. M. (2014). Understanding case studies. Medsurg Nursing, 23(6), 422-424. Available at http://medsurgnursing.net/archives/14nov/422.pdf

Cooper, M. J., & Loe, T. W. (2000). Using the theory of constraints' thinking processes to

improve problem-solving skills in marketing. Journal of Marketing Education, 22(2), 137-146. Retrieved from

https://doi.org/10.1177/0273475300222008

Council of State Governments Justice Center (2013). Integrated reentry and employment strategies: Reducing recidivism and promoting job readiness. Retrieved from https://www.bja.gov/Publications/CSG-Reentry-and-Employment.pdf

Council of State Governments Justice Center (2013). Reentry Matters: Strategies and successes of Second Chance Act grantees across the United States. Retrieved from http://csgjusticecenter.org/reentry/reentry-matters

D'alessio, S.J., Stolzenberg, L., & Eitle, D. (2014). Last hired, first fired: The effect of the unemployment rate on the probability of repeat offending. American Journal of Criminal Justice, 39(1), 77-93.

https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-013-9199-1

D'Alessio, S. J., Stolzenberg, L., & Flexon, J. L. (2015). The effect of Hawaii's ban the box law on repeat offending. American Journal of Criminal Justice, 40(2), 336-352. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-014-9251-9

Decker, S. H., Ortiz, N., Spohn, C., & Hedberg, E. (2015). Criminal stigma, race, and ethnicity: The consequences of imprisonment for employment. Journal of Criminal Justice, 43(2), 108-121.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2015.02.002

Department of Labor Licensing and Regulation, (2015). Local area unemployment statistics. Retrieved from http://www.dllr.state.md.us/lmi/laus/

Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (2012). Secretary's end of the year

report fy12. Retrieved from

http://dpscs.maryland.gov/initiatives/pdfs/FY12_End_of_Year_Report_small.pdf

Bureau of Justice Statistics (2014). Recidivism of prisoners released in 30 states in 2005:

Patterns from 2005 to 2010. Retrieved from

http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/rprts05p0510.pdf

Duwe, G., & King, M. (2012). Can faith-based correctional programs work? An outcome

evaluation of the inner change freedom initiative in Minnesota. International

Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 57(7), 813-841.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X12439397

Farabee, D., Zhang, S. X., & Wright, B. (2014). An experimental evaluation of a

nationally recognized employment-focused offender reentry program. Journal of

Experimental Criminology, 10(3), 309-322.

https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-014-9201-z

Featherstone, R., & Deflem, M. (2003). Anomie and strain: Context and consequences of

merton's two theories. Sociological Inquiry, 73(4), 471-489.

https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-682X.00067

Flower, S. M. (2013). Baltimore City jail reentry strategies project: Final report.

Retrieved from

http://www.baltimorecity.gov/portals/humanservices/downloads/Final%20Jail%2

0Reentry%20Strategies%20Report%2010.7.2013.pdf

Fox, K. J. (2010). Second chances: A comparison of civic engagement in offender reentry

programs. Criminal Justice Review, 35(3), 335-353.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0734016809360328

Gee, G. C., & Ford, C. L. (2011). Structural racism and health inequities: Old issues, new

directions. Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race, 8(1), 115–132.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1742058X11000130

Gideon, L. & Sung, H. (2011). Rethinking corrections: Rehabilitation, reentry, and

reintegration.

https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452230474

Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research. The

Qualitative Report, 8(4), 597-606. Retrieved from

http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol8/iss4/6

Gottschall, J., & Armour, M. (2011). Second chance: Establishing a reentry program in

the northern district of illinois. DePaul Journal for Social Justice, 5(1), 31-69.

Retrieved from http://via.library.depaul.edu/jsj/vol5/iss1/4

Goulette, N. W., Reitler, A. K., Frank, J., Flesher, W., & Travis, L. F. (2014). Criminal

justice practitioners' perceptions of collateral consequences of criminal conviction

on offenders. Criminal Justice Review, 39(3), 290-304.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0734016814526752

Governor's Office of Crime Control & Prevention. (2017, October 3). Governor Larry

Hogan announces implementation of justice reinvestment act [Press release].

Retrieved from http://goccp.maryland.gov/governor-larry-hogan-announces-

implementation-justice-reinvestment-act

Gunnison, E., & Helfgott, J. B. (2011). Factors that hinder offender reentry success: A view from community corrections officers. International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 55(2), 287-304. https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X09360661

Hall, T. L., Wooten, N. R., & Lundgren, L. M. (2016). Post incarceration policies and prisoner reentry: Implications for policies and programs aimed at reducing recidivism and poverty, Journal of Poverty, 20(1), 56-72, https://doi.org/10.1080/10875549.2015.1094761

Hallett, M., & McCoy, S. (2014). Religiously motivated desistance: An exploratory study. International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 59(8), 855-872. https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X14522112

Harding, D. J., Morenoff, J. D., & Herbert, C. W. (2013). Home is hard to find: Neighborhoods, institutions, and the residential trajectories of returning prisoners. The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 647(1), 214-236. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716213477070

Harding, D. J., Wyse, J. B., Dobson, C., & Morenoff, J. D. (2014). Making ends meet after prison. Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, 33(2), 440-470. https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.21741

Hederman Jr., R. (Summer 2010). What is unemployment? National Affairs, 35. Retrieved from https://www.nationalaffairs.com/publications/detail/what-is-unemployment

Hirschfield, P. J. (2014). Effective and promising practices in transitional planning and

school reentry. Journal of Correctional Education, 65(2), 84-96. Available at
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317290449_Effective_and_Promising_P
ractices_in_Transitional_Planning_and_School_Reentry

Houghton, C., Casey, D., Shaw, D., & Murphy, K. (2013). Rigor in qualitative case-study
research. Nurse Researcher, 20(4), 12-17.
https://doi.org/10.7748/nr2013.03.20.4.12.e326

Hunter, B.A., Lanza, A. S., Lawlor, M., Dyson, W., & Gordon, D.M. (2015). A strengths-
based approach to prisoner reentry: The fresh start prisoner reentry program.
International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 60(11),
1-17. https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X15576501

Ingham-Broomfield, R. (2014). A nurses' guide to quantitative research. Australian
Journal of Advanced Nursing, 32(2), 32-38. Retrieved from
http://www.ajan.com.au/Vol32/Issue2/4Broomfield.pdf

Ispa-Landa, S., & Loeffler, C. E. (2016). Indefinite punishment and the criminal-record:
Stigma reports among expungement-seekers in illinois. Criminology, 54(3), 1-49.
https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9125.12108

James, N. (2011). Offender reentry: Correctional statistics, reintegration into the
community, and recidivism. Retrieved from http://www.nationalcia.org/wp-
content/uploads/Correctional-Statistics-Reintegration-into-the-Community.pdf

Jones, J., & Castleberry, C. (2013). Innovative and evidence-based approaches to
recidivism reduction and reentry. Corrections Today, 75(4), 44-46. Available at
https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Innovative+and+evidence-

based+approaches+to+recidivism+reduction+and...-a0344841428

Jones, J., & Forman, B. (2016). Reducing recidivism in Massachusetts with a
comprehensive reentry strategy. Retrieved from http://massinc.org/wp-
content/uploads/2016/01/Reentry-Policy-Brief.pdf

Jones Young, N.C., Powell, G.N. (2015). Hiring ex-offenders: A theoretical model.
Human Resource Management Review, 25(3), 298-312.
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2014.11.001

Jonson, C. L., & Cullen, F. T. (2015). Prisoner reentry programs. Crime and Justice,
44(1), 517-557. https://doi.org/10.1086/681554

Koh, O., Lee, J., Tan, M. L. S., Tai, E., Foo, C. J., Chong, K. J., Wee, H. (2014).
Establishing the thematic framework for a diabetes-specific health-related quality
of life item bank for use in an english-speaking asian population. PLOS ONE,
9(12), 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0115654 Latessa, E. (2012).
Why work is important, and how to improve the effectiveness of correctional
reentry programs that target employment. Criminology & Public Policy, 11(1),
87-91. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9133.2012.00790.x

Lattimore, P. K., & Visher, C. A. (2014). The impact of prison reentry services on short-
term outcomes: Evidence from a multisite evaluation. Evaluation Review, 37(3-
4), 274-313. https://doi.org/10.1177/0193841X13519105

Leshnick, S., Geckeler, C., Wiegand, A., Nicholson, B., & Foley, K. (2012). Evaluation
of the reintegration of ex-offenders (RExO) program: Interim report. Retrieved
from http://www.mdrc.org/project/reintegration-ex-offenders-random-

assignment-evaluation#featured_content

Lewis, S. (2015). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches [Review of the book Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among the five approaches (3rd Ed), by J. Creswell]. Health Promotion Practice, 16(4), 473-475. https://doi.org/10.1177/1524839915580941

Listwan, S. J., Cullen, F. T., & Latessa, E. J. (2006). How to prevent prisoner re-entry programs from failing: Insights from evidence-based corrections. Federal Probation, 70(3), 19-25. Available at https://www.uc.edu/content/dam/uc/ics/docs/ListwanCullenLatessaHowToPrevent.pdf

Liu, S., Huang, J. L., & Wang, M. (2014). Effectiveness of job search interventions: A meta-analytic review. Psychological Bulletin, 140(4), 1009-1041. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035923

Loafman, L., & Little, A. (2014). Race, employment, and crime: The shifting landscape of disparate impact discrimination based on criminal convictions. American Business Law Journal, 51(2), 251-314. https://doi.org/10.1111/ablj.12028

Loeffler, C. E. (2013). Does imprisonment alter the life course? Evidence on crime and employment from a natural experiment. Criminology, 51(1), 137-166. https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9125.12000

Lub, V. (2015). Validity in qualitative evaluation: linking purposes, paradigms, and perspectives. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 14(5), 1-8.

https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406915621406

Lynch, J. P. (2006). Prisoner reentry: Beyond program evaluation. Criminology & Public Policy, 5(2), 401-412. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9133.2006.00386.x

MacKenzie, D. L. (2000). Evidence-based corrections: Identifying what works. Crime & Delinquency, 46(4), 457-471. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128700046004003

MacKenzie, D. L. (2013). First do no harm: A look at correctional policies and programs today. Journal of Experimental Criminology, 9(1), 1-17. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-012-9167-7 Marshall, B., Cardon, P., Poddar, A., & Fontenot, R. (2013). Does sample size matter in qualitative research: A review of qualitative interviews in is research. The Journal of Computer Information Systems, 54(1), 11-22. https://doi.org/10.1080/08874417.2013.11645667

Martinson, R. (1974). What works? Questions and answers about prison reform. The Public Interest, 35: 22-54. Retrieved from http://www.scribd.com/doc/58100576/MARTINSON-What-Works-Questions-and-Answers-About-Prison-Reform

Maryland General Assembly. MD-SB. 0004, Chapter 160. Reg. Sess. 2012-2013. (2013).

Maryland Judiciary. (2017). How can I expunge my criminal record? Retrieved from https://mdcourts.gov/sites/default/files/import/accesstojustice/pdfs/04redexpunge mentbrochure2015.pdf

Maryland State Police. (2011). Crime in maryland: 2011 uniform crime report [Data file]. Retrieved from http://www.goccp.maryland.gov/msac/documents/2011_Crime_In_Maryland.pdf

Maryland State Police. (2012). Crime in Maryland: 2012 Uniform crime report [Data

file]. Retrieved from

http://www.goccp.maryland.gov/msac/documents/2012CrimeInMarylandUniform

CrimeReport.pdf

Mears, D. P., Shollenberger, T. L., Willison, J. B., Owens, C. E., & Butts, J. A. (2010).

Practitioner views of priorities, policies, and practices in juvenile justice. Crime &

Delinquency, 56(4), 535-563.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128708324664

McCusker, K., & Gunaydin, S. (2015). Research using qualitative, quantitative or mixed

methods and choice based on the research. Perfusion, 30(7), 537-542.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0267659114559116

Miller, J. M. (2014). Identifying collateral effects of offender reentry programming

through evaluative fieldwork. American Journal of Criminal Justice, 39(1), 41-58.

https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-013-9206-6

Miller, R. J. (2014). Devolving the carceral state: Race, prisoner reentry, and the micro-

politics of urban poverty management. Punishment & Society, 13(3), 305-335.

https://doi.org/10.1177/1462474514527487

Morani, N.M., Wikoff, N., Linhorst, D.M., & Bratton, S. (2011). A description of the

self-identified needs, service expenditures, and social outcomes of participants of

a prisoner-reentry program. The Prison Journal, 91(3), 347-365.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0032885511409896

Morenoff, J. D., & Harding, D. J. (July 2014). Incarceration, prisoner reentry, and

communities. Annual Review of Sociology, 40, 411-429.

https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-071811-145511

Morse, J.M. (2015). Analytic strategies and sample size. Qualitative Health Research,

25(10), 1317-1318.

https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732315602867

Moses, M.C. (2014). Redemption research and offender employability. Corrections

Today, 76(5), 14-16. Available at

http://www.aca.org/aca_prod_imis/Docs/Corrections%20Today/2014%20Articles

/Sept%20Articles/Research%20Notes.pdf

Mulmat, D. H., & Burke, C. (2013). Addressing offender reentry: Lessons learned from

senate bill 618 san diego prisoner reentry program. Corrections Today, 75(4), 24-

27. Available at

http://www.aca.org/ACA_PROD_IMIS/docs/Corrections%20Today/Mulmat_Bur

ke.pdf

Murray, Chris (November 2012). Working on the inside: New approaches to increasing

the employability of offenders. Prison Service Journal, 204, 27-34. Retrieved

from

http://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/sites/crimeandjustice.org.uk/files/PSJ%20Nov

ember%202012%20No.%20204.pdf

Nally, J. M., Lockwood, S., Ho, T., & Knutson, K. (2014). Post-release recidivism and

employment among different types of released offenders: A 5-year follow-up

study in the united states. International Journal of Criminal Justice Sciences, 9(1),

16-34. Available at

http://www.sascv.org/ijcjs/pdfs/nallyetalijcjs2014vol9issue1.pdf

Naor, M., Bernardes, E., & Coman, A. (2013). Theory of constraints: is it a theory and a

good one? International Journal of Production Research, 51(2), 542-554.

https://doi.org/10.1080/00207543.2011.654137

National Employment Law Project (April 2018). Ban the box: U.S. cities, counties, and

states adopt fair chance policies to advance employment opportunities for people

with past criminal convictions. Retrieved from

http://www.nelp.org/content/uploads/Ban-the-Box-Fair-Chance-State-and-Local-

Guide.pdf

National Institute of Justice (1997). Preventing crime: What works, what doesn't, what's

promising. Retrieved from https://www.ncjrs.gov/works/

Osborn, D. S., Kronholz, J. F., Finklea, J. T., & Cantonis, A. M. (2014). Technology-

savvy career counselling. Canadian Psychology, 55(4), 258-265.

https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038160

Pager, D., Quillian, L. (2005). Walking the talk? What employers say versus what they

do. American Sociological Review, 70(3), 355-380.

https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240507000301

Palinkas, L.A., Horwitz, C. A., Wisdom, J.P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015).

Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method

implementation research. Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental

Health Services Research, 42(5), 533-544. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-

0528-y

Pallais, A. (2014). Inefficient hiring in entry-level labor markets. The American

Economic Review, 104(11), 3565-3599. Retrieved from

http://scholar.harvard.edu/pallais/files/inefficient_hiring.pdf

https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.104.11.3565

Petersilia, J. (2004). What works in prisoner reentry? Reviewing and questioning the

evidence. Federal Probation, 68(2), 4-8. Retrieved from

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56944ef9a976af291c6b9145/t/571172ebc2e

a51df8fb840ce/1460761324686/What+works+in+prisoner+reentry+-

+FedProb+2004.pdf

Pettinato, T. R. (2014). Employment discrimination against ex-Offenders: The promise

and limits of title VII disparate impact theory. Marquette Law Review, 98(2),

831-879. Retrieved from: http://scholarship.law.marquette.edu/mulr/vol98/iss2/5

Pettit, B., & Western, B. (2004). Mass imprisonment and the life course: Race and class

inequality in U.S. incarceration. American Sociological Review, 69(2), 151-169.

https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240406900201

Pretorius, P. (2014). Introducing in-between decision points to toc's five focusing steps.

International Journal of Production Research, 52(2), 496-506.

https://doi.org/10.1080/00207543.2013.836612

Rade, C. B., Desmarais, S. L., & Mitchell, R. E. (2016). A meta-analysis of public

attitudes toward ex-offenders. Criminal Justice and Behavior, 43(9), 1260-1280.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854816655837

Sarre, R. (1999). Beyond 'what works: A 25-year jubilee retrospective of robert

    martinson. Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology, 34(1), 38-46.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/000486580103400103

Seiter, R. P., & Kadela, K. R. (2003). Prisoner reentry: What works, what does not, and

    what is promising. Crime & Delinquency, 49(3), 360-388.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128703049003002

Severson, M.E., Bruns, K., Veeh, C., & Lee, J. (2011). Prisoner reentry programming:

    Who recidivates and when. Journal of Offender Rehabilitation,50(6), .327-348.

    doi:10.1080/10509674.2011.582931

https://doi.org/10.1080/10509674.2011.582931

Solinas-Saunders, M., & Stacer, M.J., (2015). An analysis of ban the box policies through

    the prism of Merton's theory of unintended consequences of purposive social

    action. Critical Sociology, 41(7-8), 1187-

    1198.https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920515589001

Solomon, A. L. (June 2012). In search of a job: Criminal records as barriers to

    employment. National Institute of Justice Journal, 270, 42-51. Available at

    https://www.nij.gov/journals/270/pages/criminal-records.aspx

Steen, S., Lacock, T., & McKinzey, S. (2012). Unsettling the discourse of punishment?

    competing narratives of reentry and the possibilities for change. Punishment &

    Society, 14(1), 29-50. https://doi.org/10.1177/1462474511424681 Stenger, M.

    (2015). The first circuit strikes out in jones v. city of boston: A pitch for practical

    significance in disparate impact cases. Villanova Law Review, 60(2), 411-441.

Available at

https://digitalcommons.law.villanova.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://sear

ch.yahoo.com/&httpsredir=1&article=3276&context=vlr

Swanson, S. J., Langfitt-Reese, S., & Bond, G. R. (2012). Employer attitudes about

criminal histories. Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal, 35(5), 385-390.

https://doi.org/10.1037/h0094498

Swensen, J. G., Rakis, J., Snyder, M. G., & Loss, R. E. (2014). Engaging employers and

business in the hiring of individuals with criminal records. Journal of Applied

Rehabilitation Counseling, 45(4), 15-24. Available at

https://health.ebsco.com/products/cinahl-plus-with-full-text/allied-health-nursing

Taskforce on Prisoner Reentry (n.d.). Final report on prisoner reentry. Retrieved from

http://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc5300/sc5339/000113/014000/01

4502/unrestricted/20120338e.pdf

Taylor, L. J., Moersch, B. J., & Franklin, G. M. (2003). Applying the theory of

constraints to a public safety hiring process. Public Personnel Management, 32(3),

367-382. https://doi.org/10.1177/009102600303200304

Thomas, J., & Harden, A. (2008). Methods for the thematic synthesis of qualitative

research in systematic reviews. BMC Medical Research Methodology, 8(45), 45-

55. https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-8-45

Trochim, W. (2006, October 20). Qualitative validity. Retrieved from

http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/qualval.php

Trochim, W. (2006, October 20). Types of relationships. Retrieved from

http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/relation.php

Uggen, C., Vuolo, M., Lageson, S., Ruhland, E., & Whitham, H.K. (2014). The edge of

stigma: An experimental audit of the effects of low-level criminal records on

employment. Criminology, 52(4), 627-654. https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-

9125.12051

Vigne, N. L., Davies, E., Palmer, T., & Halberstadt, R. (2008). Release planning for

successful reentry: A guide for corrections, service provides, and community

groups. Retrieved from

http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411767_successful_reentry.pdf

Visher, C. & O'Connell, D. (2012). Incarceration and inmates' self-perceptions about

returning home. Journal of Criminal Justice, 40(5), 386-393.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2012.06.007

Visher, C. A., Lattimore, P. K., Barrick, K., & Tueller, S. (2016). Evaluating the long-

term effects of prisoner reentry services on recidivism: What types of services

matter? Justice Quarterly, 34(1), 136-165.

https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2015.1115539

Wanberg, C. W., Basbug, G., Van Hooft, E. J., & Samtani, A. (2012). Navigating the

black hole: Explicating layers of job search context and adaptational responses.

Personnel Psychology, 65(4), 887-926. https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12005

Wells, D. (2014). Training and preparing inmates for post-release employment.

Corrections Today, 76(6), 18-19. Retrieved from

https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/248574.pdf

Wesolowski, P. (2014). Using forums and message boards to recruit study participants in qualitative research. The Qualitative Report, 19(39), 1-15. Retrieved from https://nsuworks.nova.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=tqr

Wikoff, N., Linhorst, D. M., Morani, N. (2012). Recidivism among participants of a reentry program for prisoners released without supervision. Social Work Research, 36(4), 289-299. https://doi.org/10.1093/swr/svs021

Wilson, J. A. & Davis, R.C., (2006). Good intentions meet hard realities: An evaluation of the project greenlight reentry program. Criminology & Public Policy, 5(2), 303-338. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9133.2006.00380.x

Wilson, J.A. (2011). What did we learn from the evaluation of project greenlight? Federal Sentencing Reporter, 24(1), 76-79. https://doi.org/10.1525/fsr.2011.24.1.76

Wilson, J. A., & Zozula, C. (2012). Risk, recidivism, and rehabilitation another look at project greenlight. The Prison Journal, 92(2), 203-230. https://doi.org/10.1177/0032885512438870

Wright, B., Zang, S., Farabee, D., & Braatz, R. (2013). Prisoner reentry research from 2000 to 2010: Results of a narrative review. Criminal Justice Review, 39(1), 37-57. https://doi.org/10.1177/0734016813501192

Zundel, L. (2009). Pathways reentry program: Connecting with our community for change success. American Jails, 23(1), 35-38. Available at https://www.ebsco.com/products/research-databases/international-security-counter-terrorism-reference-center