EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS AND ATTITUDE TO EMPLOYMENT FOR MALE EX-OFFENDERS

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ABSTRACT

Working is a central aspect of life, as employment is a means of survival and it allows for both social interaction and self-determination. One group in particular has historically struggled to obtain employment, namely ex-offenders. Despite the large number of unemployed ex-offenders, counseling psychology has not paid much attention to the specific vocational needs for this particular population. This study describes the difficulties that male ex-offenders have when trying to obtain employment. Specifically, the relationship between perceived barriers to employment and job search attitudes are examined in an adult male non-violent and violent offender population. The participants included 150 English-speaking adult males with a criminal record, aged 18 and older, and who were currently unemployed. Results supported that there is a relationship between their perceived barriers to employment and job search attitude. Results also supported a relationship between type of offense committed (violent vs. non-violent), total number of criminal convictions, and highest level of education completed and their Barriers to Employment Success overall score and Job Search Attitude overall score, with the most significant relationship being between highest level of education and one’s overall barriers to employment. Results suggest that vocational programs should take more of a holistic approach, and incorporate interventions that are targeted at improving offenders’ attitudes, such as motivational interviewing, because it may help decrease their employment concerns and perceived employment barriers, and improve their attitudes.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Working is a central aspect of life because employment is a means of survival and it allows for both social interaction and self-determination (Blustein, 2006). Research has demonstrated that not only is work an important aspect of life, but it is also essential for one’s physical health (Fassinger, 2008) and mental health (Paul & Moser, 2009). There are many barriers that are experienced by individuals who are unemployed (Crites, 1969; Urbanaviciute, et al., 2016), which negatively impact their ability to obtain employment. Individuals who have job problems often suffer from issues with self-esteem, financial instability, relational conflicts, substance abuse, alcoholism, and additional mental health concerns (Blustein, 2006; Feather, 1990; Stearns, 1995). Though there are many barriers to employment (i.e., mental and physical health), one’s perceived barriers and attitude toward work affects one’s ability to handle and overcome such barriers (Bucken & Zajac, 2009).

Understanding one’s perceived barriers to employment and attitude toward work is important because the majority of one’s life is generally spent working or completing work-related activities, and work allows individuals to provide for themselves and their families. Though work is an important aspect of one’s life, many individuals do not have
the opportunity to obtain employment due to many anticipated and unanticipated employment barriers, and because of their job search attitude. One’s perceived barriers to employment can be broadly defined as one’s perceived difficulties in meeting one’s career aspirations (Urbanaviciute, et al., 2016), while one’s job search attitude is one’s overall attitude toward completing tasks needed to obtain employment (Liptak, 2010). Individuals with employment barriers and poor job search attitudes are likely to contribute to the nation’s unemployment rate. Since the U.S. recession of 2008, employment has risen steadily. As of May 2017, only 4.3% of U.S. citizens were unemployed (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017).

One group in particular, that of ex-offenders, has had a difficult time obtaining employment even before the recession, partly due to their perceived employment barriers and attitudes toward work. Ex-offenders are a unique marginalized group in our society that suffer from multiple hardships and barriers, and that generally sustains these hardships before incarceration, during incarceration, and after release. It is likely that these hardships and structural and interpersonal barriers affect their perceived employment barriers and job search attitude. Specifically, men with criminal records account for about 34% of all nonworking men between 25 and 54 years of age (Hamel, Firth, & Brodie, 2014). Studying ex-offenders’ barriers to employment and their attitude toward work is worthy of study because unemployment can negatively impact offenders’ health (Fassinger, 2008), confidence and sense of self (Paul & Moser, 2009), family system due to financial and government restrictions (McCarty et al., 2015), and their likelihood of re-offending (Marbley & Ferguson, 2005). Not only can it have a negative impact on the individual but it can also be financially costly to society (Basile, 2005).
The purpose of this study is to: (a) explore the relationship between perceived barriers to employment and job search attitudes for male ex-offenders, and (b) determine the relationship between type of offenses, number of criminal convictions, education level, and perceived barriers to employment and job search attitudes. It is hoped that through understanding the difficulties and perceived barriers to employment for male ex-offenders, that techniques can be created to help ex-offenders obtain employment, and ultimately provide ex-offenders with the opportunity to explore their unemployment barriers and job search attitude.

The following sections will highlight the negative effects of structural and interpersonal barriers to employment and will reiterate the importance of assisting ex-offenders in obtaining employment, which includes understanding employment barriers such as physical and mental health effects, family systems effects, and unemployment’s impact on future employment outcomes for the general population and ex-offenders.

Effects of Unemployment on Health

Physical health. There are many physical health concerns that increase one’s barriers to employment. Such physical health outcomes can create additional barriers that impact an individual’s life with short-term, or even long-term, effects. Unemployment has been associated with arthritis (Strully, 2009a) and dementia (Strully, 2009a), both of which can pose as physical barriers to employment. Additionally, heart attack (Dupre et al., 2012), heart disease (Dupre et al., 2012), hypertension (Levenstein, Smith, & Kaplan 2001), obesity (Deb, et al., 2011), and stroke (Gallo et al., 2004) are also associated with unemployment. Such medical conditions are costly to the individual and his or her family. Being unemployed is likely to increase levels of stress in one’s life (Pearlin,
Meneghan, Lieberman, & Mullan, 1981) due to the economic hardships that develop from unemployment and medical bills. Individuals who are unemployed also experience one of the more adverse side effects, a reduced life expectancy (Ceccherini-Nelli & Priebe, 2011; Sullivan & von Wachter, 2009), and poorer self-rated health (Strully, 2009b). It is likely that unemployed individuals suffer from poor physical health because stress can weaken the immune system, causing the body to become more receptive to sickness and diseases (Glaser & Kiecolt-Glaser, 2005), ultimately increasing their work-related problems. Also, individuals who are unemployed are more likely to be promiscuous (Davis, 2009) and use fewer forms of birth control, which could increase unplanned pregnancies and spread sexually transmitted diseases, causing additional financial and familial-related barriers to employment.

The perceived barriers to employment for ex-offenders are worthy of study because having a positive attitude toward work helps individuals view barriers as less challenging (Bucklen & Zajac, 2009). Therefore, if they have positive attitudes toward finding employment, they may view some of the physical health consequences of unemployment as less detrimental to obtaining reemployment. Managing perceived barriers to employment and maintaining a positive job search attitude will help individuals obtain employment, and employed individuals are likely to experience the least damaging health behaviors. They are likely to experience lower levels of stress, have the best eating habits, engage in the most physical activity, and engage in the least amount of habit-forming activities, such as smoking and alcohol use (Rosenthal et al., 2012).

**Mental health.** It is also likely that there are many mental health concerns that
increase one’s challenges in finding employment. Being unemployed can have a negative effect on one’s mental health (Paul & Moser, 2009) because one’s mental health and well-being decline the longer an individual remains unemployed (Hepworth, 1980). Unemployment is known to increase levels of depression (Dooley, Catalano, & Wilson, 1994), anxiety and affective disorders (Comino et al., 2003), social loneliness (Creed & Reynolds, 2011), and substance abuse (Mossakowski, 2008), which may ultimately increase barriers to employment. Additionally, unemployed individuals may be more likely to experience increased rates of admission into psychiatric hospitals (Adams, 1981; Eriksson et al., 2010) and experience an increase in suicide rates (Ceccherini-Nelli & Priebe, 2011).

Semi-skilled and unskilled workers, who comprise a large portion of the employed offender population, are more likely to experience poorer psychological well-being during times of unemployment compared to men of higher occupational status (Hepworth, 1980). The duration of unemployment and an association with poor psychological health are strongest in middle-aged groups of unemployed men (Jackson & Warr, 1984). Additionally, the individual’s loss of income is seen as an important factor for provoking psychological distress (Creed & Klisch, 2005) due to the financial burdens of unemployment. Individuals who are recurrently unemployed during their lives are likely to have the highest levels of anxiety and depression (Zenger, Brahler, Berth, & Stobel-Richter, 2011) compared to individuals who have never been unemployed. It is also likely that individuals who suffer from long periods of unemployment during their working years will experience an increase in mental health problems when they are living in their retired years, assuming one is able to obtain employment to retire in the future.
Taking both physical and mental health effects into account, some believe that there are two main hypotheses for the relationship between unemployment and overall health-related barriers. The first was proposed by Hammarstrom (1994) and focused on a ‘coping hypothesis’ that explores the possibility that unemployment may cause adverse changes in health behaviors, which in turn lead to a decline in one’s health by trying to find ways of coping with the stress (e.g. substance abuse, poor eating habits, and crime). This hypothesis could hold true for ex-offenders because they may already be familiar with these adverse coping mechanisms prior to their convictions. It is also likely that such adverse coping mechanisms further exasperate their barriers to employment and negatively impact their attitude towards work by causing additional stress. The next hypothesis is referred to as the ‘latent sickness hypothesis,’ which refers to the belief that pre-existing health barriers lead to both unemployment and poor health (Jusot, Khlat, Rochereau, & Sermet, 2008). This has been supported in literature showing that individuals with poor mental health will have an even more difficult time trying to obtain employment (Butterwoth et al., 2012).

**Effects of Unemployment on Family Systems**

Some individuals experience familial-related barriers to employment. Once an individual is unemployed, their family is also negatively impacted, subsequently increasing one’s overall barriers (Christofferesen & DePanfilis, 2009; Haid & Seiffge-Krenke, 2013; Rook, Dooley, & Catalano, 1991). High levels of pessimism, stress, and lower life satisfaction were found in couples where one partner was unemployed (Haid & Seiffge-Krenke, 2013). It is likely that increased levels of pessimism, due to familial
unemployment, will also negatively impact one’s job search attitude (Lazarus, 1991). Compared to relationships where both partners are employed, a relationship where one partner is unemployed demonstrates more health-risk behaviors, which are potential employment barriers, for the unemployed individual (e.g., increased use of cigarettes and smoking cannabis) (Haid & Seiffge-Krenke, 2013). Additionally, barriers to employment of one spouse are also known to affect the other spouse in a negative way. Women whose husbands were unemployed were significantly more likely than other women to experience psychological distress and barriers (Rook, Dooley, & Catalano, 1991). The spouse of an unemployed individual’s social support is negatively impacted by unemployment (Atkinson, Liem, & Liem, 1986). It may be likely that such negative effects on the family’s support network are due, in part, to the negative effects unemployment has on the husband’s psychological well-being (Atkinson et al., 1986).

Additionally, a lack of social support is known to be a barrier for some individuals who are seeking employment (Brown, Lent, & Knoll, 2013). Perceived social support also varies depending on the type of community in which one lives. For example, individuals who are unemployed and from rural communities may experience more social support, and subsequently less perceived barriers, than those who are unemployed and live in urban communities (Gore, 1978).

Barriers that prevent a parental figure(s) from obtaining employment are also known to have effects on the children who live in the household. Individuals who experience employment barriers and are unemployed are more likely to engage in physical abuse or neglect of their children (Christoffersen & DePanfilis, 2009), and are likely to continue abusing their children due to sustained financial barriers over time.
(Broman, Hamilton, & Hoffman, 1990), further indicating a negative effect of financial barriers. Not only are unemployed men more likely to hit their children, but unemployed men are also more likely to engage in spousal abuse (Cunradi, Todd, Duke, & Ames, 2009). Overall, individuals who are unemployed are more likely to act out in violent matters (Broman et al., 1990; Christoffersen & DePanfilis, 2009; Cunradi et al., 2009), which may affect one’s likelihood of committing a violent act against a family member, or committing an additional criminal offense.

**Impact on Future Employment**

Once an individual is unemployed, it is more difficult to obtain reemployment (Butterwoth, Leach, Pirkis, & Kelaher, 2012), which may be due, in part, to increased perceived barriers and a negative job search attitude as a result of additional failed employment attempts. It is likely that the negative effects associated with unemployment make getting back on one’s feet even more difficult because being unemployed over time can increase an individual’s mental health barriers (Paul & Moser, 2009), and subsequently decrease their likelihood to get reemployed. This is highly likely for ex-offenders, as many individuals lose their jobs while incarcerated. Once an individual is reemployed, even after a long period of being unemployed, it is likely that he or she will experience an overall increase in his or her sense of well-being (Isaksson, 1990). Time spent unemployed is an important factor because studies have shown that it is best for individuals to find employment as quickly as possible in order to prevent increased health barriers, as well as an increased chance of future unemployment. However, one’s perceived barriers and poor job search attitude make finding timely employment difficult. Moreover, Krueger and Mueller (2011) sampled unemployed workers and found that the
longer an individual was unemployed, the less likely he or she would be to continue the job search process. This is probable for ex-offenders, as many remain unemployed years after their release (The Second Chance Act, 2007) due to employment barriers and poor job search attitudes (Varghese & Cummings, 2012).

In general, one’s barriers to employment and poor job search attitude have an effect on one’s unemployment status. Though the effects of unemployment significantly impact the individual as well as his or her family, studies have shown that once an individual is employed, his or her negative symptoms will decrease, or be obsolete (Graetz, 1993; Paul & Moser, 2009). This is an important factor because employment could significantly increase the overall health and stability of the individual and his or her family.

The following sections will specifically explore the criminal justice population and bring awareness to some of the specific barriers they experience, as well as variables that influence their attitude toward work.

**Criminal Justice Population**

As briefly mentioned, ex-offenders are a specific population that continually experience barriers to employment. Sampson and Laub (2005) argue that the impacts of one’s criminal conviction and incarceration depend critically on an individual’s life-course stage. The point at which one transitions from late adolescence through early adulthood is found to be a critical time in one’s development, as this is the period at which most individuals are exploring their career options and developing social connections. As of December 2015, approximately 27% of individuals incarcerated are between the ages of 18-29; this supports the notion that a quarter of individuals
incarcerated are in the critical point in their life course (U.S. Department of Justice, 2016). However, little research explores why ex-offenders struggle to obtain and maintain employment (i.e., their perceived barriers and job search attitude), and fails to explore the effects of unemployment on ex-offenders.

As previously mentioned, unemployment has a general negative effect on one’s mental health (Paul & Moser, 2009). However, mental health effects may be larger in the criminal justice population compared to the general unemployed population. James and Glaze (2006) found that a large number of incarcerated individuals meet the criteria for psychiatric illnesses according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). It has been estimated that between 15% and 20% of U.S. inmates have a severe psychiatric disorder (e.g., schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, major depression), making it difficult to obtain employment for the criminal justice population due to mental health barriers (Torrey et al., 2010). In addition, chances of habit-forming activities such as smoking and alcohol use are high in the general unemployed population (Rosenthal et al., 2012), but are also experienced by the criminal justice population. Though inmates are incarcerated, many of them also manage to abuse substances while in prison, which can increase further distress. More than 50% of participants from two different state correctional facilities reported using illegal substances while incarcerated. Additionally, individuals who had symptoms that met criteria for two or more psychological disorders were more likely to report higher levels of substance use than individuals who met the criteria for one or no psychological disorders (Simpler & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2005).

Acts of violence are high in the general unemployed population (Christoffersen &
DePanfilis, 2009; Cunradi et al., 2009) and in the criminal justice population, as acts of violence are a significant reason several individuals become incarcerated. One would hope that incarceration could eliminate many of the negative social networks that individuals have in society, but this is not always the case. Along with suffering from mental illness and drug use, many inmates are involved in gang-related violence while in prison. Employment barriers such as an inmate’s age, education level, sentence length, and whether or not the individual was incarcerated due to committing a violent offense are all predictors of violent behaviors while incarcerated (Worrall & Morris, 2012).

Similar to the general unemployed population, the criminal justice population is likely to experience many employment barriers. Inmates who are near release experience significant worry about what life may look like for them once released from prison. If an inmate has positive family support, has children, and has completed in-prison substance abuse treatment programs, then he or she will likely be more optimistic about life after incarceration, which may ultimately positively impact their job search attitude (Creed, Patton, & Bartrum, 2004). However, barriers such as negative family influences, longer incarceration times, and a history of serious drug use reduce optimistic attitudes and beliefs about life after incarceration (Visher & O’Connell, 2012).

**Employment in the criminal justice population.**

Once an inmate is released from prison, being able to manage one’s perceived barriers and job search attitude is important for the ex-offender’s success. An individual’s possibility to commit a crime is affected by his or her work status: employed vs. unemployed (Laub & Sampson, 1993; Needels, 1996). One study found that crime went down as earnings increased (Needels, 1996), while Laub and Sampson (1993) propose
that job instability was associated with higher arrest rates. Furthermore, Uggen and Thompson (2003) found that earning money by way of legitimate employment, not by illegal means, tended to reduce illegal earnings. Andrews, Bonta, and Hoge (1990) acknowledged eight risk factors, the ‘Central Eight,’ that have a significant impact on criminal recidivism, with work (employed vs. unemployed) being one of them. In sum, when an individual has a legitimate means of employment, which can be obtained through managing one’s perceived barriers to employment and having a positive job search attitude (Varghese & Cummings, 2012), they are less likely to engage in criminal behavior, reducing the likelihood of imprisonment. Furthermore, most soon-to-be released prisoners identify finding a job as the single most important factor in staying out of trouble once they integrate back into society (Visher et al., 2004), as obtaining employment may help reduce rates of recidivism.

An increase in criminal activity has often been associated with unemployment. Hooghe, Vanhoutte, Hardyns and Bircan (2011) conducted a study that looked at criminal activity in relation to unemployment and found that unemployed individuals had an increase in criminal activity. This means that if an ex-offender is unemployed, he or she is more likely to commit an additional offense and create yet another barrier to employment, as employers do not want to hire ex-offenders who have multiple offenses (Haslewood-Pocsik, Brown, & Spencer, 2008). Specifically, the study found that unemployed individuals committed more property crime and violent crime. It is believed that barriers such as a concentration of poverty, a lack of resources, and various aspects of social inadequacy have all been linked to explain a concentration of crime in the unemployed. Being unemployment can lead to a loss of income and an increased risk of
poverty, which could influence an individual’s need to commit property crime in hopes of obtaining money to support oneself and one’s family. This is particularly important in relation to ex-offenders because unemployment could potentially increase their chances of recidivism, based on the likelihood of increased in criminal acts by those who are unemployed (Marbley & Ferguson, 2005), continuing the cycle of employment barriers.

**Effects on a crime-related family.**

Ex-offenders who cannot find work may struggle to support their families once released from prison. Having a prior criminal record makes it difficult to support one’s family due to several barriers enforced by government and federal law restrictions. In 1996, the welfare reform law passed a lifetime ban on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) for individuals with a felony drug conviction after August 22, 1996 (McCarty, Falk, Aussenberg, & Carpenter, 2015). However, states can opt-out or even change the federal ban through enacting their own state law, which must be passed by the state’s legislature and governor. As of July 2015, 12 states have lifetime disqualification for drug felons, 12 states have no disqualifications for drug felons, and 27 states have modified the disqualifications (McCarty et al., 2015). There is also a federal ban on SNAP (previously known as Food Stamps) benefits for individuals who have a drug related felony. Yet as of July 2015, 12 states have a lifetime disqualification for drug felons, 23 states have no disqualification for drug felons, and 18 states have modified the disqualifications (McCarty et al., 2015), which may exasperate their work related barriers compared to that of the general population. Additionally, there are several federal drug - and other crime-related barriers in federal housing assistance programs. Individuals who have committed drug-related or violent crimes are subject to denial or termination in
Public Housing, Section 8 Vouchers, and Project-Based Section 8 housing. Those who are listed on the sex-offender registry receive a mandatory denial of assistance in Public Housing, Section 8 Vouchers, and Project-Based Section 8 housing; however, some states have modified the disqualifications (McCarty et al., 2015).

Taken together, not only is unemployment related to poor health and, at times, spousal and child abuse, but chances of employment may also be negatively impacted by federal and state regulations. Such regulations can create more barriers and make it harder for the individual to care for his or her family. Understanding the difficulties experienced by ex-offenders is important, as unemployment ultimately produces more barriers compared to the barriers experienced by the non-crime related general population. It also possibly produces negative job search attitudes because perceptions of barriers negatively affect career attitudes and behaviors (Albert & Luzzo, 1999).

**The criminal justice population as able-bodied workers.**

Combining the hardships of individuals who have been incarcerated with current levels of unemployment leads to one of the main difficulties for ex-offenders: job obtainment. Ex-offenders make up a portion of able-bodied workers who could be contributing members of society by obtaining part-time or full-time employment. However, the job searching process for ex-offenders is not an easy one (Lukies, Graffam, & Shinkfield, 2011). In 2015, 458 per 100,000 U.S. adult residents were sentenced to federal or state prisons (U.S. Department of Justice, 2016). More surprisingly, however, is that about half (51%) of all federal inmates were serving time for one or multiple drug offenses (U.S. Department of Justice, 2016). The majority of crimes committed are considered non-violent crimes, and studies have shown that non-violent offenders are
more likely to be accepted by society, compared to offenders who committed violent crimes (Graffam et al., 2008). At the end of 2015, 88.8% of all male inmates were aged 18 to 54, while an estimated 2.4% were aged 65 or older, demonstrating that the majority of inmates in state or federal prisons were aged 54 or younger (U.S. Department of Justice, 2016). The majority of inmates in prison will be released well within their working years. Though every year a large number of the U.S. population is sentenced to federal or state prisons, a large number of the prison population is also released back into society. In 2015, ex-offenders released from prison (641,027) exceeded offenders’ admissions into prison (608,318) (U.S. Department of Justice, 2016). The number of inmates released from prison displays the increased number of able-bodied workers who could be hired for part-time or full-time employment and who could contribute to the U.S. economy.

Though there are many ex-offenders released every year, approximately 641,027 in 2015 (U.S. Department of Justice, 2016), nearly 60% cannot obtain employment, even after one full year of their release from prison (The Second Chance Act, 2007). This is a large concern because ex-offenders need employment to support themselves, their families, and ultimately to avoid re-offending (Marbley & Ferguson, 2005). The Urban Institute’s Returning Home Study in Maryland found that 65% of the prisoners had worked during the six months prior to incarceration. However, for half of the participants, the longest they had ever maintained a job was two years or less. In addition, nearly half had been fired from a job at least once before (Visher et al., 2004). This may explain high levels of unemployment, a lack of stability in work experiences, a high level of job firings within the criminal justice population, and, in turn, perceived barriers to
employment and problematic job search attitudes.

If ex-offenders were able to gain employment, they could positively contribute to society by paying their taxes and not costing society money through expenses associated with their criminal activity (Marbley & Ferguson, 2005). The cost of incarcerating one individual is estimated to be around $30,000 per year (Basile, 2005). Alarmingly, in some states the yearly cost of incarcerating inmates is more than the cost of welfare and higher education combined (Brann, 1993). Even with these findings, there has been a significant decline in the number of vocational programs offered in prisons (Lawrence, Mears, Dublin, & Travis, 2002), making it difficult for ex-offenders to know how to manage their perceived barriers to employment, or establish positive job search attitudes. Furthermore, ex-offenders experience a lifetime reduction in earnings, between 10% and 30% (Western & Pettit, 2000), which increases their personal and financial barriers.

**Employer bias.**

While there are many barriers to employment for ex-offenders, many of these barriers could be managed, or minimized, by the ex-offenders themselves. However, employer bias is a difficult barrier to overcome (Albright & Denq, 1996). An employer’s willingness to hire an ex-offender varies (Miller, 1979), and may be dependent on the ex-offender’s level of education (Albright & Denq, 1996), type of offense committed (Albright & Denq, 1996), and number of criminal convictions (Haslewood-Pocsik, Brown, & Spencer, 2008). As ex-offenders’ level of education increase, employers are more willing to hire individuals with criminal records (Albright & Denq, 1996), therefore increased levels of education may decrease barriers to employment. Additionally, employers are more likely to hire individuals who have been convicted of drug-related
offense or driving while intoxicated compared to individuals who have been convicted of sexual assault, murder, and crimes against children (Hulsey, 1990). This means that committing a non-violent offense, compared to a violent offense, may also decrease one’s barriers to employment.

Even with government incentives and tax breaks for businesses, such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit program (United States Department of Labor: Employment and Training Administration, 2017), many employers do not want to hire ex-offenders. To date, no study has been conducted to determine whether or not there is a relationship between one’s level of education, type of offense committed, and number of criminal convictions to one’s perceived barriers to employment and job search attitude. Having a positive attitude toward work has been found to help ex-offenders view barriers as less challenging (Bucklen & Zajac, 2009), while one’s perceptions of barriers can negatively affect their career attitudes and behaviors (Albert & Luzzo, 1999). Though ex-offenders have little control over employer bias, if they have a positive attitude toward work, then they may not allow employer bias to greatly influence their job search process.

The previous sections highlighted the effects of unemployment on the criminal justice population. In addition, the sections explored some of the struggles the ex-offenders have when trying to obtain employment. The following sections will briefly explore why ex-offenders have such difficulties when trying to obtain employment, specifically related to their perceived barriers to employment and job search attitude, as these barriers can negatively impact their attitude (Albert & Luzzo, 1999).

**Perceived Barriers**

There are many perceived external and internal barriers that are experienced by
individuals who are unemployed (Urbanaviciute et al., 2016; Crites, 1969). One’s perceived barriers to employment can be broadly defined as one’s perceived difficulties in meeting one’s career goals. The literature describes external barriers as environment-focused and contextual factors such as financial problems, family demands, and employment restrictions (Urbanaviciute et al., 2016). Crites (1969) described perceived external barriers as external frustrations, such as discrimination in the workplace and wages. Compared to external barriers, internal barriers are described as person-focused and refer to one’s perceived lack of ability, motivation, or interest in pursuing career goals (Urbanaviciute et al., 2016), while Crites (1969) described internal barriers as struggles with one’s self-concept and motivation to achieve.

One’s perceived career barriers generally negatively impact one’s career goals and are defined as perceived because they are the career-related barriers that the individual believes currently exist or may experience in the future (Albert & Luzzo, 1999). As cited in Urbanaviciute (2016), one’s perceived barriers have been associated with less career planning (Cardoso & Moreira, 2009), readiness (Hirschi, 2001), career indecisions (Creed, Patton, & Bartrum, 2004), and lowered career aspirations (Creed, Conlon, & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2007). Urbanaviciute (2016) argue that one’s perceived internal or external barriers make it difficult for an individual to see one’s self in a chosen vocation. Additionally, one’s perceived career barriers are predictive of his or her likelihood to foreclose on career options (Leal-Muniz & Constantine, 2005). One’s tendency to foreclose on career options refers to when an individual prematurely commits to a career choice without fully exploring all of his or her career options (Blustein, Ellis, & Devenis, 1989). Though interest in perceived career barriers appears to have increased
over the years, research studies have not examined the role that one’s job search attitude plays in his or her perceived career barriers.

Exploring the perceived barriers to employment and job search attitudes for male ex-offenders are important to study because their internal influences (e.g., attitude) may interact with their external influences (e.g., barriers) to effect career development variables (Gottfredson, 1981). Specifically, Albert and Luzzo (1999) proposed that one’s perception of barriers might negatively affect one’s career attitudes and behavior. Albert and Luzzo (1999) further argued that Lent, Brown, and Hackett’s (1994) social cognitive career theory (SCCT) is a useful theoretical framework for examining how perceived career barriers influence one’s career outcome. Additionally, the updated SCCT model, which can be adapted for the use of ex-offenders (SCCT; Brown, Lent, & Knoll, 2013), includes the career self-management model, which adds an emphasis on interpersonal influences (e.g., job search attitude) and contextual influences (e.g., barriers) proximal to choice behavior. Lent, Brown, and Hackett (2000) propose that the effects of perceived barriers are mitigated by an individual’s internal characteristics. While SCCT will be explained in greater detail in Chapter Two, when taken together, this theory supports that there should be a relationship between perceived barriers and job search attitude.

To date, no known research study has specifically looked at the perceived barriers to employment for male ex-offenders (Brown, 2011). The American Psychologist has published articles from 1985 to 2002 on prison growth and policy issues, juvenile delinquents, and violent offenders; however, the publications did not focus on the barriers and supports to employment, which are critical to the ex-offenders’ reintegration (Brown, 2011). Most research has looked at employer bias, type of offense committed, and highest
level of education completed (Albright & Denq, 1996) as barriers to employment for male ex-offenders, but has failed to study the perceived barriers of ex-offenders. Varghese and Cummings (2012) explained that research is limited to macro-level perspectives, such as environmental barriers to work, while little attention is given to micro-level or person-centered issues, such as ex-offenders’ career behaviors and attitudes. Further research suggests the majority of studies conducted have looked at the employers’ attitudes about ex-offenders, or toward hiring ex-offenders (Albright & Denq, 1996; Graffam, Shinkfield, Lavelle, & Hardcastle, 2004; Jensen & Giegold, 1976); however, a gap in the literature reveals that research studies have not considered male ex-offenders’ perceived barriers or their job search attitude.

**Job Search Attitude**

One of the main interpersonal variables that have been found to influence an individual’s success is his or her attitude. Bandura (1977) believed that one’s beliefs and attitudes about his or her ability to perform a given function were the most critical factors in determining one’s life achievements. Specifically, one’s job search attitude may be a determining factor in his or her employment outcome, as individuals who have a positive job search attitude are likely to view their employment barriers as less challenging (Bucklen & Zajac, 2009). Understanding the environmental perspectives (i.e., barriers) that influence an ex-offender’s ability to obtain employment is important to study, but Varghese and Cummings (2012) also argue that personal characteristics, such as an ex-offender’s attitude, is worthy of further study. Varghese and Cummings (year) further propose that one’s attitude may mediate the relationships between vocational interventions and desired outcome. Bucklen and Zajac (2009) concluded that the greatest
difference between individuals who followed the rules of parole (i.e., parole success) compared to those who did not follow the rules of parole (i.e., parole violators) was found in their employment attitudes. The parole success group was willing to work any job, compared to their counterparts who were unwilling to work entry-level jobs. While the parole success group was also dissatisfied with their income and working conditions associated with their jobs, they generally saw these challenges as barriers that could be overcome. This shows that having a positive attitude toward work helped them view barriers as less challenging. Bucklen and Zajac explain, “our results do not suggest that resource deprivation and structural barriers are unimportant but that reentry outcomes are a product of those things plus individual offenders’ attitudes and perceptions of them and of their skill in dealing with them” (2009, p. 260). For example, Lazarus (1991) found that there is a relationship between one’s attitude (i.e., levels of optimism and pessimism) and one’s perception of their external barriers. Research demonstrated that optimistic individuals are more likely to perceive external barriers, such as financial demands, as challenging rather than threatening to their achievement of vocational goals (Creed, Patton, & Bartrum, 2004), further demonstrating that there is a relationship between different types of perceived barriers and attitude.

Notably, one research study found that one of the main reasons ex-offenders could not obtain employment was because of their negative attitudes (Tschopp et al., 2007). In addition, Holzer, Raphael, and Stoll (2003) looked at supply-side barriers (i.e., the ex-offender’s own characteristics and attitudes), such as limited education, cognitive skills, work experience, substance abuse, as well as other physical and mental health problems. However, they did not explore the relationship between those supply-side
barriers and their attitudes. Though Holzer et al. (2003) mentioned that an ex-offender’s attitude may affect his or her ability to obtain employment, no specific examples or research were cited, further supporting the notion that the relationship between perceived barriers and one’s job search attitude are not studied in the literature.

**Perceived Barriers and Job Search Attitude Relationship**

It is important to study the relationship between perceived barriers and job search attitude because one’s attitude may influence the severity of such perceived barriers, as well as their ability to overcome perceived career barriers (Lazarus, 1991). In addition, one’s attitude may mediate the relationships between vocational interventions and desired outcome (Varghese & Cummings, 2012). For example, if a career counselor is working with an ex-offender to minimize or overcome career barriers, but is not addressing the ex-offender’s negative attitude, job search outcomes may not be successful. It is also pertinent to study this relationship because employment interventions may need to be altered by counseling psychologists to better assist offenders in obtaining employment by not only addressing the external forces (i.e., barriers), but also internals factors (i.e., attitude) that influence one’s ability to find work. To maximize employment outcomes, counseling psychologists’ interventions cannot address one without addressing the other. One study that looked at an employment readiness program found that if the ex-offender has an honest and healthy attitude, the job-search coach is able to work with him or her on overcoming career barriers and obtaining employment. However, if the ex-offender has a negative or closed-off attitude, the job-search coach feels compelled to address the client’s attitude before working on employment barriers and employment needs (Tschopp et al., 2007).
Varghese and Cummings (2012) claim there is a deficit that counseling psychologists who are knowledgeable in vocational psychology and offenders can fill. They argue for the use and development of an offender employment barriers scale to help assess the employment needs and abilities of each offender, and as previously mentioned by Varghese and Cummings, it is beneficial to also explore offenders’ attitudes. As such, determining the relationships between ex-offenders perceived barriers and job search attitude could highlight an ex-offender’s strengths or areas of concern for treatment. Although dated, Gendreau, Goggin, and Gray (1998) reported that even though there is a direct relationship between employment and recidivism, current offender risk assessments do not effectively explore offenders’ employment-related attitudes regarding work, specifically one’s job search attitude. Furthermore, the majority of existing employment programs do not target an offender’s career attitudes (Varghese & Cummings, 2012). The findings of this study might inform scholars who engage in future scale development to create an offender employment barriers scale.

Studying the relationship between perceived barriers and job search attitude could highlight areas of concern for offenders, as well as their strengths. It is possible there is a relationship between perceived barriers and job search attitude, and such perceived barriers to employment are interrelated, suggesting that employment strategies need to take a broader approach to help ex-offenders obtain employment. Such strategies should include not only external job search techniques (i.e., resume building, interview techniques), but also internal job search techniques, such as counseling interventions to improve one’s interpersonal characteristics, including one’s job search attitude. The majority of vocational interventions offered in the prison systems include external job
search influences, such as work release programs, specific job training, and programs that allow inmates to obtain general equivalency diploma, or even college education credits; however, the effectiveness of such interventions has not been well-established in the literature (Travis & Petersilia, 2001). This relationship is important to the field of research, as it can demonstrate the types of variables that should be addressed when developing an employment intervention program, or what variables can be used to help develop an offender employment barriers scale.

Summary

This chapter introduced the importance of studying unemployment in ex-offenders, specifically the relationship between perceived barriers to employment for male ex-offenders as well as their job search attitude. Evidence was provided to support why it is important to understand the difficulties that ex-offenders have when trying to obtain employment, such as how unemployment increases barriers that are impacted by one’s mental and physical health, as well as one’s family. Employer bias is also a barrier that is experienced by ex-offenders, compared to their counterparts. This chapter also explored the potential relationship between variables of employer bias as measured by the type of offense committed, number of criminal convictions, and educational level, and how such variables may influence one’s perceived barriers to employment and job search attitude.

Fouad (2006) has stated that some social justice interventions that can be used for the criminal justice population include: 1) decreasing employment barriers, 2) increasing employment preparation opportunities, and 3) decreasing discrimination. Fassinger and Gallor (2006) put an emphasis on advocating for changes in policy and laws to further
promote educational and work opportunities for the criminal justice population. By incorporating Blustein’s (2008) policy recommendations of eliminating racism, increasing diversity training, and enhancing equality in the labor market to the criminal justice population, one may increase opportunities of employment for ex-offenders. Taken together, these studies indicated that, when individuals are imprisoned it limits the amount of money they can contribute to their family, it increases the amount of money tax payers must spend, and ultimately it negatively affects the local communities and their economy in areas that have higher rates of ex-offenders, which can negatively affect the whole surrounding community. It is hoped that by studying the relationship between perceived barriers to employment and job search attitude, interventions can be developed to better meet the needs of ex-offenders.

The following chapter will explore SCCT (SCCT; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994), the literature review on barriers to employment, and job search attitude.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this literature review is to provide additional support for the aims of this dissertation, which are: (a) explore the relationship between perceived barriers to employment and job search attitudes for male ex-offenders, and (b) determine the relationship between type of offenses, number of criminal convictions, education level, and perceived barriers to employment and job search attitudes. The review of the literature will cover the major barriers to employment for ex-offenders and job search attitude. The following sections will be discussed in the literature review: SCCT with the Criminal Justice Population, Barriers to Employment (e.g., Personal and Financial, Emotional and Physical, Decision-Making and Planning, Job Seeking Knowledge, Training and Education), Additional Barriers to Employment, Employee’s Attitudes, Job Search Attitude (e.g., Luck vs. Planning, Uninvolved vs. Involved, Pessimistic vs. Optimistic, Help From Others vs. Self-Help, Passive vs. Active), Interventions to Assist Ex-Offenders, and Unemployment as a Risk for Reoffending.

Social Cognitive Career Theory with the Criminal Justice Population

SCCT (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994) can be employed to study the
unemployment concerns of ex-offenders. The original SCCT model consisted of three interrelated models intended to explain interest development, choice-making, and performance and persistence in education and vocational contexts. A fourth SCCT model, aimed at satisfaction/well-being in educational and occupational contexts, has also been presented with a goal of developing a more cohesive model (Lent & Brown, 2006). Lent and Brown (2013) argue that, to date, the focus of SCCT has, metaphorically speaking, been more on the “destination than on the journey” (p. 557). For example, SCCT has focused on the outcome of job selection rather than the process of selecting the job, and how individuals then manage the challenges of the job. Lent and Brown (2013) propose adding a career self-management model to SCCT. Adding the career self-management model is particularly important when studying unemployment of ex-offenders because the process, or ‘journey,’ for finding a job is often a difficult one, as employment barriers and job search attitude may create challenges for ex-offenders trying to obtain employment.

The career self-management model (see Figure 1 in Lent & Brown, 2013), which adds an emphasis on interpersonal influences proximal to choice behavior, focuses on the process aspects of career development. The new model is primarily concerned with “how, under varying environmental conditions, people make career-related decisions, negotiate the transition from school to work, find jobs, pursue personal goals, maintain vitality, manage multiple roles, and respond to career setbacks” (2013, p. 559). This new model is intended to complement, rather than substitute, the four existing SCCT models by acknowledging that there are more influential, environmental, and personal factors than previously discussed in earlier SCCT models. Figure 4 in Lent, Brown, and Hackett
(2000) demonstrates how perceived barriers are a result of coping efficacy beliefs, past personal barrier experiences, and perceived barriers through vicarious learning. Coping efficacy is one’s belief that he or she can overcome particular environmental or personality-based obstacles. Such proximal barriers can negatively affect one’s interests, goals, and action to career choice behavior (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000). With regards to ex-offenders, it is likely that their ability to obtain employment is affected by many environmental conditions, (e.g., criminal record, employer bias), but it is important to determine what other factors influence their ability to get a job, such as one’s perceived barriers and job search attitude.

The career self-management model is based on the assumption that people generally have some form of personal control, or agency, in some areas of their own career development. As cited in Lent and Brown (2013), agency is due, in part, to an individual’s ability to engage in planning, intentional action, self-reflection, and self-reaction (Bandura, 2001, 2006b). It is likely that these capabilities provide individuals with the opportunity to engage in their own career choice and development (Brown & Lent, 2013). As further explained by Lent and Brown (2013), only accounting for one’s agency does not mean that people have control over their lives. Instead Lent and Brown emphasize that “people do not operate as autonomous agents. Nor is their behavior wholly determined by situational influences. Rather, human functioning is a product of a reciprocal interplay of intrapersonal, behavioral, and environmental determinants . . .” (Bandura, 2006b, p. 165). The career self-management model focuses on such intrapersonal, behavioral, and environment determinants, which include one’s barriers and job search attitude.
Brown, Lent, and Knoll (2013) discussed the new model’s relevance to offender career development. The SCCT process model acknowledges that the amount of time and energy ex-offenders put toward the job-search process, and their level of persistence when faced with adversity, may somewhat depend on:

(a) job-search self-efficacy, (b) job-search outcome expectations (e.g., expectations for finding a desirable job), (c) goals (e.g., intentions to perform specific job-search behaviors), (d) availability of a social network of support for the job search and its emotional strains, and (e) the presence of barriers to the process (e.g., unavailability of certain classes of jobs, lack of transportation) (p. 1056)

SCCT-based interventions should address the ex-offender’s “willingness to work, employment preparation, job finding, job maintenance, and overcoming employment-related barriers” (p. 1056). For the purposes of this paper, it is most influential to not only study the often-researched environmental determinates, but also study the interpersonal (e.g., job search attitude) and behavioral variables that are likely affecting the unemployment of ex-offenders, as highlighted in the SCCT framework. As a result, this model will be used as a guide to the present investigation, but will not be tested.

**Barriers to Employment**

There are several barriers to employment that should be mentioned, but will not be explored in the context of this study. These additional barriers include liability issues (Bushway, Stoll, & Weiman, 2007), race (Pager, 2003), and social factors (Hagan, 1993). Bushway et al. (2007) found that one impact for unemployment of ex-offenders is the liability issue of employers who hire ex-offenders as employees. In the past, and
currently, if an ex-offender committed a crime at the work place the employer could be held liable because he or she is the one who hired an individual with a criminal background. Further, Bushway et al. (2007) found that an employer may be reluctant to hire an ex-offender if the employer thinks it may cost him or her more money in the long-run due to liability. Employers have lost 72% of negligent hiring cases, with an average settlement of more than $1.6 million (Connerley, Arvey, & Bernardy. 2001). Albright and Denq (1996) sampled 300 employers in the Dallas and Houston areas and found that government incentives have a positive effect on employer’s willingness to hire ex-offenders, with the exception of Targeted Job Tax Credits (TJTC). Employers are more willing to hire ex-offenders who are bonded, insured, and licensed. Bonding displayed the highest effect compared to insured and licensed (Albright & Denq, 1996). However, for the employer to know whether or not the potential employee has a criminal record, the employer must run a background check.

The stigma associated with a criminal record may be further pronounced for specific subgroups, such as underrepresented racial or ethnic groups (Cooke, 2004). Pew Center on the States (2009) found that for both men and women, 1 in 45 European Americans are under correctional supervision, while 1 in 11 African Americans and 1 in 27 Latinos are in prison. Race and ethnic backgrounds are also believed to play a role in the hiring of ex-offenders. Pager (2003) showed that European Americans with a criminal record had a 50% reduction in the probability of a callback compared to European Americans who did not have a criminal background, whereas African Americans had a 64% reduction in the probability of getting called back if they were
convicted of a crime. Further, Pager (2003) found that African Americans who had
criminal records or no criminal records were less likely to hear from employers than
European Americans who had criminal records. This study helped show that employers
discriminate against ex-offenders, and that discrimination is more prevalent against
African Americans compared to their European American counterparts. In addition,
Wang, Mears, and Bales (2010) studied male ex-prisoners who were released from
Florida prisons between January 2000 and June 2001 ($N = 13,272$ African American male
ex-prisoners) ($N = 8,648$ European American male ex-prisoners). They found that
African American ex-offenders who were released into predominantly African American
neighborhoods with high unemployment rates were more likely to recidivate with violent
crimes, while European American counterparts did not show such effects.

Also, when considering the employment difficulties for ex-offenders it is
important to consider the social changes that have taken place over the years since an ex-
offender has been incarcerated. For example, technology continues to change over the
years, and being incarcerated means that ex-offenders may be re-entering into a world
that he or she is not familiar with due to technological advances. Hagan (1993) found
that another social factor that could affect employment is the destruction of many social
networks, due to one’s criminal past, that may be necessary for an individual to obtain
employment. Being incarcerated prevents the ex-offender from developing and
maintaining professional networks while in prison and once out of prison. Furthermore,
prison may strengthen the ex-offender’s ties to criminal networks (i.e. gangs) that may
facilitate continued criminal activity. Wolff and Draine (2003) argued that ex-offenders
might veer from access to legitimate work opportunities, and steer toward illegal income due to previous criminal ties while in prison. Also, as already mentioned, due to employer biases (Graffam et al., 2008), professionals may not want to network with an ex-offender. A discussion of perceived barriers to employment, which is of specific interest in this study, follows.

**Perceived Barriers to Employment**

Liptak’s (2011) reviewed the literature and analyzed programs and interventions designed to help job seekers overcome employment related barriers. It was found that their employment-related barriers cluster into five distinct categories: personal and financial, emotional and physical, decision-making and planning, job-seeking knowledge, and training and education. To date, no known research looks at the *perceived* barriers to employment for male ex-offenders. This being the case, the literature review will explore barriers to employment for male ex-offenders, including external barriers, which are environmental and contextual factors such as financial problems, family demands, and employment restrictions (Urbanaviciute et al., 2016). It will also explore internal barriers, which are person-focused and refer to such factors as perceived lack of ability, motivation, or interest in pursuing career goals (Urbanaviciute et al., 2016). The literature review will be organized into the following five distinct categories: Personal and Financial, Emotional and Physical, Decision-Making and Planning, Job-Seeking Knowledge, and Training and Education.

**Personal and financial.** Known barriers that may affect the employability of ex-offenders are their personal and financial influences, which surface due to lack of basic
survival resources (e.g., sufficient childcare, transportation, health and dental care, housing, money) (Liptak, 2011). Specifically, ex-offenders experience a lifetime reduction in earnings between 10% and 30% (Western & Pettit, 2000). Even when individuals obtain a job where little skill is required, they must have basic job readiness skills to successfully obtain and maintain a job. Such skills include showing up to work on time, working hard and taking responsibility for one’s actions, and demonstrating that he or she is trustworthy. Furthermore, it is no surprise that individuals who are released from prison suffer many economic hardships that could prevent an ex-offender from obtaining employment. Taxman (2004) explained that many individuals who are released from prison do not have a safe place to live, while Rakis (2005) mentioned that ex-offenders are less likely to have appropriate clothing for job interviews. Not only do ex-offenders not have a safe place to live or appropriate clothing to wear to an interview, but many do not even have a driver’s license or a car to get to and from a job interview (Harris & Keller, 2005). As often as not, these economic hardships may be overlooked by the general population that does not have to worry about such obstacles in obtaining employment. Holzer and Stoll (2001) sampled (N = 750) employers from four large metropolitan areas: Los Angeles, Chicago, Cleveland, and Milwaukee, and concluded that when looking at the recent work of welfare recipients in the labor market, their success in employment, once hired, depends on these types of variables. Specifically, they looked at absenteeism, basic skills, job sills, and coworker relationships, all of which may be personal barriers to employment for ex-offenders. For example, work absenteeism could be due to a lack of childcare or transportation issues, and as already mentioned, transportation issues could affect ex-offenders, as some are not allowed to
have a driver’s license.

Additionally, Tschopp et al. (2007) used a Grounded Theory approach to explore (N = 7) vocational service providers. Participants were male (n = 7) and female (n = 6) who ranged in age from 24 to 69, and found that some of the main barriers to employment for ex-offenders were their lack of stable housing, lack of support system, and poor time management. This research study’s findings are supported by changes in federal law. For example, the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 and the Housing Opportunity Extension Act of 1996 allowed the landlord of the property to deny rent, or even evict, tenants based on criminal record (Weiss, 2017). A phenomenological approached was conducted to look at financial barriers to employment for 17 individuals who were 25 to 55 years old (M = 41.82). Participants were male (n = 11) and female (n = 6), were predominantly Black (n = 15), or identified as White (n = 2). Participants reported limited social capital, and limited family or neighborhood resources that could provide financial assistance or job leads, suggesting that the employment transition may be a difficult one (Baron & Draine, 2013).

A large-scale study conducted with (N = 967) ex-offenders that comprised of (n = 491) young men and (n = 476) women in New York determined that women and men experience different financial barriers one year post-release. Participants were males who were 16 through 19 years of age and females who were 18 years of age and older. The study found that young men were less likely to receive public benefits (7% vs. 30%, p < .001) or obtain financial support from family and friends (62% vs. 76%, p < .001) one year post-release. However, the women included in the study received more public benefits (51% vs. 60%), p < .001) and financial support from their families (26% vs.
56%, \( p < .001 \) one year post-release, demonstrating that men are less likely to receive financial support once released from prison (Freudenberg, Daniels, Crum, Perkins, & Richie, 2005). Additionally, many young men experienced homelessness since release (\( Odds \ Ratio = 1.42 \)) and have childcare responsibilities (\( Odds \ Ratio = .675 \)), while women also experienced homelessness (\( Odds \ Ratio = 2.70 \)) and childcare responsibilities (\( Odds \ Ratio = 0.62 \)).

**Emotional and Physical.** Ex-offenders may experience barriers that arise from physical complications and feelings of uncertainty and low self-esteem (e.g., concerned with maintaining positive health and outlook on life, and decreasing anger and depression) (Liptak, 2011). A qualitative study was conducted with parolees (\( N = 17 \)), of which eight identified as African American, five as White, two as Hispanic/Latino, and two as mixed race. Participants ranged in age from 40 to 62 years (\( M = 48.00 \)). Participants identified as having physical complications such as hepatitis C, HIV/AIDS, diabetes, hypertension, coronary artery disease, depression, anxiety disorder, bipolar disorder, seizure disorder, osteoarthritis, low back pain, glaucoma, and legal blindness. The study found that parolees were not able to adequately care for their physical health-related problems due to being uninsured and being poor (Marlow, White, & Chesla, 2010). In addition, pre- and post-mental health services use before and after sentence was examined in a sample of (\( N = 1,853 \)) first-time offenders. The study found that offenders were six times more likely (\( p < .0001 \)) than non-offenders (i.e., those not yet sentenced) to have had at least one mental health service contact for a mental disorder. This study supported that emotional barriers increase from pre-sentence to post-sentence, indicating higher emotional barriers in the offender population (Sodhi-Berry, Knuiman,
Alan, Morgan, & Preen, 2015). Interestingly, violent offenders, compared to their non-violent offender counterparts, were statistically more likely to be hospitalized for self-harm (*Odd Ratio*: 4.2, *p* < 0.01).

Freudenberg, Daniels, Crum, Perkins, and Richie (2005) concluded that both young men and adult women suffered from emotional and physical barriers at the time of the study and one year post-release. As previously explained, participants were males who were 16 through 19 years of age and females who were 18 years of age and older. The study found that young men were less likely to seek mental health treatment or counseling (11% vs. 4%, *p* < .001), visit the emergency room (26% vs. 16%, *p* < .001), or be hospitalized overnight (10% vs. 4%, *p* < .001) one year post-release. However, the women included in the study were more likely to seek mental health treatment or counseling (14% vs. 28%, *p* < .001) and visit the emergency room (41% vs. 51%, *p* < .001), but were less likely to be hospitalized overnight (26% vs. 24%, not significant) one year post-release. This suggests that men may experience more barriers to getting their physical and emotional needs met, or may be less likely to seek treatment for such needs, potentially prolonging their emotional and physical needs once released from prison.

One variable that has received little attention in the literature is an ex-offender’s self-efficacy and its role in employment. Using only the Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale (Taylor & Betz, 1983) and the Career Decision Self Efficacy Scale—Short Form (Betz, Klein, & Taylor, 1996) as search criteria, a recent meta-analysis that looked at 34 articles written from 1983 to 2008 from several databases (e.g. PsychINFO, Science Direct, EBSCO, ERIC, and Google Scholar). The database result search found that career decision self-efficacy is inversely and strongly related to career indecision, positively and
moderately to strongly related to peer support and vocational outcome expectations, and
negatively and weakly related to career barriers (Choi et al., 2012). Another meta-
analysis by Kanfer, Wanberg, and Kantrowitz’s (2001) looked at 73 articles from the
American Psychological Association’s PsycINFO (1881-2000), Business Index (1988-
2000), and the National Technical Information Services (1964-2000) and indicated that
job search self-efficacy produced small to moderate, positive relations with job search
behavior and number of job offers received. Specifically, Bucklen and Zajac (2009)
found that offenders who had confidence in their ability (i.e. self-efficacy) to overcome
barriers associated with work were more likely to keep their job. To date, no known
research has measured an ex-offenders self-efficacy and its potential impact on his or her
ability to obtain employment.

Similar to self-efficacy, a number of studies have also examined self-esteem in
relation to job search outcomes and as a risk of offending. This being the case, one could
argue that a prisoner’s self-esteem and perceptions of control over their lives can
influence their willingness and ability to change. Visher and Courtney (2006) found that
once men were released, their self-esteem improved significantly. They reported about
half of the men rated favorably on measures of self-esteem at the end of their prison term;
a greater percentage, about 75%, reported higher self-esteem after they had been released
in the community for a few months. Being that self-esteem was found to improve once
released from prison, one must wonder if self-esteem would have an impact on one’s
ability to obtain employment. Visher and Kachnowski (2007) found that self-esteem did
not significantly affect an offender’s ability to have employment, four to eight months
from release. Results are surprising, given that self-esteem plays an active role in many aspects of one’s life (Choi et al., 2012).

Furthermore, Oser (2006) had inmates from two medium-security prisons complete a self-administered survey ($N = 146$). The majority of inmates that completed the survey were males (57%), compared to their female counterparts (43%), with an average age range from 20 to 61 years ($M = 35.19$, $SD = 8.88$). The sample was predominantly European American (65%) and single (75%). The study found that offenders who had completed high school, or obtained a GED, had significantly higher levels of self-esteem while incarcerated (Oser, 2006). It may be likely that ex-offenders who have a high school diploma, or a GED, may have higher levels of self-esteem, positively influencing their ability to obtain employment. Furthermore, Oser (2006) found that offenders who were incarcerated due to violent or drug offenses had significantly lower levels of self-esteem, compared to inmates with other convictions.

**Decision-making and planning.** Ex-offenders also experience barriers as measured by a lack of career planning and career decision-making skills (e.g., setting goals, developing plans to achieve goals) (Liptak, 2011). Tschopp et al. (2007), using a qualitative approach, surveyed 13 vocational coaches who were 24 to 69 years old, ethnically diverse, and worked as support employment service professionals in a community mental health center employment service program in Indiana. The study determined that a key to success for ex-offenders is helping them build insight into their lives and set goals for the future. It was found that implementing intrapersonal interventions, namely exploring the ex-offender’s concept of oneself as a worker, educating oneself about the world of work, and establishing feasible career goals are
important factors for employment success. One vocational coach explained, “…So they maybe have even higher expectations…And they get all upset, and I think that’s part of our job to help them realize when you get this job, it’s still going to be hard…” (p. 178).

One study concluded that 491 male offenders were less likely to be engaged in career planning and career decision-making one year post-release, compared to their female \(n = 472\) counterparts. Specifically, young men were less likely to be enrolled in school or training programs (69% vs. 29%, \(p < .001\)) one year post-release, while women were more likely to be enrolled in school or training one year post-release (14% vs. 32%, \(p < .001\)) (Freudenberg et al., 2005). Results imply that men may experience more barriers to educational or training programs, or that men are less motivated to engage in such activities one year post-release. Some research has concluded that one’s career decision making and planning abilities may be influenced by one’s personality variables. For example, conscientiousness, one of the Big Five factors, may facilitate the use of personality factors that influence behavior needed for planning and persistence (e.g., career exploration, job searching) (Brown & Hirschi, 2013). In addition, scoring higher on extraversion may be related to adaptive behaviors that involve social interaction, such as networking and interviewing. Personality factors will not be explored in this current study.

**Job seeking knowledge.** Ex-offenders experience barriers due to a lack of awareness about how to engage in an effective job search, as measured by their abilities to develop a job search plan, engage in effective communication skills, and master effective job search skills (Liptak, 2011). It is likely that offenders have difficulty obtaining employment due to not understanding how to go about gaining employment, or
understanding the rules and restrictions placed upon them due to their crime. Tschopp et
al. (2007) completed a qualitative study that analyzed two different focus groups, which
explored 13 vocational service providers’ perspectives on working with individuals who
have a criminal record. Participants were 24 to 69 years of age, with seven males and six
females. Each service provider was asked a series of questions in relation to the services
they provided to individuals with criminal records. Grounded Theory was used to
develop themes. They found that one of the main barriers for ex-offenders was their lack
of understanding about how their crime translated into work restrictions. For example,
they found that some ex-offenders struggled to understand why a pedophile is restricted
from working in a childcare setting. Additionally, it was found that the vocational service
providers thought ex-offenders needed to build more effective interactions with potential
employers, specifically learning to address gaps in their employment history and discuss
their criminal record.

Baron and Draine (2013) also found that participants reported that the vocational
community programs they participated in once released from prison were only mildly
responsive to their needs. Such programs in the study were designed to help participants
develop a resume, participate in mock interviews, and teach participants how to search
for a job. However, participants reported that the progress was agonizingly slow. Another
qualitative study conducted by Soeker et al. (2013) interviewed five South African ex-
offenders to assess barriers to employment. Participants ranged from 18 to 36 years of
age, all had a high school education, and all committed violent offenses. One theme that
emerged was working towards change through capacity building. Participants described
barriers to employment that included a lack of communication skills, which could help
the ex-offender communicate with potential employers. Ex-offenders in this study also struggled with communicating their abilities to employers. One sub-theme that emerged was proof of skills. Ex-offenders thought it would be beneficial to have a formal qualification or a certificate as proof that could be utilized when applying for a job.

Training and education. Training and education are barriers that are experienced due to a lack of education or training for the type of job desired (Liptak, 2011). One variable that accounts for one’s training and education is the issue of job maintenance, which is the need to adapt to the world of work and its challenges. Graffam, Shinkfield, Lavelle, and McPherson (2004) employed 34 participants (e.g., 12 offenders, 22 professionals including seven from the criminal justice system, four from the accommodation and housing sector, seven from employment support services, and four from rehabilitation programs) and found some ex-offenders reported extensive, but periodic histories of unskilled or blue collar labor, other ex-offenders reported some regular work in one semi-skilled area, while some ex-offenders had minimal work experience due to substance abuse and imprisonment. Lack of training experience is a particularly significant barrier for many ex-offenders because a large number of ex-offenders become incarcerated as young adults, age 18, are often not released until well into adulthood, and have not had the opportunity to previously work. Furthermore, individuals who are incarcerated do not necessarily work while in prison, further limiting their work experience. For example, Atkinson and Rostad (2003) analyzed the 2000 Corrections Yearbook and 2000 CIA Directory and found that of the nearly 1.1 million state and federal prisoners who were able to work in 2000, only 53% had a current work assignment while in prison. Such a deficit in employment opportunities for inmates
hinders their ability to find employment once released from prison, as they are not provided with opportunities to learn valuable work skills, such as a work ethic.

A lack of education is also thought to be a significant reason that ex-offenders are unable to obtain employment. Lawrence et al. (2002) found that only 50% of offenders have graduated from high school, while 75% of non-offenders have graduated from high school. According to another study, about half of all inmates are ‘functionally illiterate,’ or cannot read (Hirsch et al., 2002), which is alarming, as the ability to read is important for the majority of jobs. Additionally, it may be hard for ex-offenders to go to college once released, due to the financial restrictions placed upon individuals who have been convicted as felons, or with drug-related crimes (Batiuk, Lahm, McKeever, Wilcox, & Wilcox, 2005), as they do not qualify for student loans. However, Sabol (2007) argued that education might not have as significant of an impact on one’s ability to obtain employment. After looking at unemployment insurance records on released prisoners in Ohio, he found that pre-prison employment, but not education or in-prison training programs, affected the likelihood of finding employment (Sabol, 2007).

**Employer Bias and Job Outcome Factors**

Though there are many perceived barriers to employment for male ex-offenders, research has found that employer bias is a significant determining factor to job outcomes for ex-offenders (Albright & Denq, 1996), based on whether or not the offender committed a violent compared to a non-violent crime (Albright & Denq, 1996; Hulsey, 1990), the number of offenses committed (Haslewood-Pocsik, Brown, & Spencer, 2008), and one’s level of education (Albright & Denq, 1996). Such employment barriers are challenging for ex-offenders because the offender has little to no control over employer
bias (Albright & Denq, 1996). Though research supports that these three barriers significantly influence whether or not an ex-offender obtains employment, no research to date looks at how these three barriers influence one’s perceived barriers to employment, or job search attitude. Research question two explores the relationships between these variables and one’s overall perceived barriers to employment and one’s overall job search attitude. Employer bias and determining factors related to job outcomes include: type of offense committed, number of criminal convictions, and level of education.

**Type of offense committed.**

Albright and Denq (1996) sampled \((N = 83)\) employers in the Dallas and Houston areas. Of the 83 participants, \((n = 21)\) stated that their decision to hire an ex-offender would be based on the type of crime committed. It was found that between 76% and 88% of the respondents were unwilling to hire an ex-offender convicted of murder, robbery, arson, sexual offense against a child, injury to a child, or sexual assault. It was further determined by Albright and Denq (1996) that sexual assault and sexual offense against a child were the strongest factors for the type of offense that employers would not likely hire, as differences between means ranged from -0.76 to -1.13 \((p < .001)\). Interestingly, crimes of driving while intoxicated (DWI) had positive effects on the attitudes toward hiring ex-offenders, with 50% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing to hire ex-offenders convicted of DWI \((\text{mean difference} = .69, p < .001)\). Albright and Denq (1996) identified a significant relationship between the crime committed and the type of job the ex-offender was seeking. The percentages of employer’s willingness to hire an ex-offender increased from 12% to 47% if the crime the ex-offender committed did not relate to the job duties (Albright & Denq, 1996). For example, if an ex-offender
committed a theft-related crime, he would not likely be hired to work in retail, due to the perceived relationship between the previous crime and the job that the ex-offender is seeking.

Another study sampled 205 employers and determined that 71% of employers would never consider hiring an ex-offender convicted of arson, while 71% of employers said they would never consider hiring an ex-offender convicted of a sexual offense. In comparison, ex-offenders who were convicted of a traffic violation would always be considered for employment by 41% of employers, and never by only 3% of employers. Their results also suggested that employers who had past experience hiring ex-offenders were more willing to consider ex-offenders with all types of convictions. For example, 34% of employers who have had previous experience employing ex-offenders were more likely to hire ex-offenders with a violent offense, compared to 51% of their non-experienced counterparts (Haslewood-Pocsik, Brown, and Spencer, 2008). Furthermore, a study conducted by Hulsey (1990) found that crimes associated with drug abuse and DWI received the highest rank among employers in terms of their willingness to hire, while violent crimes such as sexual assault, murder, and crimes against children received lower ranks.

**Number of criminal convictions.**

One employment barrier that has received little attention in the literature is the relationship between one’s total number of criminal convictions and its effects on employment discrimination. Haslewood-Pocsik, Brown, and Spencer (2008) conducted a study with 205 employers who completed a survey. Participants included 43% of employers who reported having some experience of employing people with a criminal
record, either at the time of the survey or in the past. They found that another reason an
employer may be reluctant to hire an ex-offender is if they had already committed a
previous crime in the past, regardless of conviction type. Specifically, they concluded
that the more criminal convictions an ex-offender had, the least likely employers would
be willing to hire them. Additionally, Brown, Spencer, and Deakin (2007) completed 10
semi-structured interviews over the telephone and 60 postal questionnaires with
employers to determine the anxieties that employers experience when considering hiring
ex-offenders. The number of offenses committed was a factor that employers reported
was ‘very important’ when determining whether or not the employer would consider
hiring an ex-offender.

It is likely that the longer an ex-offender goes without committing an additional
crime, the more likely he or she will not re-offend (Blumstein & Nakamura, 2009).
Blumstein and Nakamura (2009) used data from a state criminal-history database in New
York State to determine the ‘redemption point,’ or the point at which ex-offenders are
likely to remain offense free. They propose that it is important for employers to know the
redemption point so that the employers feel more comfortable hiring someone with a
criminal record once they reach that redemption point. Specifically, they acquired 27
years’ worth of arrest records to follow individuals and assess their recidivism
probabilities. Blumstein and Nakamura (2009) focused on ex-offenders with robbery,
burglary, and aggravated assault charges, but left out ex-offenders who were charged
with a DWI or murder. The overall sample consisted of 19,089 individuals’ arrest
records. They determined that a ‘redemption point’ does exist where ex-offenders are
likely to remain offense-free and not commit a subsequent offense after nine years, even
after taking the age of first arrest into consideration. This study supports the findings that the number of criminal convictions deters employers from wanting to hire ex-offenders.

**Educational level.**

Albright and Denq (1996) also explored level of education and its influence on employers’ \((N = 83)\) willingness to hire ex-offenders. They concluded that as an ex-offender’s level of education increased, an employer’s willingness to hire the ex-offender also increased. Specifically, willingness to hire the ex-offender increased from 12% to 32% for individuals who held a college degree, 30% for individuals who held a vocational trade, and 38% for those who completed at least two training programs (i.e., college, vocational trade, on-the-job training) while incarcerated. Having a college degree had the highest effect (mean difference = .43, \(p < .001\)), followed by having at least two programs completed (mean difference = .38, \(p < .001\)) when comparing means of the baseline item (i.e., willingness to hire an ex-offender) and items related to each level of training.

Additionally, a large five-year follow-up study conducted by Lockwood, Nally, Ho, and Knutson (2012) revealed that an ex-offender’s level of education statistically significantly \((p < .01)\) predicted one’s employment status five years’ post-release. Participants included 6,561 released offenders from Indiana who were 2029 years old \((n = 2,371)\), 30-39 years old \((n = 1,994)\), 40-49 years old \((n = 1,586)\), 50-59 years old \((n = 414)\), and 60 years old or above \((n = 72)\). Participants were African American \((n = 3,863)\), Caucasian \((n = 2,531)\), Hispanic \((n = 136)\), Asian \((n = 21)\), and Unknown \((n = 10)\). Results found that 66.7% of the offenders who had a college education had been employed for at least one quarter in any given year in the study period of 2005-2009,
compared to their counterparts who had below a high school degree, with 57% employed. Overall, this study found that the offender’s education and employment were the most important predictors to the post-release recidivism. Obtaining a job depended on one’s level of education, and one’s employment status predicted whether or not the offender would commit another crime.

It is evident from the literature described above that ex-offenders experience many barriers to employment. However, no known research study looks at the perceived barriers to employment for male ex-offenders, using a quantitative method. Though ex-offenders experience many barriers, it is hypothesized that there is a relationship between one’s perceived barriers and job search attitude, as one’s attitude toward work influences one’s perceived barriers to employment (Bucken & Zajac, 2009).

**Attitudes**

One of the main interpersonal variables that has been found to influence an individual is his or her attitude. Bandura (1977) believed that one’s beliefs and attitudes about his or her ability to perform a given function were the most critical factors in determining one’s success. Specifically, one’s job search attitude may be a determining factor in their employment outcome. Understanding the environmental perspectives (i.e., barriers) that influence an ex-offender’s ability to obtain employment is important to study, but Varghese and Cummings (2012) also argue that personal characteristics, such as an ex-offender’s attitude, is also important to study. Varghese and Cummings further argue that one’s attitude may mediate the relationships between vocational interventions and desired outcome.
Ex-offenders’ attitudes and beliefs about themselves and the world around them can affect their ability to reconnect with their family, friends, and community after release, including their ability to obtain employment. Maruna (2001) found that motivation to change could increase prisoners’ likelihood of successful reintegration. The attitudes and beliefs of 226 male offenders in Visher and Courtney’s (2006) study were assessed with a series of questions about their readiness to change, their self-esteem, perceived control over their lives, feelings about the legal system and the police, and their spirituality. Visher and Courtney found that 82% of the men in the study were emotionally and physically exhausted by the problems their crime caused. Furthermore, 64% voiced a desire and need for help from others to manage their problems once released, while 89% claimed that they would terminate friendships that often led them into trouble (2006).

**Job Search Attitude**

One’s attitude refers to one’s conscious or unconscious cognitive approach, and one’s emotional reaction to something (Ajzen, 1991). As previously described, Bandura (1977) believed that one’s beliefs and attitudes about his or her ability to perform a given function were the most critical factors in determining one’s success. This being the case, one’s job search attitude may be the most critical factor in their employment outcome, and may affect individuals at the conscious or unconscious level. For purposes of this study, one’s job search attitude will be broken down into five attitude variables: Luck vs. Planning, Uninvolved vs. Involved, Pessimistic vs. Optimistic, Help From Others vs. Self-Help, and Passive vs. Active in the general population, which are selected after a thorough review of the literature, case studies, and interviews with unemployed adults.
(Liptak, 2010). To date, little research has been conducted that specifically looks at one’s job search attitude.

**Luck vs. planning.**

One’s emphasis on planning during the job search process rather than relying on luck to find a job can be a measure of one’s job search attitude (Liptak, 2010). Shane and Heckhausen (2016) conducted a study with 140 adults that included 99 females and 41 males. They explored participants’ beliefs about how socioeconomic status (SES) is attained in society and how they themselves believe their own SES will be attained, as well as how it related with the degree to which they engaged or disengaged from their career goals. The study explored one’s SES-related privilege/luck-oriented beliefs and how those beliefs affected his or her attitude toward his or her career goals. They found that individuals who obtained higher scores on SES-related privilege/luck-oriented beliefs experienced career-goal disengagement compared to their counterpart parts (beta = .15, 95% CI [-.24, -.07], p = .001). In other words, participants who believed their success was due to luck were not engaged in their career goals. Though this study was conducted with the general as opposed to criminal population, it can be hypothesized that ex-offenders may experience the same outcome.

Another study conducted by Shane and Heckhausen (2013) determined that beliefs of luck negatively influenced one’s career engagement and drive to find employment. Specifically, the study sampled 410 adults with a mean age of 20.48, SD = 2.15. Participants were male (n = 137) and female (n = 282) who were Asian (n = 214), White (n = 71), Hispanic (n = 68), Middle Eastern (n = 25), African American (n = 4), mixed (n = 36), and one participant who identified as ‘human.’ They wanted to determine
whether or not adults still believe in the ‘American Dream,’ which was defined as the meritocratic view of American society. This particular ‘view’ consists of three belief systems: 1) Independence, 2) Protestant Ethic, and the American dream (Plaut, Markus, & Lachman, 2002). They hypothesized that participants would rely on meritocratic-oriented causal conceptions, as opposed to luck, and found that participants significantly endorsed meritocratic-oriented beliefs ($M = 4.49$) compared to their luck-oriented counterparts ($M = 3.06$), mean difference $= 1.42$, $SE = .06$; $t (418) = 25.47, p < .001$. Their study determined that a disengagement-promoting career pathway consisted of luck-oriented causal beliefs and enhanced goal-disengagement habits, with decreased expected personal SES through career aspirations. Additionally, career goal engagement and career disengagement partially mediated the relationship between meritocratic-oriented causal conceptions and expected personal SES, 95% CI = .019, .191, and goal engagement and disengagement fully mediated the relationship between luck-oriented causal conceptions and expected personal SES, 95% CI = −.122, −.028.

**Uninvolved vs. involved.**

Having an uninvolved, compared to an involved, approach to the job search process measures how involved individuals are in their own search for a job, such as learning new job search techniques, and being dedicated to their search (Liptak, 2010). Maurer, Weiss, and Barbeite (2003) found that one’s attitude had an indirect effect on one’s intention and participation in career related development activities when completing a 13-month longitudinal study with 800 working adults across the United States. Men ($n = 368$) and women ($n = 432$) who scored higher on measures of attitude were more engaged, or were more involved in career development and learning new job
techniques ($p \leq .001$). However, a limitation mentioned by the authors is that this study explored the attitudes in a working adult sample. They proposed the importance of determining such a relationship in the unemployed population and special populations (i.e., ex-offenders). However, Andersson (2015) conducted a study with 142 unemployed adults, who ranged in age 25 to 58 years ($M = 38.00$) who were mostly women ($n = 94$), and found that one’s level of work involvement and personal initiative did not positively relate to reemployment once unemployed. For the purposes of Andersson’s study, personal initiative was defined as a “behavioral syndrome that includes a self-starting and persistent attitude” (p.439), in other words, how consistently involved an individual is in their job-search process.

Additionally, one study concluded that one’s attitude significantly predicted his or her job-seeking behavior, or how involved he or she was in the job-search process (Wilson, 2007). Specifically, 253 adults who were seeking employment participated in the study. The strongest indicator of an individual’s intentions to search for a job was the belief in his or her ability to perform the job-search behaviors successfully. Results found that 23% of the variability in one’s job search intention was predicted by his or her attitude and perceived control ($p = .000$). In other words, their attitudes and beliefs influenced how involved they were in the job search process. Participants’ intentions to search for a job decreased if he or she did not believe in his or her own abilities. Furthermore, the participant’s instrumental attitudes influenced his or her involvement in the job search process. If he or she believed that job search was important, useful and wise, he or she was more involved in the job search process. One’s instrumental and affective attitude was a slightly larger contributor to the prediction of one’s involvement
in his or her job search behavior ($\beta = 0.17, \beta = 0.23$, respectively) than his or her perceived control.

**Pessimistic vs. optimistic.**

An individual’s outlook on a situation often impacts their success (Lazarus, 1991). Creed, Patton, and Bartrum (2004) conducted a study ($N = 130$) that included 79 females and 49 males with a mean age of 18.08, and found that levels of optimism and pessimism predicted internal and external barriers to employment. For the total sample, optimism and pessimism accounted for a significant 28% of the variance in self-esteem, which is a measure of one’s internal barriers. Additionally, optimism and pessimism emerged as a significant individual predictor, with total effects on self-esteem of .36 and -.31, respectively. However, when the data was examined based off of one’s gender, amounts of variance were predicted for each (females = 20%; males = 42%), but pessimism emerged as the only significant individual predictor for females (beta = -.36), whereas optimism was the only one for males (.53). When examining the data for external barriers, optimism and pessimism were unable to predict significant amounts of variance in the total sample and in the male sample. However, when examining the data on females, optimism and pessimism predicted a significant 9% of the variance in barriers, and pessimism emerged as a significant individual predictor (.28). Overall, Creed, Patton, and Bartrum (2004) found that for females, pessimism predicts both self-esteem and external barriers. However, in the male sample, optimism predicts self-esteem but neither optimism nor pessimism predicts external barriers.

Creed, Patton, and Bartrum (2002) found similar results in an adolescent sample. Participants included 504 high school students, which consisted of females (52%) and
males (48%), who ranged in age from 12.48 to 18.51 years ($M = 14.96$ years, $SD = 1.52$ years). Specifically, they wanted to determine the relationship between optimism and career-related variables such as career maturity, decision-making, and goals. Career Development Attitude composite (CDI-A CDA) was moderately positively correlated with Life Orientation Test – Revised (LOT-R) Optimism ($r = .24, p < .001$), such that higher levels of optimism were associated with more career planning and exploration, while there was no association between LOT-R Pessimism and Career Development Attitude ($r = -0.07, p > .01$). The Career Planning subscale was moderately positively correlated with LOT-R Optimism ($r = .26, p < .001$), while the Career Exploration subscale was highly positively correlated with LOT-R Optimism ($r = .15, p < .01$). They found that individuals with high levels of optimism were more engaged in their career planning and exploration, were more dedicated in areas of career decisions, and had more career-related goals, compared to their pessimistic counterparts. Additionally, there were positive correlations between one’s level of self-esteem and optimism ($r = .34, p < .001$) and negative correlations between one’s self-esteem and pessimism ($r = -.45, p < .001$), suggesting that individuals who are optimistic likely have higher levels of self-esteem, compared to their pessimistic counterparts.

**Help from others vs. self-help.**

One’s attitude can also be measured by how much people depend on external supports (i.e., help from others) to help them obtain employment, rather than relying on internal supports (i.e., self-help) (Liptak, 2010). The Protean Career Orientation (PCO) model proposes that the self-directed ways in which protean people manage their careers may mean that they are motivated to engage in their own job-search procedures rather
than relying heavily on recruiters, career counselors and/or government employment agencies (Hall, 1996). Waters, Briscoe, Hall, and Wang (2014) conducted a three-wave, 12-month longitudinal study ($N = 186$) that comprised of 54% males and 46% females with a mean age of 36.03 years, and found that PCO was significantly related to finding reemployment and obtaining reemployment that leads to job improvement and career growth. In other words, individuals who relied on their own self-help were more likely to obtain reemployment. Specifically, the results showed that when PCO increased by one unit over 12 months, and when an individual's PCO is one unit higher than another's, that individual is 78% more likely to be reemployed. PCO was also significantly related to job-search activity over time. Their findings suggest that PCO may have encouraged people to hold on to positive self-esteem which, in turn, encouraged these people to show high levels of agency (i.e., the ability to act on one's own behalf in times of change) with respect to job-search activity. Notably, they found that although confidence in oneself is enough to activate job-search activity, when a person possesses a PCO to one's career, the need for high self-esteem is not needed. Put differently, having higher levels of self-help and lower levels of help from others is more important that having high levels of self-esteem when it comes to obtaining employment. Waters et al. (2014) explained that career counselors would better serve the needs of their clients if they focused on working with unemployed clients to build their sense of self-direction, or self-help skills.

Self-help or self-directed career attitude was explored in a sample of 265 employees who were aged 45 and older ($M = 53.00$), with 41% male and 59% female. Results found that self-directed career attitude, or how likely one relies on internal supports, relates significantly and positively to career self-management ($p < .01$),
engagement ($p < 0.01$), and retirement intention ($p < .01$). Results suggest that individuals with self-directed career attitudes want to remain employed longer and retire later than individuals who score lower on self-directed career attitudes (De Vos & Segers, 2013). Hence, not only does self-help attitude help individuals become reemployed (Waters et al., 2014), but it can also help individuals maintain employment well into later years.

**Passive vs. active.**

Having a passive or active attitude shows how much control job searchers think they have in their job-search process (Liptak, 2010). McGee (2015) analyzed four different samples: a) reservation-wage sample ($N = 3,291$), b) 1981 search-hours sample ($N = 386$), c) unemployment-duration sample ($N = 3,215$), and d) reemployment-wage sample ($N = 3,157$), which were all collected from the same large-scale study that spanned from 1979 through 1994. They found that individuals who believed they had more control over their employment outcome were more active in their job search process and searched harder for a job, compared to individuals who believed they had less control of their employment outcome. Specifically, a 1 standard deviation increase in internality increases the hours of job search by just over 19%.

McGee and McGee (2016) conducted a laboratory experiment ($N = 347$), which was separated into two experimental groups: 1) Uncertain ($N = 189$) and 2) Certain ($N = 158$) to determine the extent to which one’s perceived degree of control influenced their search behavior. In the uncertainty group, participants were not informed of the relationship between completed tasks and the probability of receiving financial compensation, while in the certainty group they were made aware that each completed
task increased the probability of receiving financial compensation by four percentage points. They found that internal individuals (i.e., those individuals who believed they have control over the outcome) searched harder than less internal individuals because they believed this effort is more likely to lead to financial compensation, and because they expected offers to be more conditional on effort they held out for higher offers. Though this study is not directly related to the job-search process, McGee and McGee (2016) propose that knowing how one’s perceived level of control affects behavior can guide policy to help individuals overcome behavioral biases that may hinder their employment prospects.

Further supporting the notion that one’s perceived level of control in their life affects their employment outcome, Caliendo, Cobb-Clark, and Uhlendorff (2015) analyzed a large ($N = 7,839$) IZA Evaluation Data Set from Germany that was collected between June 2007 and May 2008. They restricted their sample to participants who were 16 to 54 years of age, and used nine separate items from the Rotter (1966) scale to measure participants’ perceived control. They found that individuals who believed they had more control over their job-search outcome applied to more jobs compared to their counterparts. People who scored higher on the internal factor submitted an additional 2.6 applications over those who scored higher on the external factor, which is an overall 16.4% increase in applications. Results determined that reservation wages also increased the more an individual perceived they had control over their job search. Specifically, a one standard deviation increase in the extent to which an individual has an internal locus of control is associated with a 1.5% increase in his or her reservation wage.

Though there is research to support having an active approach to one’s job search
process, Andersson (2015) found that having a personal-active job-search behavior did not significantly predict reemployment after 15-months in an adult unemployed sample. Additionally, an anonymous-passive job-search behavior had a significant negative relationship to reemployment after 15 months, suggesting that as passivity in the job-search process increased, reemployment decreased. However, a limitation of this study is that one’s job search behavior (i.e., active vs. passive) was measured with a single item, as opposed to a full measure.

**Job Search Attitude in Ex-Offenders**

The literature above supports the notion that different attitude variables can influence an individual’s overall job search attitude. However, no study has been conducted with unemployed ex-offenders that specifically measure the above attitude constructs. In fact, no known study has actually looked at an ex-offender’s job search attitude and its affect on one’s perceived barriers and the job-search process. The majority of the literature that explores the relationship between attitudes and employment in the offender population looks at the attitudes of the employer (Albright & Denq, 1996).

Bucken and Zajac (2009) performed a two-phase study where they looked at a sample of parole violators ($M = 35.00$ years of age) and parole successes ($M = 41.00$ years of age). Phase one of the study looked at parole violators who returned to the custody of Pennsylvania Department of Corrections while phase two of the study looked at parole successes, which are those individuals who have remained violation-free for at least three years. Completing a mixed methods study ($N = 704$), they found that the strongest employment difference in the two groups was in their attitude toward employment. Parole successes were more committed to employment, regardless of the
type of employment, compared to their counterparts. Many of the parole violators felt entitled to higher-paying jobs once directly released from prison. During the interviews, parole successes often made statements such as “I’ve been working the same job for 5 years, and I’ve never missed a day of work and I’ve never been later for work” while parole violators made such statements as “I won’t work at [a fast food restaurant] no matter what” (p. 253). While the parole success group was also dissatisfied with their income and working conditions associated with their jobs, they generally saw these challenges as barriers that could be overcome, hence, having a positive attitude toward work helped them view barriers as less challenging. As previously mentioned, Bucklen and Zajac explain, “Our results do not suggest that resource deprivation and structural barriers are unimportant but that reentry outcomes are a product of those things plus individual offenders’ attitudes and perceptions of them and of their skill in dealing with them” (2009, p. 260). For example, Lazarus (1991) found that there is a relationship between one’s attitude (i.e., levels of optimism and pessimism) and one’s perception of their external barriers. Research demonstrated that optimistic individuals are more likely to perceive external barriers, such as financial demands, as challenging rather than threatening to their achievement of vocational goals (Creed, Patton, and Bartrum, 2004), further demonstrating that there is a relationship between different types of perceived barriers and attitude.

The review of the literature demonstrates the many difficulties that ex-offenders have when trying to obtain employment (e.g., barriers). However, no known research study has explored the perceived barriers to employment for male ex-offenders. The review of the literature also explored variables of one’s job search attitude and how such
variables may impact one’s employment outcome. From the review of the literature, it is evident that exploring ex-offenders perceived barriers and job search attitude may impact ex-offenders’ employment outcomes. These many gaps in the literature will be addressed by the current aims of the study.

**Interventions to Assist Ex-Offenders**

Little research has been conducted regarding specific techniques used to help ex-offenders obtain jobs. When researching effectiveness of vocational programs, most studies look at rates of recidivism to determine whether or not a program was successful. In a literature review conducted by Aos, Miller, and Drake (2006), almost 300 evaluations of correctional programs during a span of 35 years were analyzed. Their review concluded that general cognitive-based programs were estimated to reduce rates of recidivism by 8%, therapeutic communities by 6%, while cognitive-behavioral treatments for sex offenders in prison reduced rates of recidivism by 15%. Aside from measuring rates of recidivism, Oser (2006) found that both psychological counseling and participation in educational programs have a significant, positive effect on the inmate’s level of self-esteem while incarcerated. It may be likely that participating in such programs would increase an ex-offender’s level of self-esteem once released from prison, positively affecting his or her ability to obtain employment. For example, SCCT highlights that one’s learning experiences (e.g., counseling programs, job training techniques while in prison) directly influence self-efficacy and outcome expectations, which in turn can influence one’s interests, goals, and behaviors (Lent et al., 1994). Taken together, it is important to look at what interventions are currently offered for
offenders, as such interventions can have an influence on their perceived barriers and job search attitude.

Vocational interventions within the prison systems have been offered for many years, but the effectiveness of such interventions has not been established in the literature (Travis & Petersilia, 2001). Examples of such vocational interventions include programs that have the offender partake in paid employment out in the community (i.e., work release), programs that focus on specific job training, and programs that allow inmates to obtain general equivalency diploma or even college education credits. Many institutions provide opportunities where they employ the offenders within the prisons, and opportunities that teach job search skills for both within and outside of prison (Bouffard, Mackenzie, & Hickman, 2000). Other studies highlight the usefulness of attending to and intervening at the organizational level; to educate individuals about the reality of the job market before release into the community so individuals can identify and choose career aspirations that are realistic and will allow them to secure and maintain employment (Filella-Guiu & Blanch-Plana, 2002). In turn, this may help with the ex-offenders’ attitudes toward employment. If an individual has realistic expectations, he or she is less likely to be disappointed when unrealistic expectations are not met, and continue to work toward gaining employment. Furthermore, the Building Bridges program (Carter, 2009) assists offenders with developing a resume, highlighting institutional employment experience, obtaining career-related correctional references, and teaching offenders how to disclose one’s criminal history in job applications and during interviews. However, Carter’s program does not take into account one’s perceived barriers to employment or job search attitude.
Additionally, Lattimore, Witte, and Baker (1990) sampled two North Carolina prisons \((N = 591\) subjects, \(N = 295\) control) for males aged 18 to 22 who were enrolled in the Sandhills Vocational Delivery System (VDS) integrated training program. Alarmingly, they found that the VDS program was only partly implemented, which could be a reoccurring theme for other vocational programs that are in place for offenders. Though the program was not adequately implemented, they concluded that inmates who participated in the vocational program were less likely (36%) than those in the control group (46%) to be re-arrested within two years post-release. This study suggested that protocols should be put in place to monitor program delivery to determine whether or not the program is being effectively implemented.

One technique that is in place for offenders is the use of Mock Job Fairs. Oswald (2005) obtained 393 responses from 26 of 50 states, with a response rate of 42%, and found that out of the states who responded to the questionnaire about the effectiveness of Mock or Non-Mock Job Fairs in the prison systems, on a scale of 1 to 5 the average response was 4.45 based on actual observation, or from comments from the inmates who participated in the Job Fairs. Oswald (2005) found that the correctional vocational education administrators believed that many different factors would be most helpful for pre-release employment training and planning for preparing inmates for the job fair. They were as follows: resume and job application preparation classes 91%, practice interviews 82%, library resources 45%, computer-based resume preparation programs 55%, and other 36% (Oswald, 2005). Though such techniques may be likely to help an ex-offender acquire employment, there may be other factors, such as one’s perceived barriers and job search attitude that hinder one’s ability to find work.
Most recently, Fitzgerald, Chronister, Forrest, and Brown (2012) developed and implemented an employment-based group counseling intervention called OPTIONS. Fitzgerald et al. used the bases of Advancing Career Counseling and Employment Support for Survivors of domestic violence (ACCESS) program developed by Chronister (2006), which is grounded in SCCT (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). They found that inmates who participated in the OPTIONS group reported higher career search self-efficacy, perceived problem-solving ability, and hopefulness at posttest and follow-up compared to the treatment-as-usual groups. Though this program worked for inmates who were in prison, results were not obtained as to whether or not being involved in the program improved the inmates overall ability to obtain employment once out of prison. Taken together, it is evident that some programs are in place to increase chances of employment for ex-offenders but little is known about them. Furthermore, these programs do not take into accounts one’s perceived barriers to employment or one’s job search attitude.

Some research follows suite of positive psychology and shifted the focus of interventions from a deficit-based to a strengths-based model of rehabilitation. Specifically, Wormith et al. (2007) stated that this model of rehabilitation focuses on “achieving success” as opposed to “avoiding failure” (p. 886). It is hoped that with positive psychology, ex-offenders will build more confidence, self-esteem, be satisfied with work, and have an overall better outlook on life. Further, it could be hypothesized that if an individual experiences an increase in one’s self-esteem and confidence, that his or her attitude, specifically attitude and motivation toward work, could also improve.

Taken together, it is evident that there are minimal to no vocational interventions
that focus on the unemployed ex-offender’s perceived barriers and job search attitude. This is particularly important to note being that one’s perceived career barriers generally negatively impact one’s career goals and career outcome (Albert & Luzzo, 1999). Perceived career barriers affect one’s career planning (Cardoso & Moreira, 2009) and readiness (Hirschi, 2011), one’s career indecisions (Creed, Patton, & Bartrum, 2004), and one’s career aspirations (Creed, Conlon, & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2007), while one’s job search attitude may mediate the relationships between vocational interventions and desired outcome (Varghese & Cummings, 2012).

**Unemployment as a Risk for Reoffending**

Aside from the typical negative effects of unemployment, ex-offenders face an additional effect that the general population does not have to face, namely increased recidivism. Many researchers (e.g., Andres & Bonta, 2010; Bradley, 1985; Menon, Blakely, Carmichael, and Snow, 1995) argue that a lack of employment is a leading cause of recidivism, or reoffending. Knowing that so many incarcerated individuals will eventually be released from prison, there is a concern as to how an ex-offender will make enough money to support their family, if the ex-offender is not obtaining legal means of employment. Additionally, Andrews and Bonta (2010) found that unemployment for ex-offenders is associated with a return to criminal behavior.

According to prior investigation (Freudenberg, Daniels, Crum, Perkins, & Richie, 2005), though some ex-offenders can obtain employment, their annual income often falls below poverty guidelines, or they obtain jobs that have greater pay in the beginning, but do not increase and do not offer stable, long-term employment, hence leading to a continued life of crime to provide financial support for oneself and one’s family.
Specifically, results from Freudenberg et al.’s (2005) study on the financial state of women and male adolescents transitioning from jail back to society demonstrated that 65% to 71% of a sample of 967 individuals had to rely on family and friends for financial backing, and 14% to 19% of those individuals relied on illegal activities to supplement their incomes. If an ex-offender lists a lack of support from family and friends as a perceived barrier, he or she may financially struggle, especially if employment cannot be attained.

Another study conducted on young adults noted that the ex-incarcerated males made more money by illegal activity, compared to young men who were never incarcerated (US$1,070 vs. US$120, respectively) (Hutcherson, 2012). It may be safe to say that ex-offenders need to find some way to make money if employers are unwilling to employ them, and a way to do so could be by illegal means, such as selling drugs or stealing. As often as not, this illegal activity could land the ex-offenders back in prison. The study also concluded that those who have been incarcerated earned less money than young adults who have never been incarcerated. Research also indicates that the higher the wages ex-offenders receive, the less likely individuals released from prison are to return to crime (Bernstein & Houston, 2000). Ultimately, it is important to keep an ex-offender from re-offending by helping the ex-offender obtain and maintain gainful employment.

This chapter provided a brief overview of SCCT (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994) and how it can be used with the offender population, as well as explored the barriers to employment for ex-offenders and job search attitude. Lastly, interventions to assist ex-offenders were described, highlighting the need for more effective interventions, while
unemployment as a risk of re-offending was explored to reiterate the importance of understanding the relationship between one’s perceived barrier to employment and job search attitude. It is hoped that through understanding the perceived barriers of employment for ex-offenders and their job search attitude, techniques can be constructed to help ex-offenders obtain employment.

**Significance of the Study**

To date, the newly proposed SCCT model (Lent & Brown, 2013) has not been used as a guide to explore the unemployment of male ex-offenders. This study is significant, in that the majority of research conducted on the unemployment of ex-offenders looks at the phenomenon from an employer’s point of view, and how he or she feels about hiring ex-offenders. In addition, the study will also focus on the perceived effects of unemployment for ex-offenders, and how they view their own treatment and discrimination in the workplace, while allowing them to explore their own lived experiences. This study will allow employers, and society in general, to get a deeper understanding of the hardships that the ex-offenders experience when trying to obtain employment. Ultimately, by completing this study, I play a role in making it easier for ex-offenders to obtain employment by bringing awareness to the relationship between their perceived barriers to employment and their job search attitude.

Specifically, exploring the perceived barriers to employment and job search attitude for male ex-offenders are important to study, as Gottfredson’s (1981) theory proposed that one’s internal influences (i.e., attitude) would interact with one’s external influences (i.e., barriers) to effect career- development variables. In addition, Lent, Brown, and Hackett (2000) proposed that the effects of perceived barriers are mitigated
by an individual’s internal characteristics. In other words, there should be a relationship between perceived barriers and job search attitude. Notably, one research study found that one of the main reasons an ex-offender could not obtain employment was because of their negative attitudes (Tschopp et al., 2007). In addition, Holzer et al. (2003) looked at supply-side barriers (i.e., the ex-offender’s own characteristics and attitudes), such as limited education, cognitive abilities, job experiences, substance abuse, and other physical and mental health problems. However, they did not explore the relationship between those supply-side barriers and their attitude. Though Holzer et al. (2003) mentioned that an ex-offender’s attitude may affect his or her ability to obtain employment, no specific examples or research were cited, further supporting the notion that the relationship between perceived barriers and one’s job search attitude are not studied in the literature.

In addition, it is important to study the relationship between perceived barriers and job search attitude because one’s attitude may influence the severity of such perceived barriers, as well as their ability to overcome perceived career barriers (Lazarus, 1991). Furthermore, one’s attitude may mediate the relationships between vocational interventions and desired outcome (Varghese & Cummings, 2012). For example, if a career counselor is working with an ex-offender to minimize or overcome career barriers, but is not addressing one’s negative attitude, job search outcomes may not be successful. It is also pertinent to study this relationship because employment interventions may need to be altered by counseling psychologists to better assist offenders in finding a job by not only addressing the external forces (i.e., barriers), but also internals factors (i.e., attitude) that influence one’s ability to obtain employment. To maximize employment outcomes,
counseling psychologists’ interventions cannot address one without addressing the other. A study that looked at an employment readiness program, found that if the ex-offender has an honest and healthy attitude, the job search coach is able to work with him or her on overcoming career barriers and obtaining employment. However, if the ex-offender has a negative or closed off attitude, the job search coach felt compelled to address one’s attitude before working on employment barriers and employment needs (Tschopp et al., 2007).

Varghese and Cummings (2012) claim that there is a deficit that counseling psychologists who are knowledgeable in vocational psychology and offenders can fill. They argue the use and development of an offender employment barriers scale to help assess the employment needs and strengths of each offender, and as previously mentioned by Varghese and Cummings it is beneficial to also explore offenders’ attitudes. Taken together, this study will use the Barriers to Employment Success Inventory (BESI) (Liptak, 2011), which has been normed on an offender population to explore their perceived barriers, and will also use the Job Search Attitude Inventory (JSAI) (Liptak, 2010), which has also been normed on offenders to explore their job search attitudes. The findings of this study could be used to develop the variables needed for an offender employment barriers scale, as mentioned by Varghese and Cummings. As such, determining the relationships between ex-offenders’ perceived barriers and job search attitude could highlight an ex-offender’s strengths or areas of concern for treatment. Although dated, Gendreau, Goggin, and Gray (1998) reported that even though there is a direct relationship between employment and recidivism, current offender risk assessments do not effectively explore offenders’ employment-related attitudes regarding
work, specifically one’s job search attitude. Furthermore, the majority of existing employment programs do not target an offenders’ career attitudes (Varghese and Cummings, 2012).

Overall, one’s internal influences interacts with external influences to impact one’s overall career development variables (Gottfredson, 1981). Furthermore, studying the relationship between perceived barriers and job search attitude could highlight areas of concern for offenders, as well as their strengths. It is likely that there is a relationship between perceived barriers and job search attitude, and such perceived barriers to employment are interrelated, suggesting that employment strategies need to take a broader approach to help ex-offenders obtain employment. Such strategies should include not only external job search techniques (i.e., resume building, interview techniques), but also internal job search techniques, such as counseling interventions to improve one’s interpersonal characteristic that include one’s job search attitude. The majority of vocational interventions offered in the prison systems include external job search influences, such as work release programs, specific job training, and programs that allow inmates to obtain general equivalency diploma or even college education credits. However, the effectiveness of such interventions has not been established in the literature (Travis & Petersilia, 2001). This relationship is important to the field of research, as it can demonstrate the types of variables that should be addressed when developing an employment intervention program or what variables can be used to help develop an offender employment barriers scale.

Not only would employment of ex-offenders benefit the former felon, but it could also benefit society as a whole by allowing more able-bodied workers to contribute to the
work force and the economy. Employment of ex-offenders could also decrease recidivism as well, and not cost society money through expenses associated with criminal activity (Marbley & Ferguson, 2005). Furthermore, assessing one’s job search attitudes would bring awareness to the interpersonal barriers that hinder an ex-offender’s ability to obtain and maintain employment. For example, Holzer et al. (2004) mentioned that a large number of ex-offenders might be able to find some form of legitimate employment if they searched long enough, but at jobs that pay low wages with few benefits. In such situations, many ex-offenders may choose not to pursue these employment options because they prefer illegal opportunities or more casual work, demonstrating interpersonal influences on maintained unemployment. This is a further reflection of the relationship between their perceived barriers and job search attitude.

**Gaps in the Literature**

Surprisingly, despite the large number of unemployed ex-offenders, counseling psychology has not paid much attention to the specific vocational needs, as well as the effects of unemployment, for this particular population. A literature search conducted by Varghese and Cummings (2012) using PsychInfo, PsycArticles, and SocIndextext, with eight search terms for offender (i.e., ex-offender, offender, prisoner, inmate, criminal, convict, felon, parolee), eight search terms for work (i.e., career, job, work, occupation, vocation, employment, profession, employability), and using counseling psychology journals such as *The Counseling Psychologist*, *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, and *Journal of Counseling and Development*), only yielded a total of eight articles related to unemployment of ex-offenders. This figure is alarming given that counseling psychologists strive to provide social justice for all
underprivileged populations and specialize in vocational psychology. Furthermore, through Brown’s (2011) literature search, he found that although the *American Psychologist* has published articles from 1985 to 2002 on prison growth and policy issues, juvenile delinquents, and violent offenders, the publications did not focus on the barriers and supports to employment, which are critical to the ex-offenders’ reintegration.

Specifically, Schaefer, Friedlander, Blustein, and Maruna (2004) completed a qualitative study that explored the work experiences of men who were charged with sexual offenses against minors, and reported that career development researchers have been largely absent from research investigating the specific needs of offender populations. Brown (2011) argues that the majority of research that explores the issues ex-offenders encounter when trying to obtain employment comes from the sociology, criminology, corrections, criminal justice, and public policy literature. Taken together, ex-offenders are seldom studied in the counseling psychology literature even though they constitute a large portion of able-bodied workers.

Blustein (2013) puts an emphasis on incorporating diversity and marginalized populations into career theory, and focuses on the belief that work is central to one’s life and one’s mental health in individuals who work and those who want to work (e.g., unemployed ex-offenders). This is particularly important when studying ex-offenders because the majority of ex-offenders do not have jobs but do want to work. Most career theories often leave out individuals who are not currently working. However, wanting to work and not being able to obtain employment is also an important aspect that should be explored in counseling psychology. Additionally, the Psychology of Working approach (Blustein, 2006) puts an emphasis on the barriers that social, economic, and political
forces place upon individuals in society; particularly those who are trying to obtain employment but cannot (Blustein, 2013). Blustein argued for further theoretical perspectives and empirical research that consider the work experiences and behaviors of those who have limited to no career choice due to the barriers that social, economic, and political forces place upon individuals in society. This is crucial when studying the unemployment of ex-offenders because there are many social, economic, and political barriers that often interfere with an ex-offenders’ ability to obtain employment.

In sum, addressing the vocational needs of ex-offenders is consistent with counseling psychology’s goal of expanding the traditional role of counseling to a focus on promoting social justice of marginalized and disempowered populations (Vera & Speight, 2003), such as ex-offenders. Specifically, there is no known research study that has looked at the relationship between perceived barriers to employment and one’s job search attitude. Studying the relationship between perceived barriers and job search attitude is pertinent because one’s job search attitude may influence the severity of such perceived barriers, as well as their ability to overcome perceived career barriers (Lazarus, 1991).

**Goals of the Study**

This study will: (a) explore the relationship between perceived barriers to employment and job search attitude for male ex-offenders, and (b) determine the relationship between type of offenses, number of criminal convictions, education level, and perceived barriers to employment and job search attitudes.

**Research Questions**

Because of the lack of previous research in this area, the following general
research questions are the focus of this dissertation:

1. Is there a relationship between ex-offenders’ perceived barriers to employment and job search attitude?

2. Is there a relationship between type of offenses committed (violent vs. nonviolent), total number of criminal convictions, highest level of education completed, and overall perceived barriers to employment and overall job search attitude?
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The sample for this study was made up of volunteer participants from Department of Rehabilitation and Correction halfway houses, which are also known as community-based correctional facilities, and one correctional institution from a Midwestern state. Halfway houses are community residential programs that provide a safe environment for ex-offenders to live in while they transition back into the community and/or while they serve the remainder of their sentence. They provide supervision and treatment services for felony offenders released from state prisons, those referred by Court of Common Pleas, or those sanctioned because of violation(s) of conditions of supervision. Halfway houses assist ex-offenders in finding employment and provide drug and alcohol treatment, educational programs, and programs for sex offenders and mentally ill offenders. Specifically, many of these participants were living in one of the Midwest’s largest community-based correctional facilities, which included four different locations. The remainder of the participants were located in one correctional institution, including a mix of minimum and maximum-security levels. Participants represented both non-violent and violent male offenders who are under transitional control, parole, and post-release control, but excluded federal participants.
The participants selected were English-speaking, adult males with a criminal record, aged 18 and older, and who were currently unemployed. Male participants were chosen specifically for this study because the majority of individuals who are incarcerated are males (1,415,297), compared to females (111,495) (U.S. Department of Justice, 2016). Additionally, it is hypothesized that the lived experiences of female ex-offenders would be different than that of males. For example, women may be more likely to experience sexism (Settles et al., 2006), sexual harassment (Stockdale et al., 2014), and childcare-related responsibilities and needs (McCrae, 2005), compared to their male counterparts.

The sample was diverse in race and included 150 men: White \( (n = 90) \) 60%, Black or African American \( (n = 52) \) 34.7%, American Indian or Alaska Native \( (n = 4) \) 2.7%, Mixed, \( (n = 3) \) 2.0%, and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander offenders \( (n = 1) \) 0.7%. Ages ranged from 19 through 68 years old \( (M = 36.41; SD = 11.06) \), while the number of years of education completed ranged from 6 through 24 (i.e., 6th grade through postdoctoral work) \( (M = 12.01; SD = 1.75) \). There was also diversity in marital status, which included single—never married \( (n = 64) \) 64%, separated \( (n = 8) \) 5.3%, committed relationship \( (n = 17) \) 11.3 %, married or domestic partnership \( (n = 9) \) 6%, divorced \( (n = 19) \) 12.7%, and widowed \( (n = 1) \) 0.7%. In addition, the number of months until being released or until their sentence was successfully completed ranged from 1 through 130 months \( (M = 11.92; SD = 20.21) \).

Of the participants, of which 58% \( (n = 87) \) committed at least one violent crime and 42% \( (n = 63) \) committed no violent crimes. The examples and definition of a violent crime were defined using the Ohio Revised Code 2901.01 (2017) which included crimes
such as aggravated murder, murder, voluntary manslaughter, involuntary manslaughter, felonious assault, aggravated assault, assault, permitting child abuse, aggravated menacing, menacing by stalking, menacing, kidnapping, abduction, extortion, trafficking in person, rape, sexual battery, gross sexual imposition, aggravated arson, arson, terrorism, aggravated robbery, robbery, aggravated burglary, burglary, inciting to violence, aggravated riot, riot, inducing panic, domestic violence, intimidation, and endangering children.

The sample also consisted of participants who committed a varied number of total criminal convictions, which included crimes where the participant was found to be guilty. In total, the number of criminal convictions ranged from 1 through 30 per participant. The total number of crimes is detailed in Table 1.
Lastly, the most recent legal employment held by participants ranged in months from 1 through 456 ($M = 67.82; SD = 95.50$). Legal employment was defined as a formal and legal job with a paycheck. For example, this does not include jobs that provided ‘under the table’ pay to participants, or any illegal pay, which consists of money earned through selling, or distributing, narcotics. It should be noted that while participants are residing in the halfway houses, many are eligible to find and obtain employment; hence, some of the participants had a job within the last month, though they are still incarcerated.

**Research Design**

This study used a correlational research design. A correlational design is a form of
nonexperimental research where the researcher does not manipulate the independent variables, and where the relationship between variables is explored, as opposed to being a causal relationship (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). In addition, descriptive statistics in a correlational research design are statistics that are reported on the observations included in the study (i.e., ex-offenders from a Midwestern state), as opposed to making inferences about a larger population (Warner, 2013). For the purpose of this study, questionnaires were used to collect respondents’ answers and produce the variables used in the data analysis.

**Instrumentation**

This research includes the following measures: Demographic Questionnaire, BESI (Liptak, 2011), and JSAI (Liptak, 2010).

**Demographic Questionnaire.** The relationship of several demographic measures on perceived barriers to employment for ex-offenders is noted in the literature, and they are accordingly included in the multivariate model as independent variables. First, the age of the respondent is measured in number of years. Next, respondent’s gender, marital status, and race are also included. Number of years of education is also explored as an independent variable. The Demographic Questionnaire also explores variables pertinent to the criminal justice population, which include: type of crime committed (i.e., violent vs. non-violent), total number of criminal convictions, length of most recent sentence, expected date released from prison, and lastly, number of years since the last legal means of employment.

**Barriers to Employment Success Inventory (BESI) (Liptak, 2011).** The BESI is a 50-item self-scored and self-administered instrument that is designed to help
individuals identify their main barriers to obtaining a job, or succeeding in their employment. Specifically, the BESI is useful for individuals who are about to begin the job hunt, those who have not been able to obtain employment, and those who are unable to sustain employment.

The BESI comprises five scales, each containing ten items per domain, which signify the range of barriers an individual might confront when looking for, or being successful in, employment: Personal and Financial (P); Emotional and Physical (E); Career Decision-Making and Planning (C); Job-Seeking Knowledge (J); and Training and Education (T). *Personal and Financial* measures the barriers that surface due to a lack of basic survival resources (e.g., sufficient childcare, transportation, health and dental care, housing, money). *Emotional and Physical* measures the barriers that arise from physical complications and feelings of uncertainty and low self-esteem (e.g., concerned with maintaining positive health and outlook on life, decreasing anger and depression). *Career Decision-Making and Planning* measures barriers that surface due to a lack of career planning and career decision-making skills (e.g., setting goals, developing plans to achieve goals). *Job-Seeking Knowledge* measures barriers due to a lack of awareness about how to engage in an effective job search (e.g., developing a job search plan, effective communication skills, mastering effective job search skills). *Training and Education* measures barriers because of a lack of education or training for the type of job desired.

The BESI has been tested with differing populations (e.g., long-term unemployed, offenders and ex-offenders, students, and welfare-to-work clients). The average time to complete the BESI is 20 minutes. Respondents are asked to circle one response for each
item to indicate their primary concerns, using the following 4-point Likert-type scale: 1 = No Concern; 2 = Little Concern; 3 = Some Concern; 4 = Great Concern. Scoring can be completed by either the testing administrator or the test taker. BESI scores are reported in the form of raw scores, with scores between 10 and 19 indicating that the participant has fewer barriers than most unemployed adults. Raw scores from 20 to 30 are in the average range, and specify that the effects of the barriers are about the same as for most unemployed adults. Raw scores from 31 to 40 suggest that the participant has more barriers than most unemployed adults. Means and standard deviations were calculated using differing populations (N = 695) (e.g., long-term unemployed, offenders and ex-offenders, students, welfare-to-work clients): Job-Seeking Knowledge (M = 27.17, SD = 6.94); Personal and Financial (M = 27.42, SD = 6.64); Emotional and Physical (M = 25.54, SD = 6.82); Training and Education (M = 23.61, SD = 8.18); and Career Decision-Making and Planning (M = 26.36, SD = 7.72) (Liptak, 2011).

Munoz, Reichenbach, and Hanser (2005) used the BESI in their Project Employ, which was a grant-funded employment program that sampled homeless adults (N = 52) (mostly women) living in an emergency shelter and residential recovery program, as a means of measuring employment barriers. Some of the participants suffered from mental health problems, drug abuse or addiction, domestic violence, as well as previous criminal histories. Participants’ work history varied, as some had zero work history while others had more experience. The BESI was also used as a tool to measure students with disabilities’ (N = 20) perceived barriers in the Start on Success program (Sabbatino & Macrine, 2007). The Start on Success program provides students with disabilities a community-based transition from school to work. Participants were aged between 17 and
20 years, were African American, and from families that fell in the low-to-middle socioeconomic status range (Sabbatino & Macrine, 2007). In 2011, the BESI was administered to \((N = 189)\) consumers of a state-federal vocational rehabilitation agency (Zanskas, Lustig, Ishitani, 2011). The authors wanted to determine if there were differences between European American and African American perceived barriers of obtaining employment. Participants were between 18 and 62 years of age \((M = 35.7; SD = 13.7)\), mostly male \((n = 104)\), African American \((n = 122)\), and had a high school diploma or less \((n = 141)\) (Zanskas, Lustig, & Ishitani, 2011).

Evidence of reliability for the BESI was measured in terms of internal consistency for unemployed adults participating in government-sponsored job training programs \((N = 150)\): Job-Seeking Knowledge (.87); Personal and Financial (.88); Emotional and Physical (.91); Training and Education (.92); and Career Decision-Making and Planning (.95) (Liptak, 2011). Liptak concluded that there is high confidence that the items on each of the BESI scales are similar, and that they measure what they are intended to measure. Additionally, Liptak ran test-retest correlations \((N = 95)\) at a 6 month follow-up: Job-Seeking Knowledge (.79); Personal and Financial (.86); Emotional and Physical (.90); Training and Education (.82); and Career Decision-Making and Planning (.85), indicating consistency over time (2011). A split-half reliability correlation was also conducted, which yielded an acceptable correlation (.90) (Liptak, 2011).

To establish content validity, Liptak (2011) initially developed 100 statements based on a careful review of the literature and input from employment and career counselors. Liptak then requested the counselors to place each statement into the most appropriate scales and to eliminate any items that did not represent career barriers.
Results were then narrowed to 50 statements. The BESI was then given to a sample of individuals enrolled in a government-sponsored job-training program. Liptak performed interscale correlations for the adult sample ($N = 150$), and the interscale correlations ranged from $0.451$ to $0.694$, providing evidence of the independence of the BESI scales.

Additionally, Gomez et al. (2016) demonstrated construct validity of the BESI when completing a mixed-methods study that analyzed the outcome of ($N = 108$) HIV-positive individuals receiving vocational rehabilitation services, specifically looking at the difference between those who received Social Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Income (SSDI), and those who received no benefits. Three out of the five BESI variables were used in this study: Personal and Financial, Career Decision Making, and Job-Seeking Knowledge. Results demonstrated a significant change in BESI scores over time (i.e., a decrease in perceived barriers), demonstrating that the BESI is sensitive to change, especially when receiving vocational rehabilitation services. At the 12-month follow-up, the researchers found those individuals who were receiving SSI/SSDI had higher scores than their counterparts because they did not want to get a job out of fear of losing their benefits. In other words, receiving benefits in the long-run increased their perceived barriers to employment. Furthermore, Webster et al. (2007) found bivariate correlations between one’s barriers to employment and participant characteristics supporting convergent validity when studying ($N = 500$) clients participating in drug court. Results demonstrated moderate correlations between perceived barriers to employment overall score and participant race ($r = -0.22, p < 0.001$) and employment status ($r = -0.22, p < 0.001$) prior to entering drug court. Non-white and the unemployed experienced greater employment barriers.
Job Search Attitude Inventory (JSAI) (Liptak, 2010). The JSAI is a 40-item self-scored and self-administered instrument that is intended to make individuals more aware of their self-directed and other-directed attitudes about their pursuit for employment.

The JSAI is comprised of five scales, each containing eight items per domain, which signify the range of an individual’s attitudes toward unemployment and searching for a job: Luck vs. Planning, Uninvolved vs. Involved, Help from Others vs. Self-Help, Passive vs. Active, and Pessimistic vs. Optimistic. Luck vs. Planning measures how much people emphasize planning during the job search process, rather than relying on luck to find a job. Uninvolved vs. Involved measures how involved individuals are in their own search for a job (e.g., learning new job search techniques, being dedicated to their job search). Help from Others vs. Self-Help refers to how much people depend on others for help in finding a job, instead of relying on oneself. Passive vs. Active measures how much control individuals think they have in searching for a job. Pessimistic vs. Optimistic refers to how optimistic people are during their job search process.

Liptak (2010) had the assistance of a rehabilitation counselor in the development of the JSAI, and it has since been shown to be effective in correctional counseling. The JSAI requires an eighth grade reading level, while the average time to complete the JSAI is 20 minutes. Respondents are asked to circle one response for each item to indicate the extent to which he or she agrees or disagrees with each of the statements, using the following 4-point Likert-type scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Agree; 4 = Strongly Agree. There is one score (number) for each of the five scales. These scores range from 8 to 32. The higher a respondent’s score, the more positive his or her attitude.
is about searching for a job. Scores from 8 to 16 signify attitudes that are other-directed (e.g., the respondent believes that he or she needs the help of others to find a job and lacks the proper mindset to approach their job search effectively). Scores between 17 and 23 suggest that though the respondent is not fully dependent on others, he or she could take more of an active role in the job search process. Scores between 24 and 32 signify attitudes that are self-directed (e.g., the respondent is confident in his or her own job searching abilities and is optimistic about the future). The groups tested included offenders (n = 554); welfare-to-work clients (n = 296); community college students (n = 535); and youths, ages 12 to 18 (n = 308). The offender sample obtained the following means and standard deviations: Luck vs. Planning (M = 23.38; SD = 3.33); Uninvolved vs. Involved (M = 24.49; SD = 4.69); Passive vs. Active (M = 21.32; SD = 2.79); and Help from Others vs. Self-Help (M = 26.84; SD = 3.81).

Evidence of reliability for the JSAI was computed by employing internal consistency alpha coefficients, test-retest correlations, and split-half reliability for unemployed adults that were participating in an outplacement counseling program or workforce development program. For an adult sample (N = 135), internal consistency was as follows: Luck vs. Planning (.85); Uninvolved vs. Involved (.88); Passive vs. Active (.89); and Help from Others vs. Self-Help (.91). The test-retest (three months later) (N = 107) yielded: Luck vs. Planning (.66); Uninvolved vs. Involved (.60); Passive vs. Active (.76); and Help from Others vs. Self-Help (.75). The split-half reliability (N = 135) was: Luck vs. Planning (.75); Uninvolved vs. Involved (.53); Passive vs. Active (.81); and Help from Others vs. Self-Help (.72).
The JSAI was also used in a study conducted by Grunau, Whitefield, and Fay (2004) that looked at the psychological and academic characteristics of extremely low birth weight adolescents \((n = 53)\) compared to their term-born peers \((n = 31)\). They found that the extremely low birth weight adolescents’ JASI results were very similar to their term-born peers; however, the only significant difference was on the Help From Others vs. Self-Help scale \((p = .001)\). Extremely low birth weight participants viewed themselves as needing more help from others in finding a job compared to their counterparts. This study further supports the utility of the JSAI with marginalized populations.

To establish content validity, Liptak (2010) initially developed 50 statements based on careful review of the literature and input from employment and career counselors. Liptak then requested the counselors to place each statement into the most appropriate scales and to eliminate any items that did not represent career barriers. Results were then narrowed to 32 statements. The JSAI was then given to a sample of individuals enrolled in a government-sponsored job-training program. Evidence of validity for the JSAI was supported by intercorrelation among JSAI scales for an adult sample \((N = 135)\), which ranged from .11 to .58. A review of the JSAI, completed by Fleenor (2009), concludes the JSAI appears to have utility as a measure of attitudes of job seekers. He acknowledged the instrument’s content validation, but explained the JSAI manual did not show support of criterion-related validity. However, Singh and Noah (2013) found that there was a significant relationship between posttest work attitude scores, when using one’s JASI overall score and one’s job placement success \((n = 7\) job placements), at three months post-counseling \((r = + .90, p < .05)\). Though the correlation
was based upon a very small sample, the data indicated a positive relationship between high posttest work attitude scores and subsequent job placement success, supporting criterion-related validity.

Additionally, Singh and Noah (2013) demonstrated construct validity of the JSAI when completing a quasi-experimental study that analyzed how employment-focused vocational counseling and level of education impacted work attitudes and successful vocational outcomes in a veteran population recovering from substance abuse ($N = 71$) with (males, $n = 57$). Participants completed the JSAI before starting vocational counseling and then after the three-month vocational counseling program. The research sample was evenly distributed across the education and counseling categories: 35 participants (49.30%) received baseline counseling, while 36 participants (50.70%) received brief counseling, with no HS diploma or GED ($n = 11$), with a HS diploma or GED ($n = 28$), and some college ($n = 32$). Mean JSAI scale scores were used in this study. Results demonstrated a statistically significant change in overall JSAI scores over time for each educational group (i.e., better job search attitude), demonstrating that the overall JSAI score is sensitive to change, especially when receiving vocational rehabilitation services. Interestingly, job search attitudes were higher for the ‘college group’ and the lowest for the ‘no HS diploma or GED’ group. This suggested that individuals who have more education are likely to have better job search attitudes than those with less education.

The overall JSAI score’s construct validity was also supported by McDonnell and Giesen (2011). They completed a study with a group of adults ($N = 18$) with visual impairments that were a part of Project H.I.R.E., an online employment preparation
The Project H.I.R.E. program was able to significantly increase pre- to post-intervention scores by approximately seven points, $M(SE) = 96.43$ and $M(SE) = 103.47$, respectively.

**Procedure**

The researcher traveled to four different Department of Rehabilitation and Correction halfway houses and one correctional institution, all located in the same Midwestern state. This investigator minimized the burden and involvement of the halfway houses’ and correctional institution’s staff by personally collecting the data and ensuring that the data collection took place during a prior, approved and agreed upon time. Each halfway house manager, who kept a running list of potential participants names, randomly approached participants to see if they were interested in participating in the study. Halfway house managers reported that they approached roughly 30 participants with the “majority” of participants agreeing to participate in the study. Roughly 25% of each halfway house consensus was approached to participate in the study. Each halfway house census varied from an average of 100 to 150 individuals. During the day of testing, each participant on the list was approached to see if he was still interested in participating and those who were still interested (all names on the list) participated. Each participant completed three instruments: 1) the Demographic Questionnaire, 2) BESI (Liptak, 2011) and 3) JSAI (Liptak, 2010). Measures were administered as a paper-and-pencil version, as computers and other resources were limited. Prior to the measures being completed, the researcher marked a participant number (Participant #’s: 1, 2 ... 150) at the top right-hand corner of each measure and demographic questionnaire. Each participant entered the designated testing room and was handed all measures (in a packet form) that
corresponded with their participant number. The participants’ numbers coincided with the order in which they participated, and was utilized as the only source of identifying information for organizing and analyzing the participants’ individual-level responses. As no identifying information was collected other than on the informed consent, the participant number was not associated with, or linked to, any identifying information (i.e. name, email, or IP address), keeping participant identities confidential.

The surveys were administered in a group setting, where no more than 30 individuals could participate at one time. Each participant completed his measures in a designated testing room to decrease distractions, which was provided by the halfway houses’ facilities and the correctional institution. The researcher remained in the testing room during the completion of all measures to answer any questions posed by the participants. After verbally reading each measure’s instructions to the participants, the researcher instructed participants to pay special attention to the instructions on each measure, specifically the JSAI due to items being reversed scored. For example, question one ‘Strongly Agree’ is scored a one while question three ‘Strongly Agree’ is scored a four. Specifically the researcher stated: “Pay special attention to this measure as the questions may try to trick you.” Each participant completed two measures as well as the demographic questionnaire in one sitting, which took each participant approximately 20-30 minutes to complete.

There were no known physical or social risks that were associated with participating in the study, beyond those consistent with daily living. Participants were exposed to subjectively minimal risks associated with cognitive fatigue, frustration, or emotional discomfort due to questions asked within the questionnaires. However,
participants should not have experienced any of these concerns beyond a level they experience over the normal course of daily living. The participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty if they found any of the questions too distressing or personal. In addition, the informed consent form directed the participants to seek services from their Department of Rehabilitation Correction halfway house and correctional institution’s mental health staff, which included their case manager, if they experienced any distress while participating in the study.

**Data Analysis**

For the purpose of this study, descriptive statistics will be reported for the BESI (Liptak, 2011) and JSAI (Liptak, 2010). In addition, a canonical correlation will be used to answer the first research question: is there a relationship between ex-offenders’ perceived barriers to employment and job search attitude? Criterion variables (i.e., Set 1), or one’s barriers to employment, are categorized as Personal and Financial, Emotional and Physical, Career Decision-Making and Planning, Job-Seeking Knowledge, and Training and Education, as measured by Liptak’s (2011) BESI. Predictor variables (i.e., Set 2), or one’s job search attitude, is defined as Luck vs. Planning, Uninvolved vs. Involved, Pessimistic vs. Optimist, Health From Others vs. Self-Help, and Passive vs. Active, as measured by Liptak’s (2010) JSAI. A canonical correlation allows the researcher to determine the relationship between perceived barriers and job search attitude for unemployed male ex-offenders. The two sets of variables (perceived barriers to employment) and (job search attitude) are correlated to determine which attitude variables best predict which perceived barriers to employment variables by producing Pearson $r$ correlations (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Ideally, using a canonical correlation
to address the perceived barriers to employment for male ex-offenders and one’s job
search attitude will address the attitude-variable gap in the literature, as discussed by
Varghese and Cummings (2012). An incentive of soda and pizza was given to
participants who agreed to partake in the study.

A canonical correlation analysis represents the highest level of the general linear
model, and can provide an extension of univariate and multivariate models (Sherry &
Henson, 2005). Hotelling (1935) initially developed the canonical correlation’s analytical
framework. Conducting a canonical correlation is now more accessible, due to statistical
programs such as Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Sherry and Henson
(2005) argue that a canonical correlation is a statistical method that best honors the reality
of psychological research, because most psychological research variables typically have
multiple causes and multiple effects, which can be explored by conducting a canonical
correlation, compared to conducting a univariate model. Therefore, conducting a
canonical correlation does not misrepresent the complexity of the human experience,
which includes human behavior, cognition, and attitudes. A canonical correlation is an
appropriate statistical method for this study because it allows the researcher to examine
the relationship of several predictor variables and criterion variables (i.e., between two
variable sets). To analyze the relationship between two variable sets, each variable set
must be combined into one synthetic variable, or latent variable. One equation from each
variable set is then generated to produce the largest possible correlation between the two
variable sets, which produces Pearson r correlations (Sherry & Henson, 2005).

Next, a multivariate multiple regression can be used to answer the second
research question: Is there a relationship between ex-offenders’ actual barriers to
employment as measured by type of offenses committed (violent vs. nonviolent), total number of criminal convictions, highest level of education completed, and overall perceived barriers to employment and overall job search attitude? For the purpose of this study, a multivariate multiple regression was used to determine if the independent variables, as categorized by Type of Offense Committed, Total Number of Criminal Convictions, and Highest Level of Education, as explored by the Demographic Questionnaire, statistically significantly predicted scores on the dependent variables as categorized by BESI overall score and JSAI overall score. The multivariate multiple regression was used because the independent variables are continuous and dummy coded—Type of offense committed was dummy coded (Violent = 1, Non Violent = 0), while total number of criminal convictions and highest level of education completed were continuous variables.

Multivariate multiple regression is used to determine the relationship between the independent and dependent variables, and the strengths of the relationships in the model. Specifically, a multivariate multiple regression allows the researcher to have more than one independent and dependent variable and use variables that are continuous and/or dummy coded. A multivariate multiple regression is highly sensitive to the combination of variables used, so careful selection of the variables was important. In general, one wants independent variables that correlate highly with the dependent variables, but not with each other. When conducting a multivariate multiple regression, all variables are entered simultaneously into SPSS (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Furthermore, a canonical correlation and multivariate multiple regression (both multivariate methods) decrease the likelihood of committing a Type I error, or rejecting the null when it is true. In other
words, multivariate techniques decrease the likelihood of committing a Type I error by simultaneously comparing variables instead of requiring additional statistical tests to be conducted (Sherry & Henson, 2005). In addition, both multivariate methods allow the researcher to test for multiple relationships, allowing for detailed descriptive outcomes (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics and Reliability of Measures

The means and standard deviations for each of the sets of variables, as well as the correlation coefficients and reliability coefficients for all of the scales are provided. These are summarized in Table 2. The Pearson $r$ correlations between all subscales of both tests ranged from -.17 to .84. In addition, the assumptions of canonical correlation are explored, which resulted in the JSAI’s Passive vs. Active subscale being removed from the canonical correlation due to issues with reliability and normality.
Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Barriers to Employment Subscales and Job Search Attitude Subscales (N = 150)

| Subscale                                | M    | SD   | 1    | 2    | 3    | 4    | 5    | 6    | 7    | 8    | 9    |
|-----------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Barriers to Employment                  |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 1. Personal and Financial               | 26.13| 5.97 | ---  |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 2. Emotional and Physical               | 22.37| 7.48 | .68**| ---  |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 3. Career Decision-Making and Planning  | 28.37| 8.05 | .53**| .63**| ---  |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 4. Job-Seeking Knowledge                | 26.51| 8.12 | .62**| .69**| .84**| ---  |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 5. Training and Education               | 22.51| 7.71 | .56**| .64**| .62**| .73**|      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Job Search Attitude                     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 6. Luck vs. Planning                    | 24.31| 3.44 | -.12 | -.22**| -.05 | -.13 | -.17*|      |      |      |      |      |
| 7. Uninvolved vs. Involved              | 25.79| 3.02 | .11  | -.02 | .08  | .05  | -.03 | .60**|      |      |      |      |
| 8. Help from Others vs. Self-Help       | 25.85| 3.02 | -.05 | -.19*| -.01 | -.06 | -.08 | .67**| .63**|      |      |      |
| 9. Pessimistic vs. Optimistic           | 23.86| 4.30 | -.23**| -.32**| -.02 | -.13 | -.08 | .61**| .44**| .59**|      |      |

Note. M = mean, SD = standard deviation, *p < .05, **p < .01
Evidence of reliability for the BESI was measured in terms of internal consistency using Cronbach’s alpha ($N = 150$). Cronbach’s alpha uses the mean of all inter-item correlations to assess the stability, or consistency, of measurement (Warner, 2013). Cronbach’s alpha results of .70 and higher are generally considered to be acceptable in the social sciences (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Results are as follows: Personal and Financial (.73); Emotional and Physical (.86); Career Decision-Making and Planning (.93); Job-Seeking Knowledge (.91); and Training and Education (.87). The internal consistency coefficients of the BESI subscales suggest that the BESI functioned as a reliable measure in this study.

Evidence of reliability for the JSAI was also measured in terms of internal consistency using Cronbach’s alpha ($N = 150$): Luck vs. Planning (.74); Uninvolved vs. Involved (.69); Help From Others vs. Self-Help (.67); Passive vs. Active (.56); and Pessimistic vs. Optimistic (.81). Results of this study reported lower Cronbach alpha coefficients compared to Liptak’s (2010) results, which ranged from a low of .85 to a high of .91, specifically Passive vs. Active (.89). If Item 33, “I will get better results concentrating on jobs that have not been advertised” was omitted from the Passive vs. Active subscale, then Cronbach alpha of the Passive vs. Active subscale increased to (.60), which is still an unacceptable Cronbach alpha. It appears that Item 33 was the most problematic item because the majority of participants ($n = 87$) provided the same response and reported that they ‘Disagree’ with the statement. It is hypothesized that ex-offenders have the misconception that they can only apply to jobs that are advertised, as opposed to reaching out to employers to see if there are any job openings, even if not
advertised. This could be due in part to the difficulties in areas of understanding how to search for a job (Tschopp et al., 2007).

Additionally, the Passive vs. Active subscale of eight items had more kurtosis compared to the other JSAI subscales. Participants appeared to have selected a certain response pattern much more in the Passive vs. Active subscale, compared to the other JSAI subscales. The vast majority of JSAI items appear to be positively skewed, with negative numbers that tail to the right, which resulted in the non-normal distribution. For a normal and symmetrical distribution, kurtosis and skewness has a value of 0. Data that is positively skewed has a longer tail on the right-hand side, while negatively skewed data has a longer tail on the left-hand side (Warner, 2013). Overall, the Passive vs. Active subscale remained unacceptable even after item deletion.

The Passive vs. Active scale did not seem to be a reliable measure in this study, which also affects its validity. Due to this, and other problems with this scale that will be discussed further in the chapter, the Passive vs. Active subscale was not used in the analyses in the canonical correlation. Though the Passive vs. Active subscale reported low internal consistency, it is believed the JSAI is still a reliable measure in this study due to Liptak’s (2010) reported Cronbach alphas, and due to resulting Cronbach alphas of the other four JSAI subscales. Additionally, the total JSAI instrument alpha was good (.91). Furthermore, Schmitt (1996) would argue that the number of items in a subscale could impact internal consistency. He proposed that fewer items in a subscale, less than 10, may allow for lower inter-item correlations—each JSAI subscale consisted of only eight items. Next, the response patterns on the JSAI Overall Score were positively skewed,
suggesting that participants responded with lower scores and rated their job search attitude as poor.

**Research Question 1**

A canonical correlation analysis was conducted to answer the first research question: Is there a relationship between ex-offenders’ perceived barriers to employment and job search attitude? One side of the model consisted of barriers to employment variables (Set 1 variables), which are Personal and Financial, Emotional and Physical, Career Decision-Making and Planning, Job-Seeking Knowledge, and Training and Education. The other side of the model consisted of job search attitude variables (Set 2 variables), which included Luck vs. Planning, Uninvolved vs. Involved, Help from Others vs. Self-Help, and Pessimistic vs. Optimistic. Higher positive scores reflect more barriers to employment in areas of Personal and Financial, Emotional and Physical, Career Decision-Making and Planning, Job-Seeking Knowledge, and Training and Education, while higher negative scores reflect a weaker job search attitude in areas of Luck vs. Planning, Uninvolved vs. Involved, Help from Others vs. Self-Help, and Pessimistic vs. Optimistic.

When conducting a canonical correlation there are assumptions that must be met. First, the data needs to be assessed for any potential missing data, as well as outliers, as missing data and outliers can cause severe problems and affect the magnitude of correlation coefficients. Next, the data need to display multivariate normality. There must also be linear relationships among all pairs of the two variable sets (i.e., Set 1 and Set 2) because curvilinear relationships can reduce the effectiveness of the analysis. In
addition, variables within each set should not be highly correlated with one another (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

To determine whether or not the assumptions of the canonical correlation were met, the data was checked for missing data and outliers. There was no missing data, and each BESI subscale was analyzed for outliers by comparing means and 5% trimmed means: Personal and Financial ($M = 26.13$; 5% Trimmed $M = 26.08$); Emotional and Physical ($M = 22.37$; 5% Trimmed $M = 22.18$); Career Decision Making and Planning ($M = 28.34$; 5% Trimmed $M = 28.70$); Job Seeking Knowledge ($M = 26.51$; 5% Trimmed $M = 26.66$); and Training and Education ($M = 22.51$; 5% Trimmed $M = 22.28$). JSAI means and 5% trimmed means for the JSAI subscales were also analyzed: Luck vs. Planning ($M = 24.31$; 5% Trimmed $M = 24.28$); Uninvolved vs. Involved ($M = 25.79$; 5% Trimmed $M = 25.77$); Help from Others vs. Self Help ($M = 25.85$; 5% Trimmed $M = 25.82$); and Pessimistic vs. Optimistic ($M = 23.87$; 5% Trimmed $M = 23.90$). The means and 5% trimmed means were all similar, suggesting that there are no outliers (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

Next, a STATA Doornik-Hansen test for multivariate normality (Doornik and Hansen 2008) was conducted. The Doornik-Hansen test analyzes the skewness and kurtosis of multivariate data that is transformed to insure independence and normality. The Doornik-Hansen test is more suitable than the Shapiro-Wilk test for most tested multivariate data (Doornik & Hansen, 2008). The Doornik-Hansen test for BESI and JSAI composite scores was significant $x^2 (20) = 33.658$ $p = 0.0285$, indicating that multivariate normality was not met. It was hypothesized that removing the Passive vs. Active variable in Set 2, due to its low Cronbach alpha (.56), would improve normality.
The STATA Doornik-Hansen test of multivariate normality for the JSAI subscales with Passive vs. Active removed was not significant $\chi^2 (18) = 26.680, p = 0.0852$, showing that the removal of the subscale fixed the problem, and the assumption of multivariate normality was met.

Additionally, multivariate linearity of Set 1 and Set 2 variables was checked by visually inspecting scatter plots and including a fit line at total. Scatter plots demonstrated linear relationships, as opposed to curvilinear relationships, suggesting the assumption of linearity was met. Running two separate principal components analyses, one for Set 1 variables and one for Set 2 variables, assessed multicollinearity by examining the eigenvalues. Eigenvalues were used to determine the maximum possible between-group variance and the minimum possible within-group variance (Warner, 2013). Eigenvalues can range in scores greater than and less than one, and less than .01 indicates significant multicollinearity. Results demonstrated that the eigenvalues were not close to zero, indicating no multicollinearity in Set 1 variables: BESI (Component 1 = 3.619); (Component 2 = 0.547); (Component 3 = 0.391); (Component 4 = 0.302); and (Component 5 = 0.141). Results demonstrated that the eigenvalues were not close to zero, indicating no multicollinearity in Set 2 variables: JSAI (Component 1 = 2.774); (Component 2 = 0.562); (Component 3 = 0.338); and (Component 4 = 0.326).

The full canonical model was statistically significant and accounted for 70% of the variance between canonical composites, Pillai’s $V = .30, F (20, 576) = 2.37, p = .001$. To determine the relationship between the two sets of variables, a dimension reduction analysis was performed. In the full model, one significant canonical root emerged. The standardized canonical function coefficients, structure coefficients, and squared structure
coefficients for the significant canonical root of the canonical correlation analysis are
included in Table 3. There were no other statistically significant ($p < .05$) canonical roots.
Table 3

*Canonical Solution for Significant Canonical Root (N = 150)*

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<th>Coef</th>
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<th>$r_s^2$ (%)</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: Structure coefficients ($r_s$) greater than .4 are in bold face. Coef = Standardized Coefficient; $r_s$ = Structure Coefficient; $r_s^2$ = Squared Structure Coefficient
The significant canonical root accounted for 22% of the overall shared variance $R_c = .47$ between canonical composites of the full model (Wilk’s Lambda = .79, $F (5, 141) = 7.58, p < .001$). The canonical correlation coefficient, or $R_c$, is the Pearson $r$ relationship between the two synthetic variables on a given canonical function, and ranges from 0 to 1 (Sherry & Henson, 2005). The standardized canonical function coefficients indicate the extent to which the discriminant variables affect the score. Results suggest that Pessimistic vs. Optimistic (standardized coefficient = -1.06) has the greatest impact on the significant canonical root. This root was characterized by heavy positive loadings on Emotional and Physical (.75) and Personal and Financial (.67), a weak to moderate positive loading on Job Seeking Knowledge (.39), a strong negative loading on Pessimistic vs. Optimistic (-.89), a moderate negative loading on Luck vs. Planning (-.42), and a weak to moderate negative loading on Help from Others vs. Self-Help (-.36). Positive loadings on the BESI subscales reflect higher perceived barriers to employment, while negative loadings on the JSAI subscales reflect lower job search attitudes. Structure coefficients greater than .60 were considered to be heavy loading, coefficients ranging from .40 to .60 were considered to be a moderate loading, and coefficients below .40 were considered to be weak or low loading. Loadings of less than .30 were not interpreted (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

These loadings suggest that higher barriers in Emotional and Physical, Personal and Financial, and Job-Seeking Knowledge are associated with a low job search attitude in Pessimistic vs. Optimistic, Luck vs. Planning, and Help from Others vs. Self-Help during their job search process. That is, ex-offenders who experience more barriers that arise from physical complications and feelings of uncertainty and low self-esteem,
barriers that surface due do a lack of basic survival resources (e.g., sufficient childcare, transportation, health and dental care, housing, money), and barriers due to a lack of awareness about how to engage in an effective job search (e.g., developing a job search plan, effective communication skills, mastering effective job search skills) are more likely to be pessimistic during their job search process, rely on luck rather than emphasize planning to find a job, and depend on others for help in finding a job instead of relying on oneself.

**Research Question 2**

A multivariate multiple regression was employed to answer the second research question: Is there a relationship between ex-offenders’ actual barriers to employment as measured by type of offenses committed (violent vs. nonviolent), total number of criminal convictions, highest level of education completed, and their overall perceived barriers to employment and overall job search attitude? Specifically, a multivariate multiple regression was used to determine if the independent variables as categorized by Type of Offense Committed, Total Number of Criminal Convictions, and Highest Level of Education, as explored by the Demographic Questionnaire, statistically significantly predicted scores on the dependent variables, as categorized by the BESI overall score and the JSAI overall score. The BESI overall score was the cumulative score of the 50 items on the BESI, while the JSAI overall score was the cumulative score of the 40 items on the JSAI. The BESI and JSAI maximum cumulative overall scores were 200 and 160, respectively. Type of Offense Committed was dummy coded (1 = Violent Offense; 0 = No Violent Offense) while Total Number of Criminal Convictions and Highest Level of Education Completed were continuous variables.
When conducting a multivariate multiple regression there are assumptions that must be met. First, the data need to provide multivariate normality. There must also be linear relationships among all pairs of the dependent variables. The overall statistical power of the multivariate multiple regression can be reduced if there are deviations from linearity. In addition, independent variables should not correlate with one another (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

A STATA Doornik-Hansen test for multivariate normality was significant $\chi^2 (4) = 9.923, p = .0417$, indicating that multivariate normality was not met. When each of the variables was tested for univariate normality overall BESI score was normally distributed ($p = .2959$), while the overall JSAI score was not normally distributed ($p = .0327$). To ensure that the nonnormality of this variable did not affect the outcome of the analysis, a log10 transformation was performed on the overall JSAI score, which resulted in a normally distributed variable after running a STATA Doornik-Hansen test ($p = 0.4000$). Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) propose using a log10 transformation when the data are positively skewed, as was the case with the JSAI. The resulting new variable (i.e., JSAI Log) was used in the multivariate multiple regression and the results of the analysis were the same when compared to the original variable (i.e., overall JSAI score). Thus, the original variable was used in the interpretation of the results for the sake of clarification, as Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) propose that interpreting log variables is not universally recommended and may be harder to decipher. Additionally, the univariate Q-Q plots were visually inspected for normality and outliers, which appeared normal upon completion. Scatter plots demonstrated linear relationships, as opposed to curvilinear relationships, suggesting the assumption of linearity was met. To assess for multicollinearity, Pearson
correlations were run, and resulted in no highly-correlated independent variables. The correlation matrix for multicollinearity is included in Table 4.
Table 4

*Correlation Matrix for Multicollinearity (N = 150)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Education Completed</th>
<th>Type of Crime</th>
<th>Criminal Convictions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education Completed</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-.118</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.151</td>
<td>.932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Crime</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-.118</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.151</td>
<td>.793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal Convictions</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.932</td>
<td>.793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this research study, direct evaluation of the comparative strengths of the relationship between variables was measured using unstandardized beta coefficients. Unstandardized beta coefficients define the prediction equation and can be used to predict a score (i.e., dependent variable) for a participant. The amount of variance explained in the criterion variable by the predictor variable was measured by $R$-square ($R^2$), while the level of significance was $p < .05$. Descriptive statistics for the dependent variables are as follows: Overall BESI Score ($M = 125.90; SD = 31.87$) and Overall JSAI Score ($M = 121.58; SD = 13.73$).

The analysis of Overall BESI Score and Overall JASI Score differences across the three predictor variables resulted in a statistically significant model, suggesting that there is a relationship between Type of Offense Committed (violent vs. non-violent), Total Number of Criminal Convictions, Highest Level of Education Completed and one’s Barriers to Employment Success overall score and Job Search Attitude overall score with Pillai’s Trace = .065, $F (2, 145) = 4.74, p = .010$. The univariate regression (see Table 5) revealed one significant relationship between Highest Level of Education Completed and Barriers to Employment Success overall score $F (1, 150) = 7.25, p = .008$, with $R^2$ of .055 (.036 adjusted). Specifically, one grade increase in level of education was associated with an almost four-point decrease in overall perceived barriers to employment. $R^2$ of .055 suggests that 5.5% of the variance of Barriers to Employment Success overall score was accounted for by the combination of independent variables. Table 5 shows the univariate effects for the multivariate regression analyses.
### Table 5

*Analyses of Type of Offense Committed, Number of Criminal Convictions, Highest Level of Education in Relation to Overall BESI and Overall JSAI Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>df errors</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of Offense Committed (V vs. NV)</td>
<td>Overall BESI</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>0.194</td>
<td>189.54</td>
<td>.661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall JSAI</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>0.200</td>
<td>37.53</td>
<td>.655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Criminal Convictions</td>
<td>Overall BESI</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>0.723</td>
<td>708.00</td>
<td>.396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall JSAI</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>0.078</td>
<td>14.57</td>
<td>.781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest Level of Education Completed</td>
<td>Overall BESI</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>7.245</td>
<td>7092.75</td>
<td>.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall JSAI</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>3.241</td>
<td>607.68</td>
<td>.074</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*R Squared = .056 (Adjusted R Squared = .036)*
Unstandardized coefficients and significant $t$-scores ($p < .05$) were examined to determine which variable contributes the most to the prediction of Barriers to Employment Success overall score. The unstandardized beta coefficient suggest that Years of Education Completed contributed most to the model ($t = -2.69, p < .008$), indicating that a one grade increase in level of education was associated with an almost four point decrease (-3.981) in overall Perceived Barriers to Employment. Based on the unstandardized regression coefficients and $t$-scores, it would appear that Years of Education Completed is the best predictor of Barriers to Employment Success overall score. Table 6 shows the unstandardized coefficients, $t$-scores, and beta weights. It is likely that the confidence interval for violent crime is wide due to the relatively small sample size (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).
Table 6

*Multivariate Regression Analysis – Main Effect for Overall BESI Score*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Lower Bound</th>
<th>Upper Bound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall BESI Score</td>
<td>Violent Crime</td>
<td>2.294</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>0.440</td>
<td>.661</td>
<td>-8.010</td>
<td>12.598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of Criminal Convictions</td>
<td>-0.380</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>-0.850</td>
<td>.396</td>
<td>-1.262</td>
<td>0.503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Years of Education Completed</td>
<td>-3.981</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>-2.690</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>-6.903</td>
<td>-1.058</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall, the canonical correlation supported that there is a relationship between one’s perceived barriers to employment and job search attitude, suggesting that higher barriers in Emotional and Physical, Personal and Financial, and Job-Seeking Knowledge are associated with higher Pessimistic vs. Optimistic, Luck vs. Planning, and Help from Others vs. Self-Help during their job search process. In addition, the multivariate multiple regression supported that there is a relationship between Highest Level of Education Completed and one’s Barriers to Employment Success overall score.

The results will be discussed in Chapter Five, which follows.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

Overview

This study assessed potential relationships between ex-offenders’ barriers to employment, as measured by Liptak’s (2011) BESI and their job search attitude as measured by Liptak’s (2010) JSAI. Specifically, the study explored two research questions: 1) Is there a relationship between ex-offenders’ perceived barriers to employment and job search attitude, and 2) Is there a relationship between type of offenses committed (violent vs. nonviolent), total number of criminal convictions, highest level of education completed, and overall perceived barriers to employment and overall job search attitude? The sample for this study was made up of volunteer participants from Department of Rehabilitation and Correction halfway houses and one correctional institution from a Midwestern state. Participants selected were English-speaking, adult males with a criminal record, aged 18 and older, and who were currently unemployed.

As previously stated, it was found that higher perceived barriers scores on the subscales Emotional and Physical, Personal and Financial, and Job Seeking Knowledge are associated with higher attitude scores on the subscales Pessimistic vs. Optimistic, Luck vs. Planning, and Help from Others vs. Self-Help. This means that ex-offenders who experience more barriers that arise from physical complications and feelings of
uncertainty and low self-esteem, barriers that surface due to a lack of basic survival resources (e.g., sufficient childcare, transportation, health and dental care, housing, money), and barriers due to a lack of awareness about how to engage in an effective job search (e.g., developing a job search plan, effective communication skills, mastering effective job search skills) are more likely to be pessimistic during their job search process, rely on luck rather than emphasize planning to find a job, and depend on others for help in finding a job instead of relying on oneself.

The current research study also attempted to understand whether or not Type of Offense Committed (violent vs. non-violent), Total Number of Criminal Convictions, and Highest Level of Education Completed could statistically significantly predict the Barriers to Employment Success overall score and Job Search Attitude overall score. The findings supported that there was an overall relationship between Type of Offense Committed (violent vs. non-violent), Total Number of Criminal Convictions, Highest Level of Education Completed and one’s Barriers to Employment Success overall score and Job Search Attitude overall score. In addition, the findings showed that Highest Level of Education Completed was the strongest predictor for one’s Barriers to Employment Success overall score. In other words, as one’s Level of Education Completed increased, one’s Barriers to Employment Success overall score decreased, suggesting that having a higher level of education minimizes one’s perceived barriers to employment. Specifically, one grade increase in level of education was associated with an almost four-point decrease in overall perceived barriers to employment. Though results on the univariate model yielded statistically significant results, the model did not
account for much variation in the scores, with only 5.5%, indicating low practical significance.

The current research study contributed to the literature by expanding our understanding of the relationship between one’s perceived barriers to employment and one’s job search attitude. As such, this research study explored the gap in the literature posed by Varghese and Cummings (2012). Varghese and Cummings asserted that existing research in this area is limited to macro-level perspectives, such as environmental barriers to work, while little attention is given to micro-level, or person-centered issues, such as ex-offenders’ career behaviors and attitudes. Specifically, Bucklen and Zajac (2009) suggest that one’s attitude toward work is related to one’s perceived barriers, proposing that being more optimistic may decrease one’s perceived barriers to employment. This study found that Pessimistic vs. Optimistic attitudes had the greatest impact on one’s perceived barriers to employment, supporting Bucklen and Zajac’s findings. Hence, improving one’s attitude may decrease their perceived barriers.

This study further supported the literature by suggesting that ex-offenders are concerned about employment-related barriers that fall into the distinct categories of emotional and physical, personal and financial, and job-seeking knowledge. Such concerns include low self-esteem (Creed, Patton, & Bartrum, 2004), transportation barriers (Harris & Keller, 2005), interview preparedness barriers (Rakis, 2005), and not knowing how to search for a job (Soeker et al., 2013; Tschopp et al., 2007). However, this study found no relationship between one’s career decision-making and planning and one’s perceived barriers to employment and their job search attitudes, even though Freudenberg et al., (2005) concluded that men are less likely to engage in career-planning
and decision-making, which includes being enrolled in school or training programs one year post-release compared to their female counterparts. This study’s findings suggest that there is not a significant relationship between an ex-offender’s ability to set goals, or develop a plan to achieve employment, and their job search attitudes.

Additionally, this study’s findings further supported Albright and Denq’s (1996) findings. They were exploring ex-offenders’ employment barriers that relate to employer bias and found that as ex-offenders’ level of education increased, employers were more willing to hire individuals with criminal records. Increased levels of education may decrease their barriers to employment because they will have a better chance at being employed. This current research study, as well as Albright and Denq’s (1996) demonstrate the importance of education for the ex-offender population, as it may help decrease perceived and actual barriers to employment. Though there was a significant relationship between one’s level of education and one’s perceived barriers to employment, there was no significant relationship for type of offense committed and total number of criminal convictions, suggesting that the latter two variables do not have a significant impact on one’s perceived career barriers. Though employers put an emphasis on ex-offenders’ type of offense committed (Albright & Denq, 1996; Haselwood-Pocsik, Brown, & Spencer, 2008) and number of criminal convictions (Brown, Spencer, & Deakin, 2007; Haslewood-Pocsik, Brown, & Spencer, 2008), ex-offenders do not view such factors as impacting their barriers to employment. Additionally, one’s job search attitude was not significantly related to one’s level of education, type of offense committed, or total number of criminal convictions. This is somewhat surprising, being
that one’s attitude and beliefs about one’s ability to perform a given function is a critical factor in determining one’s success (Bandura, 1977).

Overall, research demonstrated that optimistic individuals are more likely to perceive external barriers, such as financial demands, as challenging, rather than threatening, to their achievement of vocational goals (Creed, Patton, & Bartrum, 2004), further demonstrating that there is a relationship between different types of perceived barriers and attitude.

**Implications for Theory**

According to Lent and Brown (2013), SCCT has focused more on the destination, rather than the journey, to obtaining employment. Their career self-management model emphasizes interpersonal influences proximal to choice behavior, specifically looking at how one may respond to career setbacks. The career self-management model focuses on such intrapersonal, behavioral, and environmental determinants, which include one’s barriers and job search attitude. Relevance to the SCCT model was supported by this study, as it demonstrated how one’s interpersonal influences (i.e., attitude) related to one’s choice behaviors and perceived barriers when trying to obtain employment. Brown, Lent, and Knoll (2013) propose exploring SCCT with the ex-offender population because their level of persistence when faced with adversity may somewhat depend on the presence of barriers during the job search process. They suggest that SCCT interventions should address the ex-offender’s “willingness to work, employment preparation, job finding, job maintenance, and overcoming employment-related barriers” (p. 1056).

This research study supports the importance of barriers to employment for the male ex-offender population by suggesting that how ex-offenders respond to their career
setbacks may be influenced by their job search attitude. In addition, one of the main interpersonal variables that have been found to influence an individual is their attitude. Bandura (1977) believed that one’s beliefs and attitudes about his or her ability to perform a given task were the most critical factor in determining one’s success. Bucklen and Zajac’s results (2009) were further supported by this study, suggesting that one’s attitude is also related to one’s perceived barriers, which may ultimately impact one’s job success. They concluded that having a positive attitude toward work helped them view career-related barriers as less challenging, while Albert and Luzzo (1999) proposed that one’s perceptions of barriers could negatively affect their career attitudes and behaviors. This study found that ex-offenders who experienced more barriers that arose from physical complications and feelings of uncertainty and low self-esteem, barriers that surfaced due do a lack of basic survival resources, and barriers due to a lack of awareness about how to engage in an effective job search were more likely to be pessimistic during their job search process, rely on luck rather than emphasize planning to find a job, and believe they have less control in searching for a job. Taken together, this research study compliments the newly-proposed career self-management model (Lent & Brown, 2013) and Bucklen and Zajac’s (2009) findings by suggesting one’s perceived career barriers cannot be fully understood without taking into consideration one’s interpersonal influences, such as attitude toward work.

**Implications for Research**

**Research question 1.**

This research study supported that there was a relationship between three perceived barriers to employment: Emotional and Physical, Personal and Financial, and
Job Seeking Knowledge; and three job search attitude variables: Pessimistic vs. Optimistic, Luck vs. Planning, and Help from Others vs. Self-Help.

Specifically, Emotional and Physical barriers include those that arise from physical complications, feelings of uncertainty, and low self-esteem. Research supports that low self-esteem may be one of the significant predictors of one’s career decision-making self-efficacy (Creed, Patton, & Bartrum, 2004), while Bucklen and Zajac (2009) found that ex-offenders who had confidence in their ability to overcome barriers associated with work were more likely to keep their job. Next, Personal and Financial barriers include a lack of basic survival resources. Research further supports that there are many personal and financial barriers to employment for ex-offenders. Once released from prison, some ex-offenders do not have a safe place to live (Taxman, 2004), appropriate clothing for a job interview (Rakis, 2005), or even a driver’s license (Harris & Keller, 2005). Third, Job Seeking Knowledge barriers include a lack of awareness about how to engage in an effective job search, as measured by one’s ability to develop a job search plan, engage in effective communication skills, and master effective job search skills (Liptak, 2011). Further supported by research, many ex-offenders do not understand how their crime translates into work restrictions (Tschopp et al., 2007), or how to effectively communicate with potential employers (Soeker et al., 2013; Tschopp et al., 2007).

Regarding ex-offenders’ job search attitude, Pessimistic vs. Optimistic refers to how optimistic people are during their job search process. Research suggests that an individual’s outlook on a situation often impacts his or her success (Lazarus, 1991) and that levels of optimism and pessimism predict the influence of internal and external barriers to employment (Creed, Patton, & Bartrum, 2004). Luck vs. Planning measures
how much people emphasize planning during the job search process, rather than relying on luck to find a job. Individuals who believe their success is due to luck are not as engaged in their career goals, due to the belief that their efforts will provide minimal effects (Shane & Heckhausen, 2016). Help from Others vs. Self-Help measures how much one depends on others for help in finding a job instead of relying on oneself to find employment. Research has found that individuals who rely on themselves to find employment, instead of relying on others, are more likely to be reemployed and obtain reemployment that leads to job improvement and career growth compared to their counterparts (Waters, Briscoe, Hall, & Wang, 2014).

Taken together, previous research supports this study’s findings. Specifically, previous research has found that such barriers to employment exist while such job search attitudes also influence one’s ability to obtain employment. However, this is the first known research study that looks at the relationship between such perceived barriers to employment and one’s job search attitude. Further supporting this research study’s findings, Bucklen and Zajac (2009) found that the strongest employment difference between parole success stories and parole violators was their attitude toward employment. However, Bucklen and Zajac did not statistically explore why attitude may have such a significant impact on individuals with criminal records. As previously stated, this current research study demonstrated that there is a relationship associated with being pessimistic compared to optimistic, relying on luck rather than planning, and depending on others for help in finding a job instead of relying on oneself, and their perceived barriers. In other words, one’s attitude toward work influenced their perceived barriers. Lazarus (1991) also found that there is a relationship between one’s attitude, as measured
by their levels of optimism and pessimism, and one’s perception of their internal barriers, while Creed, Patton, and Bartrum (2004) demonstrated that optimistic individuals are more likely to see barriers as challenging, rather than threatening, to their overall success. Supporting and improvement in one’s attitude may decrease their perceived barriers. This study further supported the notion that individuals who experienced high pessimism had higher barriers. In addition, the majority of vocational research that has been conducted on populations with criminal records look at the phenomenon from the employers’ point of view, and how they feel about hiring ex-offenders, as opposed to why ex-offenders feel they are struggling to obtain employment.

Future research should explore different individual and group therapeutic techniques that could be implemented in the criminal justice system to help offenders explore their perceived barriers to employment and job search attitude. Brown (2011) argues that career development researchers need to examine the design and delivery of such career development interventions. Specifically, future research could be applied to determine if therapeutic vocational techniques that have demonstrated effectiveness for the general population will also be effective for the ex-offender population. Additionally, assessment instruments need to be developed and implemented that are normed on the offender population. The ex-offender population experiences different career related barriers compared to the general population. For example, outcomes on the Work Volition Scale (Duffy, Diemer, Perry, Laurenzi & Torrey, 2012) may differ for ex-offenders compared to the general population, as ex-offenders may not perceive that they have as much power in their career decision making processes. Future research also needs to explore the extent to which current vocational theories relate to the offender population.
Brown, Lent, and Knoll (2013) propose using SCCT with the offender population; however, no studies to date have tested the model to determine its applicability.

**Research question 2.**

This research study found that there is a relationship between Type of Offense Committed (violent vs. non-violent), Total Number of Criminal Convictions, Highest Level of Education Completed, and one’s Barriers to Employment Success overall score and Job Search Attitude overall score, with Years of Education Completed being the strongest predictor for one’s Barriers to Employment overall score. Research supports that there are many barriers to employment for male ex-offenders who committed a violent crime, when compared with those who committed a non-violent crime (Albright & Denq, 1996; Hulsey, 1990), as well as barriers based on the number of offenses committed (Haslewood-Pocsik, Brown, & Spencer, 2008), and one’s level of education (Albright & Denq, 1996). These three factors are known forms of employer bias, over which the offender has little to no control (Albright & Denq, 1996). Specifically, Albright and Denq (1996) found that the percentage of employer’s willingness to hire ex-offenders increased from 12% to 32% for those with a college degree, 30% for those with a vocational trade, and 38% for those who have completed two training programs. This study’s findings suggest that ex-offenders are also aware of the importance of education. As such, an increase in their level of education decreased their overall perceived barriers in this study.

It is important to study how some of the barriers affect one’s perceived barriers and job search attitude because individuals who believe they have more control over their
employment outcome are more active in their job search process and will search harder for a job, compared to individuals who believe they have less control over their employment outcome (McGee, 2015). Furthermore, Liptak’s JSAI (2010) would also argue that one’s attitude could be measured by exploring how much control job searchers think they have in their job search process. As such, it is likely that employer bias makes the ex-offender feel as though they have little control over their job search outcome. So, if an offender feels as though he has no control over his employment outcomes due to the employer’s bias, he may experience more perceived barriers to employment and, in turn, have a negative job search attitude (Albert & Luzzo, 1999).

Though one’s level of education significantly contributed to the model, it is surprising that total number of criminal convictions and type of offense committed were not significant in the model. It is hypothesized that there was no relationship between total number of criminal convictions and overall BESI and JSAI score due to the variability in total number of crimes, as displayed in Table 1. Total number of crimes ranged from one through 30 per participant. It is also hypothesized that there was not a relationship between type of offense committed and one’s overall BESI and JSAI score because the majority of participants who were convicted of more than one crime were convicted of drug-related crimes. Husley (1990) proposed that employers were more willing to hire ex-offenders convicted of drug abuse or DWI compared to other crimes. It is likely that ex-offenders also recognize that drug-related convictions do not carry as much stigma as violent crimes (Graffam et al., 2008).

**Implications for Practice**

This study suggests that ex-offenders are concerned about their Emotional and
Physical, Personal and Financial, and Job Seeking Knowledge barriers to employment. This being the case, correctional facilities and halfway houses should pay special attention to these barriers, and ensure that they are helping ex-offenders learn how to cope with and overcome such barriers. Furthermore, focusing on overcoming these barriers is not enough. Institutions should pay special attention to ex-offenders’ attitudes and develop therapeutic techniques to foster an environment for attitude growth and awareness. To reiterate, if ex-offenders are pessimistic during their job search process, as opposed to optimistic (Creed, Patton, & Bartrum, 2004), rely on luck rather than emphasize planning to find a job (Shane & Heckhausen, 2016), and depend on others for help in finding a job instead of relying on oneself (Waters et al., 2014), they are probably less likely to engage in an active job search process. Filella-Guiu and Blanch-Plana (2002) highlighted the usefulness of attending to, and intervening at, the organizational level, which includes educating individuals about the reality of the job market before release into the community so individuals can identify and choose career aspirations that are realistic and will allow them to obtain employment. Taking a broader approach to vocational treatment, as opposed to only working on the environmental barriers (e.g., resume building, interview techniques) to employment, may help with the ex-offender’s attitude toward employment. If an individual has realistic expectations, he or she is probably less likely to be disappointed when unrealistic expectations are not met, and continue to work toward gaining employment.

In addition, this research study suggests that there is a relationship between Type of Offense Committed (violent vs. non-violent), Total Number of Criminal Convictions, Highest Level of Education Completed, and one’s Barriers to Employment Success.
overall score and Job Search Attitude overall score. Specifically, years of education completed was the strongest predictor for one’s BESI overall score. Stated another way, one grade increase in level of education was associated with an almost four-point decrease in overall perceived barriers to employment. Therefore, institutional intervention programs should continue to encourage ex-offenders to obtain and further their level of education through correctional GED and college credit programs. Educational programs, combined with psychological counseling, is known to increase an inmate’s level of self-esteem (Oser, 2006), and one’s self-esteem has been found to be positively impact by levels of optimism (Creed, Patton, and Bartrum, 2004), which, in turn, may influence one’s perceived barriers to employment. It is likely that an increase in education decreases one’s perceived barriers, providing a more positive attitude toward employment. Since employment outcomes for male ex-offenders are impacted by the type of crime committed (violent vs. non-violent) (Albright & Denq, 1996; Hulsey, 1990), the number of offenses committed (Haslewood-Pocsik, Brown, & Spencer, 2008), and level of education (Albright & Denq, 1996), counseling psychologists may need to take all factors into account, instead of simply helping the ex-offender with resume-building and job search techniques. If counseling psychologists have a better understanding of how such variables impact one’s perceived barriers and job search attitude, not only from the employer’s point of view, but also the employee’s point of view, treatment can take a holistic approach. Taking such an approach to vocational counseling will hopefully increase employment outcomes for ex-offenders. Additionally, it is important to determine how such variables impact one’s perceived barriers, as well
as one’s job search attitude, since it was found that there is a relationship between perceived barriers and job search attitude.

No research, other than this study, has been conducted to determine the ex-offender’s perceived barriers to employment. However, some research studies have sampled correctional vocational education administrators to determine what treatment interventions may be needed for ex-offenders. Correctional vocational education administrators reported that resume and job application preparation classes, practice interviews, library resources, and computer-based resume preparation programs would benefit ex-offenders during their job search (Oswald, 2005). It is likely that such techniques could benefit ex-offenders during their job search processes; however, such interventions fail to take into account ex-offenders’ perceived barriers to employment and one’s job search attitude. As cited in Varghese (2012), Vernick and Reardon (2001) investigated vocational programs in correctional facilities and determined that the majority of vocational programs did not incorporate components that change the offenders’ attitudes and overall career thoughts.

As suggested by Wormith et al. (2007), it is likely that taking a positive psychology approach and focusing on obtaining employment success as opposed to avoiding employment failure will be beneficial for ex-offenders, because there is a relationship between one’s perceived barriers to employment and one’s job search attitude. It is likely that one’s job search attitude could be positively impacted by positive psychology interventions. Next, motivational interviewing techniques could be implemented with the ex-offender population because motivational interviewing is known to improve one’s attitude toward a specific goal (Schmaling, Blume, & Afari,
2001). Harper and Hardy (2000) conducted a study that determined statistically significant improvements in the attitudes of offenders whose officers were trained in motivational interviewing techniques. Additionally, their study found a decrease in overall employment concerns after motivational interviewing techniques were implemented. Therefore, motivational interviewing could serve to decrease one’s perceived barriers and increase their attitude, positively impacting one’s employment status.

Additionally, there are policy implications for this study’s findings. As cited in Brown (2011), current public policies make it difficult for ex-offenders to continue their education due to student loan restrictions (Harrison & Schehr, 2004). This study’s findings reiterate the importance of an ex-offenders ability to obtain higher education due to the relationship between one’s level of education and one’s perceived barriers to employment, as one’s education increased one’s perceived barriers decreased. Public policy could further be impacted by providing education and awareness to businesses and employers about the tax credit programs that are offered to employers who are willing to hire ex-offenders. Some tax programs offer a reduction in their federal income tax liability (United States Department of Labor: Employment and Training Administration, 2017), which is aimed at improving employers’ motivation to hire ex-offenders. Furthermore, current public policies increase barriers to employment due to housing restrictions, food assistance restrictions, and welfare restrictions (McCarty et al., 2015) that make it difficult for an ex-offender to focus on obtaining and maintaining a job when he cannot access basic needs for himself. This study’s findings would support decreasing such barriers for ex-offenders so that they are able to focus on job obtainment.
Limitations

The current research study has some limitations. First, the population sampled differed from the national average male prison population in terms of race. Specifically, the sample in this study comprised of 150 men: 60% White, 34.7% Black or African American, 2.7% American Indian or Alaska Native, 2.0% Mixed, and 0.7% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander offenders. However, the national average male prison population is mostly represented by Blacks, with 39% Black, 37% White, and 24% Hispanic (U.S. Department of Justice, 2016). Because of this, the results may not be generalizable to the national male prison population as a whole. Additionally, only participant’s race was explored in the context of this study while participant’s ethnicity was not explored. As such the Latino/Hispanic population was left out of the study, as the United States Census Bureau (2017) was used as a guide to measure one’s race. Next, data were collected through self-report measures that may be influenced by over or under-reporting of symptoms. Third, though the participants were selected at random, those who agreed to participate may have higher attitudes in general, as they were motivated to volunteer their own time for the purposes of this study. Additionally, though no identifying information was assigned to the data, participants may have been reluctant to openly share whether or not they have committed a violent crime, and their total number of criminal convictions, due to embarrassment or shame. Another limitation is that all data collection took place in one geographic area, which limits its applicability to other areas throughout the country. Lastly, the Passive vs. Active subscale in the JSAlI had to be removed from the canonical correlation analysis, due to issues with normality and its low Cronbach alpha.
Summary

In conclusion, studying perceived barriers and attitudes of ex-offenders is worthy of study because most soon-to-be released prisoners identify finding a job as the single most important factor in staying out of trouble once they integrate back into society (Visher et al., 2004). However, the job search process for ex-offenders is not easy (Lukies, Graffam, & Shinkfield, 2011), and produces more barriers compared to the general unemployed population. One’s perceived career barriers are predictive of their likelihood to foreclose, or prematurely commit to a career choice, without fully exploring all of their career options (Leal-Muniz & Constantine, 2005), which may negatively impact their desire to maintain a job. In addition, an increase in criminal activity has often been associated with unemployment, suggesting that unemployed individuals experience an increase in criminal activity (Hooghe, Vanhoutte, Hardyns & Bircan, 2011). Specifically, unemployed individuals are more likely to commit more property crime and violent crime. As previously mentioned, it is believed that poverty, a lack of resources, and various aspects for social inadequacy have all been linked to explain a concentration of crime in the unemployed (Hooghe, Vanhoutte, Hardyns & Bircan, 2011), hence, their barriers actually help maintain their unemployment status.

Overall, this study’s findings, along with Bucklen and Zajac (2009), propose that one’s attitude toward work is related to one’s perceived barriers, suggesting that being more optimistic may decrease one’s perceived barriers. Stated another way, improving one’s attitude toward work may decrease one’s perceived barriers to employment. Future research studies should continue to explore the relationship between one’s perceived barriers to employment and job search attitude, and develop therapeutic techniques that
target each aspect during the career search process. Vocational programs in correctional facilities have failed to incorporate components that change the offenders’ attitudes and overall career thoughts (Vernick & Reardon, 2001). Specifically, interventions that are targeted at improving an offender’s attitude, such as motivational interviewing, should be implemented into vocational correctional programs because motivational interviewing can help decrease employment concerns and increase one’s attitude (Harper & Hardy, 2000). In addition, follow-up studies should be explored to determine whether or not such therapeutic techniques produce successful job obtainment when taking into account their perceived barriers to employment and job search attitude.
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Available at http://www.access-dv.org/


http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_101HHR.pdf


APPENDIX A

Demographic Questionnaire

Demographic Questionnaire

1) Participant ID Number: __________

2) Age: __________

3) Gender:
   Male
   Transgender

4) Current Marital Status:
   Single, never married □
   Married or domestic partnership □
   Committed Relationship □
   Widowed □
   Divorced □
   Separated □
   Other □ __________

5) Race:
   American Indian or Alaska Native □
   Asian □
   Black or African American □
   Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander □
   Mixed □
   White □

6) Number of years of education completed: __________

7) Have you ever been convicted of a violent crime: Yes □ No □
   Examples of violent crimes (i.e., aggravated murder, murder, voluntary manslaughter, involuntary manslaughter, felonious assault, aggravated assault, assault, permitting child abuse, aggravated menacing, menacing by stalking, menacing, kidnapping, abduction, extortion, trafficking in person, rape, sexual battery, gross sexual imposition, aggravated arson, arson, terrorism, aggravated robbery, robbery, aggravated burglary, burglary, inciting to violence, aggravated riot, riot, inducing panic, domestic violence, intimidation, endangering children).

8) Total number of criminal convictions: __________

9) Length of most recent sentence/incarceration/jail time served (years/months/days): _________________

10) Date of most recent release from jail/prison/time served (or expected release date): _________________

11) When was the last time you had a formal/legal job with a paycheck: _________________