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Employer Attitudes toward Hiring First Time Felons in Newport News, Virginia

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**EMPLOYER ATTITUDES TOWARD HIRING FIRST TIME FELONS IN
NEWPORT NEWS, VIRGINIA**

A Research Paper

**Presented to the Graduate Faculty in
the Department of STEM Education and Professional Studies
at Old Dominion University**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement for the
Master of Science Degree**

By

Adriane D. Young

January 2011

Approval Page

This research paper was prepared by Adriane Young under the direction of Dr. John M. Ritz in OTED 636, Problems in Occupational and Technical Education. It was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science.

Approved By: _____

Dr. John M. Ritz

Date

Advisor and Graduate Program Director

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---Adriane D. Young---

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Chapter I

Introduction

In tough economic times it is difficult enough for qualified individuals to secure employment. It follows that it would be more difficult for a qualified individual with a criminal record to do the same. This research study attempted to investigate one major component to this issue, employer attitudes. Recent studies from Lichtenberger (2006) and VanDe Carr (2007) have looked at the issue of employing felons. Three different approaches from three different metropolitan cities were highlighted in VanDe Carr's (2007) study. While he studied the entire reentry process, Lichtenberger (2006) chose to focus his study on Virginia and the opportunities for felon employment alone. A 1996 study by Denq and Albright addressed the same issue that is the focus of this study, employer attitudes toward hiring felons. This study is intended not only to determine the attitudes but also to make employers aware of the benefits of hiring felons. Another hopeful outcome of this study is to assist felons with reentry. This study will highlight employment as a successful method for reducing recidivism.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was to determine the relationship between employer attitudes and the job outlook for first time felons in Newport News, Virginia, to increase the employment opportunities for first time felons.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were to explore the following questions:

1. How do employers a) perceive the idea of hiring a felon with adequate job skills and b) allow their attitudes to affect whether the felon obtains the job or not?

2. How can employer attitudes a) be influenced so that they are open to the idea of hiring a felon and b) bring a change in the availability of job opportunities for first time felons in Newport News?

Background and Significance

Reentry for felons is not a new issue. There has been considerable research in the field, much of it completed prior to 2000. In 1996 Denq and Albright conducted a similar study entitled “Employer Attitudes Toward Hiring Ex-Offenders”. There is also related research including models for facilitating ex-offender employment (Home Builders Institute, 1999), a study of where ex-offenders find employment in Virginia (Lichtenberger, 2006), and a study of employer hiring decisions (Gordon, 1985). In some research the issue of successful reentry for ex-offenders is considered a crisis. The following quote from Paul VanDe Carr’s “Call to Action” demonstrates the necessity for research in the field. “Many returnees have no viable job prospects, no social supports and no access to services; two thirds will be rearrested and almost half will return to prison within three years” (VanDe Carr, 2007, p. 2). In 2006 it was estimated that 650,000 adults would reenter into their communities (Farley & Hackman, 2006). Much of the available research suggests that the major problems are high recidivism rates and the unavailability of resources to assist with reentry. Farley and Hackman (2006) stated that American taxpayers spend over \$60 billion a year on prisons and jails. With staggering numbers like these it is imperative that a solution to successful reentry is reached. This study is intended to provide a starting point for ex-offenders when they go to look for employment. Since the last study of this sort was conducted over ten years ago, this will

serve as an update to the available information. It will also serve as a local resource for felons returning to the Hampton Roads area upon release.

Limitations

In a research study that deals with “attitudes” there will certainly be some limitations. In this study the employer attitudes will be categorized as positive or negative based on the following factors:

1. Whether or not the employer will be likely to employ a qualified felon?
2. Whether or not the employer is open to hiring a felon after being informed of all the benefits of doing so?

Some methodological limitations of this study include the following:

1. This study is limited to first time felons only as multiple convictions would create another variable to be analyzed.
2. Employers from the agricultural, forestry, fishing and hunting, mining, and utilities industry will not be included as the industries do not make up a significant percentage of the population.
3. Employers from the surrounding Hampton Roads cities will not be included. Only employers in the city of Newport News will be included due to limited funding and time.

Assumptions

One condition must be assumed in order for the study to become successful. It was assumed that an employer with a majority of responses opposing hiring a felon would not hire felons.

Procedures

The data necessary for this study will be collected using surveys. The employer survey will include Likert scale questions that seek to determine how the employer will respond to an application for hiring a first time felon.

The employer survey will be given a rating of positive or negative. A positive rating will be given to all employers that would, for the majority of the circumstances presented in the survey, hire a felon. The negative rating is reserved for those employers that would be less inclined to hire a felon in the circumstances presented.

The validity of the employer surveys is based on the questions being asked. The questions were pulled from the 1996 Denq and Albright study. Reliability of the instrument has been established as the content of the survey questions covers all topics discussed in Chapter II.

Definition of Terms

Some terms used in this study are technical in nature or require definition. The following is a list of these terms:

First time felon- An individual that has been convicted of any crime considered a felony in the state of Virginia and served a prison sentence. The individual may have committed more than one felony and still be considered a first time felon.

Job outlook- This refers to the availability of jobs for which the felon is qualified.

Recidivism- Used in this study to describe the act of recommitting a crime and being rearrested, not including probation and parole violations.

Reentry- This is the integration of the ex-offender back into his or her community in terms of employment.

Overview of Chapters

The successful reentry of ex-offenders into their communities is the main goal of this research study. The researcher seeks to find a way to encourage employers to hire qualified felons. This study will explore employer attitudes and how they translate into job opportunities in Newport News, Virginia. The researcher has set forth the main objective, which is to help ex-offenders find employment. There is a definite need for the study, as there is a definite need to get ex-offenders into constructive work. Several limitations for the study have been established in order to set boundaries for the study. The unalterable factors concerning this study were stated in the assumptions. A brief definition of some unfamiliar terms was also found in Chapter I.

The remaining chapters will provide a review of relevant literature, including studies conducted on the reentry crisis, ways to reduce recidivism, and employer attitudes. The data collection and treatment process will be further defined and then applied. The researcher will report the findings of the study to include all surveys and discoveries from the relevant literature. Finally the study will be concluded along with a presentation of the implications that this study will have for the city of Newport News, as well as the state of Virginia. The researcher will also make recommendations for improving and expanding the study.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

A closer look at why things occur is a feasible way to solve problems in many different areas of life. This holds true for doctors, teachers, and scientists. It makes sense that this would be the case for students and researchers. This study will examine why felons are having a hard time reentering society. The focus of this study will be employment. To get to the bottom of the employment issue for felons, the researcher chose to start with the employer. This chapter will include a review of relevant literature concerning felon reentry, with a heavy emphasis on employment.

How Hiring Felons is Perceived by Employers

A review of the literature confirmed what the researcher assumed; employers in most industries do not hire felons or they do not hire a significant number of them. The most closely related study, conducted by Lichtenberger (2006) revealed that some industries were more likely to hire felons than others. His study went further into the issue. Lichtenberger (2006) believed that ex-offenders would retain jobs at an improved rate if they were matched to the proper position. Lichtenberger (2006) found that out of 192,910 Virginia employers, 8.23% or 15,821 employed at least one ex-offender from fiscal year 1999 to 2003. The top three industries for employing felons were construction, accommodation and food service, and administrative and support services, respectively.

Buck (2000) determined that 72.4 percent of ex-offenders who made post-release employment plans did not recidivate compared to only 46.1 percent of those who did not make such plans. This indicated that there is an opportunity for these individuals to make such arrangements. The problem arises when this opportunity is not available.

Assistance for Ex-Offenders

Many ex-offenders find it difficult to get their lives on track once they are released from prison. Many communities face difficulty in getting these individuals to succeed. Good and Sherrid (2005) summarized the sentiment felt by so many with the following statement:

Urgency defines the issues of prisoner reentry from the perspective of society at large, from the perspective of the often-struggling communities where prisoners flock on release and from the perspective of the prisoners themselves. (p. 3)

High on the list of priorities for an ex-offender are several “responsibilities of release” (Buck, 2000). Day-reporting, abstaining from drug and alcohol use, avoiding contact with known offenders, and maintaining steady employment among other things are a few of an ex-offender’s responsibility, says Buck (2000). Some ex-offenders also deal with financial issues, including the payment of compounding child support, court fines, and simply earning a living.

Good and Sherrid (2005) also found that more than 2,000 prisoners return to their respective communities each day. The need for programs that provide ex-offenders with reentry assistance is enormous. Buck (2000) researched several programs that assist ex-offenders with securing employment. Most programs begin with employment for ex-offenders as it has been shown to be the primary antagonist to recidivism rates. Better People in Oregon, the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) and South Forty in New York, Safer Foundation in Illinois, and the Virginia Community Action Re-Entry System (VA CARES) are the programs Buck (2000) highlighted in her study. Better People approaches felon reentry by addressing moral issues as well as job placement and

retention programs. CEO has a two point program that places ex-offenders in jobs as well as provides job assistance and skill training. The Safer Foundation serves over 2,800 returnees with job assessment, support services, and job placement assistance. They also provide a GED program to those who are not yet prepared to work. South Forty offers a pre-release program and job placement and retention programs. They have several contacts with employers in New York City to place the ex-offenders. VA CARES serves the population being studied, so the researcher decided to investigate further.

The VA CARES program began in Roanoke, Virginia, in 1975 with several community agencies that came together with the intent to provide statewide assistance to parolees. The program provided a list of reentry services that addressed the issues faced by local parolees. They cited employment as the most important issue (Buck, 2000). VA CARES begins their assistance while offenders are still incarcerated and maintains an open door policy for former participants for years to come. Formal placed participants have quarterly follow ups with VA CARES. The unique style of the program allows the basic needs, housing, food, and clothing to be prearranged during pre-release seminars. VA CARES credits much of its success to collaboration with community action agencies (CAAs).

Total Action Against Poverty (2000) is the local CAA in Roanoke that serves inmates with life skill classes prior to their release. The VA CARES program began as a federally funded program and was cut in 1980, only to return after a 1983 research study that demonstrated the success of the program. It is now funded by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, along with assistance from each host CAA (2000). Buck (2000) stated that the majority of participants are placed in hospitality, food

service, and customer service industries. In 2000, almost 2,000 ex-offenders used one of the 13 post-release centers across the state and 1,000 prisoners participated in the pre-release portion of the program (Buck, 2000).

Influencing Employers to Hire Felons

Lichtenberger's (2006) research was not the only research that explored gainful or meaningful employment for ex-offenders. The Home Builders Institute (1999) conducted a study to assist ex-offenders in finding meaningful employment. The Home Builders Institute (HBI) recognized that ex-offenders are more difficult than other groups to place in "meaningful long-term employment" (p. 5). The HBI also suggests that ex-offenders recognize their target market, employers in the home building and light commercial construction industries. It is important for ex-offenders to understand that they will not be marketable to all employers as many companies have strict policies against hiring individuals with criminal records. Reducing recidivism rates is not simply a humanitarian issue in the eyes of the HBI; rather it is assistance to taxpayers. "Rising costs associated with incarceration, and a desire to lighten the public burden in paying those costs, makes reducing recidivism not so much a humanitarian ideal as a practical necessity" (Home Builders Institute, 1999, p. 5).

Ready 4 Work is a national demonstration project to connect ex-prisoners with mentors and jobs (VanDe Carr, 2007). The program, which was funded by several groups including the United States Departments of Labor and Justice, began in 2002 to assist ex-prisoners with reentry. Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) assisted with funding as well as administering Ready 4 Work (VanDe Carr, 2007). The program helped to achieve what many communities had been striving to achieve. P/PV based their program structure on

three pioneer reentry programs: Operation New Hope in Jacksonville, Florida; Second Chance in Memphis, Tennessee; and the CSOSA and ERCPCP programs in Washington, DC. A summary of the recommendations from the case study of these three programs can be found in Table 1 (VanDe Carr, 2007).

Table 1
Summary of Recommendations

Internal Components	
Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the needs identified in the organization’s mission and the resources in and outside the organization • Design program model that applies resources to meet needs. • Balance program capacity with program demand, such as by accepting only as many participants as the program can manage.
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline all roles and responsibilities to be fulfilled in order to serve the mission. • Create an organizational structure that ensures these roles and responsibilities are fulfilled. • Facilitate communication among staff, board and other personnel.
Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess ex-prisoners’ service needs through surveys, focus groups or conversations. • Arrange for services to ex-prisoners, whether in-house or by partnering with outside providers. • Arrange for career-enhancement opportunities for participants, based on their interests and information about the labor market derived from workforce development organizations, government agencies or employers.

Source: Call to Action: How Programs in Three Cities Responded to the Prisoner Reentry Crisis.

Buck (2000) gave an account of how one program in Portland, Oregon, helped influence employer perceptions of hiring felons. Better People enrolls their participants in moral reconnection therapy while placing them in temporary staffing agencies. They also focus on changing the hiring policies of major local employers. The organization employed current research on ex-offenders and recidivism to demonstrate the flaw in one

company's seven-year rule. The utility company, which had once barred felons for seven years prior to becoming eligible for hire, changed its policy.

Buck (2000) also suggests a few strategies for changing the attitudes of employers. Along with subduing safety and theft concerns, she suggests highlighting the fact that the reentry programs are providing qualified applicants. Another strategy is to alert employers of the benefits, such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit which offers employers a tax credit of up to \$2,400 for each qualified hire during the first year. Buck (2000) mentions another benefit, the Federal Bonding Program which eases employers' fears concerning theft. Buck (2000) informs readers that the program offers an insurance bond up to \$ 5,000. This covers against theft, forgery, larceny, or embezzlement. The overall gist of the strategies for influencing employers calls for program practitioners to educate potential employers.

Farley and Hackman (2006) stated that the Ready 4 Work program has produced promising results, including impressive job retention rates and reduced recidivism rates among participants. In 2006 Ready 4 Work was in 11 cities around the country, with 4,500 ex-offenders enrolled. These individuals were eligible for support services for up to one year. The Ready 4 Work team operates on the basis that ex-prisoners who find steady jobs as well as develop social bonds have considerably lower recidivism rates. The issue for these ex-offenders is to *find* gainful employment and establish those relationships. Ready 4 Work offers intensive case management for housing, health care, drug treatment, job placement, and employment-readiness training. They also offer a mentoring component to help the participants build relationships. These mentors provide emotional and practical support to the ex-offender trying to improve his or her situation. Farley and

Hackman (2006) state that these mentors help with finding a place to live, getting a driver's license, and even figuring out how to commute to work without a driver's license. Perhaps the best thing about the Ready 4 Work program is that it costs only about \$1,000 more than probation for one year and about \$18,500 less than incarceration for one person in a Federal Bureau of Prisons facility. Ready 4 Work however does not enroll violent offenders or sex-offenders. These are the individuals with the highest recidivism rates. This is also the population least likely to secure employment due to the nature of their offenses. That being said, the program is still a great tool for getting felons employed.

Buck (2000) realized one of the major problems concerning employment for ex-offenders. "Most job developers focus on placing individuals in appropriate positions rather than addressing whether companies are willing to hire ex-offenders" (p. 14). This suggests a well-rooted approach, or one that requires more than just the obvious. It requires job developers and program practitioners to investigate further and exert more effort in placing ex-offenders. Influencing someone or some group to alter their set thoughts requires copious work.

Employer Attitudes

Albright and Denq (1996) conducted a study of ex-offenders. They sent 300 surveys to employers in Houston and Dallas, Texas. With a 28% response rate they determined that the Federal Bonding Program would increase the likelihood of them hiring an ex-offender. Albright and Denq (1996) determined that while employers were not originally willing to hire a felon, they did change considerably when the nature of the offense was considered. One can conclude that there will likely always be a stigma for

ex-offenders in the workforce. The researcher intends for this study to assist employers in rationalizing as opposed to generalizing. If employers are able to distinguish between the relevant and irrelevant factors then they will be able to aid ex-offenders in reentering society and on a larger scale reduce recidivism rates. Employer attitudes are a major stepping stone for advancing ex-offender employment efforts.

Summary

A review of the literature suggests that ex-offenders, as well as society in general, need some type of program to assist them with reentry. The extent of services varies from person to person, yet it is clearly needed. The researcher found that there is a lack of available programming across the country. Only about a quarter of the United States has programming. The Public/Private Ventures Company is one of the most involved in the reentry crisis. Their Ready 4 Work program is affiliated with many of the state programs working with ex-offenders. In Chapter II the researcher explored the current perception of employers concerning hiring felons and how that perception can be influenced otherwise. There is currently a negative attitude toward the practice of hiring felons in many industries, aside from construction, manufacturing, food service, and accommodations. A few employers have tested the idea and there was even an instance where one of the reentry programs influenced an employer to change their policy. This issue was addressed as well. How to influence employers to change their attitudes is the real question. Buck (2000), for Public/Private Ventures, offered a few suggestions for how to achieve that change. She includes educating the employers on the benefits (WOTC and Federal Bonding, 2000), and informing employers that they will receive qualified workers. The WOTC grants up to \$2,400 per ex-felon hired. The employers can

hire as many ex-felons as they want and receive the credit each time. Federal bonding ensures the employer for loss up to \$5,000 associated with the ex-offender. Finally, the researcher examined a similar study conducted in Texas, which surveyed the attitudes of employers in two metro areas, Houston and Dallas. From this study the researcher concluded that the overall attitude of employers hinges on the circumstances surrounding a given ex-offender.

Chapter III will detail the procedures for this research study, including an explanation of how the surveys will be conducted. The population and sample group will be outlined.

Chapter III

Methods and Procedures

This study is a descriptive correlational study that seeks to determine the relationship between two variables: employer attitudes toward hiring felons and the job outlook for first time felons in Newport News, Virginia. Chapter III will identify the population addressed in this study, the type of instrument used to determine attitudes and job outlook, how the research data were obtained, and how the data will be analyzed.

Population

According to fourth quarter data for 2009 from the DOLI, there are 3,887 employers in Newport News, Virginia. This number represents the entire population being studied. A list of industries operating in the city can be found in Table 2.

Table 2

Employers by Industry Sector (Newport News, VA)

Industry Sector	Establishments
Accommodation and Food Services	363
Admin., Support, Waste Mgmt, Remediation	244
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	6
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	56
Construction	387
Education Services	59
Finance and Insurance	224
Health Care and Social Assistance	429
Information	52
Management of Companies and Enterprises	24
Manufacturing (31-33)	121
Mining	1
Other Services (except Public Admin.)	356
Professional, Scientific & Technical Svc	395
Public Administration	59
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	274
Retail Trade (44 & 45)	612
Transportation and Warehousing (48 & 49)	95
Utilities	4

Wholesale Trade	126
Total, all industries	3,887

A stratified random sample was taken to allow findings to provide a truer picture of employer subgroups. The strata were the different industries. A sample of 70 employers was calculated to yield an 11.6% margin of error, a 94.9% confidence level, and a 50% response distribution. The researcher then calculated the percentage of employers represented in each industry. She used this percentage to determine how many surveys to send to the different industries represented in Newport News, Virginia.

Instrument

A Likert scale survey with twenty-one items rated from 1 to 5, 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree was developed. A statement was given, for example, "I am inclined to hire a felon". The employer then responded with a response 1 to 5. The remainder of items was intended to determine what factors affected the attitudes of employers. Questions 2 and 3 measured an employer's willingness to hire a felon that had been trained or educated either while incarcerated or prior to incarceration. Question 4 measured willingness to hire felons enrolled in reentry programs. Questions 5 and 6 measured employer willingness to hire felons when government incentives were available. Questions 7 through 19 addressed employer willingness to hire a felon based on the nature of their offense. Question 20 measured willingness to hire a felon under probationary supervision. Question 21 measured employer willingness to hire felons with charges unrelated to the job. The design of this instrument was based on the one used in Albright's and Denq's (1996) study and addressed the research objectives of this study. See Appendix A for a copy of the survey.

Methods of Data Collection

The surveys were sent to employers via mail. Employers that did not respond via mail were contacted by phone and via interview. A cover letter explaining the study was included with the survey. See Appendix B for a copy of the cover letter.

Statistical Analysis

Upon receipt of completed surveys the researcher determined the overall score for each employer. An industry with a score of 2.5 or below would not hire a felon or would be less likely to hire a felon. A score of 2.59 to 3.50 indicated that an employer was neutral toward hiring a felon. An industry was considered more likely to hire a felon with a score of 3.50 or more. Next the positive score was given to those employers that were neutral or would hire a felon for more than 50% of the circumstances presented in the survey. The negative score was given to employers that would not hire a felon for more than 50% of the circumstances presented.

Summary

This chapter discussed the details necessary to replicate the study. The population was defined as Newport News employers. Instrument design was discussed, as well as the basis for its validity. A description of how the surveys were administered and how data were collected and treated was included.

Chapter IV will report the outcomes of the employer surveys. It will also provide further descriptions of how the surveys were compared to unemployment rates to determine the job outlook for first time felons. Analysis of these findings will also appear in Chapter IV.

Chapter IV

Findings

The problem of this study was to determine the relationship between employer attitudes and the job outlook for first time felons in Newport News, Virginia. This was undertaken to increase the employment opportunities for first time felons. This chapter will cover the responses to the surveys.

Response Rate

Out of the 70 employers surveyed, 67 percent of them responded to the survey. Six surveys from employers in the accommodation and food service industry were collected to equal 12.76 percent of the population. Six surveys were also received from employers in the health care and social assistance industry. Four employers from each of the following industries returned surveys: administrative, support, waste management, and remediation; construction; other services; and professional, scientific, and technical services. Each industry was representative of 8.51 percent of the population. Nine surveys were returned by retail trade employers, equal to 19.15 percent of the population. Two surveys from both the real estate and rental leasing, and transportation and warehousing industries were returned representing 4.26 percent of the population. One employer each from the following industries returned a survey to equal 2.13 percent of the population: arts, entertainment, and recreation; education services; finance and insurance; manufacturing; public administration; and wholesale trade. See Table 3.

Table 3
Percentage of Employers that Participated in Survey

Industry	% of Employers	Number of surveys returned
Accommodation and Food Service	12.76%	N=6
Admin., Support, Waste Management, and Remediation	8.51%	N=4
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	2.13%	N=1
Construction	8.51%	N=4
Education Services	2.13%	N=1
Finance and Insurance	2.13%	N=1
Health Care and Social Assistance	12.76%	N=6
Manufacturing	2.13%	N=1
Other Services	8.51%	N=4
Professional Scientific and Technical Services	8.51%	N=4
Public Administration	2.13%	N=1
Real Estate and Rental Leasing	4.26%	N=2
Retail Trade	19.15%	N=9
Transportation and Warehousing	4.26%	N=2
Wholesale Trade	2.13%	N=1

Report of Survey Findings

Question 1: I am inclined to hire a felon.

The first attitude to measure was employers' perceptions of hiring a felon at the baseline. Question 1 was used to measure this attitude. The researcher found that sixty-eight percent of employers surveyed would not hire a felon at the baseline, Question 1. Twenty-one employers responded that they strongly disagreed to the statement and eleven employers responded that they disagreed with the statement. Eleven employers

(23%) responded neutrally and four employers (8.5%) responded that they agreed with the statement. Education services and finance and insurance employers responded with a mean score of 1.0 to Question 1 and the entire survey. Health care and social assistance, and manufacturing employers were also among the least likely to hire a felon at the baseline. See Table 4.

Table 4

Question 1 Responses

INDUSTRY	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	MEAN	MEDIAN
Accommodation and Food Service	4	1	1	0	0	1.5	1
Admin., Support, Waste Management, and Remediation	0	0	4	0	0	3	3
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0	0	1	0	0	3	3
Construction	0	1	2	1	0	3	3
Education Services	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Finance and Insurance	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Health Care and Social Assistance	6	0	0	0	0	1	1
Manufacturing	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
Other Services	0	3	0	1	0	2.5	2
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	2	1	1	0	0	1.75	1.5
Public Administration	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Real Estate and Rental Leasing	2	0	0	0	0	1	1
Retail Trade	4	3	2	0	0	1.78	2
Transportation and Warehousing	0	0	0	2	0	4	4

Wholesale Trade	0	1	0	0	0	2	2
Total Responses	21	11	11	4	0	47	
	Total Median Score		2	Total Mean Score		1.96	

How Employers Perceive Hiring a Felon with Adequate Job Skills

The researcher used three questions to measure how employers perceived the idea of hiring a felon with adequate job skills. Questions 2, 3, and 22 were used to measure how employers felt about hiring felons that had been trained either prior to or during incarceration and those who were found to have adequate job skills.

Question 2: I am inclined to hire a felon that has completed college, a vocational trade, or on-the-job training while incarcerated.

Forty-nine percent of employers stated that they would not hire a felon that has been trained during incarceration, Question 2. Thirteen employers (28%) responded neutrally to this question, while eleven employers (23%) strongly agreed with the statement. The mean response to Question 2 was 2.51, which means that there were several employers neutral toward or willing to hire a felon that received training, vocational or otherwise, while incarcerated. See Table 5.

Table 5

Question 2 Responses

INDUSTRY	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	MEAN	MEDIAN
Accommodation and Food Service	0	3	3	0	0	2.5	2.5
Admin., Support, Waste Management, and Remediation	0	0	1	3	0	3.75	4
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0	0	1	0	0	3	3

Construction	0	0	1	3	0	3.75	4
Education Services	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Finance and Insurance	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Health Care and Social Assistance	4	2	0	0	0	1.33	1
Manufacturing	0	0	1	0	0	3	3
Other Services	0	1	1	2	0	3.25	3.5
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1	0	3	0	0	2.5	3
Public Administration	0	1	0	0	0	2	2
Real Estate and Rental Leasing	1	1	0	0	0	1.5	1.5
Retail Trade	3	4	2	0	0	1.89	2
Transportation and Warehousing	0	0	0	2	0	4	4
Wholesale Trade	0	0	0	1	0	4	4
Total Responses	11	12	13	11	0		47
	Total Median Score		3	Total Mean Score		2.51	

Question 3: I am inclined to hire a felon that has completed college, a vocational trade, or on-the-job training prior to incarceration.

Question 3 had a mean response of 2.55. A slightly greater number of employers preferred that a felon have training prior to incarceration. Forty-seven percent of employers responded that they were unwilling to hire a felon based on training prior to incarceration. Thirteen employers (28%) responded neutrally. Twelve employers (25%) responded that they agreed with the statement. See Table 6.

Table 6
Question 3 Responses

INDUSTRY	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	MEAN	MEDIAN
Accommodation and Food Service	0	4	2	0	0	2.33	2
Admin., Support, Waste Management, and Remediation	0	0	1	3	0	3.75	4
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0	0	1	0	0	3	3
Construction	0	0	1	3	0	3.75	4
Education Services	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Finance and Insurance	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Health Care and Social Assistance	4	2	0	0	0	1.33	1
Manufacturing	0	0	1	0	0	3	3
Other Services	0	1	1	2	0	3.25	3.5
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1	0	3	0	0	2.5	3
Public Administration	0	1	0	0	0	2	2
Real Estate and Rental Leasing	1	1	0	0	0	1.5	1.5
Retail Trade	3	2	3	1	0	2.22	2
Transportation and Warehousing	0	0	0	2	0	4	4
Wholesale Trade	0	0	0	1	0	4	4
Total Responses	11	11	13	12	0		47
	Total Median Score		3	Total Mean Score		2.55	

Question 22: I am inclined to hire a felon with adequate job skills.

Twenty-three percent of employers surveyed responded that they would not be willing to hire a felon with adequate job skills, Question 22. Twenty-two employers

responded neutrally to the question, while fourteen employers (30%) agreed. Employers in all industries except real estate and rental leasing, finance and insurance, education services, and health care and social assistance had a mean score above 2. The total mean score was 2.89. See Table 7.

Table 7
Question 22 Responses

INDUSTRY	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	MEAN	MEDIAN
Accommodation and Food Service	0	0	4	2	0	3.33	3
Admin., Support, Waste Management, and Remediation	0	0	2	2	0	3.5	3.5
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0	0	1	0	0	3	3
Construction	0	0	0	4	0	4	4
Education Services	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Finance and Insurance	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Health Care and Social Assistance	2	3	1	0	0	1.83	2
Manufacturing	0	0	1	0	0	3	3
Other Services	0	0	2	2	0	3.5	3.5
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1	0	2	1	0	2.75	3
Public Administration	0	0	1	0	0	3	3
Real Estate and Rental Leasing	1	0	1	0	0	2	2
Retail Trade	2	0	4	3	0	2.89	3
Transportation and Warehousing	0	0	2	0	0	3	3
Wholesale Trade	0	0	1	0	0	3	3
Total Responses	8	3	22	14	0	47	

Total Median Score	3	Total Mean Score	2.89
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Influencing Employers to Hire Felons

There were several questions that addressed the research goal of influencing employers to hire felons. Questions 5 and 6 addressed the incentives available to employers that hire felons. Questions 7 through 19 addressed what types of offenses the employers would or would not accept.

Question 5: I am inclined to hire a felon eligible for the Work Opportunity and Tax Credit.

Thirty-two percent of employers would not hire a felon if they were eligible for the federal benefit. The mean response to Question 5, concerning the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), was 2.81. Health care and social assistance, and real estate and rental leasing employers were among the most unlikely to hire a felon eligible for the WOTC. Transportation and warehousing, wholesale trade, manufacturing, and construction employers were the most likely to hire a felon in this instance. See Table 8.

Table 8

Question 5 Responses

INDUSTRY	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	MEAN	MEDIAN
Accommodation and Food Service	0	2	2	2	0	3	3
Admin., Support, Waste Management, and Remediation	0	0	3	1	0	3.25	3
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0	0	1	0	0	3	3
Construction	0	0	1	3	0	3.75	4

Education Services	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Finance and Insurance	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Health Care and Social Assistance	2	4	0	0	0	1.66	2
Manufacturing	0	0	0	1	0	4	4
Other Services	0	0	3	1	0	3.25	3
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1	0	2	1	0	2.75	3
Public Administration	0	0	1	0	0	3	3
Real Estate and Rental Leasing	1	0	1	0	0	2	2
Retail Trade	2	1	4	2	0	2.67	3
Transportation and Warehousing	0	0	0	2	0	4	4
Wholesale Trade	0	0	0	1	0	4	4
Total Responses	8	7	18	14	0	47	
	Total Median Score		3	Total Mean Score		2.81	

Question 6: I am inclined to hire a felon that is federally bonded.

Question 6, which also addresses the incentives to employers, had a mean response of 2.81. Thirty percent of employers would not hire a federally bonded felon. Eighteen employers (38%) responded neutrally. Fifteen employers (32%) agreed that they would hire a felon with this type of classification. A federally bonded felon was more likely to be hired by employers in all industries except real estate and rental leasing, health care and social assistance, education services, and finance and insurance. See Table 9.

Table 9
Question 6 Responses

INDUSTRY	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	MEAN	MEDIAN
Accommodation and Food Service	0	2	2	2	0	3	3
Admin., Support, Waste Management, and Remediation	0	1	2	1	0	4	3
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0	0	0	1	0	4	4
Construction	0	0	2	2	0	3.5	3.5
Education Services	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Finance and Insurance	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Health Care and Social Assistance	3	1	2	0	0	1.83	1.5
Manufacturing	0	0	0	1	0	4	4
Other Services	0	0	2	2	0	3.5	3.5
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1	0	2	1	0	2.75	3
Public Administration	0	0	1	0	0	3	3
Real Estate and Rental Leasing	1	0	1	0	0	2	2
Retail Trade	3	0	4	2	0	2.56	3
Transportation and Warehousing	0	0	0	2	0	4	4
Wholesale Trade	0	0	0	1	0	4	4
Total Responses	10	4	18	15	0	47	
	Total Median Score		3	Total Mean Score		2.81	

Question 7: I am inclined to hire a felon convicted of a DWI.

Forty-nine percent of employers responded that they would not hire a felon with a driving while influenced (DWI) offense. Employers in the administrative, support, waste

management, and remediation, and professional, scientific, and technical services industries joined the group of employers not willing to hire a felon based on a DWI offense. Eighteen employers (38%) responded neutrally and six employers (13%) agreed to hire a felon convicted of a DWI. The overall mean score was 2.38. See Table 10.

Table 10

Question 7 Responses

INDUSTRY	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	MEAN	MEDIAN
Accommodation and Food Service	0	0	5	1	0	3.17	3
Admin., Support, Waste Management, and Remediation	2	2	0	0	0	1	1.5
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0	0	1	0	0	3	3
Construction	0	2	2	0	0	2.5	2.5
Education Services	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Finance and Insurance	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Health Care and Social Assistance	2	3	1	0	0	1.83	2
Manufacturing	0	1	0	0	0	2	2
Other Services	2	0	1	1	0	2.25	2
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1	3	0	0	0	1.75	2
Public Administration	0	0	1	0	0	3	3
Real Estate and Rental Leasing	1	0	1	0	0	2	2
Retail Trade	2	0	6	1	0	2.67	3
Transportation and Warehousing	0	0	0	2	0	4	4
Wholesale Trade	0	0	0	1	0	4	4
Total Responses	12	11	18	6	0	47	

Total Median Score	3	Total Mean Score	2.38
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Question 8: I am inclined to hire a felon convicted of a drug crime.

A drug felony, Question 8, influenced a little over seventy-two percent of employers not to hire. Several industries, including wholesale trade, arts, entertainment, and recreation, and transportation and warehousing had a mean score above 2. Eleven employers (23%) responded neutrally, while two employers (4%) agreed with Question 8. The total mean score was 1.91. See Table 11.

Table 11

Question 8 Responses

INDUSTRY	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	MEAN	MEDIAN
Accommodation and Food Service	0	3	3	0	0	2.5	2.5
Admin., Support, Waste Management, and Remediation	0	3	1	0	0	2.25	2
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0	0	1	0	0	3	3
Construction	0	1	3	0	0	2.75	3
Education Services	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Finance and Insurance	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Health Care and Social Assistance	5	1	0	0	0	1.17	1
Manufacturing	0	1	0	0	0	2	2
Other Services	2	1	0	1	0	2	1.5
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1	3	0	0	0	3.5	2
Public Administration	1	0	0	0	0	1	1

Real Estate and Rental Leasing	1	1	0	0	0	1.5	1.5
Retail Trade	7	1	1	0	0	1.33	1
Transportation and Warehousing	0	0	2	0	0	3	3
Wholesale Trade	0	0	0	1	0	4	4
Total Responses	19	15	11	2	0	47	
	Total Median Score		2	Total Mean Score		1.91	

Question 9: I am inclined to hire a felon convicted of a forgery crime.

Question 9 had a mean response of 2.17. Sixty-two percent of employers were unwilling to hire a felon convicted of a forgery crime. Fifteen employers (32%) responded neutrally. Three employers (6%) were willing, or agreed to hire a felon with this type of crime. Employers in the manufacturing, professional, scientific, and technical services, and construction industries joined the transportation and warehousing, and wholesale trade industries as employers that were willing to hire a felon convicted of a forgery crime. See Table 12.

Table 12

Question 9 Responses

INDUSTRY	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	MEAN	MEDIAN
Accommodation and Food Service	1	3	2	0	0	0.0217	0.02
Admin., Support, Waste Management, and Remediation	0	2	1	1	0	2.75	2.5
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Construction	1	0	3	0	0	2.5	3
Education Services	1	0	0	0	0	1	1

Finance and Insurance	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Health Care and Social Assistance	3	2	1	0	0	1.67	1.5
Manufacturing	0	0	1	0	0	3	3
Other Services	0	2	1	1	0	2.25	2.5
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1	0	3	0	0	2.5	3
Public Administration	0	1	0	0	0	2	2
Real Estate and Rental Leasing	1	1	0	0	0	1.5	1.5
Retail Trade	3	5	1	0	0	1.78	2
Transportation and Warehousing	0	0	1	1	0	3.5	3.5
Wholesale Trade	0	0	1	0	0	3	3
Total Responses	13	16	15	3	0		47
	Total Median Score		2	Total Mean Score		2.17	

Question 10: I am inclined to hire a felon convicted of theft.

Ninety-two percent of employers surveyed responded that they would not hire a person convicted of felony theft, Question 10. Two employers (4%) responded neutrally and two employers agreed to hire a felon convicted of theft. The mean score for Question 10 was 1.45. See Table 13.

Table 13

Question 10 Responses

INDUSTRY	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	MEAN	MEDIAN
Accommodation and Food Service	5	1	0	0	0	1.17	1
Admin., Support, Waste Management, and Remediation	1	3	0	0	0	1.75	2

Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Construction	2	2	0	0	0	1.5	1.5
Education Services	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Finance and Insurance	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Health Care and Social Assistance	6	0	0	0	0	1	1
Manufacturing	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Other Services	2	1	0	1	0	2	1.5
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	2	1	1	0	0	1.75	1.5
Public Administration	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Real Estate and Rental Leasing	2	0	0	0	0	1	1
Retail Trade	7	2	0	0	0	1.22	1
Transportation and Warehousing	0	0	1	1	0	3.5	3.5
Wholesale Trade	0	1	0	0	0	2	2
Total Responses	32	11	2	2	0	47	
	Total Median Score		1	Total Mean Score		1.45	

Question 11: I am inclined to hire a felon convicted of burglary.

Ninety-two percent of employers surveyed said they would not hire a felon convicted of burglary, Question 11. Three employers (6%) responded neutrally. One employer (2%) agreed with Question 11. The mean score for this question was 1.4. See Table 14.

Table 14

Question 11 Responses

INDUSTRY	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	MEAN	MEDIAN
Accommodation and Food Service	5	1	0	0	0	1.17	1
Admin., Support, Waste Management, and Remediation	1	3	0	0	0	1.75	2
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Construction	3	1	0	0	0	1.2	1
Education Services	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Finance and Insurance	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Health Care and Social Assistance	6	0	0	0	0	1	1
Manufacturing	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Other Services	3	0	0	1	0	1.75	1
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	2	1	1	0	0	1.75	1.5
Public Administration	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Real Estate and Rental Leasing	2	0	0	0	0	1	1
Retail Trade	6	2	1	0	0	1.44	1
Transportation and Warehousing	0	1	1	0	0	2.5	2.5
Wholesale Trade	0	1	0	0	0	2	2
Total Responses	33	10	3	1	0	47	
	Total Median Score		1	Total Mean Score		1.4	

Question 12: I am inclined to hire a felon convicted of assault.

Sixty-two percent of employers would not hire a felon convicted of assault. Seventeen employers (36%) responded neutrally. One employer (2%) agreed to hire a felon with this type of conviction. The mean score was 2.02. See Table 15.

Table 15

Question 12 Responses

INDUSTRY	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	MEAN	MEDIAN
Accommodation and Food Service	3	1	2	0	0	1.83	1.5
Admin., Support, Waste Management, and Remediation	0	1	3	0	0	2.75	3
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0	1	0	0	0	2	2
Construction	0	1	3	0	0	2.75	3
Education Services	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Finance and Insurance	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Health Care and Social Assistance	5	1	0	0	0	1.17	1
Manufacturing	0	0	1	0	0	3	3
Other Services	1	1	1	1	0	2.5	2.5
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1	1	2	0	0	1.5	2.5
Public Administration	0	1	0	0	0	2	2
Real Estate and Rental Leasing	1	0	1	0	0	2	2
Retail Trade	5	2	2	0	0	1.67	1
Transportation and Warehousing	0	1	1	0	0	2.5	2.5
Wholesale Trade	0	0	1	0	0	3	3
Total Responses	18	11	17	1	0		47
	Total Median Score		2	Total Mean Score		2.02	

Question 13: I am inclined to hire a felon convicted of arson.

An arson felony was another deterrent for employers. Ninety-four percent of employers surveyed would not hire a felon convicted of arson. Employers in the professional, scientific, and technical services, transportation and warehousing, and other services were the only ones with a mean or median score above 2. Two employers (4%) responded neutrally. One employer (2%) agreed to hire a felon with an arson conviction.

The overall mean score here was 1.47. See Table 16.

Table 16

Question 13 Responses

INDUSTRY	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	MEAN	MEDIAN
Accommodation and Food Service	4	2	0	0	0	1.33	1
Admin., Support, Waste Management, and Remediation	0	4	0	0	0	2	2
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Construction	2	2	0	0	0	1.5	1.5
Education Services	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Finance and Insurance	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Health Care and Social Assistance	6	0	0	0	0	1	1
Manufacturing	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Other Services	1	2	0	1	0	2.25	2
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	2	1	1	0	0	1.75	1.5
Public Administration	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Real Estate and Rental Leasing	2	0	0	0	0	1	1
Retail Trade	6	3	0	0	0	1.33	1

Transportation and Warehousing	0	1	1	0	0	2.5	2.5
Wholesale Trade	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total Responses	29	15	2	1	0	47	
Total Median Score			1	Total Mean Score		1.47	

Question 14: I am inclined to hire a felon convicted of robbery.

Ninety-six percent of employers were unwilling to hire a felon convicted of robbery. One employer (2%) responded neutrally and one employer agreed to hire a felon with a robbery conviction. The total mean score was 1.3. See Table 17.

Table 17

Question 14 Responses

INDUSTRY	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	MEAN	MEDIAN
Accommodation and Food Service	5	1	0	0	0	1.17	1
Admin., Support, Waste Management, and Remediation	3	1	0	0	0	1.25	1
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Construction	3	1	0	0	0	1.25	1
Education Services	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Finance and Insurance	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Health Care and Social Assistance	6	0	0	0	0	1	1
Manufacturing	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Other Services	2	1	0	1	0	2	1.5
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	2	2	0	0	0	1.5	1.5
Public Administration	1	0	0	0	0	1	1

Real Estate and Rental Leasing	2	0	0	0	0	1	1
Retail Trade	7	2	0	0	0	1.22	1
Transportation and Warehousing	0	1	1	0	0	2.5	2.5
Wholesale Trade	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total Responses	36	9	1	1	0	47	
	Total Median Score		1	Total Mean Score		1.3	

Question 15: I am inclined to hire a felon convicted of manslaughter.

Ninety-six percent of employers were also unwilling to hire a felon convicted of manslaughter. One employer (2%) each responded neutrally or agreed to hire someone with this type of felony conviction. The mean score for Question 15 was 1.26. See Table 18.

Table 18

Question 15 Responses

INDUSTRY	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	MEAN	MEDIAN
Accommodation and Food Service	4	2	0	0	0	1.33	1
Admin., Support, Waste Management, and Remediation	3	1	0	0	0	1.25	1
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0	1	0	0	0	2	2
Construction	3	1	0	0	0	1.25	1
Education Services	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Finance and Insurance	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Health Care and Social Assistance	6	0	0	0	0	1	1
Manufacturing	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Other Services	3	0	0	1	0	1.75	1

Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	3	1	0	0	0	1.25	1
Public Administration	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Real Estate and Rental Leasing	2	0	0	0	0	1	1
Retail Trade	9	0	0	0	0	1	1
Transportation and Warehousing	0	1	1	0	0	2.5	2.5
Wholesale Trade	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total Responses	38	7	1	1	0		47
	Total Median Score		1	Total Mean Score		1.26	

Question 16: I am inclined to hire a felon convicted of injury to a child.

All but one employer (2%) responded that they were unwilling to hire a felon convicted of injuring a child. No employer responded neutrally. The mean score was 1.21. See Table 19.

Table 19

Question 16 Responses

INDUSTRY	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	MEAN	MEDIAN
Accommodation and Food Service	6	0	0	0	0	1	1
Admin., Support, Waste Management, and Remediation	2	2	0	0	0	1.5	1.5
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Construction	2	2	0	0	0	1.5	1.5
Education Services	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Finance and Insurance	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Health Care and Social Assistance	6	0	0	0	0	1	1

Manufacturing	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Other Services	2	1	0	1	0	2.67	1.5
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	4	0	0	0	0	1	1
Public Administration	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Real Estate and Rental Leasing	1	1	0	0	0	1.5	1.5
Retail Trade	9	0	0	0	0	1	1
Transportation and Warehousing	1	1	0	0	0	1.5	1.5
Wholesale Trade	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total Responses	39	7	0	1	0	47	
	Total Median Score		1	Total Mean Score		1.21	

Question 17: I am inclined to hire a felon convicted of sexual assault.

The total mean score for this question was also 1.21. Ninety-four percent of employers were not willing to hire a felon convicted of sexual assault. Two employers (4%) responded neutrally. One employer (2%) agreed to hire a felon with this type of conviction. See Table 20.

Table 20

Question 17 Responses

INDUSTRY	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	MEAN	MEDIAN
Accommodation and Food Service	5	1	0	0	0	1.17	1
Admin., Support, Waste Management, and Remediation	3	0	1	0	0	1.5	1
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Construction	3	0	1	0	0	1.5	1

Education Services	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Finance and Insurance	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Health Care and Social Assistance	6	0	0	0	0	1	1
Manufacturing	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Other Services	3	0	0	1	0	1.75	1
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	3	1	0	0	0	1.25	1
Public Administration	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Real Estate and Rental Leasing	2	0	0	0	0	1	1
Retail Trade	9	0	0	0	0	1	1
Transportation and Warehousing	1	1	0	0	0	1.5	1.5
Wholesale Trade	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total Responses	41	3	2	1	0	47	
	Total Median Score		1	Total Mean Score		1.21	

Question 18: I am inclined to hire a felon convicted of a sexual offense against a child.

Ninety-six percent of employers would not hire a felon convicted of a sexual offense against a child. One employer (2%) responded neutrally and one employer agreed with Question 18. The total mean score was 1.19. See Table 21.

Table 21

Question 18 Responses

INDUSTRY	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	MEAN	MEDIAN
Accommodation and Food Service	5	1	0	0	0	1.17	1
Admin., Support, Waste Management, and Remediation	3	1	0	0	0	1.25	1

Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Construction	3	0	1	0	0	1.5	1
Education Services	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Finance and Insurance	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Health Care and Social Assistance	6	0	0	0	0	1	1
Manufacturing	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Other Services	3	0	0	1	0	1.75	1
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	3	1	0	0	0	1.25	1
Public Administration	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Real Estate and Rental Leasing	2	0	0	0	0	1	1
Retail Trade	9	0	0	0	0	1	1
Transportation and Warehousing	1	1	0	0	0	1.5	1.5
Wholesale Trade	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total Responses	41	4	1	1	0	47	
	Total Median Score		1	Total Mean Score		1.19	

Question 19: I am inclined to hire a felon convicted of murder.

Ninety-eight percent of employers strongly disagreed with this question. The total mean score was 1.06. All but one employer (2%) responded that they would not hire a person with this conviction. The one employer that responded differently agreed with this question. See Table 22.

Table 22

Question 19 Responses

INDUSTRY	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	MEAN	MEDIAN
Accommodation and Food Service	6	0	0	0	0	1	1
Admin., Support, Waste Management, and Remediation	4	0	0	0	0	1	1
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Construction	4	0	0	0	0	1	1
Education Services	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Finance and Insurance	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Health Care and Social Assistance	6	0	0	0	0	1	1
Manufacturing	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Other Services	3	0	0	1	0	1.75	1
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	4	0	0	0	0	1	1
Public Administration	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Real Estate and Rental Leasing	2	0	0	0	0	1	1
Retail Trade	9	0	0	0	0	1	1
Transportation and Warehousing	2	0	0	0	0	1	1
Wholesale Trade	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total Responses	46	0	0	1	0	47	
	Total Median Score		1	Total Mean Score		1.06	

Changing Employer Attitudes to Change the Job Outlook

Questions 4 and 20 were used to determine if some programs would help employers change their attitudes toward hiring felons. Question 21 was used in order to determine if the type of offense would affect the employers' attitudes.

Question 4: I am inclined to hire a felon in a reentry program.

Question 4 asked whether an employer would hire a felon in a reentry program. Fifty-five percent of employers surveyed said they would not hire that person. The mean response to this question was 2.38. Twelve employers (26%) responded neutrally. Nine employers (19%) agreed to hire a felon enrolled in a reentry program. Health care and social assistance, and real estate and rental leasing employers were the least likely to hire a felon in a reentry program, besides the education services and finance and insurance employers. Employers in the transportation and warehousing, and wholesale trade industries were the most likely to hire a felon enrolled in a reentry program. See Table 23.

Table 23

Question 4 Responses

INDUSTRY	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	MEAN	MEDIAN
Accommodation and Food Service	0	4	1	1	0	2.5	2
Admin., Support, Waste Management, and Remediation	0	0	2	2	0	3.5	3.5
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0	1	0	0	0	2	2
Construction	0	0	2	2	0	3.5	3.5
Education Services	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Finance and Insurance	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Health Care and Social Assistance	5	1	0	0	0	1.17	1
Manufacturing	0	0	1	0	0	3	3
Other Services	0	1	2	1	0	3	1
Professional, Scientific, and Technical	1	2	1	0	0	2	2

Services							
Public Administration	0	1	0	0	0	2	2
Real Estate and Rental Leasing	1	1	0	0	0	1.5	1.5
Retail Trade	3	3	3	0	0	2	2
Transportation and Warehousing	0	0	0	2	0	4	4
Wholesale Trade	0	0	0	1	0	4	4
Total Responses	12	14	12	9	0	47	
Total Median Score			2	Total Mean Score		2.38	

Question 20: I am inclined to hire a felon on probationary supervision.

Question 20 asks if employers would hire a felon who is on probationary supervision. Slightly over forty percent of employers were unwilling to hire a felon on probationary supervision. Twenty-six employers (55%) responded neutrally. Two employers (4%) agreed to hire a felon on probationary supervision. The overall mean score was 2.45. See Table 24.

Table 24

Question 20 Responses

INDUSTRY	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	MEAN	MEDIAN
Accommodation and Food Service	0	2	4	0	0	2.67	3
Admin., Support, Waste Management, and Remediation	0	0	4	0	0	3	3
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0	1	0	0	0	2	2
Construction	0	0	4	0	0	3	3
Education Services	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Finance and Insurance	1	0	0	0	0	1	1

Health Care and Social Assistance	3	3	0	0	0	1.5	1.5
Manufacturing	0	0	1	0	0	3	3
Other Services	0	2	1	1	0	2.75	2.5
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1	0	2	1	0	2.75	3
Public Administration	0	1	0	0	0	2	2
Real Estate and Rental Leasing	1	0	1	0	0	2	2
Retail Trade	2	1	6	0	0	2.44	2.44
Transportation and Warehousing	0	0	2	0	0	3	3
Wholesale Trade	0	0	1	0	0	3	3
Total Responses	9	10	26	2	0	47	
	Total Median Score		3	Total Mean Score		2.45	

Question 21: I am inclined to hire a felon convicted of a crime not related to the job.

Twenty-five percent of employers surveyed responded that they were not willing to hire a felon with a conviction unrelated to the job, Question 21. Public administration, real estate and rental leasing, finance and insurance, and education services employers were not willing to hire a felon, even if the offense was not related to the job to be performed. Twenty-eight employers (60%) responded neutrally. Seven employers (15%) agreed to hire a felon convicted of a crime unrelated to the job. The total mean score was 2.72. See Table 25.

Table 25

Question 21 Responses

INDUSTRY	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	MEAN	MEDIAN
Accommodation and Food Service	0	0	4	2	0	3.33	3

Admin., Support, Waste Management, and Remediation	0	0	3	1	0	3.25	3
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0	0	1	0	0	3	3
Construction	0	0	2	2	0	3.5	3.5
Education Services	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Finance and Insurance	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Health Care and Social Assistance	2	3	1	0	0	1.83	2
Manufacturing	0	0	1	0	0	3	3
Other Services	0	0	3	1	0	3.25	3
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1	0	2	1	0	2.75	3
Public Administration	0	1	0	0	0	2	2
Real Estate and Rental Leasing	1	0	1	0	0	2	2
Retail Trade	2	0	7	0	0	2.56	3
Transportation and Warehousing	0	0	2	0	0	3	3
Wholesale Trade	0	0	1	0	0	3	3
Total Responses	8	4	28	7	0	47	
	Total Median Score		3	Total Mean Score		2.72	

Industry Scores for Hiring Felons

Each industry was also given a positive or negative score for hiring felons. Employers in the transportation and warehousing industry were the most likely to hire a felon. The education services and finance and insurance industries however were unwilling to hire someone convicted of a felony. Many industries fell somewhere in between, meaning they were neutral toward hiring a felon when training, government

incentives, type of offense, and offender help programs were considered. The industries with positive scores include administrative, support, waste management, remediation, construction, manufacturing, other services, transportation and warehousing, and wholesale trade. Table 26 lists the scores for each industry.

Table 26
Industry Scores

Industry	Score
Accommodation and Food Service	Negative
Administrative, Support, Waste Management, Remediation	Positive
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	Negative
Construction	Positive
Education Services	Negative
Finance and Insurance	Negative
Health Care and Social Assistance	Negative
Manufacturing	Positive
Other Services	Positive
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	Negative
Public Administration	Negative
Real Estate and Rental Leasing	Negative
Retail Trade	Negative
Transportation and Warehousing	Positive
Wholesale Trade	Positive

Summary

This chapter included a detailed description of the employer responses. It was determined that at the baseline most employers would not hire a felon. Training prior to or during incarceration made most employers neutral toward hiring a felon. Most employers were also neutral toward hiring a felon eligible for the WOTC. Only thirty-two percent were not willing to hire with this incentive and even less were unwilling if the felon was federally bonded. Most employers were neutral again toward a DWI

conviction. As the offense became more serious, for instance crimes against a person (Questions 12, and 14 through 19), the majority of employers were unwilling to hire. Over half the employers surveyed were neutral once more when it came to hiring a felon on probationary supervision. Sixty percent of them were still neutral when asked if they would hire a felon convicted of a crime unrelated to the job. Thirty percent of employers responded that they would hire a felon with adequate job skills and forty-seven percent of them were neutral, leaving less than a quarter of employers surveyed against hiring the person. Scores were assigned, either positive or negative, for each industry. A positive score was given to employers that would hire felons for more than 50% of the circumstances. A score of negative was given to employers that would not hire felons for more than 50% of the circumstances.

The final chapter will include a summary of the research project. The researcher will draw conclusions and include opinions about the findings of this study. Recommendations for improving or duplicating the study will be given.

Chapter V

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter will provide a summary of the research project. An overview of each component will be included as well as the significance of what was found in the study. The researcher will draw conclusions and give her opinion of the findings as they relate to the research objectives set forth. Finally, recommendations for how to better conduct this study or to recreate it will be discussed.

Summary

The problem of this study was to determine the relationship between employer attitudes and the job outlook for first-time felons in Newport News, Virginia. This problem was studied in order to increase the opportunities for felons to find a job in Newport News. The researcher developed some objectives for the study. They were:

- How do employers a) perceive the idea of hiring a felon with adequate job skills and b) allow their attitudes to affect whether the felon obtains the job or not?
- How can employer attitudes a) be influenced so that they are open to the idea of hiring a felon and b) bring a change in the availability of job opportunities for first time felons in Newport News?

The study arose from a previous study conducted by Albright and Denq (1996) that addressed similar issues. There was also the study conducted by Lichtenberger (2006) that focused on where ex-offenders in Virginia could find employment. Finally a study on employer hiring decisions was conducted by Gordon (1985). The major lapse in time was the main reason for the study along with the civic necessity for ex-offenders to find employment.

There were some limitations to the study. The methodological limitations were:

1. This study was limited to first time felons only as multiple convictions would create another variable to be analyzed.
2. Employers from the agricultural, forestry, fishing and hunting, mining, and utilities industry would not be included as the industries do not make up a significant percentage of the population.
3. Employers from the surrounding Hampton Roads cities will not be included. Only employers in the city of Newport News will be included due to limited funding.

As with any research study, there was something that the researcher had to assume. For example, it was assumed that if an employer responded with a majority of negative responses to the survey questions it was assumed that overall the employer would not hire a felon.

The researcher included basic procedures for the study, such as how surveys would be collected and how they would be scored. Surveys with Likert scale items pertaining to attitudes toward hiring felons were mailed to a stratified random sample of employers in Newport News. These employers were representative of the industries operating in the city.

A review of related literature was conducted in order to determine what was known about this issue and what remained to be done in terms of helping felons reenter successfully. The first item addressed was how employers had perceived hiring felons in the past. The consensus was that generally, employers have been afraid or unable to hire felons for various reasons. There was the issue of what assistance was available for felons

to reenter society and find jobs. It was found that copious agencies exist that work for the cause. VACARES was the agency available in Virginia. Classes and programs centered on improving job skills and people skills, as well as providing mentors for ex-offenders were some of the services available. Federal incentives, like bonding and tax credits were listed as some ways to influence the employers to hire felons. These incentives combined with help from community action agencies, or CAA's, was an accepted method for influencing employer attitudes. In this study the attitudes addressed were the same attitudes addressed in the Denq and Albright (1996) study. The researcher began by asking a baseline question and then assessing the different circumstances that would alter the baseline attitude. The data were collected using a survey sent via mail. Employers that did not respond via mail were interviewed via phone or in person. Sixty-seven percent (47) of the 70 employers surveyed responded. The surveys were then separated by industry for statistical analysis.

Conclusions

Research Objective 1: How do employers a) perceive the idea of hiring a felon with adequate job skills and b) allow their attitudes to affect whether the felon obtains the job or not?

Research Objective 1 focused on how employers perceived hiring felons with adequate job skills and how that perception might affect a felon in obtaining employment. Questions 2, 3, and 22 addressed the training and skills felons had. The mean response to Question 2 was 2.51, indicating that on average the employers surveyed were neutral toward hiring a felon who had received vocational or on-the-job training while incarcerated. If a felon had received such training prior to incarceration the researcher

found that on average employers would be a bit more willing to hire the felon. Question 3 had a mean response of 2.55. This indicated that on average most employers were neutral toward hiring a felon. Question 22 asked specifically if employers would be willing to hire felons with adequate job skills. The mean response to this question was 2.89. The researcher determined that overall employers would be neutral toward hiring a felon with adequate job skills. Overall, when presented with felons that had the necessary training and job skills the majority of employers surveyed responded that they would hire the candidate. Employers in the health care and social assistance industry were the least likely to hire a felon regardless of vocational training before or during incarceration. Employers in the transportation and warehousing and wholesale trade industries were the most likely to hire a felon no matter where the vocational training took place. With the exception of the public administration, real estate and rental leasing, and retail trade industries all other employers had a mean score above 2.

Research Objective 2: How can employer attitudes a) be influenced so that they are open to the idea of hiring a felon and b) bring a change in the availability of job opportunities for first time felons in Newport News?

Questions 4 through 6 addressed the variables that might help to influence employers to hire felons. Felons enrolled in reentry programs were less likely to be hired by surveyed employers than those that were eligible for federal incentives including the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) and federal bonding. Question 4 asked about the reentry program. The mean score to this question was 2.38, indicating that employers were neutral. Question 5 asked about the WOTC. With a mean score of 2.81 it was determined that this incentive would influence employers to at least consider hiring a

felon as the response was largely neutral. The nature of the offense bore much weight in a hiring decision according to Question 21. A mean response of 2.72 showed that an employer would be neutral toward hiring a felon if the felony was unrelated to the job. Question 7 asked about a driving while influenced (DWI) felony. A slight majority (51%) of employers was neutral or willing to hire a felon convicted of a DWI. This question however yielded a mean response of 2.38, indicating that overall employers were not willing to hire a felon. Question 8 pertained to drug felonies. Overall employers were not willing to hire felons convicted of drug felonies. The mean score was 1.91. A forgery felony, Question 9, was not as much of a deterrent as the drug felony, however employers were still unwilling overall to hire a felon in this instance. The mean was 2.17. Theft and burglary felonies, Questions 10 and 11, yielded very similar results. Almost ninety-two percent of employers were unwilling to hire a felon convicted of either crime. The mean for Question 10 was 1.45 and 1.4 for Question 11. Felons with crimes against a person, especially those against children and murders were the least likely to be hired, as shown by Questions 14 through 19. The mean was less than 2 for each question. Question 12 was also a question about a crime against a person; however, the mean response was above 2. An assault felony was acceptable in seven industries. Overall employers were unwilling to hire with a mean score of 2.02. Probationary supervision was also a factor in the hiring decision. The mean response to Question 20 was 2.45. Employers were close to neutral overall but still unwilling. With nearly sixty percent of employers neutral or willing to hire a felon on probationary supervision the researcher found that this might also assist felons in securing employment.

The researcher also assigned a score of positive or negative to each industry in order to help felons find more employment and improve the job outlook. The industries with positive ratings were administrative, support, waste management, and remediation, construction, manufacturing, other services, transportation and warehousing, and wholesale trade. All of these industries were likely to hire a felon on average because the mean score for the industry was above 2.

While this study was completed using a small population, it is still safe to assume that the results are somewhat, if not largely, representative of the sentiment among Newport News employers. Based on this study the researcher can conclude that employers are not sold on the idea of hiring felons. It appears that the training and skills of a candidate are more important than the nature of the candidate's offense. With high numbers of felons being released from prisons, it is important to note what issues make the biggest impact on whether or not he or she will secure employment?

As mentioned earlier, it is important for the CAA's and the government to take on the role of encouraging employers to feel confident in hiring felons. The resources exist but are not currently being used to their full potential. CAA's need to get more involved with employers to educate them on benefits and address the concerns of the different industries. The study showed that the biggest concerns or influential factors in considering a felon for employment were job skills, government incentives, and training. It follows that all involved parties should focus efforts on getting the proper information to employers. While federal incentives may not have been the most important factor it is still important to present the information to employers in order to educate them on the benefits of hiring individuals with a felony. As this information is made more readily

available there is a strong chance that the job outlook for first time felons will increase. The more education offered about the positives of hiring a felon, the more employers will open up to the idea, and hopefully the practice, of hiring them.

Until the necessary change in employer attitudes can be achieved it would behoove felons in Newport News, Virginia, to seek employment in the industries with positive ratings. That is not to completely discourage this group from seeking employment in the career field of their choice. It simply means until a felon can get into one of the career fields with the negative score it would be wise to seek something in the positive range to make a living.

Recommendations

It is important that research be performed continually on any subject. This study will continue to gain importance as more and more felons are released back into society. Following are some recommendations for implementing the findings of this study:

- There were so many employers in the neutral area; it might be helpful for the CAA's and probation officers, and even the government to work together to highlight those concerns and create forums and workshops available to employers on increasing the awareness of benefits in hiring felons.
- The Newport News workforce department, as well as other workforce departments, would do well to follow the example of Public/Private Ventures and use the model from the three cities and tailor it to fit the needs of individual cities or even regions.

- Probation and parole officers also need to reach out to employers to provide them with the information from this study and others like it to influence them to hire qualified felons.

In order to benefit society as a whole, the continuance of research on this issue is a necessity. To provide better opportunities, and more of them, it might be helpful to consider the following when recreating or furthering this study:

- A larger population size would provide a truer picture of the hiring situation and it would be more accurate. Due to limited resources this study was not completed on a large scale.
- Consider other environmental or social characteristics to determine job outlook. The interviewing skills and or the desire within the candidate are also very important variables in the hiring decision.
- Extend the study to include the surrounding cities. The researcher was limited to one city. Take the study statewide or even national. It would be the most accurate and would provide helpful information to many communities nationwide.

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Appendices

- A. Survey Cover Letter
- B. Survey

Appendix A
Survey Cover Letter

Adriane Young
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To Whom It May Concern

Hello! I am a graduate student at Old Dominion University completing research that will benefit all taxpayers in the city of Newport News. The study I am conducting deals with getting first time felons help with employment. Past research shows that meaningful employment has been a key factor in reducing the rate at which felons commit or recommit crimes. The study will examine employer attitudes, in Newport News, Virginia, toward hiring first time felons. All that is required of you is your initial responses to the survey questions attached. There are twenty-two items that will require a response from 1 to 5.

Old Dominion University understands that many participants are concerned about confidentiality, which is why the University goes to great lengths to protect that confidentiality. There will be in no way, shape, or form any mention of your company's name. Your survey has been coded with a number that identifies only the industry to which your company belongs. Every effort and resource will be employed in order to maintain the confidentiality that you expect.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Your participation is greatly appreciated. If there are any questions or concerns I can be reached at (757) 358-2716.

Sincerely,
Adriane Young

Appendix B

Employer Attitude Survey

Please score the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being “strongly disagree” and 5 being “strongly agree”. Please choose the rating that is most accurate in your opinion.

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am inclined to hire a felon.	1	2	3	4	5
I am inclined to hire a felon that has completed college, a vocational trade, or on-the-job training while incarcerated.	1	2	3	4	5
I am inclined to hire a felon that has completed college, a vocational trade, or on-the-job training prior to incarceration.	1	2	3	4	5
I am inclined to hire a felon enrolled in a reentry program.	1	2	3	4	5
I am inclined to hire a felon eligible for the Work Opportunity Tax Credit.	1	2	3	4	5
I am inclined to hire a felon that is federally bonded.	1	2	3	4	5
I am inclined to hire a felon convicted of a DWI *	1	2	3	4	5
I am inclined to hire a felon convicted of a drug crime.	1	2	3	4	5
I am inclined to hire a felon convicted of a forgery crime.	1	2	3	4	5
I am inclined to hire a felon convicted of theft.	1	2	3	4	5
I am inclined to hire a felon convicted of burglary.	1	2	3	4	5
I am inclined to hire a felon convicted of assault.	1	2	3	4	5
I am inclined to hire a felon convicted of arson.	1	2	3	4	5
I am inclined to hire a felon convicted of robbery.	1	2	3	4	5
I am inclined to hire a felon convicted of manslaughter.	1	2	3	4	5
I am inclined to hire a felon convicted of injury to a child.	1	2	3	4	5
I am inclined to hire a felon	1	2	3	4	5

convicted of sexual assault.					
I am inclined to hire a felon convicted of a sexual offense against a child.	1	2	3	4	5
I am inclined to hire a felon convicted murder.	1	2	3	4	5
I am inclined to hire a felon on probationary supervision.	1	2	3	4	5
I am inclined to hire a felon convicted of a crime not related to the job.	1	2	3	4	5
I am inclined to hire a felon with adequate job skills.	1	2	3	4	5