ABSTRACT

RADE, CANDALYN BLUE. Assessing Public Attitudes toward Criminal Justice Policies, Practices, and Ex-Offenders. (Under the direction of Dr. Sarah L. Desmarais).

More than one fifth of Americans have a criminal record, and most of those who are arrested return to the community within their lifetime. Accordingly, within the United States, there is an increasing emphasis on policy and programming that improves rehabilitation and community reintegration for people who have been incarcerated. Public attitudes have the potential to constructively or adversely influence the development and implementation of these criminal justice policies and practices, including those addressing sentencing and community reentry. Review of the extant literature provides limited insight into the factors which explain public attitudes toward criminal justice policies and practices, and toward ex-offenders. Yet, given the influence that public attitudes can have directly and indirectly on shaping future criminal justice policies and practices, additional research is needed to increase our understanding regarding the correlates of public attitudes and the mechanisms driving these attitudes. The manuscripts included in this dissertation sought to address these limits of the current research.

The first manuscript described the characteristics of studies assessing religious correlates of public attitudes toward capital punishment through a systematic review of the literature. Synthesis of the prior literature identified an emphasis on Christian affiliations and beliefs to the neglect of others, and revealed inconsistencies in the operationalization and measurement of religious correlates. Findings brought clarity to the differences between
religious beliefs and religious affiliations as they are associated with support for or opposition to capital punishment.

The second manuscript used a meta-analytic approach to synthesize the recent literature on correlates and moderators of public attitudes toward ex-offenders. Results showed a focus on public characteristics (e.g., political orientation), rather than ex-offender (e.g., criminal history) or community characteristics (e.g., crime prevalence) to explain public attitudes. Findings revealed that political orientation, interpersonal contact, and sexual offending history were significantly associated with public attitudes; however, small associations between correlate variables and attitudes, suggested that people are more similar than different in their attitudes toward ex-offenders.

The final manuscript presented a new model based on implicit theory to explain public attitudes toward ex-offenders and support for community reentry policy and practices. Mediation analyses revealed a significant indirect effect of mindsets on support for reentry, through general attitudes toward ex-offenders. People with growth mindsets, relative to fixed mindsets, reported more positive attitudes toward ex-offenders, and those with more positive attitudes toward ex-offenders reported greater support for reentry. Findings provided support for a more complete explanation of public attitudes toward ex-offenders and support for their reentry that addresses the limitations of previous theoretical approaches applied in this context.

Taken together, this body of work advances our understanding of public attitudes toward criminal justice policies, practices, and ex-offenders, suggesting future directions to
improve sentencing and reentry outcomes. The associations between public characteristics and support for reentry identified herein provide direction for continued investigation of the ways individual characteristics influence public attitudes toward criminal justice policy and practice, as well as the ways that these policies and practices shape public attitudes. Increased knowledge of the correlates and mechanisms of public attitudes will allow for development of interventions, particularly those that foster growth mindsets, in order to increase support for reentry, and ultimately, improve ex-offender transition and reintegration into the community.
Assessing Public Attitudes toward Criminal Justice Policies, Practices, and Ex-Offenders

by

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For Michael & Wendell.
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In the United States, most adults who are arrested return to the community within their lifetime. Almost two-thirds of a million people are released from state and federal prisons in the United States annually (Carson, 2015), and one in every 37 American adults is under correctional system supervision (Kaeble & Glaze, 2016). The nature of sentencing and community reintegration for these ex-offenders is shaped by public attitudes and beliefs. Indeed, in democratic countries, such as the United States, local and federal policies created by appointed and elected officials are intended to represent the attitudes and opinions of the general public (see Shapiro, 2011 for review). Accordingly, current policies and practices within the criminal justice system should be a reflection of public attitudes and support for those policies and practices. As such, public attitudes may influence both the sentencing and reentry processes, either adversely or advantageously. The following sections will review the literature regarding these public attitudes—first, attitudes toward capital punishment policy and practice, and second, attitudes toward ex-offenders and associated support for community reintegration policies and programming.

The policy and practice of capital punishment is increasingly controversial. Although 58 countries (including the United States) retain capital punishment, more people and jurisdictions are expressing disapproval, resulting in 140 countries who have abolished capital punishment in law or in practice (Amnesty International, 2016). These jurisdictions have seen changes in the legislation and implementation of capital punishment. 2015 had the
most confirmed executions worldwide in 26 years; however, the number of countries carrying out these executions decreased. Recent history is marked by a subtle trend away from the use of capital punishment, as 42 countries completely abolished capital sentencing over the past 20 years (Amnesty International, 2016).

Paralleling the differences in international capital punishment policies and practices, public opinions regarding capital punishment are similarly divergent. To demonstrate, in Japan, Poland, and the United States, a majority of the general population holds attitudes in support of capital punishment (Berlatsky, 2010; Hough & Roberts, 2012; Pew Research Center, 2015), whereas a majority of those in other nations, including the United Kingdom, oppose capital punishment (Clements, 2015). Individual characteristics and beliefs contribute to these polarizing attitudes in support of and against capital punishment. Men tend to support capital punishment more often compared to women (Kandola & Egan, 2014). White adults report more support for capital punishment compared to Black adults, even after accounting for other covariates such as political beliefs and community crime prevalence (Cochran & Chamlin, 2006; Maggard, Payne, & Chappell, 2012). Research suggests personality traits may lead to differences in attitudes toward capital punishment; for example, one study of 207 adults indicates that people who are lower in openness and emotional stability and higher in extraversion and contentiousness are more likely to support capital punishment (Kandola & Egan, 2014). Beyond these individual differences, personal beliefs and motivations also explain differences in attitudes toward capital punishment. Members of the public commonly cite the notion of “an eye for an eye” or the appropriateness of the
punishment in support for the use of capital punishment, whereas moral objections against taking a life are common reasons opposing capital punishment (Swift, 2014). Religious motivations, including religious affiliations (e.g., Christianity, Islam, Buddhism) and religious beliefs or practices (e.g., forgiveness, religious service attendance, image of God), are often one of the most important considerations in shaping attitudes—both in support for and opposition of capital punishment (Pew Research Center, 2001). Together, the prior literature suggests that the divergent attitudes toward capital punishment may be due to a variety of factors, although religious affiliations, beliefs, and practices are among the most prevalent.

Public attitudes regarding capital punishment not only have the ability to influence the enactment of policies by elected officials in many jurisdictions, but also have a direct influence on sentencing decisions when capital sentences are decided by a qualified jury. As noted in the review above, recent studies have identified religious correlates of capital punishment attitudes. However, inconsistent operationalization and a focus on Christianity to the neglect of other religious affiliations have contributed to mixed findings. There is a lack of effort to tie the research together to identify the most salient religious characteristics that influence a juror’s attitudes and decision process. A synthesis of the empirical evidence regarding the influence of diverse religious affiliations and beliefs on public attitudes toward capital sentencing policies and practices is needed to better inform the implementation and reform of capital punishment.
Beyond affecting policies and practices regarding sentencing, public attitudes toward ex-offenders also influence the success of their community reentry. When reintegrating into the community after incarceration, ex-offenders often encounter stigma and discriminatory behavior from the public, which adversely affects many domains of functioning and well-being that are central to reentry. For example, when seeking employment, housing, or health care, ex-offenders often receive differential and discriminatory treatment due to their criminal history (e.g., Pager & Quillian, 2005; Wakefield & Uggen, 2010). Given the negative impact of stigma and discrimination on reentry outcomes, research examining these negative attitudes toward ex-offenders may help to explain current policies and to inform evidence-based reentry practices with the ultimate goal of facilitating more successful community reintegration.

Generally speaking, members of the public report mixed attitudes toward ex-offenders and their reentry. The extant literature suggests that attitudes toward ex-offenders differ based on characteristics of the public, including sex (Leverentz, 2011; Mancini, Shields, Mears, & Beaver, 2010; Willis, Malinen, & Johnston, 2013), race (Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010; Leverentz, 2011; Mancini et al., 2010), political orientation (Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010; Locke, 2010; Mancini et al., 2010), and religious affiliation (Park, 2010). In addition to these demographic characteristics, those who report interpersonal contact with an ex-offender express more positive attitudes toward ex-offenders compared to those without prior contact (Gibson, Roberson, & Daniel, 2009; Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010; but see, Dreiling, 2010). Additionally, research suggests that people generally express support for ex-
offender reentry and associated programming (Garland, Wodahl, & Schuhmann, 2013; Krisberg & Marchionna, 2006); although, this support may be limited based on an ex-offender’s criminal and rehabilitative histories (Garland et al., 2013; Hardcastle, Bartholomew, & Graffam, 2011).

Despite these trends in the literature, our current understanding of public attitudes toward ex-offenders and support for reentry programming and policy is limited in two important ways. First, public attitudes described herein is a general attitudinal construct that is operationalized many ways, including an individual’s willingness to associate with an ex-offender and an overall assessment of ex-offenders’ character. In contrast, support for ex-offender reentry is a specific measure of an individual’s endorsement of policies and practices to facilitate and improve community reentry, such as increased taxes to support transitional housing and job training programs. These varied operationalizations limit the ability to make clear conclusions regarding the significant correlates of attitudes toward ex-offenders and, therefore, conclusions regarding variables to target through intervention to improve reentry support. Second, the present research and theories provide only partial explanations for differences in attitudes toward ex-offenders and support for reentry. Besides noting individual differences as explanations for public attitudes, interpersonal contact has been posited as one way to improve public attitudes and support for reentry. Yet, generalizability of contacts and the feasibility of implementing appropriate interventions to create attitudinal change present challenges to its application as a viable theoretical explanation and means of intervention in this context (see Brewer, 2010; Dixon, Durrheim, &
Tredoux, 2005). Alternative theoretical approaches may provide more comprehensive explanations of the underlying mechanisms driving public attitudes toward ex-offenders and support for reentry policies and practices.

I suggest that the literature on implicit theories and person perception may help complete this explanation for public attitudes toward ex-offenders and support for reentry. The theoretical framework of implicit theories (or person mindsets) posits that people hold beliefs about the nature of personal attributes (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Specifically, a growth mindset (incremental theory) is the belief that personal attributes are malleable and can develop over time; whereas, a fixed mindset (entity theory) is the belief that personal attributes are relatively invariable or fixed. Prior research suggests that these mindsets may predict attitudes toward criminal justice policies and associated practices, including punishment for children (Chiu, Dweck, Tong, & Fu, 1997), juror decision making (Gervey, Chiu, Hong, & Dweck, 1999), and punitiveness (Tam, Shu, Ng, & Tong, 2013). To demonstrate, in one study, people who endorse growth mindsets, relative to fixed, were less likely to make internal attributions of criminal behavior, less likely to expect offenders to reoffend, and thus less punitive (Tam et al., 2013). Moreover, mindset-based interventions offer the potential to create lasting attitudinal change (e.g., Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007; Yeager et al., 2014). Even so, implicit theory has not been applied to the context of explaining attitudes toward ex-offenders and support for their reentry.

Taken together, current research provides limited insight into the factors which explain public attitudes toward criminal justice policies and practices, and toward ex-
offenders. Given the influence that public attitudes can have directly and indirectly on shaping future policies and practices to improve criminal justice outcomes, additional research is needed to increase understanding of the correlates and mechanisms driving these attitudes. The manuscripts included in this dissertation seek to address these limits of the current research through three specific aims, which are described in the sections that follow.

**Specific Aims**

**Aim 1: Describe methodological characteristics of studies assessing public attitudes toward criminal justice policies and practices, and toward ex-offenders.** As identified above, interdisciplinary research from psychology, criminal justice, and criminology have assessed the correlates of public attitudes toward criminal justice policies and practices, such as capital punishment and community reentry, and attitudes toward ex-offenders generally. However, inconsistent operationalization and assessment techniques lead to seemingly contradictory findings. Consequently, the first aim of this dissertation is to describe the methodological characteristics of the prior literature to bring clarity to these inconsistencies.

**Aim 2: Synthesize the extant literature on correlates of public attitudes toward criminal justice policies and practices, and toward ex-offenders.** The ability to make conclusions regarding correlates of public attitudes toward criminal justice policies and practices, and attitudes toward ex-offenders is limited by the substantial variability in findings across the research. The second aim seeks to synthesize findings of the current
research to identify the nature of associations between identified correlates and public attitudes, revealing the most salient correlates.

**Aim 3: Identify a viable theoretical and applied explanation of attitudes toward ex-offenders and support for reentry policies and practices.** Consistent with the literature review above, many correlates and theories have been proposed to explain public attitudes toward ex-offenders, including individual differences in public characteristics and interpersonal contact theory. These approaches are limited in their ability to explain public attitudes and offer practical strategies to improve attitudes. Thus, the final aim is to explore the application of a model based on implicit theory to explain and improve attitudes toward ex-offenders and their reentry into the community.

**Addressing the Specific Aims: Overview of the Research Chapters**

The specific aims of this dissertation are addressed through three manuscripts (Chapters 2-4) that examine public attitudes toward criminal justice policies and practices, and toward ex-offenders. Collectively, the manuscripts advance our understanding of public attitudes toward criminal justice policies and practices, and attitudes toward ex-offenders reentering the community, with implications for attitude change research, policy, and intervention. The three manuscripts and the ways they address each of the specific aims are summarized below.

The first manuscript (Chapter 2) contributes to Specific Aims 1 and 2. Through a systematic search of the literature, this manuscript identifies and describes the characteristics of studies assessing religious correlates of public attitudes toward capital punishment.
(Specific Aim 1). Review of identified studies \( n = 33 \) provides a synthesis of findings regarding associations between religious affiliations and beliefs with public attitudes toward policies and the practice of capital punishment (Specific Aim 2). Overall, this manuscript identifies religious correlates associated with support for, those associated with opposition to, and those not associated with public attitudes toward capital punishment.

The second manuscript (Chapter 3) is a meta-analysis of the current research on the correlates and moderators of public attitudes toward ex-offenders, addressing Specific Aims 1 and 2. After review of the literature, the manuscript describes characteristics of the studies that met inclusion criteria \( n = 19; k = 73 \), including publication status, sample characteristics, data collection technique, and outcome variable (Specific Aim 1). This study then uses a meta-analytic approach to synthesize the literature on correlates of public attitudes toward ex-offenders and to examine the potential moderating effects of sexual offense history and study characteristics, with the purpose of resolving inconsistencies and highlighting avenues for future research (Specific Aim 2).

The third manuscript (Chapter 4) explores an integrated theoretical approach to explain public attitudes toward ex-offenders and support for community reentry. This study proposes that implicit theory may provide a more complete explanation of public attitudes toward ex-offenders and support for reentry policies and practices, addressing the limitations of previous theoretical approaches applied in this context. Mediation analyses are conducted to test the proposed model and account for significant covariates from the previous literature (Specific Aim 3).
CHAPTER 2

Systematic Review of Religious Affiliations and Beliefs as Correlates of Public Attitudes toward Capital Punishment

Religious reasons are frequently described as considerations that shape support for or opposition to capital punishment; however, there are many inconsistencies in the literature. This study represents a systematic review of the extant research on religious affiliations and beliefs as correlates of public attitudes toward capital punishment. Searches conducted in five databases identified 33 articles, representing 97,570 respondents. Results revealed that people belonging to Protestant affiliations and with negative images of God were more likely to support capital punishment. People possessing positive images of God and with strong beliefs in compassion were less likely to support capital punishment. The religious correlates commonly assessed in the extant literature, such as fundamentalism, are not significant correlates of attitudes toward capital punishment. Findings also revealed that the predominance of research examined Christian religious affiliations, to the exclusion of other common affiliations, such as Buddhist or Islamic affiliations. Taken together, findings suggest that compared to affiliations, religious beliefs better explain attitudes toward capital punishment. Further research is needed to investigate the ways religious correlates influence death qualified jury selection and capital sentencing decisions. An increased understanding of
the nuanced relationship between religion and capital punishment attitudes can better inform capital punishment policy and practice.

*Criminal Justice Studies, 30(1), 63-85*
Introduction

Capital punishment is a controversial criminal justice policy that is decreasingly prevalent, as more jurisdictions each year abolish its use. Since 2000, 27 countries have abolished capital punishment and, currently, 140 countries have abolished it in law or practice (Hood & Hoyle, 2008; Amnesty International, 2015). Moreover, the United Nations affirmed five moratoriums on capital punishment between 2007 and 2014 (UN General Assembly, 2014). Despite these trends, 58 countries—including the United States—retain capital punishment. In 2014, at least 607 executions occurred internationally and an additional 2,466 people were sentenced to death (Amnesty International, 2015). Within the U.S., 32 states continue to retain capital punishment, and in 2014, there were 72 new capital sentences and 35 executions—most of which occurred in Texas and Missouri (Amnesty International, 2015).

Public opinion on capital punishment is mixed. In the U.S., for example, recent surveys suggest a small majority of the general population holds attitudes in support of capital punishment (Pew Research Center, 2015), as do citizens in other countries, including Indonesia, Japan, Poland, and Romania (Berlatsky, 2010; Hough & Roberts, 2012). In contrast, most people oppose capital punishment in other nations, such as the United Kingdom (Clements, 2015). Importantly, these public attitudes, and juror attitudes specifically, have a direct influence on capital sentencing decisions (O’Neil, Patry, & Penrod, 2004). For example, in the U.S. capital sentences are decided by a jury rather than a judge. As such, prior to serving on a capital trial, jury members must be qualified to do so; that is, a
potential jury member can be excluded if the juror’s attitudes regarding capital punishment are so strong as to impair the ability to serve on the jury or if the juror would automatically vote against a death sentence (Wainwright v. Witt, 1985; Witherspoon v. Illinois, 1968). Thus, there is a need for increased understanding of beliefs associated with public attitudes toward capital punishment.

Although people hold strong attitudes—for or against—capital punishment, the reasons for and motivations behind such attitudes vary greatly (e.g., Kandola, & Egan, 2014; Swift, 2014). Many individual characteristics and beliefs have been examined vis-a-vis attitudes toward capital punishment (e.g., Cochran & Chamlin, 2006; Maggard, Payne, & Chappell, 2012; Unnever & Cullen, 2012). In particular, a survey of 2,041 people found that religion was one of the most important considerations in shaping their attitudes—both in support and opposition—toward capital punishment (Pew Research Center, 2001). Not surprisingly, then, many studies have examined associations between religious correlates and attitudes toward capital punishment. Religious correlates may be described by two categories—religious affiliations and religious beliefs—which can operate independently, as beliefs can vary within and between religious affiliations. Herein, religious affiliation is defined as a person’s affiliation with a certain religion or religious denomination, such as Christianity, Judaism, or Islam. In comparison, religious beliefs are defined as important, but non-central aspects of a worldview, including forgiveness, image of a divine being, and interpretation of religious text. Although these religious affiliations and beliefs are often investigated separately, they also can influence one another. Moreover, religious affiliations
that establish official positions on social or political issues are likely to influence personal beliefs and attitudes (Bornstein & Miller, 2009), including attitudes toward capital punishment.

Research suggests that the relationship between religion and attitudes toward capital punishment are dynamic over time, particularly within the U.S. (see Santoro, 2014). Indeed, many religious traditions and teachings have been interpreted as providing support both for and against capital punishment. To demonstrate, within Judeo-Christian traditions, capital punishment was used historically in accordance with Mosaic, Judaic, and Roman law (Dowling, 2006; Megivern, 1997). Statements regarding capital punishment are found in Jewish and Christian scriptures (Genesis 9:5-6; Exodus 21:23-25), in which God states that punishments should be proportionate to crimes committed. Moreover, historical teachings of the Catholic Church and some individual Christian denominations (e.g., Southern Baptist Convention) view capital punishment as an acceptable form of punishment for certain crimes (Brugger, 2003; Southern Baptist Convention, 2000). Similarly, Islamic law allows for use of capital punishment in accordance with the law of the Koran, and capital punishment is practiced in many nations where Islam is the official religion (Peters, 2005; Schabas, 2000). Although Buddhist teachings have historically opposed capital punishment, many nations where Buddhism is the national religion, such as Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, also have retained capital punishment (Horigan, 1996).

Religious beliefs and teachings also are foundational to attitudes against capital punishment. Across religious affiliations, teachings emphasize values of forgiveness, mercy,
and compassion over punishment. For instance, Judeo-Christian teachings profess the basic principle of right to life (Hanks, 2002; Perl & McClintock, 2001) and that forgiveness and compassion supersede retribution or punishment (Jacobs, 2004; Owens, Carlson, & Elshtain, 2004). Specifically, throughout Jewish and Christian scriptures, God demonstrates mercy and forgiveness toward murderers—Cain (Genesis 4:10-15), Moses (Exodus 2:11-15), and David (2 Samuel 12:9-14)—rather than condemning them to death (Hanks, 2002; Westmoreland-White, 2004). Many scholars argue that scriptures traditionally used to support capital punishment (e.g., Genesis 9:5-6; Exodus 21:23-25) are subject to alternate interpretation due to the larger Biblical narrative, which includes mercy, forgiveness of sin, and redemption (Hanks, 2002; Megivern, 1997; Stassen & Gushee, 2003). Additionally, the Catholic Church revised its position, now against the use of capital punishment (Pope John Paul II, 1995), consistent with views of other Christian denominations, including the United Methodist Church (2012), Episcopal Church (2001), and United Church of Christ (1999). Similarly, Buddhism teaches compassion and the value of life in the panca-sil (Horigan, 1996) and Islam emphasizes repentance, forgiveness, compassion, and the sanctity of human life (El Fadl, 2004).

**The Current Review**

Many recent studies have assessed religious correlates of capital punishment attitudes. Unfortunately, inconsistent operationalization and a focus on Christian affiliations to the neglect of other religious affiliations and beliefs have contributed to mixed findings. As a result, there is a need for a synthesis of the empirical evidence regarding the
associations of diverse religious affiliations and beliefs with public attitudes toward capital punishment. Specific aims of the present study were to: 1) identify and describe the characteristics of studies assessing religious correlates of public attitudes toward capital punishment; 2) synthesize the findings regarding associations between religious affiliations and attitudes toward capital punishment; and 3) synthesize the findings regarding religious beliefs and attitudes toward capital punishment. The overall goal of this review was to identify religious correlates associated with support for, those associated with opposition to, and those not associated with attitudes toward capital punishment.

**Methodology**

When possible, this review adhered to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) statement to report all findings (Liberati et al., 2009; Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, Altman, & The PRISMA Group, 2009). The PRISMA statement is composed of a 27-item checklist, which was created to encourage clarity, transparency, and rigor in systematic review reporting (Liberati et al., 2009).

**Inclusion Criteria**

This review sought to describe and synthesize the findings of religious affiliations and beliefs as correlates of public attitudes toward capital punishment, which is reflected in the studies included in the systematic review. This review included all published and unpublished empirical research that met the following criteria: 1) study sample was composed of members of the general public (including students), but excluded criminal justice professionals, to provide an evaluation of public opinion; 2) outcome measures
assessed attitudes toward capital punishment for adults, including general attitudes toward and support for capital punishment policies (but excluded attitudes toward capital punishment for juvenile offenders); 3) data and significance testing for at least one religious affiliation correlate variable (i.e., Evangelicalism, Protestantism, Catholicism, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, other affiliation, no affiliation) or one religious belief correlate variable (i.e., biblical literalism, religious service attendance, image of God, evangelism, fundamentalism, forgiveness, compassion); 4) reported in peer-reviewed journals, dissertations, theses, conference presentations, government reports, or unpublished/in press manuscripts; 5) written in English or reliable translation available; and 6) produced between January 1, 1990 and December 31, 2014, to reflect the contemporary empirical literature and current state of the research.

**Literature Search**

A systematic review of the contemporary literature was conducted using five online databases: PsycINFO, Web of Science, National Criminal Justice Reference Service Abstracts (NCJRS), ProQuest Dissertation & Theses, and Sociological Abstracts. In doing so, broad search terms were employed to ensure that any potentially relevant studies were identified prior to further inclusion screening. Keyword searches were conducted using all possible combinations within a two-part search term system, consisting of one capital punishment term (“capital punishment”, “death penalty”) paired with one attitudinal term (attitud*, stigma*, punitiv*, “social distance”, contact, familiar*, “public opinion”).
Identified studies were screened against inclusion criteria to ensure all relevant studies were included.

Initial literature searches identified 3,287 studies, with 721 from PsycINFO, 987 from Web of Science, 649 from NCJRS, 174 from ProQuest, and 742 from Sociological Abstracts, many of which included duplicate studies (see Figure 1). Cursory searches adding additional, more specific search terms (e.g., religion) and in other databases, as well as review of study references revealed an additional 14 studies. After removal of duplicate records, each study was evaluated against inclusion criteria at the title-level, resulting in 1,739 studies. Studies were then screened at the abstract and full text levels, resulting in a final total of 33 articles that met inclusion criteria and were included in the present systematic review.

**Variable Coding**

A comprehensive codebook was created and utilized to record all relevant data for each study that met inclusion criteria (available upon request). Sample characteristics, study characteristics, and outcome data were extracted and coded consistent with the operationalization used in each original study.

**Outcome variables.** Attitudes toward capital punishment were defined as support for or opposition to capital punishment on an abstract level, using measures such as general attitudes toward capital punishment and support for capital punishment policies.

**Correlate variables.** Public religious affiliation and beliefs were coded for all studies when available. Religious affiliation included nine affiliation categories (i.e., Evangelicalism, Protestantism, Catholicism, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Other affiliation, No
affiliation). Of note, Evangelicalism is typically distinct from mainline Protestantism, due to the emphasis on sharing one’s faith with others, belief in Christ for salvation, and the inspiration and authority of scripture. However, in all cases for this review, religious affiliation coding was consistent with the scheme or definition of the original study. Religious beliefs and behaviors were classified into six categories: **biblical literalism** (the notion that the Bible is the word of God to be taken literally); **religious service attendance** (frequency of attending church, other religious meetings, or religious activities); **image of God** (using labels such as harsh, angry, judgmental, gracious, and loving to describe God); **evangelism** (belief and/or behavior of sharing one’s religious beliefs with others with the intention of religious conversion); **fundamentalism** (fundamentalist belief system, as defined by the original study); **forgiveness** (value of forgiveness in divine relationships and/or forgiveness of self and others); and **compassion** (feeling a sense of responsibility to reduce pain and suffering). All correlate variables were coded in accordance with the original study’s operationalization.

**Inter-Rater Reliability**

All studies were coded by the first and third authors. Both raters contributed to creating the codebook and completed a comprehensive training on all coding procedures. A random subset of studies ($k = 4$ studies; 17 unique correlates) was coded by both raters to establish inter-rater reliability. Cronbach’s alpha, Cohen’s kappa, and percentage agreement were used to calculate inter-rater reliability for each coding decision (i.e., each relevant variable coded was classified as a coding decision). Excellent levels of inter-rater reliability
were established for all continuous variables (100% agreement; ICC$_{3,1} = 1.00$). For
categorical variables, rater agreement ranged from 71% (Kappa= 0.72) for year data was
collected to 100% (Kappa = 1.00) for 23 variables (e.g., study methodology, religious belief
correlate). Disagreements were resolved through rater discussion and consensus.

**Results**

**Study Characteristics**

The 33 studies included in this systematic review contained data regarding six
categories of religious affiliations (i.e., Evangelicalism, Protestantism, Catholicism, Judaism,
Other affiliation, No affiliation) and seven categories of religious beliefs and behaviors (i.e.,
biblical literalism, religious service attendance, image of God, evangelism, fundamentalism,
forgiveness, compassion) among a total of 97,570 participants (see Table 1). A majority of
studies were conducted in jurisdictions where capital punishment is legal ($k = 32$, 96.9%) and
within the U.S. ($k = 32$, 96.9%). Most studies employed representative and/or randomized
data collection methods ($k = 27$, 81.8%), such as random digit dialing and the U.S. General
Social Survey, and collected samples of adults from the general public ($k = 30$, 90.9%).

**Religious Affiliations**

Table 2 describes each study that evaluated religious affiliations as correlates of
attitudes toward capital punishment. Findings are summarized by affiliation below.

**Christianity.** Of the 33 studies reviewed, most evaluated three different Christian
affiliations, Evangelicalism ($k = 2$), Protestantism ($k = 7$), and Catholicism ($k = 14$). Two
studies meeting inclusion criteria assessed Evangelicalism and produced inconsistent results.
Specifically, one survey of 2,832 members of the public found that people of Evangelical affiliations were more than twice as likely to support capital punishment compared to people who were unaffiliated with a religious affiliation (Wozniak & Lewis, 2010). This relationship was moderated by biblical interpretation, such that people of Evangelical affiliations who interpret the Bible literally support capital punishment less than Evangelicals who do not interpret the Bible literally. In contrast, the other survey of 1,776 people found that members of Evangelical affiliations within the U.S. were less likely to support capital punishment compared to people of non-Evangelical affiliations, after controlling for covariates including education, ideology, fear of crime, and political affiliation (Hall, 2004). However, when additional sociodemographic covariates (e.g., sex, geographic location, age, income) were included in the model, Evangelicalism was no longer associated with capital punishment support. Although findings are contrary to what may be anticipated based on the extant research on punitiveness, it highlights the ways members of one religious affiliation can differ on core beliefs, such as interpretation of scriptures, and the ways these differences may be accounted for in part by other sociodemographic variables. For example, white and black evangelicals are similar in some beliefs including same-sex marriage, but differ in political party affiliation and beliefs (Pew Research Center, 2003). Similar nuanced differences may be reflected in support for capital punishment between members of the same religious affiliation. Taken together, these two studies provide insufficient evidence to support an association between Evangelicalism and attitudes toward capital punishment.
Across the seven studies assessing Protestantism, results revealed a complex relationship with attitudes toward capital punishment. A majority of studies ($k = 5, 71.4\%$) found that people of Protestant affiliations were more likely to support capital punishment compared to those of non-protestant affiliations (Burgason, 2010; Miller & Hayward, 2008; O’Neil et al., 2004; Schlaupitz, 2003; Wozniak & Lewis, 2010); however, the association failed to reach significance for the use of capital punishment in some specific cases, such as adults convicted of murder of a child. For example, Miller and Hayward (2008) found that among community members in general, as well as those who met criteria to participate in a death qualified jury, participants of Protestant affiliations were more likely to support capital punishment compared to those of other affiliations. In contrast, one survey of 12,342 adults across 11 European countries found that people of Protestant affiliations were less likely to approve of capital punishment compared to people of other religious affiliations (Doktor, 2002); however, this study was the only one conducted outside of the U.S., which may account for the inconsistent findings. Additionally, type of Protestantism may moderate differences in capital punishment attitudes (Wozniak & Lewis, 2010; but see Bader, Desmond, Mencken, & Johnson, 2010).

Catholicism was the most frequently assessed Christian affiliation ($k = 14$). The majority of studies ($k = 10, 71.4\%$) reported no difference in support for capital punishment as a function of Catholic affiliation (Bader et al., 2010; Grasmick, Cochran, Bursik, & Kimpel, 1993; Hall, 2004; Maher, Sever, & Pichler, 2008; Miller & Hayward, 2008; Sandys & McGarrell, 1997; Schlaupitz, 2003; Unnever, Cullen, & Bartkowski, 2006; Wozniak &
Lewis, 2010). In contrast, two studies revealed that people of Catholic affiliations report less support for capital punishment compared to those of other religious affiliations (Soss, Langbein, & Metelko, 2003), and Protestant affiliations (O’Neil et al., 2004), while two studies revealed that Catholics reported more support for capital punishment (Burgason, 2010; Doktor, 2002). Consideration of changes within the Catholic Church may help explain these inconsistent findings.

In 1995, the Catholic Church changed its stance on capital punishment (Pope John Paul II, 1995). Since this time, the consistent message from the Vatican has been against the use of capital punishment, which is likely to influence the beliefs and attitudes of ordained clergy and lay people affiliated with the Catholic Church. Therefore, analysis of the research regarding support for capital punishment among those belonging to a Catholic affiliation should be considered in regard to whether it occurred before or after the change in stance in 1995. Some of the studies conducted before 1995 suggest no difference in support for capital punishment based on Catholic affiliation (Grasmick, Cochran et al., 1993; Sandys & McGarrell, 1997). On the other hand, one study suggests people of Catholic affiliations were less likely to support capital punishment (Soss et al., 2003). Similarly, a fourth study found that historically, people of Catholic affiliations were more likely to support capital punishment compared to those of other affiliations, but that there were no such differences in more recent years (Bjarnson & Welch, 2004). Results of these studies suggest that prior to the change in the Catholic Church’s stance on capital punishment there was a shift in attitudes indicative of the changes to come within the Catholic Church. The research
conducted after 1995 reveals a somewhat different pattern in attitudes, as most studies did not find a difference in attitudes toward capital punishment based on Catholic affiliation (Bader et al., 2010; Hall, 2004; Maher et al., 2008; Schlaupitz, 2003; Unnever et al., 2006; Wozniak & Lewis, 2010). Although, two studies conducted after the Catholic Church changed its stance against the use of capital punishment found that people of Catholic affiliations were more likely to support capital punishment compared to people of other religious affiliations (Burgason, 2010; Doktor, 2002). Even after accounting for official changes in the Catholic Church’s stance on capital punishment, findings across most current studies suggest that people of Catholic affiliations do not differ from people of other religious affiliations in their attitudes toward capital punishment.

**Judaism.** Three of the 33 studies included in this review evaluated Judaism as a correlate of attitudes toward capital punishment. Across studies, there were no differences in attitudes toward capital punishment between people of a Jewish affiliation and people of other religious affiliations (Bader et al., 2010; Cohen & Liebman, 1997; Schlaupitz, 2003). Findings, though limited in number, suggest that Jewish religious affiliation is not associated with attitudes toward capital punishment.

**Other religious affiliations.** Although other religious affiliations, such as Buddhism, Islam, and Hinduism, may also be associated with capital punishment support, no studies were identified that met inclusion criteria and assessed these affiliations explicitly. Rather, two studies collapsed these additional religious affiliations and assessed “other religions” as a correlate of capital punishment support. The first study of 764 students found that people
who identified as belonging to these other religious affiliations did not differ in attitudes toward capital punishment from those of more frequently assessed affiliations (i.e., Catholic, non-Catholic Christian, not religious) (Maher et al., 2008). Bader and colleagues (2010) similarly failed to find differences in beliefs regarding whether capital punishment should be abolished among people of various religious affiliations. Collectively, the extant, but limited, research does not suggest differences in attitudes toward capital punishment between the more frequently studied religious affiliations (e.g., Catholicism, Protestantism) and other religious affiliations; however, additional research regarding the differences in attitudes across these infrequently assessed orientation is needed.

**No religious affiliation.** Few articles ($k = 3$) assessed capital punishment attitudes among people with no religious affiliations, including those who identified as atheist or agnostic. Findings of two studies revealed no differences in attitudes toward capital punishment between people with no religious affiliation compared to those with a religious affiliation (Grasmick, Cochran, et al., 1993; Maher et al., 2008). However, one survey of 1,721 members of the public found that having no religious affiliation was associated with less support for capital punishment and more agreement that it should be abolished compared to people reporting a religious affiliation (Bader et al., 2010). Again, the research regarding people with no religious affiliation is limited and thus subsequent conclusions regarding the association between no religious affiliation and support are also limited.
Religious Beliefs and Practices

Religious beliefs and practices may provide additional explanations of the associations between religion and attitudes toward capital punishment. Table 3 summarizes each study that assessed religious beliefs and practices as correlates of capital punishment attitudes, and findings are described below.

Biblical literalism. Across the 14 studies that assessed biblical literalism, a majority of studies \( k = 8 \), 57.1% failed to find differences in attitudes toward capital punishment based on biblical literalness (Applegate, Cullen, Fisher, & Ven, 2000; Bader et al., 2010; Britt, 1998; Sandys & McGarrell, 1997; Unnever & Cullen, 2006; Unnever, Cullen, & Applegate, 2005; Unnever et al., 2006; Wozniak & Lewis, 2010). Comparatively, six studies found a relationship between literal interpretation of the Bible and attitudes toward capital punishment, such that people who reported subscribing to a more literal interpretation of the Bible tended to report more support for capital punishment compared to those endorsing less literal interpretations (Grasmick, Bursik, & Blackwell, 1993; Miller & Hayward, 2008; Schlaupitz, 2003; Weicko & Gau, 2008; Young, 1992; Young & Thompson, 1995). For instance, in their study of 628 American adults, Weicko and Gau (2008) found that people who believe the Bible is the literal word of God were almost five times more likely to support capital punishment compared to people who do not believe the Bible is the literal word of God. Moreover, the influence of biblical literalism on capital punishment attitudes may be moderated by race/ethnicity or religious affiliation; specifically, some research suggests that biblical literalism is associated with more support for capital punishment among
Black, but not White, participants (Young, 1992; but see Unnever et al., 2005), whereas biblical literalism is associated with less support for capital punishment among people of evangelical, but not other, affiliations (Wozniak & Lewis, 2010). Taken together, most studies did not find a significant association between biblical literalism and capital punishment support, some revealed a positive association, but no studies found a negative association. Moreover, the relationship between biblical literalism and capital punishment attitudes may differ within subgroups of people.

**Religious service attendance.** Thirteen studies evaluated the role of attendance at church and other religious services. A majority (k = 9, 69.2%) found that attitudes toward capital punishment do not differ as a function of frequency of attendance (Barkan & Cohn, 1994; Borg, 1997; Cohen & Liebman, 1997; Grasmick, Bursik et al., 1993; O’Neil et al., 2004; Smith, 2005; Stack, 2003; Vogel & Vogel, 2003; Wozniak & Lewis, 2010). For example, in their study of 2,849 students and members of the public, O’Neil and colleagues (2004) found that people who reported never attending religious services reported comparable levels of capital punishment support compared to people who attended services less than and more than once per week. Another study of 2,832 members of the American public found that church attendance was not associated with capital punishment attitudes, after controlling for other religious beliefs, affiliations, and other sociodemographic factors (Wozniak & Lewis, 2010). The four other studies, in contrast, found a negative relationship between frequency of attendance at church and other religious services and support for capital punishment (Bader et al., 2010; Baumer, Messner, & Rosenfeld, 2003; Bjarnason &
Welch, 2004; Hall, 2004). Overall, findings provide mixed evidence. Most studies tend to suggest that religious service attendance is not a significant correlate of attitudes toward capital punishment; and although some revealed a negative relationship, no studies suggest a positive relationship between religious service attendance and capital punishment support.

**Image of God.** Of the seven studies that assessed image of God, five investigated negative images of God (i.e., harsh, angry, judgmental, punitive). People who reported having a harsher image of God (Unnever & Cullen, 2006; Wozniak & Lewis, 2010) and those who viewed God as judgmental (Bader et al., 2010) were more likely to support capital punishment. Though having a punitive image of God was associated with support for capital punishment in one study (Grasmick, Bursik et al., 1993), the association was no longer significant after accounting for other religious beliefs and sociodemographic variables (Applegate et al., 2000; Grasmick, Bursik et al., 1993). Having a view of God as angry also was not associated with attitudes toward capital punishment (Bader et al., 2010). In comparison, three studies assessed positive images of God. People who held a gracious image of God tended to report limited support for capital punishment (Unnever et al., 2005). However, having a loving image of God was not consistently associated with capital punishment attitudes (Bader et al., 2010; but see Unnever et al., 2006). Additionally, one study investigated image of God as engaged, assessing whether or not God is directly involved in personal and worldly affairs. People who held an engaged view of God tended to report more support for capital punishment, though findings were inconsistent (Bader et al., 2010). Generally, when differences were found, extant research suggests that more negative
images of God (e.g., harsh, judgmental) are associated with more support for capital punishment, whereas more positive images of God (e.g., gracious) are associated with less support for capital punishment. Although beyond the scope of this review, image of God is associated with other possible correlates, such as political beliefs and gender (e.g., Bader & Froese, 2005; Grimes, 2007; Nelsen, Cheek, & Au, 1985), suggesting that the association between image of God and capital punishment support may differ across other correlate subgroups.

**Evangelism.** Of the four studies that assessed evangelism, half \((k = 2)\) found a significant relationship with attitudes toward capital punishment (Miller & Hayward, 2008; Young, 1992). Specifically, in a study of 1,228 members of the public, Christians who reported sharing their religious beliefs with someone else were less likely to support capital punishment; this association was stronger among Black compared to White respondents (Young, 1992). In the second study, the association between evangelism and capital punishment attitudes was no longer significant, after controlling for other religious beliefs, practices, and affiliations (Miller & Hayward, 2008). Two other studies similarly failed to find differences in attitudes toward capital punishment as a function of belief in the importance of or prior experience sharing one’s faith (Young & Thompson, 1995; Unnever et al., 2005). On the whole, findings do not support an association between evangelism beliefs and/or practices and capital punishment support, particularly after accounting for other religious and sociodemographic covariates.
Christian fundamentalism. More than half of all studies that met inclusion criteria ($k = 22$) assessed fundamentalism as a correlate of capital punishment attitudes, and of these studies, most ($k = 17, 77.3\%$) measured fundamentalist beliefs using the scheme created by Smith (1990). Almost two-thirds ($k = 14, 63.6\%$) failed to find differences in attitudes toward capital punishment as a function of fundamentalist beliefs (Barkan & Cohn, 1994; Baumer et al., 2003; Borg, 1997; Sandys & McGarrell, 1997; Schlaupitz, 2003; Sharp, McGhee, Hope, & Coyne, 2007; Soss et al., 2003; Unnever & Cullen, 2006, 2007; Unnever et al., 2005; Wozniak & Lewis, 2010; Young, 1992; 2000; Young & Thompson, 1995). However, the eight other studies found that people with fundamentalist beliefs were more likely to support capital punishment compared to people who held weaker or more liberal religious beliefs (Britt, 1998; Curtis, 1991; Doktor, 2002; Grasmick, Cochran et al., 1993; Miller & Hayward, 2008; Stack, 2003; Unnever et al., 2006; Vogel & Vogel, 2003). In contrast, those with fundamentalist compared to moderate religious beliefs did not differ consistently in their support for capital punishment (e.g., Curtis, 1991).

Further review of findings suggest that individual characteristics, including race/ethnicity, death qualification, and geographic location, may account for some of the inconsistencies across these studies (Borg, 1997; Britt, 1998; Grasmick, Cochran et al., 1993; Young, 1992; Young & Thompson, 1995; but see Unnever et al., 2005). For example, one study of 13,823 members of the public, found that African American fundamentalists were

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1 Although fundamentalism is sometimes considered a religious affiliation, herein Christian fundamentalism was classified as a religious belief because many measures are composed of belief-based items, including literal interpretation of the Bible, punitive image of God, and emphasis on sharing religious beliefs with others.
less likely to support capital punishment compared to White fundamentalists and African American respondents with non-fundamentalist beliefs (Unnever & Cullen, 2007). Another study of 973 adults revealed that the positive relationship between fundamentalist beliefs and attitudes toward capital punishment is found for members of the general public, but not for those who met criteria for death qualified juries (Miller & Hayward, 2008). This contrasting finding is likely due to the fact that all qualified jury members, regardless of religious beliefs, must be willing to vote in favor of capital punishment. Overall, some studies found that fundamentalist beliefs were associated with more support for capital punishment and some studies did not find this significant association; however, no studies found that fundamentalist beliefs were associated with less support for capital punishment. Moreover, findings suggest that associations between fundamentalist beliefs and attitudes toward capital punishment, when observed, may be attributable to other individual characteristics.

Forgiveness. Three of the four studies that assessed forgiveness failed to find associations between attitudes toward capital punishment and belief in forgiveness, including forgiveness of self, others, and belief that God is forgiving (Unnever & Cullen, 2006; Unnever et al., 2005; Wozniak & Lewis, 2010). In a sample of 559 American adults, the fourth study found that the more strongly people endorsed forgiveness as an important value and theme throughout the Bible, the less likely they were to support capital punishment (Applegate et al., 2000). However, this study measured different beliefs in forgiveness; specifically, beliefs that forgiveness is a requirement without limits and that people should
'hate the sin’ but ‘love the sinner’. Thus, findings tend to suggest that forgiveness is not a consistently significant correlate of capital punishment support.

**Compassion.** The three studies that assessed compassion consistently found a negative association between compassionate beliefs and attitudes toward capital punishment. After controlling for other religious beliefs and sociodemographic variables, people who reported higher levels of compassion—defined as feeling a responsibility to reduce pain and suffering in the world—were less likely to support capital punishment compared to people who were less compassionate (Unnever & Cullen, 2006; Unnever et al., 2005; Wozniak & Lewis, 2010). These findings suggest that compassion is negatively associated with support for capital punishment, even after accounting for possible covariates.

**Discussion**

Public attitudes regarding capital punishment are mixed. Religious affiliations, beliefs, and practices are often identified as a source of attitudinal differences (e.g., Nielsen, Hatton, & Donahue, 2013), and consequently, these constructs are frequently included in studies and public opinion polls examining attitudes toward capital punishment. Yet, there has been little effort to integrate findings across research studies of capital punishment attitudes and associated religious correlates. To that end, the current review examined empirical evidence drawn from 33 studies of 97,570 participants regarding the associations between religious affiliations and beliefs and attitudes toward capital punishment. The sections that follow provide a discussion of findings vis-a-vis the religious correlates
associated with support for and opposition to capital punishment, as well as those not associated with attitudes toward capital punishment and upon which more research is needed.

Summary of Findings

Across studies, findings suggest that people belonging to Protestant affiliations and those with negative images of God (i.e., harsh, judgmental) tend to be more likely to espouse attitudes supporting capital punishment. There also was some evidence suggesting that people with fundamentalist beliefs and belief in a literal interpretation of the Bible are more likely to support capital punishment; however, less than half of the studies examining fundamentalist beliefs supported this conclusion. In contrast, findings suggest that people possessing a positive image of God (i.e., gracious) and those with strong beliefs in compassion were less likely to support capital punishment. There was some evidence that people with a belief in evangelism also are less likely to support capital punishment, although studies produced mixed results. Overwhelmingly, this review revealed that most religious affiliations assessed in the extant literature are not significant correlates of attitudes toward capital punishment. Indeed, other than Protestantism, all other religious affiliations that were examined in the research, including Evangelicalism, Catholicism, Judaism, other affiliations, and no affiliation, were not associated consistently with attitudes toward capital punishment. Beliefs in forgiveness and religious attendance similarly were not associated consistently with capital punishment attitudes.
Implications for Research

This review revealed that the empirical literature is limited in three important ways. First, studies varied in the operationalization and measurement of religious affiliations and beliefs. Many studies used broad terms to encompass affiliations and beliefs, such as image of God, Evangelicalism, and Fundamentalism, which were often defined using different parameters, leading to inconsistencies in methodology, results, and generalization of findings (for examples, see Unnever & Cullen, 2006; Miller & Hayward, 2008; Wood & Gannon, 2009). Fundamentalism, in particular, was considered both a religious affiliation and belief across studies, leading to inconsistencies in interpretation of findings. Although many of the studies in this review utilized the same classification criteria (Smith, 1990), its measurement of fundamentalism is based primarily on identification with specific Christian denominations rather than emphasis on specific fundamentalist beliefs which may vary within denominational traditions. Also, measures of fundamentalism may be highly correlated and confounded with other religious variables; fundamentalist measures can include items related to biblical literalism, image of God, evangelism, and/or affiliation with Protestant denominations. These measurement issues and potential multicollinearity may help to explain the inconsistent findings regarding fundamentalist beliefs and capital punishment attitudes. Additionally, and outside the scope of this review, frequency of attending religious services sometimes have been associated with or included in more comprehensive measures of self-reported religiosity or religious salience. Future research should seek to establish consistent operationalization and measurement of religious affiliations and beliefs.
Second, with some exceptions, there is a lack of research assessing attitudes toward capital punishment outside of the United States and among non-Christian samples. Although a few studies assessed Judaism, ‘other’ religious affiliations, and no affiliation, other prominent religious affiliations such as Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism were not assessed. Specifically, many international executions occur in countries where Islam and Buddhism are the most common religious affiliations (Amnesty International, 2015), yet there is little research of capital punishment attitudes among people belonging to these affiliations. Therefore, findings may not generalize to international populations; rather, they reveal trends in attitudes toward capital punishment among members of the American public, particularly Christians. Additional research is needed to begin understanding the influence of religious affiliations and beliefs on capital punishment attitudes and policies internationally.

Third, although religious affiliations and beliefs are sometimes both assessed in a single study (e.g., Miller & Hayward, 2008; Wozniak & Lewis, 2010), few studies have directly compared the ways in which beliefs and affiliations are associated with attitudes toward capital punishment or examined possible interactions between these religious correlates. Nevertheless, the distinction between religious affiliations and beliefs is essential in disentangling the relationship between religion and capital punishment support. Findings of this review indicate that religious beliefs, compared to affiliations, may provide better, more consistent explanations for attitudes toward capital punishment. For example, findings suggest that on average people belonging to a Catholic affiliation do not differ from people with other religious affiliations; however, the degree to which Catholics interpret scripture
literally, attend religious services, and endorse compassion may vary. Thus, research should assess if and in what ways religious beliefs vary within and between affiliations, in order to obtain a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between these religious correlates and public attitudes toward capital punishment.

**Implications for Policy**

In an international climate of moratoriums and abolition trends, capital punishment advocates frequently use high rates of public support to validate their position. Indeed, in many jurisdictions, including the U.S., a majority of the public reports support for capital punishment (Berlatsky, 2010; Hough & Roberts, 2012; Pew Research Center, 2015); however, an increased understanding of the factors contributing to these public attitudes may lead to evaluation of the legitimacy of capital punishment policies. Findings of the current review suggest that some, but not all, religious affiliations and beliefs may influence public attitudes toward capital punishment. Religious beliefs, such as compassion and image of God, can be particularly salient in shaping attitudes toward capital punishment policy among members of the public, especially among those belonging to Protestant affiliations. Therefore, capital punishment supporters and opponents should continue to evaluate the nexus of religious beliefs and attitudes toward capital punishment, in order to assess levels of public support for capital punishment.

More specifically, findings of this review have implications for death qualification and jury selection for capital trials, particularly within the U.S. Legal precedent has established that jurors cannot be disqualified from participation in capital trials due to moral
or religious beliefs about capital punishment in so much as these beliefs do not interfere with
the juror’s ability to perform his or her duty (Witherspoon v. Illinois, 1968; Wainwright v. Witt, 1985). Yet, personal morals and beliefs can lead potential jury members to be more or
less likely to support capital punishment, and those who oppose it are excluded from
participation in capital trials. The long-standing literature on death-qualified juries suggests
that these policies lead to biased juries which are prone to conviction and harsher sentences
(e.g., Butler, 2007; Allen, Mabry, & McKelton, 1998; Jurow, 1971; Mauro, 1991).

Religion is one criteria often used by attorneys to exclude potential jurors during the
selection process, due to an assumption that strong religious beliefs may bias jurors and
prevent them from being fair and impartial (Miller, Jehle, & Summers, 2007). Within the
context of death-qualified juries specifically, research suggests that qualifications for jury
participation may lead to biased juries which are disproportionately likely to include
members of some religious affiliations over others (Fitzgerald & Ellsworth, 1984; Santoro,
2014). For example, a recent study found that people with a Catholic affiliation were less
likely to be death-qualified, whereas those with fundamentalist beliefs and literal
interpretations of the Bible were more likely to be death-qualified (Summers, Hayward, &
Miller, 2010). The current review suggests that several other religious correlates may predict
attitudes toward capital punishment—namely Protestant affiliation, image of God, and belief
in compassion and evangelism. These findings provide direction for selection of potential
death-qualified jury members, as attorneys seek to include jurors who are more or less
supportive of capital punishment. However, juror selection based on religious affiliations and
beliefs may lead to death-qualified juries that are more likely to favor capital punishment and result in a jury that is not representative of the community. Indeed, death-qualified jury pools are not representative of the public at large (e.g., Butler, 2007; Haney, Hurtado & Vega, 1994), and may be more prone to convict. Therefore, caution is warranted when applying religious criteria to the selection of death-qualified jurors, in order to preserve both the potential and perceived fairness of capital trials.

**Limitations**

Findings of this systematic review should be considered within the context of several limitations. Although this review employed systematic efforts to locate and include all available research that met inclusion criteria, some relevant studies may not have been identified. Moreover, this review sought to explore religious correlates of attitudes toward capital punishment. As such, it is limited by the focus solely on religious correlates and did not thoroughly explore other correlates of capital punishment support, such as gender, race/ethnicity, and political beliefs. Similarly, the present study was concentrated on the most commonly assessed religious correlates of capital punishment, and did not include other religious correlates which had little or no empirical research regarding associations with capital punishment attitudes (e.g., orthodoxy, orientations). Because this study reviewed main religious affiliations (e.g., Evangelicalism, Catholicism, Judaism, and other affiliations), it did not account for differences between individual denominations that make up the larger affiliations, particularly within Evangelicalism and Protestantism. For example, some research has focused on specific denominations, such as Southern Baptist (Eisenberg,
Garvey, & Wells, 2001), which were not addressed in the present study. Future research should continue to investigate how people of various denominations differ from one another regarding capital punishment support.

Beyond these aspects of the present study, systematic reviews are inherently limited by the quality, design, and methodology of the included studies. To allow for the most comprehensive analysis, studies were not screened based on methodological quality or rigor as part of inclusion criteria. As identified in the sections above, included studies varied in operationalization, measurement of religious constructs, and populations assessed. All findings and conclusions of this review should be considered within the confines of the included studies, and provide direction for future research to form more consistent operationalization and methodologies, and evaluate these in more diverse populations.

Conclusion

A systematic review was conducted to synthesize the quantitative evidence on religious affiliation and beliefs as correlates of public attitudes toward capital punishment. Findings suggest a complex relationship between religious affiliations, religious beliefs, and public attitudes toward capital punishment. Although findings are inconsistent across most correlates, the present review suggests that religious beliefs compared to religious affiliations, may better predict attitudes toward capital punishment. Additionally, this review revealed that the relationship between religious correlates and attitudes toward capital punishment may be moderated by individual characteristics, including race/ethnicity, geographical location, and other religious factors (e.g., Applegate et al., 2000; Bader et al.,
Continued evaluation of religious beliefs, their effects on capital punishment support, and potential moderating effects of sociodemographic variables is needed to disentangle patterns behind trends in public opinion on capital punishment. Further research is needed to investigate the ways in which religious beliefs influence jury selection and sentencing decisions among death qualified jury members.
Table 1. Descriptive characteristics of included studies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Data Year</th>
<th>Total N</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Correlates</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Sampling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applegate, Cullen, Fisher, &amp; Vander Ven, 2000</td>
<td>1996-2005</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Beliefs (2)</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Random Mail Surveys</td>
</tr>
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<td>Bader, Desmond, Mencken, &amp; Johnson, 2010</td>
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<td>1,721</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Beliefs (6)</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>General Social Survey (GSS)</td>
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<td>Barkan &amp; Cohn, 1994</td>
<td>1990-1994</td>
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<td>Public</td>
<td>Beliefs (2)</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>GSS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1990-1991</td>
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<td>Public</td>
<td>Beliefs (2)</td>
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<td>Students</td>
<td>Affiliations (2)</td>
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<td>Convenience</td>
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<td>Cohen &amp; Leibman, 1994</td>
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<td>Public</td>
<td>Beliefs (1)</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>GSS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curtis, 1991</td>
<td>nr</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>Students</td>
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<td>1996</td>
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<td>Beliefs (3)</td>
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<td>GSS</td>
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Note. Reported sample size refers to total sample size for the study; actual sample size for individual analyses may vary. nr = not reported. Public = adults in the general population. Affiliations included: Evangelicalism, Protestantism, Catholicism, Judaism, Other affiliation, No affiliation. Beliefs included: Biblical Literalism, Attendance, Image of God, Evangelism, Fundamentalism, Forgiveness, Compassion. *Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden.
Table 2. Religious affiliations and attitudes toward capital punishment.

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<th>Study</th>
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<th>Judaism</th>
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<td>x, a, b</td>
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Total Articles 2 7 14 3 2 3

Note. + = significantly more positive attitudes toward or more support for capital punishment. - = significantly less positive attitudes toward or less support for capital punishment. x = relationship not significant. a among participants of mainline Protestant affiliations. b among participants of Black Protestant affiliations only. *compared people of Catholic affiliations to those of Protestant affiliations only (and not people of other religious affiliations).
### Table 3. Religious beliefs and attitudes toward capital punishment.

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<th>Religious Service Attendance</th>
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<th>Harsh, Judgmental, Punitive</th>
<th>Angry</th>
<th>Engaged</th>
<th>Evangelism</th>
<th>Fundamentalism</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>+</td>
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<td>+</td>
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Note. + = significantly more positive attitudes toward or more support for capital punishment. - = significantly less positive attitudes toward or less support for capital punishment. x = relationship not significant. <sup>a</sup>among all participants. <sup>b</sup>among participants of evangelical affiliations only.
Figure 1. Results of systematic literature search.

$n = 3,287$
Records identified through keyword searches:
PsycINFO ($n = 721$), Web of Science ($n = 987$),
NCJRS ($n = 649$), ProQuest Thesis & Dissertations ($n = 174$);
Sociological Abstracts ($n = 742$); cursory search ($n = 14$)
Screened at article title level

$n = 1,739$
Screened at abstract level

$n = 1,517$
Records excluded for not meeting inclusion criteria

$n = 222$
Full-text records assessed against inclusion criteria for eligibility

$n = 189$
Full-text records excluded for not meeting inclusion criteria or insufficient data

$n = 33$
Records included in systematic review
CHAPTER 3

A Meta-Analysis of Public Attitudes toward Ex-Offenders

Ex-offenders face barriers to community reintegration including negative attitudes held by members of the public. This meta-analysis summarizes the extant research on the correlates of public attitudes toward ex-offenders—namely, public, ex-offender, and community characteristics—and the moderating effects of sexual offense history. A systematic search of four databases (PsycINFO, Web of Science, NCJRS, ProQuest Dissertation & Theses) identified 19 records, consisting of 9,355 participants. Results revealed small associations between correlate variables and attitudes, suggesting that people are more similar than different in their attitudes toward ex-offenders. Indeed, only political ideology, interpersonal contact, and sexual offense history emerged as significant correlates. Moderation analyses revealed differences in public attitudes toward ex-offenders based upon the year a record was produced. Findings reveal the need for additional research examining moderators of public attitudes toward ex-offenders and suggest that interventions should explore ways to incorporate interpersonal contact and reduce stigma related to criminal histories.

*Criminal Justice & Behavior, 43(9), 1,260-1,280*

Introduction

A vast number of offenders reenter the community following incarceration each year. In 2011, for example, close to two-thirds of a million people were released from U.S. state and federal prisons, and one of every 50 American adult residents was under the supervision of probation or parole (Carson & Sabol, 2012; Maruschak & Parks, 2012). Yet, men and women who reenter the community after incarceration face many barriers to successful reintegration. These may be attributable, at least in part, to negative attitudes held by members of the public regarding ex-offenders (e.g., Brooks, Visher, & Naser, 2006; Clear, Rose, & Ryder, 2001; Wakefield & Uggen, 2010). Indeed, many studies have identified that members of the public commonly hold negative attitudes toward and desire social distance from ex-offenders (e.g., Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010; Leverentz, 2011; Manza, Brooks, & Uggen, 2004; Park, 2009), often resulting in social rejection, discrimination, and loss of social status (Phelan, Link, & Dovido, 2008). These negative attitudes can contribute to the development of policy restrictions and barriers for ex-offenders in domains such as education, employment, health, housing, and voting rights (Clear et al., 2001; Pager, 2003; Pogorzelski, Wolff, Pan, & Blitz, 2005; Schnittker & Bacak, 2013; Varghese, Hardin, Bauer, & Morgan, 2010; Wakefield & Uggen, 2010). Furthermore, sub-groups of ex-offenders may experience variable rates of barriers due to negative public attitudes. This is evident in the case of sex offenders, who are among one of the most discriminated against groups of ex-offenders (Tewksbury & Lees, 2006; Viki, Fullerton, Raggett, Tait, & Wiltshire, 2012).
Prejudice, Stigma, and Social Distance

Prejudice, stigma, and social distance theories provide a foundation for understanding negative attitudes toward ex-offenders (see Allport, 1954; Dovidio, Glick, & Rudman, 2005; Goffman, 1963). Prejudice is described as “antipathy” toward groups or individuals because of incorrect beliefs or generalizations (Allport, 1954, p. 10). Similarly, stigma is the process through which individuals or groups are rejected by others based on differences in physical characteristics, personal character, identity, or flaws (Goffman, 1963). Stigma and prejudice theories can be considered as complementary, emphasizing normal sociocultural processes, and generally can be applied to discriminated, dehumanized, or devalued groups, including ex-offenders (Phelan et al., 2008). As a result, ex-offenders often experience differential treatment because of their status as an ‘ex-offender.’ Discrimination against ex-offenders also may occur in more subtle ways as described by social distance theories, such that ingroup members (i.e., non-offenders) desire social distance from outgroup members (i.e., ex-offenders) (Park & Burgess, 1921). Sex offenders are particularly subject to the effects of social distance, as ex-offenders with a history of sexual offenses are more commonly dehumanized and socially excluded (e.g., Viki et al., 2012).

Stigma and prejudice toward, and desired social distance from ex-offenders can be manifested as barriers to accessing services in the community (e.g., housing, education), exclusion from social settings and rights (e.g., voting), and inequality when seeking employment (Pager, 2003; Pogorzelski et al., 2005; Schnittker & Bacak, 2013; Wakefield & Uggen, 2010). To illustrate, negative employer attitudes and stigma toward ex-offenders
serve as a barrier to obtaining employment (Clear et al., 2001; Pager, 2003; Varghese et al., 2010). Employment can decrease the likelihood of recidivism and increase the likelihood of successful community reentry (Graffam, Shinkfield, Lavelle, & McPherson, 2004; Uggen, 2000; Visher, Debus, Yahner, 2008); as such, reducing stigma and discrimination toward ex-offenders seeking employment may be one strategy for decreasing reentry barriers and improving community reintegration.

**Correlates of Attitudes toward Ex-Offenders**

Identification of correlates associated with negative attitudes toward ex-offenders may assist efforts to reduce stigma and facilitate successful reentry. Based on our systematic review of the literature, the most frequently assessed correlates can be categorized as representing public characteristics, ex-offender characteristics, and characteristics of the local community. We briefly summarize trends in the research on correlates within each of these categories below.

Prior research has found four public characteristics associated with attitudes toward ex-offenders: sex, race/ethnicity, political affiliation or ideology, and interpersonal contact. Many studies show that women compared to men demonstrate less favorable attitudes toward ex-offenders (Leverentz, 2011; Mancini, Shields, Mears, & Beaver, 2010; Willis, Malinen, & Johnston, 2013). However, some research does not find differences in attitudes between women and men (Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010; Locke, 2010; Park, 2009). Similarly, White or non-minority participants typically—but not always—report less favorable attitudes toward ex-offenders compared to minority participants (Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010;
Leverentz, 2011; Mancini et al., 2010; but see Comartin, Kernsmith, & Kernsmith, 2009; Dawson Edwards, 2007). Identification as politically conservative (Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010; Locke, 2010; Mancini et al., 2010) or a Republican (Park, 2009) is frequently associated with less favorable attitudes toward ex-offenders compared to identification as politically liberal or a Democrat; however, again, the research findings are mixed (e.g., Dawson Edwards, 2007; Leverentz, 2011). Lastly, interpersonal contact theory (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) posits a negative relationship between interpersonal contact and prejudice, such that increased contact with a member of an outgroup is associated with decreased prejudice, stigma, and/or desired social distance from outgroup members. Consistent with interpersonal contact theory, members of the public who report having contact with ex-offenders (Gibson, Roberson, & Daniel, 2009; Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010; but see, Dreiling, 2010), even sex offenders (Willis, Levenson, & Ward, 2010; Viki et al., 2012), generally report more favorable attitudes. In contrast, age, income, and education (e.g., Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010; Mancini et al., 2010; Park, 2009) typically have not been significantly associated with attitudes toward ex-offenders, with some exceptions (e.g., Brown, 1999; Comartin et al., 2009; Willis et al., 2013).

Four characteristics of ex-offenders commonly have been found to be associated with public attitudes in the extant research: 1) criminal history or type of offense; 2) race/ethnicity; 3) participation in a rehabilitation program; and 4) the presence of mental illness. First, members of the public generally hold more negative attitudes toward ex-offenders with a history of violent crimes, felonies, and sexual offenses compared to those
with a history of non-violent crimes, misdemeanors, and no sexual offenses (Hardcastle, Bartholomew, & Graffam, 2011; Perkins, Raines, Tschopp, & Warner, 2009; Rogers, Hirst, & Davies, 2011; but see Martinez, 2011). By way of illustration, members of the public generally report significantly less support for voting right reinstatement for violent ex-felons compared to ex-felons (Manza et al., 2004). Second, members of the public appear to hold more negative attitudes toward ex-offenders belonging to a minority race or ethnicity compared to ex-offenders of the majority race or ethnicity (Pager, 2003). Third, members of the public tend to report more negative attitudes toward ex-offenders who have not participated in a rehabilitation program compared to ex-offenders who have participated (Hardcastle et al., 2011; Rogers et al., 2011). Fourth, members of the public, on average, demonstrate more negative attitudes toward ex-offenders with mental illnesses compared to ex-offenders without mental illnesses (LeBel, 2008; Locke, 2010). Taken together, research suggests that most ex-offenders face multiple stigmas which can increase barriers encountered during reentry (LeBel, 2012).

Lastly, prior research has identified community size and crime prevalence as possible correlates of attitudes toward ex-offenders, although community characteristics are studied less frequently than public and ex-offender characteristics. A handful of studies suggest that individuals from non-rural communities report less negative attitudes toward ex-offenders compared to those living in rural communities (Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010; Leverentz, 2011; Mackey & Courtright, 2000). Findings of one study showed that citizens of non-rural neighborhoods with high to moderate crime prevalence were more likely to report less
punitive attitudes generally—not attitudes toward ex-offenders, specifically—compared to those living in rural neighborhoods with moderate to low crime prevalence (Leverentz, 2011). However, other studies have failed to find differences in attitudes as a function of community size and crime salience (e.g., Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010; Locke, 2010).

Beyond the correlates reviewed above, there is evidence that sexual offense history has a moderating effect on the relationship between public characteristics and attitudes towards ex-offenders. Prior research suggests that members of the public hold more negative attitudes toward ex-offenders who have been convicted of a sexual offense, such as sexual assault (Hulsey, 1991), sexual assault against children (Hardcastle et al., 2011), or any sexual offense (Manza et al., 2004; Willis et al., 2010) compared to ex-offenders convicted of other offenses. Because members of the public appear to hold more negative attitudes toward sex offenders compared to ex-offenders with no history of sexual offending, there may be a stronger consensus of negative attitudes toward sex offenders, regardless of public characteristics. Thus, effect sizes for the associations between public characteristics and attitudes toward sex offenders may be smaller than those observed between public characteristics and attitudes toward ex-offenders with no history of sexual offending.

**The Present Study**

For more than 20 years, researchers have sought to identify factors that may act as barriers to successful community reintegration following release from correctional facilities, including public, ex-offender, and community characteristics associated with negative public attitudes toward ex-offenders. However, variability in findings across studies limits our
conclusions regarding the significance, strength, and direction of the relationships between public characteristics, ex-offender characteristics, and characteristics of the local community and attitudes toward ex-offenders. Inconsistent operationalization and measurement of attitudes may have contributed to the contradictory findings, and small sample sizes may have limited power to detect significant effects. As a result, there is a need for a systematic evaluation of the current empirical literature.

To that end, the present study used a meta-analytic approach to synthesize extant literature on correlates of public attitudes toward ex-offenders and to examine the potential moderating effect of sexual offense history for public characteristic correlates, with the goal of resolving inconsistencies and highlighting avenues for future research. We additionally examined the moderating effects of publication status, sampling methodology, year produced, country, and attitude operationalization to assess potential biases (see Liberati et al., 2009; Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, Altman, & The PRISMA Group, 2009).

Methodology

To the extent possible, we followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) statement for reporting the findings of meta-analyses (Liberati et al., 2009; Moher et al., 2009). The PRISMA statement is comprised of a 27-item checklist, created to encourage clarity, transparency, and rigor in meta-analysis reporting (Liberati et al., 2009).

Inclusion Criteria

The current study included all published and unpublished empirical research that met
the following inclusion criteria: 1) sample was drawn from the general public (including students) and did not include criminal justice professionals; 2) at least one outcome variable assessing attitudes toward ex-offenders who have reentered the community, defined as measures of general attitudes, stigma, punitiveness, or desired social distance from ex-offenders; 3) reported necessary data to calculate effect size (e.g., means, standard deviations, correlation values, sample size) for at least one correlate variable, or ability to obtain necessary data from the authors; 4) reported in peer-review journals, dissertations, theses, conference presentations, government reports, or unpublished/in press manuscripts; 5) written in English or reliable translation available; and 6) produced between January 1, 1990 and December 31, 2013 to reflect the contemporary empirical literature and current state of the science. For the purpose of this study and record inclusion, the term “ex-offenders” refers to individuals with a criminal offense history who are no longer incarcerated and who have reentered the community following incarceration.

**Literature Search**

Records for the meta-analysis were identified through systematic searches in PsycINFO, Web of Science, National Criminal Justice Reference Service Abstracts (NCJRS), and ProQuest Dissertation & Theses electronic databases. Keyword searches were conducted using a two-part search term system; all possible combinations were employed, consisting of one criminal justice term (incarcerat*, offend*, inmate, felon*, misdemean*, crim*, prison*, convict*, recidiv*) paired with one attitudinal term (attitud*, stigma*, punitiv*, “social distance”, contact, familiar*, “public opinion”). For each included record,
cited references were screened against inclusion criteria to ensure all relevant records were identified. Emails inquiring about additional relevant records or data were sent to prominent authors (C. A. Atkin-Plunk, personal communication, January 21, 2016; S. Brown, personal communication, September 2, 2014; K. B. Burchfield, personal communication, August 7, 2014; E. B. Comartin, personal communication, July 8, 2014; J. S. Levenson, personal communication, July 28, 2014; C. Mancini, personal communication, July 5, 2014; D. Pager, personal communication, August 31, 2014; D. V. Perkins & J. A. Raines, personal communication, July 2, 2014; A. R. Piquero, personal communication, July 3, 2014; A. R. Piquero, personal communication, October 8, 2014; G. M. Willis, personal communication, July 9, 2014).

Initial literature searches revealed 56,609 records, with 21,536 from PsycINFO, 18,146 from Web of Science, 9,028 from NCJRS, and 7,899 from ProQuest, many of which were duplicates. An iterative process of reviewing reference lists, searching other databases, and contacting prominent authors identified an additional 76 records. Each record title was evaluated against inclusion criteria (94–96% inter-rater agreement; Kappa = .67–.78 on two samples of 100 records). Duplicates and records that initially did not meet criteria were removed; 1,459 relevant records remained for further evaluation against inclusion criteria. Records that did not meet inclusion criteria were excluded; criterion 2 (at least one outcome variable assessing attitudes toward ex-offenders who have reentered the community) and criterion 3 (reported necessary data to calculate effect size) were the most common reasons for record exclusion. A final total of 19 records remained that met all inclusion criteria (see
Variable Coding

General procedures. For all records meeting inclusion criteria, relevant information regarding the record, sample, and effect size were extracted and coded according to a comprehensive coding manual (available upon request). When exact group sample sizes were not reported or available from record authors, equal group sample sizes were assumed. For example, if the authors reported the total sample size but did not report the number of male and female participants, equal group sample sizes of men and women were assumed.

Outcome variables. Attitudes toward ex-offenders were operationalized to include measures of general attitudes (e.g., attitudes toward ex-offenders), stigma (including measures of prejudice), punitiveness (e.g., support for punitive policies toward ex-offenders and ex-offender rights), and social distance (e.g., willingness to hire or work with an ex-offender) toward ex-offenders in the community, with higher values representing more negative attitudes (continuous when available; positive attitudes = 0, negative attitudes = 1). Responses of “don’t know” or “unsure” were excluded from all analyses, when reported.

Correlate variables. Public, ex-offender, and community characteristics were coded for all records when available. Public correlates included sex (female = 0, male = 1), race/ethnicity (majority = 0, minority = 1), education (continuous when available; less education [< Bachelor’s degree] = 0; more education [≥ Bachelor’s Degree] = 1), religious beliefs (Christian = 0, other religion = 1), political affiliation or ideology (conservative/Republican = 0, other political affiliation/ideology = 1), age (continuous when
available; younger age [< 35] = 0, older age, [≥ 35] = 1), household income (continuous when available; < US$50,000 = 0, ≥ US$50,000 = 1), and interpersonal contact (any type of contact, continuous when available; contact absent = 0, contact present = 1).

Ex-offender correlates included violent offense history (violent = 0, non-violent = 1; as defined by the original record or consistent with the U.S. Department of Justice [2014] definition of violent crimes to include murder, nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault), sexual offense history (sexual offense history = 0, no history of sexual offense = 1; as defined by the original record), felony offense history (felony = 0, misdemeanor = 1; as defined by the original record), race/ethnicity (majority = 0, minority = 1), rehabilitation participation (no = 0, yes = 1), and presence of mental disorder (mental disorder present = 0, mental disorder not present = 1; as defined by the original record).

Community correlates included community size (rural = 0; non-rural = 1; as defined by the original record) and crime prevalence (low crime = 0, high crime = 1; as defined by the original record).

**Moderator variables.** Sexual offense history was assessed for moderation effects for public characteristics when ample data were present and was coded for each record when explicitly stated and available (sexual offense history = 0; no history of sexual offense = 1, as defined by the original record). Five additional characteristics were tested for moderation effects to assess any potential biases when sufficient data were available. Publication status (published in peer-review outlet = 0, other outlet, including dissertations = 1) was assessed to evaluate the potential bias of published records focusing on significant results. Sampling
methodology (random or representative sample = 0; other sample, including convenience samples = 1) was assessed for potential biases, as more confidence may be placed in more well-constructed methodologies. Year produced (dummy coded based on median year; articles produced before 2009 = 0; articles produced during or after 2009 = 1) was tested for moderating effects to determine if the potential changes in attitudes over time had a biasing effect. Country (conducted in the U.S. = 0, conducted in a country other than the U.S. = 1) was assessed for potential biases, as attitudes toward ex-offenders may vary internationally. Lastly, attitude operationalization (social distance = 0, general attitudes = 1, stigma = 2, punitiveness = 3) was tested for moderating effects to determine potential differences in public attitudes based on multiple measurements of public attitudes.

**Inter-Rater Reliability**

All records were coded by the first author. A random sample of 21% of records was selected for coding by an additional rater to establish inter-rater reliability ($n = 4$ records, $k = 17$ unique effect sizes). The additional rater participated in a comprehensive training on all coding procedures, including two practice records. Reliability was calculated for all coding decisions (i.e., each variable coded was characterized as a coding decision) using Cronbach’s alpha or Cohen’s kappa, and percentage agreement.

Excellent levels of inter-rater reliability were produced for effect size coding ($ICC_{3,2} = 1.00$, 100% agreement). Inter-rater reliability ranged from 67% to 100% agreement (Kappa $= .50–1.00$) for all dichotomously coded variables (e.g., publication status, population type). For continuous variables (e.g., sample size), inter-rater reliability ranged 82% to 100%
agreement ($\text{ICC}_{3,2} = .62–1.00$). All disagreements were resolved by consensus. A final review of all effect sizes was conducted by the first author to verify the accuracy of coding.

**Data Analysis**

All analyses were conducted using the Hunter and Schmidt random-effects model of meta-analysis (Schmidt & Hunter, 2015), considered an accurate approach for estimating random-effects and mean reliability estimates of categorical variables (Mason, Allam, & Bannick, 2007). The random-effects model assumes variability among population parameters and utilizes a random variable of effect to calculate weights and estimate mean effect sizes (Hunter & Schmidt, 2000; Schulze, 2004), resulting in more conservative estimates.

Correlation coefficient $r$ was recorded as the effect size measure for all available relationships between public, ex-offender, and community characteristics with attitudes toward ex-offenders. Continuous and categorical data were used to calculate effect sizes, based on the format in which data were available.² Most records (78.9%, $n = 15$) produced more than one unique, independent effect size (e.g., effect size for income and education). When a product-moment correlation coefficient was not reported or available from the record authors, $r$ was calculated according to the appropriate conversion formulas (Lipsey & Wilson, 2001; Wilson, 2001a, 2001b). Means and standard deviations ($k = 34$), $F$-ratios ($k = 3$), or $t$-values ($k = 1$) were used to calculate $r$ for continuous data, and frequencies ($k = 17$) or chi-squares ($k = 1$) were used to calculate $r$ for categorical data. Several records ($n = 4$)

² For example, when data for the age correlate were reported as a continuous variable in a given record, we calculated the effect size for that record using the continuous format; however, if data for the age correlate were reported as a categorical variable in another record, we calculated the effect size for that record using the categorical format.
reported multiple effect sizes and used multiple outcome measures for a single correlate within one sample. For instance, if a record reported the relationships between education and two outcome measures (social distance and attitudes), for the same sample, the two effect sizes were averaged together. When this occurred, effect sizes ($k = 26$) were averaged, producing a mean effect size estimate for the sample ($k = 13$), resulting in 73 independent effect sizes altogether. To reduce risk of bias further, records that reported a non-significant effect without providing specific data to approximate an effect size were coded as $r = 0.00$ ($k = 6$).

To reduce sampling bias in aggregate estimates, individual effect sizes for each correlate were aggregated and weighted by sample size to produce a mean sample-weighted effect size ($\bar{r}_w$) and to calculate the sample-weighted observed variance [$\text{var}(r)$], using the formulas below (Arthur, Bennett, & Huffcutt, 2001; Schmidt & Hunter, 2015).

$$\bar{r}_w = \frac{\Sigma (N_i \times r_i)}{\Sigma N_i}$$
$$\text{var}(r) = \frac{\Sigma (N_i \times (r_i - \bar{r})^2)}{\Sigma N_i}$$

Corrections were applied to individual effect sizes of three artificially dichotomized variables (public education, $k = 6$; public age, $k = 2$; public income, $k = 5$) to correct for associated biases (Schmidt & Hunter, 2015). Corrected and non-corrected meta-analysis results are presented (see Tables 3 and 2, respectively). However, corrected results are discussed in text. An effect size cut-off rule was implemented, such that any weighted effect sizes less than $\bar{r}_w = 0.10$ was considered negligible to interpretation.

Homogeneity of variance was assessed using the $Q$ statistic to detect the extent to which observed variance is due to sampling error or artifact biases. When significant, the $Q$
statistic in combination with a percent of variance accounted for by the sampling error and artifacts \( (PVA_{se}) \) less than 75% suggest the presence of moderation (Arthur et al., 2001; Schmidt & Hunter, 2015). Moderation analyses were conducted when sufficient data were available using a subset approach (Schmidt & Hunter, 2015), by performing separate analyses within each subset (e.g., sexual offense history and no history of sexual offense). Differences in mean effect sizes, reduced variances within subsets, and credibility intervals that do not overlap demonstrated the presence of a moderation effect (Arthur et al., 2001; Schmidt & Hunter, 2015). Meta-regression analyses were conducted to assess moderation effects for attitude operationalization when sufficient data were available. All analyses were conducted in Microsoft Excel 2013, SPSS version 20, and Comprehensive Meta-Analysis version 3, as appropriate.

**Results**

**Record Characteristics**

The 19 records included in the meta-analysis produced 73 unique, independent effect sizes, representing a total sample size of 9,355 participants \((M = 492.37, SD = 546.82, \text{Median} = 318, \text{Range} = 42 – 2,282)\). A majority of included records were published in peer-review journals \((n = 15, 78.9\%)\). Included records were produced between 1996 and 2013 (Median = 2009), with a majority conducted in the United States \((n = 16, 84.2\%)\). Across all records, a majority of the samples included members of the general public \((n = 12, 63.2\%)\), with a handful of student \((n = 3, 15.8\%)\) and employer \((n = 4, 21.1\%)\) samples. Most records used rigorous and representative sampling procedures, such as random digit dialing \((n = 6,\)
31.6%), other types of random sampling \( (n = 3, 15.8\%) \), door-to-door surveys \( (n = 1, 5.3\%) \), and recruitment within local community establishments \( (n = 2, 10.5\%) \). About half of records assessed attitudes toward ex-offenders based on sexual offense history \( (n = 9, 47.4\%) \), one quarter assessed attitudes based on felony offense history \( (n = 5, 26.3\%) \), and few assessed attitudes based on violent offense histories \( (n = 4, 21.1\%) \). See Table 1 for descriptive characteristics of all included records.

Measures of attitudes included a variety of categorical and continuous variables that assessed public attitudes toward ex-offenders. Outcome measures assessing desired social distance were most common \( (n = 11, 57.9\%) \), followed by measures of negative attitudes \( (n = 5, 26.3\%) \) and punitiveness \( (n = 5, 26.3\%) \). Though the specific operational definitions varied, all outcome variables assessed public attitudes toward ex-offenders in the community.

**Correlates of Public Attitudes**

**Public characteristics.** Small weighted mean correlations were found between public characteristics and attitudes toward ex-offenders, with values ranging from 0.01 for age to -0.18 for interpersonal contact (see Tables 2 and 3). Two correlates associated with public attitudes met the established effect size threshold: political affiliation/ideology and interpersonal contact. People with politically conservative ideologies \( (\bar{r}_w = -0.12, 95\% CI = -0.18, -0.04) \) and those who reported no previous contact with a current or ex-offender \( (\bar{r}_w = -0.18, 95\% CI = -0.22, -0.13) \) reported more negative attitudes toward ex-offenders compared to members of the public with non-conservative political beliefs and those with reported

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3 Percentages may exceed 100% because offense histories are not mutually exclusive.
4 Percentages may exceed 100% due to the presence of more than one outcome measure in some records.
contact (including personal experience with the criminal justice system). Religious affiliation was not examined because effect size data were only available for one record that met inclusion criteria.

**Ex-offender characteristics.** Small weighted mean correlations were found between ex-offender characteristics and public attitudes toward ex-offenders. As hypothesized, the public reported more negative attitudes toward ex-offenders with histories of sexual offending compared to ex-offenders with no history of sexual offending ($\bar{r}_w = -0.19$, 95% CI = -0.26, -0.12). However, the effect size for public attitudes toward ex-offenders with and without histories of violent offenses was small and negligible to interpretation. Felony offense history, ex-offender race/ethnicity, rehabilitation participation, and presence of a mental disorder were not examined because effect size data were only available for one record that met inclusion criteria within each category (see Table 2).

**Community characteristics.** A small weighted mean correlation was found between community size and public attitudes toward ex-offenders. Members of the public who live in smaller, rural communities compared to those living in larger, non-rural communities reported more negative attitudes toward ex-offenders ($\bar{r}_w = -0.04$, 95% CI = -0.08, -0.00), but this fell below the established benchmark (see Table 2). Effect size data for community crime prevalence was available for only one record, and, therefore, could not be analyzed as a correlate of public attitudes.

**Sexual Offense History as a Moderator**

Analyses revealed a significant amount of variability in all tested public and ex-
offender correlates (all $Q$s significant at $p < 0.05$, see Tables 2 and 3), suggesting the presence of moderating variables. Percent of variance accounted for by the standard error and artifacts ($\text{PVA}_{se}$) was less than the 75% benchmark (Arthur et al., 2001; Schmidt & Hunter, 2015) for all public and ex-offender correlates (see Tables 2 and 3), providing additional support for the presence of moderators. Among the community correlates, the homogeneity of variance test for community size was not significant ($p > 0.05$), but the standard error accounted for over half of the variance ($\text{PVA}_{se} = 54.95\%$), again suggesting the presence of moderating variables (see Table 2).

When tested as a moderator, sexual offense history reduced the amount of variability present among some correlates (see Tables 2 and 3). Across moderation analyses, effect sizes were larger for attitudes toward ex-offenders without sexual offense histories compared to those with sexual offense histories, but the differences were not significant. Indeed, most subset correlates continued to demonstrate significant homogeneity values and some credibility intervals contained zero. Sufficient data were not available to assess sexual offense history as a moderator for religious affiliation, political affiliation/ideology, age, income, and interpersonal contact.

**Potentially Biasing Records**

Though publication status, sampling methodology, and country did not emerge as statistically significant moderators, effect sizes tended to be smaller for records that were published in peer-review outlets, utilized representative sampling methods, and were conducted outside of the U.S. Similarly, public attitudes toward ex-offenders did not differ
significantly between operationalizations of social distance, punitiveness, and general attitudes. (Full results not reported, but available upon request.) In contrast, analyses of potential biases associated with year produced revealed significant moderation for public age and income correlates, with reduced variance in subsets and non-overlapping credibility intervals (see Table 4). Before 2009, older respondents reported more negative attitudes toward ex-offenders compared to younger respondents ($\bar{\rho}_{wc} = 0.15$, 95% CI = 0.05, 0.24). During and after 2009, the association is negligible ($\bar{\rho}_{wc} = -0.01$, 95% CI = -0.06, 0.03). Additionally, before 2009, members of the public with larger household incomes reported more negative attitudes toward ex-offenders than did those with smaller household incomes ($\bar{\rho}_{wc} = 0.16$, 95% CI = 0.03, 0.29). During and after 2009, the association is negligible ($\bar{\rho}_{wc} = 0.03$, 95% CI = 0.00, 0.06).

Discussion

Negative public attitudes toward ex-offenders are a known barrier to reentry and successful community reintegration (e.g., Wakefield & Uggen, 2010). Research for more than 20 years has sought to understand factors associated with public attitudes toward ex-offenders, in efforts to improve reentry. However, findings regarding associations of public, ex-offender, and community characteristics with public attitudes have been inconsistent across studies. This meta-analysis presents a comprehensive assessment of the correlates of public attitudes toward ex-offenders and potential moderating effects of sexual offense history, publication status, sampling methodology, year produced, country, and attitude operationalization.
Overall, we found negligible effect sizes across frequently studied correlates of public attitudes toward ex-offenders, with the exception of interpersonal contact, political affiliation/ideology, and sexual offense history. Members of the public who report having any type of contact with a current offender or ex-offender also report less negative attitudes toward ex-offenders. This finding suggests that interpersonal contact is a significant correlate of public attitudes, despite potential differences in type (i.e., face-to-face, vicarious) or quality (i.e., positive, negative) of the contact. Moreover, those who self-identify as politically conservative or Republican report more negative attitudes toward ex-offenders. Findings are consistent with research examining attitudes toward other populations, such as death-row inmates and juvenile offenders, which show that people with more conservative political ideologies are more likely to support punitive policies that may be attributed to dispositional attributions (e.g., Jacobs & Carmichael, 2002; Grasmick & McGill, 1994). Often, dispositional attributions are based on the assumption that all individuals, including ex-offenders, are responsible for their actions and, therefore, the consequences of those actions (Jacobs & Carmichael, 2002; Grasmick & McGill, 1994).

Among the correlates of public attitudes examined herein, sexual offense history produced the largest effect size across records. This finding is consistent with studies of attitudes towards sex offenders held by other groups, including criminal justice professionals, who report more negative attitudes toward sex offenders compared to ex-offenders with no history of sexual offending (see Weekes, Pelletier, & Beaudette, 1995). Moderation analyses revealed that effect sizes tended to be larger for attitudes toward ex-offenders without
histories of sexual offenses, compared to those with sexual offense histories. That is, we observed greater effects of public characteristics on attitudes toward ex-offenders with no history of sexual offending compared to sex offenders. Women compared to men, for instance, reported more negative attitudes toward ex-offenders with no history of sexual offending, whereas differences in attitudes between men and women toward ex-offenders with sexual offense histories were negligible. Subgroup analyses were not significant, but limited by the small number of records \( n = 3, 15.8\% \) explicitly assessing attitudes toward ex-offenders with no history of sexual offending. Nonetheless, findings suggest a stronger consensus of negative attitudes toward sex offenders, while attitudes towards ex-offenders with no history of sexual offending appear to be more variable. Additional analyses of offense history failed to identify differences between public attitudes toward ex-offenders with a history of violent offenses compared to those without a history of violent offenses.

Our investigation of potentially biasing records revealed an additional moderator: year produced. Before 2009, older people and those with larger household incomes reported more negative attitudes toward ex-offenders compared to younger people and those with smaller household incomes. During and after 2009, however, the associations of age and income with attitudes toward ex-offenders became negligible. In other words, regardless of age and income, members of the public began reporting more similar attitudes toward ex-offenders—although not necessarily more positive—after 2009. These findings suggest that public attitudes toward ex-offenders change over time.

Reasons for a shift in public attitudes may be explained, in part, by changes in local
or federal policies related to ex-offender reentry. The Second Chance Act of 2007 (42 U.S.C. § 17501) is an example of a large scale federal policy which aimed to improve reentry, reduce recidivism, and increase public safety. The Second Chance Act also contributed to the development of additional policy and funding mechanisms focused on improving ex-offender reentry. One such policy is the Federal Prisoner Reentry Initiative of 2009 (42 U.S.C. § 17541) which established an inter-agency strategy for preparing ex-offenders for successful reentry, including an emphasis on skill development, medical care, and employment, with priority given to high risk offenders. Policies such as the Second Chance Act and the Federal Prisoner Reentry Initiative may influence public opinion (Gideon & Loveland, 2011) and have the potential to improve public attitudes toward ex-offenders, and, ultimately, reduce barriers to successful community reintegration. That said, given the present analysis identified that public attitudes changed over time but were not necessarily more positive, there is a need for continued research on the ways in which such policy changes may have a positive influence on public opinion and reentry outcomes. Furthermore, these findings reveal that community context, such as local and federal policies, may be associated with public attitudes. As identified in this study, limited research has been conducted on community-level correlates. Future research on the effects of community context on public attitudes toward ex-offenders and reentry is warranted.

Given the generally small associations between public characteristics and public attitudes, efforts to improve public attitudes toward ex-offenders should not necessarily target or tailor material to certain sociodemographic groups. Rather, findings suggest that
interventions may be more effective if they: 1) seek to reduce stigma associated with specific criminal histories, and 2) incorporate interpersonal contact. First, attitudes toward ex-offenders vary across different criminal histories, particularly across sexual offense but not violent offense histories, and therefore, strategies for reducing stigma may require variation or modification. A public health approach that emphasizes prevention is an example of one suggested intervention strategy (Brown, 2009; Laws, 2000). Under this model, prevention steps may include media campaigns, public education, training for professionals, or increased access to community-based resources, each of which could be tailored to address specific offenses, such as sexual offenses or drug possession offenses. Many organizations are using these types of multi-faceted targeted interventions, including advocacy initiatives, training, and media campaigns to facilitate successful reentry, increase public awareness of issues surrounding reintegration, and improve public perceptions of ex-offenders (e.g., Just Leadership USA, 2016; Legal Services for Prisoners with Children, 2015). Education-based interventions also may be tailored to preliminarily address less stigmatized ex-offender groups (i.e., those without a history of sexual offense) or to target stigma toward specific offenses (e.g., Kleban & Jeglic, 2012). For example, materials could be developed to educate potential employers about recidivism rates, the various pathways to crime, and the diversity of behaviors classified within a specific crime category.

Second, having interpersonal contact with an ex-offender is associated with more positive attitudes toward ex-offenders. Therefore, interventions which incorporate elements of contact may be more effective; however, the causal direction is unclear. Research with
other stigmatized populations, such as adults with mental illnesses, suggests that contact-based interventions can improve attitudes, although the success of these anti-stigma interventions may depend upon characteristics of the contact (Clement et al., 2012; Corrigan, Morris, Michaels, Rafacz, & Rüsch, 2012). In the same way, interventions such as the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program for college students and prisoners (Conti, Morrison & Pantaleo, 2013; Pompa, 2013) have been designed to facilitate interpersonal contact with offenders while incarcerated. To our knowledge however, such contact-based interventions have not been applied to reduce stigma toward ex-offenders living in the community specifically. Thus, future research and intervention addressing the influence of interpersonal contact on attitudes toward ex-offenders should consider the type (e.g., face-to-face, vicarious) and quality (e.g., positive, negative) of contact.

Limitations

Findings should be considered within the context of limitations of both the design of our meta-analysis and the included records. Even though we employed systematic efforts to find all available research through rigorous search procedures, some relevant records may not have been identified. Indeed, we identified a relatively small number of records overall ($n = 19$). Consequently, our meta-analytic review revealed a dearth of research assessing public correlates of attitudes toward ex-offenders. So few empirical studies have been conducted on ex-offender (felony criminal history, race/ethnicity, rehabilitation participation, age, mental illness) and community characteristics (crime prevalence), that many of these correlates could not be assessed in our meta-analysis due to insufficient data. The small number of
studies assessing offense history, in particular, prevented us from assessing other offense histories (e.g., violent offense history, felony offense history) as moderators of public attitudes. Nonetheless, this small number of records did have sufficient power, as post-hoc power analyses revealed that all weighted effect sizes had ample sample sizes to detect small significant effects at $\alpha = 0.01$ (power = 0.80; Cohen, 1992). Lastly, we included records regardless of methodological rigor or quality to allow for the most comprehensive analysis; even so, many records used random sampling procedures, and potential biases were controlled for through weighted correlations, random-effects, and artifact correction techniques.

**Conclusions and Future Directions**

This study marks the first meta-analysis of the correlates and moderators of public attitudes toward ex-offenders. Findings bring to light the limited nature of the research on correlates of public attitudes toward ex-offenders, and particularly the lack of research investigating public attitudes toward ex-offenders without a sexual offense history. More generally, there has been a focus on public characteristics to the neglect of ex-offender and community correlates in the current empirical literature. Thus, future research should explore the ways in which histories of violent and non-violent offenses, as well as felony offenses, rehabilitation participation, and mental illnesses are associated with public attitudes. Findings also revealed small associations between those correlates that have been studied and public attitudes toward ex-offenders. Therefore, we should begin asking what else there is to learn about public attitudes toward ex-offenders by exploring other correlates, such as implicit
beliefs and biases, the influence of family members and peers, and changes in local legislation on public attitudes. Moreover, there is a need to translate these findings into practice through development, implementation, and evaluation of anti-stigma interventions, working toward improvement of ex-offender community reentry.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Record</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>k</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Sampling Method</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albright &amp; Denq</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Published</td>
<td>Employers</td>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>Social distance measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atkin &amp; Armstrong</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Published</td>
<td>Employers</td>
<td>Random</td>
<td>Social distance measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>Published</td>
<td>General public</td>
<td>Random</td>
<td>Social distance measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burchfield</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Published</td>
<td>General public</td>
<td>Door-to-door</td>
<td>Attitudinal measure; Social distance measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comartin et al.</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>703</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Published</td>
<td>General public</td>
<td>RDD</td>
<td>Punitiveness measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawson Edwards</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Not-published</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>Punitiveness measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gibson et al.</td>
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<td>461</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Not-published</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>Social distance measure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hirsfield &amp; Piquero</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2,282</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Published</td>
<td>General public</td>
<td>RDD</td>
<td>Attitudinal measure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Levenson et al.</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Published</td>
<td>General public</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Social distance measure</td>
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<td>Locke</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Not-published</td>
<td>General public</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Social distance measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mancini et al.</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1,380</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Published</td>
<td>General public</td>
<td>RDD</td>
<td>Punitiveness measure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manza et al.</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Published</td>
<td>General public</td>
<td>RDD</td>
<td>Punitiveness measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martinez</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Not-published</td>
<td>Employers</td>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>Social distance measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pager &amp; Quillian</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Published</td>
<td>Employers</td>
<td>Random</td>
<td>Social distance measure</td>
</tr>
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<td>Park</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Not-published</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>Attitudinal measure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perkins et al.</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Published</td>
<td>General public</td>
<td>RDD</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piquero et al.</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Published</td>
<td>General public</td>
<td>RDD</td>
<td>Punitiveness measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rogers et al.</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>Published</td>
<td>General public</td>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>Attitudinal measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willis et al.</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>Published</td>
<td>General public</td>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>Attitudinal measure; Social distance measure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Reported sample size (N) refers to total sample size for the record; actual sample size for individual effect sizes (k) may vary. RDD= Random digit dialing.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlates</th>
<th>k</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>$r_w$ (σp)</th>
<th>PVA (%)</th>
<th>95% CIw</th>
<th>80% Cred.</th>
<th>Q(k-1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Characteristic</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex, (Female=0)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6,949</td>
<td>-0.04 (0.07)</td>
<td>28.47</td>
<td>-0.09, 0.02</td>
<td>-0.13, 0.05</td>
<td>45.75***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Offender</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3,109</td>
<td>-0.08 (0.03)</td>
<td>75.11</td>
<td>-0.12, -0.04</td>
<td>-0.11, -0.04</td>
<td>9.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sex Offender</td>
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<td>711</td>
<td>-0.13 (0.14)</td>
<td>20.03</td>
<td>-0.23, -0.03</td>
<td>-0.27, 0.00</td>
<td>10.02**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity, (Majority=0)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6,252</td>
<td>-0.09 (0.05)</td>
<td>38.55</td>
<td>-0.13, -0.04</td>
<td>-0.15, -0.02</td>
<td>28.59***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Offender</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2,437</td>
<td>-0.04 (0.06)</td>
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<td>-0.10, 0.02</td>
<td>-0.12, 0.04</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>-0.09, 0.02</td>
<td>-0.12, 0.05</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sex Offender</td>
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<td>2,604</td>
<td>-0.08 (0.04)</td>
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<td>-0.13, -0.03</td>
<td>-0.13, -0.03</td>
<td>9.49*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-Sex Offender</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>698</td>
<td>-0.10 (0.07)</td>
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<td>-0.19, -0.01</td>
<td>-0.19, -0.01</td>
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<td>Religious Affiliation, (Christian=0)</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Affiliation/Ideology, (Conservative=0)</td>
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<td>4,792</td>
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<td>27.88</td>
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<td>-0.20, -0.05</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sex Offender</td>
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<td>532</td>
<td>-0.05 (0.01)</td>
<td>95.40</td>
<td>-0.14, 0.04</td>
<td>-0.07, -0.03</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5,099</td>
<td>0.01 (0.07)</td>
<td>26.95</td>
<td>-0.05, 0.06</td>
<td>-0.08, 0.09</td>
<td>33.46***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Offender</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2,214</td>
<td>0.00 (0.08)</td>
<td>24.33</td>
<td>-0.07, 0.07</td>
<td>-0.11, 0.11</td>
<td>20.60***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sex Offender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4,690</td>
<td>0.03 (0.04)</td>
<td>54.93</td>
<td>-0.00, 0.07</td>
<td>-0.01, 0.08</td>
<td>12.76*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Offender</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,885</td>
<td>-0.01 (a)</td>
<td>607.53</td>
<td>-0.05, 0.02</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sex Offender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact, (No Contact=0)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3,659</td>
<td>-0.18 (0.05)</td>
<td>31.45</td>
<td>-0.22, -0.13</td>
<td>-0.24, -0.12</td>
<td>12.73**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Offender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sex Offender</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ex-offender Characteristic</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offense History, (Violent=0)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,596</td>
<td>0.03 (0.13)</td>
<td>12.82</td>
<td>-0.07, 0.13</td>
<td>-0.14, 0.20</td>
<td>31.29***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Offense History, (Sexual=0)</td>
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<td>-0.28, 0.10</td>
<td>9.16**</td>
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<td>Offense History, (Felony=0)</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity, (Majority=0)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation Participant, (No=0)</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
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<td>Mental Disorder, (Yes=0)</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Community Characteristic</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Size, (Small/Rural=0)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3,120</td>
<td>-0.04 (0.03)</td>
<td>54.95</td>
<td>-0.08, -0.00</td>
<td>-0.08, -0.01</td>
<td>5.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime Prevalence, (Low=0)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** k = number of effect sizes; n = total number of participants; $r_w$ = weighted mean effect size; σp = standard deviation of sampling error; PVA = proportion of variance accounted for by sampling error and attenuating artifacts; 95% CIw = confidence interval of weighted mean effect size; 80% Cred = credibility interval of corrected standard deviation; $Q_{(k-1)}$ = chi-square homogeneity test; * = negative residual variance resulted in inability to calculate standard deviation of sampling error; **Bold** text indicates effect sizes that met the established weighted effect size cut-off ($r_w \geq 0.10$). *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001
Table 3. **Corrected Weighted Mean Effect Sizes of Negative Attitudes toward Ex-Offenders**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corrected Public Characteristic Correlates</th>
<th>$k$</th>
<th>$n_c$</th>
<th>$\bar{r}<em>{wc}$ ($\sigma</em>{pc}$)</th>
<th>PVA$_c$ (%)</th>
<th>95% CI$_{wc}$</th>
<th>80% Cred.$_c$</th>
<th>$Q_{(k-1)c}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4,534</td>
<td>-0.03 (0.08)</td>
<td>23.26</td>
<td>-0.09, 0.03</td>
<td>-0.13, 0.06</td>
<td>34.46***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Offender</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1,698</td>
<td>-0.09 (0.06)</td>
<td>48.50</td>
<td>-0.15, -0.03</td>
<td>-0.17, -0.02</td>
<td>10.23*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sex Offender</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>-0.10 (0.10)</td>
<td>27.98</td>
<td>-0.21, 0.00</td>
<td>-0.22, 0.02</td>
<td>7.17**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4,311</td>
<td>0.01 (0.08)</td>
<td>26.98</td>
<td>-0.05, 0.07</td>
<td>-0.09, 0.10</td>
<td>33.43***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Offender</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1,426</td>
<td>0.00 (0.11)</td>
<td>24.36</td>
<td>-0.09, 0.09</td>
<td>-0.13, 0.13</td>
<td>20.60***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sex Offender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4,086</td>
<td>0.04 (0.04)</td>
<td>55.72</td>
<td>-0.00, 0.08</td>
<td>-0.01, 0.08</td>
<td>12.59*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Offender</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,368</td>
<td>-0.01 (a)</td>
<td>630.73</td>
<td>-0.06, 0.03</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Sex Offender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* All values and analyses corrected for artificially dichotomized independent variable. $k =$ number of effect sizes; $n_c =$ corrected total number of participants; $\bar{r}_{wc}$ = corrected weighted mean effect size; $\sigma_{pc}$ = corrected standard deviation of sampling error; PVA$_c$ = corrected proportion of variance accounted for by sampling error and attenuating artifacts; 95% CI$_{wc}$ = corrected confidence interval of weighted mean effect size; 80% Cred.$_c$ = corrected credibility interval of corrected standard deviation; $Q_{(k-1)c}$ = corrected chi-square homogeneity test; a = negative residual variance resulted in inability to calculate standard deviation of sampling error and credibility interval; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$
Table 4. *Moderation Analyses for Potentially Biassing Records: Year Produced*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Characteristic</th>
<th>$k$</th>
<th>$n$</th>
<th>$\bar{w}$ (σ)</th>
<th>PVA (%)</th>
<th>95% CIw</th>
<th>80% Cred.</th>
<th>$Q_{k-1}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex, (Female=0)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6,949</td>
<td>-0.04 (0.07)</td>
<td>28.47</td>
<td>-0.09, 0.02</td>
<td>-0.13, 0.05</td>
<td>45.75***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>-0.01 ( * )</td>
<td>409.02</td>
<td>-0.01, 0.09</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6,488</td>
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<td>24.36</td>
<td>-0.10, 0.02</td>
<td>-0.13, 0.05</td>
<td>45.23***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity, (Majority=0)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6,252</td>
<td>-0.09 (0.05)</td>
<td>38.55</td>
<td>-0.13, -0.04</td>
<td>-0.15, -0.02</td>
<td>28.59***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>631</td>
<td>-0.11 ( * )</td>
<td>440.48</td>
<td>-0.18, -0.05</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5,621</td>
<td>-0.08 (0.06)</td>
<td>29.36</td>
<td>-0.13, -0.03</td>
<td>-0.16, -0.01</td>
<td>27.28***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education†</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4,534</td>
<td>-0.03 (0.08)</td>
<td>23.26</td>
<td>-0.09, 0.03</td>
<td>-0.13, 0.06</td>
<td>34.46***</td>
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<td></td>
<td>≥ 2009</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4,345</td>
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<td>20.60</td>
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<td>4,792</td>
<td>-0.12 (0.06)</td>
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<td>-0.20, -0.05</td>
<td>21.55***</td>
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<td>≥ 2009</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4,574</td>
<td>-0.12 (0.04)</td>
<td>36.34</td>
<td>-0.16, -0.07</td>
<td>-0.17, -0.06</td>
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<td>0.01 (0.08)</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>0.15 (0.08)</td>
<td>46.48</td>
<td>0.05, 0.24</td>
<td>0.05, 0.24</td>
<td>6.49*</td>
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<tr>
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<td>6</td>
<td>3,757</td>
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<td>39.98</td>
<td>-0.06, 0.03</td>
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<tr>
<td>Income†</td>
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<td>0.04 (0.04)</td>
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<td>-0.01, 0.08</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>0.16 (0.07)</td>
<td>63.62</td>
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<td>-0.18 (0.05)</td>
<td>31.45</td>
<td>-0.22, -0.13</td>
<td>-0.24, -0.12</td>
<td>12.73**</td>
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<td>3,659</td>
<td>-0.18 (0.05)</td>
<td>31.45</td>
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<td>Violent, (Violent=0)</td>
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<td>1,596</td>
<td>0.03 (0.13)</td>
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<td>Sexual, (Sexual=0)</td>
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<td>1,343</td>
<td>-0.19 (0.07)</td>
<td>21.87</td>
<td>-0.26, -0.12</td>
<td>-0.28, 0.10</td>
<td>9.16**</td>
</tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1,343</td>
<td>-0.19 (0.07)</td>
<td>21.87</td>
<td>-0.26, -0.12</td>
<td>-0.28, -0.10</td>
<td>9.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Characteristic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Size, (Small/Rural=0)</td>
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<td>3,120</td>
<td>-0.04 (0.03)</td>
<td>54.95</td>
<td>-0.08, -0.00</td>
<td>-0.08, -0.01</td>
<td>5.47</td>
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<td></td>
<td>≥ 2009</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3,120</td>
<td>-0.04 (0.03)</td>
<td>54.95</td>
<td>-0.08, -0.00</td>
<td>-0.08, -0.01</td>
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</table>

*Note. $k$ = number of effect sizes; $n$ = total number of participants; $\bar{w}$ = weighted mean effect size; $σ_w$ = standard deviation of sampling error; PVA = proportion of variance accounted for by sampling error and attenuating artifacts; 95% CIw = confidence interval of weighted mean effect size; 80% Cred = credibility interval of corrected standard deviation; $Q_{k-1}$ = chi-square homogeneity test; * = negative residual variance resulted in inability to calculate standard deviation of sampling error; Values and analyses corrected for artificially dichotomized independent variable; Bold text indicates effect sizes that met the established weighted effect size cut-off ($\bar{w} ≥ 0.10$) or significant moderation effects. *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001
Figure 1. Results of Systematic Literature Search
Figure 2. Number of Records Assessing Public Attitudes toward Ex-offenders over Time
CHAPTER 4

An Integrative Theoretical Model of Public Support for Ex-offender Reentry

Prior research suggests that public and ex-offender characteristics are associated with attitudes toward ex-offenders and support for their reentry; however, research examining reasons for these associations is limited. Research also is limited on the association between attitudes toward ex-offenders generally, and support for their reentry, specifically. Implicit theory offers a new approach to explaining public attitudes through beliefs in the fixed or malleable nature of people (i.e., mindsets). We developed and tested an integrative model applying implicit theory to investigate mechanisms through which beliefs explain support for reentry. Results showed that growth mindsets predicted more positive attitudes toward ex-offenders, which, in turn, predicted greater support for reentry. Belief in a just world, prior contact with an ex-offender, and political orientation were among the covariates of reentry support. Beyond supporting the application of implicit theory in this context, findings suggest that anti-stigma interventions should target growth mindsets to promote community reintegration.

International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, revise & resubmit.
Introduction

With one of the highest incarceration rates in the world, one out of every 37 American adult residents is under correctional system supervision annually (Kaeble & Glaze, 2016). Every year over half a million people are released from state and federal prisons in the United States (Carson, 2015), yet two-thirds are re-arrested and half return to prison within three years of release (Durose, Cooper, & Snyder, 2014). Thus, there is an increasing national emphasis on facilitating rehabilitation and reducing barriers associated with community reintegration (Office of the Press Secretary, 2015). Although ex-offenders face numerous barriers during reentry, negative public attitudes, stigma, and discrimination are among the most common. Members of the public consistently report negative attitudes toward ex-offenders (Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010; Manza, Brooks, & Uggen, 2004). These attitudes, stigma, and discriminatory behaviors, in turn, detrimentally influence other domains critical to successful community reintegration (e.g., Brooks, Visher, & Naser, 2006; Wakefield & Uggen, 2010; Pager, 2003). To illustrate, people who have been incarcerated receive differential treatment due to their classification as an ex-offender, which may adversely impact their employment, health care, voting rights, and housing (Pager & Quillian, 2005; Pager, 2003; Wakefield & Uggen, 2010).

However, there has been limited examination of the ways these stigmatizing attitudes and differential treatment of ex-offenders influence public support for the community reintegration process. To that end, we developed and tested a model of support for reentry, drawing from the prior research and theoretical perspectives reviewed below. Specifically,
we evaluated a process model describing the pathway between beliefs about the degree to which personal attributes are malleable, public attitudes toward ex-offenders, and support for ex-offender reentry.

**Attitudes toward Ex-offenders and Reentry**

Many studies have investigated factors associated with attitudes toward prisoners (e.g., Kjelsberg, Skoglund, & Rustad, 2007), ex-offenders (e.g., Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010; Rogers & Ferguson, 2011), and their reentry into the community (e.g., Hardcastle, Bartholomew, & Graffam, 2011; Leverentz, 2011). Together, findings of this research suggest that characteristics of both the public and ex-offenders are associated with attitudes toward ex-offenders. To demonstrate, findings of a recent meta-analysis showed that people with conservative political orientations and those who have not had interpersonal contact with an ex-offender express more negative attitudes toward ex-offenders, compared to those with liberal political orientations and those with prior contact (Rade, Desmarais, & Mitchell, 2016). The extant research also suggests that attitudes toward ex-offenders may vary based on public race, sex, religious beliefs and affiliations, income, age, and education. Non-White compared to White participants (e.g., Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010; Leverentz, 2011) and men compared to women (e.g., Leverentz, 2011; Willis, Malinen, & Johnston, 2013; but see Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010) tend to report more positive attitudes toward ex-offenders. Religious beliefs such as forgiveness are typically associated with positive attitudes toward ex-offenders, whereas self-reported affiliation with Christianity is typically associated with less favorable attitudes toward ex-offenders and reentry compared to other religious
affiliations (Park, 2010). Prior research also suggests that those with lower incomes, of a younger age, and with less education tend to report more positive attitudes toward ex-offenders, though findings are mixed (e.g., Comartin, Kernsmith, & Kernsmith, 2009; Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010; Piquero et al., 2011; Willis et al., 2013). Additionally, people tend to report more negative attitudes toward ex-offenders with a history of sexual offense compared to those without a history of sexual offense (Rade et al., 2016). Regarding support for reentry in particular, the extant literature suggests that people generally express support for reentry services (Garland, Wodahl, & Schuhmann, 2013; Krisberg & Marchionna, 2006), but this support may be limited to ex-offenders with certain criminal histories (Garland et al., 2013).

Though conceptually similar, these two attitudinal measures (attitudes toward ex-offenders and support for reentry) nonetheless represent distinct constructs. The former is a measure of general attitudes toward ex-offenders, and may include perception of ex-offender character and willingness to associate with someone who has been incarcerated. By comparison, the latter assesses attitudes toward reentry practices and policies specifically, which may include dimensions of support for transitional programming and housing (e.g., Garland, Wodahl, & Cota, 2016). In contrast with the vast literature on attitudes toward ex-offenders, research examining factors associated with reentry support and the association between attitudes toward ex-offenders and support for their reentry, is limited.
**Extant Theoretical Perspectives**

Interpersonal contact theory has been used to explain stigma toward many marginalized groups, including ex-offenders (Corrigan, Morris, Michaels, Rafacz, & Rüscher, 2012; Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010; Pettigrew & Troop, 2006). This theory posits a negative relationship between interpersonal contact and prejudice, such that an increase in contact with outgroup members predicts a decrease in prejudice and stigmatizing attitudes (Allport, 1954). Accordingly, contact theory suggests that multiple mediating mechanisms (e.g., behavior, affect, cognition; Dovidio, Gaertner, & Kawakami, 2003) and contact-based interventions (e.g., Corrigan et al., 2012) can reduce public stigma and prejudice. However, contact theory is limited in several ways. For instance, contact theory assumes that positive contact with an outgroup member will extend to the whole outgroup, although often times this generalization fails when an outgroup member is considered an exception (Brewer, 2010). Moreover, interpersonal contact theory presents limited utility for social change, in part because the criteria recommended for optimal contact are rare in everyday contacts and present practical challenges to intervention development and implementation (Dixon, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2005; but see Pettigrew & Troop, 2006). Establishing an optimal contact-based intervention with ex-offenders who have successfully reentered the community would be resource-intensive and impractical in many circumstances. And although indirect contacts provide potentially more feasible formats, evidence is mixed regarding the success of these formats compared to face-to-face contact (Clement et al., 2012; Corrigan et al., 2012; Reinke, Corrigan, Leonhard, Lundin, & Kubiak, 2004). For these reasons, contact
theory does not provide an optimal framework for understanding and reducing stigmatizing attitudes toward ex-offenders and increasing support for their reentry.

Belief in a just world theory also has been used to explain individual difference in public attitudes (Furnham, 2003; Hafer & Bègue, 2005) and, as such, may help us understand attitudes toward ex-offenders and inform strategies to increase support for their reentry. Generally speaking, strong belief in a just world is associated with endorsing the notion that people get what they deserve and deserve what they get. Consequently, strong belief in a just world explains negative attitudes toward not only victims, but also frequently discriminated against groups, including the elderly, poor, and people with serious mental illnesses (Bègue & Bastounis, 2003; Bizer, Hart, & Jekogian, 2012; Furnham, 2003; Hafer & Bègue, 2005; Halabi, Statman, & Dovidio, 2015). Moreover, belief in a just world is predictive of support for harsher and more punitive punishments (Bègue & Bastounis, 2003; Mohr & Luscri, 1995). Thus, people with a strong belief in a just world may be more likely to report negative attitudes toward ex-offenders and less likely to support rehabilitation and reentry policies, whereas those with less belief in a just world may be more likely to support ex-offender reentry.

Taken together, these two theoretical perspectives help us to understand factors contributing to public attitudes toward ex-offenders and supportive attitudes toward reentry. However, they fail to explain the underlying mechanisms driving associations between individual and ex-offender characteristics, attitudes toward ex-offenders, and support for ex-offender reentry and thus, are limited in their ability to identify intervention targets. We
propose that interpersonal contact and belief in a just world may better serve as covariates of public attitudes and support for reentry, rather than explanatory mechanisms. Therefore, this study sought to develop and test an integrative model to explain attitudes toward ex-offenders that draws from the longstanding social psychology literature on implicit theories and person perception (Chiu, Dweck, Tong, & Fu, 1997).

**Implicit Theory**

According to an implicit theory approach, people hold beliefs about the degree to which personal attributes are malleable. These beliefs, or mindsets, may be classified into two categories: fixed mindsets (entity theories) or growth mindsets (incremental theories) (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). People with a growth mindset tend to believe in the malleable and dynamic nature of human attributes, which can change over time. Comparatively, those with a fixed mindset believe that human attributes are relatively static. As such, those with growth mindsets may be described as process-focused, considering psychological, situational, and contextual explanations for behaviors; whereas people with fixed mindsets are more trait-focused, relying on personality and dispositional judgments about people and their behaviors (Chiu et al., 1997; Molden, Plaks, & Dweck, 2006). For example, results of three studies showed that when under cognitive load (conditions leading to depleted mental resources), people with fixed mindsets rely more on dispositional reasoning (e.g., personality traits) to explain a fictitious person’s anxiety, whereas those with growth mindsets rely more on situational explanations (e.g., stressful situation; Molden et al., 2006). Accordingly, those holding fixed, relative to growth, mindsets also are more likely to endorse stereotypes and
attribute stereotyped traits to innate sources (Levy, Stroessner, & Dweck, 1998; Rydell, Hugenberg, Ray, & Mackie, 2007).

An implicit theory approach provides an explanation for the mechanisms underlying individual attitudes and offers a target for interventions with the potential to create lasting attitude change (e.g., Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007; Yeager et al., 2014). Despite the potential to explain public attitudes toward ex-offender and their reentry, implicit theory has yet to be applied to this context. However, three distinct areas of research on related attitudes and beliefs support such an application of implicit theory. First, research suggests that attributions of behavior are associated with attitudes toward punishment and rehabilitation. Dispositional attributions of criminal behaviors are associated with punitiveness (Maruna & King, 2009), including punitive attitudes toward juvenile offenders (Grasmick & McGill, 1994), support for capital punishment (Cochran, Boots, & Heide, 2003), and deterrence as the goal of punishment (Templeton & Hartnagel, 2012). In comparison, situational attributions are associated with support for rehabilitation (Templeton & Hartnagel, 2012). Individuals with growth mindsets, relative to fixed mindsets, are more inclined to consider the situation and less likely to focus on dispositional information (Chiu et al., 1997; Gervey, Chiu, Hong, & Dweck, 1999; Molden et al., 2006). Second, belief in the redeemability of human nature—and specifically, belief that offenders are able to change for the better—is associated with reduced likelihood to support punitive policies and sentencing (Maruna & King, 2009). Third, mindset theory can be used to understand punitiveness (Tam, Shu, Ng, & Tong, 2013), punishment for children (Chiu et al., 1997), and jury decisions
We propose that the current extension of mindset research may provide a more complete explanation of public attitudes toward ex-offenders and support for their reentry, addressing the limitations of prior theoretical approaches applied in this context.

**Present Study**

In the present study, we developed and tested a process model to explain public support for ex-offender reentry, drawing on an implicit theory perspective and past work reviewed above. Specifically, we suggest that people with a growth mindset may be more likely to make situational attributions, believing that ex-offenders can change through successful rehabilitation programming and reintegrate back into the community, consistent with previous research regarding public attitudes and rehabilitation support (Maruna & King, 2009; Templeton & Hartnagel, 2012). Alternatively, those with a fixed mindset may be more likely to rely on dispositional judgements and believe the adage, “once a criminal, always a criminal”, as suggested by prior research (Grasmick & McGill, 1994; Maruna & King, 2009; Tam et al., 2013). Thus, we hypothesize a mediation pathway in which the relationship between person mindsets and supportive attitudes toward ex-offender reentry is mediated by attitudes toward ex-offenders generally (Figure 1). To test this model, our primary research aims were to: (1) examine direct associations between mindsets, attitudes toward ex-offenders, and support for ex-offender reentry; and (2) evaluate the hypothesized process model of the attitudinal pathway between mindsets, attitudes toward ex-offenders, and support for ex-offender reentry.
Methodology

Participants and Procedures

We recruited 180 adults living in the US through Amazon MTurk to participate in our online survey. MTurk is an online venue for posting jobs to complete for compensation. It has become a valuable tool for behavioral research (Bartneck, Duenser, Moltchanova, & Zawieska, 2015; Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Casler, Bickel, & Hackett, 2013) and has been used to study a variety of topics including intergroup forgiveness (Davis et al., 2015) and public opinion regarding criminal justice issues (Scurich & Monahan, 2016). To be eligible for the present study, respondents must have been at least 18 years of age and living in the US. All respondents provided informed consent and completed the online survey (measures described below). Respondents received $0.20 for their participation. Eight persons were removed for failing an attention check item, resulting in a final sample of 172.

A priori power analyses indicated that a sample size of 148 would provide ample power (power = .08) to detect an $\alpha$ path of 0.26 and $\beta$ path of 0.26 in the proposed mediation model (Fritz & Mackinnon, 2007). We recruited a larger sample to allow for potential attrition and missing data. The Institutional Review Board at NC State University approved all study procedures.

Measures

**Outcome variable.** The primary outcome, *support for ex-offender reentry*, was assessed using seven items drawn from the Attitudes toward Prisoner Reentry scale (Park, 2010). Items assessed respondent agreement (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 =
undecided, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree) with statements about ex-offender reentry programming (e.g., job training, drug treatment), policy (e.g., early release, funding for reentry programs), and public safety. One item was reverse coded. For all analyses, responses were summed and possible total scores ranged from 7 to 35, with larger scores indicating more support for ex-offender reentry ($\alpha = 0.82; M = 17.43, SD = 4.24$). Factor analyses using principle axis factoring extraction methods and oblique rotation revealed that all items assessing support for reentry loaded onto one factor, with loadings ranging from 0.22 to 0.87 (eigenvalue = 3.58). Results suggested that one item (“most released prisoners will be a risk to public safety”) may compose a second factor (eigenvalue = 1.33); however, this potential second factor is correlated with the first (0.57) and it is well-accepted that each factor should comprise three or more items to be considered reliable (e.g., Osborne & Costello, 2009; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013; Yong & Pearce, 2013). Based on the results of the factor analyses and a strong Cronbach’s alpha value, we have retained use of the support for reentry scale as a single-factor measure.

**Explanatory variables.** *Growth mindset* was assessed using the Implicit Person Theory measure (Levy et al., 1998), which measures beliefs about the fixed (fixed mindset) vs. malleable (growth mindset) nature of human attributes using a 6-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = mostly disagree, 4 = mostly agree, 5 = agree, 6 = strongly agree). Three items were reverse coded. For all analyses, responses were summed and possible total scores ranged from 8 to 48, with larger scores indicating a stronger growth mindset ($\alpha = 0.95; M = 26.84, SD = 8.89$). *Positive attitudes toward ex-offenders* were assessed using a
modified six-item scale measuring attitudes toward people who have been incarcerated (Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010). Items measured respondent agreement with six statements regarding ex-offender characteristics (e.g., dishonest, dangerous, innocent) and willingness to associate with an ex-offender. Four items were reverse coded. For all analyses, responses were summed and possible total scores ranged from 6 to 30, with larger scores indicating more positive attitudes toward ex-offenders ($\alpha = 0.82; M = 18.24, SD = 4.68$). Again, factor analyses using principle axis factoring and oblique rotation revealed that all items assessing positive attitudes toward ex-offenders loaded onto one factor, with loadings ranging from 0.45 to 0.79 (eigenvalue = 3.15). Results suggested that two items (“many people who are incarcerated do not deserve to be there” and “many people convicted of crimes in courts are actually innocent”) may compose a second factor (eigenvalue = 1.10); however, this potential second factor is strongly correlated with the first (0.81). Together, results of the factor analyses, a strong Cronbach’s alpha value, prior use of the total scores of the scale in research, and convention that factors should contain at least three items to be reliable (Osborne & Costello, 2009; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013; Yong & Pearce, 2013), we have retained use of the positive attitudes toward ex-offender scale as a single-factor measure.

Covariates. Sociodemographic information was also collected and tested for inclusion as potential covariates in the mediation analyses. Respondent characteristics included, White race/ethnicity (dichotomized; 0 = White, 1 = other), female sex (0 = male, 1 = female), arrested since the age of 18 (0 = yes, 1 = no), convicted since the age of 18 (0 = yes, 1 = no), incarcerated since the age of 18 (0 = yes, 1 = no), age (in years), annual
household income (1 = $0-$20,000, 2 = $20,000-$40,000, 3 = $40,000-$60,000, 4 = $60,000-$80,000, 5 = $80,000-$100,000, 6 = $100,000-$150,000, 7 = >$150,000), highest level of education [1 = less than a high school degree, 2 = high school or equivalent, 3 = vocational/technical school, 4 = Bachelor’s degree, 5 = Master’s degree, 6 = Doctorate degree (PhD), 7 = professional degree (MD, JD, etc.), 8 = other], political orientation (1 = extremely liberal, 2 = liberal, 3 = slightly liberal, 4 = moderate, 5 = slightly conservative, 6 = conservative, 7 = extremely conservative), geographic region (1 = Northwest, 2 = Midwest, 3 = South, 4 = West; according to the US Census Bureau regional divisions; US Census Bureau, 2010), and religious affiliation (1 = Agnosticism, 2 = Atheism, 3 = Buddhism, 4 = Christianity- Protestant, 5 = Christianity- Catholic, 6 = Christianity- Orthodox, 7 = Hinduism, 8 = Islam, 9 = Judaism, 10 = None, 11 = Other). Additionally, religious beliefs were assessed using the 5-item Duke University Religions Index (Koenig & Bussing, 2010) which measures religiosity (e.g., “I try hard to carry my religion over into all other dealings in life”) and engagement in religious practices (e.g., frequency of prayer, meditation, and religious meeting attendance). Interpersonal contact with an ex-offender was assessed using a 14-item Level-of-Contact Report (adapted from Holmes, Corrigan, Williams, Canar, & Kubiak, 1999), ranging from no contact (i.e., "I have never observed a person that I was aware had previously been incarcerated") to personal contact (i.e., "I have been previously incarcerated"). Belief in a just world was assessed using the Global Belief in a Just World Scale (Lipkus, 1991). Items measured respondent agreement (1 = strong disagreement, 2 = disagreement, 3 = slight disagreement, 4 = slight agreement, 5 = agreement, 6 = strong
agreement) with seven items (e.g., “I feel that people earn the rewards and punishments they get”), summed to produce possible total scores ranging from 7 to 42, with larger scores indicating stronger belief in a just world.

**Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistics were calculated for all variables, including frequencies and percentages for dichotomous variables and means and standard deviations for continuous variables. To address our first research aim, we conducted bivariate correlations to investigate the associations between the independent variable (mindsets), mediator (attitudes toward ex-offenders), and dependent variable (support for ex-offender reentry). Additionally, we conducted independent sample t-tests, one-way ANOVAs, Spearman’s rho correlations, and Pearson’s $r$ correlations to examine the associations between covariates and support for ex-offender reentry. To address our second research aim, we conducted mediation analyses using PROCESS model 4 (Hayes, 2013). Specifically, we examined the associations between mindsets and support for ex-offender reentry, and the indirect effects after adding the mediator to the model, while controlling for all covariates (only significant covariates were retained in mediation analyses). For all mediation analyses, we used bootstrapping procedures (10,000 bootstrap resamples) to create an approximation of the sampling distribution and generate 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals for the indirect effects (Hayes, 2013; Preacher & Hayes, 2004). All analyses were conducted using SPSS v.20 (IBM, Armonk, NY) and mediation analyses were conducted using the SPSS PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013; Preacher & Hayes, 2004).
Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents participant characteristics. Respondents were between 19 and 71 years old and most had pursued additional education after high school ($n = 153, 89.0\%$). A majority of respondents were White and about half were male. Half of respondents reported at least “slightly” liberal political orientations ($n = 96, 55.8\%$). Religious affiliations of the respondents were varied, with Christianity as the most prevalent (Protestant, Catholic, or Orthodox; 44.2\%), followed by Agnosticism and Atheism; however, a majority ($n = 104, 60.5\%$) reported rarely or never engaging in private religious activities (e.g., prayer, meditation, reading religious text). Although over half of respondents reported personally knowing an ex-offender ($n = 101, 58.7\%$), few had a history of arrest, conviction, or incarceration (see Table 1).

Compared to the US general population, as measured by the 2010 US Census (obtained from factfinder.census.gov), our sample was more educated, as a greater proportion had a bachelor’s degree compared to the general population (38.9\% vs. 18.0\%, $p < .05$), although educational attainment distributions regarding advanced graduate degrees did not differ. We had a somewhat higher percent of male respondents (56.4\% vs. 48.6\%, $p < .05$) and there were no differences in the racial/ethnic breakdown (76.2\% vs. 70.4\% white, $p > .05$). A joint age-sex-race distribution revealed that our sample contained more young adults, both men and women, compared to the US adult population (see Table 2).
Bivariate Analyses

Bivariate analyses of sociodemographic characteristics revealed significant differences in supportive attitudes toward ex-offender reentry as a function of respondent female sex, belief in a just world, prior contact with an ex-offender, conservative political orientation, religious affiliation, and religious practices (see Table 1). Overall, women reported more support for ex-offender reentry compared to men. Respondents who reported less belief in a just world also reported more support for reentry. Respondents who had more direct and personal contact with someone who had been incarcerated (e.g., friend, co-worker, family member) tended to report more support for reentry compared to those who had less direct contact (e.g., observation, contact through social media). Respondents who held more liberal political orientations, compared to those with more conservative orientations, reported greater support for reentry. Generally, respondents who reported less religiosity (e.g., experience present of the divine, religious beliefs influence other areas of life), who attended religious meetings less frequently, and who engaged in private religious activities less frequently tended to report more support for ex-offender reentry. All other covariates, including respondent age, White race/ethnicity, income, education, and previous criminal justice involvement, were not associated with supportive attitudes toward ex-offender reentry (all $p s > .05$). Only the significant covariates (female sex, belief in a just world, prior contact with an ex-offender, conservative political orientation, religious affiliation, religiosity, and religious practices) were retained in the multivariable models.
Addressing our first research aim, we found significant direct associations between growth mindsets, positive attitudes toward ex-offenders, and support for ex-offender reentry. Specifically, people with growth mindsets, compared to those with fixed mindsets, held more positive attitudes toward ex-offenders \((r = .27, p < .001)\) and more support for ex-offender reentry \((r = .32, p < .001)\). People with more positive attitudes toward ex-offenders also reported greater support for ex-offender reentry \((r = .61, p < .001)\). As anticipated, analyses showed a significant correlation between positive attitudes toward ex-offenders and support for their reentry that was large in size. However, this value is well below the threshold of multicollinearity, suggesting that these two variables are indeed measuring two distinct, but related attitudes.

**Mediation Analyses**

To investigate our second research aim, we conducted two mediation analyses (see Figure 1 for models). Results of the first model supported the hypothesized pathway from growth mindsets to support for ex-offender reentry through positive attitudes toward ex-offenders (see Table 3a). We examined the direct effects composing the pathway between growth mindsets and support for reentry. Results showed that people with growth mindsets reported more positive attitudes toward ex-offenders \((a_1)\), and those with more positive attitudes toward ex-offenders reported more support for reentry \((b_1)\). The direct pathway between mindset and support for reentry remained significant, as people with growth mindsets reported greater support for ex-offender reentry \((c')\). Overall, the results supported
our hypothesis that public attitudes toward ex-offenders mediate the relationship between
growth mindsets and support for ex-offender reentry \((a_1b_1)\).

The second model tested the same mediation model, with the addition of a number of
significant covariates including respondent female sex, belief in a just world, previous
contact with an ex-offender, conservative political orientation, religious affiliation, and
religious beliefs and practices (as determined through bivariate analyses). Again, having a
growth mindset was associated with reporting more positive attitudes toward ex-offenders
\((a_1)\), and those with more positive attitudes toward ex-offenders reported more supportive
attitudes toward ex-offender reentry \((b_1)\). The direct effect of growth mindsets on support for
ex-offender reentry \((c')\) was again significant. Moreover, three of the covariates—belief in a
just world \((a_3)\), prior contact with an ex-offender \((a_4)\), and conservative political orientation
\((a_5)\)—demonstrated significant direct associations with positive attitudes toward ex-
offenders; however, only contact remained as a significant covariate of support for reentry
\((b_4)\). Taken together, results revealed a significant indirect effect of growth mindsets on
support for ex-offender reentry through positive attitudes toward ex-offenders \((a_1b_1)\), even
after accounting for all other covariates in the model.

Discussion

Negative attitudes and stigma lead to differential treatment and opportunities for ex-
offenders due to their criminal histories, compared to non-offenders. This discrimination can
adversely impact aspects of reentry from jail and prison, including employment, housing, and
health care, which are key to successful community reintegration (Brooks et al., 2006;
Wakefield & Uggen, 2010). Although many studies have investigated factors associated with negative attitudes and discriminatory behaviors toward ex-offenders and their reentry, there is no comprehensive theory to explain support (or not) for ex-offender reentry. Yet, a comprehensive approach may help to improve public attitudes toward ex-offenders, increase support for reentry, and ultimately, facilitate more successful community reintegration. For these reasons, we developed and tested a model applying mindset theory to examine the process through which personal beliefs contribute to attitudes toward ex-offenders and, in turn, affect support for ex-offender reentry. Overall, findings provide support for our theoretically-informed and empirically-based model, as well as for the extension of implicit theory to the context of public support for ex-offender reentry. In the sections that follow, we discuss the study findings and implications in further detail.

Our first aim was to examine the direct associations between mindsets, attitudes toward ex-offenders, and support for ex-offender reentry. Findings revealed direct associations between all three variables. Respondents reporting a growth mindset also reported more positive attitudes toward ex-offenders; respondents with more positive attitudes toward ex-offenders also reported more support for reentry. Taken together, findings of our first research aim provided preliminary support for our hypothesized process model of supportive attitudes toward ex-offender reentry.

Findings also revealed differences in support for reentry based on respondent sex, religious beliefs and practices, political orientation, previous contact with someone who had been incarcerated, and belief in a just world. Women reported more support for reentry
compared to men. Despite mixed findings in the extant literature regarding sex and punitiveness (Leverentz, 2011; Willis et al., 2013; but see, Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010; Rade et al., 2016), our finding is consistent with the notion that while punitive, women are more likely to support rehabilitation than men (Falco & Turner, 2014). People who attend religious services and engage in religious activities less frequently reported more support for ex-offender reentry. Little empirical research has investigated the relationship of attitudes toward ex-offenders or reentry with religious activity and belief, and our study is one of the first to identify a difference in attitudes toward reentry based on religiosity. Our findings regarding political orientations and prior contact with an ex-offender confirm that of the prior research (e.g., Rade et al., 2016); people with more liberal political beliefs reported more support for reentry, as did those with contact with an ex-offender. Therefore, interpersonal contact may provide a point of intervention to improve attitudes toward ex-offenders. Lastly, this is the first study to establish a relationship between belief in a just world and support for ex-offender reentry, adding to the body of research supporting the association between belief in a just world and attitudes toward other marginalized populations (Bizer et al., 2012; Halabi et al., 2015) and punishment (Bègue & Bastounis, 2003; Mohr & Luscri, 1995). Future research should continue this line of research to investigate how individual differences, including differences in political orientations, religious beliefs and practices, interpersonal contact, and belief in a just world, may contribute to public attitudes toward ex-offenders and reentry. Such research may produce a more complete understanding of the role that mindsets play in shaping public support for ex-offender reentry.
Our second aim was to evaluate our process model of the pathway between growth mindsets, positive attitudes toward ex-offenders, and support for ex-offender reentry. Findings of the first mediation analysis provided support for our model. Growth mindsets lead to more positive attitudes toward ex-offenders, and subsequently, more support for reentry. In light of the significant bivariate associations identified in our aim 1 analyses, we included respondent female sex, belief in a just world, previous contact with someone who had been incarcerated, conservative political orientation, and religious beliefs and practices as covariates in the mediation analyses. Findings provided support for the second research hypothesis. The final model again revealed that growth mindsets were associated with more positive attitudes toward ex-offenders, which in turn were associated with more support for ex-offender reentry.

Findings are consistent with research demonstrating the associations between mindsets and attitudes toward criminal justice policies and practices (Chiu et al., 1997; Gervey et al., 1999; Tam et al., 2013). Our study extends the mindset literature, representing the first investigation of the associations between mindsets and attitudes toward ex-offenders generally, and reentry support in particular. Findings provide support for mindsets as a mechanism to explain support for ex-offender reentry. As such, this model also builds upon extant research regarding barriers to reentry (e.g., Brooks et al., 2006; Wakefield & Uggen, 2010), thereby offering a potential point of intervention. Across multiple contexts and populations, research shows that mindsets may be changed through single-session and long-term interventions (e.g., Blackwell et al., 2007; Burnette, 2010; Nussbaum & Dweck, 2008;
Yeager et al., 2014). Moreover, teaching growth mindsets, through presentation of scientific readings regarding the malleability of personality, for example, has been shown to decrease stereotypical thinking (Levy et al., 1998).

Our study provides initial support for the development of interventions which promote growth mindsets to improve support for ex-offender reentry. Consistent with federal initiatives in the United States (e.g., Office of the Press Secretary, 2015), future interventions may be designed to target (1) general attitudes toward ex-offenders and reentry, (2) specific adverse outcomes of stigma and discrimination, including barriers to ex-offender employment and housing, or (3) specific populations, such as employers and health care providers. Anti-stigma interventions may seek to target fixed mindsets and shift beliefs toward growth mindsets. Such interventions could use techniques applied in other mindset-based interventions, including short, single-session reading-based interventions, or those that involve multiple sessions to reinforce a growth mindset over time. For example, existing training platforms for employers and hiring managers could incorporate mindset-based readings or presentation of research regarding ex-offender rehabilitation. Employer education interventions that foster growth mindsets have the potential to increase willingness to work with or hire ex-offenders and reduce employment barriers to reentry, a key aspect of successful community reintegration (Berg & Huebner, 2011; Tripodi, Kim, & Bender, 2010; Uggen, 2000). Finally, public education campaigns could provide broader application of growth mindset interventions, including use of personal anecdotes and information describing successful rehabilitation and reentry programs.
Limitations and Future Directions

Findings should be considered within the context of study limitations. Respondents were drawn from a sample of MTurk workers, which may limit the generalizability of findings to members of the public at large. In particular, young adults, both male and female, were overrepresented in our sample (consistent with prior research, Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012), as were individuals who have at least a bachelor’s degree or higher educational attainment; thus, findings may not generalize to older adults in the United States and those without a college degree. Research provides mixed evidence regarding the external validity of MTurk samples, suggesting that MTurk samples are comparable to other commonly used samples, including other online samples and in-person student samples (Bartneck et al., 2015; Casler et al., 2013), but may consist of younger and more ideologically liberal participants (Berinsky et al., 2012). Therefore, we adhered to recommendations to include an attention check on MTurk surveys, avoid questions with factual answers, and consider the influence of individual differences on relevant characteristics, which we addressed at least in part by controlling for relevant sociodemographic covariates (Goodman, Cryder, & Cheema, 2013). Our MTurk sample afforded the initial testing of implicit theory applied to support for ex-offender reentry; future studies should recruit more representative samples to increase external validity. All respondents in the present study were residents of the United States. Cross-cultural differences in criminal justice practices and policies, as well as adherence to implicit theories, may limit the ability to generalize findings to people living outside of the
United States; future studies should test the process model with community-based and international samples to assess the generalizability of findings.

The present study used a cross-sectional method for initial evaluation of the hypothesized process model. Findings represent naturally occurring associations between mindsets and attitudes, and therefore, do not allow for causal conclusions. Thus, future research should manipulate mindsets to test for causality. Moreover, few studies have investigated the contributing factors of support for ex-offender reentry and the present study provides one possible explanation. Even so, findings provide preliminary evidence that mindsets affect support for reentry. Subsequent studies should develop interventions which emphasize the malleability of personal attributes, and criminal behavior particularly, to promote growth mindsets among the public, and test such interventions to determine whether they do indeed increase growth mindsets and, ultimately, improve public attitudes toward ex-offenders and their reentry. Additionally, implicit theory research suggests that beliefs regarding the fixed and malleable qualities of human nature are domain specific (e.g., Chiu, Hong, & Dweck, 1997; Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Levy et al., 1998). Consistent with research demonstrating that attitudes toward ex-offender may be moderated by offense history (Rade et al., 2016), mindsets regarding criminal behavior may vary based on ex-offender characteristics (e.g., type of offense, repeat offenses, race of offender). Thus, future research should investigate potential moderating effects of ex-offender characteristics, including offense history, within this model.
Conclusion

Men and women released into the community after incarceration encounter negative attitudes and stigma from the public, which serve as barriers to successful reentry. Findings of the present study provide support for the application of mindset theory to describe the process through which personal beliefs affect support for ex-offender reentry. To our knowledge, this is the first study to differentiate and assess the relationship between attitudes toward ex-offenders and support for ex-offender reentry in the same sample. This study also represents the first application of mindset theory, as well as belief in a just world, in this context, providing a more comprehensive model of explaining public attitudes toward ex-offenders and support for reentry. Beliefs about people’s ability to change were both directly and indirectly associated with supportive attitudes toward reentry. Findings showed a growth mindset was associated with more positive attitudes toward ex-offenders and their reentry, providing a new and promising target for efforts designed to reduce stigma and promote successful community reintegration. Continued research is needed to replicate and extend the current results, including examining the role of additional characteristics, such as ex-offender race and criminal history (e.g., type and severity of crime), that may further contribute to differences in public support for ex-offender reentry.
Table 1. *Sample Characteristics by Support for Ex-offender Reentry.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Characteristics</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Categorical Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>t-value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>56.4</td>
<td>-2.37*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>-0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrested</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>83.6</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convicted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>90.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incarcerated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>93.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Affiliation</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnosticism</td>
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<td>20.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atheism</td>
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<td>16.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christianity, Protestant</td>
<td></td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christianity, Catholic</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>2.02*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christianity, Orthodox</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic Region</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td></td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td></td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td></td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Continuous Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief in a Just World</td>
<td></td>
<td>24.40 (6.99)</td>
<td>-0.37***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td>33.09 (11.07)</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.66 (4.27)</td>
<td>-0.16*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.84 (1.60)</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.34 (1.17)</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Contact</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.36 (3.79)</td>
<td>0.26**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Meeting Attendance</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.20 (1.49)</td>
<td>-0.18*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Religious Activity</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.06 (1.58)</td>
<td>-0.21**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative Political Orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.40 (1.62)</td>
<td>-0.33***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.*
Table 2. *Proportion of sample from each age-sex-race distribution category and comparison to 2010 US Census population distribution.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2010 Census %</th>
<th>MTurk Sample %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female-Young-White*</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female-Young-NonWhite</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female-Old-White**</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female-Old-NonWhite***</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male-Young-White***</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>34.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male-Young-NonWhite***</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male-Old-White***</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male-Old-NonWhite***</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes.* “Young” < 44 years, “Old” ≥ 44 years based on U.S. median age (43.9 years); “White” = white race, “NonWhite” = race other than White; *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001
Table 3a. **OLS regression coefficients for mediation models testing the conditional direct and indirect effects of mindsets through attitudes toward ex-offenders, on support for ex-offender reentry (Model 1).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive Attitudes toward Ex-offenders (M₁)</th>
<th>Support for Ex-offender Reentry (Y)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coeff (SE) 95%CI</td>
<td>Coeff (SE) 95%CI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth Mindset (X)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Attitudes</td>
<td>a₁ 0.14**(0.04) 0.06, 0.22</td>
<td>c’ 0.08**(0.03) 0.02, 0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>toward Ex-offenders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(M₁)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>iₘ1 13.56*** (1.19) 11.21, 15.91 R² = 0.07, F (166) = 13.19 ***</td>
<td>iᵧ 13.29*** (1.17) 10.97, 15.60 R² = 0.39, F (165) = 53.15 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model R² = 0.10, F (166) = 18.61 ***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. Coeff = OLS regression coefficient; SE = Standard Error; CI = Confidence Interval; *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.

Table 3b. **OLS regression coefficients for mediation models testing the conditional direct and indirect effects of mindsets through attitudes toward ex-offenders, on support for ex-offender reentry, and controlling for sociodemographic covariates (Model 2).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive Attitudes toward Ex-offenders (M₁)</th>
<th>Support for Ex-offender Reentry (Y)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coeff (SE) 95%CI</td>
<td>Coeff (SE) 95%CI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth Mindset (X)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Attitudes</td>
<td>a₁ 0.09**(0.04) 0.02, 0.17</td>
<td>c’ 0.07**(0.03) 0.02, 0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>toward Ex-offenders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(M₁)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Sex (U₁)</td>
<td>a₂ 0.30(0.65) -0.99, 1.58</td>
<td>b₂ 0.40(0.53) -0.65, 1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief in a Just World (U₂)</td>
<td>a₃ -0.15**(0.05) -0.25, 0.05</td>
<td>b₃ -0.08(0.04) -0.16, 0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Contact (U₃)</td>
<td>a₄ 0.29*** (0.08) 0.13, 0.46</td>
<td>b₄ 0.15**(0.07) 0.01, 0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative Political Orientation (U₄)</td>
<td>a₅ -0.61*** (0.23) -1.07, -0.15</td>
<td>b₅ -0.10(0.19) -0.49, 0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Affiliation (U₅)</td>
<td>a₆ -0.11(0.11) -0.33, 0.11</td>
<td>b₆ -0.16(0.09) -0.34, 0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity (U₆)</td>
<td>a₇ 0.24(0.12) -0.01, 0.48</td>
<td>b₇ -0.03(0.10) -0.23, 0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Service</td>
<td>a₈ -0.08(0.29) -0.65, 0.49</td>
<td>b₈ 0.08(0.23) -0.38, 0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance (U₇)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Religious Activity (U₈)</td>
<td>a₉ -0.56(0.29) -1.12, 0.00</td>
<td>b₉ -0.26(0.24) -0.72, 0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>iₘ₁ 17.45*** (2.21) 13.08, 21.81 R² = 0.31, F (153) = 7.64 ***</td>
<td>iᵧ 16.93*** (2.13) 12.72, 21.14 R² = 0.46, F (152) = 12.87 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model R² = 0.33, F (153) = 8.28 ***</td>
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Notes. Coeff = OLS regression coefficient; SE = Standard Error; CI = Confidence Interval; *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.
Figure 1. Statistical diagrams of mediation models of the direct and indirect effects of mindsets on support for ex-offender reentry.
CHAPTER 5

Integrative Review

Public attitudes toward criminal justice policies, practices, and ex-offenders directly and indirectly influence sentencing, rehabilitation, and community reintegration of the millions of men and women who are in contact with the criminal justice system each year. Increasing our understanding of public attitudes, therefore, may help improve outcomes for those currently under criminal justice supervision and for ex-offenders reentering the community. Accordingly, this body of work addresses how public attitudes impact the ways ex-offenders enter (i.e., capital sentencing) and exit the criminal justice system (i.e., community reintegration). The three manuscripts in this dissertation aimed to extend our current knowledge about public attitudes toward criminal justice policies, practices, and ex-offenders, while providing future direction for research, policy, and intervention. The following sections will provide a summary of the research findings, followed by a discussion of implications.

Summary of Findings

Findings of the first manuscript (Chapter 2) reveal that the bulk of prior research examined Christian religious affiliations, to the exclusion of other common affiliations, such as Buddhist, Islamic, or Hindu affiliations. Among the literature assessing Christianity, findings showed that people belonging to Protestant affiliations and with negative images of God are more likely to support capital punishment. Those holding positive images of God and with strong beliefs in compassion are less likely to support capital punishment. (Specific
Aim 2). This manuscript identifies the importance of distinguishing between religious beliefs and affiliations, and suggests that compared to affiliations, religious beliefs better explain attitudes toward capital punishment (Specific Aim 1). As the first comprehensive synthesis of religious correlates of capital punishment attitudes, findings have implications for death-qualified jury selection and capital sentencing decisions, particularly with respect to the use of religious criteria to exclude potential jurors which may create biased juries that are more likely to convict. Future research is needed to provide an increased understanding of the nuanced relationship between religion and capital punishment attitudes to better inform capital punishment policy and practice.

Findings of the second manuscript (Chapter 3) reveal small associations between correlate variables and attitudes, suggesting that people are more similar than different in their attitudes toward ex-offenders. Only political ideology, interpersonal contact, and sexual offense history emerged as significant correlates (Specific Aim 2). Members of the public who self-identify as politically liberal and those who report having any type of contact with a current offender or ex-offender report more positive attitudes toward ex-offenders, compared to those of politically conservative orientation and without contact with an ex-offender (Specific Aim 2). Members of the public report more positive attitudes toward offenders with no history of sexual offense compared to those with sexual offense histories. Additionally, attitudes toward ex-offenders changed over time, with members of the public reporting more similar attitudes toward ex-offenders after 2009. Although public attitudes were operationalized differently, results did not significantly differ across the various measures
(Specific Aim 1). This study is the first to review the literature regarding public attitudes toward ex-offenders, providing direction for future research and intervention. Specifically, findings suggest that anti-stigma interventions may be more effective by incorporating interpersonal contact and focusing on stigma associated with specific criminal histories. However, the small effect sizes and dearth of research investigating ex-offender and community characteristics suggest future research also should investigate alternative explanations for public attitudes toward ex-offenders.

The final manuscript (Chapter 4) builds on findings of the second by exploring an integrative theoretical model to better explain public attitudes toward ex-offenders and support for their reentry into the community. This study extends the mindset literature, representing the first investigation of the associations between mindsets and attitudes toward ex-offenders generally, and reentry support, in particular. Mediation analyses examined the associations between implicit beliefs and support for ex-offender reentry, through general attitudes toward ex-offenders (Specific Aim 3). Results revealed an attitudinal pathway between implicit beliefs, attitudes toward ex-offenders, and support for ex-offender reentry, after controlling for sociodemographic variables identified in the second manuscript (e.g., interpersonal contact, political orientation). People with growth mindsets, relative to fixed, reported more positive attitudes toward ex-offenders, and those with more positive attitudes toward ex-offenders reported greater support for reentry. These findings present a new model of understanding public attitudes toward ex-offender reentry and provide initial support for
the development of anti-stigma interventions which promote growth mindsets to improve support for community reentry.

**Implications for Research**

The development and implementation of successful interventions that target public attitudes and improve criminal justice outcomes first requires research regarding the person-level factors and underlying mechanisms of public attitudes. Findings of the included manuscripts offer insight into the correlates and theoretical perspectives which help explain support for criminal justice policies and programs related to sentencing and community reintegration. Three implications for future research will be discussed in detail in the section that follows: 1) improvement in operationalization and measurement of public attitudes toward criminal justice outcomes and associated correlates; 2) continuation of research on correlates associated with public attitudes toward criminal justice policies, programs, and ex-offenders; and 3) extension of implicit theory to explain public attitudes toward ex-offender reentry.

Findings of the first and second manuscripts revealed inconsistencies in operationalization and measurement of public attitudes toward criminal justice outcomes and associated correlates. Studies use broad, overlapping terms to assess public characteristics (e.g., religious fundamentalism, religiosity) and attitudes (e.g., general attitudes, punitiveness). To demonstrate, the extant literature frequently assess Christian fundamentalism as a factor associated with support for capital punishment, but lacks consensus regarding the parameters of this correlate. Many studies use one classification
based on Christian denomination affiliation (Smith, 1990), while others consider the beliefs associated with fundamentalism—namely, literal biblical interpretation, punitive image of God, and importance of evangelism. Similarly, assessments of public attitudes toward ex-offenders suffer from measures that are related and often overlap. Measures can include support for reentry policy (e.g., Comartin et al., 2009; Manza et al., 2004), desired social distance from ex-offenders (e.g., Atink-Plunk & Armstrong, 2013; Brown, 1999), and degree of punitiveness (e.g., Piquero et al., 2011). These inconsistencies lead to varied methodologies and contradictory results which limit the generalizability of findings. Consequently, future research should seek to consolidate measurement of central public correlates and attitudinal measures to facilitate more consistent assessment of public attitudes toward criminal justice outcomes.

Findings of the first two manuscripts also reveal an emphasis on public characteristics as correlates of public attitudes regarding sentencing and reentry, to the neglect of other potential correlates, such as characteristics of the ex-offender or local community. In particular, the empirical literature primarily has focused on religious correlates of capital punishment support. Findings suggest that religious beliefs may explain support for capital punishment more than religious affiliations; however, research regarding affiliations is limited to Christian denominations assessed in the United States. In contrast, religious factors are considered infrequently when assessing public support for ex-offenders and their community reentry. Rather, the emphasis of prior research is on other public correlates, such as political orientation, race, sex, education, age, and income. Of these public characteristics,
only political orientation and interpersonal contact are associated with public attitudes toward ex-offenders consistently. Together, findings highlight inconsistencies in which public characteristics are evaluated to explain public attitudes, as well as a scarcity of research on the ex-offender and community correlates of public attitudes toward criminal justice policies and practices.

Future research should more thoroughly investigate correlates of public attitudes, including a comprehensive analysis of all major religious affiliations and beliefs, and greater consideration of ex-offender characteristics (e.g., criminal history, number of offenses) and community characteristics (e.g., crime prevalence, local policies). Moreover, the identified correlates may influence criminal justice outcomes outside of those considered in this body of work. For example, research could investigate the impact of public, ex-offender, and community characteristics on severity of sentencing, specific populations (e.g., jurors, judges, parole officers), or alternatives to incarceration (e.g., jail diversion programs). In addition to identifying the correlates of these public attitudes, research suggests that public opinion directly and indirectly influences criminal justice outcomes, including mass incarceration, policymaking at multiple governmental levels, and the ideology and decisions of elected judges (e.g., Brace & Boyea, 2008; Enns, 2014; Shapiro, 2011). Even so, continued research is needed to assess the degree to which public attitudes inform the enactment and revision of criminal justice policies and practices.

Lastly, findings integrate multidisciplinary research to offer a theoretically-informed model of attitudes toward ex-offenders and support for their reentry. Research from
criminology provides direction regarding the associations between characteristics of the public (i.e., political orientation, religious beliefs and practices, interpersonal contact) and attitudes toward ex-offenders (e.g., Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010; Leverentz, 2011; Mancini et al., 2010). However, findings of the second manuscript reveal that of these public characteristics, few have consistent effects of attitudes toward ex-offenders, and of those, the effect sizes are relatively small ($\bar{r}_w = -.12 - -.19$). Additionally, social psychological research demonstrates that growth mindsets, relative to fixed mindsets, are associated with less punitive attitudes and decreased support for punishment (Chiu, Dweck, et al., 1997; Tam et al., 2013). Besides confirming the results of interdisciplinary research, this body of work extends the literature through the application of implicit theory beyond punitiveness to a new context, creating a more comprehensive model of public support for criminal justice policies and practices. Findings not only provide initial support that mindsets can explain support for criminal justice policies and practices, specifically ex-offender community reentry, but also provide direction for future research exploring the application of implicit theory to other ways attitudes affect criminal justice sentencing and reintegration. For example, future research should investigate how ex-offenders’ mindsets regarding their own criminal behavior and rehabilitation may influence the success of their transition back into the community. The extension of this model to other specific groups, such as criminal justice professionals, employers, jury members, and health care professionals, may provide opportunities to better intervene across multiple systems involved in the community reentry
process. Even so, future investigations should first manipulate mindsets to test these models for causality.

**Implications for Policy and Practice**

Across this body of work, findings suggest that not only do public attitudes guide support for criminal justice policies and practices, but also policies may shape public attitudes. Findings have implications for the development and implementation of criminal justice policies and practices regarding offender sentencing and ex-offender community reentry. As such, there are opportunities for developing theoretically-informed interventions that target these avenues of addressing public attitudes, ultimately improving criminal justice outcomes. Policy and practice implications of the three manuscripts regarding entry to (i.e., capital sentencing) and exit from the criminal justice system (i.e., community reentry) will be discussed in detail below.

The first manuscript provides direction for the impact of public attitudes on sentencing and associated jury selection procedures. Findings bring to light the ways in which religious beliefs and affiliations are associated with support for capital punishment and may bias sentencing in capital trials. Most of these correlates, however, cannot (or cannot ethically) be changed through intervention. Rather, findings inform death-qualified jury member selection criteria and provide direction on ways to improve the jury selection process. In the United States, legal precedent has established that jurors cannot be disqualified from participation in capital trials due to moral or religious beliefs about capital punishment, save that beliefs do not interfere with the juror’s ability to perform his or her
duty (Witherspoon v. Illinois, 1968; Wainwright v. Witt, 1985). Yet, those who outright oppose capital punishment are excluded from participation in capital trials. Findings of this systematic review identified that several religious characteristics can influence public support for (i.e., Protestant affiliation, negative image of God) or opposition to capital punishment (i.e., positive image of God, belief in compassion), and therefore, may be used to identify jurors who should be excluded from serving on capital trial juries. Attorneys often consider religious beliefs and affiliations of potential jurors during the selection process, presuming that otherwise religious factors may lead to biased jury members. Nevertheless, current practices in the United States regarding juror exclusion lead to biased juries which are prone to conviction and harsher sentences (Allen, Mabry, & McKelton, 1998; Butler, 2007; Jurow, 1971; Mauro, 1991) and create a disproportionate representation of some religious affiliations (Fitzgerald & Ellsworth, 1984; Santoro, 2014; Summers, Hayward, & Miller, 2010). As such, jury selection based on the religious affiliations and beliefs identified herein may lead to death-qualified juries which are not representative of the general public and are more likely to favor capital punishment. Because individual beliefs and religious affiliations cannot be altered through intervention or policy, revision to belief-based jury selection criteria should be considered to reduce bias and increase the representativeness of juries. Such policy changes could draw from practices in other countries that retain capital punishment. For example, capital trials in Japan are decided by a lay assessor system composed of a panel of professional judges and lay judges who are randomly selected from the public. Although presenting some limitations (Levin & Tice, 2009), reference to other
capital sentencing policies may provide insight into potential reform to those in the United States.

Beyond reform to capital punishment policy and its implementation, attention should be directed toward the international trends toward abolition. The United Nations affirmed six moratoriums on capital punishment between 2007 and 2016, and a majority of countries in the world—140—abolished capital punishment in law or in practice (Amnesty International, 2016; UN General Assembly, 2016). There is also a shift in national support for alternatives to capital punishment; since 2007, five states abolished capital punishment, three states issued a moratorium, and ten states did not carry out an execution (Amnesty International, 2016). Additionally, a national survey of registered voters in the United States revealed that compared to capital punishment, more people support alternative punishments, including life sentences without parole and life sentences with restitution (Death Penalty Information Center, 2010). Based on these national and international trends, additional efforts should be made to understand public attitudes toward capital punishment and institute policies that are consistent with these attitudes, which may include abolition in law or practice.

The final two manuscripts speak to the ways public attitudes inform ex-offender reentry, and vice versa, providing potential opportunities for interventions that improve transition and reintegration into the community. Moderation analyses in the second show that members of the public began reporting more similar attitudes toward ex-offenders after 2009, regardless of age and income. The changes in public attitudes over time may be attributed at least in part to the changes in policy and practice (Gideon & Loveland, 2011). To
demonstrate, the Federal Prisoner Reentry Initiative of 2009 (42 U.S.C. § 17541) established an inter-agency strategy for preparing ex-offenders for successful reentry, as part of the large scale Second Chance Act of 2007 (42 U.S.C. § 17501) focused on improving reentry, reducing recidivism, and increasing public safety. In recent years, this national emphasis on facilitating rehabilitation and reducing barriers associated with community reintegration has continued, including efforts to ensure fair-hiring practices for federal employees through “ban the box” initiatives (Office of the Press Secretary, 2015). These federal initiatives build on the momentum of the over 150 cities and counties and 25 states that have established “ban the box” or fair-chance policies which remove the requirement to report criminal history on initial employment applications to reduce the employment barriers associated with a criminal record (Rodriguez & Avery, 2017). These local, state, and federal policies that target employment not only improve outcomes for ex-offenders through increased employment opportunities and reduced recidivism, but also provide benefits for the general public, including economic gains and increased public safety (Berg & Huebner, 2011; Drake, Aos, & Miller, 2009; The Pew Charitable Trust, 2010; Uggen 2000). In sum, policies can improve reentry outcomes and may influence public opinion over time to be more supportive of reentry efforts, whereas more restrictive and punitive policies may have the opposite effect.

Conversely, public attitudes may influence the development and implementation of reentry policy and programming. Findings of the third manuscript revealed that public attitudes toward ex-offenders generally (i.e., willingness to associate with ex-offenders, perception of ex-offender character) were positively associated with support for ex-offender
reentry (i.e., reentry programming and policies). By improving general attitudes toward ex-offenders, support for reentry may be increased. Several characteristics of the public were identified in the second paper as significantly associated with these general attitudes—namely, political orientation and interpersonal contact. Intervention to change political orientation may not be successful or appropriate. On the other hand, interpersonal contact offers a more feasible point of intervention. Examples may be drawn from the research regarding stigma toward people with mental illness which demonstrates that education-based, media-based, and face-to-face contact improve public attitudes (Clement et al., 2012; Corrigan, Larson, Sells, Niessen, & Watson, 2007; Corrigan, Morris, Michaels, Rafacz, & Rüsch, 2012; Reinke, Corrigan, Leonhard, Lundin, & Kubiak, 2004). Contact-based interventions are limited however, in several ways. In the current context, directionality of the association is unknown; having more positive attitudes toward ex-offenders may lead to more frequent interpersonal contact with an ex-offender. Some types of contact, such as education- or media-based, are more easily disseminated, yet effectiveness may vary based on the type of contact and not generalize beyond the intervention context. Additional research is needed regarding the feasibility and effectiveness of contact-based interventions to improve public attitudes toward ex-offenders and support for reentry.

Building on these intervention implications and limitations, findings of the third manuscript suggest that mindset-based interventions may provide a more appropriate means of improving public attitudes and reentry support. Interventions that foster growth mindsets may increase public support for ex-offender community reentry by improving general
attitudes toward ex-offenders. Consistent with prior research, mindsets may be changed through single-session and long-term interventions (e.g., Blackwell et al., 2007; Burnette, 2010; Nussbaum & Dweck, 2008; Yeager et al., 2014) and can effectively reduce stereotypical thinking (Levy et al., 1998). Mindset-based interventions address the limitations of prior efforts in several ways, offering a novel mechanism through which to address public attitudes.

First, mindset-based interventions could be developed and administered online and through various media platforms to increase the feasibility and breadth of dissemination. A brief intervention could draw from research in psychology, criminology, and other disciplines supporting the notion that criminal tendencies are malleable to foster a growth mindset of criminal behavior. Specifically, intervention materials could provide empirical evidence regarding recidivism rates, pathways to crime, and success rates of rehabilitation programs, in combination with relatable case study examples. This basic online intervention could be tailored to include more interactive components. In particular, incorporation of self-persuasion techniques can prompt participants to generate ideas and engage in mental or written reflection consistent with a growth mindset, while considering examples from personal and/or professional experiences. Online, interactive interventions with visual, auditory, and/or narrative elements can facilitate perspective taking and counterattitudinal self-reflection, which are effective mechanisms of self-persuasion and attitude change (Heslin, Latham, & VandeWalle, 2005; Petty & Briñol, 2010). This online, mindset-based
intervention approach represents a scalable, low-cost, and time-effective strategy of promoting growth mindsets criminal behaviors and fostering support for ex-offender reentry.

Second, mindset-based interventions could be tailored to target specific audiences (e.g., employers, policy makers, practitioners), and therefore, specific aspects of reentry (e.g., employment, housing, health care). To illustrate, gainful employment is considered a “turning point” for ex-offenders and is associated with reduced recidivism and time incarcerated (Berg & Huebner, 2011; Tripodi, Kim, & Bender, 2010; Uggen, 2000). An intervention that fosters growth mindsets and targets employer attitudes toward ex-offenders, may in turn, lead to increased willingness to hire ex-offenders and improved employment outcomes for ex-offenders. Such a mindset-based intervention could be disseminated online, through modules added to existing employee training platforms or incorporation into training for students pursuing a MBA degree, for example.

Third, interventions may be adapted to address stigma toward ex-offenders based on specific characteristics (e.g., criminal history, rehabilitation participation). To demonstrate, findings of the second manuscript reveal that public attitudes toward ex-offenders differed based on criminal history (sexual offense history vs. no history of sexual offense). Interventions could provide information regarding recidivism rates for offenders with specific criminal histories and barriers to reentry associated with specific criminal records while fostering growth mindsets, in an effort to improve reintegration outcomes. Similarly, a growth-mindset intervention could be adapted and applied to increase reentry support for other groups involved in the criminal justice system who often experience greater rates of
discrimination, such as homeless adults, those with serious mental illnesses, and/or a history of substance use (LeBel, 2012). Findings suggest that implicit theory may provide a viable mechanism to explain and improve public attitudes and support for reentry. The suggested interventions offer ways to encourage growth mindsets that can be modified to target stigmatizing attitudes toward marginalized groups, and develop public support for policies and practices that improve outcomes for ex-offenders.

**General Conclusion**

Within the United States, there is an increasing emphasis on policy and practices that improve rehabilitation and community reintegration for people who have been incarcerated (Office of the Press Secretary, 2015). Public attitudes have the potential to constructively or adversely influence the development and implementation of these criminal justice policies and practices, particularly those related to entry to and exit from the criminal justice system. The first manuscript brings clarity to the differences between religious beliefs and religious affiliations as they are associated with attitudes toward capital punishment, and has important implications for policies and practices regarding death-qualified jury selection. The second manuscript identifies the dearth of research regarding ex-offender and community-level correlates of public attitudes toward ex-offenders, and provides direction regarding the most salient correlates of public attitudes. The final manuscript presents a new approach to explain the mechanism through which personal beliefs and attitudes explain support for ex-offender reentry, providing direction for the extension of implicit theory research and the development of anti-stigma interventions. Collectively, this body of work increases our understanding of
public attitudes and suggests future directions for research, policy, and practices that seek to improve sentencing and community reentry outcomes for ex-offenders.
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APPENDIX
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