

DISSERTATION

IDENTIFYING AND EVALUATING FACTORS THAT ENHANCE FORMER OFFENDERS'
HIRING-RELATED OUTCOMES

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ABSTRACT

IDENTIFYING AND EVALUATING FACTORS THAT ENHANCE FORMER OFFENDERS' HIRING-RELATED OUTCOMES

Former offenders face several barriers to re-entry into society and the workplace. One such barrier includes employers' negative and unfounded attitudes of former offenders, which may lead to unfair bias in hiring. Crandall and Eshleman's (2003) justification-suppression model (JSM) posits that such prejudicial attitudes can be suppressed. Guided by the JSM theoretical framework, the current two-study project was designed to (1) identify prejudice suppression factors that might increase employers' willingness to hire former offenders – more specifically former minor drug offenders (FMDOs) and (2) test the efficacy of two suppression factors in a hypothetical hiring setting. Study 1 was an interview study of 13 employers, across several industries, on what factors made them more likely to consider hiring FMDOs. Thematic analysis results yielded 30 factors that were classified as *situation-related*, *employer-related*, and *applicant-related* suppression factors. The two most frequently endorsed prejudice suppression factors were: (1) evidence of the applicant's *desistance & positive change*, and (2) evidence of the applicant's *honest disclosure* of their background. In Study 2, the efficacy of these two suppression factors (desistance and disclosure) was tested to assess whether FMDOs' hiring-related outcomes were improved by manipulating suppressor evidence (desistance, disclosure, or no suppressor) and the offense type of the applicant (traffic offense, minor drug offense, and serious drug-related offense) in a hypothetical hiring context, for a retail sales associate position. Using a sample of 230 hiring managers in a retail setting, a significant main effect of offense

type was found. No significant main effect was found for suppressor evidence on hiring recommendations. Neither offense type nor suppressor evidence was related to participants' concerns about hiring the applicants, or their proposed starting salary for applicants. Implications of these findings, alternative theoretical explanations, limitations, and future directions are discussed.

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DEDICATION

To my late father:

Richard Anthony Anderson

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

A known, yet often overlooked, societal issue is that former offenders have a disproportionately more difficult time finding and securing work than the general population (Couloute & Kopf, 2018; National Employment Law Project, 2016; Petersilia, 2003). An examination of explanatory factors for this phenomenon suggests that job-relevant factors play a role, but they alone do not explain the incommensurate unemployment rates of former offenders (Schmitt & Warner, 2011). Former offenders also experience unfair prejudice and discrimination in the job market which results in adverse employment outcomes, thereby continuing a negative cycle of unemployment (Brown, 2011). In pursuit of science-based and ethical practice in industrial-organizational (I-O) psychology, the goal of this two-part research project is to (a) identify possible factors that will suppress unfair discriminatory hiring practice regarding former offenders, and (b) begin to evaluate the effectiveness of such suppressors on the adverse hiring bias for former offenders.

The justification-suppression model (JSM) of prejudice (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003) is a model that explains how stigmatized beliefs may or may not lead to the expression of that prejudice and, by extension, to biased outcomes. In short, the JSM posits that genuine prejudice held by an individual goes through a process of being suppressed and/or justified as the person considers several factors. Although changing prejudiced beliefs at the societal level is slow and difficult to accomplish, the JSM implies that the activation of relevant prejudice suppression factors can interrupt the link between an individual's raw, unbridled stigmatizing beliefs and the actual expression of their prejudice (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). Activating suppressors, then, could potentially be one way individual former offenders can improve their employment

outcomes. Thus, I employ the JSM to identify relevant suppressors that former offenders may utilize to positively alter their employment outcomes.

To support this research, I reviewed the following literature in the sections below. First, I provide the rationale for this research to focus on a specific group of former offenders, specifically minor drug offenders. Then I discuss the importance of the research problem and its real-world implications. This section is followed by evidence about performance and other work-related issues of former offenders in specific jobs (e.g., law enforcement, sales). In this section, I discuss the legitimacy of employers' concerns about hiring former offenders and former minor drug offenders. I then review validity evidence for the widely used pre-employment background check. Although there are documented employer concerns regarding the employment of former offenders, there are also documented benefits for employing them. In the sections to follow, I present evidence for the benefits of the employment of former offenders, and discuss several federal, state, and local policies introduced to promote the hiring of former offenders. Finally, I make the case that former offenders' disproportioned employment outcomes are at least, in part, explained by stigma and prejudice. To make this case, I define stigma and prejudice, present evidence of employers' reported prejudice against former offenders, and then apply the JSM to describe how former offender and former minor drug offender (FMDO) applicants may positively alter employers' prejudiced view of them to improve their employment outcomes.

Narrowing the Scope to Former Minor Drug Offenders

The former offender population is multifarious and is comprised of people with different background stories, offense types and numbers, mitigating circumstances, and punitive sentences. Different offenses present different challenges to employment. Furthermore, studying the full heterogeneous population of former offenders would likely obscure important differences

among them. For these reasons, I will focus my studies on the sub-population of *former offenders with minor drug offenses* rather than the broad and heterogenous population of *former offenders*. I use the term *former offenders* to refer to people who have been convicted of a crime and have served the term of their sentence. Accordingly, the term *former offenders with minor drug offenses* refers to former offenders whose offenses are drug-related and minor; for example, relating to drug possession or usage as opposed to trafficking of substantial quantities. As described below, I chose this sub-population (FMDOs) for several reasons.

It is worth noting that although my studies focus on former offenders with minor drug offenses, and relevant research on this sub-population is limited in the applied work psychology literature. As such, many of the references cited to support my rationale for the necessity and importance of my research refer to the broader group of former offenders in general. Research on FMDOs will be clearly identified whenever distinguished from the larger group of former offenders.

Rationale for Focusing on FMDOs

First, drug offenses are still among the most common offenses for incarcerated individuals in America. According to Federal Bureau of Prisons statistics (BOP; 2023), the most prevalent charges for BOP inmates were: (1) “drug offenses” (44.8%), (2) “weapons, explosives, arson offenses” (21.6%), and (3) “sex offenses” (12.0%). Second, employers consider the type of offense committed when considering former offenders for a job and tend to be more reluctant to hire people with violent and sex offenses and more willing to overlook drug charges (Couloute & Kopf, 2018; Rade et al., 2016; Rockeman & Saraiva, 2020).

Third, Americans’ attitudes toward drug use have become more progressive over time (Millhorn et al., 2009; Nielsen, 2010). Pew Research Center reported that in 2019, two-thirds of

Americans supported the outright legalization of marijuana in the U.S., and even more (9 in 10) favor legalizing marijuana for recreational or medical purposes (Daniller, 2019). Finally, and concurrent with the changes in public attitudes toward drug usage, lawmakers have also relaxed drug laws over time, and as such there has been a recent influx of FMDOs back into society. Following President Nixon's declaration of a "war on drugs" in the 1970s, between 1972 and 2009 there was a near 700% growth in the prison population (Ghandnoosh, 2009). Since then, some 40 states revised and softened their drug laws to varying degrees (Desilver, 2014). This has resulted in a modest reduction in incarceration rates across states (Ghandnoosh, 2009). More recently, since 2022, six states – Rhode Island, Maryland, Missouri, Delaware, Minnesota, and Ohio – have passed legislation to legalize the recreational use of marijuana (Hansen et al., 2023).

Hiring Outcomes for Former Offenders and FMDOs

Generally, former offenders are very motivated to work. According to Couloute and Kopf's (2018) report, 93% of people with a history of conviction were either employed or actively looking for a job, compared to 83% in the general population. Nevertheless, the formerly incarcerated are employed at much lower rates than the general population. The unemployment rate of former offenders in 2008 – the most recent year for which data are available – was estimated at 27% (Couloute & Kopf, 2018). This is higher than the unemployment rate of the total U.S. population of any historical time period - even the Great Depression in the 1930s (Couloute & Kopf, 2018). Newly released offenders have an especially difficult time obtaining jobs, as between 60% and 75% of formerly incarcerated people remain unemployed a year after release (Petersilia, 2003; National Employment Law Project, 2016). Couloute and Kopf (2018) provide corroborative evidence of this pattern as they found the unemployment rates of individuals less than 2 years since release to be approximately 32%.

Comparatively, about 21% of people 2-3 years post-release, and 14% of people four or more years since release were jobless.

Legitimate Reasons for Employers' Reluctance to Hire Former Offenders and FMDOs

Although there are several benefits for hiring FOs and FMDOs, there are also substantive risks associated with working with members of these groups. Previous research has found that many employers understandably have concerns about hiring FMDOs, and former offenders more generally. Some of the concerns employers have shared are related to their generally deficient educational attainment, insufficient job skills and work history, history with drugs and alcohol, high rate of recidivism, negligent hire lawsuits due to poor quality hires, and the comfort of coworkers and customers working and interacting with them (Bronson et al., 2017; Hunt & Dumville, 2016; Zakaria et al., 2018). The aforementioned factors that concern employers are referred to in the I-O psychology literature as *job-relevant* selection factors, and many of them have been shown to have predictive validity. Predictive validity refers to the selection method's ability to predict future performance on the job, job-related learning, and other important job-related outcomes (Schmidt & Hunter, 1998). According to Schmidt and Hunter (1998), predictive validity is the most valuable characteristic of a personnel selection method.

Lacking Requisite Qualifications: Education & Job Skills. Arguably the most fundamental concern of employers seeking to fill job vacancies is that the individuals placed in those jobs are qualified and will perform the job well. This fundamental consideration is, however, one of the main barriers FOs and FMDOs face in gaining employment, as these groups often lack the job skills and educational qualifications necessary to meet employers' requirements (Zakaria et al., 2018). The issue of job skills deficiency in former offenders has been raised and discussed across several disciplines, such as law (Thompson, 2003), criminal

justice (Kethineni & Falcone, 2007) and public policy (Uggen et al., 2005). The time former offenders spend in incarceration is time that could have otherwise been spent acquiring education, training, and work experience valued by employers.

Former offenders tend to be at the bottom of the education distribution (Lundquist, Pager, Strader, 2018). Whereas only 13% of the general population have neither a high school diploma nor GED, almost twice as many formerly incarcerated people (25%) have failed to attain at least a high school level of education (Couloute, 2018). Furthermore, whereas people in the general public are more likely to have traditional high school diplomas than GEDs, the opposite is true for formerly incarcerated offenders. Moreover, Couloute (2018) reports that former offenders are eight times less likely to complete college than the general public. Taken together, it is clear that based on job skills and educational attainment, former offenders tend to be less competitive on the job market. This is important because years of education ($r = .10$) and job skills, which is most practically measured by years of job experience ($r = .18$), have been shown to be predictive of job performance (Schmidt & Hunter, 1998), and years of education ($r = .20$) has been shown to predict performance in training programs, (Schmidt & Hunter, 1998).

History with Drugs and Alcohol Abuse. Former offenders, even those not specifically convicted for drug-related crimes, often struggle with drug use and abuse problems. For example, in a study using national survey data and interviews with young inmates in Minnesota prisons, Uggen et al. (2005) found that inmates under age 25 often have a history of drug and alcohol abuse. They further found that among the prison population in 1997, about four in five inmates reported a history of substance abuse, and over 50% reported using drugs or alcohol when they were arrested (Uggen et al., 2005). Correspondingly, results from the National Inmate Survey, using data from 2007 – 2009, found a similar trend (Bronson et al., 2017). Specifically,

compared to about 5% of the general adult population who met the criteria for drug dependence or abuse as outlined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition (DSM-IV), 58% of state prisoners and 63% of sentenced jail inmates met the criteria for drug dependence or abuse (Bronson et al., 2017).

Drug use, abuse and dependence is an issue for former offenders, and FMDOs especially, because many jobs require prospective employees to pass alcohol and drug testing as a pre-employment condition. Some jobs will even conduct random tests for drug use as a condition of continued employment. This practice is especially prevalent in jobs that involve driving and operating dangerous, heavy machinery. Furthermore, empirical studies have shown drug use to predict several job-related outcomes, such as a higher probability of the person being classified as unsuitable after hire (McDaniel, 1988), higher probability of quitting (Hoffmann et al., 2007), as well greater frequency of engaging in work withdrawal activities and antagonistic work behaviors (Lehman & Simpson, 1992).

Likelihood of Recidivism and Re-Offense. Many employers expect, and even *fear*, that former offenders may re-offend and recidivate. This is a legitimate concern as research shows that past behavior predicts future behavior (Aarts et al., 1998). Relatedly, according to a report by the United States Sentencing Commission, across an eight-year period, nearly half (49.3%) of federal offenders in the commission's study had been rearrested and almost a third (31.7%) had been reconvicted. Of the reoffenders, most reoffended within the first two years of release (median = 21 months) (Hunt & Dumville, 2016). Concurrently, the Bureau of Justice Statistics found that among a sample of state prisoners from 30 states released in 2005, about two-thirds (67.8%) were arrested for a new crime within 3 years, and more than three-quarters (76.6%) were arrested within five years (Durose, Cooper, Snyder, 2014). Finally, results from a 2007

study done in the state of Washington showed that drug offenders (62.7%) and property offenders (66.4%) had the highest rates of recidivism, thereby validating employers' concerns about the high risk of recidivism in FMDOs (State of Washington Sentencing Guidelines Commission, 2008).

Negligent Hire Lawsuits. Failure to properly vet applicants or remove problematic employees could result in a negligent hiring and retention lawsuit (Clark, 2019). Employers have a legal obligation to provide a safe work environment that is free from recognized hazards likely to cause harm or death, in compliance with the General Duty Clause of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970. For example, in 2016, a jury awarded over one million dollars in a negligent hiring lawsuit against Woven Metal Products, Inc in Texas after an employee with multiple arrests and a previous conviction shot and killed his coworker while on the job (Burleigh, 2016). If an organization hired an individual who has an extensive history of struggling with drug abuse, and that person injured members of the public due to being under the influence of drugs while operating heavy machinery on the job, the company would be held liable for injuries and damages. Negligent hire lawsuits are therefore valid employer concerns. Organizations therefore must consider the risk that prospective employees bring to the work environment to preserve employee and public safety, as well as to avoid financial burdens and damage to their reputation from lawsuits.

The Role of Offense Type and Industry Laws. An important factor that ought to be considered is that some occupations and industries have laws that disqualify individuals with specific offense types from having certain jobs. For example, the Childcare and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014 (Pub. L. 113-186) requires that childcare organizations complete an eight-part criminal background check of their childcare providers, every five years,

to identify and remove individuals with a history of sexual abuse, child abuse, and neglect. Similarly, even beyond legal mandates, many jobs that require driving or operating heavy machinery, for example, will not consider individuals with a recent conviction of driving while intoxicated (DWI), or driving under the influence (DUI). As such, FMDOs – especially those who were very qualified – are somewhat limited in the types of jobs for which they may even be qualified.

Coworkers' Reactions and Comfort Level. Meta-analytic findings ($k = 19$; $N = 9,355$) from Rade, Desmarais, and Mitchell (2016) found that people have generally negative attitudes toward former offenders, and there is not much variability in these attitudes. In like manner, with a sample of 297 job incumbents, Anderson (2020) found that workers anticipated that their coworkers would disapprove of their companies' recruitment of former offenders to their respective workplaces. Comparatively, the recruitment of other comparison groups (i.e., recent college graduates, career/ professional women, older workers, and welfare recipients) were all anticipated to receive at least some support. Notable also is that incumbents expected their coworkers to exhibit greater levels of hostility toward former offenders than any other comparison group. While this concern may not necessarily be valid, in terms of being linked to performance or turnover, it may still be considered as job-related, especially for employers in organizations that are concerned about the fit of new employees with the existing workforce and organizational culture. Finally, it is important to note that I reviewed literature on employers' concerns about hiring people with various offense types in their background, and some of these offense types are more serious than minor drug offenses. Therefore, some of the material reviewed may not necessarily be valid for FMDOs.

Additional Validity Evidence for Background Predicting Specific Job-Relevant

Criteria: Police, Military, & Sales. Research conducted by Sarchione, Cuttler, Muchinsky, and Nelson-Gray (1998) showed that law enforcement officers cited for dysfunctional job behaviors after being hired (for example: absence, theft, drug use, sexual misconduct, insubordination, and inappropriate verbal conduct toward the public) had worse work histories, as well as more extensive drug use and criminal histories in their backgrounds than their counterparts who were not cited for dysfunctional job behaviors. A similar study conducted by Kane and White (2009), looking at a sample of 1,543 NYPD officers, found that compared to officers who served honorably, those dismissed for misconduct were more likely to have a prior criminal history and have had an NYPD background investigator recommend against their hiring (Kane & White, 2009; White & Kane, 2013).

In a non-law enforcement study, Minor, Persico, and Weiss (2018) found that sales employees with a criminal record were 34% more likely to be terminated for employee misconduct than sales employees without a criminal record. A weaker, marginally significant relationship between criminal record and customer service jobs was also seen, where customer service employees with a criminal record were more likely to be terminated for employee misconduct (Minor et al., 2018). Citing the fact that very little empirical research exists on the topic, Griffith and Harris (2020) explored the relationship between criminal record and objective task performance of customer service representatives in a large telecommunications firm. They found no significant relationship between criminal background and objective task performance. This suggests that former offenders are no better or worse at performing core job tasks than other non-offender workers – at least in the context of customer service representatives at

telecommunications firms. Again, it is important to note that not all research findings presented in this section are related to FMDOs specifically.

All in all, research suggests that a criminal background is associated with higher likelihood of committing (Lundquist et al., 2018), being disciplined for (Sarchione et al., 1998), or being terminated for (Kane & White, 2009; White & Kane, 2013; Minor et al., 2018) dysfunctional work behaviors. To this point it is apparent that *for some limited occupations*, there may be a valid basis for not hiring former offenders at a higher rate. Nevertheless, for most occupations, there are fewer valid reasons for hiring former offenders, especially FMDOs, at such disproportionate levels as compared to the general population. Therefore, while taking a cautious approach to considering the employment of former offenders and FMDOs is reasonable, there is evidence to suggest (discussed in the sections below) that, unless mandated by industry laws, the indiscriminate rejection of all former offenders and FMDOs in an organization's hiring process is an oversimplified and misguided approach to hiring, as there are documented benefits to them.

Supportive Policies for the Employment of Former Offenders and FMDOs

Employment outcomes of FMDOs are disproportionately worse than those of non-offenders, and this problem persists despite supportive policies. Ban-the-box laws, for example, prohibit employers from inquiring about applicants' criminal history on application blanks. Employers are instead required to delay these inquiries and background checks to later in the selection process such as during interviews or after a conditional job offer has been made. The state of Hawaii passed the first ban-the-box law in 1998, and as of the year 2020 some 36 states and over 150 cities and counties had ban-the-box laws (Avery & Lu, 2020). The specifics of ban-the-box laws vary among states and localities, but some policies go as far as to outlaw

discrimination on the basis of criminal background without a legitimate business reason (Maurer, 2018).

In 2012, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) issued guidance on the use of arrest and conviction records in employment decisions to avoid adverse impact in hiring. The EEOC advised employers to consider the “Green factors” relevant to assessing whether exclusion based on criminal history is consistent with business necessity. These factors are: (1) the nature and gravity of the offense, (2) the nature of the job being sought, and (3) completion of sentence and time passed since offense (EEOC, 2012). Along those same lines, federal legislation such as the Second Chance Act of 2008 and the First Step Act of 2018 authorized funding for state and federal re-entry programs; calling for an evidence-based approach to curbing recidivism.

Benefits of Employing Former Offenders and FMDOs

The successful re-integration of FMDOs into the labor market has important benefits for those individuals and for society. The introduction of policies such as ban-the-box and the Second Chance Act of 2008 were principally aimed at promoting individual-level and societal benefits for employing more past offenders. Nonetheless, organizations can also benefit from hiring qualified former offenders, particularly when facing labor shortages (Dean, 2022; Mayer, 2021).

Individual and Societal Benefits

Just as members of the general population benefit from being employed, so do FMDOs. Working people are generally better able to afford critical cost-of-living expenses – such as food, housing, transportation, and healthcare – than the unemployed. Having work also better enables FMDOs to take care of more unique financial responsibilities such as paying court-ordered fines,

monthly parole supervision fees, and fees for mandatory treatment programs (Finkel, 2019). Furthermore, for many formerly incarcerated people, parole is contingent on finding and maintaining employment (Prison Fellowship, n.d.). Broader society also stands to benefit from FMDOs being employed. Employment has been shown to be key in promoting desistance from crime (Laub & Sampson, 2001) lowering rates of recidivism (Lockwood et al., 2016). The majority of incarcerated individuals today are scheduled to be released eventually. Thus, without a feasible path for FMDOs' re-integration into society and the workforce, we are likely to continue seeing high rates of recidivism (Hunt & Dumville, 2016).

Benefits to Organizations

Avoiding Adverse Impact Litigation. Given the disproportionate incarceration of Black and Hispanic men, the indiscriminate disqualification of all applicants based on criminal history could result in adverse impact on the basis of race (EEOC, 2012). Oddly, ban-the-box policies have been shown to sometimes result in more racial discrimination than when employers were legally allowed to ask about criminal records (Agan & Starr, 2018; Emsellem & Avery, 2016). The authors explained that in the absence of applicants' criminal history, employers assumed applicants' criminality based on their race.

Earning Federal Tax Credits. Organizations that hire individuals with a criminal history may receive a federal tax credit through the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) initiative on behalf of the Department of Labor. As described by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), the WOTC initiative credits organizations that hire members of groups that have faced significant barriers to employment.

Addressing Market-Driven Talent Shortages. Labor supply and demand in the U.S. labor market vary periodically (Robertson, 2021), and may be influenced by national and global

events (Lee et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic, for example, has had a profound impact on employment in the U.S as it set off significant workforce changes and mass resignations (Dean, 2022; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). Throughout the pandemic, as a result of stay-at-home orders, millions of Americans either had to work from home, saw reduced hours at work, or lost their jobs entirely. Even with the end of the pandemic, Americans have been slow to return to work. Some reasons for the slow return to work include: an increased preference and desire to work remotely (Mauer, 2021), saved time and money on commuting to work (Geisler, 2021) and increased job opportunities from an employee-driven job market (Maese & Saad, 2021). This employee-driven market has resulted in mass talent shortages across several industries (Maurer, 2023).

Gaining Effective and Reliable Employees. Even for those FMDOs who may be lacking the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs) necessary for more skilled and specialized jobs, entry-level low-skilled positions should be suitable (Minnesota State CAREERwise, n.d.). Yet, despite compelling research demonstrating the valuable contributions that former offenders can make in the workplace, employers persistently overlook their potential.

According to a collaborative research study conducted by the SHRM Foundation and the Charles Koch Foundation (SHRM, 2021), the majority of surveyed human resource (HR) professionals and business leaders, at companies that have hired former offenders, believed individuals with criminal records perform the same or better than non-offender hires across several key areas of job performance (85% HR; 81% business leaders). This is in line with findings from SHRM's 2018 report in which 82% of managers and 67% of HR professionals thought that "quality of hire" of former offenders was equivalent to – or higher than - that of workers without criminal records (SHRM, 2018). As another illustrative example, Lundquist,

Pager, and Strader (2018) conducted a study that followed and compared ex-offender and non-offender US military enlistees from 2002 to 2009. Results indicated that military personnel with felony charges were promoted to higher ranks at a faster rate than enlistees without criminal histories. As a final example, Minor et al. (2018) found that individuals with criminal records had a significantly longer tenure and were less likely to quit their jobs than other workers.

The findings discussed above may at least in part be explained by the *norm of reciprocity* – a concept that is extensively explored in social science (e.g., Perugini et al., 2003; Whatley et al., 1999) and management science (e.g., Belmi & Pfeffer, 2015; Taylor, et al., 2022) literatures. The norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) would suggest that former offenders who are given a chance at employment will often seek to repay their employer in loyalty and commitment to the organization (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2002). Taken together then, hiring FMDOs into positions for which they are qualified can help organizations meet their talent goals. Although former offenders and FMDOs may be less skilled and educated than the general population (Zakaria et al., 2018), they may still be suitable for many low-skilled jobs. Still, despite the potential benefits of hiring FMDOs, and former offenders more broadly, data consistently shows that they face greater barriers to employment and are hired at a lower rate than the general population (Visher et al., 2008; Visher, Debus-Sherrill, Yahner, 2011). Thus, there may be unfair bias associated with hiring decisions regarding individuals with criminal history.

Prejudice Against Former Offenders

In the field of I-O psychology, when disproportionate employment outcomes for groups of people exist and persist over time – as is the case with former offenders as compared to the general population – those outcomes are often at least partially explained by stigma, stereotypes, and prejudice.

Stigma and Prejudice: What Are They?

Stigma comes from the Greek *stizein* which referred to a mark, like a tattoo, which was branded into the skins of slaves, traitors, and criminals as a sign of their moral dearth and inferiority (Herek, 2004; López-Ibor Jr., 2002). Sociologist Erving Goffman re-coined the term in 1963, defining it as a deeply discrediting attribute, ascribed to a target (i.e., person or group), that reduces the target from a whole to a lesser being (Goffman, 1963). The term has been expanded and developed over time such that today there are several types of stigmas. *Public stigma*, as the name suggests, is a generally agreed upon negative stereotype imposed by the broader community on a target group (Chui & Cheng, 2013). A target's internalization of public stigma is referred to as *self-stigma*. Thus, targets can anticipate, perceive, and internalize public stigma (Chui & Cheng, 2013). Research has shown that public stigma itself (Wakefield & Uggen, 2010), as well as its anticipation (Moore et al., 2013), perception (LeBel, 2012), and internalization (Evans et al., 2018), can all impair the successful re-entry of former offenders.

Prejudice is defined as the negative evaluation of a group based on group membership (Crandall et al., 2002). Although it is most often discussed on the basis of race, nationality, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, etc., criminal history is also a factor about which people are prejudiced. As the definitions of stigma and prejudice are very similar, the two terms are often used interchangeably and confused for one another. After reviewing 18 key models to explore commonalities and distinctions between prejudice and stigma, Phelan, Link, and Dovidio (2008) concluded that they are “one animal” rather than two. These results therefore suggest that the terms may be appropriately used interchangeably, and that research in one area can be used to – and often does – inform research in the other.

Employers' Willingness to Hire Former Offenders & FMDOs

There are several indicators of employers' aversion toward hiring FMDOs and former offenders. One of the most vivid indicators of this is the afore-discussed high unemployment rate of formerly incarcerated people compared to the general population. Beyond these summary statistics, there are also studies that explicitly highlight employers' reluctance to hire former offenders. Giguere and Dundes (2002), for example, found that just over half (53%) of Baltimore area employers surveyed (N = 62) said they were willing to hire a former offender. Still, the fact that 53% of employers reported being willing to hire a former offender should be taken with fair skepticism, as Pager and Quillian (2005) uncovered that, when it comes to actually hiring former offenders, employers do not "walk the talk." They reported that employers who indicated a greater likelihood of hiring former offenders were no more likely to hire them in practice.

In an exploratory qualitative study, Crawford and McBride-Owens (2014) interviewed 10 HR hiring managers about their perceptions toward hiring non-violent ex-offenders with college degrees. Results show that just 40% of HR hiring managers said that having a higher degree *would definitely* influence their decision to hire former offenders. One dissenting interviewee went on to explain that in his view, former offenders who obtain their degrees while incarcerated are merely criminals with college degrees; that is, the offense outweighed the subsequent accomplishment.

The Effect/Outcome of Stigma on Applicants: Lower Hiring Prospect

Stigma, or negative stereotypes, affects how people react to – and *behave* toward – targets of stigma. The stereotype content model (SCM) for example, posits that the stereotypes people hold of others influence their emotional reactions toward them (Fiske et al., 2002). Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick's (2007) complementary behavior from intergroup affect and stereotypes (BIAS) model further posits that behavioral tendencies result from people's emotional reactions to the stereotypes they hold of the target.

There is an abundance of empirical studies that have found stigmatized groups to fare worse in their job hunt than the general other. For example, Kosyluk, Corrigan, and Landis (2014) found that employers' hiring behaviors regarding individuals with serious psychiatric disabilities were completely explained by stigma. Similarly, Ho, Shih, Walters, and Pittinsky (2011) found that unemployment stigma exists, and that stigma in turn led to hiring biases against the unemployed. Furthermore, a host of other stigma studies have found that, for example, the stigma carried by obese individuals (Flint et al., 2016; Hebl and Kleck, 2002), military veterans (Stone & Stone, 2015), and people with visible tattoos (Henle et al., 2021) all negatively affect applicants' likelihood of being selected for jobs.

Evidence of Stigma and Prejudice Against Former Offender Applicants

Prejudice is a difficult construct to measure, and Crandall and Eshleman (2003) reported that it is not directly accessible through self-report. Rather, genuine prejudice is implied either through a disconnect between expressed attitudes and intergroup behavior or evaluated unconsciously through implicit attitude measures like the implicit association test (IAT) or the affect misattribution procedure (AMP) (See Blanton, Jaccard, Klick, Mellers, Mitchell, and Tetlock (2009) and Payne and Lundberg (2014) for discussions on the effectiveness of the IAT and AMP respectively).

Anderson (2020) provides a non-self-report assessment of the stereotypes Americans hold against former offenders. In that study, people's stereotyping of former offenders was assessed through others' reports. Participants reported on the stereotypes of the *generalized other* rather than themselves, and as such had no discernible motivation to "save face" by providing socially desirable answers. Consistent with Fiske et al.'s (2002) stereotype content model, participants rated how warm (i.e., warm, tolerant, good-natured, and sincere) and competent (i.e.,

competent, confident, independent, and competitive) society generally perceives former offenders. Results showed that former offenders were characterized as *cold* (as opposed to warm) and *incompetent* (as opposed to competent) and were expected to be among the worst treated employees in the workplace if they were to be hired.

Importantly, former offenders are often seen as less favorable job candidates than others even when former offenders and non-offenders possess the same KSAOs (Pager, 2003). Holzer, Raphael, and Stoll (2002; 2003), for example, found a representative sample of employers from four large metropolitan areas (Atlanta, Boston, Detroit, and Los Angeles) to be generally unwilling to hire ex-offenders. About 62% of employers said they “probably would not” or “definitely would not” hire applicants with criminal records. Furthermore, employers were less willing to hire former offenders than all other stigmatized comparison groups: i.e., people with spotty employment histories (41%), individuals who have been unemployed for a year or more (17%), former or current welfare recipients (8%), and workers with a GED in lieu of a high school diploma (4%).

In a similar but broader study, Graffam, Shinkfeld, Lavelle, and Hardcastle (2004) examined the attitudes of 596 employers, 234 employment services workers, 176 corrective service workers, and 175 prisoners and offenders toward the employability of former prisoners and former offenders. In their study, the authors differentiated between former offenders and former prisoners. Former offenders referred to people involved in community corrections such as local jails or on parole, whereas former prisoners were individuals who were once convicted and imprisoned. All groups combined rated ex-prisoners and ex-offenders as less likely to exhibit work skills, communication skills, and interpersonal skills than the general population. Another noteworthy finding was that employers, correction workers, and employment services workers

alike rated former prisoners and former offenders as less likely to exhibit all three employment-related skills than those groups rated themselves.

Pager (2003) went beyond employers' self-reported attitudes and intention to hire, and instead looked at potential differences in call-back rates of black and white former offenders. Through an experimental audit of 350 employers, a total of 150 white - and 200 black - matched pairs of applicants applied to real entry-level jobs. Results showed that among white men, non-offenders (34%) received more call-backs than offenders (17%); and similarly, among black men, non-offenders (14%) received more call-backs than offenders (5%). Also consistent with past research (Bendick et al., 1994), black non-offenders (14%) received less than half as many call-backs as white non-offenders (34%, $p < .01$). Interestingly, white offenders (17%) received about as many call-backs as black non-offenders (14%), thereby highlighting the intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) of racial and criminal history prejudices acting together.

Pager's (2003) results indicated that being a member of multiple stigmatized groups often has different and more negative effects than belonging to just one. This outcome is consistent with findings in the diversity, equity, & inclusion and feminism studies literatures, and is known as *intersectionality* (Crenshaw, 1990). The basic premise of intersectionality is that individuals have various social and political identities that combine to produce unique experiences of discrimination and privilege (Cho, Crenshaw, McCall, 2013; Crenshaw, 1990). More evidence of this can be seen in the results of studies conducted by Batastini and colleagues (i.e., Batastini, Bolaños, Morgan, 2014; Batastini et al., 2017). In both 2014 and 2017 studies the researchers consistently found that candidates with both a criminal background and a known history of mental illness experienced greater levels of stigma from employers than all other applicant types

(i.e., people with only a criminal background, only a history of mental illness, or neither (i.e., a “healthy” control).

One notable difference between the two studies though is that in the 2017 study, people with both mental illness and criminal histories received lower job acceptability and likelihood of hire scores than all other comparison groups *except* people with only a criminal background. The unique plight of individuals with a criminal history was further highlighted in the finding that although applicants with only a criminal background were expected to be among the best performers, they were also rated among the lowest on job acceptability and likelihood for hire (Batastini et al., 2017). The authors ultimately concluded that employer perceptions appear to be more driven by labels like “ex-offender” rather than job-specific skills. This is consistent with a pervasive issue faced by I-O practitioners: employers’ overreliance on intuition and subjectivity in their hiring procedures, rather than utilizing validated assessments (Highhouse, 2008; Lodato et al., 2011).

On a more positive note though, results from Batastini and colleagues’ (2014; 2017) studies show that educating employers on the benefits of employment for stigmatized groups may improve job acceptability and likelihood of hire ratings to varying degrees. These results therefore suggest that stigma – or at least the product of stigma – may potentially be reduced through stigma management efforts.

Exploring Prejudice Theories

Psychologists and sociologists have studied stigma and prejudice for a long time. Over time, and across different prejudice theories, researchers have offered different explanations for the origin of prejudice, presented evidence of various factors that incite prejudice, and proposed mitigation factors and strategies. In this section, I review several prejudice and stereotype

theories that provided important context for the focal theory of this research project: Crandall and Eshleman's (2003) justification-suppression model (JSM). I highlight key tenets of the theories and discuss my rationale for selecting the JSM over these alternate theories.

Social Identity Theory. Social identity theory (SIT), by Tajfel and Turner (1985), is one of the most widely used and empirically supported prejudice theories. According to SIT, people have an innate inclination to categorize things, including people, into groupings. The theory posits that people have a strong bias in favor of their in-group (i.e., the group to which they belong), and tend to exaggerate the differences between their in-group and other out-groups. They also tend to emphasize the similarities of in-group members. Resultantly, individuals conceptually divide their social world into "us" and "them". Despite the high rate of incarceration in the U.S. compared to the rest of the world, the vast majority of Americans will live their lives without ever being incarcerated (Bonczar & Beck, 1997). Therefore, for most Americans, other non-offenders like themselves are considered to be a part of the figurative "us" and former offenders are "them". Realistically, however, most people may not be aware of the criminal history of the people they interact with.

A central tenet of SIT is that social identity is derived primarily from group membership (Brown, 2000), and the groups to which people belong and identify are an important source of pride and esteem. Research has shown that in-group members will seek to find negative aspects of an out-group, and this maintains and enhances their social identity thereby boosting their self-image (Brown, 2000; Lemyre & Smith, 1985). This suggests that non-offender employers would exacerbate the differences between former offender and non-offender applicants in favor of those members of their non-offender in-group.

Intergroup Contact Theory. Another popular and widely supported prejudice theory is intergroup contact theory. As is the case with the social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1985), in-group favoritism and out-group contempt are central tenets of intergroup contact theory (Pettigrew, 1998). According to Gordon Allport's (1954) *intergroup contact hypothesis* members of one group can positively change their beliefs and attitudes about another through contact with the out-group. Allport's (1954) intergroup contact theory posits that increased contact between groups can reduce intergroup prejudice. More contact between groups does not automatically lead to a reduction in prejudice though. Allport (1954) identified four key factors necessary to enable intergroup contact to reduce prejudice: (1) equal status between the groups with the situation, (2) common goals, (3) cooperation between groups, and (4) authority support for the contact (Pettigrew, 1998; 2021). Over a thousand studies and several meta-analyses (e.g., Beelman & Heinemann, 2014; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Lemmer & Wagner, 2015) have shown that intergroup contact generally reduces prejudice (Pettigrew, 2021). More recent studies have shown that reduced anxiety and increased empathy mediate this effect (Zhou et al., 2019).

Although intergroup contact theory is widely recognized, it also has some drawbacks. Perhaps the most significant drawback is that the theory requires optimal conditions for contact (listed above) which are not always present in real-world situations (Lytle, 2018). This may be especially true when dealing with FMDOs and former offenders, i.e., groups for which it is socially acceptable, and sometimes even legally defensible, to stigmatize their members.

The SCM and BIAS Models. The stereotype content model (SCM; Cuddy et al., 2008) suggests that stereotypes are formed from intergroup and interpersonal interactions and are captured on two dimensions: warmth and competence. The warmth dimension describes the degree to which the target is seen as good-natured, trustworthy, tolerant, friendly, and sincere.

The competence dimension, on the other hand, describes the degree to which the target is seen as capable, skillful, intelligent, and confident (Cuddy et al., 2008). The authors assert that when people first interact, they want to know the other's intentions (i.e., whether they are positive or negative) and their capability to pursue those intentions (i.e., competence). The SCM further posits that different combinations of stereotyped warmth and competence elicit different intergroup emotions and prejudices (Fiske et al., 2002). More specifically, targets perceived as warm but incompetent are said to evoke paternalistic or pity emotions, while the highly competent but cold are believed to evoke envious emotions. On the other ends, targets perceived as highly competent and warm elicit feelings of admiration from the perceiver, whereas those seen as both cold and incompetent are met with contempt.

Behaviors from Intergroup Affect and Stereotypes. Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick (2007) extended the SCM with the introduction of the behavior from intergroup affect and stereotypes (BIAS) model. The BIAS model proposed that behavioral tendencies result from stereotypes and are directly driven by emotional reactions. Taken together, four unique behavioral tendencies are proposed to result from the four possible combinations of high versus low levels of warmth and competence: active facilitation (helping), passive facilitation (associating), active harm (attacking), and passive harm (neglecting; by Cuddy et al. (2008)). Previous research has shown that people believe former offenders are cold, incompetent, and would not get along well with their coworkers on the job (Anderson, 2020). In summary, respondents did not believe that formerly incarcerated individuals were competent and therefore would not be a good fit for the job. They also believed that they (former offenders) would not get along well with their respective coworkers. In the current study, I chose to similarly evaluate the extent to which employers perceived the applicants as warm and competent, as it is possible that their perceived

warmth and competence of applicants could influence their hiring decisions. Although the current study is grounded in the JSM theoretical framework (discussed in greater detail in upcoming sections), I measured perceived warmth and competence as potential alternative explanatory variables or covariates.

Implicit Bias & Prejudice Theory. To this point, all the prejudice theories introduced above imply that people are aware of their prejudice. Researchers and supporters of implicit bias theory, however, would argue that people are not truly aware of the presence of – or the degree of their prejudice toward a target. Implicit prejudice is defined as a negative attitude against a specific social group, of which one is not consciously aware (APA Dictionary of Psychology, n.d.). Implicit bias is derived from past experiences that influence one’s judgments of targets, but this bias is not consciously known by the actor (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). Rather, this cognitive process occurs without one’s conscious knowledge. Over time our cognition and implicit bias is shaped by learned associations between social categories and qualities. An example of such an association is between African Americans and being violent (Hurwitz & Peffley, 1997). Since implicit bias is not something one is thoughtfully aware of, direct measures via self-report are not adequate to measure it. Instead, implicit bias must be measured unconsciously with implicit association tests (IATs).

As further support for this theory, research has found that implicit and explicit attitudes are distinct (Karpinski & Hilton, 2001). Karpinski and Hilton (2001) found that whereas the attitudes expressed by people predicted behavior, implicit attitudes did not. This accentuates an important point that people’s articulated account of their prejudice may not truly reflect their *true* attitudes and feelings about a target – even when they believe what they say to be true. It is by

this phenomenon that we may observe discriminatory behaviors from people who explicitly disavow prejudice (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995).

In the sections above, I presented and briefly discussed other theories that helped to guide the selection of some of my dependent variables and covariates, for example stereotyped warmth and competence. However, I ultimately selected Crandall and Eshleman's (2003) justification-suppression model as the guiding theoretical framework for the current study. In the following section, I elucidate my decision to select JSM as the central theory, and subsequently discuss its key principles.

Prejudice Theory of Choice: The Justification-Suppression Model

The justification-suppression model of expressed and experienced prejudice, introduced by Crandall and Eshleman (2003), is a model of prejudice that explains how the genuine prejudice that one holds internally comes to being outwardly expressed. In other words, it describes the process through which the prejudice in one's head turns into biased behaviors and outcomes that affect others. This distinction between genuine prejudice and expressed prejudice is my primary reason for utilizing the JSM as opposed to the other theories reviewed.

In the present research project, I am most interested in uncovering practical steps that FMDOs can take to improve their employment outcomes. Thus, I am chiefly concerned with positively changing the expression of prejudice rather than the genuine prejudice itself that employers may hold toward FMDOs. In sum, I am interested in the expression of bias rather than the unconscious bias itself. Whereas the utilization of the other theories discussed in the section above would require intervening on the genuine prejudice of employers, which is difficult to accurately measure, a JSM-guided intervention instead targets changing the materialization of prejudice, i.e., employment outcomes. Furthermore, seeking to intervene on employers' genuine

prejudice of former offenders and FMDOs would be incredibly difficult to do because, as discussed in previous sections, there are *legitimate* reasons for them to be cautious about hiring from those populations. Finally, by informing former offenders and FMDOs of practical steps they can take to reduce prejudice against them and increase their chances of employment, I seek to empower them. I aspire to show them that they do have some control over their work and life outcomes.

Genuine Prejudice vs. Expressed Prejudice

Prejudice is said to come from an accumulation of developmental, cognitive, social, and cultural forces from one's in-group about out-group members. Causes of prejudice include *people's natural inclination for social categorization and identity, antagonistic family/ parental teachings, cultural learning* through unfavorable media portrayal, *a rational evaluation of threat* to self or in-group, *group contact* and *intergroup conflict*, and *a target's observed deviation from the norm* (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). Genuine prejudice, which is prejudice in its raw and unmediated form, is a spontaneous, long-lasting, negative affective state that has powerful motivational force (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). Merely thinking about or interacting with a target brings about a tension or energy that can serve as a spark to action (Brehm, 1999; Esses et al., 1994). Unless genuine prejudice is censored or *suppressed*, it will be expressed by the person holding the genuine prejudice toward the target and may even be internalized and accepted into one's own self-concept when someone self-stereotypes.

The JSM authors distinguish between genuine prejudice and subsequent expressions of prejudice and suggest that the prejudice that is eventually expressed may not necessarily be one's true prejudicial feelings. Simply put, people do not always act in accordance with their original unfiltered biased thoughts. Thus, the degree to which expressed prejudice is reflective of genuine

prejudice is based on the influence of other factors – what Crandall and Eshleman (2003) refer to as *suppression* and *justification factors* – in censoring or encouraging the expression of those feelings. Consider as an illustrative example that a genuinely racially prejudiced employer may still follow fair hiring and promotion practices because of the threat of adverse impact and disparate treatment lawsuits. To that end, biased employment decisions can be described as a form of employers' expressed prejudice. However, as JSM posits, employers' genuine prejudice can be moderated by other factors to reduce bias in employment decision-making.

The Suppression and Justification of Prejudice

Justification factors, or *justifiers*, and suppression factors, or *suppressors*, either link genuine prejudice to expressed prejudice (justifiers) or interrupt the link between the two (suppressors). Prejudice suppression is a person's motivated attempt to reduce, deny or avoid their perception and expression of prejudice. It is induced by internal (e.g., *personal standards, beliefs, value systems*) and external pressures (e.g., *performing for an audience or adhering to social norms*) to reduce public expressions and private experiences of prejudice. This process helps people maintain a non-prejudiced appearance and self-concept. The resulting altered thoughts and expressions are short-lived, however, and do not persist as long as the genuine prejudice itself. Unlike the automatic activation of genuine prejudice, the act of suppression requires conscious effort and mental energy. If cognitive resources are unavailable, an attempt at suppressing prejudice may be unsuccessful (Wegner, 1989). This could be because insufficient mental energy engenders diminished critical thinking and a greater tendency toward making superficial judgments (Richards & Gross, 1999). Nonetheless, simply having sufficient mental energy does not necessarily guarantee successful suppression. As suppression is fundamentally an individual's conscious and effortful challenge of their involuntary episodes of genuine

prejudice, this conflict creates mild negative mood and results in built-up energetic tension. Justification relieves that built-up energetic tension by permitting the expression of these prejudices (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003).

Prejudice justification is a primarily cognitive process that creates an opportunity for the genuine experience and expression of prejudice without begetting internal or external sanctions. No amount of justification for prejudice disqualifies it from being conceptualized as prejudice. Justifying factors are things such as cognitions, beliefs, ideologies, attributions, roles, and social situations that give freedom to the public expression and private acceptance of prejudice without guilt or shame. Whereas some suppression factors, such as the value of egalitarianism, can be used to suppress many different types of prejudice, justifications are more specific to the target group. The justification process counteracts suppression, and as the built-up energetic tension from suppression is released, a positive mood is produced. Put simply, justification counteracts suppression and allows the expression of an otherwise repressed prejudice (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003).

Past studies have shown suppressors and justifiers to be linked to various outcomes. For example, in a study looking at customer service employees' stigma of obese shoppers, King, Shapiro, Hebl, Singletary, and Turner (2006) found that in the presence of high justification evidence obese shoppers faced more interpersonal discrimination than average weight shoppers in high-prejudice justification conditions. In another study, conducted by Wang, Arndt, Singh, Biernat, and Liu (2013), the researchers found that when the outcome of a phone call into call service centers were favorable for them, customers who interacted with employees with accents reported greater levels of satisfaction and better customer-employee rapport than when the service outcome was unfavorable for them. In this case, the favorable outcome served as a

suppressor of prejudice against accented customer service employees that extant research and practitioners customarily assume is present. So, then, the JSM suggests that FMDOs who want to overcome prejudice-based barriers to employment may be able to do so if they make employers aware of suppressor factors. This leads me to the goal of my two studies: (1) to identify suppression factors that employers are likely to pay attention to (qualitative study 1), and (2) see if these suppressors are actually effective in improving employment outcomes for FMDOs (experimental design in study 2).

STUDY 1: IDENTIFYING SUPPRESSORS OF ADVERSE HIRING BIAS

There are many potentially relevant prejudice suppression factors that could play a role in containing employers' genuine prejudice against former offenders, and FMDOs more specifically. These suppression factors vary in the extent to which they are within the control of the applicant. For this project, however, I am most interested in suppressors that applicants can reasonably affect, change, or influence during the hiring process or as they prepare to navigate companies' hiring processes. Past studies have documented ways in which former offenders more broadly have attempted to manage their stigma as they seek employment.

Former Offenders' Attempts to Manage Stigma and Prejudice in the Hiring Process

To deal with the reality of being stigmatized by society, former offenders looking for jobs must effectively manage their stigma. Cherney and Fitzgerald (2016) conducted semi-structured interviews of study of 50 Australian parolees (42 men and eight women) about their experiences related to searching for - and securing - work. The researchers were also interested in the barriers they faced and the role that family and friends might have played in their finding employment. Qualitative coding yielded four themes: (1) *anticipated stigma and its consequences*, (2) *the consequences of disclosure for securing employment*, (3) *managing disclosure and framing self-disclosure as a redemption script*, and (4) *the role of social networks in helping to manage stigma*.

Cherney and Fitzgerald (2016) reported that parolees highly anticipated their ascribed stigma and the negative repercussions it would have. They recognized that it would be extremely difficult to transcend the criminal *label* and presumed that their former offender status would not be seen favorably by hiring managers. Because of this, some people sought to circumvent the

anticipated uncomfortable conversations with employers by choosing to not apply (self-selection) to jobs thought would require criminal record checks. Even in jobs they chose to pursue, many struggled with *if*, *how*, and *when* they should disclose their criminal history to employers. About half of the parolees said they would never self-disclose as it only served to reduce their chances of getting and retaining a job.

A common disclosure strategy used by some parolees was to frame their criminal history as the past and present themselves as having “moved on” and changed for the better. Some waited to disclose until after they had been hired and they had proved themselves as a good worker. This did not always have the intended effect, however, as employers sometimes saw this delayed disclosure as an act of dishonesty. Finally, one’s social network was described as key in successfully managing stigma. Close associates such as family, relatives, friends, and romantic partners facilitated access to jobs, and were often instrumental in reducing employers’ concerns by vouching for the applicant’s competencies and commitment to work.

Another way for former offenders to manage ascribed stigma is to employ impression management tactics. Ali, Lyons, and Ryan (2017) found that ex-offender applicants benefited from using impression management tactics that communicate remorse when discussing their past offenses. They found that the use of an apology tactic (accepting responsibility for the offense and acknowledging that they were wrong) or justification tactic (accepting responsibility for the offense but providing an explanation for the offense) when explaining a criminal offense had a positive indirect effect on hiring evaluations. An apology or explained justification for the offense led to raters perceiving applicants as more remorseful, less likely to be deviant in the workplace, and as a result they received more favorable hiring recommendations than when the

excuse tactic (admit wrongdoing but deny responsibility for the offense) was used. The excuse tactic on the other hand had the opposite effect, as it negatively affected hiring evaluations.

Both studies were helpful in uncovering things that former offenders can do to increase their chances of being hired through the suppression of employers' genuine prejudice toward them. It was evident from Ali et al.'s (2017) study, for example, that apologizing and offering a justification for the offense served as prejudice suppression factors.

Another factor that employers tend to consider is offense type. Employers tend to be more reluctant to hire people with violent and sex offenses and more willing to exercise leniency toward drug offenders (Couloute & Kopf, 2018; Rade et al., 2016; Rockeman & Saraiva, 2020). It is therefore feasible that offense type could play the role of a prejudice suppression factor in certain job contexts. As an illustrative example, a hiring manager looking to fill the position of delivery driver could use an applicant's driving under the influence (DUI) conviction as justification for his prejudice toward former offenders. Another hiring manager, however, looking to hire a janitor could look at that same applicant's DUI conviction, conclude that it is unrelated to the job tasks of a janitor as it does not require operating a vehicle, and use the type of offense as motivation to suppress his prejudice toward former offenders. Therefore, given the complexity of identifying prejudice suppressor factors and the limited empirical studies that have identified suppressors that may aid FMDOs in acquiring jobs, I began with a qualitative study to better understand which factors are most relevant for employers, and to identify which of these might be possible for applicants to use. Furthermore, I aimed to anchor my qualitative study within the contemporary historical framework.

Previous studies indicate that individuals with criminal records have historically faced lower employment rates compared to the general population (Brown, 2011). This disparity can

be partly attributed to employer bias and prejudice against those with criminal backgrounds (Schmitt & Warner, 2011). A critical question that arises is whether this situation persists in the present day. How does contemporary employer bias toward former offenders compare to that of the past? Two notable factors that may feasibly influence employers' prejudice and willingness to hire FMDOs are: (1) *acute labor shortages in response to events*, such as the economic downturn following the COVID-19 pandemic, and (2) *recent progressive changes in drug laws*, especially as it relates to the recreational use of marijuana. Accordingly, my research questions for Study 1 are:

RQ1A: What are present day employers' policies toward hiring former minor drug offenders?

RQ1B: What effect have recent changes in drug laws had on employers' willingness to hire former minor drug offenders?

RQ1C: What effect have adverse labor market conditions (such as the "great resignation") had on employers' willingness to hire former minor drug offenders?

RQ2: What suppression factors do employers describe as making them more willing to hire former minor drug offenders?

STUDY 1 METHODOLOGY

Participants

A total of 13 participants were interviewed. These individuals were all employers with experience reviewing applications from people with criminal records. All employers were mid-to-upper-level managers or supervisors who have, and have had, the authority to make hiring decisions in their respective organizations.

To qualify to take part in this study, participants had to meet the following inclusion criteria: (1) be 18 years or older, (2) currently have or recently had hiring decision authority, and (3) have experience with reviewing applications from former offenders. Prior to the interview, all participants completed a screening survey and consent form (via Qualtrics) to ensure they meet the selection criteria. The screening survey described the purpose of the study, compensation for participation, and data and privacy concerns. It also collected participants' demographic information such as the industry they work in, how long they have worked in that industry, and how many years of hiring experience they have. Interviewees reported working in variety of industries that spanned: spray and foam installation (1), HVAC plumbing and electrical (1), gems and jewelry appraisal (1), and various types of wholesale and retail businesses (10). Interviewees had an average of 8 years hiring experience; ranging from as little as 1 year to as many as 23 years. See Table 1 for interviewee profiles.

Author Positionality & Reflexivity

As the lead researcher in this study exploring prejudice suppression factors that FMDOs can use to increase their chances of being hired, I acknowledge the critical role of positionality in interpreting the words of my research participants. Reflexivity involves introspectively analyzing

one's own assumptions, beliefs, and judgment systems, and carefully considering their impact on the research process (Jamieson et al., 2023). Positionality refers to the “multiple overlapping identities” of researchers (Kezar, 2002, p. 96), and this inevitably affects our understanding of our social world (May & Perry, 2014). The act of reflexivity, and the inclusion of a reflexivity and/or positionality statement, is considered a best practice in qualitative research (Johnson et al., 2020) and is considered an essential component of high-quality research (Holloway & Freshwater, 2007). It provides a means to make the researcher's position transparent (DeSouza, 2004), and is essential for demonstrating rigor in qualitative research and establishing credibility (Patton, 1999).

Positionality Statement

In the current study, there were two coders – myself and a graduate research assistant. I designed the study and led the data collection effort, and both coders contributed to interpreting findings of the study. I am an educated (M.S. in I-O psychology), black, male, and senior graduate student living in the United States. I also have 5 years of experience researching – and volunteering to work with – former offenders, and generally have an interest in the successful rehabilitation of formerly incarcerated individuals. Comparatively, my graduate RA is younger, educated (M.S. in I-O psychology), white, female, and a more junior graduate student. She also has an interest in former offender rehabilitation and re-integration into the workforce. I recognize the biases we may bring to the coding and interpretation of the data due to our interests, values, beliefs, racial-ethnic backgrounds, life experiences, and other elements of our identities. For example, as both my RA and I would describe ourselves as advocates for the reintegration of former offenders into society, it is possible that we may have interpreted interviewees' responses

through a more positive lens than people with a more critical view on former offender rehabilitation.

Procedures

Development of Interview Questions

A total of nine interview questions were written and utilized (See Appendix A). Due to the semi-structured nature of the interviews, the order in which the questions were asked, and the number of probing follow-up questions varied from interview to interview, based on conversational flow. Questions were written to serve one of two purposes: (1) to provide direct answers to specific research questions, or (2) to provide supplemental context to interview responses.

Questions Targeting Specific Research Questions. Questions 1-3 were written to answer RQ1 and its sub-questions (i.e., today's employers' attitudes toward hiring FMDOs and the effects of recent drug laws and adverse labor market conditions), and Questions 4, 8 and 9 were written to answer RQ2 (i.e., suppression factors that make employers more willing to hire former minor drug offenders).

Questions Providing Supplemental Information. In addition to asking interview questions geared toward answering specific research questions, I also asked a few supplemental questions. These additional questions were aimed at uncovering nuances and providing deeper insights that contribute to a more holistic understanding of the subject matter. Question 5 ("What are some things or factors that make – or have made – you unwilling or less willing to hire or 'take a chance' on former drug offender applicants?") was included in the list of interview questions because collecting prejudice justification factors is consistent with the JSM and may provide insight into the distinctiveness and potential overlap of suppressors and justifiers. Question 6 ("Describe the characteristics of a candidate in general (not just former offenders)

that you would strongly consider for employment?") gives me insight into the potential similarities and differences in what employers are looking for in former offenders with minor drug offenses, and non-offender applicants. Finally, Question 7 ("How do you assess these characteristics and qualifications you value?") allows me to probe the processes and tools employers use to evaluate the very things they claim to be making hiring decisions on. It gives me a sense of how much objectivity versus subjectivity is involved in hiring processes.

Interview questions were written in accordance with subject matter expert (SME) tips and best practices (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Kallio et al., 2016; Roulston, 2010). For example, I made sure to: utilize an interview guide and script, ask open-ended questions, keep my questions simple and focused on a singular subject, use language familiar to participants, and structure the order of questions in a logical manner.

Interview Format

To investigate my research questions, I utilized the semi-structured interview format. Semi-structured interviews balance the standardization of structured interviews and the flexibility of unstructured interviews. Through my use of semi-structured interviews, I was able to ask each participant the same set of open-ended questions, while also maintaining the flexibility to probe interviewees' responses to unearth richer information, or ask questions in a different order, based on the flow of the conversation. Given that I sought to ask employers about their own potential biases, I thought it would be especially important for interviewees to feel comfortable during the interview process, and a free-flowing and conversational interview helps to facilitate this (Adams, 2015).

Pilot Testing of Interview Questions

After writing my initial set of interview questions, I had them reviewed by two SMEs from my professional network. One SME has dedicated much of her life's work to counseling

and helping former offenders to successfully re-enter society. She was the founder of a staffing agency that specialized in helping former offenders find jobs and did this for almost 15 years. As such, she understands the perspectives of both former offender applicants and employers. My second SME is an individual who was formerly incarcerated for a non-drug-related crime and has since successfully re-integrated into society and the workforce. Although his offense type may not be representative of my population of interest, still as a formerly incarcerated individual, he personally understands the difficulties former offenders face as they navigate the job market and can speak to strategies that he found to be helpful in getting jobs. Each SME provided a critical review of my initial interview questions, and offered suggestions on questions to consider revising, adding, and dropping.

After amending my interview questions, I then piloted the revised interview questions with a SME that met the identified criteria of my target population. To simulate the “real” experience for both the interviewer and interviewee, the pilot interview was conducted in a manner that closely adhered to the planned procedure for interviews of the actual study. Immediately following the pilot interview, I conducted a cognitive interview of the participant to better understand her thought process as she heard, thought about, and responded to the interview questions. Cognitive interviewing is a pre-testing methodology used to explore how well respondents understand the wording of survey or interview questions. This allows researchers to revise instructions and questions to ensure that respondents comprehend researchers’ questions as they intended (Drennan, 2003). Feedback from the cognitive interview was then used to further refine my interview questions. The most tangible improvements that stemmed from the pilot test and cognitive interview were: (1) re-wording some questions to better probe my

research questions, and (2) adding follow-up questions and interviewer notes in anticipation of interviewees asking clarifying questions.

Participant Recruitment

I recruited prospective interviewees using several methods and sources: (1) through use of popular job search websites, (2) advertising on Mechanical Turk, and (3) by following up on previous interviewees' referrals.

Exploring Job Search Websites. I first searched Indeed.com and LinkedIn to find organizations that openly hire former offenders, through searching the key phrases: "felon friendly employer," and "second chance employer." I further searched the websites to find organizations that do not necessarily identify themselves as felon-friendly, but also do not automatically disqualify individuals with criminal records. To do this, I analyzed the description of job postings to see if they explicitly conveyed a policy of automatically rejecting applicants with a criminal background. In short, I sought to identify organizations that allow their hiring personnel reasonable autonomy in making decisions on hiring former offenders. Indeed.com was determined to be a good place to find employers, and prospective participants, as it is the most popular job search engine in the U.S. (Betterteam.com, 2020). In 2016, Indeed delivered 65% of all on-line hires in the U.S. (Marino, n.d.), and according to Indeed.com (<https://www.indeed.com/about>), the site has 250 million unique monthly visitors, and adds 10 jobs per second globally. LinkedIn was thought to be a good place to source participants as the platform has nearly 800 million users, approximately 57 million companies, and 2.9 million groups listed (Szomszor, 2021). Ultimately, just one interviewee was successfully recruited from these sources over the span of about six weeks.

Mechanical Turk Advertising. Second, I used Amazon's Mechanical Turk to screen for potential interviewees by inviting MTurk users to take a five-question screening survey. Persons

who met the inclusion criteria for the interview study were given details about the study and invited to take part in it at a later date and time. All MTurk users were compensated \$0.05 for completing the brief screening survey irrespective of their decision to participate in the interview study. A total of four interviewees were successfully recruited from this source over the span of about four weeks.

Snowball Sampling Method. My third method of identifying potential interviewees was by soliciting referrals from previous interviewees about people they knew that met the inclusion criteria and would likely be interested in taking part in the study. Although I initially planned on exclusively using the job search sites (Indeed.com and LinkedIn) and MTurk as my sources for finding interviewees, the use of the snowball method became necessary after these other methods became ineffective at efficiently yielding interviewees. A total of eight interviewees were successfully recruited using the snowball sampling method.

Evaluating the Point of Data Saturation

I terminated the collection of interview data after conducting 13 interviews – the point at which I reached data saturation. Data saturation is the point in data collection and analysis that additional incoming data fails to add or introduce new information (Strauss, 2017; Guest et al., 2020). It underscores the researcher’s confidence that they have obtained sufficient richness of information, and that continued data collection would be redundant (Hennick, Kaiser, Marconi, 2017). To calculate saturation, I utilized Guest et al.’s (2020) methodology.

Before using Guest et al.’s (2020) methodology to calculate the point and level of saturation, I had to make a few subjective but critical a-priori decisions about the study’s *base size*, *run length* and *new information threshold*. The base size is the *minimum number* of interviews to be analyzed and used to calculate the amount of information gained. The *run length* is the number of interviews within which the analyst looks for new information. *New information*

threshold is the level of deficiency of new information the analyst accepts as evidence of adequate saturation. In an experiment looking at data saturation and variability, Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) found that data saturation occurred within the first 12 interviews. Likewise, in a separate study with similar research objectives, Ando, Cousins, and Young (2014) found that all themes and codes were generated from the first 12 interviews. Taking that, and the findings of other similar studies into account (cf. Hennick et al., 2017; Francis et al., 2010), I opted for a base size of 10, run length of two interviews, and a new information threshold of 0% (i.e., no new information yielded). With these established a-priori criteria, I calculated the point of data saturation using the following steps:

- (1) Prior to analysis, I established a *base size* (10), *run length* (2), and *new information threshold* (0%).
- (2) Found the number of unique themes for the base set of interviews.
- (3) Found the number of unique themes for the first [subsequent] run.
- (4) Calculated the *saturation ratio* by dividing the number of new themes in the first [subsequent] run by the number of unique themes in the base set of interviews.
- (5) Compared the yielded *saturation ratio* to the a-priori *new information threshold*. If it met the threshold, then saturation has been achieved.
- (6) If the saturation ratio did not meet the established new information threshold, I continued coding runs, until the saturation ratio met the new information threshold.

I therefore concluded that I reached a point of saturation with 13 interviews after determining that interviews 12 and 13 did not yield any themes that were not already introduced in interviews 1-11.

Interview Procedure

Regardless of which recruitment method was used to identify prospective participants, when they expressed interest in taking part in the study, I first confirmed that they had met the inclusion criteria before scheduling their interview at a time convenient for both of us. After scheduling the interview, I e-mailed the interested party a link to a brief Qualtrics survey that collected their contact information, demographic information, and their informed consent.

Consenting participants called the phone number provided to them at the scheduled date and time of the interview. The fact that participants themselves had to call in served as an additional layer of consent. After calling in, I greeted participants, reviewed key aspects of the consent form (such as the use of audio recording and data privacy concerns), and answered any questions they may have had. The audio-recording was initiated prior to me asking the first interview question and automatically ceased when the call ended. Each participant received \$40 compensation and was emailed a debriefing statement within 48 hours of completing their interview.

Transcription

At the conclusion of each interview, the interview audio file was uploaded to NVivo 14 (Lumivero, 2023) and transcribed using NVivo's transcription feature. NVivo is a widely used qualitative analysis software program. After each interview audio was transcribed, I conducted a quality control listening and read-through of the interview recording and software-produced transcript. I did this to check for – and correct – potential spelling errors and to make note of non-verbal details such as pauses in speech.

Coding Technique

Transcribed interviews were analyzed using the thematic analysis coding technique. Thematic analysis, in its most basic form, is defined by Braun and Clarke (2006) as a qualitative analysis method in which researchers identify, analyze, and report patterns of meanings –

referred to as themes – within data. It may also be taken a step further as researchers offer their interpretation of their findings (Boyatzis, 1998). A theme is defined as a coherent integration of the disparate pieces of data (i.e., codes) that constitute the findings (Sandelowski & Leeman, 2012), and captures something important to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Rationale for Thematic Analysis. According to Ayres (2007), thematic analysis or content analysis is appropriate for answering questions such as concerns people may have about an event, or the reasons people have for doing, or not doing, something. Given that I asked employers about their thoughts, feelings, and concerns about hiring former offenders, as well as their suggestions on how former offenders may overcome their ascribed stigma, thematic analysis was thought to be an appropriate analytic technique. Additionally, Braun & Clarke (2006) postulated that thematic analysis is the first qualitative method of analysis that researchers should learn as the classification of meanings into smaller units of themes is a skill that is universally used across the various qualitative analysis methods (Holloway & Todres, 2003). It is independent of theory and epistemology and can be applied to a wide range of theoretical approaches. This makes thematic analysis a flexible and practical research tool, especially for researchers new to qualitative analysis. Vaismoradi, Turunen, and Bondas (2013) concur in saying that thematic analysis and content analysis should be employed by qualitative researchers at the beginning of their research careers.

Calculating and Establishing Intercoder Reliability

It is important for qualitative researchers to acknowledge their own theoretical positions, values (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2012), and relevant life experiences in relation to the qualitative study at hand. These factors may influence the questions we ask and the meaning we glean from the data. As objective as researchers may try to be, they still must make subjective decisions on what pieces of information from the data “fit together,” what pieces are “worth reporting,” which

pieces can be disregarded, and then give their own interpretation of it all (Fine, 1992). In acknowledgement of this, I chose to include a research assistant in the coding and codebook development process. To help circumvent this potential issue of the interpretation of data being a product of my singular perspective and way of thinking, I sought the second opinion of a research assistant (RA).

Calculating Intercoder Reliability. I calculated intercoder reliability using Cohen's kappa. Cohen's kappa is increasingly preferred over simple proportion agreement methods and recommended by qualitative researchers as unlike proportion agreement methods it takes into account the possibility that raters may occasionally agree by chance (Bernard, 2000; Campbell et al., 2013). Coefficient k estimates the proportion of agreement after chance is removed from consideration (Cohen, 1960).

$$k = \frac{p_o - p_c}{1 - p_c}$$

In the formula above, p_o is the proportion of units in which raters agree, and p_c is the proportion of units for which agreement is expected by chance. Kappa values $>.80$ indicate very good levels of coding agreement and is the recommended standard (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yardley, 2008).

Coding Procedure

I modelled my coding process after Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step process for conducting thematic analysis, with a slight modification. First, I familiarized myself with the data by reading and re-reading interview transcripts and jotting down my initial thoughts and impressions. Second, I generated initial code by coding noteworthy details of the data across the entire data set. I also gathered data relevant to each code to begin drafting the initial codebook (See Table 2 for the final codebook). Third, I collated codes into potential themes, and gathered

data relevant to each theme to serve as exemplars. At this stage I worked with a research assistant to establish intercoder reliability. Fourth, I reviewed my themes to check that they make sense in relation to coded extracts, and the broader data set. At this stage, I began generating a thematic map which is an illustrative summary of my findings from the qualitative coding process. Fifth, I refined theme names and definitions, and the story being told by the overall data. This was an iterative process. Sixth, and finally, I selected compelling extract examples of themes to produce an analytic narrative that addresses the research questions. I related themes and extracts back the literature, in my discussion section, and produced a final thematic map that ties emergent themes and codes together. See Figure 1 for the final thematic map.

Deviations from Initial Coding Plan

Braun and Clarke's (2006) process suggests establishing interrater reliability at Step 2, rather than at Step 3 as I did in my modified coding procedure. It should be noted that, I intended for my RA and I to code a subset of interviews at the same pace, rather than me coding all 13 interviews before the RA coded their first. We were then to establish intercoder reliability and jointly refine the codebook before I moved forward with independently coding the remaining interviews. This planned course of action was ultimately not carried out because I had a change of RAs during the coding phase of my analysis plan, and after the first few interviews had already been coded. Instead of delaying qualitative analysis for another RA, I opted to continue coding interviews. At the point at which the second and final RA joined the research endeavor, I had concluded my coding of all 13 interviews. I therefore chose to revise my approach to measuring and establishing inter-coder reliability. Although my RA was introduced to the process later than initially planned, her input was still used to revise the codebook where appropriate.

Revised Coding Strategy

As the lead researcher, I coded all 13 interviews, and my research assistant coded a subset of them. Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, and Pedersen (2013) assert that it is appropriate to assess inter-rater reliability on a sample of texts, especially when resources do not permit all researchers coding each interview. Hodson (1999) recommends using at least 10% of the total sample of texts. This means that with 13 interviews are conducted and coded, the use of four for inter-rater reliability calculations is acceptable.

I first coded all 13 interviews and drafted a preliminary codebook independent of the RA. The RA then independently coded two interviews selected at random and drafted their own codebook. We then met to review and discuss the similarities and differences in our codes and respective codebooks. At this point, the intercoder reliability was calculated to be $k = .81$, which meets the $k > .80$ standard. Still, in pursuit of even greater stronger agreement, we discussed and resolved discrepancies to the point that we agreed on a unified coding approach and codebook.

Both the RA and I then independently coded an additional two interviews, chosen at random, using the revised codebook. Given that I had already coded these interviews, I instead went through a process of re-coding those select interviews. Again, we met to discuss similarities and differences in our coding and resolved discrepancies to produce the final codebook. The intercoder reliability was again calculated to be $k = .81$. I then used the final codebook to independently re-code and revise all remaining interviews that were not jointly coded (See Table 2 for the final codebook).

STUDY 1 RESULTS

RQ1: Employers' Reported Policies on Hiring Former Minor Drug Offenders

RQ1A asks what are present day employers' policies toward hiring FMDOs? To answer RQ1A, I examined employers' responses to the questions: "What is your policy regarding hiring former drug offenders (with minor offenses)?" and the follow-up questions of: "Is that your personal policy?" and "Is there a difference in your personal policy and the organizational policy?" (i.e., Interview Question 1) to further understand similarities and differences between the employer's personal hiring policy and their company's policy. I used the semantic approach of thematic coding to examine employers' responses to the interview questions. A semantic approach to thematic coding requires analyzing the explicit content of the data. This means, taking the data as-is, and at face value (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Alternatively, a latent approach to thematic coding involves reading into the context and underlying meaning to interpret the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

All employers (13 of 13 employers) described themselves as being *open to hiring* FMDOs. As a reminder to the reader, employers were not restricted from participating in the study based on their willingness to hire FMDOs. Still, in the current sample of employers all described themselves as being open to hiring FMDOs.

Nevertheless, although all employers were *at least willing* to consider hiring someone from that sub-population, they varied in *how willing* they were, and *how likely* they were to act on their willingness. At one end of the spectrum was an employer (Interviewee 1) whose business intentionally caters to and recruits former offenders. Interviewee 1 explained "I mean, my policy is, that [providing employment to former offenders] is the reason my business was

founded.” On the other hand, most employers described a more conditional approach toward hiring FMDOs and their propensity to act on that willingness. Interviewee 9, for example, stated “I have to take everything as a case-by-case basis,” and Interviewee 5 explained “Before the pandemic, we might have looked at someone a little bit harder and maybe, maybe not hire them.” See Table 1 for more details on how each interviewee responded to interview questions relevant to RQ1.

RQ1B & RQ1C: The Influence of Drug Laws & Labor Market on Hiring Policies

RQ1B and RQ1C sought insight on the extent to which employers thought recent changes in drug laws and acute labor shortages (e.g., the “great resignation”) following the COVID-19 pandemic influenced their policies toward hiring FMDOs. To answer RQs 1B and 1C, employers were asked: “How have changes in drug laws affected your hiring policy?” (Interview Question 2) and “How has the current labor market (and the “great resignation”) affected your hiring policy regarding hiring former drug offenders with minor offenses?” (Interview Question 3). Again, and as was done with RQ1A, the semantic approach to thematic coding was used to answer RQs 1B and 1C.

The Influence of Recent Progressive Changes in Drug Laws

The majority of employers (10 of 13) indicated that recent changes in drug laws across the U.S. did not have a meaningful impact on their personal policy for hiring FMDOs. Interviewee 13’s response to the question of “How have changes in drug laws affected your hiring policy?” encapsulates the sentiments of the 10 employers who said their policies have been unaffected by recent drug law changes. Interviewee 13 stated:

I don't think it really changed it, simply because I kind of think major jail sentences for minor drug charges is a bit extreme anyway. So, when the states were changing their drug laws, it really didn't have an effect on my personal opinion on the hiring process, cuz I already thought that they deserved the shot and a chance to, you know, wipe the stain from their name.

The remaining three of 13 employers (interviewees 5, 11, and 12) shared that their personal hiring policies had in fact been affected by recent drug law changes such that they are now more willing to consider hiring former offenders with minor offenses than they were prior to the progressive law changes. When asked if he thinks the recent changes in drug laws have had an effect on his personal willingness to hire former offenders, Interviewee 12 responded: “Yeah. Especially if it's for one of the things that we now say is okay when before we said it wasn't. Like, that's not really fair to them.”

The Influence of Labor Market Conditions

As was the case with recent changes in drug laws, most employers (10 of 13) indicated that their personal hiring policy regarding former minor drug offenders had not been meaningfully influenced by the (then current) adverse labor market conditions resulting from the global COVID-19 pandemic and the related “great resignation”. The following excerpt from interview 4 captures the positions of the 10 employers who reported that their personal hiring policies were not affected by the (then current) labor shortages:

Researcher: How has the current labor market and the great resignation affected your policy regarding hiring former offenders with minor drug offenses?

Interviewee 4: Um, it really hasn't. It... it hasn't changed.

When asked if the current adverse labor market conditions have had an impact on their personal policy regarding hiring former minor drug offenders, interviewees 5 and 11 responded affirmatively, and one interviewee did not answer the question. Interviewee 11 explained that it is difficult to protect the store’s merchandise and meet customers’ needs when there is insufficient staffing coverage. Therefore, as staffing needs and the difficulty to fill vacancies increase – such as when the labor market favors applicants, and during the holiday season – so does his willingness to consider hiring FMDOs. Interviewee 5 mirrored those sentiments, stating:

Let's say, let's go back to 2019. Before the pandemic, we might have looked at someone a little bit harder and maybe not hire them if we thought that there was some issue there. Now we tend to be a little bit more flexible. We almost have to, because as I said, the labor market is so terribly tight, particularly for our retail industry.

In summary, although employers varied in how willing they were to hire FMDOs, all interviewees described themselves as being *at least willing* to do so. Furthermore, although most employers agreed that recent changes in drug laws and labor market conditions (e.g., the “great resignation”) did not have a significant effect on their willingness to hire FMDOs, 2 of 13 employers indicated that these factors influenced their hiring policies concerning FMDOs. In the section below, I discuss the factors, referred to as prejudice suppression factors (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003), that employers identified as influencing their willingness to hire FMDOs.

RQ2: Suppression Factors that Increases Employers’ Willingness to Hire FMDOs

RQ2 asks what suppression factors employers describe as making them more willing to hire former minor drug offenders? To answer RQ2, employers’ responses to Interview Question 5 (“What are some things or factors that make you – or have made you – willing or more willing to hire or ‘take a chance’ on former minor drug offender applicants?”), Interview Question 8 (“If a loved one of yours was a FO with a minor drug offense, how would you advise them to go about increasing their chances of getting hired?”) and Interview Question 9 (“From your perspective, what are things that FOs can do to mitigate employers’ negative perceptions of them?”) were coded and analyzed.

Although most suppression factors coded from the interview transcripts were yielded from interviewees’ responses to questions 5, 8 and 9, responses from *all* questions across the entire interview were also considered and analyzed for potential suppression factors. This more expansive and inclusive coding was done to account for instances in which interviewees provided information relevant to RQ2 (i.e., describing suppression factors) in their answers to

other interview questions. A latent approach to thematic coding (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006), involving reading into the context and underlying meaning of responses, was utilized to examine interviewees answers to questions. Results from the coding process were organized into a set of codes, first-order themes, and second-order themes.

Codes are descriptive individual pieces of information that are the closest representation of what participants discussed (Gioia, 2021). I organized codes derived from employer interviews into first-order themes. Whereas codes are more descriptive in nature, themes are more interpretive and are the result of an integration of related codes (Sandelowski & Leeman, 2012) that capture something important to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Gioia, 2021). Themes derived directly from codes were referred to as first-order themes. I then summarized related first-order themes into second-order themes. Second order themes are the result of a synthesis of related first-order themes. They are the summative articulation of the interrelationships between first order-themes and underlying their codes (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Gioia, 2021). See Figure 1 for an illustration of the relationship between codes, first-order themes, and second-order themes.

The second-order themes that emerged from the qualitative analysis process were: (1) situation-related suppression factors, (2) employer-related suppression factors, and (3) applicant-related suppression factors. I operationalized situational suppression factors as *things that make an employer more willing to hire FMDOs that are outside of the control of the applicant and employer*. I classified employer-related suppression factors as *characteristics of an employer that makes them more willing to hire FMDOs*. Thirdly, I defined applicant-related suppression factors as *characteristics of a FMDO that makes employers more willing to hire them*. Importantly,

applicant-related suppression factors were thought of as *things within an applicant's power to change in preparation for their pursuit of employment.*

Situation-Related Suppression Factors

The situation-related suppression factors discussed by employers as making them more willing to hire FMDOs were: (1) progressive changes in drug laws, (2) unfavorable labor market conditions, and (3) the details of the case.

Progressive Drug Law Changes and The Labor Market. The first two situation-related suppression factors (i.e., drug laws and labor market conditions) were addressed in the results of RQ1 above. In summary, two (2 of 13) employers said they were more willing to consider hiring FMDOs due to the unfavorable turn of the labor market. Similarly, two (2 of 13) employers shared that recent progressive changes in drug laws have made them more lenient in their consideration of hiring FMDOs (See Table 1 for interviewee profiles). Below, I expound on the influence that the details and context of the offense has on employers' willingness to hire FMDOs.

The Details of the Case. Although all employers were open to hiring former minor drug offenders, for some employers (8 of 13 interviewees), their willingness to hire someone with a minor drug offense charge depends on the details of the charge and the surrounding circumstances. These employers were interested in knowing, for example: What are the details of the case? What type of drugs were involved? What was the applicant's role in the crime? Was it just a situation of "wrong place, wrong time"? When it comes to offense type, Interviewee 2 maintained that "drug possession is not a big deal." As it relates to drug type, Interviewee 8 shared that she would be more concerned about crystal meth or heroin-related charges than a marijuana-related charge, which she described as "non-descript." Finally, for the details of the

situation, employers were mainly looking to understand the nature of the legal situation and how the applicant got into the situation. Interviewee 11 explained: “For instance, a friend of mine got a minor drug offense by being caught with weed in Ocean City when he was 17 during senior week. You know, if it's something like that... I wouldn't even bat an eye.”

Employer-Related Suppression Factors

Employer-related suppression factors are characteristics or values of an employer that make them more likely to take a chance on hiring a FMDO. As is the case with situation-related suppression factors, applicants have no say or input on these factors.

Employers’ Worldview. Roughly half of the employers (7 of 13) indicated that their openness to hire former minor drug offenders – and former offenders as a whole – stems in part from their worldview. These employers believed in the rehabilitation and redemption of FMDOs (and former offenders broadly). Yet, in some instances, they were also critical of the American criminal justice system. Interviewee 8, for example, explained:

I do believe that instead of having criminalization for drugs, people shouldn't be penalized for usage of drugs. If they get caught with drugs, they should be given like rehab resources and, you know, things to help them out, get out of that instead of: “Oh, well we caught you with this drug, so we're gonna lock you up for, you know, however many years.”

Employers’ Personal Life Experiences. Some employers (4 of 13) explained that they were particularly empathetic toward minor drug offenders because they themselves have made mistakes in the past. Several interviewees disclosed that have had a loved one in a similar situation before, and some even shared that they themselves have had personal encounters with the justice system in the past. As a result of these direct and indirect personal encounters with the justice system, these employers tend to be more understanding as they have seen, and sometimes experienced, how difficult it can be to overcome the stigma ascribed to formerly incarcerated individuals to re-integrate into the workforce. Interviewee 3 for example shared: “I believe in

giving people second chances. I've been arrested for, in my past, for a DUI and alcohol stuff, and I believe in giving second chances almost 100%.”

Employer’s Subjective Assessment of Applicant. A few employers (3 of 13) reported making a subjective evaluation of applicants based solely on their intuition rather than any discernible pieces of evidence. Said simply, some employers reported trusting their gut feeling about applicants. Thus, when employers have a good gut feeling about FMDO applicants, they are in turn more likely to take a chance on hiring them. “... I guess I would have to say taking people at face value... You know, there's always that kind of feeling that you get, and unfortunately that would be based on my perception.” – Interviewee 11.

Employer’s Deference to Company Background Check Policy. Four employers reported that their personal hiring policy for FMDOs was to defer to the company’s background check applicant filtering process. This factor was specifically endorsed by four employers that although they have the authority to use their discretion in hiring decisions, they were not themselves the authors of the company’s policies on what types of offenses result in the disqualification of an applicant. These employers explained that once applicants pass the company’s more stringent background check, they no longer personally considered their background as a relevant factor. “But we don't have a problem as long as they have a good reputation, and they pass a background check. Everyone gets background checked because of the nature of the industry.” – Interviewee 2

Applicant-Related Suppression Factors

Applicant-related suppression factors in this study were operationalized as qualities of the applicant or factors that a FMDO can reasonably control or develop over a period of time before applying for a job or while being considered for a job. Applicant-related suppression factors,

unlike situational and employer-related suppression factors, are things an applicant has the power to control or influence. Most (23 of 30) of the factors that employers described as making them more likely to hire FMDOs were applicant-related suppression factors. Therefore, if FMDOs were informed that employers value these factors, they could be working on these qualities/factors between their release time and a job interview.

Each element that was described as making employers more likely to take a chance on hiring FMDOs was coded as a suppression factor. See Table 2 for the complete list of suppression factor codes. After the coding of interviews, I condensed all applicant suppression factor codes discussed by employers into first-order themes by grouping similar and related ideas together. Employers want: (1) *evidence that applicants have desisted and changed for the better*, (2) *honest disclosure, but vary on when applicants should disclose*, (3) *applicants who are serious and sincere about work*, (4) *applicants to present themselves well in the interview*, and (5) *signs of stability in applicants' non-work life*. I will now discuss each of these overarching themes and describe the codes that encompassed each one.

Theme 1: Evidence that Applicants Have Desisted and Changed for the Better

All employers (13 of 13 interviewees) expressed a desire to see evidence that the applicant has desisted, moved on from that stage in their life, and is therefore unlikely to re-offend. According to interviewees 8 and 9, with re-offending comes an increase in a several adverse outcomes for employers, such as employees using drugs while on the job, having unreliable employees, suddenly losing workers who are eventually re-arrested, and a potential hit to the company's reputation. Employee 8 explained:

You do not want to have to hire someone and then they go out and repeat the same behavior and they end up in jail, and then you've lost your employee after a certain amount of time – that's another factor. You want to find someone who is going to at least

be there a little long term, or they can give you notice for when they're going to leave and not just be a sudden type of thing.

Employers discussed several factors that they consider as signs of desistance from crime and positive change in the applicant's life. These factors are discussed below:

Articulation of Positive Growth & Positive Changes. Although all employers sampled expressed wanting to see that former offender applicants have learned from their mistakes and grown since offending, there was some variability in what they would look for as evidence of this. Some employers (6 of 13) said that they wanted former offender applicants to explicitly verbalize this to them in the interview. Interviewee 3, for example, advised the following: "I would tell somebody. Lay out the positive things. Tell them what they did wrong and how they've changed and what they've done to, you know, be a different person than they were back then."

Low Number of Offenses. Some employers (6 of 13 interviewees) divulged that individuals with lengthy criminal histories are seen as unattractive prospects because repeat offenses may be an indication that the individual is a career criminal. They see this as an issue because repeat offenses suggest to them that the individual either does not want to change or that despite their best efforts, they cannot help themselves. Employers therefore tend to be more lenient toward one-time offenders and individuals with few offenses compared to those with extensive criminal histories. Accordingly, Interviewee 12 stated: "If it's a one-time offense then I would – we would keep that option open." Interviewee 2 echoed those sentiments in saying: "It depends. Since how many offenses you have, then it looks habitual. Then you start wondering whether they really want to change."

Meaningful Time Passed Since Last Offense(s). For many employers (6 of 13 interviewees), seeing a considerable amount of time passed since the applicant has committed a

crime is a welcomed sight that helps to ease their concerns about the individual's likelihood of re-offending and recidivating. They posited that the longer one goes without re-offending, the higher the probability that they have committed their last offense, the more time they have had to "work on themselves" (Interviewee 12), and the lower their risk to re-offend. Interviewee 11 explained:

Number one [suppression factor] is the length of time since [the offense]. Because it shows there's more time or more potential that that person has developed or grown past whatever that drug offense was. And if they haven't had any additional drug offenses since that most recent one, and it's been a certain amount of time, let's say in this example, maybe two years or more, then that is kind of reinforcement that this person is maturing past that, or they're not in a position or situation that would make them feel motivated to potentially commit more drug offenses or put themselves in position to face more drug offenses.

Taking Accountability for Past Transgressions. Several employers (4 of 13) voiced their desire to see former offender applicants take responsibility and show accountability for their actions, as they see this as a step in the right direction toward growth. They explained that they do not want applicants to diffuse blame or give an excuse for their conduct that led them to be arrested and incarcerated. Interviewee 2 spoke to this, explaining that she likes when an applicant "... acknowledges what they did, and they need to start over, and they'd like a chance."

Constructive Use of Free Time. For two employers, an applicant's constructive use of time may also serve as evidence for desistance and positive change. In employers' eyes this shows them that the applicant is seeking to be involved with productive things, rather than spending time in situations that put them in trouble with the law in the first place. One employer maintained: "What matters to me, what adds to the interview process is like, like I said before, rehabilitation. Are they into education? Their recreational activities and such, you know?" – Interviewee 9.

Being in Good Legal Standing. Finally, according to one employer, a fairly simple way that an applicant can show that they are no longer involved in criminal activity, and have moved on from that life, is by currently (i.e., at the time they are being considered for the job) in good legal standing. This means for example not currently being on parole or have any outstanding warrants for their arrest.

Theme 2: Applicants' Honest Disclosure, But Employers Vary on When They Should Disclose

Outside of my sample of employers' ubiquitous openness to hiring former minor drug offenders, the applicant factor that was most discussed as making employers more willing to hire former minor drug offenders was the *applicant's honest disclosure*. When employers spoke of *honest disclosure*, they explained that they want applicants to divulge their criminal past, and to speak honestly about it – not withhold information about the details of the offense(s). Employers see the applicant's disclosure and honesty about the details as a sign that the individual is truthful, and this in turn helps to ease concerns they may have about the individual's trustworthiness.

Although employers almost unanimously (12 of 13 interviewees) expressed wanting the applicant to disclose their past honestly, they varied in their opinions on the optimal time during the hiring process to disclose.

Unprompted, Voluntary Disclosure. Some employers (7 of 13 interviewees) believed that it is best for the applicant to initiate that conversation – even if not explicitly prompted by the interviewer – as a sign of good faith. They shared that they would prefer for the applicant to be upfront about their criminal past rather than for them to first learn about it on the background check. This signals to employers that the applicant is forthright and not trying to sweep those undesirable details under the rug. Interviewee 3 explained: “Honestly, I feel like I am way more

inclined to hire somebody who tells me that they've had drugs or any kinds of like arrests in the past... That they tell me that versus me finding out on their background check.”

Disclosing Only If Prompted. On the other end of the spectrum, one employer asserted that it may be in the best interest of former offender applicants to speak on their backgrounds only when employers directly ask about it. By doing this they could avoid unnecessarily cueing employers’ biases and stereotypes about formerly incarcerated people. For example, when one particular hiring manager was asked if it is important to him that former offender applicants initiate the conversation about their criminal past, he responded: “Not at all. I’ve never asked anybody if they’ve had any priors or any of that stuff.” He then goes on to say however: “If you’re asked about it, just be honest.” – Interviewee 7.

Timing Disclosure on a Case-By-Case Basis. Finally, some employers (5 of 13 interviewees) explained that there is not necessarily a universally ideal time to disclose – rather it should be handled on a case-by-case basis. One employer remarked:

I think it's a situational thing. Feel 'em out, and if it's, you know,... sometimes... they may ask you a question like, or they may ask you say, name a situation where this happened, and if it fits ... you talk about it, but if not, I don't think you necessarily have to bring it up.– Interviewee 12

Theme 3: Applicants Are Sincere and Serious About Work

Most employers (9 of 13 interviewees) reported wanting to know that applicants are serious about work in general, and also genuinely interested in working for their company specifically. This theme emerged in 9 of 13 interviews.

Articulation of Seriousness About the Job. Some employers (5 of 13) expressed concerns that not all applicants may be serious about working. One interviewee (Interviewee 2), for example, shared that past applicants said that their reason for applying to the job was to satisfy their probation conditions of searching for a job, and indirectly communicated that they

were not actually interested in actually working. Employers therefore want applicants to clearly articulate their seriousness about being employed at their place of work. One employer, for example, asserted: “I don't wanna say aggressiveness... um, assertiveness toward wanting the job. Okay. When you talk to someone, you can really tell a, if they want the job.” - Interviewee 4.

Good References. To some employers (5 of 13), an applicant’s good references from past employers or others who can speak to their character, track record, and qualifications serve as a positive indicator that they are serious and sincere about their ambitions to work. References can answer questions that prospective employers may have and address their potential concerns. One employer explained: “Sometimes I'll also call the references, you know, and ask him, well,... how was this person on the job? Did you have any issues with them?” – Interviewee 5.

High Performance at Previous Job(s). Three employers expressed that when an applicant can speak to their high performance in previous jobs, this is a sign to employers that the applicant took their previous jobs seriously and is generally motivated to work. This in turn makes employers more confident the applicant will take working with them seriously as well. Furthermore, it shows that the applicant has a record of being a competent employee. One employer shared: “If I can point to prior performance, that's also positive” – Interviewee 11.

Openness and Willingness to Learn the Job. In instances when an applicant does not have the preferred amount of relevant experience, some employers (2 of 13) explained that they see applicants with an open mind and a willingness to learn the job as a positive. It shows them that they are willing to work to overcome their deficiencies in experience. One employer expressed: “I'm looking for people who have a positive attitude and aptitude towards the process of learning the trades and skills that we train.” – Interviewee 1.

Applicant is Reliable. Finally, one employer shared that he wants to be confident that applicants will be reliable workers who will be present, punctual, and remain committed to their jobs. According to one employer: "... Their abilities to show up, you know, and be responsible." – Interviewee 5.

Theme 4: Applicants Present Themselves Well in the Interview

Several employers (8 of 13 interviewees) shared that they are more likely to take a chance on hiring FMDO applicants who present themselves well in the interview. In fact, two employers explicitly stated that a good interview with a FMDO makes them more willing to take a chance on hiring them. Applicants can present themselves favorably to employers in the interview in a number of ways.

Good Character and Personality. Employers (5 of 13) explained that they favor applicants who show themselves to be good people, and applicants' character and personality are used as indicators. Employers did not however define the specific qualities that constitute good character and personality. One employer explained: "I guess in terms of like hiring, it's all about character at the end." – Interviewee 8.

Positive Attitude. Applicants with a positive attitude are favored by employers (4 of 13). They explained that they prefer for the individuals that work with – and for – them to have an optimistic and upbeat attitude. As such, they believe someone with a positive attitude in the interview will likely have a positive attitude on the job. One employer reported: "You know, it's all about like how you present yourself; and if somebody's got like a good positive attitude, regardless of again their past issues [with] law enforcement, I'm gonna consider them pretty much right away." – Interviewee 7.

Professional Demeanor and Self-Conduct. Some employers (3 of 13) asserted that they see applicants' interview attire as a reflection of how highly they regard the job and the interview process. Furthermore, for these employers, professionalism displayed in the interview is a positive sign that the applicant would likely be a professional on the job as well. One employer shared: "Um, I, I would say it, it's a lot, a lot of it's based on their demeanor." – Interviewee 10.

Mentally Sharp and "Quick on Their Feet". One employer explained that she likes when applicants quickly respond to interview questions, rather than them taking a "long time" to think and respond.

Good Vernacular and Communication Skills. Finally, one employer stated that applicants need to be able to communicate in standard English language, without the use of colloquial or slang terms – especially those associated with criminal culture.

Theme 5: Signs of Stability in Applicants' Non-Work Lives

Finally, some employers (6 of 13 interviewees) reported being concerned with FMDO applicants' stability in their non-work lives.

Socio-emotional Connections with Others. Two employers shared that they found that former offenders with relationships with others such as their children (Interviewee 3) or pets (Interviewee 4) gave them a stronger sense of purpose and in turn made them stronger employees. One employer explained:

If you see a thing on the bottom where they say, I like animals. Um, I spend a lot of time with my family, then I'll read that resume. Okay? Because for some reason, you know, animal lovers and people that spend time with their family seem to get along better in a team atmosphere. – Interviewee 4.

Stable Living Conditions. Acknowledging the difficulties with securing stable living quarters that former offenders often are often faced with post-release, two employers (Interviewees 2 and 5) expressed their desire to see that the applicant has stable living conditions.

These employers did not, however, expound on why this was important to them. One employer expressed: “But also I think, you know, if they seem to have a stable living situation, you know, where they're ... not moving around. If they lived this one address a year or two, well that's a positive sign there.” – Interviewee 5.

Having a Support System. One employer (Interviewee 8) explained that she wants to know that FMDO applicants have a support system outside of work. She explained that as someone who has hired and worked with former offenders, she understands the difficulties associated with re-integrating into society and the workplace. Therefore, she thinks it is imperative that FMDO applicants have a support system of individuals they can turn to in their times of need and depend on to provide positive counsel.

Good Stress Management Skills. One employer (Interviewee 9) was also concerned with how applicants manage the stresses of life as. She expressed knowing that people can often be driven to drug use and abuse by stress. Hence, knowing that FMDOs have good stress management skills can help to ease her concerns about their likelihood of relapsing.

STUDY 1 DISCUSSION

Study 1 served two primary purposes. My first objective was to obtain a snapshot of employers' policies on hiring FMDOs. My second objective was to learn, through the utilization of the justification-suppression model framework (Crandall and Eshleman; 2003), what prejudice suppression factors employers identified as making them more likely to hire FMDOs. To do this, I conducted semi-structured interviews of a sample of employers and analyzed their responses through thematic analysis. The main findings from the interviews are discussed in the sections below.

Summary of Results

Employer's Reported Policies Toward Hiring FMDOs Today

All employers in my sample were *at least willing to consider hiring* FMDOs, but they differed in how inclined they were to *actually hire* them. It is important to note that although my recruitment strategy did not seek to exclude individuals who were unwilling to hire FMDOs, all 13 employers in my sample described themselves as being willing to hire FMDOs to some degree. Previous studies have found employers of the past to be less willing to hire and work with former drug offenders. For example, in a study published by Giguere and Dundes in 2002, the authors reported that 26% of sampled Baltimore-area employers said they would ignore a marijuana offense in hiring situations. Slightly fewer employers (19%) said they would ignore "other drug offenses" in hiring situations. Fahey, Roberts, and Engel's (2006) study, which was published four years later, reported similarly lower levels of employers' willingness to hire former drug offenders. According to the study's findings, just 23% of employers said they would consider hiring someone with a past drug-related felony conviction (Fahey et al., 2006).

In my interview study, which was conducted in 2022, all 13 employers reported being at least willing to hire individuals with a minor drug offense in their background. It is possible that my finding may in part be explained by selection bias and demand characteristics. More specifically, it is feasible that, due to demand characteristics, employers who are willing to consider hiring FMDOs may be more open to talk about their more inclusive hiring policies than employers who are unwilling to consider hiring and working with FMDOs. Still, the willingness of 100% of employers in my sample to consider hiring FMDOs is noteworthy. With that being said, it is important to note that my convenience sample of 13 employers does not allow me to draw conclusions about the current state of American employers' policies on hiring FMDOs. Further, although recent literature has shown that Americans' attitudes toward drug use have become more progressive over time (Daniller, 2019; Desilver, 2014; Millhorn et al., 2009; Nielsen, 2010) my study's methodology and sample size does not allow me to compare my study's results to past patterns documented in the existing literature.

In acknowledgement of the progressive attitudes regarding American society's attitudes about drug usage (Daniller, 2019), I thought it important to ground my study in this relevant historical context. I did so by asking employers about the potential influence that recent progressive changes in drug laws and the adverse labor market conditions may have had on their hiring policies towards FMDOs. Interestingly, very few employers reported that these factors had a significant impact on their personal policies towards hiring FMDOs. In fact, 11 of 13 employers said that changes in drug laws had no effect on their hiring policies. Rather, the majority of employers did not feel nudged toward being more open in their hiring policies regarding FMDOs as they were already open to it. For most employers, recent progressive

changes in drug laws simply served as validation for the values and policies they already espoused.

Suppression Factors that Increase Employers' Willingness to Hire FMDOs

The prejudice suppression factors mentioned by employers were classified into one of three second-order theme categories: (1) *situation-related suppression factors*, (2) *employer-related suppression factors*, and (3) *applicant-related suppression factors* (many of which are job-relevant). These factors were (1) neither within the control of the applicant nor the applicant, (2) within the control of the employer, or (3) within the applicant's control, respectively. Given that my main interest for Study 1 was to identify suppression factors within the control of FMDO applicants, I briefly discuss situational and employer-related suppression factors and focus my discussion below primarily on applicant-related suppression factors.

Situation-Related Suppression Factors. The situational factors discussed by some employers that make them more likely to hire FMDOs were: *details and context of the offense(s)* that paint the offender in a less ominous light, *labor market conditions* that favor applicants as opposed to employers – what is referred to as a high selection ratio in I-O psychology (Murphy, 1986) –, and *recent progressive changes in drug laws*. Generally, the utility of all these suppression factors have been shown in the existing literature.

The suppression factor of *details and context of the offense(s)* encompasses the surrounding circumstances of the crime, the type of drug involved, and the type of offense(s) committed. Extant literature indicates that employer's attitudes toward former offenders is affected by the type of offense in one's background. Giguere & Dundes (2002), for example, revealed that employers reported taking offense type into account when considering their willingness to hire previously incarcerated individuals. Similarly, Rade et al. (2016) reported that

people's self-described attitudes toward former offenders varied by offense. In both studies, people had more positive views of drug offenders as compared to violent or sex-offenders. A gap that still exists in the literature, however, is whether there are significant variations in the genuine and expressed prejudice for different types of drug offenses. *Labor market conditions* that favor workers have also been shown in existing literature to benefit former offenders looking for jobs. Historically, during periods of economic robustness, when there are more job vacancies than unemployed people to fill them – what is known as a high selection ratio in the I-O psychology field (Boudreau, 1991; Murphy, 1986) –, former offenders experience more favorable employment prospects (Garsd, 2019) than during an economic lull when general unemployment is high and employers are more selective in their hiring. Finally, although it has been widely reported that Americans have more progressive views toward drug use, and drug laws have also become more progressive over time, to my knowledge, no published empirical study has looked at a potential causal relationship between drug law changes and employers' hiring policies.

Employer-Related Factors. Employer-related factors that some interviewees described as making them more likely to hire FMDOs were their *worldview*, *personal life experiences*, *positive subjective assessment of the FMDO applicant*, and their *deference to the company's background check decision*.

The factor of *personal life experience* is defined as *events, encounters, or experiences that have had a significant impact on the employer's life*. This factor encompasses people who themselves have a criminal background or have close friends or family members with a criminal history. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1985) and intergroup contact theory (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998) both posit that people favor members of their in-group over out-group

members, so it is unsurprising that employers with a criminal background would have more favorable views of former offenders than the general population does. Graffam, Shinkfield, and Hardcastle's (2008) study results demonstrated this as they found that former offenders rated themselves more favorably on their perceived employability than others rated them. Intergroup contact theory supports the notion of employers with increased social contact with former offenders, such as through friends and family, being more sympathetic toward former offender applicants.

I define the factor of *worldview* as *one's collection of values, attitudes, and expectations of the world that informs their thoughts and actions* (Gray, 2011). Therefore, one aspect of this factor is one's sociopolitical views. This is important because people who hold socio-politically conservative views have been shown to promote harsher punishments against criminal offenders than individuals who hold liberal views (Gerber & Jackson, 2016).

The factor of *positive subjective assessment* of the applicant refers to a positive hunch or gut-feeling that employers have about the applicant. Extant literature has documented employers' insistent and widespread use of intuition in employee selection (Highhouse, 2008), and its extremely limited utility. Through semi-structured, in-depth interviews Miles and Sadler-Smith (2014), for example, found that employers opted to use intuition in their hiring decisions for various reasons, including: personal preferences, resource constraints, and to compensate for the limitations of other more structured selection approaches. Among the findings from Miles and Sadler-Smith's (2014) study was that employers were generally aware of the inherent bias and limitations of that approach, and some participants described using intuition along with other more structured and objective approaches.

Even when used with caution, however, the use of one's gut-feeling is not a valid selection tool. It is also a phenomenon that is difficult to study and explore because one's gut feelings could be influenced by many different things, and perhaps even things that employers themselves are not consciously aware of, and consequently cannot articulate. Therefore, the use of intuition in hiring decision-making very likely introduces several types of bias. One type of bias that may be introduced, for example, is the *similar-to-me effect* (also known as *affinity bias*), which is a cognitive bias that results in employers favoring applicants like themselves (Rand & Wexley, 1975).

Finally, the factor of *deference to company's background check policy* refers to employers who espoused the belief that once applicants have passed the organization's background check screening, the applicant's criminal history is no longer a serious factor in employers' decision-making. There is currently a lack of research to explain why some people, with decision authority, choose to no longer consider criminal background relevant to their hiring decision, while others continue to consider it. I suspect that potential explanations include: (1) personality differences for deferring to authority, and (2) the depth and rigor of the organization's background check process.

Applicant-Related Factors. As for applicant-related suppression factors, employers described wanting: (1) *evidence that applicants have desisted and changed for the better*, (2) *honest disclosure, but vary on when applicants should disclose*, (3) *applicants who are serious and sincere about work*, (4) *applicants to present themselves well in the interview*, and (5) *signs of stability in applicants' non-work life*.

Of all suppression factors discussed, applicant-related suppression factors were most often cited by employers as things that can positively influence their willingness to hire FMDOs.

The applicant-related suppression factors related to *desistance and positive change* and *honest disclosure* were far and away the most prevalent and widely endorsed. In my discussion below, I focus on these two themes as they were the applicant-related themes for which there was virtually unanimous consensus among employers.

Evidence That Applicants Have Desisted and Changed for The Better

Employers expressed wanting to see evidence that applicants have desisted from their past crimes and have changed for the better. Simply put, they want to be confident that FMDO prospects are not likely to reoffend, especially while in their employ. Applicants can ease employers' concerns about them reoffending by: (1) being in good legal standing at the time of consideration for employment, (2) having – and pointing out – their one-time offense or low number of offenses, (3) having – and highlighting – a “significant” amount of time passed since last offense, (4) taking accountability for past transgression, (5) sharing how they make constructive use of their free time (i.e., time outside of work), and (6) by explicitly highlighting ways they have changed and turned their lives around for the better. Moreover, the emergence of this *desistance and positive change* theme as a suppression factor that increases employers' willingness to hire FMDOs is consistent with previous research.

Desistance. Given the high rate of recidivism of former offenders in the U.S. (Antenangeli & Durose, 2021), it is understandable that employers' primary concern when considering taking a chance on hiring FMDOs is seeing evidence of desistance and positive change from the applicant. Policy makers similarly acknowledge the significance of concerns about former offenders' relapse into criminal behavior as the National Institute of Justice has characterized recidivism as one of the most fundamental concepts in criminal justice (National Institute of Justice, n.d.). Relatedly, a 2021 Harvard Political Review affirmed these concerns by

stating that that within three years of release, approximately two-thirds of formerly incarcerated people are re-arrested, and more than half are imprisoned again (Benecchi, 2021). Employers' concerns about desistance of FMDOs has also been substantiated by research. For example, a 2007 study found that drug offenders were most likely to repeat the same offense, and to be rearrested (State of Washington Sentencing Guidelines Commission, 2008). The number of past offenses has been found to be a significant risk factor of recidivism such that individuals with more offenses in their past are at a higher risk of recidivism than individuals with fewer past offenses (Mulder, Brand, Bullens, Van Marle, 2011).

Positive Change. In addition to showing evidence of desistance from the offenses in one's past, employers would like applicants to take it a step further by showing evidence of how they have changed for the better since then. In essence, employers want the applicant to show that although they may have made bad legal decisions in the past, they are no longer that person. To do this, applicants need to effectively manage their identities; specifically, how other people see them. Shih, Young and Bucher (2013) discussed identity management strategies that people may use in organizations to reduce the effect of discrimination.

One strategy – *identity switching* – involves deemphasizing target identities and recategorizing to a more positively valued identity (Shih, Young & Bucher, 2013). In the context of FMDOs seeking employment, this could be put into practice by applicants emphasizing, and talking about, their other more positive identities outside of being a FMDO. For example, they could instead emphasize their studies (i.e., identity as a student), community involvement (i.e., identity as an active and productive local community member), relevant certifications (i.e., identity as certified professional), etc.

The second of two proposed strategies – *identity redefinition* – entails stereotype reassociation and regeneration (Shih, Young & Bucher, 2013). Using this strategy, the target individual redefines the target identity itself by focusing on the positives associated with that target identity. Practically speaking, FMDOs may counteract former offender stereotyping and discrimination by emphasizing positive traits associated with former offenders, such as their loyalty to the employer for giving them a “second chance” at life. Of the two strategies, interviewees described wanting to see things that were more in line with identity switching. Most employers tended to want FMDO applicants to emphasize who they are today, and distance themselves from their criminal past.

Applicants’ Honest Disclosure, But Employers Vary on When They Should Disclose

All but one employer (i.e., 12 of 13) expressed a desire for FMDO applicants (and former offender applicants in general) to honestly disclose the offense(s) in their background. When employers spoke of honest disclosure, they described wanting applicants to disclose the offense(s) in their background *and* to be open to speaking on the details. Additionally, and importantly, employers want applicants to speak honestly about the details if or when they are prompted in the interview. Most employers preferred and recommended that FMDO applicants voluntarily self-disclose their background without being prompted, as this serves as a sign of good faith to employers that the applicant can be trusted to be honest. The second most endorsed approach was to approach the timing of honest disclosure on a case-by-case basis. Some employers believed that it was in the best interest of applicants to feel out the company and employer and use that as a guide for if it is in their best interest to voluntarily self-disclose or to choose to disclose only if prompted. Finally, one employer explained plainly that it may be in

applicants' best interest to omit details about their criminal past, unless they are explicitly asked about it.

The emergence of this *honest disclosure* theme as a prejudice suppression factor that employers want to see is consistent with I-O psychology – and broader psychology – research and literature. A phenomenological study of employer perspectives on hiring former offenders identified *lack of trustworthiness* as a primary barrier to former offender employment (Obatusin & Ritter-Williams, 2019). Thus, it is not surprising that employers, and people in general, value honesty as dishonesty has been shown to be associated with other socially undesirable behaviors and traits. Halevy, Shalvi, and Verschuere (2014), for example, found self-reports of frequent lying to be positively correlated with cheating and psychopathic tendencies. In their study, Halevy et al. (2014) used the term *psychopathic tendencies* to refer to trait psychopathy measured by: (1) the *youth psychopathic trait inventory* (YPI; Andershed et al., 2002) and (2) the psychopathic trait subscale from the *multidimensional personality questionnaire-brief form* (MPQ BF; Patrick et al., 2002). The YPI, for instance, is a 50-item scale, comprised of 10 subscales, namely: dishonest charm, grandiosity, lying, manipulation, callousness, un-emotionality, remorselessness, impulsiveness, thrill seeking and irresponsibility. Taken together, I therefore postulate that people's general desire for honesty is likely because dishonesty threatens their sense of safety and security.

Employers' desire to screen for honest employees is also evidenced by decades of research on pre-employment honesty testing (See for example, Lanyon & Goodstein, 2004; Murphy, 1993; Packett & Harris, 1987). Honesty tests, also referred to as integrity tests, were developed to assess dependability, integrity, and honesty of applicants with the intention of identifying individuals who are likely to perform dishonest behaviors at work, such as theft

(Ones & Viswesvaran, 1998, 2001). According to Ones and Viswesvaran (1998), integrity tests have existed since the 1940s, and they are designed to either be overt or disguised personality-based measures. The endorsement of the theme of honest disclosure by my interviewees indicates that employers use both overt and indirect methods to evaluate FMDOs honesty and trustworthiness. On one hand, employers see an applicant being open and honest about their past as an overt indication of their trustworthiness. Still, for some employers disclosing their criminal background without being prompted is seen as a sign of honesty. This may be the case because an applicant that chooses to not disclose their past unless prompted may be seen by some employers as attempting to cover up the truth.

Although the performance of individual integrity tests varies, some tests such as the criterion-focused occupational personality scales (COPS) have been shown to have good criterion validity in predicting job performance and counterproductive work behaviors (Ones & Viswesvaran, 2001). Correspondingly, meta-analytic findings have shown the honesty-humility personality dimension of the HEXACO personality model to significantly predict task performance, counterproductive work behaviors, and occupational citizenship behaviors (Lee et al., 2019). Finally, and consistent with the evidence discussed to this point, Jonason and McCain (2012) found honesty-humility to be negatively related to the universally undesirable traits of narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism – traits that employers would want to avoid in prospective employees.

Other Applicant-Related Suppression Factors

Although the focus of my Study 1 discussion is on the near universally endorsed themes of *desistance and positive change* and *honest disclosure*, there were a few interesting patterns in the results that I thought of as noteworthy. One such observation is that while the two most

endorsed applicant-related suppression factors – i.e., *desistance and positive change* and *honest disclosure* – are related to applicants’ criminal history and are therefore unique to applicants with a criminal history, the remaining three applicant-related suppression factors are things relevant to applicants regardless of their background, not just former offenders. An employer’s desire for: *applicants who are serious and sincere about work* (theme 3), *applicants to present themselves well in the interview* (theme 4), and *signs of stability in applicants’ non-work life* (theme 5) can be generalized to applicants in general, and not just FMDOs.

Themes 3 and 4: Serious About Work and Presenting Well in the Interview. Many of the factors across themes 3 and 4 have been shown by existing research to be valid predictors of important job-relevant criteria. For example, dependability – a proxy for *reliability* (a factor from theme 3) – has been shown to be negatively correlated with counterproductive work behaviors (Marcus & Schuler, 2004). Reference checks – a proxy for *good references* (a factor from theme 3) – have been shown to be a predictor of tenure, training success, and supervisor ratings of job performance (Hunter & Hunter, 1984). As a final example: state optimism, trait optimism, and trait positive affect – proxies for *positive attitude* (a factor from theme 4) – have all been shown to be positively related to affective commitment to the organization, job satisfaction, and task performance (Kluemper et al., 2009). See Appendix B for a comprehensive list of each applicant-related suppression factor and its existing validity evidence.

Theme 5: Signs of Stability in Applicants’ Non-Work Lives. Theme 5 factors all relate to things in their lives that, although they are not related to work at face value, can affect their experience at work via work-life spillover. According to spillover theory (Wilensky, 1960), satisfaction or dissatisfaction in one life domain may influence satisfaction in another domain. This means, for example, that dissatisfaction in the family life domain may spillover to cause

dissatisfaction in one's job domain (Sirgy et al., 2001). From this perspective, it is therefore understandable why some employers may care to know that prospective employees, especially those from vulnerable populations such as FMDOs, have stable non-work lives.

Correspondingly, previous research has shown family contact and support to be a protective factor from long-term recidivism (Barrick et al., 2014). Additionally, housing insecurity – a proxy for *stable living conditions* – has been shown to be associated with an increased risk of recidivism, above and beyond several other recidivism risk factors (Jacobs & Gottlieb, 2020). Although *risk of recidivism* is traditionally a non-work outcome of interest, it is also of relevance to employers because hiring someone with high risk of recidivism increases the probability of employers suddenly losing them to re-arrest and conviction. Relatedly, with the sudden, unplanned loss of employees comes a host of undesired outcomes, such as lost productivity and increased costs related to recruiting, hiring, and training new talent.

Final Observations

As my final observation of note, it is clear from the list of interview-generated suppression factors and themes that employers value a mix of job relevant and job irrelevant factors when making hiring decisions regarding FMDO applicants. For example, an employer's desire for *applicants to present themselves well in the interview* (theme 4) is supported by empirical evidence showing the predictive validity of structured interviews in predicting performance on the job (Campion et al., 1994). On the other hand, I was unable to find published studies that look at relationships between applicants' *honest disclosure* of their background and job-relevant outcomes such as performance, turnover, or absenteeism. All-in-all though, most suppressors were either job-relevant or proxies for factors that are job relevant (See Appendix B).

Strengths and Limitations of Study 1

One limitation of Study 1 is that my small sample size of 13 interviewees does not allow me to generalize my findings to my population of interest: American employers. Although I adhered to best practices regarding sample sizes in qualitative analysis (Ando et al., 2014; Marshall et al., 2013), and stopped coding after reaching a point of saturation with 13 interviews (Guest et al., 2006; 2020), such a small sample of employers limits my ability to apply my findings to a broader context. Quantitative study methods allow for large and quick data collection efforts, such as the use of questionnaires, and relatively quick data analysis with constantly improving analysis software. These larger samples facilitated by quantitative methods lead to more representative and generalizable findings (Levitt et al., 2017). Qualitative study methods such as interviews on the other hand, are more time-consuming to conduct, and data analysis is a more tedious – often iterative – process (Pratt & Bonaccio, 2016). These more thorough methods such as interviews do, however, yield richer information than a survey would be able to without being unreasonably lengthy (Smith & McGannon, 2018). Compared to quantitative methods, interview studies allow researchers greater agency in their depth of investigation of a phenomenon – especially a phenomenon that is relatively understudied and not very well understood. Furthermore, through my use of semi-structured interview questions, I was able to ask follow-up questions and dig deeper into my participants' responses to my questions (Campbell et al., 2013). Qualitative research methods therefore require an inevitable trade-off between richness of information and the generalizability and representativeness of the findings (Levitt et al., 2017).

Another feature of the study that reduces generalizability of results is my use sampling of the purposive and snowball sampling methodologies. Convenience or opportunistic sampling methodologies such as purposive and snowball sampling are among the most commonly used

sampling plans in qualitative research (Tracy, 2019, p. 134). Through purposive sampling, I identified and targeted people that met my selection criteria (i.e., 18 years or older, currently have or recently had hiring decision authority, and have experience with reviewing applications from former offenders). I also asked qualified interviewees for references on people they knew that met the study's inclusion criteria. Non-probability sampling methods such as convenience and purposive sampling are useful when randomization is not possible due to a very large size of the population, and when the researcher is limited in resources, time, and workforce (Etikan et al., 2016; Tracy, 2019, p. 135). All of the above qualifiers are applicable to this study. Still, although non-probability sampling was appropriately utilized in Study 1, it does inevitably limit generalizability of research findings due to lack of representativeness in sample.

Another limitation related to my sampling methodology is selection bias. Selection bias occurs when sampling is not reflective of the population, thereby resulting in systematic error (Collier & Mahoney, 1996). This error limits our ability to make meaningful inferences from the study's findings as we cannot be confident that the phenomenon being studied was truly captured in the study's sample (Collier & Mahoney, 1996). One likely source of selection bias is that interviewees attained via the snowball sampling method share social and professional networks with others (i.e., participants they recommended) in my sample. Furthermore, another issue inherent with non-random sampling is that it is likely that the people who chose to talk to me, regardless of the recruitment method from which they were yielded, share some characteristic that differs from individuals who opted not to participate. This *volunteer bias* is another type of selection bias (Tripepi et al., 2010).

An interesting finding of my study was that all employers sampled reported being open to hiring FMDOs. Although I did not limit my study to employers open to hiring FMDOs, I cannot

be sure of the absence of *non-response bias* in my sample. Non-response bias occurs when the people who take part in, or complete, a study are systematically different from those who elect not to participate or drop out before completing the study (Tripepi et al., 2010). This is an issue because it is possible, for example, that people employers who are not open to hiring FMDOs are less willing to participate in an interview to talk about their stance. As such, it would have been valuable to also gain insights from employers who are not open to hiring FMDOs.

Finally, despite taking measures to reduce the influence of any one person's bias on the interpretation of the interview data, such as using a second coder, and coding independently, it is simply not possible to eliminate all researcher bias from qualitative analysis. As Patton (1999) points out, qualitative analysis is a "creative process" that is guided by the insights and conceptual capabilities of the analysts. Qualitative analysis is therefore an inherently subjective process, and what researchers "see" in the data is largely shaped by their interests, biases, background, and life experiences (Patton, 1999). Thus, it is important that researchers critically examine their positionality and the influence it may have on important decision points in the study's design and interpretation of the data (Jamieson et al., 2023). Both analysts (my RA and I) are I-O psychology graduate students and researchers at Colorado State University. Additionally, we both have a personal interest in the successful re-entry of former offenders back into the workforce, and society as a whole. It is possible that these similarities may have, unbeknownst to us, affected the ways in which we understood and summarized the data in our coding and theming processes. Still, my RA and I have some fundamental differences. Some of the ways that my RA and I differ are in racial/ ethnic background, sex, age, and life experience. On one hand, these differences in our identities and experiences may be beneficial as the diversity in our analysis dyad facilitates a sense of accountability and institutes a system of checks and balances

for each other's biases. On the other hand, each researcher brings their own biases to the study, and these biases may reinforce one another, or even lead to a compounded effect.

In addition to the positionality of the researchers, other key decisions regarding the study design may have impacted the coders' interpretation of participants' responses. For example, an important decision point in my study design was the number of coders to utilize in the qualitative analysis process. Ultimately, I chose to use two coders (me and one graduate RA), primarily because of financial constraints. This is an important decision point because while involving multiple coders in data analysis may introduce more inconsistencies, which may then lead to reduced reliability, employing more coders can improve validity by triangulating data (Olson et al., 2016). An additional aspect concerning coders that is important to consider is the power dynamics, and potential power differential (Kaaristo, 2022). As the lead researcher, the more senior graduate student, and the researcher who coded all of the interviews, I had more influence on interpretation of the data, and how discrepancies were resolved.

In sum, the findings of Study 1 are tied to the study design and the positionality of the two coders (Patton, 1999). Given the subjective nature of thematic analysis, different choices in the number of coders used, who those coders were, and their positionality in relation to other researchers and interview participants could have meaningful implications for how the data was interpreted, how themes were collated, and the conclusions that were drawn from Study 1. With the perspective of a third coder, for example, there might have been a clearer demarcation between the *desistance and positive change* and *honest disclosure* themes. This additional perspective could have potentially facilitated a clearer operationalization of the desistance and disclosure themes and a stronger manipulation of the related constructs for Study 2.

STUDY 2: TESTING THE EFFICACY OF APPLICANT-RELATED SUPPRESSORS

Study 1 revealed that some employers are generally willing to consider hiring FMDOs, and also identified several possible prejudice suppression factors that may mitigate unfair bias. Further, some of these potential suppressor factors may be ones over which an applicant has a certain degree of control. The applicant-related suppression factors that were most frequently identified by employers in Study 1 were: (1) *evidence of desistance and positive change*, (2) *honest disclosure* of background, (although there were differing opinions on disclosure timing), (3) *applicants who are serious and sincere about work*, (4) *applicants to present themselves well in the interview* (theme 4), and (5) *signs of stability in applicants' non-work life*. In Study 2, the goal was to determine whether a subset of suppressors identified in Study 1 were effective in mitigating adverse hiring outcomes for FDMOs compared to other offenders. In order to address this general objective, a more controlled, targeted experiment was conducted to examine the effect of two suppressors (i.e., evidence of *desistance and positive change* and *honest disclosure* of background) on hiring decisions for former offenders whose offense varied in severity (e.g., traffic offense, drug possession offense, drug and firearm offense). Although the JSM has not been applied in the context of former offenders, there is related discrimination literature on other forms of bias that uses the JSM as a basis for understanding how suppressors might influence work-related outcomes. This serves as one basis for the hypotheses for Study 2.

Evidence of the Suppressors and Justifiers Altering Outcomes

Existing JSM literature has shown that the presentation of suppressor and justification information can alter work-related and relational outcomes. For example, applying the JSM to accent bias, Wang et al. (2013) found that performance outcomes suppressed accent bias.

Specifically, among American customer, when the outcome of the phone call into call service centers were unfavorable, customers who interacted with accented employees reported lower levels of satisfaction and worse customer-employee rapport than when the service outcome was favorable for them. The study also supports the notion that suppression is both an affective and cognitive process (Wang et al., 2013). Upset customers were less able or inclined to suppress their genuine prejudice (affective component of suppression) while customers who were informed about the frequency of favorable and unfavorable service outcomes were more likely to suppress their biases than those who were not provided with that information (cognitive component of suppression).

In a study examining customer service employees' stigma of obese shoppers, King, Shapiro, Hebl, Singletary, and Turner (2006) investigated the generalizability and applicability of the JSM to subtle discrimination (e.g., reduced eye-contact; Hebl et al., 2002) in organizational contexts. The researchers investigated whether there would be a difference in interpersonal discrimination or interaction quality between obese and average weight shoppers. They were also interested in how the presence of prejudice justification evidence would affect expressed prejudice, in the forms of discrimination. Justification evidence was operationalized as whether customers signaled that they took control of – or responsibility for – their weight. In the high justification condition, customers were seen drinking a high calorie beverage and heard saying they had not been recently athletically active. In the low justification condition customers were seen drinking a low-calorie diet beverage and heard saying they had been athletically active recently.

King et al. (2006) found that obese shoppers faced more interpersonal discrimination (e.g., less eye contact, smiling, friendliness, increased rudeness, and the premature termination of

interaction) than average weight shoppers in high-prejudice justification conditions. Results indicated that belief about the controllability of obesity served as justification for expressing weight prejudice and removing perceivers' justification decreased incidences of interpersonal discrimination for obese individuals.

The JSM has also been applied to sexual orientation prejudice. Hoffarth et al. (2018) conducted a large multinational study that looked at when and why religious attendance may relate to anti-gay bias and the opposition of gay rights. As expected, they found that on average, there was greater anti-gay bias in countries with lower gay rights recognition than in countries with higher recognition of gay rights. Moreover, religious attendance was associated with anti-gay bias in countries that widely recognize gay rights, but not in those with lower gay rights recognition. Consistent with the JSM, the authors concluded that in more tolerant social contexts, religiousness often serves as justification for anti-gay bias (Hoffarth et al., 2018).

Finally, the JSM has been applied to religious prejudice. In an experimental field study King and Ahmad (2010) found no difference in interview offers made to applicants dressed in traditional Muslim attire from those in typical American clothing. Confederates, observers, and naive coders did however perceive greater interpersonal discrimination from employers toward traditionally clad Muslim applicants who did not provide "stereotype-inconsistent" information compared to those who did. As Muslims are stereotyped as *cold* by Americans (Fiske et al., 2000), the provision of information signaling warmth, such as revealing their professional affiliation with *Big Brothers, Big Sisters of America* – a non-profit, youth mentoring, organization – is characterized as stereotype-inconsistent information. Results showed that applicants who presented themselves as Muslim by wearing traditional Muslim attire, but also *did not* provide stereotype-inconsistent information of warmth (i.e., shared their affiliation with a

non-profit organization) were met with greater interpersonal discrimination than those who signaled warmth. All in all, results from King and Ahmad's study reveal that expressions of prejudice can be subtle rather than overt, and that prejudice can manifest interpersonally even when it does not manifest in personnel decision-making.

Exploring Alternative Explanations for Biased Hiring Outcomes

Evidence from previous studies suggests that the JSM may, at least in part, explain the phenomenon of unfair bias in the hiring of FMDOs and former offenders more broadly. Still, it is important I acknowledge that my study is among the first to apply the JSM to the context of former offenders navigating the hiring process. It is therefore imperative that I critically evaluate the efficacy of my focal theoretical framework and explore alternative perspectives. Therefore, a secondary objective of Study 2 is to, through supplemental analyses, explore nuances that the JSM might not capture. By testing the complementary SCM (Fiske et al., 2002) and BIAS (Cuddy et al., 2007; 2008) theoretical models, as alternative explanatory mechanisms, in the context of FMDOs seeking employment, I seek to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of prejudicial hiring against FMDOs.

Previous SCM and BIAS research has shown that group membership influences stereotypes (i.e., warmth and competency perceptions) (Durante et al., 2017; Eckes, 2002, etc.) and that stereotypes influence behaviors of the judge toward the target (Cuddy et al., 2008). Hosoda, Nguyen, and Stone-Romero (2012), for example, found that an applicant with a Mexican-Spanish accent was rated as less competent than an applicant with an American-English accent. Compared to the applicant with the American-English accent, the one with a Mexican-Spanish accent was judged less favorably by the participants on various criteria, such as, suitability for the job, likelihood of promotion, and hiring recommendations (Hosoda et al.,

2012). In another example of the SCM and BIAS models applied to a work context, Anderson (2020) found former offenders to be stereotyped as cold and incompetent. Furthermore, warmth & competence ratings predicted anticipated support for the recruitment of various stigmatized groups, including former offenders (Anderson, 2020).

Finally, leading SCM researcher, Fiske (2015; 2018), posits that warmth perceptions include judgments about the target's trustworthiness and morality. Relatedly, Obatusin and Ritter-Williams (2019) discovered through interviews with employers that trustworthiness was a central concern for them when considering job applicants with a criminal history. Taken as a whole, it is apparent that the SCM and BIAS models may offer an alternative theoretical explanation for the relationship between the ascribed stigma of former offenders and their hiring-related outcomes.

Linking Study 1 to Study 2

The results of the empirical studies summarized above support the idea that activating prejudice suppression and justification factors may alter work-related outcomes. Even though employers in Study 1 provided a list of factors that would make them more likely to consider hiring FMDOs, past studies have demonstrated that employers' self-reported willingness to hire may not be consistent with their actual decisions in hiring situations (Pager & Quillian, 2005). In light of this, I conducted Study 2 to test if presenting evidence of key suppressors identified in Study 1 would actually impact employment outcomes for FMDO applicants in a simulated hiring setting.

My primary goal in Study 2 was to empirically test the efficacy of the most endorsed applicant-related suppression factors (i.e., *desistance & positive change* and *honest disclosure*) for hypothetical job applicants with an offense in their past. In Study 2, I was interested to see

the effect that the most frequently discussed applicant-related factors (i.e., *desistance & positive change* and *honest disclosure*) have on employers' cognition and recommended job application decisions, collectively termed as *hiring-related outcomes*. In short, I sought to test if applicants who presented evidence for either suppression factor fared better than applicants who presented no evidence of either suppressor.

Further, although nearly all employers favored transparency from FMDO applicants through the *honest disclosure* of their background, their opinions diverged on the optimal disclosure strategy. This divergence in preferences for disclosure approaches *could* suggest that the effect of evidence related to *desistance & positive change* on hiring-related outcomes may significantly differ from the effect of evidence for *honest disclosure*. I therefore also, in Study 2, sought to examine if there was a discernible difference in the impact of suppressor evidence types on hiring-related outcomes.

Finally, the second predictor of interest was offense type. Past empirical studies have highlighted the importance of offense type – and by extension, offense severity – in hiring outcomes of former offenders. Simply put, offense type affects employer's thoughts and hiring decision-making (Couloute & Kopf, 2018; Rade et al., 2016; Rockeman & Saraiva, 2020).

Therefore, my hypotheses for Study 2 are:

Hypothesis 1: Main Effect of Offense Type

H1: Applicant offense type will influence all three outcomes (i.e., concerns about hiring, hiring recommendations, and proposed starting salary), such that traffic offenders will have the most favorable outcomes, minor drug offenders will have less favorable outcomes, and serious drug offenders will have the least favorable outcomes.

Hypotheses 2a & 2b: Main Effect of Suppression Evidence

H2a: The absence or presence of suppression factor evidence will influence all three outcomes (i.e., concerns about hiring, hiring recommendations, and proposed starting salary), such that applicants who present evidence of either desistance or disclosure will have more favorable outcomes than applicants who do not present such evidence.

H2b: The effect of each suppression factor on all three outcomes (i.e., concerns about hiring, hiring recommendations, and proposed starting salary) will differ by suppressor type, such that applicants who present evidence of desistance will have more favorable outcomes than applicants who disclose a past offense.

Hypothesis 3: Interaction Effect of Offense Type and Suppression Evidence

H3: The effect of offense type on all three outcomes (i.e., concerns about hiring, hiring recommendations, and proposed starting salary) will be largest when no suppressor evidence is presented, smaller when there is evidence of disclosure, and smallest when evidence of desistance is presented.

STUDY 2 METHOD

Pre-Study Development of Stimuli & Manipulations

To determine if an applicant's offense type and presentation of suppressor evidence have a significant effect on employer-rated selection outcomes, employers were presented with a hypothetical job application file. The application file consisted of: (1) a completed application blank, (2) an interview transcript, and (3) a pre-employment background check (Appendix C). Former offenders are generally less educated and qualified for jobs than the general population (Zakaria et al., 2018). For this reason, it was critical that I selected a job with a low barrier to entry for the vacancy. Given that most of my interviewees in Study 1 worked in the retail industry, and its low barrier to entry, I selected the *retail sales associate* position.

Along with the application file, participants were given a job description of the position they were asked to fill. To write a realistic job description, I referenced the detailed tasks and work activities sections for "retail salesperson" provided by the Occupational Information Network (O*NET) database, and job descriptions of postings for "retail sales associate" on Indeed.com. According to their website, O*NET is the primary source of occupational information in the U.S. It contains "hundreds of standardized and occupation-specific descriptors on almost 1,000 occupations covering the entire U.S. economy" (onetonline.org). Indeed.com is the most popular job search website in the U.S. (Betterteam.com, 2020).

As is often done in studies looking at the effect of offender status and stigma on hiring outcomes, I chose to standardize applicants' files and only varied their criminal histories (e.g., Pager, 2003; Pager & Quillian, 2005), and how they spoke about that history (Ali et al., 2017). I sought to present all applicants as equally qualified and good candidates for the job. I did this by

presenting the applicant as having a high school diploma, 2.5 years of relevant work experience, and describing himself as enjoying the work environment. According to O*NET, 82% of the time a high school diploma or equivalent is the highest level of education required to perform the job (onetonline.org).

An important decision made was to use a race neutral applicant name to control for potential racial bias in hiring (Neckerman & Kirschenman, 1991; Ziegert & Hanges, 2005). In a field experiment that randomly assigned race to distinct looking resumes of similar education and career profiles, Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004), found that applicants White sounding names (such as “Emily Walsh” or “Greg Baker”) received 50% more call-backs for interviews than applicants with African American sounding names (such as “Lakisha Washington” and “Jamal Jones”). Furthermore, White names on a high-quality resume yielded 30% more call-backs than African American sounding names on high quality resumes (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004). For this reason, I chose the race neutral name of *Sean Williams*. A Google search of the name “Sean Williams” returned many pictures of men from various racial-ethnic backgrounds. The stereotypically masculine name of “Sean” was selected to control for potential gender bias in hiring (Marlowe et al., 1996), especially because female former offenders have been shown to have worse employment outcomes than their male counterparts (Couloute & Kopf, 2018).

In summary, I sought to present the stimulus materials in a format that resembled a real-life job application process, using methodologies often used in real-world settings. Application blank questions mirrored those of real application blanks shared by companies. Interview questions were written to gauge relevant work experience, person-job fit, possession of relevant competencies, etc., and closed with an open-ended question: “Is there anything else you would

like to share with us about yourself?” as, from my experience, is common in interviews. I also sought to experimentally control for anticipated errors related to differences in qualifications, as well as race and gender bias in an effort to isolate the effects of prejudice on hiring-related outcomes. See Appendix C for all stimulus material.

Development & Pre-testing of Manipulations

Manipulation of Offense Type. I tested my manipulations of offense type with a brief survey in which I asked a sample of 37 Mechanical Turk participants to rate how serious they thought various offenses were, using a seven-point Likert scale, where 1 = *Not at all serious*, and 7 = *Extremely serious*. Table 3 lists all piloted items and their descriptive statistics. In addition to the offense type items, there were also two attention check items asking participants to select a specific response. The order of the offense types and manipulation checks items were randomly presented to participants.

In my manipulation check survey, I aimed to represent three levels of offense type, with varying degrees of severity. First were non-criminal offenses that under normal circumstances *would not* result in incarceration, and the typical punishment would be a fine. I wanted to include non-criminal offenses that the average person may think of as trivial or “not a big deal”. As such, I chose to test various traffic-related offenses (i.e., parking citation, speeding citation, and reckless driving citation). It was important for me to represent the “non-offender” comparison group as people with no criminal record, but that have an offense in their past that they can speak to desisting from. Second, I needed to include minor drug offenses that under normal circumstances *could* result in incarceration. I thought drug possession charges fit this description well and opted to test various drug possession charges (i.e., possession of marijuana, heroin, and fentanyl). Third, I wanted to include more serious drug-related criminal offenses that under

normal circumstances *would* certainly result in incarceration and a fairly lengthy sentence. For this, I thought trafficking drugs while in possession of a firearm met the established criteria and as a result, I tested the trafficking of marijuana, heroin, and fentanyl while in possession of a firearm.

Taken together, I expected the non-criminal traffic-related offense to be rated as less serious than both the drug possession charges, and drug trafficking while in possession of a firearm. Further, I expected the drug possession charges to be regarded by participants as minor drug offenses, and for them to be rated as more serious than the non-criminal traffic-related offenses, but less serious than the charges of drug trafficking while in possession of a firearm.

Manipulation of Minor Drug Offense & Serious Drug-Related Offense. Results (see Table 3) showed that possession of marijuana was rated as the least serious of the three drug possession charges and trafficking of heroin while in possession of a firearm was rated as the most serious of all offenses included in the survey. A comparison of mean severity scores found that marijuana possession ($M = 4.38, SD = 1.80$) was rated as significantly less serious than trafficking heroin while in possession of a firearm ($M = 5.30, SD = 1.33; t(66) = -2.50, p = .008$). Given the statistically significant difference of severity of offense ratings between the two, I chose to use *possession of marijuana* for my manipulation of minor drug offense, and *trafficking heroin while in possession of a firearm* for my manipulation of a more serious drug-related offense.

Manipulation of Non-Criminal Traffic Offense. The three offenses that I expected to be rated as the least serious in relation to all other offenses were parking citation, speeding citation, and a reckless driving citation. Based on the results, parking violation was rated as the least serious offense, followed by speeding violation, and reckless driving citation, in that order. I did

however consider the fact that speeding tickets issued by police officers are written to the violators themselves, whereas parking citations are written to the owner of the vehicle who may or may not actually be responsible for the infraction. It is therefore possible that someone may have received parking citations for offenses they did not commit. On the other hand, speeding tickets issued by police officers are issued to the offender regardless of whether they are the owner of the vehicle involved. Since there is less ambiguity about the guilt of the recipient of a speeding ticket compared to the recipient of a parking ticket, I selected *speeding citation* as my manipulation of a non-criminal traffic offense.

Further evidence for the appropriateness of a speeding citation as a suitable choice for a non-criminal offense is the fact that speeding citation ($M = 4.41, SD = 1.50$) was rated as a significantly less serious offense than trafficking heroin while in possession of a firearm ($M = 5.30, SD = 1.33; t(71) = -2.71, p = .004$) and the possession of marijuana ($M = 4.38, SD = 1.80$) although this paired comparison was not statistically significant, $t(70) = -0.07, p = .472$. Bonferroni-type adjustments for multiple tests were made to the α criterion for the three paired comparisons conducted. The adjusted alpha criterion was $\alpha = .016$. Finally, as the speeding citation and marijuana possession offenses were considered equally serious, there is not a hierarchical distinction between these two qualitatively distinct offenses.

Manipulation of Suppressor Evidence. The testing of manipulations for suppressor evidence was done in a pre-test survey with a sample of Mechanical Turk participants ($N = 45$). In this pre-test survey, participants were asked to use a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 = *No Evidence*, and 7 = *Complete Evidence*, to indicate the degree to which various interview excerpts and details from pre-employment background check results provided evidence for various anchor statements. These anchor statements were: The applicant... “Has disclosed an offense in their

background”, “Is honest about an offense in their past”, “Is generally an honest person”, “Takes accountability for their actions”, “Will NOT re-offend in the future”, and “Has grown and matured since their last offense.” (See Appendix D).

Manipulation of Desistance & Positive Change. I sought to manipulate *desistance and positive change* since offending in two ways: (1) through explicit verbalization by the applicant in the interview, and (2) through the results of the pre-employment background check (See Appendix D).

Interview Excerpt Manipulation. I modeled interview excerpts after how interviewees from Study 1 spoke about signaling *desistance and positive change*. In short, I wanted to communicate that the offense was a one-time thing, that has not been repeated, and will not happen again. I expected for interview excerpts aimed at manipulating *desistance and positive change* since offending to be perceived as providing more evidence of the applicant *not being likely to reoffend* and evidence of *growth and maturity* since offense than all other anchor statements. Results showed that interview excerpts with the following format: “You will see from my record that I only have one offense. It was a one-time thing. I have stayed out of trouble for the past [6 months/ 2 years/ 5 years]” met these criteria (See Table 4).

Pre-Employment Background Check Manipulation. I opted to also manipulate *desistance and positive change* through pre-employment background check results, to hopefully create a stronger manipulation. I wanted employers to not only be told by applicants that they have desisted, but to also see objective evidence of this. Similar to the interview excerpts, I expected for background check results that reflected a longer period of desistance from offending to be perceived as providing greater evidence of (1) the applicant not being likely to reoffend, and (2) evidence of growth and maturity since offense compared to results that reflected a shorter

period of time passed since offending. I therefore expected background check results with 5 years since the offense to be rated more favorably than those with 2 years since offending, and 6 months since offending.

Results (See Tables 5A & 5B) showed that the manipulation of time since offense in the pre-employment background check results was not particularly effective at influencing participants' perceptions of *desistance and positive change* as the pattern of means for evidence of growth since offense and likelihood of NOT re-offending were relatively erratic across the no offense, 6-month, 2-year, and 5-year manipulations. For example, as shown in Table 5A, pilot study participants reported seeing stronger evidence of growth and maturity in the background check results of a speed offender who had remained clean for 6 months ($M = 5.60, SD = 1.27$), compared to those who had been clean for 2 years ($M = 5.42, SD = 1.14$), and 5 years ($M = 5.38, SD = 0.94$). The opposite pattern was seen for marijuana possession offenders. Stronger evidence of growth and maturity since offending was seen for a marijuana offender who had been clean for 5 years ($M = 5.53, SD = 0.97$), compared to those with 2 years ($M = 5.47, SD = 1.25$), and 6 months' time clean ($M = 5.31, SD = 1.29$). Still, despite a lack of evidence for the efficacy of the background check results manipulating *desistance and positive change*, pre-employment background check results were still included in my Study 2 stimulus materials as it is important for the manipulation of *honest disclosure*. Participants simply cannot pick up on a lack of honest disclosure about an offense if they are not made aware of an offense in the applicant's background, and the background check is where employers become aware of this.

Manipulation of Honest Disclosure. I sought to manipulate *honest disclosure* of one's background in two ways: (1) through explicit verbalization by applicant in the interview, and (2) through the results of the pre-employment background check. I modeled interview excerpts after

how interviewees from Study 1 spoke about signaling *honest disclosure* of one's background. In short, I wanted to communicate that the applicant voluntarily disclosed the offense, was honest about it, and had signaled an openness to talk honestly about the details of the offense. I expected for interview excerpts aimed at manipulating *honest disclosure* of one's background to be perceived as providing more evidence of (1) the applicant disclosing their background, (2) being honest about an offense, and (3) being a generally honest person than all other anchor statements.

Results (See Table 6) showed that excerpts with the format of "I am not sure if you do background checks, but I want to let you know that I have an offense on my record. It's a [speeding citation/ marijuana possession charge/ heroin trafficking while in possession of a firearm charge]. I hope that I did not just shoot myself in the foot by sharing that, but I think it is important that you hear it from me first" provided the strongest evidence for the manipulation of *honest disclosure*. Even so, not all of the expected patterns in means were observed. As expected, the anchor statements related to seeing evidence of the applicant being honest about an offense, and being a generally honest person were consistently rated the highest. However, the anchor statements regarding seeing evidence that the applicant disclosed an offense were consistently rated lower than all other anchor statements.

Taken together, results provided some evidence for the manipulation of *honest disclosure*. That said, the interview excerpt format and the pre-employment background check results were retained and used in Study 2. I made the decision to retain both pieces of information because employers would not know if someone has not disclosed an offense unless they have seen offenses in their background later in the selection process. Employers cannot make a determination on whether an applicant has honestly disclosed an offense without knowing if there is indeed something to be disclosed.

Final Manipulations

Offense Type. For my manipulation of offense type, I wanted to have three offense types: (1) a non-criminal offense, (2) a minor drug offense, and (3) a more serious drug-related offense. Offense type was manipulated in the results of the pre-employment background check of applicants. Regardless of what condition participants were assigned, they were made aware of the type of offense in the applicant's background in the background check results. As was the case with suppressor evidence, my manipulations of offense type were informed by the results of my pre-study pilot tests. *Minor drug offense* (the focal and referent group) was represented as a marijuana possession charge that resulted in a 1-year jail sentence. The *non-criminal traffic offense* was manipulated as a speeding ticket that resulted in 3 points on the applicant's driver's license and a \$250 fine. The *more serious drug-related offense* was manipulated trafficking heroin while in possession of a firearm, which resulted in a 5-year prison sentence.

Suppressor Evidence. As informed by results from Study 1, the two types of suppressor evidence that I manipulated were: (1) *desistance & positive change* and (2) *honest disclosure*, as these were the two most frequently endorsed prejudice suppression factor themes that were also under reasonable control of applicants. Suppressor evidence was manipulated and presented in the interview transcript as the applicant response to the interviewer's question of: "Is there anything else you would like to share with us about yourself?" My manipulations of suppressor evidence were informed by the results of my pre-study pilot tests and manipulation checks.

Desistance and Positive Change. The presentation of desistance and positive change evidence was manipulated by the applicant responding with: "You will see from my record that I only have one offense. It was a one-time thing and I have stayed out of trouble for the past 5 years. I take care to not put myself in situations like that anymore." This was then followed up with: "The very last thing I would like to say, to end on a positive note, is that I would love the

opportunity to work and grow here.” Results from the pre-background check would confirm this claim by showing how much time had passed since the offense.

Honest Disclosure. The presentation of honest disclosure evidence was manipulated by the applicant responding as saying: “I am not sure if you do background checks, but I want to let you know that I have an offense on my record. It's a charge for [offense type]. I hope that I did not just hurt my chances of getting hired by sharing that, but I think it is important that you hear it from me first. If you would like to know more, I am definitely willing to tell you more about it.” Similarly, this was then followed up with: “The very last thing I would like to say, to end on a positive note, is that I would love the opportunity to work and grow here.”

No Suppressor Information. For conditions with the absence of suppressor evidence, the applicant simply responding saying: “The very last thing I would like to say, to end on a positive note, is that I would love the opportunity to work and grow here.”

The Present Study

Participants

Participants were recruited using Prolific – a renowned research platform that helps to connect researchers and participants for the completion of online research studies. Prospective participants from Prolific’s website indicated their interest in taking part in the research study by selecting it from a list of advertised tasks on the website. In an effort to preemptively ensure proven and reliable respondents were being recruited, I utilized a number of Prolific filtering mechanisms to limit who would be able to see my advertised study. To be able to see and access the advertisement, participants must have had at least a 95% approval rate from previous requesters, living in the US, at least 18 years old, fluent in the English language, working in the retail industry, and have hiring experience.

Following an a-priori power analysis, I planned to collect a total of 225 responses – i.e., 25 participants for each of my nine conditions. A sample size of 225 would provide enough power to detect medium-small effects (i.e., $\eta^2 = .035$, which is the mid-point between a small effect of $\eta^2 = .01$ and a medium effect of $\eta^2 = .06$). Anticipating that some cases would likely be discarded after the data quality check and cleaning process, I sought to oversample by 5 to 10%, and therefore collected a total of 252 survey responses. After discarding incomplete survey responses and participants who failed at least one attention check or reading check item, a total of 230 cases remained, and were later used in statistical analyses.

Study Design

In Study 2, a 3x3 between-subjects design was used to examine the effects of: (1) no suppressor, (2) evidence of desistance, or (3) evidence of honest disclosure on the hiring-related outcomes for FMDOs whose offense was either: (1) a traffic offense, (2) marijuana possession, or (3) trafficking heroin while in possession of a firearm. A 3x3 multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to determine if there were differences in hiring-related outcomes (i.e., level of concern about hiring, hiring recommendations, and proposed starting salary) on suppressor evidence and/or offense type. Follow-up one-way ANOVAs and post-hoc analyses were also conducted to probe significant findings from the omnibus test.

Procedure

Qualtrics Survey

Upon clicking on recruitment link on Prolific's website, prospective participants were then redirected to the Qualtrics survey. Once in the survey, participants were first presented with the consent form which described the purpose of the study, the types of questions that would be

asked, the estimated time to completion, compensation for participation, and informed them of the presence of attention check items.

As consenting participants worked through the survey, they were given instructions on the task and then randomly assigned to one of nine conditions (See Table 7 for the details of each condition). Participants were then presented with the application file of the hypothetical job applicant. The application file first showed the applicant's answers on the application blank, then a transcript of the applicant's responses to questions from a brief phone interview, and finally the results of a pre-employment background check. From there participants were asked to give their hiring recommendations (i.e., their likelihood of recommending rejecting the applicant, bringing them in for a second interview, and hiring them now), their proposed starting salary if the applicant were to be offered the job, and to rate the importance of several factors that may have influenced their recommended hiring decisions. In the following section of the survey, they were asked what types of evidence they thought the application file provided about the applicant, and to rate their level of concern on several factors about the applicant. They were then asked to rate how warm and competent they thought the applicant was, and to describe their impression of the applicant in a sentence or two. Lastly, their demographic information was collected. Upon the successful completion of the survey, participants were debriefed, compensated, and thanked for their participation. The survey was completed in an average of approximately 10 minutes.

Data Quality Checks

Several precautions were taken toward encouraging participants to be attentive as they completed the survey. Two attention check items, instructing participants to provide specific responses, were dispersed throughout the survey. An example of such an item is: "Select neutral for this question." Each attention check item mirrored the format of the surrounding questions so

that they would not readily stand out to someone inattentively skimming through the survey. Participants were also presented with three reading check items designed to evaluate how closely they read and understood the task instructions and remembered key details from the application file. The items asked participants to recall the industry they were asked to imagine they were hiring for, the applicant's years of relevant experience, and the offense in the applicant's background. Only participants that scored perfectly on all attention check and reading check items were retained and used for analysis. A total of 22 of 252 responses were discarded for failing to meet the described data quality standards.

Preliminary Assumption Testing

Prior to hypothesis testing, I tested the following assumptions: normality and linearity of observed variables, absence of multicollinearity, homogeneity of variance, homogeneity of regression, and the absence of outliers. There were some instances in which violations of assumptions of statistical tests were found. However, I found that after performing various transformations and deleting multiple cases, despite yielding slightly different statistical estimates, the general conclusions drawn from the results of the various statistical tests were the same. As such, I opted to report the results from statistical analyses carried out on the original, untransformed data to preserve sample size, integrity of the data, and interpretability of findings.

Study Measures

Hiring Recommendations

Hiring recommendations is an encompassing term that I used to describe a participant's recommendation on what steps should be taken on the applicant's case for employment. More specifically, I was interested to know employers' thoughts on outright rejecting the applicant, learning more about the applicant through a second interview, and outright hiring the applicant. I chose to look at multiple indicators of hiring recommendations because prejudice can be

manifested in different ways (Devine, 2001; Russinova et al., 2011). To assess hiring recommendations, participants were asked to use a seven-point Likert scale, where 1 = *Extremely unlikely*, and 7 = *Extremely likely*, to rate their likelihood of recommending each of the following: “rejecting the applicant,” “bringing the applicant in for an in-person interview (2nd interview),” and “hiring the applicant now.” The three-item scale of hiring recommendations was found to have good internal consistency, $\alpha = .84$.

Proposed Starting Salary

Participants’ recommendation on the amount the applicant should be offered as his starting salary, if he were to be offered a job, was captured using a sliding scale that ranged from \$24,000 to \$30,000. The sliding scale defaulted at the lowest end of the scale (i.e., \$24,000), and participants had to move the dial to adjust their recommendation on the applicant’s starting salary.

Level of Concern Regarding Hiring Applicant

I developed an eight-item measure to evaluate employers’ level of concern regarding hiring the applicant. Seven of eight items were based on factors employers identified as being concerned about in Giguere and Dundes’ (2002) study. Employers’ areas of concern were perceived people skills, customer comfort, coworker comfort, training, time to adjust, turnover, and fear of victimization (Giguere & Dundes, 2002). The eighth and final item, written by me, accounts for concerns about the applicant being arrested for committing drug-related offenses – the type of offense I am most interested in. Participants indicated their level of concern about each factor using a seven-point Likert scale, where 1 = *Not at all concerned*, and 7 = *Extremely concerned*. The eight-item scale was found to have very good internal consistency, $\alpha = .93$.

Measures for Supplemental Analyses

In-Study Manipulation Check for Suppressor Evidence

To assess participants' perceptions of suppressor evidence in the application file, I asked participants to rate the amount of evidence they believed the applicant's file provided for a number of statements, using a seven-point Likert scale, where 1 = *No evidence*, and 7 = *Complete*. The statements included were inspired by Study 1's most prevalent suppression factors of *desistance and positive change* and *honest disclosure*. Examples of the statements included are: "The applicant has voluntarily disclosed an offense in their background" and "The applicant will NOT re-offend in the future". This scale was included to test my manipulation of suppressor evidence.

Factors that Influence Hiring Recommendations

To evaluate how much influence different factors had on employers' hiring recommendations, I asked participants to rate the importance of several factors, on a seven-point Likert scale, where 1 = *Not at all important*, and 7 = *Extremely important*. The list of factors ultimately included were derived from two sources. One source was Study 1's most often discussed codes and themes of suppression factors (e.g., honest disclosure, time passed since offense, desistance, etc.). The second source was what I thought to be key pieces of job-relevant information in the application file that employers generally tend to care about. Factors that participants provided importance ratings for included: information on the initial application form, responses to interview questions, pre-employment background check results, and prior job experience. This information was collected to provide greater understanding for participant ratings of applicant hireability.

Perceived Warmth & Competence of Applicant

The stereotype content model (SCM) posits that stereotypes are captured by two dimensions: warmth and competence (Fiske et al., 2002). The measurement of perceived warmth

and competence of the applicant was included to allow me the option to test alternative theoretical explanations of my Study 2 findings. The stereotype classification of each applicant was assessed with an eight-item measure, utilized by Fiske et al. (2002). On a seven-point Likert scale, where 1 = *Not at all*, and 7 = *Extremely*, perceived warmth was assessed by asking: “How [warm, tolerant, good-natured, sincere] do you think the applicant is?” The competence dimension was measured by asking: “How [competent, confident, independent, competitive] do you think the applicant is? Consistent with past reliability estimates, both warmth $\alpha = .91$ and competence $\alpha = .90$, showed very good internal consistency in this study. This measure was included to test an alternative theoretical explanation of the relationship between offender status and unfair bias in employment decision-making.

General Impressions

Participants’ overall impressions of the applicant was solicited with the question: “In a sentence or two, please describe your general impressions of the applicant.” This question was included to get additional context behind employers’ thoughts and impressions about applicants.

STUDY 2 RESULTS

Pre-Hypothesis Testing

In this section, I will present participant demographic information and descriptive statistics, followed by results from my primary hypotheses testing. Descriptive statistics give a high-level overview of the results and provide a summary of the data that can be used to provide important context and help draw conclusions about the results from subsequent hypothesis testing (Murphy, 2021). In addition to primary hypothesis testing, I present results of analyses for supplemental information collected in the study. The supplemental analyses included an in-study manipulation check, factors that influenced hiring ratings, and targeted post hoc analyses.

Participants Demographics

Of the 230 participants retained for analysis, 24 were randomly assigned to condition 1A, 24 assigned to condition 1B, 25 were assigned to condition 1C, 29 were assigned to condition 2A, 26 were assigned to condition 2B, 23 were assigned to condition 2C, 26 were assigned to condition 3A, 26 were assigned to condition 3B, and 27 respondents were assigned to condition 3C (See Table 7 for the details of each condition).

On average, participants were 40.5 years old ($SD = 12.1$), and residents of 43 different states across the U.S. The sample was primarily composed of White (85.2%), men (51.3%), with at least some level of college education (83.9%; See Table 8 for more detailed sample demographics). Most participants (76.1%) reported having supervisory responsibilities in their current job, and 67.4% reported making hiring decisions in their current position. In terms of hiring experience, most participants (47.0%) reported that they have hired someone with a speeding offense before. Most reported (42.2%) not having hired someone with a marijuana

possession charge before. Similarly, the vast majority of participants (82.6%) reported not having ever hired someone with a charge of trafficking heroin while in possession of a firearm. Very few participants had ever been arrested (18.3%), and even fewer had ever been convicted of a crime (12.6%).

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for the dependent variables in Study 2 can be found in Table 9. As evidenced by the low mean rating across conditions ($M = 2.08$, $SD = 1.31$; measured on a 1-7 Likert scale), participants had generally low concerns about hiring applicants. Participants were most concerned about applicants leaving the job within 6 months ($M = 2.70$, $SD = 1.58$), and least concerned about applicants harming people at work ($M = 1.75$, $SD = 1.50$). The average proposed starting salary across all conditions was \$26,893.01 ($SD = \$1,860.68$; with a possible range between \$24,000 and \$30,000), which is about 48 percent of the maximum salary they could have possibly offered. Finally, applicants across all conditions received relatively favorable hiring recommendations ($M = 5.36$, $SD = 1.37$; on a 7-point Likert scale). In terms of hiring recommendations, participants were most likely to invite the applicant in for a second interview ($M = 5.70$, $SD = 1.47$), then reject the applicant ($M = 5.60$, $SD = 1.55$ when reverse-scored), and had the lowest likelihood of hiring the applicant now ($M = 4.78$, $SD = 1.70$).

Relationships Among Dependent Variables. All pairs of my three outcome variables of interest were significantly correlated. Specifically, a greater level of concern about hiring the applicant was associated with a lower proposed starting salary ($r = -.53$, $p < .001$) and less favorable hiring recommendations ($r = -.21$, $p = .001$). Also, more favorable hiring recommendations was associated with a high proposed starting salary ($r = .40$, $p < .001$).

Hypothesis Testing

In hypotheses 1 and 2, I predicted that offense type (H1), the absence or presence of suppressor evidence (H2a), and the type of suppressor evidence presented (H2b)-would significantly influence employers' levels of concern about hiring applicants, their recommended hiring decisions, and their proposed starting salaries if the applicants were to be hired. In hypothesis 3, I predicted that the type of suppressor evidence presented would moderate the relationship between offense type and employers' levels of concern about hiring those applicants, their recommended hiring decisions, and their proposed starting salaries if the applicants were to be hired. I expected to see the least favorable outcomes when no suppressor evidence was presented, better outcomes when evidence of *honest disclosure* was given, and the most favorable outcomes when evidence of *desistance and positive change* was presented. My rationale for this prediction was because *desistance and positive change* was endorsed more frequently than *honest disclosure* in Study 1.

Multivariate Analysis Results

To test my hypotheses, I conducted a 3x3 multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). As revealed by the 3x3 MANOVA there was a significant omnibus effect of offense type on the statistical combination of my outcomes of interest (i.e., concerns about hiring, hiring recommendations, and proposed starting salary), $F(2,221) = 5.79, p < .001; \lambda = 0.86$. Neither suppressor evidence presented, $F(2,221) = 1.09, p = .365; \lambda = 0.97$, nor the interaction effect of offense type and suppressor evidence, $F(2,221) = 1.35, p = .189; \lambda = 0.93$, were found to significantly influence the outcomes of interest. Follow-up ANOVAs, and post-hoc tests were conducted to further probe the results of the 3x3 MANOVA, and to provide a better understanding of the degree to which I had support for my hypotheses.

Main Effect of Offense Type on Hiring-Related Outcomes. In hypothesis 1, I predicted that all three outcomes of interest (i.e., concerns about hiring, hiring recommendations, and proposed starting salary) would vary by the type of offense (traffic offense, minor drug offense, or serious drug-related offense) in a job applicant's history such that traffic offenders would have the most favorable outcomes, minor drug offenders would have less favorable outcomes, and serious drug-related offenders would have the least favorable outcomes. Recall that results from the 3x3 MANOVA showed that there was in fact a significant main effect of offense type on the statistical combination of outcome variables.

I conducted a series of follow-up one-way ANOVAs to investigate the individual effect of offense type on each of my three outcome variables of interest. Results showed a significant main effect of offense type on hiring recommendations ($F(2,227) = 15.58, p < .001, \eta^2 = .12$), but not on concerns about hiring the applicant ($F(2,227) = 1.28, p = .281, \eta^2 = .01$), nor proposed starting salary ($F(2,227) = 2.89, p = .057, \eta^2 = .02$).

I then conducted a Scheffe's paired comparison post-hoc test to probe the significant relationship between offense type and hiring recommendations. I utilized Scheffe's post-hoc test to probe this significant ANOVA tests for two main reasons. First, was due to the unequal sizes of my groups, and the fact that Scheffe's test is customarily used with unequal sample sizes. Second, Scheffe's test automatically adjusts the α criterion for the number of paired comparisons run. This adjustment of the α criterion allows me to control for the probability of committing a Type I error due to the number of tests run (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2018, p. 334). Results from the post-hoc analysis revealed, as hypothesized, that serious drug-related offenders ($M = 4.75, SD = 1.55$) received less favorable hiring recommendations than traffic offenders ($M = 5.89, SD = 0.98; p > .001$) and minor drug offenders ($M = 5.48, SD = 1.25; p = .002$). Interestingly, and

contrary to my hypothesis, there was not a statistically significant difference in hiring recommendations given for traffic offenders ($M = 5.89$, $SD = 0.98$) and minor drug offenders ($M = 5.48$, $SD = 1.25$; $p = .142$) (See Table 13 for the effects of offense type on each individual item of the hiring recommendations scale). Therefore, based on these results, H1 was partially supported.

Main Effect of Suppressor Evidence on Hiring-Related Outcomes. In H2a, I predicted that all three outcomes of interest (i.e., concerns about hiring, hiring recommendations, and proposed starting salary) would vary by the absence or presence of suppressor evidence (absence of *honest disclosure* and *desistance and positive change* information vs. the presence of either *honest disclosure* or *desistance and positive change* information) in a job applicant's application file, such that applicants who presented evidence of *honest disclosure* or *desistance and positive change* would have more favorable outcomes than applicants who did not present evidence of either suppression factor. In H2b, I predicted that all three outcomes of interest (i.e., concerns about hiring, hiring recommendations, and proposed starting salary) would vary by the type of suppressor evidence presented (*honest disclosure* vs. *desistance*) in a job applicants application file, such that applicants who presented evidence of *desistance* would have more favorable outcomes than applicants who honestly disclosed their offense.

Results from my 3x3 MANOVA (reported above) revealed a non-significant main effect of suppressor evidence on the three outcomes of interest. Given the non-significant results of the omnibus test, I did not conduct post-hoc tests, such as follow-up one-way ANOVAs or planned contrasts. These results therefore suggest that neither the absence nor presence of suppressor evidence nor the type of suppressor evidence had a significant effect on the outcomes of interest. As such, H2a and H2b were not supported.

Interactive Effect of Offense Type and Suppressor Evidence on Hiring-Related

Outcomes. In hypothesis 3, I predicted a significant interaction effect of offense type and suppressor evidence on all three outcomes of interest (i.e., concerns about hiring, hiring recommendations, and proposed starting salary). Specifically, I expected to see the largest effect of offense type on the favorability of outcomes when no suppressor evidence was presented, a smaller effect when there was evidence of disclosure, and the smallest effect when evidence of desistance was presented. Results from my 3x3 MANOVA revealed a non-significant interaction effect of offense type and suppressor evidence on my outcomes of interest (i.e., the combination of concerns about hiring the applicant, hiring recommendations, and proposed starting salary). H3 was therefore not supported.

Supplemental Analyses

In addition to hypothesis testing, I conducted an in-study manipulation check as well as several post-hoc, supplemental analyses on additional variables to provide context to the findings from my hypothesis tests.

In-Study Manipulation Check of Suppressor Evidence

To supplement the lack of strong evidence for the manipulation of suppressor evidence yielded in my pre-test study, I conducted an in-study manipulation check. In the pre-test manipulation check, I examined the *isolated effects* of manipulating suppressor evidence (i.e., *desistance and positive change* and *honest disclosure*) separately in the interview excerpt and the pre-employment background check results. Differently, in the in-study manipulation check, I examined the *joint effects* of manipulating suppressor evidence both in the interview excerpt and the pre-employment background check. This was especially important to do for the manipulation of *honest disclosure*, because participants would not be able to determine if applicants honestly disclosed their background without knowing: (1) the results from the pre-employment

background check, *and* (2) if the applicant was honest about their background in the interview. I also thought it might strengthen the *desistance & positive change* manipulation because participants would have complementary evidence of desistance from the applicant's self-report of desistance in the interview *and* evidence from the pre-employment background check that showed information such as number of offenses and time since last offense. Given the stronger evidence received for an effective manipulation of offense type (and severity) in my pre-study manipulation checks, I did not conduct an additional in-study manipulation check to test perceived severity of offense type.

Evidence of Desistance and Disclosure. To test if participants noticed and discerned my manipulations of *desistance & positive change* and *honest disclosure*, I asked participants to rate the amount of evidence they believed the application file provided for the applicant: disclosing an offense, being honest about a past offense, being a generally honest person, taking accountability for their actions, being unlikely to reoffend, and growing and maturing since offending. For the *honest disclosure* manipulation, I expected to see significantly higher agreement ratings that the applicant (1) disclosed an offense, (2) was honest about an offense, and (3) is an honest person in general for the *honest disclosure* conditions (i.e., conditions 1B, 2B, 3B) than for the no suppressor information conditions (i.e., conditions 1A, 2A, 3A). For the *desistance & positive change* manipulation, I expected to see significantly higher agreement ratings that the applicant (1) takes accountability, (2) will NOT reoffend, and (3) has grown since offense for the *desistance & positive change* conditions (i.e., conditions 1C, 2C, 3C) than for the no suppressor information conditions (i.e., conditions 1A, 2A, 3A). The pattern of means (as shown in Tables 11A-11F) were generally consistent with my predictions.

Results consistently showed that for conditions in which neither suppression factor (i.e., neither *desistance and positive change* nor *honest disclosure*) was manipulated participants reported seeing less evidence of the manipulations than in conditions in which either suppression factor was manipulated. For example, applicants reported seeing greater evidence of the applicant being honest about an offense in the “minor drug offense + desistance” condition ($M = 6.35, SD = 1.03$) and the “minor drug offense + disclosure” condition ($M = 6.00, SD = 1.30$) than in the “minor drug offense” condition ($M = 3.17, SD = 1.49$) in which neither *desistance and positive change* nor *honest disclosure* evidence was presented. This pattern of results therefore suggested that participants recognized the manipulations of the suppression targets.

An interesting finding was that all items used in the manipulation of *desistance and positive change* (i.e., taking accountability for their actions, being unlikely to reoffend, and growing and maturing since offending) and *honest disclosure* (i.e., disclosing an offense, being honest about a past offense, being a generally honest person) were positively and significantly correlated. This suggested, for example, that participants often saw evidence of disclosing an offense as also evidence of growth and maturity ($r = .46, p < .001$). This may also potentially explain why regardless of which suppression factor was manipulated (i.e., *desistance and positive change* or *honest disclosure*), participants reported seeing greater levels of evidence for all factors tested by the items. Another interesting finding was that all manipulation check items, except for evidence of disclosure and evidence of honesty about an offense, were significantly correlated with my outcome variables of interest (See Table 12 for the complete correlation matrix of dependent variables and evidence of manipulations).

Factors that Influence Hiring Recommendations

With the goal of better understanding what factors might influence participants' decisions regarding the employment of the applicant they were presented, I asked them to rate the importance of several factors in influencing their hiring recommendations for the applicant. For the most part, the importance ratings of various factors in influencing hiring recommendations were intercorrelated (See Table 13). Some notable exceptions are the non-significant relationships between the importance of "background check results" and: "meets qualification" ($r = -.07, p = 3.24$), "prior job experience" ($r = -.02, p = .805$), and "answers to interview questions" ($r = -.01, p = .920$). Together, these findings highlight a larger pattern of results showing that participants who rated background check results as more important to their hiring recommendations for applicants tended to rate other background-related factors as more important than factors related to the qualifications of the applicant.

Three factors that were found to be significantly correlated to all three dependent variables (i.e., concerns about hiring the applicant, hiring recommendations, and proposed starting salary), specifically: "meets qualifications," "answers to interview questions," and "background check results." Higher importance ratings of "meets qualifications" was associated with lower levels of concern about hiring the applicant ($r = -.18, p = .005$), more favorable hiring recommendations ($r = .32, p < .001$), and higher proposed starting salary ($r = .17, p = .010$). In a similar pattern of results, higher importance ratings of "answers to interview questions" was associated with lower levels of concern about hiring the applicant ($r = -.19, p = .003$), more favorable hiring recommendations ($r = .36, p < .001$), and higher proposed starting salary ($r = .28, p < .001$). Differently, higher importance ratings of "background check results" was associated with higher levels of concern about hiring the applicant ($r = .32, p < .001$), less favorable hiring recommendations ($r = -.38, p < .001$), and lower proposed starting salary ($r = -$

.28, $p < .001$). These patterns of results suggest that when participants valued or placed emphasis on the qualifications of the applicant as opposed to their offense or background, they tended to recommend more favorable hiring-related outcomes for the applicant.

Factors that Influence Hiring Recommendations by Offense Type

In light of the significant main effect of offense type on hiring recommendations, and the numerous significant correlations between hiring recommendations and many of the factors inquired about, I wanted to see if certain factors were regarded as more or less important to their hiring recommendations based on the offense type of the applicant the employer reviewed. I therefore conducted a MANOVA to investigate if the participants' importance ratings of factors influencing their hiring recommendations varied by the type of offense in the background of the applicant they reviewed. Results from an omnibus one-way MANOVA revealed that importance ratings of factors varied by offense type, $F(2,227) = 3.02, p < .001; \lambda = 0.72$. I then conducted a series of follow-up univariate ANOVAs, adjusting the alpha level to $\alpha = .004$ for the 13 tests run. I further conducted post-hoc tests to probe the significant univariate ANOVA results. Generally, the importance ratings of job-related factors such as "meets qualifications" ($F(2,227) = 0.70, p = .497$), "answers to interview questions" ($F(2,227) = 0.60, p = .550$), and "prior job experience" ($F(2,227) = 0.07, p = .935$) were seen as equally important for hiring recommendations ratings across all three offense types. On the other hand, the importance ratings of factors that are relevant to only former offenders such as "disclosure of offense" ($F(2,227) = 14.90, p < .001$), "growth and maturity since offense" ($F(2,227) = 13.03, p < .001$), and "time since offense" ($F(2,227) = 43.98, p < .001$) significantly varied by offense type. Generally, these factors were reported as more important for the hiring recommendations ratings of serious and minor drug offenders than non-criminal traffic offenders (See Table 14 for details).

Testing An Alternative Stigma Theory: The SCM and BIAS Model

Given the significant main effect of offense type on hiring recommendations, and the non-significant main effect of my hypothesized prejudice suppression factors on any of my dependent variables (i.e., level of concern, hiring recommendations, and proposed salary), I wanted to see if an alternative prejudice/ stigma theory would do a better job of predicting employers' level of concern, hiring recommendations, and proposed salary for applicants. To do this, I replaced the JSM-inspired (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003) *suppressor evidence* variable with the SCM-and BIAS-inspired (Fiske et al., 2002) *perceived warmth and competence* variables in the omnibus MANOVA model used for hypothesis testing.

To verify the suitability of including perceived warmth and competence, as covariates of offense type, in a MANCOVA model to predict level of concern, hiring recommendations, and proposed salary, I first conducted correlational analyses to determine if warmth and competence were related to my dependent variables. For independent variables or covariates to be included in an MANOVA or MANCOVA model, those variables should be related to the dependent variables (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2018, p. 80). Results showed that greater perceived warmth of the applicant was related to participants' lower levels of concern regarding hiring them ($r = -.32$, $p < .001$), higher proposed starting salaries ($r = .29$, $p < .001$), and more favorable recommended hiring outcomes ($r = .51$, $p < .001$). In a similar pattern of results, greater perceived competence of applicants was related to participants' lower level of concern regarding hiring them ($r = -.22$, $p < .001$), higher proposed starting salaries ($r = .21$, $p = .001$), and more favorable recommended hiring outcomes ($r = .41$, $p < .001$). Collectively, therefore, correlation analysis results affirmed that perceived warmth and competence were appropriate covariates for the MANCOVA model.

Results from the omnibus MANCOVA revealed a significant main effect of offense type ($F(2,218) = 7.29, p < .001, \lambda = 0.82$) and perceived warmth of the applicant ($F(1,218) = 27.10, p < .001, \lambda = 0.73$) on the statistical combination of employers' level of concern, hiring recommendations, and proposed salary for applicants. The perceived competence of the applicant did not have a significant main effect ($F(1,218) = 1.92, p < .001, \lambda = 0.97$) on the outcome variables (recall that I held cues about the applicants' level of competence constant across all conditions). Similarly, all combinations of interaction effects were non-significant (See Table 15 for more details).

Post-Hoc Analyses. I conducted a series of follow-up multiple regression analyses to probe the significant relationship between warmth, competence and each of my dependent variables. Although only perceived warmth, and not competence, was found to be significant in the omnibus MANOVA model, I included perceived competence in the follow-up regression models, along with warmth, to see if removing offense type from the statistical model would significantly affect the relationship between competence and the outcome variables. Multiple regression results showed that perceived warmth ($\beta = -.33, t(227) = -3.76, p < .001$) explained a significant amount of variance in levels of concern about hiring applicants, but perceived competence did not ($\beta = .01, t(227) = 0.08, p = .936$), $F(2, 227) = 12.97, p < .001$. Results similarly showed that perceived warmth ($\beta = .44, t(227) = 5.58, p < .001$) explained a significant amount of variance in hiring recommendations, but perceived competence did not ($\beta = .11, t(227) = 1.40, p = .163$), $F(2, 227) = 41.54, p < .001$. Finally, perceived warmth ($\beta = .24, t(227) = 3.12, p = .002$) was shown to explain a significant amount of variance in proposed starting salary, and perceived competence did not ($\beta = .02, t(227) = 0.20, p = .838$).

In summary, the warmer (i.e., warm, tolerant, good-natured, and sincere) participants judged the applicant to be, the less concerns they had about hiring them, the more favorable their hiring recommendations, and the higher their recommended starting salary. As a reminder, applicants' level of competence was held constant across conditions. Therefore, the finding that perceived warmth, but not competence, explained a significant amount of variance in concerns about hiring applicants, their hiring recommendations, and their recommended starting salary was consistent with the intent of the study.

In my final supplemental analysis, I examined if perceptions of warmth and competence varied based on my manipulations of offense type and/ or suppressor evidence. Results from these analyses could provide important insight on how my independent variables of interest (especially offense type) might relate to hiring-related outcomes. Consistent with my research design that held applicant qualifications constant across conditions, perceived competence did not vary based on either offense type ($F(2,227) = 0.31, p = .734, \eta^2 = .00$) or suppressor evidence ($F(2,227) = 0.16, p = .855, \eta^2 = .00$). An interesting finding, however, was that perceived warmth did not vary based on either offense type ($F(2,227) = 2.14, p = .120, \eta^2 = .02$) or suppressor evidence ($F(2,227) = 2.20, p = .113, \eta^2 = .02$). Collectively, these results *suggest* that the relationship between offense type and hiring recommendations is not explained by perceptions of warmth or competence. Instead, both offense type and perceived warmth exert unique effects on hiring recommendations.

Post-Hoc Hypothesis Testing: Hiring Decision Makers

Finally, I explored whether the subset of participants who make hiring decisions in their current positions ($n = 155$) would produce different findings than those obtained with my full sample ($N = 230$). Like my findings with the full sample, the 3x3 MANOVA revealed a

significant omnibus effect of offense type on the statistical combination of my outcomes of interest (i.e., concerns about hiring, hiring recommendations, and proposed starting salary), $F(2,146) = 3.73, p = .001; \lambda = 0.86$. Neither suppressor evidence presented, $F(2,146) = 1.14, p = .338; \lambda = 0.95$, nor the interaction effect of offense type and suppressor evidence, $F(4,146) = 1.08, p = .373; \lambda = 0.92$, were found to significantly influence the outcomes of interest.

Post-Hoc Analyses. Follow up post-hoc analyses revealed a distinction between the findings from the full sample and the subset of hiring decision makers. In the full sample, of the three hiring-related outcomes, offense type was *only* found to be significantly related to hiring recommendations ($F(2,227) = 15.58, p < .001, \eta^2 = .12$). In the subset of hiring decision makers, however, offense type was shown to be significantly related to two of three hiring-related outcomes, i.e., hiring recommendations ($F(2,152) = 8.89, p = .001; \eta^2 = .10$) and proposed starting salary ($F(2,152) = 3.21, p = .043; \eta^2 = .04$).

Hiring Recommendations. Like with the full sample, serious drug-related offenders ($M = 4.84, SD = 1.62$) received less favorable hiring recommendations than traffic offenders ($M = 5.91, SD = 0.92; p > .001$). Similarly, traffic offenders ($M = 5.91, SD = 0.92$) and minor drug offenders ($M = 5.44, SD = 1.20; p = .058$) received comparably favorable hiring recommendations. Unlike with the full sample, however, minor drug offenders ($M = 5.44, SD = 1.20$) and serious drug-related offenders ($M = 4.84, SD = 1.62; p = .178$) received statistically similar hiring recommendations with the subset of hiring decision makers. Recall that in the full sample, minor drug offenders received more favorable hiring recommendations than more serious drug-related offenders.

Proposed Starting Salary. Interestingly, despite the significant main effect of offense type of proposed starting salary, all paired comparisons were non-significant. Specifically,

serious drug-related offenders ($M = \$26,545.33$, $SD = \$1,819.48$) received statistically similar proposed starting salaries to traffic offenders ($M = \$27,341.30$, $SD = \$1,693.62$; $p = .076$) and minor drug offenders ($M = \$26,620.93$, $SD = \$1,719.48$; $p = .976$). Similarly, there was not a statistically significant difference in the proposed starting salaries for minor drug offenders ($M = \$26,620.93$, $SD = \$1,719.48$) and traffic offenders ($M = \$27,341.30$, $SD = \$1,693.62$; $p = .113$).

Alternative Theoretical Explanation. As I did with my full sample, I replaced the *suppressor evidence* variable with the *perceived warmth and competence* variables in the omnibus MANOVA model used for hypothesis testing. Results from the omnibus MANCOVA with the subset of hiring decision makers yielded similar results to those from the full sample. Offense type ($F(2,143) = 4.31$, $p < .001$, $\lambda = 0.84$) and perceived warmth of the applicant ($F(1,143) = 14.33$, $p < .001$, $\lambda = 0.77$) were the only significant predictors of the statistical combination of employers' level of concern, hiring recommendations, and proposed salary for applicants. A series of follow-up multiple regression analyses showed that perceived warmth, but not perceived competence, was associated with less concerns about hiring the applicant ($\beta = -.38$, $t(152) = -2.54$, $p = .012$), more favorable hiring recommendations ($\beta = .53$, $t(152) = 3.06$, $p < .001$) and a higher proposed starting salary ($\beta = 497.82$, $t(152) = 2.44$, $p = .016$). These patterns of results mirror what those found with the full sample.

In summary, the pattern of results yielded from my full sample and the subset of hiring decision makers were largely consistent. Two variations of note, however, were that: (1) whereas the full sample gave minor drug offenders more favorable hiring recommendations than more serious drug-related offenders, hiring decision makers gave comparable ratings to both groups, and (2) only in the subset of hiring decision makers was there a significant main effect of offense type on proposed starting salary – although all paired comparisons were non-significant.

STUDY 2 DISCUSSION

The purpose of Study 2 was to extend my findings from Study 1, and to test the efficacy of two frequently mentioned potential applicant-related suppression factors (i.e., desistance and positive change and honest disclosure) in mitigating adverse hiring-related outcomes as identified in Study 1. I organize my discussion of Study 2 results by hypotheses.

H1: Offense Type on Concern, Hiring Recommendations, and Proposed Salary

I hypothesized that traffic offenders would show the most favorable outcomes, with minor drug offenders receiving less positive outcomes, and serious drug-related offenders having the most negative ratings.

Hiring Recommendations

Largely consistent with previous literature (for example: Kuhn, 2019) and extant theory, results indicated that offense type had a significant effect on hiring recommendations. Applicants with less serious offenses (i.e., traffic offenders, and FMDOs) received more favorable hiring recommendations (i.e., lower recommendations to reject their application, higher recommendations to invite them to a second interview, and higher recommendations to hire them now) than applicants with a more serious drug-related offense (i.e., heroin trafficking while in possession of a firearm).

Although traffic offenders and minor drug offenders received statistically comparable hiring recommendations, both groups received more favorable ratings than serious drug-related offenders. Specifically, serious drug-related offenders received higher rejective ratings and lower hiring ratings than the other two conditions. There were no significant differences in ratings to recommend applicants for a second/callback interview. More research is needed to more fully

understand whether, and under what conditions, an applicant's offense type can influence their likelihood of being invited for a *second* interview. Extant research (e.g., Leasure & Zhang, 2021; Vuolo et al., 2017) primarily focuses on callbacks for a first, and in many cases only, interview. More research is therefore needed to understand the prevalence and importance of second interviews in present-day hiring processes.

An interesting finding from post-hoc tests conducted was that when only the responses of individuals who make hiring decisions in their current positions were analyzed, minor drug offenders and more serious-drug related offenders had statistically comparable hiring recommendations. The only significant difference among offense types was between serious drug-related offenders and traffic offenders. Like with the full sample, traffic offenders had more favorable hiring recommendations than more serious drug-related offenders. Sample selection plays a crucial role in determining the external validity of research findings (Findley et al., 2021). As external validity refers to the degree to which conclusions based on a study's sample can be generalized to larger populations (Calder et al., 1982), it is imperative that a study's sample is representative of the broader population and the study's conditions mirror real-world settings (Findley et al., 2021). In real-world settings, only individuals with the authority to make hiring decisions would be asked to evaluate applicants and make hiring-related decisions, as they were asked to do in the current study. Hence, the similar hiring recommendations ascribed to FMDOs and more serious drug-related offenders by a subset of hiring decision makers in my sample, might better mirror real-world outcomes than the findings from the entire sample, which includes individuals that do not have hiring authority in their current positions.

Empirical studies have documented significant differences in the hiring outcomes of offenders as compared to non-offenders (Pager, 2003), and between different offense types

(Holzer et al., 2003). Pager (2003), for example, found that compared to non-offenders, formerly incarcerated drug offenders were only half to one-third as likely to be considered for employment, as measured call-back rates. Further, Kuhn (2019) found that, when considering former offenders, the apparent severity of an offense (and its recency) influenced raters' evaluation of an applicant for a call center job. Several researchers have shown that employers, for example, tend to be more reluctant to hire people with violent and sex offenses and more willing to overlook drug charges (Couloute & Kopf, 2018; Rade et al., 2016; Rockeman & Saraiva, 2020). Findings from Holzer et al.'s (2003) study showed that employer's willingness to hire former offenders varied with offense type, such that employers were less averse to offenders of less serious crimes (such as property and drug offenses) and were more averse to offenders of more serious (such as violent crimes).

Therefore, my results are consistent with previous research. Interestingly, my study 2 results could be interpreted (albeit cautiously) to suggest that participants viewed both traffic violations as well as a marijuana drug offense as similar in severity (at least in terms of hiring recommendations).

Employers' Concern About Hiring

Interestingly, the type of offense in an applicant's background generally did not have a significant impact on employers' level of concern about hiring them, nor employers' proposed starting salary for them. Post-hoc tests showed that employers were more concerned about applicants with a previous possession of marijuana charge, and applicants with a charge for trafficking heroin while in possession of a firearm being subsequently charged with a drug offense than applicants with a past speeding citation. However, when all eight individual types of

concern were aggregated into a single scale, my sample of employers had comparably low concerns about hiring applicants across all three offense types.

This was an interesting finding that did not support my hypothesis as I expected employers to report having more concerns about hiring former criminal offenders (minor drug offenders and more serious drug-related offenders) than non-criminal traffic offenders. It has been well-documented that employers are concerned about the risks involved in hiring former offenders (Harris & Keller, 2005). A 2002 study of Baltimore area employers found that they were most concerned about: former offenders' people skills, customers' comfort, coworkers' comfort, training necessary, time to adjust, turnover, and fear of victimization, in that order (Giguere & Dundes, 2002). Results from supplemental analyses showed that employers have similarly low concerns about applicants' likelihood of leaving within 6 months, employees' level of comfort around them, customers' level of comfort around them, training required for applicants, time needed for them to adjust to the job, applicants' people skills, and their likelihood of harming others at work. Understandably, employers had a higher level of concern about serious drug-related offenders and minor offenders being arrested for a drug-related offense than traffic offenders.

My findings of low and comparable levels of concern across offense type manipulations may be explained by my study design. Although my pilot studies showed that a speeding violation and a marijuana possession charge were perceived as less serious than trafficking heroin while in possession of a firearm, it is possible that the study stimulus material, which was designed to present the applicant as a qualified candidate, largely alleviated employers' concerns regarding things such as the applicant's people skills and need for training. Employers would

have likely expressed greater levels of concern toward applicants who were presented as less competent (Young & Powell, 2015).

An alternate, or perhaps additional, explanation is that none of the offenses were perceived as “serious enough” to raise employers’ concerns about hiring them for a retail sales associate job. One reason for this could be that these specific offenses were not particularly job-related. EEOC (2012) guidance instructs employers to consider the relevance of the offense to the job when making hiring decisions regarding individuals with a criminal history. Thus, employers may have been more concerned about hiring individuals with offenses that were relevant to the retail sales associate job. For example, employers may have reported greater concern about applicants with an offense of theft, robbery, or assault of a coworker than they did for traffic and drug-related offenses. Furthermore, empirical research has shown that the relationship between the applicant’s crime and the work context influences employers’ willingness to hire former offenders (Albright & Denq, 1996).

Proposed Starting Salary

Employers’ proposed starting salary levels for applicants did not significantly differ by offense type. This was despite the positive correlation between proposed starting salary and hiring recommendations, and the fact that hiring recommendations varied by offense type. Intriguingly, post-hoc analyses revealed that although proposed starting salary did not vary by offense type for my full sample, the two variables were significantly related when considering the responses of *only* hiring decision makers in my sample. The peculiar finding of a significant main effect and non-significant pair-wise comparisons may be explained by several factors. First, although there was a small-medium effect ($\eta^2 = .04$; Cohen & Cohen, 1983) of offense type on proposed starting salary, the corresponding p-value of .043 just met the alpha criterion of $p < .05$.

A small sample size, and high variability in the data make it more difficult to uncover significant differences (Park, 2003). Furthermore, Scheffe's post-hoc test adjusts the alpha criterion to control for the family-wise error rate and reduce the chance of making a Type I error (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2018, p. 334). This correction to the p-values makes it harder to achieve statistical significance.

Generally, the relationship between proposed starting salary and hiring recommendations is consistent with existing research. In an experiment looking at the effects of organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) and selection decisions made in the context of a job interview, a peripheral finding was that of a significant positive relationship between salary recommendations and overall evaluation of the applicant (Podsakoff et al., 2011). The six-item overall evaluation scale used in the study included items such as: "Based on the interview, I think this candidate would be an appropriate hire for the administrative assistant [supervisor] position" and "If we hired her, I think this candidate would be a success on the job" (Podsakoff et al., 2011, p. 317).

My finding that proposed starting salary for applicants was consistent across all three offense types suggests that participants made salary recommendations irrespective of the applicant's past offenses. Although this did not support my prediction, from an organizational justice standpoint, it is positive that determinations of applicants' proposed starting salaries were not being made on factors unrelated to their ability to perform the job. Past studies have shown that although there may not be significant differences in the rate at which different groups are hired, there can be differences in the starting salaries offered to different groups (Terborg & Ilgen, 1975). Moreover, in a study about obesity discrimination at work, researchers found that greater "anti-fat prejudice" predicted the allocation of a lower starting salary, lower perceived

leadership potential, and lower overall employability ratings for obese candidates as compared to non-obese candidates (O'Brien et al., 2013).

H2: Suppressor Evidence on Hiring Concern, Hiring Recommendations and Salary

I hypothesized that employers' level of concern about hiring applicants, as well as their hiring recommendations and proposed starting salary for applicants would vary by the absence or presence of suppression factor evidence and by the suppressor type. Contrary to my predictions, the presentation of *desistance and positive change* and *honest disclosure* evidence did not significantly influence my outcomes of interest. These findings did not support my predictions based upon Crandall and Eshleman's (2003) JSM.

The risk of losing an employee to re-offense and recidivism is a legitimate concern for employers to consider, especially given the high rates of recidivism across the U.S. (Alper et al., 2018). Further, previous research indicates that employers value honesty and trustworthiness in their prospective employees (Brody, 2010). In addition, Bushway and Apel (2012) postulated that employers may be more willing to hire from a pool of former offenders if they are able to reliably identify "desisters." However, in the current study, suppression factors of *honesty and disclosure* did not mitigate adverse hiring outcomes, especially for serious drug-related crimes. Possible methodological explanations for this finding will be discussed below.

A potential reason for the lack of main effect of suppressor evidence and a non-significant interaction effect of offense type and suppressor evidence on hiring-related and salary outcomes could be that my manipulation of the suppressor evidence was not sufficiently robust. Results from my pre-test manipulation checks yielded inconsistent evidence of the effectiveness of the manipulations (See Tables 5A & 5B). For this reason, I decided to include a check of the suppressor evidence manipulation in Study 2. The in-study manipulation check produced stronger evidence for the manipulation of suppressor evidence than was previously seen in the

pre-test manipulation check (Tables 11A-F). Participants in conditions that manipulated suppressor evidence consistently rated seeing more evidence of that manipulation. Still, even though participants consistently perceived evidence of the manipulations when they were exposed to it, their rating (on a seven-point Likert scale) for how much they believe the applicant's file provided evidence of the manipulation tended to be in the range of 4 ("neutral") and 5 ("moderately") as opposed to 6 ("mostly") and 7 ("completely"). This suggests that although participants appropriately picked up on the manipulations of suppressor evidence, the manipulations could have been stronger. This is important because a sufficiently strong manipulation is necessary for independent variables to substantially influence the dependent variable (Wilson et al., 2010).

In addition, participant ratings of the importance of various factors that influenced their hiring recommendations offers some insight into the lack of a significant main effect of prejudice suppressor evidence on hiring recommendations. Interestingly, employers in my sample rated factors related to the applicant's background and offense (for example: background check results, disclosure of offense, and time since offense) as having the least influence on their concerns about – and recommendations for – applicants. On the other hand, job-related factors such as "meets qualifications," "answers to interview questions," and "being an honest person" were rated as being most influential on employers' hiring recommendations and proposed starting salary. Plainly, participants believed that they were more influenced by job-relevant information than by prejudice suppression factors.

According to Spence's (1973) signaling theory, job applicants typically know more about their ability to perform the job than potential employers. Spence (1973) refers to this as *information asymmetry*. It is therefore up to applicants to *signal* their suitability for the job to

employers through their provision of various types of evidence. Thus, in addition to reducing my likelihood of detecting true effects, the need for stronger evidence of *desistance and positive growth* and *honest disclosure* also has important practical implications. Past studies have demonstrated that former offenders can employ reparative impression management tactics to increase their likelihood of receiving a hiring recommendation (Ali et al., 2017). Findings from Ali et al.'s (2017) study showed that impression management tactics, based on how applicants talked about their offenses, was indirectly linked to hiring recommendations (i.e., to hire or not hire the applicant) through the influence of perceived remorse and anticipated workplace deviance. Therefore, although it was not reflected by my Study 2 findings, previous research and my findings from Study 1 highlight the importance of former offenders addressing employers' concerns about their desistance from crime.

H3: Interaction Effect of Offense Type and Suppression Evidence on Outcomes

For my third hypothesis, I hypothesized that employers' level of concern about hiring applicants, hiring recommendations, and their proposed starting salary for applicants would vary by the interaction of type of offense in the applicants' background and suppressor evidence presented by applicants. The interaction of the two variables was not found to significantly affect hiring recommendations. One likely explanation for this pattern of results as discussed in the previous section, is that my manipulation of suppressor evidence was not strong enough. An alternate explanation is that with a sample of 230 participants, the study did not have sufficient power to detect the residual small amounts of variance explained by prejudice suppressor evidence presented or the combination of offense type and prejudice suppressor evidence. Finally, another possibility is that the suppressor factors in this study were ineffective in affecting hiring outcomes (evidence contrary to JSM).

Strengths and Limitations of Study 2

An unexpected finding was that neither suppressor evidence nor the combination of suppressor evidence and offense type had a significant effect on my hiring-related outcomes of interest. This may likely be due to methodological challenges associated with this research; specifically, (1) the insufficiently robust manipulation of suppressor evidence and (2) an insufficiently large sample size. In the absence of robust evidence of an experimental manipulation, I cannot be sure if the suppressor factors of interest *truly* do not substantially influence the outcome of interest, or if participants *truly* did not believe applicants had desisted and disclosed the details of their background (Foschi, 2014; Fayant, Sigall, Lemonnier, Restin, Alexopoulos, 2017). A weak experimental manipulation therefore limits my ability to interpret my findings and determine if I have support for my hypotheses (Fayant et al., 2017). Additionally, it is possible that my decision to present evidence of desistance as *5 years clean* might have overshadowed other manipulation information presented in the application file, thereby compromising the effectiveness of the manipulation.

The cumulative evidence points to a small effect of suppressor evidence on hiring-related outcomes; yet this is still a phenomenon worth studying. Effect sizes should be interpreted within their specific contexts (Bosco et al., 2015; Funder & Ozer, 2019), as even a small statistical effect may have practical implications (Hsu & Feldt, 2009). For example, a small increase in the hiring outcomes of FMDOs would be appreciated by FMDO applicants who benefited from the application of knowledge in their job pursuit. Furthermore, small effects may contribute to incremental progress both in research and practice. For example, FMDO applicants may benefit from combining strategies learned from disparate research studies that yielded small effect sizes to enhance their chances of being hired. Future studies should therefore replicate my study's design and procedure, while utilizing a more robust manipulation of suppressor evidence, and a

sufficiently large sample size capable of detecting small effects. A more robust manipulation of *desistance and positive change* may benefit from referencing the underlying factors identified in Study 1, specifically: (1) *articulation of positive growth*, (2) *low number of offenses*, (3) *meaningful time passed since last offense*, (4) *being currently in good legal standing*, (5) *constructive use of free time*, and (6) *taking accountability for their actions*.

In Study 1, a total of 30 prejudice suppression factors that likely increase employers' willingness to hire FMDOs were coded from employer interviews. Of those 30 coded factors, only a small collection of factors grouped into two first-order themes – *desistance and positive change* and *honest disclosure* – were adapted and manipulated in Study 2. These two suppressors were selected because they were the most frequently cited suppression factors in Study 1. Importantly, even though *desistance and positive change* and *honest disclosure* appeared to be qualitatively distinct enough to be separated into two themes in Study 1, the themes are harder to separate and isolate in Study 2. This is the case because there is *some* disclosure in the manipulation of desistance. The applicant cannot speak to their desistance and positive change without first referencing or mentioning their past offense. As such, the *desistance and positive change* condition in Study 2 may effectively function as a “low disclosure” condition, and the *honest disclosure* condition may effectively be a “high disclosure” condition.

Another related limitation of the present study is that I only presented evidence for one of two hypothesized prejudice suppression factors in any condition; I did not test the possible joint effects of presenting both suppressors at the same time. This limitation comes as a direct result of my study objectives and design. Though I was able to compare the relative strength of effects of each prejudice suppression factor, I did not test the joint effect of an applicant presenting evidence of both *desistance and positive change* and *honest disclosure* influencing hiring-related

outcomes as it was outside the scope of the current study. Future studies should seek to test joint effects of *desistance and positive change* and *honest disclosure* in improving hiring-related outcomes for former offenders. It is possible that presenting both desistance and disclosure evidence has an additive or multiplicative effect (Van Iddekinge et al., 2018) on important hiring related outcomes. Additionally, future studies may build on the findings of the present study by manipulating and testing the efficacy of other commonly endorsed suppression factors identified in Study 1, such as *good applicant references* and *personality traits*, in improving the employment outcomes of FMDOs, and former offenders in general.

An additional limitation of Study 2 was that there was not a true control group for the offense type manipulation. True control groups help to avoid capturing the effects of extraneous and confounding variables in the results of an experiment (Bruchmann, 2017). A true control group, for example, would have been applicants with no offenses in their background as evidenced by the result of a “clean” pre-employment background check. The decision to utilize a non-criminal offender comparator (i.e., traffic offenders) as opposed to an applicant with a spotless record was made because there was no other realistic way to make participants aware of the applicant’s *honest disclosure* of an offense in their background without their background results bringing light to this fact. As such, I needed to include something in the applicant’s background that he could choose to honestly disclose or not. Given this constraint, I opted to select a non-criminal offense that is generally considered to be minor, and that is not directly related to working in a retail store. It is possible that participants would have given significantly more favorable hiring recommendations to applicants with a “clean” pre-employment background check than they gave to serious drug-related offenders, minor drug offenders and even non-criminal traffic offenders in the present.

In addition to the lack of a true control group, there are further limitations of my study associated with specific design decisions regarding the stimulus materials. For example, I included a considerable amount of positive job-relevant information in the application file of applicants across all conditions. I did this to present all applicants as qualified for the job. As a direct consequence of my study design, however, I am not able to measure the effect that the inclusion of such positive job-relevant information had on applicants hiring-related outcomes.

Given the association of race and assumed criminality (Quillian & Pager, 2001), and the disparate outcomes of black and white former offenders (Pager, 2003), I aimed for the applicant's name in my stimulus materials to be race neutral. Although I conducted a Google image search of the name "Sean Williams" and observed pictures of men of various racial-ethnic backgrounds, the perceived race-neutrality of the applicant's name (Sean Williams) was not pre-tested to assess the degree to which the general public also thought of the name as racially ambiguous. Without a pre-test, or directly asking participants in the study, I cannot be sure participants did not assume to know the race of the applicant, and that the assumed race of the applicant did not influence their hiring-related decisions.

Another limitation of my study was in its external validity. External validity is the degree to which the findings of a study can be appropriately generalized across situations and other settings (Mitchell, 2012). While Study 2 methodology allows me to draw more generalizable conclusions from the findings than Study 1, there remain limits on the generalizability of my Study 2 findings. One limit on generalizability is the fact that I evaluated participants' subjective reports of what their hiring recommendations and proposed starting salary for applicants would likely be. This is a potential limitation because intention or likelihood to act does not always translate to actual behavior (Pager & Quillian, 2005). In a typical hiring scenario, employers

make actual hiring decisions rather than recommendations. There are in fact realistic scenarios in which an individual may make a recommendation or offer their opinion on hiring decisions, but in those situations the evaluator usually has the opportunity to consult with other evaluators and perhaps even discuss to reconcile differences in their opinions. The present study did not allow for final hiring decisions to be made, nor did it enable the collaborative evaluations of applicants by employers. Alternatively, the observation of actual hiring decisions and starting salaries would have made for a study of greater external validity and generalization of findings.

An additional limit on the generalizability of my results is the fact that study participants were only presented with a single applicant, rather than multiple applicants, to evaluate for the open retail position. Although there are certainly instances in which employers may consider a single applicant for a position, given the low barrier for entry into this industry, it is presumably more common for retail job vacancies to attract multiple applicants and for employers to have several candidates to choose from rather than just one. It is possible that employers engage in a more different and perhaps more complex decision-making process when considering multiple prospects for a single vacancy than when they are considering one applicant for that single vacancy. Perhaps we would observe more pronounced group differences in the hiring recommendations of FMDOs as compared to other comparators if participants had other applicants – of varying backgrounds and presentation of suppressor evidence – to compare them to. Existing literature has established that the number of job openings relative to the number of applicants, referred to as selection ratio in I-O psychology literature, has an impact on how selective employers are in their hiring decisions (Murphy, 1986). Future studies should examine potential differential hiring recommendations or actual hiring outcomes of former offender applicants when they are the sole applicant being considered for a position, versus when they are

merely one of several applicants being considered. Relatedly, future studies could examine the point at which FMDOs or more serious offenders are more favored to receive a job offer than non-offenders.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Former offenders face significant barriers to employment and re-integration into the workforce (Solinas-Saunders et al., 2015). One primary barrier to workforce re-integration is the stigma ascribed to them by society in general, and the interrelated biased hiring practices of employers (Winnick & Bodkin, 2008). Effectively addressing the problem of prejudicial hiring practices, from a JSM perspective (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003), requires first, understanding the nature of employers' stigmatization of former offenders; and second, identifying actionable prejudice suppression factors that former offenders can employ in pursuit of work opportunities. This two-study project was designed and conducted to take an I-O psychology approach to understanding and mitigating employer-held stigma regarding former offenders – and more specifically, FMDOs – in an effort to improve their likelihood of successfully obtaining employment.

In Study 1 interviews, I sought to gauge present day employers' thoughts about hiring FMDOs, and bring to light prejudice suppression factors that make them more likely to consider hiring FMDOs. In Study 2, I applied the two most prominent applicant-related suppression factors identified in Study 1 in the context of a hypothetical job application for a position in a retail store. I looked to investigate the efficacy of each factor in reducing employers' concerns and decisions regarding their application for employment, and explored the extent to which the efficacy of the prejudice suppression factors may be offense related. I organize my general discussion by first discussing the research questions that guided Study 1 and Study 2, highlighting key findings and links to the literature. This is followed by discussing the results of

Study 1 and 2 in relation to theoretical applications and explanations, theoretical contributions, practical applications at work, and final conclusions.

RQ1: Present Day Employers' Policies Toward Hiring FMDOs

In Study 1, all 13 employers in my sample reported being open to at least consider hiring FMDOs. Still, my sample size of 13 and my use of convenience sampling methodologies do not allow me to conclude that my findings are *representative* of employers in broader society today (Robson, 1993; Stratton, 2021). I therefore cannot appropriately answer the research question: “What are present day employers’ policies toward hiring former minor drug offenders?” or its sub-questions related to effects of the recent progressive drug law changes or adverse labor market conditions. To do this I would have needed to collect a sufficiently large, random, and representative sample of employers across the U.S.

Study 2 findings, however, from a sample size of 230, offer some insight on how FMDOs are perceived in comparison to other types of offenders, specifically traffic offenders (non-criminal offenders) and more serious drug-related offenders. In Study 2 (and in my pre-testing for Study 2), I found a significant difference in perceived seriousness of marijuana possession (minor drug offense) and an offense of trafficking heroin while in possession of a firearm (serious drug related offense), but not between marijuana possession (minor drug offense) and a speeding offense (non-criminal traffic offense). The fact that marijuana possession was judged as a less serious crime than trafficking heroin while in possession of a firearm is not particularly surprising. I did, however, find it interesting that present-day employers judged the possession of marijuana as comparably serious to a speeding offense.

Criminologists have extensively studied factors that influence society’s perception of the seriousness of crimes. In summary, public perceptions about the seriousness of a crime are said to come from their consideration for the *morality* and *consequences* of the offender’s actions

(Adriaenssen et al., 2020). Morality considerations refer to ethical rules and duties that may have been violated, while considerations of consequences take into account the outcomes of the offender's action (Adriaenssen et al., 2020). Research findings are however mixed on which of the two factors primarily influences seriousness perceptions. While some studies have found evidence that seriousness ratings of crimes are primarily defined by the perceived moral wrongfulness of the actions (Alter et al., 2007; O'Connell & Whelan, 1996), other studies have found evidence for the primacy of consequences (Rosenmerkel, 2001; Warr, 1989).

That said, in a more recent study, Adriaenssen et al. (2020) observed that crimes causing physical or psychological harm to victims were considered the most serious, property crimes as second, and victim-less crimes as the least serious. This sheds some light on why in Study 2, the speeding and marijuana possession offenses – both harmless and victimless crimes that resulted in no damage to property – were rated as being comparably severe. On the other hand, although trafficking fentanyl while in possession of a firearm in and of itself is victimless and does not harm others or property, drug trafficking and subsequent distribution can be very disruptive to communities. Furthermore, communities may be put at risk as the mere exposure to fentanyl can be extremely harmful, and even deadly (Fodale et al., 2008).

RQ2: Suppression Factors that Make Employers More Willing to Hire FMDOs

In my second research question, I sought to identify (in Study 1) and test (in Study 2) factors that may influence prejudice suppression factors that would increase FMDOs chances of being hired. In Study 1, I identified a total of 30 unique suppression factors endorsed by my sample of employers, and the majority of these factors were applicant-related. This means that most factors that employers said would increase their willingness to hire FMDOs and former offenders more broadly are in the control of applicants to change or influence, either during – or in preparation for – the application process.

In Study 1, employers most frequently spoke of wanting to see evidence of *desistance and positive change* since offending and *honest disclosure* of an offense in one's background. The manipulation and integration of these hypothesized prejudice suppression factors in a job application context, however, did not yield improvements in employers' level of concern about hiring applicants, their hiring recommendations, or their proposed starting salaries of applicants if they were to be hired. Instead, results from studies 1 and 2 jointly emphasized the importance of offense type – and by extension, offense severity – for employers as they consider hiring former offenders.

The Importance of Offense Type for Employers

Study 1 results showed that after *desistance & positive change* and *honest disclosure*, the next most endorsed suppression factor was *details and context of the offense(s)* – a theme that includes offense type. Study 2 findings showed that of the two predictor variables, i.e., offense type and suppressor evidence, offense type was the only factor that had a significant impact on hiring recommendations. Results further showed that the types of offense being statistically compared are important. More extreme comparisons in offense type (and by extension, severity) yielded the strongest effects. For example, a consistent pattern observed in the results was that the strongest effects were yielded for traffic offender vs. serious drug-related offender, as compared to traffic offender vs. minor drug offender or minor drug offender vs. serious drug-related offender. This is consistent with both research findings and federal guidelines (Connor & White, 2013) on how to legally approach evaluating people with criminal histories for hire.

First, results from several existing studies have shown that employers tend to be more reluctant to hire individuals with more serious charges than people with minor offenses (Couloute & Kopf, 2018; Kuhn, 2019; Pearson et al., 2009; Rade et al., 2016; Rockeman &

Saraiva, 2020). Second, the EEOC advises employers to consider the nature and gravity of the offense (i.e., offense type and details of the offense), the nature of the job being sought, and completion of sentence and time passed since offense (EEOC, 2012). Study 2 results presents evidence of employers at the very least considering the nature and gravity of the offense.

The Job-Relevance of Prejudice Suppression Factors

Although it was not an explicit research question, an additional goal of mine for this research project was to note the extent to which the prejudice suppression factors endorsed by employers in Study 1, and shown to be *actually* effective in Study 2, are job-relevant.

Interestingly, most applicant-related suppression factors discussed by employers in Study 1 were either job-related or a proxy for a job-related factor. Furthermore, there is existing validity evidence for most of these factors being related to important job-related outcomes such as job performance, counterproductive work behaviors (CWBs), and tenure with a company (See Appendix B).

For the applicant-related themes of *desistance & positive change, seriousness about the job, presents well in the interview* – i.e., three of five applicant-related first-order themes – there is existing empirical evidence for at least one of its underlying factors having a relationship with important job-related outcomes. The fact that there is little empirical evidence available for *honest disclosure of one's background* and *stability in non-work life* being related to job-relevant outcomes does not necessarily mean that they should not be utilized by employers considering FMDO applicants, however. There is evidence in the criminology and criminal justice literatures that having *stable living conditions* (Yahner & Visser, 2008), *family and social connections* (Boman & Mowen, 2017), and a *support system* through social contacts (ASPE Research Brief, 2016) are related to successful re-entry and lower risk of recidivism. Likelihood of re-entry success and recidivism risk are not inherently job-related, yet they are important to employers

because with a higher likelihood of successful re-entry and a lower risk of recidivism bring a lower probability of employers losing their employees to incarceration.

In Study 2, the job-relevant factors that were held constant across conditions, such as whether the applicant meets qualifications, and the applicant's answers to interview questions, were generally rated as having greater influence on employers' hiring recommendations ratings and proposed starting salary than evidence provided for the two suppressors of interest (for example, disclosure of offense, and time since offense). From the ratings employers provided about the relative importance of factors in influencing the key outcome variables, employers reported caring more about things that were related to applicants' job fit and qualifications than information about their criminality (See Table 12). This is in fact good news for FMDO applicants, as it is in line with the I-O psychology recommendation of removing bias from personnel decision-making, and instead using job-related information in hiring (Lips, 2013; Whysall, 2018). In conclusion, based on their self-reports, employers most often use job-related information to make hiring-related decisions.

Theoretical Application and Alternative Explanations

Results from my study did not show evidence of the hypothesized prejudice suppression factors repressing employers' prejudice toward FMDOs to improve their likelihood of being hired, as the JSM suggests. As discussed in the strengths and limitations section of Study 2, the insufficiently robust manipulation of my hypothesized suppressor factors as independent variables in my study could explain the lack of a significant main effect (Campbell & Stanley, 1963; Fayant et al., 2017). Additional research, with a sufficiently large representative sample and stronger manipulations, is needed to see if stronger evidence of these hypothesized suppression factors makes a difference in hiring outcomes of former offenders.

Still, I chose to include a measure of another widely renowned stereotype model – i.e., Fiske et al.'s (2002) stereotype content model – in Study 2 to see, through supplemental analyses, if it accounts for employers' concern about hiring applicants, their hiring recommendations, and their proposed starting salaries if they were to be hired. Results showed strong evidence for the applicability of the SCM and BIAS model in my study's context. First, in univariate analyses when both constructs are considered separately, both perceived warmth (i.e., how warm, tolerant, good-natured, and sincere they are) and competence (i.e., how competent, confident, independent, and competitive they are) were significantly related to level of concern about hiring, hiring recommendations, and proposed starting salary. In short, the warmer and more competent employers perceived applicants to be, the less concerns they had about hiring them, the more favorable their hiring recommendations, and the higher their proposed starting salaries. When both SCM predictors are included in bivariate and multivariate analyses, however, only perceived warmth predicted hiring-related outcomes.

Overall, my findings are mostly consistent with the SCM. Viewed through the lens of the SCM (Fiske et al., 2002), former offenders would be perceived as cold and incompetent, a finding corroborated by Anderson (2020). This finding highlighted the generally shared public perception of former offenders posing a threat to society and their colleagues at work (Fiske et al., 2002). Similar to my findings in Study 2, Anderson (2020) found that when both stereotyped warmth and competence were included in the same statistical model, stereotyped warmth (which through the lens of the SCM is linked to the applicant's offense type and severity) was the lone significant predictor of coworkers' anticipated approval for the recruitment of former offenders. Thus, through the joint theoretical lens of the SCM and BIAS model, it makes sense that in my study offenders of more serious drug related crimes yielded less favorable behavioral outcomes –

specifically, hiring recommendations – than minor drug offenders and traffic offenders despite them all being presented as qualified for the job (i.e., competent).

Finally, supplemental analyses from Study 2 yielded an unexpected finding: traffic offenders, minor drug offenders, and more serious drug-related offenders were all rated as comparably warm and competent. Considering that candidates in all scenarios were portrayed as equally competent in my study materials, the lack of significant variation in competence ratings across conditions was an expected outcome. The SCM would however suggest that perpetrators of more serious crimes would be perceived as colder and less competent than offenders of less serious crimes and non-offenders, as they would be seen as posing a greater level of threat to society and people in their work environment (Fiske et al., 2002; Kervyn et al., 2015). One explanation for my findings could be that the differences in the severity of offense were not extreme enough to produce significantly different perceptions of warmth. When considered with the significant main effects of offense type and warmth perceptions on hiring recommendations, these findings also seem to suggest that offense type and perceived warmth of the applicant each distinctly shape hiring recommendations, as opposed to through an indirect relationship of: offense type → perceived warmth → hiring recommendations. It is essential to approach this conclusion with caution, as an adequately powered (Fiedler et al., 2012) mediational analysis is necessary to formally test this indirect relationship (Valente et al., 2016).

Theoretical Contributions

This research project sought to address several gaps in research regarding the prejudicial hiring against FOs, and FMDOs specifically, and in doing so makes important contributions to theory and relevant literatures.

First, Study 2 replicated and extended previous research showing a link between offense type and employers' attitudes and stigma toward the applicants with an offense in their

background. Previous studies have shown that employers' levels of concern about hiring and attitudes toward former offenders vary by offense type and severity (Giguere & Dundes, 2002). Similarly, employers have been shown to be less willing to hire someone convicted of more serious offenses such as aggravated assault, arson, and burglary than someone previously convicted of a drug offense (Atkin & Armstrong, 2013).

In an extension of previous knowledge, findings from Study 2 have also emphasized the importance of offense type and severity to employers as they consider former offenders for employment. While the prejudice suppression factors of *desistance and positive change* and *honest disclosure* of an offense in one's background did not affect hiring recommendations, offense type (and severity) did. Interestingly, offense type mattered more when employers were considering applicants' offense-related information such as time since offense and likelihood to (re)offend. When the more traditionally job-related information, such as answers to interview questions and prior job experience, were being considered it was considered as equally important regardless of offense type.

Second, this study applies the JSM (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003) to former offenders seeking employment. To date JSM has been applied to work contexts such as foreign accents of customer service agents (Wang et al., 2013), customer service employees' stigma of obese shoppers (King et al., 2006), obesity and physical disability of applicants (Hebl et al., 2002). This study is one of the few that have empirically tested the efficacy of proposed prejudice suppression factors in reducing prejudiced hiring practices, thereby increasing FMDOs' (and former offenders') likelihood of being hired. Studies 1 and 2 therefore extend the limited and scattered research on factors that may increase FMDOs' (and former offenders') likelihood of being selected for a job.

Findings from Study 1 advance our knowledge of prejudice suppression factors that employers claim positively affect their willingness to consider hiring FMDOs. A total of 30 situation-related, employer-related, and applicant-related suppression factors were identified. Study 1 findings also provide an extensive list of suppression factors for future researchers to test their utility in reducing prejudicial hiring outcomes against former offenders, and specifically FMDOs. Another important theoretical contribution from Study 1 is that most of the suppression factors discussed by employers in my sample were applicant-related and job-relevant.

Third, findings from Studies 1 and 2 highlight strengths and weaknesses of applying the JSM to the former offender population and I-O Psychology research. First, a strength of applying JSM in I-O research is that JSM posits that prejudice suppression factors do not change a person's genuine prejudice itself, but rather the expression of that prejudice (Fiske et al., 2002). Although the absence of genuine prejudice would be ideal, it is the expression of prejudice that is most important and consequential. For example, it does not matter if an employer genuinely has no racial prejudice and no intention of discriminating based on race, if their selection procedures are racially prejudiced in practice then they are at risk of an adverse impact lawsuit (Civil Rights Act, 1964; Seinert, 2023). On the other hand, a genuinely racist hiring manager who is fair in their personnel selection practices is not at risk of adverse impact or disparate treatment litigation.

There are however potential limitations in the JSM highlighted by my studies' findings. One prominent issue is that some factors, for example offense type, may serve either as a suppressor or justifier. Although employers in Study 1 discussed offense type (and the details of the offense) as something that could make them more willing to take chance on hiring FMDOs, which classifies it as a prejudice suppression factor, some offenses could conceivably encourage

the expression of employers' genuine prejudice, which would then classify it as a prejudice justification factor. For example, a DUI charge may be a justifier for employers seeking to fill a delivery driver position, but a suppressor for employers seeking to hire a retail store associate.

Yet another feasible consideration is that offense type may not be *just* a suppressor or justifier, but it may also be a factor that produces its own qualitatively unique genuine prejudice. Through the lens of JSM, classifying offense type as a suppressor or justifier means that employers have genuine prejudice toward former offenders in general, and the expression of that central genuine prejudice is tempered or emboldened by the type of offense in the applicant's background. Thus, offenses judged to be less serious would result in the suppression of that general prejudice toward former offenders, and offenses judged to be more severe would justify the expression of prejudice toward former offenders in general. However, it is possible, and perhaps likely, that employers have different genuine prejudices based on the type of offense committed by the target. As an illustrative example, it is conceivable that society has very differently feelings and attitudes toward sex offenders than they have toward offenders of less severe and victim-less crimes such as marijuana possession. Previous research from Rade et al. (2016) supports the notion of people feeling differently about former offenders based on offense type and severity.

Therefore, from the JSM perspective, it is unclear if a single factor may be classified as both a suppressor and a justifier, and at what point may a suppressor or justifying variable start to influence not only the expression of prejudice, but also the genuine prejudice itself. This was not addressed by Crandall and Eshleman (2003) – the founders of the theoretical model. Relatedly, it is theoretically unclear what role offense type (and severity) plays in influencing employers' willingness to hire former offenders, and FMDOs more specifically. The distinction between

suppressors and justifiers is not sufficiently precise or parsimonious, which are two characteristics of a good theory (Gieseler et al., 2019). Findings from my studies therefore brought to light the need for JSM researchers to explain limits of classifying a factor as a prejudice suppressor or prejudice justifier. Future JSM research and literature should seek to clarify this issue.

Practical Implications

One of my main objectives for this research project was to provide FMDOs seeking to work in retail with practical tips on how to approach and navigate the job market. I was especially interested in providing suggestions on actions that FMDOs can take to positively influence employers looking past their genuine prejudice of FMDOs to ultimately hire them.

FMDOs Should Be Mindful of the Employer and Organization

FMDOs should seek out inclusive companies that either identify themselves as – or have a proven track record of being – open to hiring former offenders. One way of doing this is by looking for companies that describe themselves as “felon friendly” or “second chance employers”. Another viable strategy, found effective by individuals with a criminal background seeking employment (Cherney & Fitzgerald, 2016), is focusing on job opportunities that do not require a background check. Furthermore, when possible, FMDOs should utilize their professional networks to learn more about the organizational culture and the people who make the hiring decisions in companies they hope to work at. One of the most frequently endorsed suppressors was the employer-related suppression factor of *the employer’s worldview*.

Employers who see former offenders as people who have served their time for their past transgressions who need to be reintegrated into society will be more likely to consider hiring FMDOs than employers who have the mindset of “once a criminal always a criminal.”

FMDOs Should Keep the Importance of Offense Type in Mind

Perhaps the most noteworthy finding across studies 1 and 2 is the importance of offense type (and severity) to employers considering hiring FMDOs, and former offenders in general. Although the type of offense in one's background is not something that an applicant can alter in preparation for the job search and application processes, applicants with less severe past offenses can be confident that they will likely fare better than applicants with more serious past offenses. Both my Study 2 findings and previous research (Atkin & Armstrong, 2013) have shown this to be the case. Along those lines, FMDOs should feel encouraged because the present-day employers of my Study 2 sample reported being just as likely to recommended them for hire as they were for non-criminal traffic offenders.

FMDOs Should Present Evidence for Job-Relevant Criteria

Results from supplementary analyses conducted in Study 2 revealed that, according to employers' self-report, their ratings of hiring recommendations and proposed starting salary were most strongly influenced by: (1) their judgments of the extent to which the applicant met qualifications, and (2) the applicant's responses to the interview questions. Both of these selection factors are job-related. Given that the stimulus material did not specify level of education necessary for the advertised retail sales associate job, participants likely made determinations about whether the applicant met qualifications by considering their amount of relevant job experience and fit of interest to the job. Existing research shows that job experience (McDaniel et al., 1988), interest in a particular job (Hunter & Hunter, 1984), and both structured and unstructured interviews (McDaniel et al., 1994) to be valid predictors of job performance. In fact, as further evidence of the importance of targeting job-relevant criteria, most of the applicant-related suppressor factors shared by applicants in Study 1 were either directly or indirectly relevant to the job.

An important consideration is that former offenders are notoriously less educated and less qualified than the general population (Zakaria et al., 2018). Therefore, in order to bolster their qualifications for jobs, former offenders may require jobs skills training. Decades of I-O psychology research shows that knowledge tests and work samples, i.e., assessments of applicants' job knowledge and relevant skills, are among the strongest predictors of job performance (Robertson & Kandola, 1982, Ekuma, 2012; Schmidt & Hunter, 1998). Hence, it is advisable for FMDO applicants to take the necessary steps to prepare – for example, through job skills or vocational training – so that they may adequately demonstrate their competence to potential employers.

Research on the efficacy of vocational training programs have found positive impacts on skill acquisition and labor market outcomes such as employment offers received, tenure, and wages earned (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2020) especially for youth (Heckman et al., 1999) whom have a higher propensity for criminal behavior and recidivism than older adults (Farrington, 1986; Sweeten et al., 2013). Lastly, in addition to demonstrable progress in job-related knowledge and skills, the completion of employment-based re-entry training programs may also serve as an indicator to employers that an individual is actively distancing themselves from criminal behaviors (Bushway & Apel, 2012).

CONCLUSION

The collective results of the present studies indicated that, as reported by employers, there is a wide array of factors that can help employers be more willing to consider hiring FMDOs. Furthermore, most of those prejudice suppression factors are changeable, within the control of the applicant, and job-relevant. There was no evidence that the two most commonly endorsed prejudice suppression factors (i.e., *desistance and positive change* since offending, and *honest disclosure* of an offense) positively influencing employer's level of concern, their hiring recommendations, and proposed starting salary for applicants as the JSM would suggest. Yet, additional, supplemental analyses showed that employers' perceived warmth of the applicant was positively correlated with all three hiring-related outcomes. Finally, and importantly, my results complement previous research findings that employers strongly consider offense type when making hiring decisions in regard to former offenders.

TABLES

Table 1

Study 1 Interviewee Profile: Interviewees' Industry, Hiring Experience, and Responses to Select Key Questions

Interview	Industry	Years of Hiring Experience	Open to Hire FMDOs	Affected by Progressive Drug Law Changes?	Affected by the Labor Market?
Interviewee 1	Spray & Foam Insulation	10 Years	Yes	No	No
Interviewee 2	Gems & Jewelry Appraisal	10 Years	Yes	No	No
Interviewee 3	Retail Store	2 Years	Yes	No	No
Interviewee 4	HVAC Plumbing & Electrical	20 Years	Yes	No	No
Interviewee 5	Oil & Gas Wholesale	23 Years	Yes	Yes	Yes
Interviewee 6	Telecommunications Retail	1 Year	Yes	No	N/A
Interviewee 7	Telecommunications Retail	9 Years	Yes	No	No
Interviewee 8	Retail Store	8 Years	Yes	No	No
Interviewee 9	Retail Store	7 Years	Yes	No	No
Interviewee 10	Fast Food Restaurant	5 Years	Yes	No	No
Interviewee 11	Retail Store	1 Year	Yes	Yes	Yes
Interviewee 12	Wholesale Club	6 Years	Yes	No	No
Interviewee 13	Food Service & Retail	2 Years	Yes	No	No

Table 2*Final Study 1 Codebook*

Code	Description	Example Quote	Interview Count
Situation-Related Suppression Factors			
Details of the Case	An explanation of the crime(s) in one's background, offering information such as the type of drug, the surrounding circumstances, etc.	"I know... you said minor but minor can range, you know, like if ... caught with, I don't know, heroin that has laced with fentanyl, I mean, even just a little tiny bit of that. I mean, we're a trouble." - #11	8
"Sellers" Labor Market Conditions	Labor market conditions that favor applicants due to a disproportionately higher rate of vacancies and to the number of applicants seeking to fill the vacancies.	"... Let's go back to 2019, before the pandemic, we might have looked at someone a little bit harder." -#5	2
Progressive Changes in Drug Laws	The relaxing of drug laws to be more lenient toward minor drug use.	"I'd say, Yeah [changes in drug laws] at the very least, had a light effect or a light impact on my perception when, especially when it came to hiring." -#11	2
Employer-Related Suppression Factors			
Worldview	The employer's own philosophy of the world. One's collection of values, attitudes, and expectations of the world that informs their thoughts and actions (Gray, 2011).	"Well, uh, as far as the priors go, you know, if people have already paid their debt to society, then mm-hmm, why should we not take a chance on them?" -#7	10
Employer's Personal Life Experiences	Events, encounters, or experiences that have had a significant impact on the employer's life.	"I just would say it's from personal experience. Like I've, I've had a little bit of run in with the law before." -#3	4

Table 2 (Continued)

Code	Description	Example Quote	Interview Count
Employer's Deference to Company's Policy	The employer's decision to reference and adhere to the company's background check policy to guide their own personal hiring policy when making hiring decisions.	"If they pass the background check even with priors, it's never been an issue. Like, I, I, I don't even look at the background check after it's completed." -#7	4
Employer's Positive Subjective Assessment of Applicant	The employer has a good intuitive feeling or hunch about the applicant based on their interactions with them.	"You know, there, there's always that kind of feeling that you get, and unfortunately that would be based on my perception." -#11	3
Applicant-Related Suppression Factors			
Applicant Voluntarily Discloses Background	The applicant self-reports their background without being prompted by the employer/ interviewer. Applicant discloses background rather than waiting for the employer to find out on the background check.	"I feel like I am way more inclined to hire somebody who tells me that they've had drugs or any kinds of, ... like arrests in the past. That they tell me versus me finding out on their background check." -#3	9
Applicant's Articulation of Growth & Positive Changes	The applicant has expressed that they have abstained from committing crimes. They may have also shown signs of growth and maturity since their last offense.	"If they've had minor drug offenses and it goes back like 10-15 years and they haven't done anything since then, I think, like, 'OK, this person is good. They there's not an issue anymore.' You know?" -#7	6
Low Number of Offenses	The applicant has only one or very few offenses in their background. Evidence that they are not a "career criminal".	"Like, for example, if it was like multiple... DUIs or at least even one, that also gives me kind of pause..." -#8	6

Table 2 (Continued)

Code	Description	Example Quote	Interview Count
Meaningful Time Passed Since Last Offense	The applicant has not re-offended for a considerable amount of time. Considerable time has elapsed since the last offense.	"If I look at somebody's resume, uh, or if they've had minor drug offenses and it goes back like 10, 15 years and they haven't done anything since then, I think like, okay, this person's good." -#7	6
Applicant's Good Character & Personality	The applicant presents themselves as being a person of good character and as having positive personality traits.	"If you come to me and we have a good interview and you've got like a great personality then I'm Going to consider you based on your personality alone, regardless of any of your past indiscretions..." - #7	5
Applicant Articulates Seriousness About Job	The applicant is highly engaged throughout the selection process. They show genuine interest in getting the job.	"I don't want to say aggressiveness. Uhm, assertiveness towards wanting the job." -#4	5
Applicant's Good References	The applicant has good references that attest to their suitability for the job.	"You know, good references make difference." -#5	5
Applicant Discloses Background on a Case-by-Case Basis	The applicant reads the situation and determines when the best time to disclose their background is. Employers acknowledge that it is sometimes in the applicant's favor to delay disclosing.	" If you're familiar with, kind of, the culture of the company and you know that they'd be kind of like more receptive to like, you know, minor drug offenses or things of the like, then Yeah, I bring it up." -#8	5
Applicant's Positive Attitude	The applicant has a positive and optimistic attitude.	"Looking for people who have a positive attitude..." -#1	4

Table 2 (Continued)

Code	Description	Example Quote	Interview Count
Applicant's Takes Accountability for Past Transgressions	The applicant shows themselves as someone who holds themselves accountable and takes responsibility for their actions. They do not make diffuse blame for their actions.	"I think it ultimately is an open and honest conversation about why things happened, not hiding it, taking a responsibility for it..." - #1	4
Applicant's Professional Demeanor & Self-Conduct	The applicant presents themselves in a professional manner and has a professional, work-appropriate demeanor.	"If you can present yourself as a professional and you have a minor drug offense from three or four years ago, they're going to overlook that and give you a second chance." -#4	3
Applicant's High Job Performance at Previous Job(s)	The applicant has a track record of good performance at their previous place(s) of work.	"If, if I can point to prior performance, that's also positive." -#11	3
Applicant Discloses Background When Prompted	The applicant discloses their background after they have been prompted. The applicant waits for their background to be the topic of conversation before talking about it.	"Just be honest, you know?... If it comes up, you know, just tell 'em what happened." -#7	3
Applicant's Openness and Willingness to Learn the Job	The applicant has an open mindset and is willing to acquire the requisite knowledge and skills on the job, or through training offered by the employer.	"I'm looking for people who have a positive attitude and aptitude towards the process of learning the trades and skills that we train." - #1	2

Table 2 (Continued)

Code	Description	Example Quote	Interview Count
Applicant's Constructive Use of Free Time	The applicant spends their free time constructively. The applicant is not partaking in activities or putting themselves in environments that increases their likelihood of being in trouble with the law.	“What do you do outside of work? So just like, you know, how they're involved in these communities since they are allowed to, you know, go to AA meetings or do different classes.” -#10	2
Applicant's Stable Living Condition	The applicant has a stable living condition. They are not without permanent residence or moving from home to home.	“I also think that they have a stable living situation... They're not moving around, you know they lived this one address a year or two.” - #5	2
Applicant Has Socio-emotional Connection with Others	The applicant has disclosed that they have some sort of emotional bond or connection with another living being. For example: children, family, pets, etc.	“If you see a thing on the bottom where they say, I like animals. Um, I spend a lot of time with my family, then I'll read that resume.”	2
Applicant's Good Vernacular & Communication Skills	The applicant speaks standard English and does not appear to have difficulty speaking without the use of slang, profanity, or vulgar language.	“I would guess... their ability to really just, um, you know, communicate.” - #10	1
Applicant is Reliable	The applicant has presented evidence that they are a reliable person and can be counted on to show up and deliver.	“Are they gonna show up on work to work on time? Are they gonna be consistent? You know? And that, that's one factor I look at too, is, you know, their reliability and that type of thing.” -#5	1

Table 2 (Continued)

Code	Description	Example Quote	Interview Count
Applicant in Good Legal Standing	The applicant is in good legal standing such that they do not have any outstanding arrest warrants, or in poor standing with parole officer.	“If you're taking care of your probation, you know, you're, you don't have a warrant out where their probation officer is looking for you.” -#5	1
Applicant Has a Support System	The applicant has shared that they have a support system to help them deal with re-entry related issues.	“It depends on what substance they're using, um, if it was a harder substance, if they do have the treatment and support system to kind of get over that crap.” -#8	1
Applicant has Good Stress Management Skills	The applicant has provided evidence that they have constructive and effective stress management skills. Evidence that they are able to manage the stresses of work and life outside of work.	“I think most of the time when people turn to [drugs], even if it's recreational, it's because they're feeling stressed. So it's important for me to understand that a work-life balance is in place. You know?” -#9	1
Applicant is Mentally Sharp and “Quick on Their Feet”	The applicant is relatively quick in their responses to interview questions – as opposed to taking a long time before responding.	“...When I ask you questions, if you don't sit and think about them, and you give me off the top of your head - Another point!” -#2	1

Note. “-#” denotes the interviewee from which the quote was taken. Therefore, -#1 means Interviewee 1.

Table 3*Severity of Offense Pilot Test Items, and Descriptive Statistics*

Offense Type	M	SD	95% CI
Parking citation	4.11	1.88	[3.50, 4.72]
Speeding citation ¹	4.41	1.50	[3.92, 4.89]
Reckless driving citation	4.95	1.27	[4.54, 5.36]
Possession of marijuana ²	4.38	1.80	[3.80, 4.96]
Possession of heroin	4.76	1.34	[4.32, 5.19]
Possession of fentanyl	4.87	1.27	[4.46, 5.28]
Unlawful possession of a firearm	4.95	1.45	[4.48, 5.41]
Trafficking marijuana while in possession of a firearm	4.81	1.33	[4.38, 5.24]
Trafficking heroin while in possession of a firearm ³	5.30	1.33	[4.87, 5.73]
Trafficking fentanyl while in possession of a firearm	5.24	1.30	[4.82, 5.66]

Note. The offenses that were selected for the final manipulations of offense type are bolded.

¹ denotes non-criminal traffic offense, ² denotes minor drug offense, and ³ denotes more serious drug-related offense.

Table 4

Pre-Test Summary of Evidence for Desistance Manipulation through Interview Excerpts

Indicator	Mean Perceived Evidence Ratings
Will Not Reoffend ^a	5.32
Grown/ Matured ^a	5.29
Honest About Offense ^b	5.27
Takes Accountability ^a	5.22
Disclosed Background ^b	5.02
Generally Honest Person ^b	5.02

Note. N = 45. Indicators are rank-ordered from most to least perceived evidence. ^a denotes proposed indicators of desistance, and ^b denotes proposed indicators of the disclosure. Therefore, for an effective manipulation of desistance, indicators denoted with ^a should have higher mean evidence ratings than indicators denoted with ^b.

Table 5A*Pre-Test Mean Evidence Ratings for Evidence of Growth and Maturity by Offense Type*

Variable	Speeding Offense		Marijuana Possession		Heroin Trafficking & Gun Possession	
	M	(SD)	M	SD	M	SD
No Offense	5.44	(1.03)	5.64	(1.17)	5.36	1.13
6 Months Clean	5.60	(1.27)	5.31	(1.29)	5.38	1.35
2 Years Clean	5.42	(1.14)	5.47	(1.25)	5.58	0.99
5 Years Clean	5.38	(0.94)	5.53	(0.97)	5.38	1.07

Table 5B*Pre-Test Mean Evidence Ratings for NOT Likely to Reoffend by Offense Type*

Variable	Speeding Offense		Marijuana Possession		Heroin Trafficking & Gun Possession	
	M	(SD)	M	SD	M	SD
No Offense	5.13	1.63	5.18	1.53	5.07	1.57
6 Months Clean	5.04	1.43	5.29	1.55	4.80	1.67
2 Years Clean	5.09	1.61	4.80	1.42	4.82	1.63
5 Years Clean	5.00	1.48	5.07	1.63	5.13	1.34

Table 6

Pre-Test Summary of Evidence for Honest Disclosure Manipulation through Interview Excerpts

Indicator	Mean Perceived Evidence Ratings
Generally Honest Person ^b	5.33
Honest About Offense ^b	5.28
Takes Accountability ^a	5.26
Grown/ Matured ^a	5.22
Will Not Reoffend ^a	5.13
Disclosed background ^b	4.89

Note. N = 45. Indicators are rank-ordered from most to least perceived evidence. ^a denotes proposed indicators of desistance, and ^b denotes proposed indicators of the disclosure. Therefore, for an effective manipulation of disclosure, indicators denoted with ^b should have higher mean evidence ratings than indicators denoted with ^a.

Table 7*Descriptions of Study 2 Conditions, Sample Sizes, and Manipulation Details*

Condition	n	Offense Type	Offense Details	Suppressor
1A	24	Non-Criminal Traffic Offense	Speeding	No Suppressor Evidence
1B	24	Non-Criminal Traffic Offense	Speeding	Honest Disclosure
1C	25	Non-Criminal Traffic Offense	Speeding	Desistance Evidence
2A	29	Minor Drug Offense	Marijuana Possession	No Suppressor Evidence
2B	26	Minor Drug Offense	Marijuana Possession	Honest Disclosure
2C	23	Minor Drug Offense	Marijuana Possession	Desistance Evidence
3A	26	Serious Drug-Related Offense	Heroin Trafficking while in Possession of a Firearm	No Suppressor Evidence
3B	26	Serious Drug-Related Offense	Heroin Trafficking while in Possession of a Firearm	Honest Disclosure
3C	27	Serious Drug-Related Offense	Heroin Trafficking while in Possession of a Firearm	Desistance Evidence

Note. *n* = sample size or number of responses for that condition.

Table 8*Descriptive Statistics of Study 2 Participants*

Demographic Variable	Categories	N	%
Gender	Male	118	51.30%
	Female	104	45.22%
	Non-binary/ Other	8	3.48%
Age	20-29 years	47	20.43%
	30-39 years	77	33.48%
	40-49 years	46	20.00%
	50-59 years	36	15.65%
	60+ years	24	10.43%
Race/ Ethnicity	White	196	85.22%
	Hispanic/ Latino	8	3.48%
	Black/ African American	13	5.65%
	American Indian/ Alaskan Native	1	0.43%
	Asian/ Asian American	9	3.91%
	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	0	0.00%
	Other	3	1.30%
Highest level of education	Less than high school	1	0.44%
	High school diploma	37	16.09%
	Some college but no degree	64	27.83%
	Two-year degree	29	12.61%
	Four-year degree	82	35.65%
	Professional degree	16	6.96%
	Doctoral degree	1	0.44%
Have supervisory responsibilities in current job	No	55	23.91%
	Yes	175	76.09%
Make hiring decisions in current position	No	75	32.61%
	Yes	155	67.39%
Ever hired someone with a speeding offense in background	No	52	22.61%
	Yes	108	46.96%
	Unsure	70	30.43%

Table 8 (Continued)

Demographic Variable	Categories	N	%
Ever hired someone with a marijuana possession charge	No	97	42.17%
	Yes	76	33.04%
	Unsure	57	24.78%
Ever hired someone with a heroin trafficking + gun possession charge	No	190	82.61%
	Yes	10	4.35%
	Unsure	30	13.04%
Ever been arrested	No	188	81.74%
	Yes	42	18.26%
Ever been convicted of a crime	No	201	87.39%
	Yes	29	12.61%

Table 9*Descriptive Statistics of Study 2 Dependent Variables*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	<i>S.E.</i>
<i>Hiring Recommendations</i>	<i>5.36</i>	<i>1.37</i>	6.00	<i>0.09</i>
Reject the Applicant	2.40	1.55	6.00	0.10
Invite to Second Interview	5.70	1.47	6.00	0.10
Hire the Applicant Now	4.78	1.70	6.00	0.11
<i>Level of Concern About Hiring Applicants</i>	<i>2.08</i>	<i>1.31</i>	6.00	<i>0.09</i>
Leaving within 6 Months	2.70	1.58	6.00	0.10
Arrested for Drug-Related Offense	2.33	1.76	6.00	0.12
Employees' Level of Comfort	2.18	1.75	6.00	0.12
Customers' Level of Comfort	2.02	1.72	6.00	0.11
Training Required	1.96	1.53	6.00	0.10
Time to Adjust to Job	1.89	1.38	6.00	0.09
People Skills	1.83	1.57	6.00	0.10
Harm People at Work	1.75	1.50	6.00	0.10
<i>Proposed Starting Salary (in dollars)</i>	<i>26893.01</i>	<i>1860.68</i>	<i>6000.00</i>	<i>122.69</i>

Note. $N = 230$. Reverse scored "Reject the Applicant" ($M = 5.60$). Scales are italicized and individual items are not italicized.

Table 10*Summary of Results from Scheffe's Post-Hoc Paired Comparisons of Offense Type*

Outcome Variable	Paired Comparison	Mean Difference	95% CI	p-value	Hypothesis Supported
Hiring Recommendations	Traffic vs. Minor Drug	0.42	[-0.10, 0.93]	.142	No
	Traffic vs. Serious Drug-Related	1.15	[0.63, 1.66]	<.001	Yes
	Serious Drug-Related v. Minor Drug	-0.73	[-1.24, -0.23]	.002	Yes
Reject Applicant	Traffic vs. Minor Drug	-0.53	[-1.10, 0.04]	0.073	Yes
	Traffic vs. Serious Drug-Related	-1.52	[-2.08, -0.95]	>.001	Yes
	Serious Drug-Related v. Minor Drug	0.98	[0.43, 1.54]	>.001	Yes
Invite to Second Interview	Traffic vs. Minor Drug	0.03	[-0.55, 0.61]	0.991	No
	Traffic vs. Serious Drug-Related	0.54	[-0.04, 1.12]	0.078	No
	Serious, Drug-Related v. Minor Drug	-0.50	[-1.08, 0.07]	0.096	No
Hire Applicant Now	Traffic vs. Minor Drug	0.69	[0.04, 1.33]	0.034	Yes
	Traffic vs. Serious Drug-Related	1.39	[0.75, 2.04]	>.001	Yes
	Serious Drug-Related v. Minor Drug	-0.71	[-1.34, -0.07]	0.024	Yes

Table 11A*Perceived Evidence that the Applicant Disclosed their Offense by Condition*

Variable	Traffic Offense		Minor Drug Offense		Serious Drug Related Offense	
	M	(SD)	M	SD	M	SD
No Suppressor Evidence	2.25	(1.67)	3.24	(2.12)	2.77	(2.08)
Honest Disclosure Evidence	6.33	(1.24)	6.04	(1.25)	6.62	(0.80)
Desistance Evidence	6.00	(1.26)	6.09	(1.31)	6.15	(1.26)

Table 11B*Perceived Evidence Ratings that the Applicant was Honest About Offense by Condition*

Variable	Traffic Offense		Minor Drug Offense		Serious Drug Related Offense	
	M	(SD)	M	SD	M	SD
No Suppressor Evidence	2.25	(1.78)	3.17	(1.49)	2.54	(1.70)
Honest Disclosure Evidence	6.33	(1.20)	6.00	(1.30)	6.58	(0.76)
Desistance Evidence	6.00	(1.32)	6.35	(1.03)	6.11	(1.28)

Table 11C*Perceived Evidence Ratings that the Applicant is an Honest Person by Condition*

Variable	Traffic Offense		Minor Drug Offense		Serious Drug Related Offense	
	M	(SD)	M	SD	M	SD
No Suppressor Evidence	4.00	(1.44)	3.72	(1.49)	3.35	(1.44)
Honest Disclosure Evidence	5.54	(1.28)	5.42	(1.24)	5.35	(1.2)
Desistance Evidence	5.24	(1.42)	5.30	(1.11)	5.07	(1.27)

Table 11D*Perceived Evidence that the Applicant Takes Accountability for Offense by Condition*

Variable	Traffic Offense		Minor Drug Offense		Serious Drug Related Offense	
	M	(SD)	M	SD	M	SD
No Suppressor Evidence	4.29	(1.30)	3.83	(1.89)	3.58	(1.65)
Honest Disclosure Evidence	5.62	(1.17)	5.58	(1.33)	5.58	(1.39)
Desistance Evidence	5.36	(1.25)	5.57	(0.79)	5.56	(1.28)

Table 11E*Perceived Evidence Ratings that the Applicant Will Not Reoffend by Condition*

Variable	Traffic Offense		Minor Drug Offense		Serious Drug Related Offense	
	M	(SD)	M	SD	M	SD
No Suppressor Evidence	3.62	(1.41)	4.10	(1.86)	3.15	(1.43)
Honest Disclosure Evidence	4.62	(1.41)	4.38	(1.60)	4.42	(1.39)
Desistance Evidence	4.40	(1.47)	4.65	(1.03)	4.33	(1.73)

Table 11F*Perceived Evidence Ratings of Applicant Growth Since the Offense by Condition*

Variable	Traffic Offense		Minor Drug Offense		Serious Drug Related Offense	
	M	(SD)	M	SD	M	SD
No Suppressor Evidence	4.08	(1.18)	4.31	(1.71)	3.77	(1.70)
Honest Disclosure Evidence	4.96	(1.55)	4.77	(1.53)	4.92	(1.29)
Desistance Evidence	5.04	(1.37)	5.35	(0.83)	5.04	(1.58)

Table 12*Intercorrelations of Evidence of Key Manipulations & Dependent Variables*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Evidence of Disclosure	--										
2. Evidence of Honesty About Offense	.94*	--									
3. Evidence of Honest Person	.68*	.73*	--								
4. Evidence of Taking Accountability	.68*	.73*	.81*	--							
5. Evidence Will Not Re-offend	.43*	.48*	.61*	.60*	--						
6. Evidence of Growth & Maturity	.46*	.51*	.64*	.67*	.83*	--					
7. <i>Concerns About Hiring</i>	-.12	-.11	-.24*	-.24*	-.22*	-.24*	--				
8. <i>Hiring Recommendations</i>	.11	.13	.32*	.31*	.33*	.32*	-.53*	--			
9. <i>Reject Applicant</i>	-.08	-.10	-.28*	-.28*	-.28*	-.28*	.53*	-.91*	--		
10. <i>Invite to Second Interview</i>	.08	.09	.26*	.26*	.25*	.24*	-.38*	.82*	-.65*	--	
11. <i>Hire Applicant</i>	.14*	.13*	.29*	.28*	.33*	.30*	-.45*	.88*	-.73*	.52*	--
12. <i>Proposed Starting Salary</i>	.14*	.15*	.25*	.23*	.16*	.22*	-.21*	.40*	-.41*	.23*	.40*

Note. Italicized Variables are outcome variables of interest. * Denotes p-value <.05.

Table 13*Intercorrelations of Rated Importance of Factors in Influencing Hiring Recommendations & Dependent Variables*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Information on Application Form	--											
2. Answers to Interview Questions	.42*	--										
3. Background Check Results	.16*	-.01	--									
4. Prior Job Experience	.47*	.35*	-.02	--								
5. Disclosure of Offense	.26*	.11	.50*	.16*	--							
6. Honest Person	.19*	.14*	.42*	.17*	.77*	--						
7. Honest About Offense	.29*	.35*	.30*	.27*	.52*	.62*	--					
8. Taking Accountability for Actions	.24*	.28*	.31*	.24*	.55*	.64*	.82*	--				
9. Growth & Maturity Since Offense	.28*	.28*	.36*	.23*	.58*	.57*	.52*	.55*	--			
10. Time Since Offense	.21*	.16*	.42*	.12	.46*	.37*	.32*	.29*	.64*	--		
11. Number of Offenses	.33*	.18*	.54*	.15*	.47*	.45*	.40*	.36*	.59*	.63*	--	
12. Not Likely to Reoffend	.25*	.16*	.46*	.14*	.54*	.47*	.48*	.43*	.64*	.63*	.72*	--
13. Meets Qualifications	.37*	.35*	-.07	.49*	.05	.07	.29*	.21*	.19*	.06	.17*	.18*
<i>14. Concerns About Hiring</i>	-.03	-.19*	.32*	-.13	.12	.08	-.01	.01	.08	.16*	.12	.09
<i>15. Hiring Recommendations</i>	.18*	.36*	-.38*	.24*	-.18*	-.09	.09	.07	-.01	-.16*	-.16*	-.21*
<i>16. Reject Applicant</i>	-.16*	-.33*	.40*	-.20*	.22*	.15*	-.05	-.03	.07	.21*	.19*	.24*
<i>17. Invite to Second Interview</i>	.14*	.33*	-.17*	.22*	-.02	.03	.15*	.09	.12	.00	-.01	-.05
<i>18. Hire Applicant</i>	.17*	.28*	-.40*	.21*	-.21*	-.11	.06	.06	-.06	-.20*	-.20*	-.25*
<i>19. Proposed Starting Salary</i>	.12	.28*	-.28*	.16*	-.11	-.05	.04	.05	-.01	-.10	-.11	-.13

Note. Factors are presented in the order that they appear in the survey. Dependent variables are italicized. * denotes p-value < .05.

Table 13 (Continued)

Variables	13	14	15	16	17	18
<i>14. Concerns About Hiring</i>	-.18*	--				
<i>15. Hiring Recommendations</i>	.32*	-.53*	--			
<i>16. Reject Applicant</i>	-.31*	.53*	-.91*	--		
<i>17. Invite to Second Interview</i>	.25*	-.38*	.82*	-.65*	--	
<i>18. Hire Applicant</i>	.27*	-.45*	.88*	-.73*	.52*	--
<i>19. Proposed Starting Salary</i>	.17*	-.21*	.40*	-.41*	.23*	.40*

Note. Factors are presented in the order that they appear in the survey. Dependent variables are italicized.

* denotes p-value < .05.

Table 14*Importance Ratings of Factors that Influence Hiring Recommendations by Offense Type*

Factor	Traffic Offense	Minor Drug Offense	Serious Drug-Related Offense	Univariate F Statistic	F-test p-value	Scheffe's Post Hoc Test Findings
Meets Qualifications	6.42	6.38	6.29	0.70	.497	No difference
Answers to Interview Questions	6.10	6.23	6.25	0.60	.550	No difference
Honest Person	5.99	6.03	6.28	1.63	.198	No difference
Taking Accountability for Actions	5.97	5.99	6.30	2.00	.138	No difference
Prior Job Experience	6.07	6.08	6.03	0.07	.935	No difference
Info of Application Form	5.85	5.69	5.89	0.78	.459	No difference
Growth & Maturity Since Offense	5.19	5.81	6.24	13.03	<.001*	Serious & Minor > Traffic
Honest About Offense	5.08	5.51	6.08	18.92	<.001*	Serious > Traffic
Not Likely to Reoffend	4.96	5.41	6.23	15.18	<.001*	Serious & Minor > Traffic
Number of Offenses	4.99	5.37	5.75	5.00	.007	Serious > Traffic
Background Check Results	4.86	5.08	5.58	4.63	.011	Serious > Traffic
Disclosure of Offense	4.27	5.23	5.71	14.90	<.001*	Serious & Minor > Traffic
Time Since Offense	4.21	4.87	5.72	43.98	<.001*	Serious > Minor > Traffic

Note. For F-test value, Bonferroni-type adjustments for multiple tests were made to the α criterion for 13 tests run. Adjusted $\alpha = .0038$. Therefore * denotes $p < .0038$. For Scheffe's Findings: Traffic = Traffic offense, Minor = Minor drug offense, Serious = Serious drug-related offense. "Serious & Minor > Traffic", for example, means that for a given factor, importance ratings in the serious drug-related offense and minor drug offense conditions were not significantly different from each other ($\alpha = .05$). Further, the factor was rated as significantly more important in the serious drug-related offense and minor drug offense conditions than in traffic offense condition. Factors are rank-ordered, from highest to lowest, by means across all conditions. MANOVA for importance ratings of all 13 factors by offense type: $F(2,227) = 3.02, p < .001; \lambda = 0.72$

Table 15

Offense Type, Warmth & Competence on Concerns, Hiring Recommendations, & Proposed Salary

Predictor Variable(s)	<i>df</i>	<i>Wilks Lambda</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Offense Type	(2, 218)	0.82	7.29	< .001
Warmth	(1, 218)	0.73	27.10	< .001
Competence	(1, 218)	0.97	1.92	0.127
Offense Type x Warmth	(2, 218)	0.96	1.58	0.152
Offense Type x Competence	(2, 218)	0.99	0.45	0.842
Warmth x Competence	(1, 218)	0.99	1.06	0.365
Offense Type x Warmth x Competence	(2, 218)	0.98	0.66	0.685

FIGURES

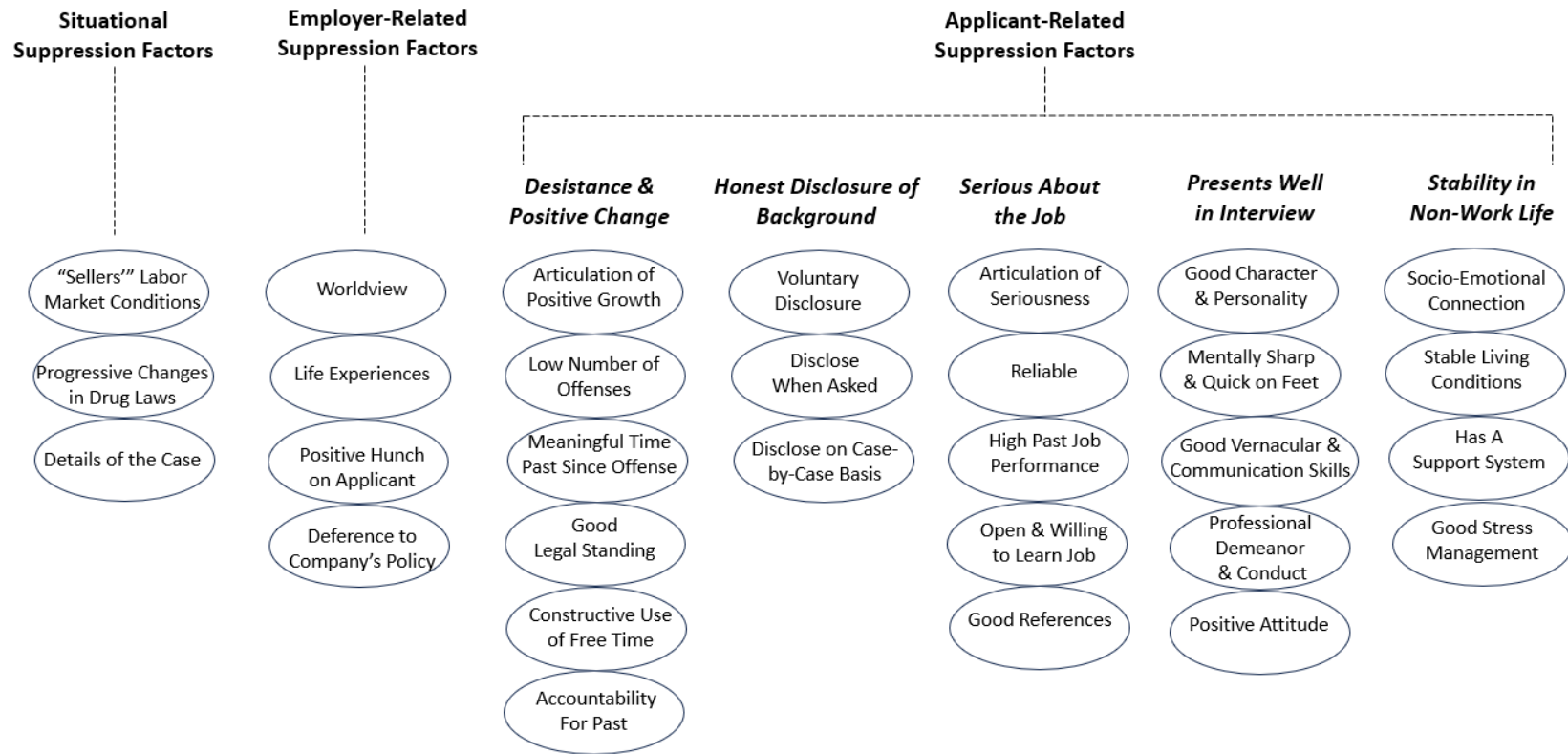


Figure 1

Thematic Map Summarizing Employer-Reported Prejudice Suppression Factors That Increase Their Willingness to Hire FMDOs

Note. Codes are unformatted (not bolded or italicized). First-order themes are ***bolded and italicized***. Second-order themes are **bolded**.

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APPENDIX A: STUDY 1 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is your policy regarding hiring former drug offenders (with minor offenses)?
 - Is that your personal policy? Is there a difference in your personal policy and the org. policy?
2. How have changes in drug laws affected your hiring policy?
3. How has the current labor market (and the “Great Resignation”) affected your hiring policy regarding former drug offenders (with minor offenses)?
4. What are some things or factors that make you – or have made you – willing or more willing to hire or ‘take a chance’ on former drug offender applicants?”
 - *For example: Are there specific things about your own values, the applicant, industry, work environment, laws and policies, or labor market that you consider?*
 - Of those factors that you’ve listed, which would you say are the top three most important?
5. What are some things or factors that make – or have made – you unwilling or less willing to hire or “take a chance” on former drug offender applicants?
 - *For example: Are there specific things about your own values, the applicant, industry, work environment, laws and policies, or labor market that you consider?*
 - Of those factors that you’ve listed, which would you say are the top three most important?
6. Describe the characteristics of a candidate in general (not just former offenders) that you would strongly consider for employment?
 - *For example: KSAOs/ QUALIFICATIONS... personality, education, skills and skill level, etc.*
7. How do you assess these characteristics and qualifications you value?
 - In what ways are they assessed formally? i.e. with validated scales, structured interviews, uniformed procedures, etc.
 - In what ways are they assessed informally? i.e. using intuition, unstructured interviews, etc.
8. If a loved one of yours was a FO with a minor drug offense, how would you advise them to go about increasing their chances of getting hired?
 - *Speak on i.e. stigma, consequences of disclosure, disclosure as redemption script, social networks.*
9. From your perspective, what are things that FOs can do to mitigate employers’ negative perceptions of them?
 - What are some things that are in their power to change?

APPENDIX B: STUDY 1 EVIDENCE FOR JOB RELEVANCE OF SUPPRESSORS

Table B1

Validity Evidence for the Job Relevance of Applicant-Related Suppression Factors and their Relationship with Job Performance

Code	Job Relevant?	Job Relevance Evidence	Citation
Applicant Discloses Background	No Data	N/A	N/A
Applicant's Articulation of Growth & Positive Changes	Yes, Related	Self-control (CWB) $r = -.63$ Behavioral Intentions (CWB) $r = .37$ Trouble avoidance (CWB), $.14^{NS}$	(Marcus, B., & Schuler, 2004)
Low Number of Offenses	No Data	N/A	N/A
Meaningful Time Passed Since Last Offense	No Data	N/A	N/A
Applicant's Good Character & Personality	Yes	Conscientiousness, $r = .29$ Agreeableness, $r = .19$,	(Hurtz & Donovan, 2000) (Barrick & Mount, 1991)
Applicant Articulates Seriousness About Job	Yes	Interest fit (satisfaction) $\rho = .19$ Interest in a particular job, $\rho = .23$	(Van Iddekinge, Roth, Putka, & Lanivich, 2011)
Applicant's Good References	Yes	Average validity = $.26$ (supervisor ratings), $.27$ (tenure)	(Hunter & Hunter, 1984)
Applicant Discloses Background on A Case-By-Case Basis	No Data	N/A	N/A
Applicant's Positive Attitude	Yes, Related	State Optimism, $r = .24$ Trait positive affect, $r = .14$	(Kluemper, Little, & DeGroot, 2009)

Table B1 (Continued)

Code	Job Relevant?	Job Relevance Evidence	Citation
Applicant's Takes Accountability for Past Transgressions	No Data	N/A	N/A
Applicant's Professional Demeanor & Self-Conduct	Yes, Related	Verbal & non-verbal behaviors $r_c = .23$ Impression management, $r_c = .15$	(Barrick, Shaffer, & DeGrassi, 2009)
Applicant's High Job Performance at Previous Job(s)	Yes	Previous performance $\bar{r} = .21$	(McDaniel, Schmidt, & Hunter, 1988)
Applicant Discloses Background When Prompted	No Data	N/A	N/A
Applicant's Openness and Willingness to Learn the Job	Weak Evidence	Openness to experience, $r = .04^{NS}$ <i>Openness to experience has positive relationship with performance in high complexity jobs, and negative relationship with performance in low complexity jobs.</i>	(Barrick & Mount, 1991) (Mohan & Mulla, 2013)
Applicant's Constructive Use of Free Time	No Data	N/A	N/A
Applicant's Stable Living Condition	No Data	N/A	N/A
Applicant Has Socio-Emotional Connection with Others	No Data	N/A	N/A
Applicant's Good Vernacular & Communication Skills	Yes	Verbal & non-verbal behaviors $r_c = .23$	(Barrick, Shaffer, & DeGrassi, 2009)

Table B1 (Continued)

Code	Job Relevant?	Job Relevance Evidence	Citation
Applicant Is Reliable	Yes	Dependability (CWB), $r = .27$	(Marcus & Schuler, 2004)
Applicant In Good Legal Standing	No Data	N/A	N/A
Applicant Has a Support System	No Data	N/A	N/A
Applicant Has Good Stress Management Skills	Yes	Neuroticism, $r = -.29$	(Sosnowska, Hofmans, & De Fruyt, 2020)
Applicant Is Mentally Sharp And “Quick on Their Feet”	Yes	Intelligence, $r = .35$	(Côté, & Miners, 2006)
		<i>“Intelligence is the strongest predictor of job performance.”</i>	(Ree & Earles, 1992)

Note. All statistics are statistically significant unless otherwise noted. ^{NS} = not significant. OR = odds ratio. Job/ task performance is the default dependent variable. () denotes a dependent variable that is not job/ task performance.

APPENDIX C: STUDY 2 STIMULUS MATERIALS

Note: The example shown below is for condition 3C: Serious Offense x Evidence of Desistance

Application for Employment

PERSONAL INFORMATION

First and Last Name: Sean Williams
 Email: seanwill2399@gmail.com Phone: 903-555-6655

Position Applied For: Retail Sales Associate
 Available Start Date: Anytime

Work Availability: Mornings Afternoons Evenings
 Employment Desired: Full Time Part Time Seasonal
 Are you authorized to work in the US? Yes No

WORK EXPERIENCE

Name of Company: Otter Products Years Worked: 6 months

- Responsibilities:
- Answer incoming phone calls and assist customers with their warranty claims
 - Provide a memorable customer service experience to disgruntled customers

Name of Company: Dollar General Years Worked: 2 years

- Responsibilities:
- Stock shelves, keep inventory, operate the cash register, maintain a clean work environment
 - Assist customers in finding products throughout the store, and generally provide excellent customer service.

EDUCATION				
Type of School	School Name	Location	Degree Received	Area of Study
High School	John F. Kennedy High	Newton, GA	Diploma	--
College	--	--	--	--
Professional School	--	--	--	--

Interview Transcript

Candidate Name: Sean Williams

Interview #: 1st 2nd

Interviewer: Why are you the right candidate for the job?

Applicant: I am the right person for this job because I am hardworking, experienced, and would be a great fit for the team. I love this type of work. Some people are drained from being around people all day, but I actually get energy from being around and interacting with people. So, I am looking forward to being a part of the team and serving customers.

Interviewer: This job requires interacting with, and serving customers, describe your experience working in a similar role.

Applicant: I have 2 and a half years of experience working in retail and customer service.

My first job was a store attendant at one of the largest dollar store franchises in the country. I worked there for about 2 years. While working there, I did everything from stocking the shelves, doing inventory, running the cash register, processing returns, etc.

After that, for 6 months, I worked as a customer service representative at a call center for a popular phone case company. There I would receive phone calls all day from upset and disgruntled customers who called in when their devices were broken, so I have a lot of experience in dealing with unhappy customers and helping them get to a good solution.

Interviewer: Describe a time you delivered excellent customer service?

Applicant: There was a time while working at my last place of employment when a regular customer of mine came into the store to get some grocery items but she forgot her wallet in her car. I, of course, allowed her the chance to go get it without making her feel rushed or embarrassed. She came back in a few minutes later looking overwhelmed and said that she had no idea where it was and that she had not seen it in the car. She started to put her groceries back, but I stopped her, told her not to worry about it – and paid for it out of my own pocket. She was so grateful. I could see her eyes tear up. A couple days later, she came back in to repay me, and insisted that I took it. She shared that she had found her wallet, and that it had fallen out at work the day she came in and could not find it. As a bonus, I also received a 5-star Google review that day!

Interviewer: That was the last question, but before I go: Is there anything else you would like to share with us about yourself?

Applicant: You will see from my record that I only have one offense. It was a one-time thing and I have stayed out of trouble for the past 5 years. I take care to not put myself in situations like that anymore.

The very last thing I would like to say, to end on a positive note, is that I would love the opportunity to work and grow here.

Pre-Employment Background Check Results

Applicant Name: Sean Williams

Investigating Company: Miracle Dollar Corp.

SEARCH PERIOD

6 months to date: **Clean**

2 years to date: **Clean**

5 years to date: **Clean**

7 years to date: **1 Record Found**

OFFENSE INFORMATION

Offense: Trafficking Heroin While in Possession of a Firearm - 1st Offense

Jurisdiction: Rockvale County, GA

Sentence: 5 Years in Prison

Conviction Date: April 1, 2013

Sentence Term: April 1, 2013 - April 1, 2018

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

Sean Williams was convicted for trafficking heroin while in possession of a firearm, once in April 2013.

He served 5 years in prison, and was released in April 2018.

He has been out of prison and has maintained a clean record for the last 5 years.

APPENDIX D: STUDY 2 PRE-TEST MANIPULATION CHECK MATERIALS

D1: Desistance & Growth Manipulation Through Interview Excerpts

Instruction: Using the scale provided below, please tell me what you think this quote says or does not say about the applicant.

1. "You will see from my record that I only have one offense. It was a one-time thing. I have stayed out of trouble for the past 6 months."
2. "You will see from my record that I only have one offense. It was a one-time thing. I have stayed out of trouble for the past 2 years."
3. "You will see from my record that I only have one offense. It was a one-time thing. I have stayed out of trouble for the past 5 years."

How much evidence do you believe the above interview quote provides for each of the following statements about the applicant? The applicant:

1 = No Evidence, 2 = Very Little Evidence, 3 = Little Evidence, 4 = Sufficient Evidence, 5 = Strong Evidence, 6 = Very Strong Evidence, 7 = Complete Evidence

Indicators	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Has disclosed an offense in their background							
Is honest about an offense in the past							
Is generally an honest person							
Takes accountability for their actions							
Will NOT-reoffend in the future							
Has grown and matured since their last offense							

D2: Honest Disclosure Manipulation Through Interview Excerpts

Instruction: Using the scale provided below, please tell me what you think this quote says or does not say about the applicant.

1. “I am not sure if you do background checks, but I want to let you know that I have an offense on my record. It’s a speeding citation. I hope that I did not just shoot myself in the foot by sharing that, but I think it is important that you hear it from me first.”
2. “I am not sure if you do background checks, but I want to let you know that I have an offense on my record. It’s a marijuana possession charge. I hope that I did not just shoot myself in the foot by sharing that, but I think it is important that you hear it from me first.”
3. “I am not sure if you do background checks, but I want to let you know that I have an offense on my record. It’s a heroin trafficking while in possession of a firearm charge. I hope that I did not just shoot myself in the foot by sharing that, but I think it is important that you hear it from me first.”

How much evidence do you believe the above interview quote provides for each of the following statements about the applicant? The applicant:

1 = No Evidence, 2 = Very Little Evidence, 3 = Little Evidence, 4 = Sufficient Evidence,
5 = Strong Evidence, 6 = Very Strong Evidence, 7 = Complete Evidence

Indicators	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Has disclosed an offense in their background							
Is honest about an offense in the past							
Is generally an honest person							
Takes accountability for their actions							
Will NOT-reoffend in the future							
Has grown and matured since their last offense							

D3: Desistance & Growth Manipulation Through Background Check Results

Applicant Name: Sean Williams
Investigating Company: Miracle Dollar Corp.

SEARCH PERIOD

6 months to date: **Clean**
2 years to date: **Clean**
5 years to date: **1 Record Found**

OFFENSE INFORMATION

Offense: Trafficking Heroin While in Possession of a Firearm – 1st Offense
Jurisdiction: Rockvale County, GA
Sentence: 5 Years in Prison
Conviction Date: April 1, 2013
Sentence Term: April 1, 2013 – April 1, 2018

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

Sean Williams was convicted for trafficking heroin while in possession of a firearm, once in April 2013.
He served 5 years In prison, and was released in April 2018.
He has been out of prison and has maintained a clean record for the last 5 years.

Instruction: Using the scale provided below, please tell me what you think each background check result says or does not say about the applicant.

Based on the background check results, this applicant:

1 = Not at all, 2 = Slightly, 3 = Somewhat, 4 = Neutral, 5 = Moderately, 6 = Mostly,
7 = Completely

Indicators	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Has disclosed an offense in their background							
Is honest about an offense in the past							
Is generally an honest person							
Takes accountability for their actions							
Will NOT-reoffend in the future							
Has grown and matured since their last offense							

APPENDIX E: STUDY 2 SURVEY MATERIALS

Attention Check

Instruction: Please answer the following questions as accurately as you can. Your responses to these questions will be used to gauge how closely you read and understood the materials.

- 1. What industry (or type of job) does the instructions ask you to imagine that you are hiring for?
 - Retail
 - Manufacturing
 - Information Technology (IT)

- 2. How many years of relevant experience did the applicant report having?
 - None
 - 2 years & 6 months
 - 10 years

- 3. What offense did you learn that the applicant has on his record?
 - No offense
 - Speeding offense
 - Marijuana possession offense
 - Heroin trafficking while in possession of a firearm

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Manipulation Check

Instruction: To what extent do you believe the applicant's file (i.e., application, interview, and background check) provides evidence for each of the following statements about the applicant?

1 = Not at all, 2 = Slightly, 3 = Somewhat, 4 = Neutral, 5 = Moderately, 6 = Mostly, 7 = Completely

The applicant...	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Has disclosed an offense in their background							
Is honest about an offense in the past							
Is generally an honest person							
Takes accountability for their actions							
Will NOT-reoffend in the future							
Has grown and matured since their last offense							

Stereotype Content Model: Warmth and Competence (Supplemental Measure)

Instructions: Based on your assessment of the applicant’s file (i.e., application, interview, and background check), please rate the degree to which you think the applicant is each of the descriptive words.

In other words, how _____ do you think the applicant is?

1 = Not at all, 2 = Not Very, 3 = Slightly, 4 = Neutral, 5 = Moderately, 6 = Very, 7 = Extremely

- | | | | | |
|------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Warmth | 1. warm | 2. tolerant | 3. good-natured | 4. sincere |
| Competence | 1. competent | 2. confident | 3. independent | 4. competitive |

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Level of Concern About Hiring Applicants (Dependent Variable)

Instruction: Based on your judgment of the applicant’s file (i.e., application, interview, and background check), please rate your level of concern about hiring the applicant using the scale below.

1 = Not at all concerned, 2 = A little concerned, 3 = Somewhat concerned, 4 = Neutral, 5 = Moderately concerned, 6 = Very concerned, 7 = Extremely concerned

How concerned are you regarding?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This applicant’s people skills							
<u>Customers’</u> level of comfort around this applicant							
<u>Employees’</u> level of comfort around this applicant							
The amount of training this applicant may require							
The amount of time this applicant will need to adjust to the job							
The applicant’s likelihood of leaving the job within 6 months							
The applicant’s likelihood of harming you or someone else at work in the future							
<i>The applicant’s likelihood of being arrested for a drug-related offense in the future</i>							

Note: These items were written by me, and are not necessarily a cohesive scale, but based on factors, that employers identified as being concerned about from Giguere and Dundes (2002). The concerns were: perceived people skills, customer comfort, coworker comfort, training, time to adjust, turnover, and fear of victimization. The final item, in italics, was added to include a n item that speaks to concerns about (re)committing drug-related offense – the types of offenses my study is centered around.

Hiring Recommendations (Dependent Variable)

Instruction: Based on your judgment of the applicant’s file (i.e., the application, interview, and background check), please rate your likelihood of recommending each of the following:

1 = Extremely Unlikely, 2 = Unlikely, 3 = Somewhat Unlikely, 4 = Neutral, 5 = Somewhat Likely, 6 = Likely, 7 = Extremely Likely

How likely would you be to:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recommend <u>rejecting</u> the applicant							
Recommend bringing the applicant in for an in-person <u>interview</u>							
Recommend <u>hiring</u> the applicant now							

Factors that Influence Hiring Recommendations (Supplemental Measure)

Instruction: Please rate how important each of the following factors were for your hiring decisions.

1 = Not at all important, 2 = Of little importance, 3 = Somewhat important, 4 = Neutral, 5 = Moderately important, 6 = Very important, 7 = Extremely important

How important is...?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Information provided on the initial application form</i>							
<i>Answers to interview questions</i>							
<i>The background check results</i>							
Prior job experience							
Disclosure of an offense in the past							
Honesty about an offense in the past							
Being a generally honest person							
Taking accountability for actions							
Growth and maturity since last offense							
Time since offense							
Number of offenses in past							
Likelihood of NOT reoffending in the future							
Meeting qualifications							

Proposed Starting Salary (Dependent Variable)

If this applicant were to be offered a position, what would you recommend as their starting salary? Use the scale below to indicate your recommended starting salary.



\$24,000	\$25,000	\$26,000	\$27,000	\$28,000	\$29,000	\$30,000
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APPENDIX F: STUDY 2 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF OUTCOME VARIABLES

Table F1

Means and Standard Deviations of Outcome Variables by Offense Type

Variable	Traffic Offense		Minor Drug Offense		Serious Drug Related Offense	
	M	(SD)	M	SD	M	SD
Hiring Concerns	1.97	(1.40)	4.31	(1.71)	3.77	(1.70)
Hiring Recommendation	5.89	(0.98)	4.77	(1.53)	4.92	(1.29)
Reject Applicant	1.70	(1.16)	5.35	(0.83)	5.04	(1.58)
Second Interview	5.89	(1.31)	5.86	(1.39)	5.35	(1.63)
Hire Applicant	5.49	(1.26)	4.81	(1.69)	4.10	(1.80)
Proposed Salary	27306.88	(1758.36)	26795.53	(1930.99)	26606.82	(1837.61)

Table F2

Means and Standard Deviations of Outcome Variables by Suppressor Evidence Presented

Variable	No Suppressor Evidence		Honest Disclosure Evidence		Desistance & Growth Evidence	
	M	(SD)	M	SD	M	SD
Hiring Concerns	2.16	(1.26)	2.15	(1.39)	1.93	(1.28)
Hiring Recommendation	5.19	(1.41)	5.34	(1.37)	5.56	(1.30)
Reject Applicant	2.57	(1.59)	2.50	(1.54)	2.12	(1.49)
Second Interview	5.56	(1.57)	5.61	(1.43)	5.93	(1.38)
Hire Applicant	4.57	(1.71)	4.91	(1.62)	4.88	(1.77)
Proposed Salary	26557.57	(1902.22)	27092.22	(1853.56)	27044.47	(1798.23)

Table F3*Means and Standard Deviations of Hiring Concerns by Offense Type & Suppressor Evidence Presented*

Variable	Traffic Offense		Minor Drug Offense		Serious Drug Related Offense	
	M	(SD)	M	SD	M	SD
No Suppressor Evidence	1.88	(1.21)	2.21	(1.38)	2.38	(1.17)
Disclosure Evidence	2.21	(1.61)	2.12	(1.19)	2.13	(1.41)
Desistance Evidence	1.82	(1.38)	1.59	(0.65)	2.31	(1.51)

Table F4*Means and Standard Deviations of Hiring Recommendation by Offense Type & Suppressor Evidence Presented*

Variable	Traffic Offense		Minor Drug Offense		Serious Drug Related Offense	
	M	(SD)	M	SD	M	SD
No Suppressor Evidence	5.83	(0.91)	5.52	(1.21)	4.22	(1.52)
Disclosure Evidence	6.03	(0.89)	5.19	(1.31)	4.85	(1.57)
Desistance Evidence	5.83	(1.15)	5.75	(1.22)	5.16	(1.45)

Table F5*Means and Standard Deviations of Rejecting the Applicant by Offense Type & Suppressor Evidence Presented*

Variable	Traffic Offense		Minor Drug Offense		Serious Drug Related Offense	
	M	(SD)	M	SD	M	SD
No Suppressor Evidence	1.75	(0.99)	2.24	(1.33)	3.69	(1.72)
Disclosure Evidence	1.58	(1.02)	2.58	(1.36)	3.27	(1.69)
Desistance Evidence	1.76	(1.45)	1.83	(1.15)	2.70	(1.64)

Table F6*Means and Standard Deviations of Second Interview by Offense Type & Suppressor Evidence Presented*

Variable	Traffic Offense		Minor Drug Offense		Serious Drug Related Offense	
	M	(SD)	M	SD	M	SD
No Suppressor Evidence	5.88	(1.36)	5.90	(1.45)	4.88	(1.70)
Disclosure Evidence	6.04	(1.12)	5.54	(1.36)	5.27	(1.69)
Desistance Evidence	5.76	(1.45)	6.17	(1.34)	5.89	(1.37)

Table F7*Means and Standard Deviations of Hiring the Applicant by Offense Type & Suppressor Evidence Presented*

Variable	Traffic Offense		Minor Drug Offense		Serious Drug Related Offense	
	M	(SD)	M	SD	M	SD
No Suppressor Evidence	5.38	(1.28)	4.90	(1.65)	3.46	(1.58)
Disclosure Evidence	5.62	(1.17)	4.62	(1.65)	4.54	(1.77)
Desistance Evidence	5.48	(1.36)	4.91	(1.83)	4.30	(1.92)

Table F8*Means and Standard Deviations of Proposed Starting Salary by Offense Type & Suppressor Evidence Presented*

Variable	Traffic Offense		Minor Drug Offense		Serious Drug Related Offense	
	M	(SD)	M	SD	M	SD
No Suppressor Evidence	27253.50	(1879.99)	26489.72	(1911.50)	25990.85	(1772.36)
Disclosure Evidence	27301.38	(1399.98)	26858.88	(2119.73)	27132.50	(1977.45)
Desistance Evidence	27363.40	(2000.98)	27109.48	(1750.18)	26693.78	(1639.02)

APPENDIX G: STUDY 2 SUPPLEMENTAL VARIABLES DESCRIPTIVES

Table G1

Descriptive Statistics of Study 2 Supplemental Variables: Importance, Warmth, & Competence

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	<i>S.E.</i>
Importance to Hiring Recommendations	--	--	--	--
Meets Qualifications	6.37	0.72	3.00	0.05
Answers to Interview Questions	6.20	0.95	6.00	0.06
Honest Person	6.10	1.10	6.00	0.07
Taking Accountability for Actions	6.09	1.17	6.00	0.08
Prior Job Experience	6.06	0.94	5.00	0.06
Info of Application Form	5.81	1.03	5.00	0.07
Growth & Maturity Since Offense	5.76	1.33	6.00	0.09
Honest About Offense	5.57	1.57	6.00	0.10
Not Likely to Reoffend	5.55	1.53	6.00	0.10
Number of Offenses	5.38	1.51	6.00	0.10
Background Check Results	5.18	1.53	6.00	0.10
Disclosure of Offense	5.09	1.74	6.00	0.11
Time Since Offense	4.95	1.71	6.00	0.11
Perceived Warmth	5.40	1.04	6.00	0.07
Perceived Competence	5.30	0.87	4.25	0.06

Note. Importance factors are rank-ordered from highest to lowest.

Table G2*Descriptive Statistics of Desistance and Disclosure Manipulation Check Items*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	<i>S.E.</i>
Evidence of Manipulation Check Factors	--	--	--	--
Evidence of Disclosure	5.03	2.22	6.00	0.15
Evidence of Honesty About Offense	5.01	2.24	6.00	0.15
Evidence of Taking Accountability	4.97	1.59	6.00	0.10
Evidence of Honest Person	4.76	1.53	6.00	0.10
Evidence of Growth & Maturity	4.68	1.51	6.00	0.10
Evidence Will Not Re-offend	4.18	1.56	6.00	0.10

Note. $N = 230$. Scale scores are italicized. Manipulation check factors are rank-ordered from highest to lowest.