



Parole Officer Attitudes Towards Parolees:
Assessing the Link between Global Orientations and Specific Attributions

Prepared by:
Dale Willits, Ph.D.
Lisa Broidy, Ph.D.
Christopher Lyons, Ph.D.

New Mexico Statistical Analysis Center
Dr. Lisa Broidy, Director



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Criminal Justice Professionals' Attitudes towards Parolees

1. Project Description

In 2009, the Bureau of Justice Statistics awarded the New Mexico Statistical Analysis Center funds to assess the factors that shape criminal justice professionals' perceptions of, and attitudes toward, parolees. The New Mexico Statistical Analysis Center previously finished a report examining the attitudes of correctional employees. The current report details the results of the second stage of this research, which examines the factors that shape probation and parole officer perceptions of, and attitudes toward, parolees. This study was funded by the Bureau of Justice Statistics with a grant awarded in 2010.

The literature suggests two models through which criminal justice professionals' perceptions of and attitudes toward parolees are generated. The importation model suggests that criminal justice system professionals bring to the job a set of characteristics that shape how they view the goals of the system and their beliefs about how the system should treat the offenders it serves. Specifically the model proposes that gender, race/ethnicity, age and educational attainment are instrumental in shaping the rehabilitative versus punitive orientations of criminal justice professionals. A meta-analysis (Maahs and Pratt 2001) found that older officers and minority officers are more likely to endorse a rehabilitative model (though they describe the relationship as substantively weak), while neither gender nor education are correlated with orientations towards rehabilitation. While demographic characteristics are among the only measurable individual level variables that cannot be influenced by the correctional work environment, it is not entirely clear what such variables represent and why they might be related to correctional orientations. Minority status, for example, is hypothesized to decrease punitive orientations via identification with inmates (Britton 1997; Jacobs and Kraft 1978). However, support for this hypothesis is mixed (Britton 1997). Certainly, not all minority officers will identify with inmates; in fact, some may actively seek to distance themselves from inmates (Toch and Klofas 1982). Similarly, not all female officers will be more empathetic towards inmates than their male counterparts. Indeed, Maahs and Pratt's meta-analysis found no significant relationship between gender and correctional orientation. Broad demographic categories may simply be too crude a proxy for the individual level processes that might influence the outcomes of interests here. However, while demographic characteristics are independent of any institutional influences, the processes that might explain any relationship between these characteristics and correctional orientations may not be, and as such, do not as neatly reflect the importation model.

Alternatively, the institutional model suggests that job characteristics and organizational contexts have a stronger influence on workers' attitudes than do individual characteristics, particularly demographic characteristics (Jurik 1985; Lopez and Russell 2008). Specifically, the institutional model posits a number of job and workplace characteristics that correlate with less sympathetic and more punitive attitudes towards offenders, including frequent contact with inmates, working

with younger inmates, working in more secure facilities, working in the field for a long time, limited job authority, and security versus treatment or service positions. Staff who work under these conditions will be less supportive of rehabilitative models and, by implication, less likely to endorse the belief that offenders are willing and/or able to change their behavior. Again, though research is mixed as to which specific job and organizational characteristics affect correctional orientations, these types of variables generally exhibit a stronger correlation with orientations than do individual level variables linked to the importation model (Maahs and Pratt 2001).

The literature suggests that in addition to individual and job/organizational characteristics, offender and/or offense characteristics might moderate the relation between these factors and individual attitudes. Bridges and Steen (1998) for example, find that offender characteristics affect the culpability assessments that juvenile probation officers make of their clients when crafting sentencing recommendations. Specifically, officers attribute cause to either personal characteristics of the offender or to the particular characteristics of an offender's circumstances. Where blame is thought to rest with personal characteristics, officers deem offenders more culpable and their sentencing recommendations are more severe. Bridges and Steen find that race plays a role in officers' assessments of blame, with personal characteristics a more common explanation for the offending behavior of black youth compared to white youth. Relatedly, Dembo (1972) found that probation/parole officers who attribute offending to personal traits are less likely to believe offenders can change than those who attribute offending to contextual dynamics. In addition to race, it is likely that other offender characteristics (gender, age, education, work history) affect attributions of blame. Work by Lopez and Russell (2008) supports this, indicating that professionals' perceptions of the social support available to offenders affect whether they view offenders as amenable to treatment. As such, offenders with strong family ties, conventional social ties and stable work histories might be viewed as more amenable to treatment. In the absence of concrete evidence of such ties, gender, age, educational attainments and work history might be used to make inferences about an offender's social embeddedness. The current research attempts to evaluate the influence of each of these sets of factors, looking specifically at how each affects parole officers' attitudes toward and perceptions of parolees.

The current study uses factorial and standard survey data from a sample of parole officers. The factorial survey design (Rossi and Nock, 1982) presents respondents with three fictional, randomly constructed descriptions of parolees under correctional supervision and asks them to evaluate these parolees on a number of domains, including their likelihood of recidivism, rehabilitation, and employability. The key parolee characteristics presented and randomized in the vignettes are: the parolee's age, gender, race, education history, marital status, whether or not the parolee had children, unemployment history, job type history, social support, arrest history, level of supervision, infractions while incarcerated, substance abuse history, most recent criminal offense, and incarceration history.

The survey also collected information regarding the respondents' perceptions and attitudes toward parolees like those presented in the vignettes. In addition to the experimentally controlled vignette dimensions, we also used standard self-report survey items to collect information on respondent demographic and attitudinal characteristics that may influence judgments of parolees. To capture individual characteristics central to importation hypotheses, respondents report on their age, sex, race/ethnicity, marital status, education level, reasons for taking their job within in probation and parole, political views, correctional orientation, and perceptions of their professional role. Variables representing the institutional model include years of experience, perceptions of the dangerousness of the parolees that they work with, levels of job stress, and levels of job satisfaction. The current report presents descriptive information on the survey respondents and a preliminary analysis of the factors related to parole officers' attitudes towards parolees.

2. Descriptive Statistics

At the time the survey was distributed, there were a total of 279 probation and parole officers working in 28 offices across New Mexico. This survey was sent out to officers at all 28 probation and parole offices in New Mexico. We received a total of 140 survey responses for an overall response rate of 50.2%. Compared to the sample size and response rate for our prior survey of correctional employees, the sample is substantially smaller (140 vs. 407), but the response rate is substantially higher (50.2% vs. 16.2%). While the overall response rate was better for parole officers, response rates vary by office, with lower rates from smaller offices. The specific breakdown of respondents by offices with respondents is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Response Rate by Parole Office

Location	Respondents	Response Rate (%)
Alamogordo	0	0
Albuquerque	30	48
Albuquerque (special programs)	29	71
Anthony	0	0
Artesia	0	0
Bernalillo	4	100
Clovis	8	80
Deming	1	25
Espanola	3	42
Farmington	10	67
Gallup	0	0
Grants	3	50
Hobbs	4	40
Las Cruces	16	64
Las Vegas	3	50
Lordsburg	0	0
Los Lunas	3	33
Men & Women's Recovery Programs	4	100
Moriarty	2	67
Portales	0	0
Raton	0	0
Rio Rancho	6	100
Roswell	1	13
Ruidoso	2	67
Santa Fe	7	37
Silver City	0	0
Socorro	4	100
Taos	0	0

Respondent Characteristics (Importation Model Variables)

The average age of respondents is 35.3 years. Respondents are fairly evenly split on gender (46% male) and marital status (45% married), with a large proportion of respondents being either Latino/Hispanic (43%) or Caucasian (51%). Respondents are, on average, highly educated (89% of respondents had at a bachelor's degree, while 10% had a master's degree) and generally describe their political views as moderate (39%) to conservative (43%).

Respondent Job Characteristics and Organizational Context (Institutional Model Variables)

In terms of job length, 47% of respondents have worked in parole for less than 4 years, 37% for 5 to 7 years, and the rest (16%) for more than 10 years. In general, respondents indicated that they worked with dangerous offenders (mean = 4.9 on a scale ranging from 1 to 6). We also constructed measures of job satisfaction and job stress using principal components analysis. These variables, which have means of 0 and standard deviations of 1, are based on a series of questions that ask how satisfied/how much stress are under while conducting their jobs.

Respondent Attitudes towards Hypothetical Offenders

The factorial vignette methodology presents respondents with a series of three hypothetical parolees, each of whom they are then asked to evaluate on a number of key dimensions. Each vignette includes information about the following dimensions: offender's age, race/ethnicity, sex, education level at incarceration, marital status, and whether they have children. We also present information about the offender's employment history, level of social support outside of the criminal justice system, and various questions about criminality, including history of substance abuse, prior arrests and incarcerations, current/most recent offense, level of security classification, and the number and type of infractions while in custody. Table 2 lists the dimensions included in each description, with corresponding levels.

Based on these hypothetical cases, we asked respondents to indicate on a Likert scale, from 1 (not at all likely) to 6 (very likely), how likely they thought each hypothetical parolee would be to recidivate, rehabilitate, find a job, and find stable employment. Responses to these survey items are displayed in Table 3. Note that the sample sizes for this table are larger than the number of respondents because each respondent evaluated three randomly constructed parolees.

Table 2: Vignette Dimensions and levels**Offender Demographics**

Age	{ 19; 25; 35 }
Race/Ethnicity	{ White; Native American; Foreign born Hispanic; US born Hispanic; African American }
Sex	Male, Female
Education Level (at incarceration)	{ No High School degree; HS degree or GED; Post HS college or technical training }
Marital Status (current)	{ Single; Married; in a steady relationship, not married }
Divorced (ever)	{ Yes; No }
Children	{ None; 2 children, frequent contact; 2 children infrequent contact }
Employment History: stability	{ Stable; Unstable }
Employment History: level	{ Entry level; Supervisory, Managerial }
Employment History: industry	{ Service Industry; Trades; Office job }
Social support	{ Supportive Family and Peer environment; Non supportive family and peer environment }
History of Substance Abuse	{ Yes; No }

Criminal History

Prior Arrests	{ None; 1 non-violent; 1 violent; 3 non-violent; 3 violent }
Prior Incarcerations*	{ Yes; No }
	* 'None' arrests = 'No' incarcerations
Current Offense	{ Drug; Property; Violent; Other... }
Security Classification*	{ 1; 2; 3; 4 }
	* Classification must be consistent with current offense
Infractions (in prison)	{ None; Minor; Multiple or Major }

Table 3. Respondent perceptions of hypothetical parolees

	Recidivate		Rehabilitate		Find Steady Employment		Maintain Healthy Relationships	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1 (not at all likely)	6	1.4	27	6.4	41	9.8	33	7.9
2	33	7.9	99	23.6	81	19.3	91	21.7
3	61	14.5	110	26.2	97	23.1	115	27.4
4	118	28.1	114	27.1	100	23.8	107	25.5
5	108	25.7	50	11.9	71	16.9	50	11.9
6 (very likely)	88	21.0	11	2.6	20	4.8	15	3.6
Missing	6	1.4	9	2.1	10	2.4	9	2.1

Table 3 suggests that respondent perceptions of the potential for success or failure among the hypothetical parolees presented in the vignettes vary considerably. There is a tendency for respondents to perceive hypothetical parolees as likely to recidivate (mean = 4.34) and not as likely to rehabilitate (3.23). Respondent perceptions regarding the ability of these hypothetical parolees to maintain steady employment and maintain healthy relationships also varies considerably, with the majority of respondents giving an ambivalent to slightly positive response regarding employment outcomes (mean = 3.34) and relationships (mean = 3.05).

3. Multivariate Analysis

Our primary aim here is to assess the relative influence of respondent (importation), job (institutional) and offender characteristics on officers' perceptions of likely outcomes for parolees. In order to assess the factors that shape probation and parole officer perceptions and attitudes towards parolees, we constructed a number of ordinal logistic regressions. Specifically, we estimated four models (one using parolee characteristics as predictors, one using importation variables, one using institutional variables, and one using all of the variables) for four dependent variables (respondent perceptions of the likelihood that the hypothetical parolee would recidivate, rehabilitate, find steady employment, and maintain healthy relationships). For presentation purposes, only the statistically significant results of these analyses are displayed in tables 4 through 7.

Table 4 presents the regression results for attitudes toward recidivism. The first model utilizes hypothetical parolee characteristics to predict attitudes toward recidivism. Results suggest that officers view parolees with social capital and informal social control as less likely to recidivate and those with weak ties and extensive or serious criminal histories as more likely to recidivate. Specifically, hypothetical parolees who had finished college were viewed as less likely to recidivate than parolees who had not finished high school. Similarly, parolees who have entry-level or managerial employment are viewed as less likely to recidivate than unemployed parolees. Hypothetical parolees with a history of unemployment, substance abuse histories, multiple nonviolent or violent offenses, a prior incarceration history, and a record of absconding while on parole are all viewed as more likely to recidivate.

The second and third models examine the relationship between importation and institutional variables and attitudes toward recidivism. Interestingly, none of the importation or institutional variables significantly predicts officers' attitudes toward the likelihood of offender recidivism.

The full model (which utilizes parolee, importation, and institutional variables) largely confirms the results of the prior models. As with the importation and institutional models, there are no statistically significant importation or institutional predictors of recidivism. The parolee variables have largely the same pattern of statistically significant relationships with attitudes toward recidivism. The only notable difference is that the variables parolees frequently unemployed and parolee incarceration history are not statistically significant predictors of recidivism in the full model.

Table 4. Regression results for recidivate

Variable	Parolee Characteristics	Importation	Institutional	Full Model
<i>Parolee Characteristic Variables</i>				
Parolee College Degree (vs. did not finish high school)	-0.673* (0.322)	-	-	-0.661* (0.334)
Parolee Frequently Unemployed	0.540** (0.190)	-	-	0.411 (0.222)
Parolee Entry-Level Employment (vs. unemployed)	-0.635* (0.307)	-	-	-0.927* (0.362)
Parolee Managerial-Level Employment (vs. unemployed)	-0.707* (0.294)	-	-	-1.096** (0.349)
Parolee Substance Abuse History	0.509** (0.189)	-	-	0.479* (0.218)
Parolee 3 Nonviolent offenses (vs. no priors)	0.724* (0.314)	-	-	0.736* (0.355)
Parolee 3 Violent offenses (vs. no priors)	1.226** (0.303)	-	-	1.211** (0.364)
Parolee Incarceration History (vs. no inc. history)	0.433* (0.209)	-	-	0.469 (0.249)
Parolee Absconding Violation (vs. no violations)	0.937** (0.228)	-	-	1.099** (0.268)
<i>Importation Variables</i>				
<i>No statistically significant variables</i>	-	-	-	-
<i>Institutional Variables</i>				
<i>No statistically significant variables</i>	-	-	-	-

Table 5 presents the regression results for officer attitudes towards the likelihood of parolee rehabilitation. These models also implicate parolee social capital and social control in officers' views of parolees' odds of success on parole. Hypothetical parolees who have completed some college, completed college, or completed technical degrees (versus those that did not complete high school) are viewed as more likely to rehabilitate. Hypothetical parolees with children with whom they did not have frequent contact and parolees with a history of unemployment were

viewed as less likely to successfully rehabilitate. Here though, importation and institutional process are also at play. In terms of importation variables, respondents who view the work of parole officers as more social work than law enforcement are more likely to believe that parolees are likely to successfully rehabilitate. In terms of institutional variables, respondents with more punitive views towards parolees are less likely to believe that parolees will successfully rehabilitate, while respondents with more years at their current job are more likely to believe that hypothetical parolees will successfully rehabilitate.

Interestingly, the full model suggests that several additional parolee characteristics are related to attitudes toward rehabilitation. Hypothetical parolees with managerial positions and parolees seeking work are viewed as more likely to successfully rehabilitate than parolees who are unemployed. Hypothetical parolees with technical violations are also viewed as more likely to successfully rehabilitate than parolees with no violations.

Table 5. Regression results for rehabilitate.

Variable	Parolee Characteristics	Importation	Institutional	Full Model
<i>Parolee Characteristic Variables</i>				
Parolee Some College (vs. did not finish high school)	0.675* (0.287)	-	-	0.576 (0.344)
Parolee Technical Degree (vs. did not finish high school)	0.584* (0.282)			0.264 (0.325)
Parolee College Degree (vs. did not finish high school)	0.938** (0.325)			0.766* (0.382)
Parolee Children Infrequent Contact (vs. no children)	-0.668** (0.241)	-	-	-0.626* (0.284)
Parolee Frequently Unemployed	-0.503* (0.190)			-0.476* (0.225)
Parolee Managerial-Level Employment (vs. unemployed)	-	-	-	0.708* (0.348)

Parolee Seeking Work (vs. unemployed)	-	-	-	0.688* (0.351)
Parolee technical violations (vs. none)	-	-	-	0.623* (0.273)
Importation Variables				
Respondent views as social work	-	0.222* (0.106)	-	0.327* (0.128)
Institutional Variables				
Punitiveness	-	-	-221* (0.095)	-0.087 (0.115)
Years at current job	-	-	-	0.070* (0.030)

Table 6 presents the regression results for perceptions of parolees' ability to find steady employment. Hypothetical parolees that are 35 years old are viewed as more likely to find steady employment than 19 year old parolees. Hypothetical parolees with children with whom they have infrequent contact and parolees with a history of unemployment with unstable job histories are viewed as less likely to find steady employment. Conversely, hypothetical parolees who are employed, seeking work, or students are viewed as more likely than hypothetically unemployed parolees to find steady employment. Parolees with technical violations are viewed as more likely to find steady employment than parolees with no violations.

In terms of the importation model, respondents who took jobs in probation and parole due to availability were less likely to believe that respondents would find steady employment than respondents that took the job because they wanted to work in a security field. No institutional models were statistically significant predictors of the perceived likelihood that hypothetical parolees would find steady employment.

The full model largely confirmed the results of the prior models. In this model though, parolee age is not statistically significant. Additionally, in the full model parolees who lived in transitional housing were viewed as less likely than those living alone to find steady employment in the full model (living situation was not significant in the parolee characteristics model). Also, respondent ethnicity, which was not a significant predictor in the importation model, is statistically significant in the full model. Specifically, respondents who identified as Latino or Hispanic were more likely than respondents who identified as Caucasian to believe that hypothetical parolees would find steady employment.

Table 6. Regression results for find steady employment.

Variable	Parolee Characteristics	Importation	Institutional	Full Model
<i>Parolee Characteristic Variables</i>				
Parolee Age 35 (vs. Parolee Age 19)	0.505* (0.249)	-	-	-
Parolee Children Infrequent Contact (vs. no children)	-0.651** (0.241)	-	-	-0.851** (0.289)
Parolee Frequently Unemployed	-1.917** (0.208)	-	-	-1.900** (0.243)
Parolee Entry-Level Work (vs. unemployed)	1.452** (0.315)	-	-	1.251** (0.368)
Parolee Managerial-Level Work (vs. unemployed)	1.730** (0.303)	-	-	1.775** (0.358)
Parolee Seeking Work (vs. unemployed)	1.155** (0.302)	-	-	0.723* (0.352)
Parolee Student (vs. unemployed)	0.955** (0.301)	-	-	
Parolee living with Family	-	-	-	-0.743* (0.320)
Parolee Technical Violations (vs. no violations)	0.526* (0.236)	-	-	0.763* (0.276)
Parolee transitional housing	-	-	-	-0.670* (0.307)
<i>Importation Variables</i>				
Respondent Job Reason: Available (vs. security)	-	-0.718* (0.363)		-1.108* (0.436)
Respondent Latino (vs. Caucasian)	-	-	-	0.569* (0.269)
<i>Institutional Variables</i>				
<i>No statistically significant variables</i>				

Table 7 presents the regression results for perceptions of parolees' ability to maintain healthy relationships. Here too parolee characteristics matter. Hypothetical parolees with college degrees and parolees with supportive families were viewed as more likely to maintain healthy relationship than parolees who did not finish high school and parolees with unsupportive families. Conversely, parolees with children with whom they had infrequent contact and

parolees with a history of unemployment were viewed as less likely to maintain healthy relationships.

No importation variables were statistically significant predictors of perceptions of the likelihood that parolees would maintain healthy relationships. In the institutional model, respondents who stated that they work with more dangerous parolees believe that hypothetical parolees would be more likely to maintain healthy relationships. This result is counterintuitive and requires additional research. One possible explanation for this relationship is that parole officers monitor dangerous parolees more closely. In this regard, parole officers may become more aware of the healthy and supportive relationships that these parolees maintain.

In the full model, parolee education level is no longer a statically significant predictor of the respondents' perceptions about the likelihood that a parolee would maintain healthy relationships. Conversely, parole work status and violation history, which were not statistically significant in the parolee characteristics model, are significant predictors in the full model. Specifically, parolees who have managerial work (versus unemployed parolees) are viewed as more likely to maintain healthy relationships, while parolees with a history of absconding are viewed as less likely to maintain healthy relationships. Also, additional importation and institutional variables are statistically significant predictors in the full model. Respondents who identify politically as moderate are more likely than respondents that identify as conservative to believe that hypothetical parolees would maintain healthy relationships, though there were no statistically significant differences between self-identified liberal and conservative respondents. Also, respondents who have had their job for a longer period of time are more likely to believe that parolees can maintain healthy relationships.

Table 7. Regression results for maintaining healthy relationships

Variable	Parolee Characteristics	Importation	Institutional	Full Model
<i>Parolee Characteristic Variables</i>				
Parolee College Degree (vs. did not finish high school)	0.646* (0.322)	-	-	-
Parolee Children Infrequent Contact (vs. no children)	-0.725** (0.240)	-	-	-1.001** (0.286)
Parolee Frequently Unemployed	-0.771** (0.192)			-0.953** (0.229)
Parolee Supportive Family	0.659** (0.195)			1.230** (0.234)
Parolee Managerial-	-			0.793**

Level Work (vs. unemployed)				(0.348)
Parolee Absconding	-	-	-	-0.547* (0.265)
<i>Importation Variables</i>				
Respondent Moderate (vs. conservative)	-	-	-	0.611* (0.277)
<i>Institutional Variables</i>				
Perceived Dangerousness of Parolees	-	-	0.177* (0.087)	0.310** (0.102)
Respondent Years at Job	-	-	-	0.121** (0.031)

4. Conclusions

This report assesses factors that potentially shape and influence parole officer perceptions of and attitudes towards parolees. Previous research and literature suggests that the importation and institutional models explain some of the variation in criminal justice professionals' perceptions of offenders and parolees. Here we assess these processes as well as the potential influence of individual parolee characteristics on corrections employees' perceptions of parolees. The hypotheses regarding the role of importation processes, institutional culture, and parolee characteristics are evaluated both separately and jointly against four dependent variables: recidivate, rehabilitate, find steady employment, and maintain healthy relationships. Our results suggest that while importation and institutional dynamics are relevant, parolee characteristics are perhaps most central to the evaluations that professionals make of parolees.

More specifically, our results suggest several important conclusions about the attitudes of correctional employees towards the parolees under their supervision. To begin, respondents are slightly pessimistic about the likelihood that parolees will succeed. Respondents were more likely to suggest that parolees, on average, will recidivate than rehabilitate. Specifically, respondents judged 75% of hypothetical parolees as likely to recidivate and only 42% as likely to rehabilitate. Respondents were equally pessimistic regarding in terms of their perceptions of a parolee's ability to maintain steady employment and to maintain healthy relationships; only 45% of hypothetical parolees were viewed as likely to find any job after release and only 41% of hypothetical parolees were viewed as likely to maintain healthy relationships. This generally pessimistic view of parolees reflects the opinions and

perceptions of the views of correctional professionals (when we asked them to evaluate the chances of success for hypothetical inmates).

Our regression models suggest that much of what drives this lukewarm attitude are the characteristics of parolees rather than the beliefs employees bring to the job or the culture of the work environment. Very few of the institutional and importation variables were significant predictors of our dependent variables, while a host of parolee characteristics significantly predicted out of the four outcome variables. Generally speaking, our results suggest that parolees who are employed (or students or seeking employment) and parolees with higher levels of education are viewed as more likely to succeed than other parolees. Conversely, parolees with a history of unemployment, parolees who abscond, and parolees who lack contact with their children are viewed as less likely to succeed. Other factors, like social support and offense history were significant predictors of parole success in the expected direction (but only for specific models). Interestingly, parolees with technical violations were viewed as more likely to rehabilitate and to find steady employment than parolees without a violation history. This result is counterintuitive and requires additional research. It is possible, however, that parole officers view technical violations as a tool to keep parolees compliant and that experiencing technical violations may improve long-term outcomes.

While individual parolee characteristics matter, we also find that some importation and institutional variables matter for certain dependent variables. For example, respondents with longer tenures in the current positions believe that parolees are more likely to both rehabilitate and maintain healthy relationships. This is an interesting result, as there is a general expectation of increasing jadedness with more time as a parole officer.

Our prior research, which examined the predictors of criminal justice professionals' attitudes toward inmates, largely supports these results. We also found that offender characteristics were much more salient than importation or institutional variables in that report. It is worth noting that while offender/parolee characteristics are clearly more important than respondent characteristics for predicting attitudes toward offenders/parolees, this is especially true for the parole officers in the current report. Very few importation or institutional variables were statistically significant in the current report, while importation factors like education levels and political ideology and institutional factors like work stress were statistically significant predictors in the prior report.

There are other interesting differences in the perceptions of parole officers and correctional employees. For example, while the respondents in both reports highlight the importance of employment history and education for reentry success, correctional professionals placed more emphasis on gender than parole officers. Specifically, correctional professionals

believed that hypothetical male offenders were more likely to recidivate than hypothetical female offenders. No such differences were observed for parole officers. It is possible that these differences in the perceived importance of gender are reflective of the fact that the correctional professionals in the prior study only worked with males, while the parole officers in the current study are likely to have worked with both male and female parolees.

The results of this report have several policy implications. First, criminal justice workers' views and attitudes toward parolees are affected by a number of factors, including the characteristics of the parolees themselves. While their assessments of the individuals most and least likely to recidivate are consistent with the general literature on desistance (particularly the role of gender and social capital), it is important to note that these characteristics are not deterministic. Training that improves criminal justice workers' attitudes towards parolees and their understanding of the factors that promote change regardless of individual characteristics may have a positive influence on parolee outcomes. Motivational interviewing training (MI) may be of specific importance here, as MI encourages criminal justice workers to view all parolees as having the potential to change. Second, to the degree that parole officer perceptions of parolees are predictive of reentry success, our results indicate that programs focused on providing parolees with education and job training opportunities may improve the reentry chances of parolees.

5. References

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