

## ABSTRACT

Thesis Title: COLLEGE STUDENT ATTITUDES TOWARDS  
THOSE WITH CRIMINAL RECORDS IN  
HIGHER EDUCATION

Jordan Pierce, Bachelor of Arts, 2022

Thesis Directed By: Associate Professor Bianca Bersani, Department of  
Criminology and Criminal Justice

In the United States, almost one third of Americans have a criminal record. That record can lead to their exclusion from various institutions making it difficult to reintegrate into society and have a successful desistance process. One institution from which those with criminal records may be excluded is higher education. For those who have a history of offending, higher education is associated with beneficial outcomes such as the facilitation of desistance. However, many colleges and universities ask about criminal records in their applications and these questions create a barrier to access for this population. The primary reason for the existence of these questions is campus safety concerns. However, there is little to no evidence that college and university students who have criminal records put campus safety in jeopardy. As such, it is important to study the nature of criminal record questions in college admissions and why they exist. One way to do this is by examining the attitudes of those enrolled in higher education about these

policies. While there has been some research on the attitudes and concerns of faculty and administrators, there has been little research on college student attitudes. This study examines the attitudes of a sample of college students on this subject. The goal of the research is to determine if college students support those with criminal records having access to higher education, whether this depends on conviction type, whether they have campus safety and comfort concerns, and if such concerns are related to their overall support. The research found that college students were generally supportive of those with criminal records having access to higher education and were not highly concerned about these individuals negatively impacting campus safety. This research has implications for changes in higher education policy and how access to higher education can be increased for the justice-involved.

COLLEGE STUDENT ATTITUDES TOWARDS THOSE WITH CRIMINAL  
RECORDS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

By

Jordan Pierce

Thesis submitted to the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the  
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Arts

2022

© Copyright by  
Jordan Pierce  
2022

## Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my faculty advisor, Dr. Bianca Bersani, for helping me through this process and answering all my questions no matter how small. Second, I would like to thank Dr. Sally Simpson and Dr. Laure Brooks for being amazing mentors to me throughout my undergraduate career. I could not and would not have completed this thesis without them. Third, I want to thank my mother and my best friend Cassie for being there for me from start to finish. I am eternally grateful for all the support I have received. Finally, thank you to all who helped me proofread my work and gave me the writing advice I needed to make this project as successful as possible.

# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	ii
Table of Contents .....	iii
List of Tables .....	v
List of Figures.....	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Literature Review .....	5
Education and Crime.....	5
Theoretical Explanation.....	5
Correctional Education, Post-Secondary Education, and Recidivism.....	7
College Admissions and Criminal Records .....	9
Exclusion of Applicants with Criminal Records .....	12
Campus Safety Concerns.....	15
Attitudes About the Justice-Involved in Higher Education .....	17
College Student Attitudes .....	19
Current Research.....	21
Chapter 3: Data and Methods .....	23
Sample.....	24
Variables and Measurement .....	26
Dependent Variable .....	26
Independent Variables .....	27
Descriptive Variables .....	28
Control Variables.....	31
Analytic Method.....	32
Chapter 4: Results.....	33
Descriptive Analysis .....	33
Bivariate Analysis .....	35
Safety and Support.....	35
Comfort and Support .....	35
Supplemental Results .....	36
Chapter 5: Discussion .....	39

Limitations .....	41
Sample and Generalizability.....	41
Survey Construction and Analysis .....	42
Implications and Future Directions .....	44
Conclusions .....	48
Appendices.....	50
Appendix A. Tables.....	50
Appendix B. Survey .....	54
References.....	58

## List of Tables

Table 1. Bivariate Correlations between Independent and Dependent Variables	35
Table 2. Descriptive Statistics (Spread and Distribution).....	37
Table 3. Sample Demographics .....	50
Table 4. Descriptive Statistics (Frequency and Percent) .....	52



## List of Figures

Figure 1. Support Across Conviction Type .....	34
--	----



## Chapter 1: Introduction

According to a study conducted by the Sentencing Project (2015), as many as 100 million Americans have a criminal record. This means that almost a third of the American population may face significant barriers in society, both economic and social, that stem from having a criminal record. For instance, those convicted of felony offenses may be restricted in their ability to vote, limited in employment, restricted in child visitation, and excluded from public housing (Forrest 2016). Many of these barriers also extend to individuals with non-felony criminal records. Such barriers can have many negative consequences for those with criminal records and lead to long lasting issues for them and their communities.

One institution from which people with criminal records may be excluded is higher education. Higher education, and education in general, can provide those convicted of committing a crime, and their communities, with many benefits. Increased educational attainment is associated with increased prospects for higher-paying and more secure employment, which can include increased access to other benefits like healthcare, housing, and childcare (Lochner 2004; 2011; Bloom, Hartley, and Rosovsky 2007; Ma, Pender, and Welch 2016). Additionally, those among the most disadvantaged groups often see greater benefits from increasing their educational attainment than those who already come from economically advantaged backgrounds (Brand and Xie 2010). Given that those with criminal records are often among the most educationally disadvantaged groups, having more access to higher education may be even more beneficial for this population (Harlow 2003). Most importantly, education, particularly higher education, is associated with *desistance*,

the cessation of criminal behavior over time, and decreased *recidivism*, or re-offending by those who have already been formally convicted of a crime (Chappell 2004; Vacca 2004; Brazzel et al. 2009; Davis et al. 2013).

Despite these benefits, having a criminal record may limit one's access to higher education due to the existence of *criminal record questions*. These questions require those seeking to gain services or applying to join an institution to report their criminal record due to both public safety concerns and the *stigma* associated with criminal records (Travis 2002; Pager 2003; Holzer, Raphael, and Stoll 2006; Kirk and Wakefield 2018; Vuolo, Lageson, and Uggen 2017). In the past few decades, many colleges have begun to ask applicants to report their criminal history, and it is now the norm for four-year institutions to do so (Custer 2013; 2016; 2018; Ballinger et al. 2019).

These questions can serve as a barrier to higher education in two ways. First, if an applicant reports that they have a criminal record, they may be denied admission based on that record regardless of the rest of their application (Rosenthal et al. 2015; Custer 2016). Second, criminal record questions can deter individuals from applying or finishing their applications (Rosenthal et al. 2015). The existence of criminal record questions in higher education primarily appears to stem from the fear that those with criminal records will pose a threat to the safety of their classmates or others in the surrounding community (McTier, Briscoe, and Davis 2020; Ott and McTier 2021). However, empirical evidence suggests that these fears may be unfounded and merely informed by unique and salient cases of campus crime

(Dickerson 2008; Hughes, Elliot, and Myers 2014; Weissman, Rosenthal, and Warth 2020).

Due to the negative impacts of criminal record questions in college admissions, it is important to understand the different factors contributing to the existence of these policies. One way of increasing knowledge about this issue is through understanding the attitudes of faculty, administrators, and students towards justice-involved individuals and campus safety. Gaining knowledge about these attitudes is an important step toward understanding the justifications for criminal record questions and their validity. While faculty and administrators cite campus safety concerns as being the driving force behind these policies, whether these concerns are the only important consideration about this issue and the nature of these concerns is unclear. While there has been some research on faculty attitudes concerning this issue (Pierce, Runyan, and Bangdiwala 2014; McTier et al. 2020; Ott and McTier 2021), there has been little research on student attitudes (Schafer et al. 2018; Binnall et al. 2021). As such, learning what students think about criminal record questions, justice-involved individuals, and campus safety is important to get at the underlying mechanisms of this issue.

The current research will help fill this gap in the literature through a survey of college student attitudes. The research questions are as follows: (1) Do college students support allowing access to higher education for those with criminal records? (2) Does this support depend on the type of conviction? and (3) Is perception of campus safety related to support for those with criminal records having access to higher education? Understanding these attitudes will help inform our knowledge

about the usage of such questions in college admissions, where policy may go in the future, and what parts of this issue concern college students. Accounting for student perspectives will allow researchers to better understand the mechanisms behind criminal record questions in college admissions and the barriers faced by those with criminal records. Furthermore, student attitudes may help inform how higher education policy can change and where policy may go in the future.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### EDUCATION AND CRIME

To understand the importance of studying criminal record questions in higher education and the attitudes of college students concerning this issue, one must examine how education impacts crime, recidivism, and desistance. Research has demonstrated that increased educational attainment is empirically linked with reduced criminal and delinquent behavior, reduced recidivism, and better outcomes for those reintegrating into the community after a term of incarceration (Chappell 2004; Lochner 2004; Vacca 2004; Brazzel et al. 2009; Groot and van den Brink 2010; Machin, Marie, and Vujić 2011; Davis et al. 2013; Sokoloff and Schenck-Fontaine 2017). In this section, one theoretical perspective and the empirical background of the education-crime relationship will be discussed. This information lays the foundation for understanding the impact of educational barriers against those with criminal histories.

#### *Theoretical Explanation*

The primary criminological theory used to explain the education-crime relationship is *social control theory*. Social control theory argues that commitment to conventional goals and norms helps bind individuals to society (Hirschi 1969; Laub and Sampson 1993). Engaging in crime defies societal norms and expectations putting conventional goals and relationships at risk. As a result, criminal activity is less appealing to those who have conventional goals and accept societal norms. Within social control theory, Laub and Sampson (1993) argue that factors like marriage, stable employment, and military service can act as *turning points* away from criminal behavior. Turning

points are major life events that help attach individuals to conventional norms and institutions, giving them a reason to stay away from crime. Given that increased educational attainment can result in an increased likelihood of obtaining stable employment, education can indirectly help bring about these kinds of positive turning points.

Furthermore, education itself may constitute a turning point or act as a bond to society. A study by Runell (2017) examined pathways for *desistance*, the process of decreasing and eventually ceasing one's criminal behavior over time, in higher education. Runell found that formerly incarcerated individuals viewed pursuing higher education as a *hook for change*, which is a reason to stop committing crime. Education can also promote prosocial attitudes and increase one's attachments to societal institutions, further decreasing the likelihood of criminal behavior (Hirschi 1969; Laub and Sampson 1993; Gaes 2008). Overall, social control theory helps explain how higher education can act as a mechanism for keeping individuals from reoffending both in itself and by increasing the likelihood of obtaining stable employment.

While this theory provides some support for the idea that education can have a crime reducing influence on individuals, one must examine research testing education's empirical impact on crime as well. In the next section, findings regarding the impact of educational programs, both secondary and post-secondary, in correctional facilities on reentry outcomes will be examined. Then the impact of higher education on crime more broadly will be discussed. With both theory and



empirical research, one can better understand how education, specifically higher education, impacts crime and criminal behavior.

*Correctional Education, Post-Secondary Education, and Recidivism*

Ample research examines the rehabilitative and reintegrative outcomes of correctional education programs. Given that most correctional facilities have educational programs, they are a helpful mechanism for studying the education-crime relationship (Harlow 2003). These programs can be vocational, which focus on teaching job skills, or academic. The most common academic programs are adult basic education (ABE) and secondary education programs (to obtain high school equivalency), while post-secondary education programs (taking college courses) are less common (Erisman and Contardo 2005; Gaes 2008; Lee 2014). Empirical studies on academic correctional education programs allow researchers to examine how those who are released from prison or jail fare upon reentry, particularly regarding recidivism and employment, depending on whether they participated in such programs. In turn, one can use these findings to gain a better understanding of the relationship between education, recidivism, and desistance more broadly.

Most of the research on correctional education has found positive outcomes in recidivism reduction and increased employment upon release (Steurer and Smith 2003; Vacca 2004; Gaes 2008; Esperian 2010; Lockwood et al. 2012; Davis et al. 2013; Duwe and Clark 2014; Hall 2015; Custer 2016; Ellison et al. 2017). A meta-analysis by Davis and colleagues (2013) assessed 50 empirical studies that examined the impact of correctional education programs, both vocational and academic, finding that participants had a 43% lower likelihood of recidivating upon release from prison.

These inmates were also significantly more likely to obtain employment after being released (Davis et al. 2013). However, some correctional education programs may yield little benefits due to program implementation issues and lack of program completion by inmates (Vacca 2004). As such, ensuring both the quality of implementation of educational programs as well as program completion are important for seeing benefits post-release.

This research is helpful for understanding the relationship between education and crime generally, but research looking specifically at higher education is needed to understand its unique impact. Still in the realm of correctional education, there is some research examining post-secondary correctional education programs. A meta-analysis by Chappell (2004) found that post-secondary correctional education programs were associated with a 31% reduction in recidivism post-release. More recent studies have found similar results, some even indicating that post-secondary education results in better outcomes than ABE or secondary education programs (Kim and Clark 2013; Duwe and Clark 2014; Castro and Zamani-Gallaher 2018).

One criticism made of research examining post-secondary correctional education programs, however, concerns *self-selection bias*. Self-selection bias refers to how those who can and choose to participate in post-secondary correctional education may be predisposed to recidivate less (Kim and Clark 2013). For instance, those who are eligible to take college courses must have completed high school or its equivalent which is already related to decreased recidivism. However, when controlling for self-selection bias significant positive results for these programs are still found, though result strength may be decreased (Kim and Clark 2013; Dennison

2019). Overall, correctional education programs demonstrate how various forms of education can reduce recidivism and improve outcomes for those who have offended.

Outside of correctional education, research examining post-secondary education in general has found that it is associated with decreased offending behavior (Lochner 2011; Manchin et al. 2011; Custer 2016; 2018; Sokoloff and Schenck-Fontaine 2017; Dennison 2019). Dennison (2019) found that for young adults having a college degree decreases the likelihood of offending more than only having a high school diploma, even when accounting for self-selection bias. Furthermore, some research demonstrates that post-secondary education's crime-reducing benefits may hold true for formerly incarcerated individuals who began attending college outside of prison (Runell 2017; Sokoloff and Schenck-Fontaine 2017). It is likely that these benefits derive both from higher education itself and subsequent increased employment opportunities. In conclusion, while more research is needed examining the specific effects of post-secondary education on crime, research thus far suggests that higher education reduces offending, fosters desistance, and increases employment prospects. With these benefits in mind, the next section will discuss the usage of criminal records in the admissions process for higher education, how these questions exclude applicants, and why these questions exist.

## COLLEGE ADMISSIONS AND CRIMINAL RECORDS

Even though post-secondary education can have a positive impact on desistance and decrease recidivism, individuals with criminal records may face barriers to accessing higher education due to criminal history questions in applications (Weissman et al. 2010; Pierce et al. 2014; Rosenthal et al. 2015; Custer 2016; 2018; Castro and

Zamani-Gallaher 2018; Ballinger et al. 2019; Stewart and Uggen 2019). The usage of criminal records in higher education is much less frequently examined than their use in other capacities, such as on job applications or in public housing (Henry and Jacobs 2007; Kirk and Wakefield 2017; Vuolo et al. 2017). In many ways, this issue is more complex given the variation in whether colleges and universities ask for this information and how they use it (Ballinger et al. 2019). Furthermore, the presence of criminal record questions in college admissions has increased substantially over the past twenty years and today many colleges collect this information during the application process (Pierce et al. 2014; Rosenthal et al. 2015; Custer 2016). As a result, there is a growing amount of research on the usage of criminal records in college admissions (Weissman et al. 2010; Pierce et al 2014; Rosenthal et al. 2015; Custer 2013; 2016; 2018; Castro and Zamani-Gallaher 2018; Stewart and Uggen 2019).

Colleges and universities, or *institutions of higher education* (IHEs), vary on what kinds of records they ask about, how this information is handled, and whether they will conduct deeper background checks (Ballinger et al. 2019). A literature review by Custer (2016) examined studies on these policies finding that there are a wide array of considerations by administrators, differences in the likelihood of one being rejected based on criminal record, and that *stigma* plays a major role in the impact of these questions on applicants. First, the presence of criminal record questions on applications varies for different types of schools. Four-year colleges and universities are significantly more likely to ask criminal history questions, with nearly 80% of private and 59% of public four-year institutions asking such questions in 2015

(Stewart and Uggen 2019). Second, IHEs differ in what kinds of records they ask applicants to disclose (Custer 2016). For example, some specify for students to indicate whether they have committed felony offenses (Rosenthal et al. 2015). Finally, many IHEs may refer applicants who have a criminal history to be reviewed by a special committee, allowing rejected applicants to appeal their decision if it was based on the applicant's criminal history (Sokoloff and Fontaine 2013).

Given concern over the impact of criminal record questions, in 2018 the Common Application, an application portal used by 900 colleges and universities (Boyington and Moody 2021), decided to remove the criminal history question from their general application (Davis 2018). Instead, the application portal leaves it up to each institution to request such information through their specific applications. Additionally, Colorado, Louisiana, Maryland, and Washington have required that criminal history questions be removed from applications for public colleges (Ballinger et al. 2019). Despite this, public institutions can still gain information about applicant criminal history by using third-party application portals with such questions (Mottley 2018). These changes in policy may indicate a future shift in the prevalence of such questions on college applications across the United States. However, in general criminal record questions are still prevalent in college applications both in third-party application portal questions and questions directly from institutions. As such, it is important to understand how these questions can impact higher education access for applicants with criminal records.

### *Exclusion of Applicants with Criminal Records*

While question types vary, the consequences of criminal record questions for relevant applicants are consistent. The most obvious issue is that applicants may be denied admission based on their criminal record regardless of the rest of their application or likelihood of re-offending (Weissman et al. 2010; Pierce et al. 2014; Rosenthal et al. 2015; Custer 2016; Stewart and Uggen 2019). But rates of rejection vary greatly depending on the institution. One study found that for applicants with felony records some schools had rejection rates almost as high as 80%, while others had rejection rates as low as 0% (Rosenthal et al. 2015). Another survey of IHEs found that 25% of schools reported that certain offense records, primarily violent and sexual offense records, were used as the basis for automatic denial (Weissman et al. 2010). Even with these variations, studies demonstrate that having to report a criminal record, particularly a felony record, results in a greater rejection rate (Rosenthal et al. 2015; Custer 2016; 2018; Stewart and Uggen 2019).

Another institutional issue is that a large percentage of college admissions staff may lack proper training for understanding and interpreting criminal record information (Weissman et al. 2010). Weissman and colleagues (2010) found that only 40% of the colleges they surveyed had training for staff on how to interpret criminal record information. Moreover, IHEs that use criminal record information often lack written policies to guide those in admissions on what to do with this information once obtained (Weissman et al. 2010). Those working in admissions may have trouble determining whether an individual's criminal record should impact their application or if a deeper background check should be administered. As a result, applicants who

have criminal records may be denied admission from some schools for offenses that similar institutions would not consider to be a significant issue.

In addition to these barriers, *stigma*, or the perception of stigma, can also impact access to higher education. Stigma refers to the negative reactions and perceptions towards a group of individuals that arise from widespread beliefs about that group's characteristics (Link and Phelan 2001). When someone is stigmatized by others it results in negative responses, rejection, and possible discrimination against that person. Stigma can come from specific individuals, entire groups/institutions, or society at large. In higher education, stigma can stem from the attitudes of administrators, faculty, and students. As such, stigma may play a role in college administrators rejecting applicants with criminal records as previously examined.

The impact of stigma against those with criminal records can also come from within the stigmatized person themselves (Moore, Tangney, and Stuewig 2016). For instance, research has demonstrated that those with criminal records are significantly deterred from applying or finishing their applications when criminal record questions are present (Custer 2013; Rosenthal et al. 2015). This may be due to the perception of stigma against those with criminal records and applicants' resulting belief that having to disclose a criminal record will lead to rejection. One study found that for institutions within the Southern University of New York system, around two thirds of applicants with a felony conviction dropped out of the application process before consideration (Rosenthal et al. 2015). The applicant attrition rate for this group was three times higher than the general applicant attrition rate. In fact, the attrition rate was more than ten times as much as the actual rejection rate for such applicants

(Rosenthal et al. 2015). This means that it may be the case that many qualified applicants drop out of the application process due to the presence of criminal history questions.

One's internalized perception that they will be stigmatized may thus play a role in whether those with criminal records apply to college or complete their application. Relatedly, a study by Widdowson, Siennick, and Hay (2016) found that being arrested had a significant negative influence on the likelihood that subjects would enroll in four-year colleges while controlling for other factors. Additionally, those who have had contact with the criminal justice system are more likely to avoid legitimate institutions and systems that require formal record keeping (Brayne 2014). Such avoidance may keep individuals with criminal records from applying to college. Overall, recognizing stigma is important to understanding how criminal record questions act as a barrier to higher education.

Even though current evidence suggests a link between having a criminal record and decreased access to higher education, one may argue that this relationship exists because those with criminal records are less qualified applicants. For instance, it is true that individuals who have been incarcerated are more likely to have dropped out of school or have experienced other educational challenges (Harlow 2003; Prison Policy Initiative 2018). However, it is unlikely that having a criminal record has little or no impact on the admissions process. First, research on criminal record questions in employment has demonstrated that this information results in applicants being less likely to be hired regardless of other qualifications (Pager 2003). Second, an experimental audit conducted by Stewart and Uggen (2019) found negative impacts



on admission likelihood associated with having a criminal record even when controlling for applicant qualifications. In conclusion, criminal record questions in college admissions can serve to exclude those with criminal records from higher education. It is therefore important to understand the justification for the existence of such questions and what factors have influenced these policies over time.

### *Campus Safety Concerns*

The most prominent consideration being made by IHEs to justify the presence of criminal record questions in college applications is campus safety (Weissman et al. 2010; Pierce et al. 2014; Jung 2016; McTier et al. 2020; Ott and McTier 2021). Administrators and faculty may believe that applicants with criminal records would be at a higher risk of committing crime on campus or in the surrounding community and therefore screening for criminal history can help improve campus safety. However, there is little to no empirical evidence to support this conclusion (Hughes et al. 2014; Custer 2016). In fact, one study found that while pre-college behavior may indicate future misconduct, screening questions for criminal backgrounds on college applications do not predict which students will offend during their time at school (Runyan et al. 2013). Research has also consistently shown that most crime committed by students on college campuses is done by those who have no prior criminal record (Weissman et al. 2010). Moreover, while crime does occur on college campuses for many reasons, it occurs at significantly lower rates than in the community (Wang et al. 2020).

Some may argue however, that while there is no empirical evidence to indicate that colleges with strict criminal record screenings are safer, this does not

mean there is no relationship between criminal record screening and campus safety (Jung 2016). Rather, it may be that such a relationship does exist, but there has not been enough empirical research on the subject. In addition, certain kinds of offenses may be more concerning for campus safety. For example, there has been a significant amount of concern about sexual misconduct and violence on college campuses (Fedina, Holmes, and Backes 2016). Admissions boards of IHEs may wish to take extra care in preventing those with sexual or violent offense histories from coming onto campus (Dickerson 2008; Jung 2016; Ott and McTier 2021). In general, given the disconnect between criminal history questions and crime on campus, it is important that more research be conducted examining the differences in campus crime and victimization for similar colleges or universities with strict criminal record standards and those with more relaxed policies.

Since campus safety concerns seem to play such a large role in the existence of criminal record questions in higher education, one must understand how these concerns have developed and the content of said concerns. One way of examining this is through assessing the attitudes of individuals towards this issue. Public opinion has impacted policy and practices in government and institutions, and this is particularly true for criminal justice related policy (Pickett 2019). Within higher education, campus safety concerns and advocacy for change have impacted such policies. For example, the Jeanne Clery Act, which requires IHEs to report campus crime, was created due to the activism of the Clery family after their daughter's murder on campus and the public outrage which resulted from this incident (Janosik and Gregory 2003). For criminal record questions, salient cases of violence on campus

over which there is great public concern, particularly if the offender had a criminal history, have pushed schools towards more restrictive criminal record screening policies (Dickerson 2008; Custer 2016; Jung 2016). As such, to increase our understanding of these policies and where they may go in the future, it is important to assess concerns and opinions of the public, faculty, and college students about those with criminal records having access to higher education.

#### ATTITUDES ABOUT THE JUSTICE-INVOLVED IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Few studies assess attitudes (of the public, faculty, or students) towards those with criminal histories in higher education. Most research focuses on public attitudes towards justice-involved individuals in general and whether beliefs are impacted by factors like demographics (Costelloe, Chiricos, and Gertz 2009; Rade et al. 2016). Some of these studies also seek to assess attitudes about criminal justice policy and how justice-involved people are treated while others look at stigma (Homant and Kennedy 1982; Applegate et al. 1996; Kjelsberg, Skoglund, and Rustad 2007; Pickett 2019). Research thus far has found that attitudes towards justice-involved individuals are most strongly associated with political ideology, interpersonal contact with those who have offended, and sexual offense history, while demographics appear to play little to no role (Mae Boag and Wilson 2013; Rade et al. 2016).

In higher education specifically, there is some research examining what faculty and administrators think about students with criminal records. Many faculty seem receptive to providing more opportunities for those with criminal records to obtain a post-secondary education (Ott and McTier 2021). However, there are some common concerns among faculty. Both faculty and administrators appear concerned

about those who have committed sexual and violent offenses. In one study, administrators expressed doubts about the ability of those who have committed sex offenses to be rehabilitated (McTier et al. 2020). As such, faculty seem to be concerned primarily by offenses that they perceive as being hazardous to campus safety (Pierce et al. 2014; McTier et al. 2020). Surveys have also found that faculty and administrators believe that admissions boards need to examine the particular offense history of each applicant rather than simply disqualifying those with criminal records from admission (McTier et al. 2020; Ott and McTier 2021).

While understanding the attitudes of the public and faculty help shed light on one facet of the nature of criminal record questions, it is important to understand how students feel about this issue as well. Students are a key part of the college community and institution. Student views on this issue are of a similar relevance to the views of faculty and administrators and are important to increase knowledge about the landscape of attitudes in higher education. Additionally, besides those with criminal records themselves, college students are the most directly impacted by whether schools ask about criminal history in admissions. While the empirical evidence suggests that those with criminal records do not pose a significant threat to campus safety, the opinions of students on this issue are vital given that they are who these policies are attempting to protect. Furthermore, it may be the case that other factors influence attitudes towards the justice-involved in this regard other than campus safety concerns which may impact policy. Given the history of campus policy changes, student attitudes may also have an impact on these admission policies and decisions. In turn, it is important to take student concerns into account when

implementing, adjusting, or removing criminal record questions in college admissions.

### *College Student Attitudes*

Most studies about college student attitudes on criminal justice issues examine attitudes towards criminal justice policy and justice-involved individuals in general. For example, one study by Tajalli, De Soto, and Dozier (2013) surveyed undergraduate college students from Texas and Wisconsin universities to determine if certain variables like race, gender, ideology, and being a criminal justice major impacted level of punitiveness towards offenders. Their results indicated that political ideology was the greatest predictor of attitudes, being a criminal justice major had a small impact, and demographics had little effect (Tajalli et al. 2013). The researchers also found that college students held particularly negative attitudes toward sex offenders and that students who were more afraid of being victimized by crime were more punitive.

Some studies have come to similar conclusions while others pose mixed results. For instance, some studies have found that college major does influence criminal justice attitudes (Kjelsberg et al. 2007; Shelley, Waid, and Dobbs 2011; Malvasi-Haines 2017), with criminal justice majors being either more or less punitive depending on the study, while others have found very few if any differences between criminal justice and non-criminal-justice-major attitudes (Farnworth, Longmire, and West 1998; Hensley 2002; 2003; 2007). Other research has found that college students tend to hold fewer negative attitudes towards justice-involved individuals than the general population and are typically supportive of rehabilitative efforts

(Mackey, Courtright, and Packard 2006; Malvasi-Haines 2017; Binnall et al. 2021). Much of this evidence is consistent with research about public attitudes towards criminal justice and what factors are important for predicting attitudes (Rade et al. 2016). In general, this research yields some indication as to how college students may feel about those with criminal records being in higher education.

Research specifically concerning the attitudes of college students towards those with criminal records having access to higher education is scarce. One very recent study by Binnall and colleagues (2021) surveyed 185 undergraduate college students concerning their attitudes towards their formerly incarcerated classmates. The authors found that students have mixed attitudes but are generally supportive of these individuals. This is consistent with research examining college student attitudes toward justice-involved individuals more generally. Another study by Schafer and colleagues (2018) surveyed college students in Illinois about their attitudes towards campus safety initiatives. Most students in this study believed colleges should restrict admission for those with criminal histories. However, a large portion of the students indicated neither agreement nor disagreement with initiatives to restrict campus access to those with criminal records (Schafer et al. 2018).

These two studies seem to contradict each other about student attitudes towards those with criminal records being in higher education. While students appear supportive of their formerly incarcerated classmates, they also may be in favor of restrictive policies against these individuals to keep them out of higher education. It may be the case that these conflicting results partially stem from the framing and specificity of each study's survey questions. The survey by Schaefer and colleagues

(2018) asked specifically about campus safety initiatives while Binnall and colleagues (2021) asked students about their general attitudes towards their formerly incarcerated classmates. By framing the exclusion of those with criminal records from higher education as a campus safety initiative, it is implied that doing so is for student safety rather than in terms of whether the justice-involved have a right to attend college. As such, it is important to examine both general attitudes towards those with criminal records in higher education and potential campus safety concerns together, rather than only examining one or the other. Overall, the lack of research on this topic indicates the need for thorough examination of college student attitudes on this issue to better understand the nature of criminal record questions in college admissions.

#### **CURRENT RESEARCH**

The current research helps to fill a gap in the literature concerning the attitudes of college students about those with criminal records in higher education and campus safety. This study will examine the general attitudes of college students about this issue, whether they have concerns about individuals with certain kinds of criminal histories, and their attitudes about campus safety and comfort levels towards those with criminal records. These subjects are addressed through several research questions and hypotheses.

**RQ1:** Do college students support allowing access to higher education for those with criminal records?

**H1:** Students will generally believe that those with criminal records should have access to higher education in some capacity, though the extent to which they believe this will vary.

**RQ2:** Does this support depend on the type of conviction?

**H2:** Attitudes will vary across conviction types, but students will be more concerned about those with violent and sexual offense histories.

**RQ3:** Are perceptions concerning access to higher education for those with criminal records influenced by perceptions of campus safety and comfort?

**H3a:** Students will have mixed attitudes about campus safety, but a significant portion of students will believe that having those with criminal records on campus may negatively impact campus safety.

**H3b:** Students will have mixed concerns about comfort, but most students will be comfortable with the idea of having a class with someone who has a criminal record.

**H3c:** Student perception of campus safety and comfort levels will be negatively related to whether students believe those with criminal records should be allowed to attend college or university.



## Chapter 3: Data and Methods

The current study seeks to examine the general attitudes of college students about those with criminal records having access to higher education and campus safety. This study utilizes a survey of the researcher's original design asking participants about their attitudes and opinions towards this issue. This survey was electronic in nature and hosted on the platform Qualtrics through the University of Maryland (UMD). It was disseminated through Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter to reach college students and their friends. The survey was intended to capture college students who attend physical campuses, however there was no specification in the advertising concerning this.

The survey was also sent to several group messages (UMD College Democrats, UMD College Republicans, a group-chat for music; theater; and dance students, a group-chat for Guest Experience staff at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, and two group-chats for Criminology & Criminal Justice Departmental Honors Program members). Both the UMD College Democrats and College Republicans group-chats were included to maximize political diversity among the sample. While colleges and universities generally have left leaning student populations (Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement 2016), it is important to represent right leaning students to increase the generalizability of the sample. In the advertising, students were encouraged to send the survey to their college friends and group-chats with college students. Collection of data began on December 3, 2021, and ended January 16, 2022.

## SAMPLE

To be eligible for the survey one must be a currently enrolled college or university student, either undergraduate or graduate, who is over the age of 18. A minimum age of 18 was set to prevent any juvenile-participant procedures from needing to take place. There is no age limit given that many people may enter college at a later age or be in a longer program. Participants should ideally attend a school which holds in-person instruction rather than an institution which operates entirely in an online format (for reasons unrelated to the COVID-19 pandemic). If a student attends a college that does not have a physical campus, then contact with students who have criminal records is minimal.

The survey was interacted with by 199 individuals with 12 previewing and 23 beginning but not completing the survey. Out of the remaining 164 responses, there was incomplete data for 5 of these respondents who each skipped one question. Most significantly, two respondents skipped the question measuring the dependent variable (*support*) which will be discussed in the “Variables and Measurement” section. These responses were excluded through pairwise deletion from the relevant analysis (bivariate correlations). Given that only a few respondents failed to answer a small number of questions, and that most analysis was through univariate statistics, 164 responses were deemed complete and usable for analysis.

The sample consists primarily of undergraduate students (79.9%, n=131) and out of these students the majority are either seniors or juniors. By gender, there are 97 (59.1%) women, 53 (32.3%) men, 12 (7.3%) non-binary individuals, and 2 (1.2%) individuals who identify with some other gender. The majority of participants

identified as only “White or European” (66.5%, n=109). For non-White or European individuals, the sample consists of 19 (11.6%) “Asian” respondents, 8 (4.8%) “Black or African” respondents, 5 (3.0%) “Latin American or Hispanic” respondents, 1 (0.6%) “Middle Eastern” respondent, and 1 (0.6%) respondent who selected only “Other”. Additionally, 21 (12.8%) respondents selected multiple races/ethnicities, 16 of whom selected “White or European” as well as some other race. A multiple races/ethnicities category was included to acknowledge the unique demographic of those with mixed race backgrounds rather than placing these individuals in the category of only one of their races (such as only White or only Black despite a mixed background). The racial/ethnic categories did include “Native American or Alaskan Native” and “Indigenous Hawaiian or Pacific Islander”, but the 3 (1.8%) individuals who selected these also selected other races/ethnicities and are included in the multiple races/ethnicities category. Most of the sample (n=142) lives in either the “Northeast or Mid-Atlantic” (43.3%) or “South” (43.3%) regions of the United States. The age-range of respondents is 18 to 42 years, but most respondents (78.6%) are 18 to 22 years of age.

Most respondents (77.4%) are not completing a criminal justice, criminology, or other closely related degree (e.g., justice studies, homeland security, etc.) meaning any differences between criminal justice and non-criminal justice majors is unlikely to significantly impact the results. In terms of political ideology, the sample is heavily left leaning with 124 (75.6%) of the participants identifying as some ideology that leans left in American politics. Left leaning ideologies include 64 (39.0%) liberal respondents, 45 (27.4%) progressive respondents, and 15 (9.1%) respondents who

entered other left leaning ideologies (these include “anarcho communist”, “left leaning moderate”, “leftist”, “communist”, “socialist”, and “Marxist”). The rest of the sample is comprised of 16 (9.8%) respondents who indicated that they do not identify with any political ideology or leaning, 8 (4.9%) conservative respondents, 6 (3.7%) libertarian respondents, 5 (3.0%) respondents who do not know their political ideology, and 5 (3.0%) “other” non-left-leaning respondents (these include “independent”, “centrist”, and “moderate”).

## VARIABLES AND MEASUREMENT

The dependent variable is *support* and the independent variables are *safety* and *comfort*. The remaining variables are descriptive in nature. The demographic control variables include participant age, gender, race, year of school, major(s), region of permanent residence, and political ideology. See Table 3 in Appendix A for raw frequencies and percentages for all demographic variables and Table 4 for all non-demographic variables.

### *Dependent Variable*

*Support* denotes how participants feel about allowing those with criminal records in general to have access to higher education. Students were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement “Those with criminal records should be allowed to attend college or university”. Extent of agreement with this statement measures participants’ general support for individuals with criminal records having access to higher education (“strongly agree” = 0, “agree” = 1, “neither agree nor disagree” = 2, “disagree” = 3, and “strongly disagree” = 4). Almost all respondents (93.2%, n=153)

either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. The average answer was 0.49 demonstrating a lean towards strong agreement.

### *Independent Variables*

*Safety* denotes whether participants believe that campus safety would be affected by having students with criminal records on campus. Students were asked how they believed those with criminal records being on campus would impact campus safety (“very negatively” = 0, “negatively” = 1, “no effect” = 2, “positively” = 3, and “very positively” = 4). Most respondents (71.3%, n=117) answered that there would be “no effect” on campus safety. The average answer was 1.87 which is close to “no effect” with a slight lean towards “negatively”.

*Comfort* denotes how comfortable participants are with the prospect of being in class with students who have criminal records. Students were asked to give their level of comfort with attending class with someone who has a criminal record (“extremely uncomfortable” = 0, “somewhat uncomfortable” = 1, “neither comfortable or uncomfortable” = 2, “somewhat comfortable” = 3, and “extremely comfortable” = 4). The most frequent response was “neither comfortable nor uncomfortable” (32.9%, n=54) out of all options given. However, most participants answered either “somewhat comfortable” or “extremely comfortable” (46.3%, n=76). In turn, the average answer was 2.42 demonstrating a lean towards “comfortable”.

*Comfort* and *safety* are both measures of factors that may be contributing to student attitudes about those with criminal records in higher education. Furthermore, *comfort* was included in this analysis to contribute to the understanding of potential campus safety concerns. If someone feels uncomfortable with the prospect of being in

class with an individual who has a criminal record, then it may be due to a concern about their personal safety. However, their discomfort may also be due to other concerns, lack of strong feelings concerning comfort, or stigma towards those with criminal records. To determine the extent of this overlap, a bivariate correlation (two-tailed) was run between *comfort* and *safety*. A significant positive correlation with a medium effect size ( $r=.420$ ,  $p<.01$ ) was found. Given that these variables do not appear to be measuring a similar underlying construct, although they are related, *comfort* can serve instead to provide more relevant information about student attitudes and concerns towards those with criminal records being on campus rather than supplementing understanding of campus safety concerns.

#### *Descriptive Variables*

The variables *drug*, *property*, *violent*, *juvenile*, and *sexual*, measure student attitudes towards those with certain conviction types through 5-point Likert scales. Each question asked students to “indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements”. Level of agreement, or disagreement, indicates whether students believe individuals with certain kinds of offense histories should be allowed to attend college or university. The variables *drug*, *violent*, and *sexual* were written so agreement with the statement indicated support for these individuals having access to higher education, while *property* and *juvenile* were written so disagreement indicated support for those with these conviction types. As such, *property* and *juvenile* were reverse coded to make comparisons across variables.

*Drug* denotes student agreement with the statement “Those who have committed drug offenses should be allowed to attend college or university” (“strongly

agree” = 0, “agree” = 1, “neither agree nor disagree” = 2, “disagree” = 3, and “strongly disagree” = 4). Almost all participants agreed with this statement (98.1%, n=161). The average answer was 0.31 indicating a lean towards strong agreement among the sample.

*Property* denotes student agreement with the statement “Those who have committed property related offenses (theft, burglary, etc.) should NOT be allowed to attend college or university” (reverse coded as “strongly disagree” = 0, “disagree” = 1, “neither agree nor disagree” = 2, “agree” = 3, “strongly agree” = 4). Most participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement (78.6%, n=129). The average answer was 0.92 indicating general disagreement among the sample.

*Violent* denotes student agreement with the statement “Those who have committed violent offenses should be allowed to attend college or university” (“strongly agree” = 0, “agree” = 1, “neither agree nor disagree” = 2, “disagree” = 3, and “strongly disagree” = 4). The most frequent answer was “neither agree nor disagree” (25.0%, n=41). However, 47.6% (n=78) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement while only 27.5% (n=45) disagreed or strongly disagreed. As such, the average answer was 1.62 which indicates a lean towards agreement with the statement among participants.

*Juvenile* denotes student agreement with the statement “Those who committed crimes as children or teenagers should NOT be allowed to attend college or university” (reverse coded as “strongly disagree” = 0, “disagree” = 1, “neither agree nor disagree” = 2, “agree” = 3, “strongly agree” = 4). Almost all participants

disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement (94.5%, n=155). The average answer was 0.42 indicating a lean towards strong disagreement among the sample.

*Sexual* denotes student agreement with the statement “Those who have committed sexual offenses should be allowed to attend college or university” (“strongly agree” = 0, “agree” = 1, “neither agree nor disagree” = 2, “disagree” = 3, and “strongly disagree” = 4). The most frequent answer was “disagree” (24.4%, n=40). However, overall disagreement comprised 42.1% (n=69) of the sample, overall agreement comprised 34.2% (n=56) of the sample, and neither agree nor disagree comprised 23.8% (n=39) of the sample. The average answer was 2.09, close to neither agree nor disagree with a slight lean towards disagreement.

*Admissions* denotes whether students believe that criminal records should be used in college admissions. Students were asked directly if they believed that criminal records should be used in admissions (“no” = 0, “yes” = 1). The majority of participants answered “yes” (59.8%, n=98) to this question.

*Records* denotes what kinds of criminal records students believe should be used in college admissions. Students were asked “what kinds of criminal records should colleges and universities consider in the admissions process?”. This question was only to be answered by those who believed that records should be used at all. Participants could choose from “Misdemeanor records”, “Felony records”, “Juvenile records”, and “I am uncertain which records should be considered”. Participants were allowed to select multiple options. If a participant selected an option, it was coded as 1; if they left an option blank, it was coded as 0. Out of the 88 participants who answered this question, 87 selected at least felony records, 24 participants selected



misdemeanor records, 17 selected juvenile records, and 26 indicated that they were uncertain which records should be considered. The majority who answered this question only selected one of the four answer choices (n=61), while a smaller, but still substantial, group selected two or more options (n=27).

*Help* denotes whether students believe that colleges and universities should “be doing more to help those with criminal records gain access to higher education” (“no” = 0, “yes” = 1). Almost all respondents answered “yes” to this question (92.7%, n=152).

*Severity* denotes whether students believe that if an individual has committed more serious criminal offenses, then that individual will be a greater threat to campus safety. Students were asked “Do you think the impact on campus safety from those with criminal records depends on the severity of the offense they have committed?” (“no” = 0, “yes” = 1). Most students answered “yes” to this question (79.9%, n=131).

#### *Control Variables*

Demographic measures included year in school, region of permanent residence, age, gender, race or ethnicity, and political ideology. These variables were utilized to account for sample generalizability and how certain variables (particularly political ideology) can potentially impact criminal justice related attitudes. “Student major” was also collected to account for the possibility that those who are criminology and/or criminal justice majors may have different criminal justice related attitudes than the general student population. However, no analysis was conducted on whether these variables significantly impact participant answers.

## ANALYTIC METHOD

The results of the survey were analyzed using SPSS. The analytic strategy proceeded in two stages. First, univariate descriptive analyses examined the distribution (i.e., frequency distribution, mean, and mode) of the core variables of interest. Then, bivariate, two-tailed Pearson correlations were used to examine the strength of the association between variables and if these associations were statistically significant.

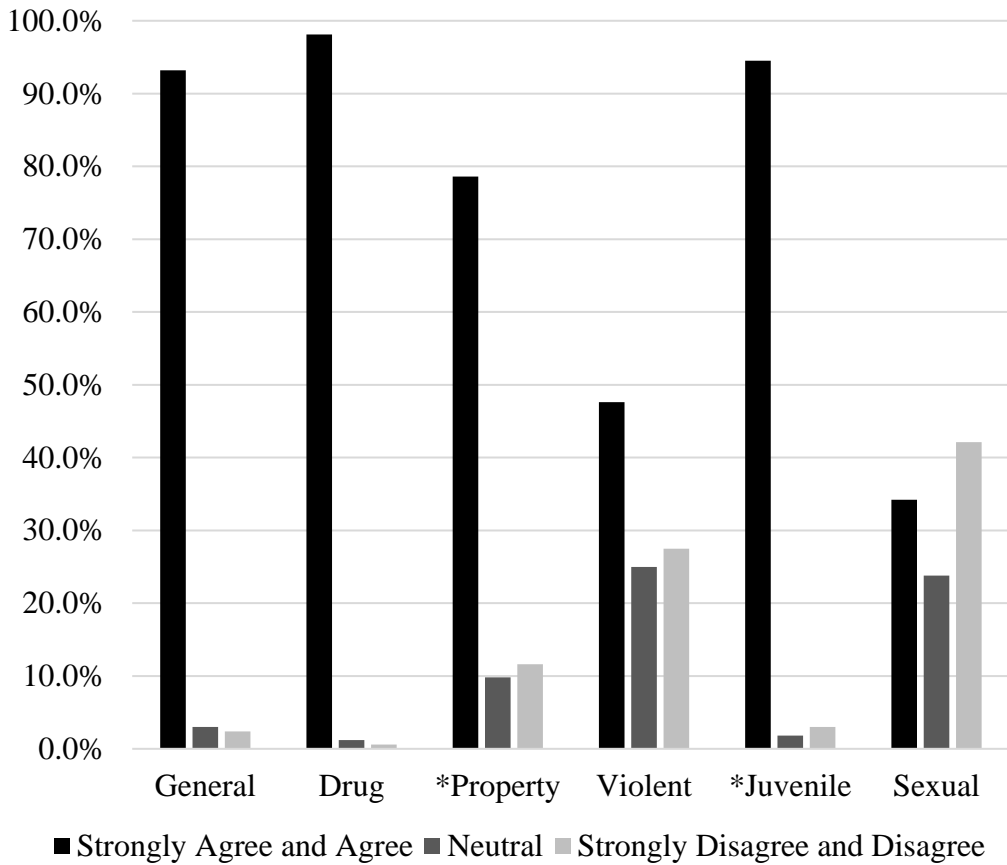
## Chapter 4: Results

### DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

The first research question asked whether college students support allowing access to higher education for those with criminal records. *Support* demonstrated that most students believe that individuals with criminal records should have access to higher education. Over 90% of the sample supported, some more strongly than others, allowing access to higher education for these individuals. As such, it can be concluded that among this sample most students are in support of those with criminal records generally having access to higher education in some capacity.

The second research question asked whether support for those with criminal records in higher education depended upon conviction type. The variables *drug*, *property*, *violent*, *juvenile*, and *sexual* demonstrated that support does depend on conviction type. Students tend to be much more supportive of those with drug, property, and juvenile convictions than those with violent and sexual convictions. Furthermore, support was greatest for those with drug convictions and weakest for those with sexual convictions. However, the lack of support for those with sexual and violent convictions was less than anticipated. Over half of the sample either supported those with sexual convictions or indicated that they did not agree nor disagree with these individuals having access to higher education (57.9%, n=95). Additionally, most participants either supported those with violent offense histories having access to higher education or they were neither in agreement nor disagreement with the statement (72.6%, n=119). See Figure 1 for the distribution of answers for general support and support across conviction type.

Figure 1. Support Across Conviction Type



NOTES: \*Property and Juvenile were both negative items and as such reverse coded to make comparisons across variables. “Strongly Agree and Agree” represents support of individuals with each conviction type while “Strongly Disagree and Disagree” indicates lack of support.

The third research question concerned the state of perceptions of campus safety and comfort levels for college students regarding those with criminal records being in higher education. Most students in this sample believe that having those with criminal records on campus would have no impact on campus safety. Furthermore, only 20.7% of the sample indicated that those with criminal records would negatively impact campus safety. The remaining 7.9% indicated that these individuals would *positively* impact campus safety. The exact reasoning behind these latter responses is unknown, but it means that almost 80% of the sample is not concerned about campus safety in this regard. For comfort levels, most participants indicated that they would

either have no leaning concerning comfort or that they would be comfortable being in class with someone who has a criminal record. Overall, among this sample, concern about safety and discomfort around those with criminal records is relatively low.

## BIVARIATE ANALYSIS

### *Safety and Support*

The third research question also concerns whether support for access to higher education for those with criminal records is related to perception of campus safety. To assess this, a bivariate correlation (two-tailed) was run between variables *safety* and *support*. A significant small negative correlation was found between these two variables ( $r=-.201, p<.05$ ). This means that when support for those with criminal records goes down, concerns about campus safety and individuals with criminal records goes up. However, given the small effect size and significance, the extent and nature of this relationship is unclear. See Table 1 for correlation coefficients between the independent variables and dependent variable.

Table 1. Bivariate Correlations between Independent and Dependent Variables

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Support</b>
Safety	-0.201*
Comfort	-0.358**

\* $p<.05$  \*\* $p<.01$

### *Comfort and Support*

The third research question also asks about the relationship between comfort levels being in a class with someone who has a criminal record and their support for these individuals having access to higher education. To assess this, a bivariate correlation (two-tailed) was run between *comfort* and *support*. A significant medium negative

correlation was found ( $r=-.358, p<.01$ ). This means that when support for those with criminal records increases, level of discomfort decreases. The greater amount of variation in comfort levels and its stronger relationship to *support* may indicate that comfort is a greater consideration for students than safety. As such, while it may be the case that students are more uncomfortable being in class with someone with a criminal record because of concerns for their personal safety, there may be other factors influencing their concerns and their comfort levels.

#### SUPPLEMENTAL RESULTS

In addition to the primary variables of interest, the variables *help*, *admissions*, *records*, and *severity* were analyzed to contribute to the overall understanding of college student attitudes towards those with criminal records in higher education. Over 90% of students in this sample agreed that colleges and universities should be doing more to help those with criminal records gain access to higher education. This indicates that in addition to students supporting those with criminal records being allowed in higher education, students in this sample also believe that helping this population gain access is worthwhile. In terms of the intersection of concerns about campus safety and support for the justice-involved, most students in this sample believe that the severity of an individual's criminal history matters for whether campus safety would be impacted. This means that students believe there is a connection between the content of a person's criminal history and their likelihood of being a campus safety risk. See Table 2 for information about the distribution of answers for all non-demographic questions.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics (Spread and Distribution)

	<b>N</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Mode</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Attitudes by Conviction (Matrix) <sup>a</sup>						
Support	162	0	4	0	0.49	0.707
Drug	164	0	4	0	0.31	0.526
Property	164	0	4	0	0.92	1.091
Violent	164	0	4	2	1.62	1.215
Juvenile	163	0	4	0	0.42	0.710
Sexual	164	0	4	3	2.09	1.338
Admissions	163	0	1	1	0.60	0.491
Records <sup>b</sup>	88	0	1			
Comfort	164	0	4	2	2.42	1.051
Help	164	0	1	1	0.93	0.261
Safety	164	0	4	2	1.87	0.602
Severity	163	0	1	1	0.80	0.398

NOTES: <sup>a</sup>For the variables included in this category, a lower mean indicates stronger support, and a higher mean indicates less support for those with criminal records in higher education.

<sup>b</sup>The measurement of records is not appropriate for mean, mode, or standard deviation given that answer choices were nominal and either selected (coded as 1) or not selected (coded as 0) by participants.

Related to attitudes about access to higher education are *admissions* and *records*. Whether students believe criminal records should be used in admissions, and if so what kind of records, is important for understanding student general attitudes about this issue. Most students answered that criminal records should be used in admissions. However, the number of students in support of such policies was not as large as those who generally support individuals with criminal records having access to higher education. This means that some students support those with criminal records having access to higher education, but they believe colleges should use criminal records in some capacity when making admissions decisions.

Additionally, among those who believed records should be used, most selected felony records for consideration. From this it can be concluded that students in this sample tend to believe record usage should at least cover the most serious

offenses. However, since only 88 participants indicated what kinds of records they believe should be used, it is difficult to know the general opinion of participants about types of records.



## Chapter 5: Discussion

The results of the survey found that almost all students in this sample are generally supportive of those with criminal records having access to higher education in some capacity. Furthermore, students in this sample were almost unanimously in support of helping those with criminal records in their pursuit of higher education. Despite this, many students answered that they think criminal records should be used in college admissions. This indicates that some students believe IHEs should consider some kinds of criminal records in admissions but that those with criminal records should still generally have access to higher education.

Results further suggest that support varies across conviction types and students in this sample are less supportive of those with violent and sexual convictions having access to higher education. However, lack of support for those with violent and sexual convictions was not as great as anticipated. While there was less support for people with these kinds of convictions, most students supported those with violent convictions and were either in support of or neutral towards those with sexual convictions. Outright disagreement with the prospect of allowing those with violent and sexual convictions to have access to higher education was still in the minority. This means that students in this sample lean towards support for those with criminal records although the extent of their support varies based on conviction type.

There was a statistically significant negative relationship between *safety* and *support*, but this relationship was not as strong as anticipated. This may be due to the response categories given in the survey or that these attitudes depend upon other factors besides campus safety concerns. It may be the case that if no “positive”

response categories were provided and more nuanced “negative” response categories were given, a stronger relationship would have resulted. In contrast, *comfort* had a stronger and more significant relationship with *support*, potentially indicating that other factors, such as stigma, influence attitudes. It also may be the case that when thinking about being in a class with someone who has a criminal record, the increased proximity to such individuals influences concerns about personal safety and/or stigmatizing attitudes. In contrast, thinking generally about campus-wide safety is less salient and therefore may be less concerning.

The results of this research have some similarities and some differences to the findings of both Binnall and colleagues (2021) and Schafer and colleagues (2018). The findings resemble Binnall and colleagues (2021) in that college students seem to generally support those with criminal records being in higher education. The findings also resemble Schafer and colleagues’ (2018) finding that students believe in restricting admissions for those with criminal records as the majority of students in this research think criminal records should be used in admissions. However, unlike Schafer and colleagues (2018), participants in the current research were generally supportive of college access for those with criminal records and not particularly concerned about campus safety. It may be the case that students believe certain records should be considered (felony, violent, sexual) but that these records should not be outright disqualifying. For example, one may believe that people with criminal records of varying types should be allowed to attend college but that administrators should still consider these records when determining on a case-by-case basis whether someone is eligible to attend.

## LIMITATIONS

### *Sample and Generalizability*

Some limitations can be found due to sample size, manner of participant recruitment, and sample demographics. Only 164 responses were usable for this study, and all came from individuals connected in some way to the social networks of the researcher. As such, the sample was not random and not large enough to be generalizable. Furthermore, since no specification about type of college program was made besides graduate or undergraduate, it is possible that students who have never attended class in person or do not have a physical college campus participated. While this is unlikely since most recruitment was done among University of Maryland students, it is a possibility. If this is the case, such participants may not have as many concerns about those with criminal records attending college because they are unlikely to interact with them.

For demographics, most participants were from the eastern and southern United States thus representing primarily students from these regions. Additionally, the sample is primarily composed of individuals who align themselves with left leaning ideologies (75.6%). Being more left leaning may influence answers in a non-punitive direction and not represent the average college student (Rade et al. 2016; Pickett 2019). The researcher attempted to control for this bias by reaching out to the University of Maryland's College Republicans, but only a small number of conservative and libertarian respondents ended up as part of the sample. However, since college students tend to be more left leaning generally, it is likely that most

college student samples will have more left leaning than right leaning participants (Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement 2016).

Other demographic limitations stem from racial/ethnic makeup. Most participants were White or European (66.5%) and this proportion is higher than the percentage of college students in the United States who are White or European (54.3%) (Hanson 2021). Furthermore, Black or African respondents and Latin American or Hispanic respondents were significantly underrepresented in this sample. The sample is also primarily made up of women (59.1%), meaning that attitudes assessed are more likely to reflect women college students. However, according to the Nation Center for Education Statistics, in 2019, 57.4% of college students were women. As such, bias based on gender may not come from the high number of women, but the low number of men in the sample (32.3%) given that some of the respondents are non-binary or another gender (8.33%). Unfortunately, due to the lack of data on students who are non-binary or some other gender besides “man” or “woman”, it is difficult to determine whether this sample is reflective of the typical college student population on this metric (Rand 2018). Overall, the high proportion of white individuals and low proportion of men must be taken into consideration when assessing the generalizability of the sample.

#### *Survey Construction and Analysis*

Other limitations of the study stem from the survey construction. For *safety*, analysis was limited by the response categories given for the relevant survey question. When asked about whether they believed those with criminal records would impact campus safety, respondents selected from “very negatively”, “negatively”, “no effect”,

“positively”, and “very positively”. However, the aim of this variable was to determine if students believed that having those with criminal records would impact campus safety negatively. While there may be reasons for respondents to select “positively”, these reasons are not relevant to the questions at hand. Instead, if the response categories were “very negatively”, “negatively”, “somewhat negatively”, and “no effect”, greater nuance may have been garnered about potential student campus safety concerns. This would have provided a better picture of whether students believed there would be any negative impact on campus safety, even if it was slight.

Since this research only used bivariate correlations to assess the relationships between variables, and these variables were dependent upon specific survey questions with limited response categories, the exact nature and power of these relationships can only be examined within this context. More complex statistical analysis in accordance with a different kind of survey construction may reveal more information about these relationships. It is also important to note that since all questions in this survey were close ended, the exact attitudes and concerns of students were not captured. Qualitative research on this subject through interviews or open-ended survey questions may provide more information about student opinions and potential concerns.

Finally, the analysis in this study used pairwise deletion across statistical comparisons to deal with missing data. While most variables were analyzed out of the total 164 responses, some were analyzed out of samples of 163 or 162. This occurred for *support*, *juvenile*, *admissions*, and *severity*. Most crucially of these, two

individuals did not answer the question for the primary outcome variable *support*. In turn, some variation across responses might be driven by the differences in N for each variable. However, given the small number of missing responses and the lack of complex analysis done for these variables, the respondents who skipped questions were kept in the study to maximize the number of overall responses. Any variation across variables is unlikely to be driven by the missing data.

#### IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This research helps fill the gap in the literature about college student attitudes towards those with criminal records in higher education. There is little information about how those within and around higher education feel about criminal record questions in admissions, people with criminal histories in higher education, and campus safety concerns about these individuals being on campus. This research adds to overall understanding of this issue, increasing knowledge on the nature and mechanisms of the exclusion of those with criminal records from higher education.

In addition to expanding knowledge of this topic, there are several policy implications. If low levels of concern about campus safety are consistent for most college students in the United States, then it is unlikely that students will oppose measures to increase access to those with criminal records. This may come in the form of changing or removing criminal history questions from applications or creating programs on campus to help these individuals. For example, students in this study overwhelmingly supported those with drug convictions having access to higher education. It is likely that students would support removing any sort of consideration about past drug use or convictions from college applications. Moreover, if students

only have some concerns about violent and sexual offenders, as demonstrated in this research, then IHEs can do more to help certain individuals with such records gain access to higher education without concern about significant student backlash.

However, students may be more concerned about those with sexual convictions being allowed on campus, and concerns about these individuals need to be investigated more deeply. Student attitudes may also point to campus support for limiting criminal history questions to felony records, although this requires more research as well.

Furthermore, if students believe those with criminal records should have better and more opportunities to access higher education, colleges and universities can take these attitudes as support for them to pursue the creation of programs or initiatives to help this population. Providing guidance and resources for those with criminal records may increase applications, enrollment, and degree completion among this population. If the results of this study remain consistent for larger samples of college students, then IHEs can expect that their student population will support such initiatives. Knowing this alleviates concern that such programs may not be politically viable or supported by students.

Additionally, the students in this study were not particularly concerned about negative impacts on campus safety from having those with criminal records on campus. Empirical evidence thus far has also not found any substantial link between having those with criminal records on campus and a negative impact on campus safety (Runyan et al. 2013; Hughes et al. 2014; Custer 2016). The few salient cases of crime and violence on college campuses that have led to restrictive policies do not appear to justify the exclusion of those with criminal records from higher education

(Dickerson 2008; Jung 2016). Students are the most directly impacted by campus crime, and yet concern about those with criminal records does not appear to be extremely prevalent among students. As such, the campus safety justification by faculty and administrators is not reflective of either student concerns or empirical evidence. In turn, decreasing the use of criminal record questions in admissions or eliminating them altogether may not increase campus safety concerns by students or actual campus safety problems on campus.

Understanding student opinions may also be important for those with criminal records themselves. Research has demonstrated that those with criminal records are concerned about the kind of stigma they may face on campus or in admissions (Halkovic and Greene 2015; Rosenthal et al. 2015). Given the general support for those with criminal records in this sample, this research can be used to inform potential students who have criminal records that stigma against them on campus is likely to be low. It could be very encouraging for prospective students with criminal records to see that their classmates support them and their pursuit of higher education. There are also potential benefits of bringing students with criminal histories onto campus for college students who have not had contact with the criminal justice system. For instance, Halkovic and Greene (2015) argue that students with criminal records bring benefits to the broader college community by helping to deconstruct stigma in these spaces and connecting disadvantaged communities to higher education.

Each of these policy implications can lead to greater access to higher education for those with criminal records. Based on prior research it seems that higher education



can serve as a mechanism for fostering desistance and decreasing recidivism among this population (Chappell 2004; Lochner 2011; Manchin et al. 2011; Kim and Clark; Duwe and Clark 2014; Sokoloff and Schenck-Fontaine 2017; Dennison 2019). This is crucial given that the recidivism rate in America is one of the highest in the world (Herscovitz 2021). For the formerly incarcerated, the average rate of rearrest within 5-years of release was 71% from 2012-2017 (Durose and Antenangeli 2021) while reconviction and reimprisonment was 55% from 2005-2010 (Fazel and Wolf 2016). As such, increasing access to higher education for those with criminal histories can help reduce recidivism among this group and crime more generally.

Increased access can also be a racial justice issue given its implications for Black and Brown communities who have been disproportionately impacted by the criminal justice system (The Sentencing Project 2015). African American and Latin American individuals are more likely to have criminal histories and thus experience rejection from higher education because of criminal record questions (The Institute for Higher Education Policy 2010; Rosenthal et al. 2015). In fact, Stewart and Uggen (2019) found that African American applicants who had a criminal record were more likely to be rejected than their White counterparts from colleges that had higher campus crime rates. This means that racial gaps in higher education are exacerbated by the exclusion of applicants with criminal records (Ramaswamy 2015; Castro and Magana 2020). As a result, increased access to higher education for those with criminal records may also help decrease some of the disparities seen for Black and Brown individuals in higher education.

In terms of future research, more surveys and interviews of those within higher education are needed. Besides students, research should continue to be conducted surveying the views of administrators and faculty. While faculty cite campus safety concerns as the primary reason for restricting access for applicants with criminal records, there may be other considerations at play (Ott and McTier 2021). For instance, public image and relations may play a role. Having criminal record questions to “protect campus safety” may simply serve to put forth an image of effort by administrators to protect students. These policies may placate parental concerns about the safety of their children on campus despite no evidence supporting the effectiveness of such policies.

Overall, future research should strive to examine broader student attitudes and concerns through various methods. For instance, while students may not be very concerned about campus safety, they may have other relevant concerns. It may also be the case that students do not have particularly strong attitudes on the subject at all. These kinds of nuances would be better captured with open-ended questions in a survey or interview. Additionally, it is possible that students believe there are other, better means of protecting campus safety than through restricting access for applicants with criminal records.

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the implications of this research and potential for future research point to how understanding the nature of criminal record questions is important for policy. The benefits that can arise for both justice-involved individuals and their communities are varied and great. Through higher education avenues for desistance

may be provided, but these avenues cannot exist if those with criminal records are significantly restricted or curtailed from applying to college or university. Any change that may be made to criminal record question policies and access will come from college administrators, faculty, and students. In turn, it is necessary to understand the landscape of attitudes among college students and related persons when investigating this issue.

## Appendices

### APPENDIX A. TABLES

Table 3. Sample Demographics

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<i>Gender</i>		
Man	53	32.3%
Woman	97	59.1%
Non-binary	12	7.3%
Other	2	1.2%
<i>Race</i>		
Asian	19	11.6%
Black or African	8	4.8%
White or European	109	66.5%
Indigenous Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0.0%
Latin American or Hispanic	5	3.0%
Middle Eastern	1	0.6%
Native American or Alaskan Native	0	0.0%
Multiple Races/Ethnicities <sup>a</sup>	21	12.8%
Other	1	0.6%
<i>Age</i>		
18-22	129	78.6%
23+	35	21.4%
<i>Year</i>		
Freshman (first year)	19	11.6%
Sophomore (second year)	16	9.8%
Junior (third year)	35	21.3%
Senior (fourth year)	60	36.6%
Graduate student	32	19.5%
Other	2	1.2%
<i>Region<sup>b</sup></i>		
Northeast or Mid-Atlantic	71	43.3%
South <sup>c</sup>	71	43.3%
Midwest	13	7.9%
West	6	3.7%
International	3	1.8%
<i>Major</i>		
Criminal Justice related	37	22.6%
Non-Criminal-Justice-related	127	77.4%
<i>Political Ideology</i>		
Conservative	8	4.9%

Liberal <sup>d</sup>	64	39.0%
Libertarian	6	3.7%
Progressive <sup>e</sup>	45	27.4%
Do not identify with an ideology	16	9.8%
Other <sup>f</sup>	20	12.1%
Do not know ideology	5	3.0%

---

NOTES: <sup>a</sup>Within Multiple Races/Ethnicities, there were 3 individuals who identified themselves as “Hawaiian or Pacific Islander” (n=1) and “Native American or Alaskan Native” (n=2). Additionally, 16 participants who selected multiple races/ethnicities chose White or European as one of their ethnicities. These specificities are discussed in the Data and Methods section.

<sup>b</sup>Each region for the United States was categorized by the breakdown of states as categorized by the U.S. Census. “Northeast or Mid-Atlantic” included CT, ME, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, and VT. “South” included AL, AR, DE, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, NC, SC, OK, TN, TX, VA, and WV. “Midwest” included IL, IN, IA, KS, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, SD, and WI. “West” included AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NV, NM, OR, UT, WA, and WY.

<sup>c</sup>Given that Maryland was categorized as part of the South, and most advertising for this survey was to University of Maryland students, it is likely that the majority of those who selected “South” are from Maryland and surrounding states (e.g., Delaware, Virginia, and West Virginia). As such, the proportion of the respondents who are from states deeper in the southern U.S. or further west is unknown.

<sup>d-f</sup>Liberal, progressive, and 15 individuals who selected “other” were included in a “left leaning” group within the Data and Methods section to describe the overall political lean of the sample. The responses categorized as left leaning within “other” were “anarcho communist”, “communist”, “left leaning moderate”, “leftist”, “leftist, socialist”, “leftist/Marxist”, “liberal/leftist”, “pro-market anarchist, but generally progressive/libertarian in US politics”, and “socialist”.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics (Frequency and Percent)

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<i>Attitudes by Conviction (Matrix)</i>		
<i>Support</i>		
Strongly Agree	97	59.1%
Agree	56	34.1%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	5	3.0%
Disagree	3	1.8%
Strongly Disagree	1	0.6%
Missing	2	1.2%
<i>Drug</i>		
Strongly Agree	117	71.3%
Agree	44	26.8%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	2	1.2%
Disagree	1	0.6%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
<i>Property</i>		
Strongly Disagree	73	44.5%
Disagree	56	34.1%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	16	9.8%
Agree	13	7.9%
Strongly Agree	6	3.7%
<i>Violent</i>		
Strongly Agree	38	23.2%
Agree	40	24.4%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	41	25.0%
Disagree	36	22.0%
Strongly Disagree	9	5.5%
<i>Juvenile</i>		
Strongly Disagree	109	66.5%
Disagree	46	28.0%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	3	1.8%
Agree	4	2.4%
Strongly Agree	1	0.6%
Missing	1	0.6%
<i>Sexual</i>		
Strongly Agree	27	16.5%
Agree	29	17.7%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	39	23.8%
Disagree	40	24.4%
Strongly Disagree	29	17.7%

<i>Admissions</i>		
Yes	98	59.8%
No	65	39.9%
Missing	1	0.6%
<i>Records<sup>a</sup></i>		
Misdemeanor	24	27.3%
Felony	87	98.9%
Juvenile	17	19.3%
Uncertain	26	29.5%
<i>Comfort</i>		
Extremely Uncomfortable	3	1.8%
Somewhat Uncomfortable	31	18.9%
Neither Comfortable nor Uncomfortable	54	32.9%
Somewhat Comfortable	46	28.0%
Extremely Comfortable	30	18.3%
<i>Help</i>		
Yes	152	92.7%
No	12	7.3%
<i>Safety</i>		
Very Negatively	3	1.8%
Negatively	31	18.9%
No Effect	117	71.3%
Positively	11	6.7%
Very Positively	2	1.2%
<i>Severity</i>		
Yes	131	79.9%
No	32	19.5%
Missing	1	0.6%

---

NOTES: <sup>a</sup>This variable and the percentages are out of the 88 students who responded to this question. Students could select multiple answer choices and as such the percentages total to over 100%.

## APPENDIX B. SURVEY

Hello! For my undergraduate thesis, I am interested in learning about college student views regarding access to higher education for individuals with a criminal history. If you are 18 years of age or older and are currently enrolled in college (undergraduate or graduate), please consider completing this survey.

The survey takes five minutes or less to complete, is voluntary, confidential and anonymous. You may skip any question in the study and/or exit the survey at any time.

You can find more information about the study here [embedded consent form link]. Your responses are greatly appreciated!

1. What year of school are you in?

- a. Freshman (first year)
- b. Sophomore (second year)
- c. Junior (third year)
- d. Senior (fourth year)
- e. I am a graduate student
- f. Other (please specify)

2. What is your major?

Free response

3. In what region of the United States is your permanent residence?

- a. Northeast or Mid-Atlantic (CT, ME, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT)
- b. South (AL, AR, DE, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, NC, SC, OK, TN, TX, VA, WV)
- c. Midwest (IL, IN, IA, KS, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, SD, WI)
- d. West (AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NV, NM, OR, UT, WA, WY)
- e. My permanent residence is outside of the United States (international students)



Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4. Those with criminal records should be allowed to attend college or university.					
5. Those who have committed drug offenses should be allowed to attend college or university.					
6. Those who have committed property related offenses (theft, burglary, etc.) should NOT be allowed to attend college or university.					
7. Those who have committed violent offenses should be allowed to attend college or university.					
8. Those who committed crimes as children or teenagers should NOT be allowed to attend college or university.					
9. Those who have committed sexual offenses should be allowed to attend college or university.					

10. Should colleges and universities use applicant criminal record information in the admissions process?
- Yes
  - No (if no, skip the next question)
11. If yes, what kinds of criminal records should colleges and universities consider in the admissions process? (YOU MAY SELECT MULTIPLE ANSWERS)
- Misdemeanor records
  - Felony records
  - Juvenile records
  - I am uncertain which records should be considered
12. How comfortable would you feel attending a class with an individual who has a criminal record?
- Extremely uncomfortable
  - Somewhat uncomfortable
  - Neither uncomfortable nor comfortable
  - Somewhat comfortable
  - Extremely comfortable
13. Should colleges and universities be doing more to help those with criminal records gain access to higher education?
- Yes
  - No
14. How do you think safety on college campuses would be impacted by having students with criminal records on campus?
- Very negatively
  - Negatively
  - No effect
  - Positively
  - Very positively
15. Do you think the impact on campus safety from those with criminal records depends on the severity of the offense they have committed?
- Yes
  - No
16. What political ideology to align most closely with?
- Conservative

- b. Liberal
- c. Libertarian
- d. Progressive
- e. Other (please specify)
- f. I do not identify with any particular political ideology or leaning
- g. I do not know my political ideology

17. How old are you?

Free response

18. What gender do you most identify with?

- a. Man
- b. Woman
- c. Nonbinary
- d. Other

19. Which race or ethnicity do you most identify with? (YOU MAY SELECT MULTIPLE OPTIONS)

- a. Asian
- b. Black or African
- c. White or European
- d. Indigenous Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- e. Latin American or Hispanic
- f. Middle Eastern
- g. Native American or Alaskan Native
- h. Other

## References

- Applegate, Brandon K., Francis T. Cullen, Michael G. Turner, and Jody L. Sundt. 1996. "Assessing Public Support for Three-Strikes-and-You're-out Laws: Global versus Specific Attitudes." *Crime & Delinquency* 42(4):517-34. doi: 10.1177/0011128796042004002.
- Ballinger, Phillip, Lee Melvin, Maureen Woods, Bart Quinet, Kelly Gualtieri, Louis Hunt, Kim Johnston, Jamie Jorgensen, Cassandra Moore, Adam Ross Nelson, Matt Wilcox, Sherry Wells, and Lisa Cooper Wilkins. 2019. "Criminal and Disciplinary History in College Admissions." *The American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers*.
- Binnall, James M., Christine S. Scott-Hayward, Nick Petersen, and Ruby M. Gonzalez. 2021. "Taking Roll: College Students' Views of Their Formerly Incarcerated Classmates." *Journal of Criminal Justice Education* 1-21. doi: 10.1080/10511253.2021.1962932.
- Bloom, David E., Matthew Hartley, and Henry Rosovsky. 2007. "Beyond Private Gain: The Public Benefits of Higher Education." Pp. 293-308 in *International Handbook of Higher Education*, Springer International Handbooks of Education, edited by J. J. F. Forest and P. G. Altbach. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.
- Boyington, Briana, and Josh Moody. 2021. "The Common App: Everything You Need to Know." *US News & World Report*. Retrieved April 14, 2022 (<https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/common-app>).
- Brand, Jennie E., and Yu Xie. 2010. "Who Benefits Most from College?: Evidence

- for Negative Selection in Heterogeneous Economic Returns to Higher Education.” *American Sociological Review* 75(2):273-302. doi: 10.1177/0003122410363567.
- Brayne, Sarah. 2014. “Surveillance and System Avoidance: Criminal Justice Contact and Institutional Attachment.” *American Sociological Review* 79(3):367-91. doi: 10.1177/0003122414530398.
- Brazzell, Diana, Anna Crayton, Debbie A. Mukamal, Amy L. Solomon, and Nicole Lindahl. 2009. “From the Classroom to the Community: Exploring the Role of Education during Incarceration and Reentry.” The Urban Institute.
- Castro, Erin L., and Eboni M. Zamani-Gallaher. 2018. “Expanding Quality Higher Education For Currently and Formerly Incarcerated People: Committing to Equity and Protecting Against Exploitation.” The Association for the Study of Higher Education and the National Institute for Transformation and Equity.
- Castro, Erin L., and Sydney Magana. 2020. “Enhancing the Carceral State: Criminal/ized History Questions in College Admissions.” *Journal of College Student Development* 61(6):814-31. doi: 10.1353/csd.2020.0077.
- Chappell, Cathryn A. 2004. “Post-Secondary Correctional Education and Recidivism: A Meta-Analysis of Research Conducted 1990-1999.” *Journal of Correctional Education* 55(2):148-69.
- Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement. 2016. “Election Night 2016: 24 Million Youth Voted, Most Rejected Trump.” Tufts University Tisch College.
- Costelloe, Michael T., Ted Chiricos, and Marc Gertz. 2009. “Punitive Attitudes

- toward Criminals: Exploring the Relevance of Crime Salience and Economic Insecurity.” *Punishment & Society* 11(1):25-49. doi: 10.1177/1462474508098131.
- Custer, Bradley D. 2013. “Why College Admissions Policies For Students With Felony Convictions Are Not Working at One Institution.” *College and university* 88(4):28-36.
- Custer, Bradley D. 2016. “College Admission Policies for Ex-Offender Students: A Literature Review.” *Journal of Correctional Education* 67(2):35-43.
- Custer, Bradley. 2018. “Reconsidering Policy Barriers for Justice-Involved College Students.” *Journal of College Access* 4(1):51-63.
- Davis, Jen. 2018. “Change to Criminal History Question for 2019-20 Application Year.” Common App. Retrieved October 4, 2021 (<https://www.commonapp.org/blog/change-criminal-history-question-2019-2020-application-year>).
- Davis, Lois M., Robert Bozick, Jennifer L. Steele, Jessica Saunders, and Jeremy N. V. Miles. 2013. "Evaluating the Effectiveness of Correctional Education: A Meta-Analysis of Programs That Provide Education to Incarcerated Adults." RAND Corporation.
- Dennison, Christopher R. 2019. “The Crime-Reducing Benefits of a College Degree: Evidence from a Nationally Representative U.S. Sample.” *Criminal Justice Studies* 32(4):297-316. doi: 10.1080/1478601X.2019.1627533.
- Dickerson, Darby. 2008. “Background Checks in the University Admissions Process:

- An Overview of Legal and Policy Considerations.” *Journal of College and University Law* 34(2):419-506.
- Durose, Matthew R, and Leonardo Antenangeli. 2021. “Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 34 States in 2012: A 5-Year Follow-Up Period (2012-2017).” Bureau of Justice Statistics.
- Duwe, Grant, and Valerie Clark. 2014. “The Effects of Prison-Based Educational Programming on Recidivism and Employment.” *The Prison Journal* 94(4):454-78. doi: 10.1177/0032885514548009.
- Ellison, Mark, Kirstine Szifris, Rachel Horan, and Chris Fox. 2017. “A Rapid Evidence Assessment of the Effectiveness of Prison Education in Reducing Recidivism and Increasing Employment.” *Probation Journal* 64(2):108-28. doi: 10.1177/0264550517699290.
- Erisman, Wendy, and Jeanne Bayer Contardo. 2005. *Learning to Reduce Recidivism: A 50-State Analysis of Postsecondary Correctional Education Policy*. Institute for Higher Education Policy.
- Esperian, John H. 2010. “The Effect of Prison Education Programs on Recidivism.” *Journal of Correctional Education* 61(4):316-34.
- Farnworth, Margaret, Dennis R. Longmire, and Vincent M. West. 1998. “College Students’ Views on Criminal Justice.” *Journal of Criminal Justice Education* 9(1):39-58.
- Fazel, Seena, and Achim Wolf. 2015. “A Systematic Review of Criminal Recidivism Rates Worldwide: Current Difficulties and Recommendations for Best Practice.” *PLoS ONE* 10(6):1-8. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0130390.

- Fedina, Lisa, Jennifer Lynne Holmes, and Bethany Backes. 2016. "How Prevalent Is Campus Sexual Assault in the United States?" *National Institute of Justice Journal* 277:26-30.
- Forrest, Catherine E. 2016. "Collateral Consequences of a Criminal Conviction: Impact on Corrections and Reentry." *Corrections Today*, the National Institute of Justice, 30-31.
- Gaes, Gerald G. 2008. "The Impact of Prison Education Programs on Post-Release Outcomes." Reentry Roundtable on Education.
- Groot, W., and H. M. van den Brink. 2010. "The Effects of Education on Crime." *Applied Economics* 42(3):279-89. doi: 10.1080/00036840701604412.
- Hall, Lori L. 2015. "Correctional Education and Recidivism: Toward a Tool for Reduction." *Journal of Correctional Education* 66(2):4-29.
- Hanson, Melanie. 2021. "College Enrollment & Student Demographic Statistics." Education Data Initiative. Retrieved February 28, 2022 (<https://educationdata.org/college-enrollment-statistics>).
- Harlow, Caroline Wolf. 2003. "Education and Correctional Populations." Bureau of Justice Statistics.
- Henry, Jessica S., and James B. Jacobs. 2007. "Ban the Box to Promote Ex-Offender Employment." *Criminology and Public Policy* 6(4):755-62.
- Hensley, Christopher, Alexis Miller, Mary Koscheski, and Richard Tewksbury. 2003. "Student Attitudes toward Inmate Privileges." *American Journal of Criminal Justice* 27(2):249-62. doi: 10.1007/BF02885697.
- Hensley, Christopher, Mary Koscheski, and Richard Tewksbury. 2007. "Examining



- Criminology Majors' and Non-Majors' Attitudes Toward Inmate Programs, Services, and Amenities." *Criminal Justice Studies* 20(3):217-30. doi: 10.1080/14786010701617631.
- Hensley, Christopher, Richard Tewksbury, Alexis Miller, and Mary Koscheski. 2002. "Criminal Justice and Non-Criminal Justice Students' Views of U.S. Correctional Issues." *The Justice Professional* 15(4):303-11. doi: 10.1080/0888431022000070421.
- Herscowitz, Eva. 2021. "US Recidivism Rates Stay Sky High." *The Crime Report*. Retrieved December 8, 2021 (<https://thecrimereport.org/2021/07/30/us-recidivism-rates-stay-sky-high/>).
- Hirschi, Travis. 1969. *Causes of Delinquency*. New York: Routledge.
- Holzer, Harry J., Steven Raphael, and Michael A. Stoll. 2006. "Perceived Criminality, Criminal Background Checks, and the Racial Hiring Practices of Employers." *The Journal of Law and Economics* 49(2):451-80. doi: 10.1086/501089.
- Homant, Robert J., and Daniel B. Kennedy. 1982. "Attitudes toward Ex-Offenders: A Comparison of Social Stigmas." *Journal of Criminal Justice* 10(5):383-91. doi: 10.1016/0047-2352(82)90021-6.
- Hughes, Stephanie F., Teresa L. Elliott, and Margaret Myers. 2014. "Measuring the Impact of Student Background Checks on Reducing Crime in Higher Education." *Public Administration Research* 3(2):1-14. doi: 10.5539/par.v3n2p121.
- Janosik, Steven, and Dennis Gregory. 2003. "The Clery Act and Its Influence on

- Campus Law Enforcement Practices.” *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice* 41(1):182-99. doi: 10.2202/1949-6605.1311.
- Jung, H. S. Albert. 2016. “Ban the Box in College Applications: A Balanced Approach Notes.” *Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy* 26(1):171-96.
- Kim, Ryang Hui, and David Clark. 2013. “The Effect of Prison-Based College Education Programs on Recidivism: Propensity Score Matching Approach.” *Journal of Criminal Justice* 41(3):196-204. doi: 10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2013.03.001.
- Kirk, David S., and Sara Wakefield. 2018. “Collateral Consequences of Punishment: A Critical Review and Path Forward.” *Annual Review of Criminology* 1(1):171-94. doi: 10.1146/annurev-criminol-032317-092045.
- Kjelsberg, Ellen, Tom Hilding Skoglund, and Aase-Bente Rustad. 2007. “Attitudes towards Prisoners, as Reported by Prison Inmates, Prison Employees and College Students.” *BMC Public Health* 7(71). doi: 10.1186/1471-2458-7-71.
- Laub, John H., and Robert J. Sampson. 1993. “Turning Points in the Life Course: Why Change Matters to the Study of Crime.” *Criminology* 31(3):301-26.
- Lee, Daniel R. 2014. “Correctional Education of Programs.” Pp. 612-17 in *Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, edited by G. Bruinsma and D. Weisburd. New York, NY: Springer.
- Link, Bruce G., and Jo C. Phelan. 2001. “Conceptualizing Stigma.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 27(1):363-85. doi: 10.1146/annurev.soc.27.1.363.
- Lochner, Lance. 2004. “Education, Work, and Crime: A Human Capital Approach\*.”

*International Economic Review* 45(3):811-43. doi: 10.1111/j.0020-6598.2004.00288.x.

Lochner, Lance. 2011. "Non-Production Benefits of Education: Crime, Health, and Good Citizenship." Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. doi: 10.3386/w16722.

Lockwood, Susan, John M. Nally, Taiping Ho, and Katie Knutson. 2012. "The Effect of Correctional Education on Postrelease Employment and Recidivism: A 5-Year Follow-Up Study in the State of Indiana." *Crime & Delinquency* 58(3):380-96. doi: 10.1177/0011128712441695.

Machin, Stephen, Olivier Marie, and Sunčica Vujić. 2011. "The Crime Reducing Effect of Education." *The Economic Journal* 121(552):463-84. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-0297.2011.02430.x.

Mackey, David A., Kevin E. Courtright, and Susan H. Packard. 2006. "Testing the Rehabilitative Ideal among College Students." *Criminal Justice Studies* 19(2):153-70. doi: 10.1080/14786010600764534.

Mae Boag, Elle, and David Wilson. 2013. "Does Engaging with Serious Offenders Change Students' Attitude and Empathy toward Offenders? A Thematic Analysis." *The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology* 24(6):699-712. doi: 10.1080/14789949.2013.841973.

Ma, Jennifer, Matea Pender, and Meredith Welch. 2016. *Education Pays 2016: The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society. Trends in Higher Education Series*. College Board.

Malvasi-Haines, Martina. 2017. "Quantitative Analysis Comparing Attitudes of

College Students Majoring in Business or Criminal Justice toward Ex-Offenders.” D.B.A., Northcentral University.

- McTier Jr., Terrence S., Kaleb L. Briscoe, and Tiffany J. Davis. 2020. “College Administrators’ Beliefs and Perceptions of College Students with Criminal Records.” *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice* 57(3):296-308. doi: 10.1080/19496591.2019.1648273.
- Moore, Kelly E., June P. Tangney, and Jeffrey B. Stuewig. 2016. “The Self-Stigma Process in Criminal Offenders.” *Stigma and Health* 1(3):206-24. doi: 10.1037/sah0000024.
- Mottley, Grace. 2018. “UMD Senate Wants to Change School Application Questions about Criminal Background.” *The Diamondback*. Retrieved December 11, 2021 (<https://dbknews.com/2018/10/03/umd-senate-criminal-background-coalition-application-questions/>).
- Ott, Molly and Terrence S. McTier Jr. 2021. “Should Students with Criminal Convictions Be Allowed to Participate in Higher Education? What Faculty Think.” *The American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers* 96(1):57-62.
- Pager, Devah. 2003. “The Mark of a Criminal Record.” *American Journal of Sociology* 108(5):937-75. doi: 10.1086/374403.
- Pickett, Justin T. 2019. “Public Opinion and Criminal Justice Policy: Theory and Research.” *Annual Review of Criminology* 2(1):405-28. doi: 10.1146/annurev-criminol-011518-024826.
- Pierce, Matthew W., Carol W. Runyan, and Shrikant I. Bangdiwala. 2014. “The Use

- of Criminal History Information in College Admissions Decisions.” *Journal of School Violence* 13(4):359-76.
- Prison Policy Initiative. 2018. “Getting Back on Course: Educational exclusion and attainment among formerly incarcerated people.” Retrieved October 8, 2021 (<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/education.html>).
- Rade, Candalyn B., Sarah L. Desmarais, and Roger E. Mitchell. 2016. “A Meta-Analysis of Public Attitudes Toward Ex-Offenders.” *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 43(9):1260-80. doi: 10.1177/0093854816655837.
- Ramaswamy, Rebecca R. 2014. “Bars to Education: The Use of Criminal History Information in College Admissions.” *Columbia Journal of Race and Law* 5(2):145-64.
- Rand, Mary. 2018. “Nonbinary students missing from college data.” *The Ithacan*. Retrieved February 20, 2022 (<https://theithacan.org/news/nonbinary-students-missing-from-college-data/>).
- Rosenthal, Alan, Emily NaPier, Patricia Warth, and Marsha Weissman. 2015. “Boxed out: Criminal history screening and college application attrition.” Center for Community Alternatives.
- Runell, Lindsey Livingston. 2017. “Identifying Desistance Pathways in a Higher Education Program for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals.” *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 61(8):894-918. doi: 10.1177/0306624X15608374.
- Runyan, Carol W., Matthew W. Pierce, Viswanathan Shankar, and Shrikant I.

- Bangdiwala. 2013. "Can Student-Perpetrated College Crime Be Predicted Based on Precollege Misconduct?" *Injury Prevention* 19(6):405-11. doi: 10.1136/injuryprev-2012-040644.
- Schafer, Joseph A., Charern Lee, George W. Burruss, and Matthew J. Giblin. 2018. "College Student Perceptions of Campus Safety Initiatives." *Criminal Justice Policy Review* 29(4):319-40. doi: 10.1177/0887403416631804.
- Shelley, Tara O'Connor, Courtney A. Waid, and Rhonda R. Dobbs. 2011. "The Influence of Criminal Justice Major on Punitive Attitudes." *Journal of Criminal Justice Education* 22(4):526-45. doi: 10.1080/10511253.2011.556132.
- Sokoloff, Natalie J., and Anika Fontaine. 2013. "Systemic Barriers to Higher Education: How Colleges Respond to Applicants with Criminal Records in Maryland." John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York.
- Sokoloff, Natalie J., and Anika Schenck-Fontaine. 2017. "College Programs in Prison and upon Reentry for Men and Women: A Literature Review." *Contemporary Justice Review* 20(1):95-114. doi: 10.1080/10282580.2016.1262772.
- Steurer, Stephen J., and Linda G. Smith. 2003. "Education Reduces Crime: Three-State Recidivism Study. Executive Summary." Correctional Education Association, Management and Training Corporation Institute.
- Stewart, Robert, and Christopher Uggen. 2019. "Criminal Records and College Admissions: A Modified Experimental Audit." *Criminology* 58(1):156-88. doi: 10.1111/1745-9125.12229.

- Tajalli, Hassan, William De Soto, and Angela Dozier. 2013. "Determinants of Punitive Attitudes of College Students Toward Criminal Offenders." *Journal of Criminal Justice Education* 24(3):339-56. doi: 10.1080/10511253.2012.740055.
- The Institute for Higher Education Policy. 2010. "A Snapshot of African Americans in Higher Education." IHEP Mini Brief.
- The Sentencing Project. 2015. "Americans with Criminal Records." Half in Ten, Poverty and Opportunity Profile. Retrieved October 8, 2021 (<https://www.sentencingproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Americans-with-Criminal-Records-Poverty-and-Opportunity-Profile.pdf>).
- Travis, Jeremy. 2002. "Invisible Punishment: An Instrument of Social Exclusion." The New Press, New York.
- Vacca, James S. 2004. "Educated Prisoners Are Less Likely to Return to Prison." *Journal of Correctional Education* 55(4):297-305.
- Vuolo, Mike, Sarah Lageson, and Christopher Uggen. 2017. "Criminal Record Questions in the Era of Ban the Box Criminal Record Questions: Research Article." *Criminology and Public Policy* 16(1):139-66.
- Wang, Ke, Yongqiu Chen, Jizhi Zhang, and Barbara A. Oudekerk. 2020. *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2019*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.
- Weissman, Marsha, Alan Rosenthal, and Patricia Warth. 2020. "Closing the Doors to Higher Education: Another Collateral Consequence of a Criminal Conviction." Center for Community Alternatives.

- Weissman, Marsha, Alan Rosenthal, Patricia Warth, Elaine Wolf, and Michael Messina-Yauchzy. 2010. "The Use of Criminal History Records in College Admissions Reconsidered." Center for Community Alternatives.
- Widdowson, Alex O., Sonja E. Siennick, and Carter Hay. 2016. "The Implications of Arrest for College Enrollment: An Analysis of Long-Term Effects and Mediating Mechanisms\*." *Criminology* 54(4):621-52. doi: 10.1111/1745-9125.12114.