

*Original Paper*

# Effect of Framing of Reentry Program on Perceptions of Ex-Offenders

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*We examine the effect of the framing of reentry programs on participants' perceptions of ex-offenders. Across four studies, participants expressed more favorable attitudes toward an ex-offender who completed a global citizen reentry program than an ex-offender who did not complete a reentry program. The results show that ex-offenders who complete a global citizen reentry program (vs. no program) are viewed as more likeable and similar to oneself, which then predicts reduced prejudice and greater endorsement to hire the ex-offender. The results are discussed in relation to the crossed categorization model of prejudice reduction.*

**Keywords**

*reentry programs, rehabilitation, global citizenship, prejudice, social distance*

**1. Introduction**

Since 1980, there has been a steady increase in the number of individuals being incarcerated in the United States. Around 1.5 million people occupied U.S. federal and state prisons at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2011), and over 7 million people were under some type of correctional supervision by the end of 2009 (Glaze, 2010). Of that 7 million, 760,400 were jail inmates, and 1,613,740 were prisoners at federal and state correctional facilities. Due to this large inmate population, the number of individuals being released from incarceration and reentering society is rising (Seiter & Kadela, 2003; Tripodi, Kim, & Bender, 2010). As a result, recidivism, or the incidence when those individuals who have been incarcerated and released reoffend and subsequently become incarcerated again (Rossi, Berk, & Lenihan, 1980), has become an area of great concern. For example, one national study (Langan & Levin, 2002) found that in 1994 about 68% of ex-offenders were re-arrested within three years of being released for either committing a new crime or violating the terms of their release (e.g., failing a drug test). Consequently, research has focused on factors to reduce recidivism.

Many variables are posited to potentially reduce recidivism, such as old age (Uggen, 2000), visitation

while incarcerated (Bales & Mears, 2008), and context of the neighborhood that the individual returns to (Kubrin & Stewart, 2006). However, finding and maintaining employment is a consistently strong predictor of desisting from reoffending (Benda, Harm, & Toombs, 2005; Laub & Sampson, 2003; Tripodi et al., 2010). Although employment does not necessarily keep an individual from being reincarcerated altogether, employment increases the amount of time an individual lives crime free (Tripodi et al., 2010). Indeed, in a study of boot camp graduates, Benda et al. (2005) found employment status (i.e., employed or unemployed) to be the second strongest predictor of who will re-offend (behind gang membership and regular possession of weapons). In short, most criminological research suggests that employment reduces an individual's risk for re-offending (Laub & Sampson, 2003), and gaining employment may provide ex-offenders with the motivation needed to create a better life by desisting from crime. However, when inmates are released their most serious challenge is finding employment (Seiter & Kadela, 2003). It is estimated that almost 60% of ex-offenders in the U.S. are still unemployed after 1 year of release (Petersilia, 2001; The Second Chance Act, 2007). In the present research we examine the effect of reentry program framing of an ex-offender's on perceptions and endorsement to hire a hypothetical ex-offender.

There are numerous barriers that affect an ex-offender's ability to become and stay employed (Graffam, Shinkfield, & Hardcastle, 2008; Harrison & Schehr, 2004), such as age at time of release, little or no work history, lack of job skills, or substance abuse issues (Seiter & Kadela, 2003). However, societal stigma (e.g., Harrison & Schehr, 2004; LeBel, 2008; Petersilia, 2003) and employer discrimination (Fletcher, 2001) are the main cause of unemployment for ex-offenders. Graffam and colleagues (2008) showed that individuals with a criminal background were perceived by employers as the second least likely to obtain and maintain employment (behind those who suffer from an intellectual or psychiatric disability). Despite this, research has shown that it is possible for some ex-offenders to find employment (Seiter & Kadela, 2003). Hirschfield and Piquero (2010) found that the stigma of ex-offenders is mitigated by personal familiarity. Thus, it could be suggested that the label of ex-offender can be overshadowed by others' positive experiences or perceptions of the individual, which contradict the negative label.

A social identity perspective (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) posits that individuals seek to gain or maintain positive and distinct group memberships. When a particular group identity is salient (e.g., non-offender), group differences are accentuated between the ingroup and outgroup. Outgroup members are then perceived to be a homogenous group (e.g., all ex-offenders are the same). Furthermore, if the individual is perceived or categorized as part of a low status and devalued outgroup (i.e., ex-offender), they are likely to face prejudice, discrimination, and stigma. This is supported by criminological research, which shows that those who hold negative attitudes of ex-offenders are more likely to exclude them both economically and socially (Clear, 2007; Pager, 2003). For example, surveys of American employers suggest that they are more likely to hire someone with a GED (96%), on welfare (92%), or with poor work experience (59%), than an applicant

with a criminal record (40%) (Holzer, Raphael, & Stoll, 2006). Furthermore, research shows that group members exhibit favoritism toward others within their same ingroup (Billig & Tajfel, 1973), and in occupational settings individuals are more likely to hire someone with whom they share a common ingroup identity, rather than hire an outgroup member (Kanter, 1977). In effect, culturally shared negative stereotypes could account for the difficulty faced by ex-offenders in finding employment (see Seiter & Kadela, 2003), and the finding that discrimination is the top reason for not gaining employment (see Fletcher, 2001). If an ex-offender is able to escape the negative label and the stereotypes associated with the stigmatized group, it is possible that ex-offenders' chance of employment will increase.

Social scientific researchers have long examined methods to reduce intergroup bias (e.g., Crisp & Hewstone, 1999; Crisp, Hewstone, & Rubin, 2001; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000), and one of the most promising models to date is the crossed categorization model that seeks to increase perceived commonality between groups (see Hall, Crisp, & Suen, 2009). The basic idea of the crossed categorization model is to make dual identities salient (e.g., ex-offender and global citizen) in an effort to highlight a greater number of shared category memberships, rather than a single ingroup versus outgroup identity. In other words, rather than focusing on a single shared group membership (as is emphasized in the common ingroup identity model: Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000), the crossed categorization model highlights the positive outcomes of salience of multiple identities. Sharing at least one salient identity reduces perceived differences between individuals, and thus reduces bias (Crisp et al., 2001). While majority group members may reject recategorizing an ex-offender into one's common ingroup, a crossed categorization approach may allow for greater acceptance of the individual while still acknowledging their membership in a negative (i.e., ex-offender) group. The type of reentry program an ex-offender completes (i.e., those that result in a positive label or identity) may affect how individuals view and categorize ex-offenders. Recidivism rates have yet to improve significantly (Langan & Levin, 2002) despite the use of job skills development and religious faith programs. An alternative positive superordinate identity crossed with the negative ex-offender label may reduce the prejudice and stigma toward ex-offenders. However, to date, no empirical studies have examined the effect of type of reentry program on bias against ex-offenders.

## **2. Overview of Research**

The purpose of the present series of studies is to examine the influence of a reentry program's framing on individuals' perceptions and endorsed willingness to hire an ex-offender. Employment is perhaps the greatest difficulty faced by ex-offenders (Seiter & Kadela, 2003), and one of the best predictors of remaining out of incarceration (see Benda et al., 2005). However, there exists a socially shared stereotype or stigma that hinders ex-offenders from obtaining employment (Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010). Consistent with a social identity perspective (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987), and a crossed categorization model of intergroup bias reduction (Crisp & Hewstone, 1999), successful

completion of a reentry program that highlights a positive inclusive identity (e.g., global citizen) may reduce individuals' bias against, and increase endorsement of hiring, ex-offenders.

Global citizenship is a social identity defined as awareness, caring, and embracing cultural diversity while promoting social justice and sustainability, coupled with a sense of responsibility to act (Reysen & Katzarska-Miller, 2013a). We chose global citizenship for the present research because prior research has shown that the content or meaning of the identity encompasses a variety of prosocial values, such as helping others outside one's ingroup, valuing diversity (Snider, Reysen, & Katzarska-Miller, 2013), intergroup empathy, felt responsibility to act for the betterment of the world, and environmental sustainability and social justice beliefs (Reysen & Katzarska-Miller, 2013a, 2013b). Across four studies, participants read a vignette in which they are asked to evaluate a potential candidate for employment. In Study 1, we examine the effect of completion of a global citizen program (vs. no program) on participants' endorsement to hire an ex-offender, perception of the ex-offender (i.e., honesty, liking), and social distance (a measure of prejudice toward others). Study 2 partially replicates Study 1 with the addition of other popular reentry programs (religious faith, job skill development). In Study 3, the underlying mechanism of reentry programs highlighting a positive identity is examined. Lastly, in Study 4, we examine whether the severity and type of past crime influence endorsement to hire an ex-offender. Across the studies, we predict that participants who evaluate an ex-offender who purportedly completes a global citizen program (vs. no program) will report more favorable impressions and indicate greater endorsement to hire the fictitious ex-offender.

### 3. Study 1

The purpose of Study 1 is to examine whether participants would endorse hiring and positively rate an ex-offender who completed a global citizen reentry program (vs. no program). We predict that participants exposed to the ex-offender who completed a global citizen program (vs. no reentry program) will perceive the ex-offender more positively and express a greater willingness to hire the ex-offender than those in the control condition.

## 4. Method

### 4.1 Participants and Procedure

Participants received partial course credit toward their introductory psychology requirement (see Table 1 for participant demographics). Participants were randomly assigned to read a vignette about an ex-offender job applicant who completed a global citizen reentry program or no mention of a program was made (control condition). Following the vignette, participants rated willingness to hire, perceived honesty, perceived likability, social distance, and reported their demographic information. All measures used a 7-point Likert-type response scale, from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

### 4.2 Vignette

In both vignettes participants were asked to imagine that they worked for the human resources

department of a large supermarket company and that part of their job was to hire employees for local stores. Furthermore, they were asked to imagine that they would be meeting with and interviewing one of the job applicants called ‘Person-A’ who was answering an ad from the local newspaper for the position of sacker in the local grocery store. To avoid participants relying on ethnic stereotypes regarding criminality, we explicitly stated that the ex-offender was White. Participants then read that Person-A was an ex-offender who was released from incarceration 6 months ago and is now on probation (e.g., “Person-A is a middle aged white male with 5 years experience as a construction worker. While going over his application, you notice that he is a convicted felon who was released 6 months ago and is now on parole.”). In the global citizen condition, participants were told that Person-A had completed a reentry program while incarcerated called Becoming A Global Citizen, and were provided with a brief description of the program (e.g., “Becoming A Global Citizen (BGC) is a program that involves teaching attitudes and behaviors related to global citizenship. Specifically, its curriculum is designed to develop awareness, caring, embracing cultural diversity, promotion of social justice and sustainability, and a responsibility to act to make the world a better place.”). No mention of a reentry program was given in the control condition.

#### 4.3 Dependent Measures

A single item (“I would hire Person-A for this job”) was constructed to measure participants’ willingness to hire the ex-offender. Four items (e.g., “I would trust Person-A to tell the truth,” “I would say that Person-A is honest”) were adapted from Reysen (2008) and combined to assess the perceived honesty of the ex-offender ( $\alpha = .89$ ). Seven items (e.g., “I would say Person-A is friendly,” “I would say Person-A is likeable”) were adapted from Reysen (2005) and combined to assess the perceived likability of the ex-offender ( $\alpha = .88$ ). Eight items (e.g., “I would be happy to have Person-A as a neighbor,” “I would be happy to have Person-A as a close personal friend”) were adapted from Biernat and Crandall (1999) to assess desired degree of social distance between the ex-offender and the self ( $\alpha = .91$ ).

**Table 1. Participant Demographics**

	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3	Study 4
<i>N</i>	92	119	92	250
Percent Women	76.1%	73.9%	66.3%	52%
Mean Age	32.23	25.11	21.83	32.76
<i>SD</i>	11.32	8.87	4.55	9.76
Ethnicity				
White/European American	55.4%	64.7%	39.1%	62.4%
Black/African American	23.9%	13.4%	37%	19.2%
Native American	1.1%	0%	0%	8.4%

Asian/South Pacific Islander	2.2%	9.2%	9.8%	4.8%
Hispanic/Latino/Latina	12%	5%	8.7%	0.8%
Arab/Middle Eastern	1.1%	0%	0%	2.4%
Central Asian/Indian	0%	3.4%	0%	0.8%
Biracial/Multiracial	3.3%	3.4%	3.3%	0.8%
Other	1.1%	0.8%	2.2%	0.4%

## 5. Results and Discussion

To examine whether completing a global citizenship program affects willingness to hire and perception of an ex-offender, we conducted a MANOVA with condition (global citizen program vs. control) as the independent variable and willingness to hire, honesty, liking, and social distance as dependent variables. The omnibus test was significant, Wilks'  $\Lambda = .83$ ,  $F(4, 87) = 4.31$ ,  $p = .003$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .17$ . As predicted, participants who read about the applicant with global citizenship training were more willing to hire the ex-offender, perceived them as more honest, expressed greater liking for the ex-offender, and were less likely to distance themselves socially from the ex-offender than participants who did not read about an applicant completing a reform program while in prison (see Table 2). Thus, the results of Study 2 suggest that crossing ex-offenders' negative label with a positive superordinate identity (i.e., global citizen) reduces bias against ex-offenders seeking employment. To examine whether the global citizen focused reentry program differs from other popular reentry programs (i.e., job skills development, religious faith) in reducing bias against ex-offenders we designed a second study.

**Table 2. Means (Standard Deviation) of Dependent Variables by Type of Reentry Program, Study 1**

Variable	No Mention of Program	Global Citizen Program	$F(1, 90)$	$p$ -value	$\eta_p^2$
Willing to Hire	3.36 (1.50)	4.14 (1.46)	6.44	.013	.067
Honesty	3.04 (1.22)	3.92 (1.05)	13.82	< .001	.133
Liking	3.07 (0.83)	3.79 (0.93)	15.13	< .001	.144
Social Distance	2.28 (1.11)	2.90 (1.34)	6.44	.013	.067

*Note.* 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

## 6. Study 2

The purpose of Study 2 was to examine how differing types of reentry programs effect individuals' willingness to hire and attitudes toward ex-offenders. Building upon the positive results of Study 1 (i.e., global citizen program reduces bias toward ex-offenders) we include current and popular reentry programs (religious faith, job skills) in Study 2. Employers' may view jobs skills training as practical

and therefore be more willing to hire an ex-offender, while a religious faith program, similar to global citizen, may cross the negative label with a positive superordinate identity. Based on the results of Study 1, we predict that global citizen, rather than job skills or religious faith, will reduce participants' bias toward the ex-offender seeking employment.

## 7. Method

### 7.1 Participants and Procedure

Participants were again asked to imagine that they were employers examining a potential job applicant. Participants were randomly assigned to read about an ex-offender who, while incarcerated, completed either a (1) global citizenship program, (2) job skills development program, (3) religious faith program, or (4) no program was mentioned (control condition). Following the vignette, participants rated willingness to hire, perceived honesty, perceived likability, social distance, and reported their demographics. All measures used a 7-point Likert-type response scale, from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

### 7.2 Materials

The global citizen program and control vignettes were identical to Study 1. The job skills vignette described an ex-offender who completed a reentry program while incarcerated that involved teaching offenders the skills needed to succeed in a work environment (e.g., "Job Skills Development (JSD) is a program that involves teaching offenders the skills needed to succeed in a work environment."). The religious faith vignette described an ex-offender who completed a reentry program that seeks to transform offenders and their relationship with God, family, and community through the power and truth of Jesus Christ. The description of religious faith and job skills reentry programs were modeled after real-life programs. We added three items ("Person-A would get along well with the other employees," "Person-A would get along well with the customers," "Person-A would get along well with management") to the single item measure used in Study 1 to form a willingness to hire index ( $\alpha = .86$ ). The measures of perceived honesty ( $\alpha = .86$ ), liking ( $\alpha = .79$ ), social distance ( $\alpha = .94$ ), and demographic variables were identical to Study 1. Participants were also asked to indicate any religious affiliation ("If you are religious, what religion do you identify with?") and rate degree of religiosity ("How religious are you?") on a 7-point Likert-type response scale from 1 = *not religious* to 7 = *very religious*. Participants indicated being Christian (83.2%), affiliated with a non-Christian religion (10.1%), or not religious (6.7%).

## 8. Results and Discussion

To examine the effect of rehabilitation program on participants' endorsement to hire and perception of the applicant, we conducted a MANOVA with condition (global citizen vs. religious program vs. job skills vs. control) as the independent variable and willingness to hire, honesty, liking, and social distance as dependent variables. The omnibus test was significant, Wilks'  $\Lambda = .77$ ,  $F(4, 112) = 2.51$ ,  $p$

= .004,  $\eta_p^2 = .08$ . As shown in Table 3 (using Tukey's post hoc for multiple comparisons), participants who read about the ex-offender who completed a global citizen reentry program rated their willingness to hire, perceived honesty, liking, and social distance higher than participants in the control condition. Participants who read about the ex-offender who completed either a religious faith or job skills development program did not differ significantly from the control or global citizen conditions on willingness to hire, honesty, liking, and social distance (with the exception that religious faith program ex-offender was rated as more honest than an ex-offender where no program was mentioned). We also examined participants' degree of religiosity as a covariate. Religiosity did not significantly influence the results.

**Table 3. Means (Standard Deviation) of Dependent Variables by Type of Reentry Program, Study 2**

Variable	No Mention	Job Skills	Religious	Global	$F(3, 115)$	$p$ -value	$\eta_p^2$
Willing to Hire	3.83 (0.90) <sub>a</sub>	4.23 (1.04) <sub>ab</sub>	4.04 (0.96) <sub>ab</sub>	4.59 (1.02) <sub>b</sub>	3.12	.029	.075
Honesty	3.26 (1.09) <sub>a</sub>	3.74 (1.08) <sub>ab</sub>	3.95 (0.85) <sub>b</sub>	4.19 (0.84) <sub>b</sub>	4.91	.003	.114
Liking	3.29 (0.77) <sub>a</sub>	3.69 (0.65) <sub>ab</sub>	3.66 (0.88) <sub>ab</sub>	3.98 (0.76) <sub>b</sub>	4.04	.009	.095
Social Distance	2.57 (1.17) <sub>a</sub>	2.46 (0.96) <sub>ab</sub>	2.81 (1.23) <sub>ab</sub>	3.26 (1.15) <sub>b</sub>	2.88	.039	.070

*Note.* Means with different subscripts differ significantly. 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

Overall, participants exposed to the ex-offender who completed the global citizen program (vs. no program) expressed greater endorsement to hire and more favorable perceptions of the ex-offender, while the programs that are widely used today (i.e., religious faith and job skills) did not significantly differ from the control condition. In other words, the results suggest that completing a global citizen program is better at reducing bias toward ex-offenders seeking employment than completing no program, while completing a religious faith or job skills program is no better than non-completion of a reentry program. However, the global citizen program did not differ significantly from the religious faith or job skills programs. Based on prior research (Crisp & Hewstone, 1999), we suggest that participants who undergo a global citizen program may be viewed as more similar to the self and more likable, predicting less prejudice (i.e., social distance). Lower prejudice may, in turn, predict greater endorsement to hire the ex-offender. To test this notion we constructed a third study.

### 9. Study 3

The results of Study 1 and 2 show that crossing the ex-offender identity with a global citizen identity



(i.e., ex-offender completed a global citizen reentry program) increases participants' endorsement to hire and positive perception of the ex-offender (vs. no reentry program). The purpose of Study 3 is to examine the underlying mechanism of the observed endorsement to hire the ex-offender. We predict a model showing the manipulation of program (global citizen vs. no program) predicting greater liking and similarity, liking and similarity predicting less social distance (i.e., less prejudice), and social distance predicting willingness to hire the ex-offender.

Although we randomly assign participants to conditions in the present studies, there exists a possibility, albeit small, that participants' mood may influence their perception of the vignettes and dependent measures. To control for this possibility in Study 3, participants completed measures of positive and negative affect before the vignette and measures, and we use affect as a covariate. Additionally, participants may have expressed a willingness to hire the global citizen reentry program ex-offender (vs. no program) simply because participants view global citizens as better employees. We examine this alternative explanation in the present study.

## 10. Method

### 10.1 Participants and Procedure

Participants received partial course credit toward their introductory psychology requirement. Prior to reading the vignette, participants rated their positive ( $\alpha = .81$ ) and negative ( $\alpha = .84$ ) affect on a 20-item scale (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). Participants then read either the global citizenship program or control (no program mentioned) vignette (identical to Study 1), and rated willingness to hire ( $\alpha = .90$ ), perceived honesty ( $\alpha = .79$ ) and likability ( $\alpha = .87$ ), and desired social distance ( $\alpha = .94$ ) (identical to Study 2). Two additional scales assessed the degree of perceived similarity between the ex-offender and the self, and the belief that global citizens are good employees. Three items (e.g., "I would say Person-A is similar to me," "In terms of general attitudes, I feel similar to Person-A") were combined to assess similarity ( $\alpha = .84$ ). Two items ("I believe global citizens make good employees," "Global citizens are trustworthy employees") assessed the belief that global citizens are good employees ( $\alpha = .88$ ). Lastly, participants reported their demographic information.

## 11. Results

### 11.1 Mean Differences

To examine the effect of rehabilitation program on participants' willingness to hire, prejudice, and perception of the applicant, we conducted a MANOVA with condition (global citizen vs. control) as the independent variable, willingness to hire, honesty, liking, social distance, similarity to self, and perception that global citizens are good employees as dependent variables, and positive and negative affect as covariates. The omnibus test was significant, Wilks'  $\Lambda = .86$ ,  $F(6, 83) = 2.29$ ,  $p = .043$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .14$ . As shown in Table 4, participants who read about the ex-offender with global citizen training rated their willingness to hire, perceived honesty, liking, and social distance higher than participants

who did not read about an applicant completing a reentry program while in prison. The perception that global citizens are good employees did not differ significantly between conditions.

**Table 4. Means (Standard Deviation) of Dependent Variables by Type of Reentry Program, Study 3**

Variable	No Mention	Global Citizen	$F(1, 88)$	$p$ -value	$\eta_p^2$
Willing to Hire	3.55 (1.20)	4.05 (1.20)	4.64	.034	.050
Honesty	3.28 (1.04)	3.85 (1.22)	5.46	.022	.058
Liking	3.14 (0.93)	3.64 (1.11)	7.26	.008	.076
Social Distance	2.32 (1.16)	2.68 (1.25)	3.97	.049	.043
Similarity	2.16 (1.16)	2.59 (1.35)	5.04	.027	.054
G.C. Employee	4.64 (1.19)	4.30 (1.25)	2.57	.113	.028

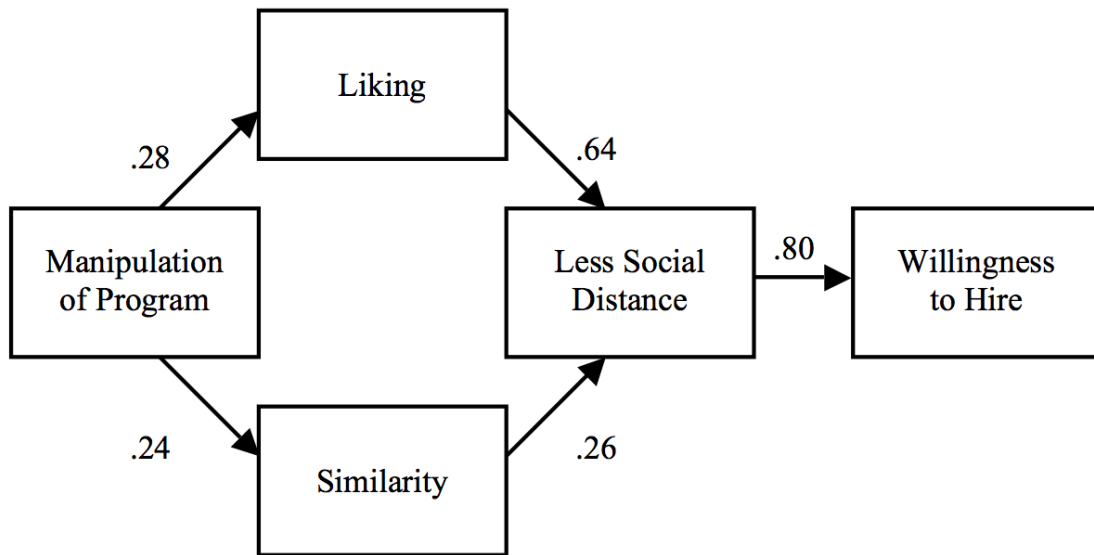
*Note.* 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

### 11.2 Path Analysis

We conducted a path analysis using Amos 19 (with bias-corrected bootstrapping, 5,000 iterations) to examine the mediating role of perceived likeability and similarity on the relationship between type of reform program (-1 = no mention of program, +1 = global citizen program) and prejudice (i.e., social distance), and subsequent willingness to hire the ex-offender. Due to the related nature of the person perception (i.e., liking, similarity), and rating of social distance and willingness to hire, we allowed the disturbance terms for these sets of variables to covary. Additionally, we allowed the covariates (positive and negative affect) to covary with all the variables in the model. The predicted path model adequately fit the data,  $\chi^2(3) = 5.69, p = .128$ , RMSEA = .099 [.000, .223], NFI = .977, CFI = .988.

As shown in Figure 2, the manipulation of type of program predicted perceived likeability ( $\beta = .28, p = .007$ , CI = .086 to .463) and similarity to the self ( $\beta = .24, p = .019$ , CI = .038 to .438). Likeability ( $\beta = .64, p = .001$ , CI = .497 to .764) and similarity to the self ( $\beta = .26, p = .001$ , CI = .125 to .418) predicted social distance, and social distance ( $\beta = .80, p = .001$ , CI = .628 to .942) predicted willingness to hire the ex-offender. The indirect effect of the manipulation on social distance was reliably carried by perceived likability and similarity to the self ( $\beta = .25, p = .004$ , CI = .088 to .406). Additionally, the indirect effect of the manipulation on willingness to hire was reliably carried through the mediators ( $\beta = .20, p = .003$ , CI = .068 to .336). In other words, the liking and greater similarity to the ex-offender who completed a global citizen reentry program predicts lower desire to distance oneself from the ex-offender (i.e., less prejudice), and subsequently predicts greater willingness to hire the ex-offender. We also conducted a second path analysis to test the reversed causal model (i.e., condition predicting willingness to hire, willingness to hire predicting social distance, and social distance predicting likability and similarity to the self). The reversed model showed less appropriate fit

to the data,  $\chi^2(4) = 30.01$ ,  $p < .001$ , RMSEA = .267 [.183, .361], NFI = .878, CFI = .885. Additionally, the final predicted model showed lower AIC (55.69) and ECVI (.612, CI = .582; .732) values than the reversed model (AIC = 78.01, ECVI = .857, CI = .705; 1.09). Thus, the predicted model showed a better fit than the reversed causality model.



**Figure 1. Manipulation of program (-1 = no program, +1 = global citizen) predicting similarity and liking, decreased prejudice (i.e., less social distance), subsequently predicting greater willingness to hire the ex-offender (Study 3). All paths significant at  $p < .05$ .**

## 12. Discussion

The results of Study 3 replicated Studies 1 and 2 in showing more favorable ratings and greater willingness to hire an ex-offender who completed a global citizen program (vs. no program). The results were not due to participants' mood prior to completing the study and not because global citizens are perceived as good employees. Furthermore, the results of the present study suggest that employers are more willing to hire ex-offenders who have completed a reentry program focused on global citizen values because they perceive the ex-offender as more likable, similar to the self, and feel less prejudice toward the ex-offender. In effect, it is likely that crossing the ex-offender label with a positive superordinate identity (i.e., global citizen) blurs the boundary between ingroup and outgroup leading to less prejudice and subsequently a greater willingness to provide employment for the ex-offender. To examine whether the type and the severity of the offense influence the degree of willingness to hire we constructed a fourth study.

## 13. Study 4

Studies 1-3 provide consistent support for the notion that crossing a positive identity with the

ex-offender label result in greater willingness to hire the ex-offender. In Study 4 we examine the limits of the positive outcomes by manipulating the type and severity of the offense. We predict that a severe and violent offense will limit participants' willingness to hire the ex-offender.

### *13.1 Participants and Procedure*

Participants received partial course credit toward their undergraduate business course requirement. Similar to the prior studies participants read a vignette about an ex-offender who either completed a global citizen program or no mention of a program was made. To manipulate type of offense the ex-offender was purported to have committed a non-violent or violent crime. To manipulate severity of offense the ex-offender was purported to have committed a misdemeanor or felony. Identical to Study 3, participants then rated willingness to hire ( $\alpha = .95$ ), likability ( $\alpha = .87$ ), similarity to self ( $\alpha = .85$ ), and desired social distance ( $\alpha = .95$ ). Lastly, participants reported their demographic information.

## **14. Results**

### *14.1 Mean Differences*

We conducted a 2 (Program: none vs. global citizen) X 2 (Type of Offense: non-violent vs. violent) X 2 (Severity of Offense: misdemeanor vs. felony) between-subjects MANOVA. Main effects were found for each of the independent variables, however, these were qualified by a three-way interaction, Wilks'  $\Lambda = .96$ ,  $F(4, 239) = 2.77$ ,  $p = .028$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .044$ . The three-way interaction was significant for willingness to hire ( $F(1, 242) = 4.08$ ,  $p = .045$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .017$ ), likability ( $F(1, 242) = 8.60$ ,  $p = .004$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .034$ ), similarity to self ( $F(1, 242) = 9.27$ ,  $p = .003$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .037$ ), and social distance ( $F(1, 242) = 8.97$ ,  $p = .003$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .036$ ).

To examine the limits of the positive outcomes for ex-offenders who completed the global citizen program (vs. no program) we conducted simple slopes analyses in a series of regressions. As shown in Table 5, when the crime was a non-violent misdemeanor, participants indicated a greater willingness to hire and greater liking for the ex-offender who completed the global citizen program (vs. no program). When the crime was a violent misdemeanor and non-violent felony, participants reported greater willingness to hire, liking, similarity, and reduced distance when the ex-offender completed the global citizen program (vs. no program). When the crime was a violent felony, participants did not significantly differ in responses to the ex-offender in the global citizen and no program conditions.

**Table 5. Means (Standard Deviation) by Condition, Study 4**

	Misdemeanor				Felony			
	Non-Violent		Violent		Non-Violent		Violent	
	Control	Global	Control	Global	Control	Global	Control	Global
Hire	3.81 (1.15) <sub>a</sub>	4.38 (0.96) <sub>b</sub>	3.10 (1.37) <sub>a</sub>	3.92 (1.13) <sub>b</sub>	3.54 (0.89) <sub>a</sub>	4.76 (1.05) <sub>b</sub>	2.82 (1.18) <sub>a</sub>	3.08 (1.21) <sub>a</sub>
Liking	3.26 (0.94) <sub>a</sub>	3.71 (0.85) <sub>b</sub>	2.76 (0.96) <sub>a</sub>	3.44 (1.04) <sub>b</sub>	2.82 (0.42) <sub>a</sub>	3.92 (0.78) <sub>b</sub>	2.91 (0.87) <sub>a</sub>	2.88 (0.91) <sub>a</sub>
Similarity	1.91 (1.30) <sub>a</sub>	2.40 (1.38) <sub>a</sub>	1.68 (0.84) <sub>a</sub>	2.53 (1.22) <sub>b</sub>	1.37 (0.55) <sub>a</sub>	2.52 (1.16) <sub>b</sub>	1.87 (1.11) <sub>a</sub>	1.57 (0.88) <sub>a</sub>
Distance	2.57 (1.45) <sub>a</sub>	2.84 (1.42) <sub>a</sub>	2.05 (1.04) <sub>a</sub>	2.88 (1.41) <sub>b</sub>	1.80 (0.44) <sub>a</sub>	3.24 (1.09) <sub>b</sub>	1.67 (1.03) <sub>a</sub>	1.81 (0.76) <sub>a</sub>

*Note.* Means with different subscripts indicates a significant difference between global citizen program and no program within each category of offence and severity. 7-point Likert-type scale, from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

#### 14.2 Structural Equation Model

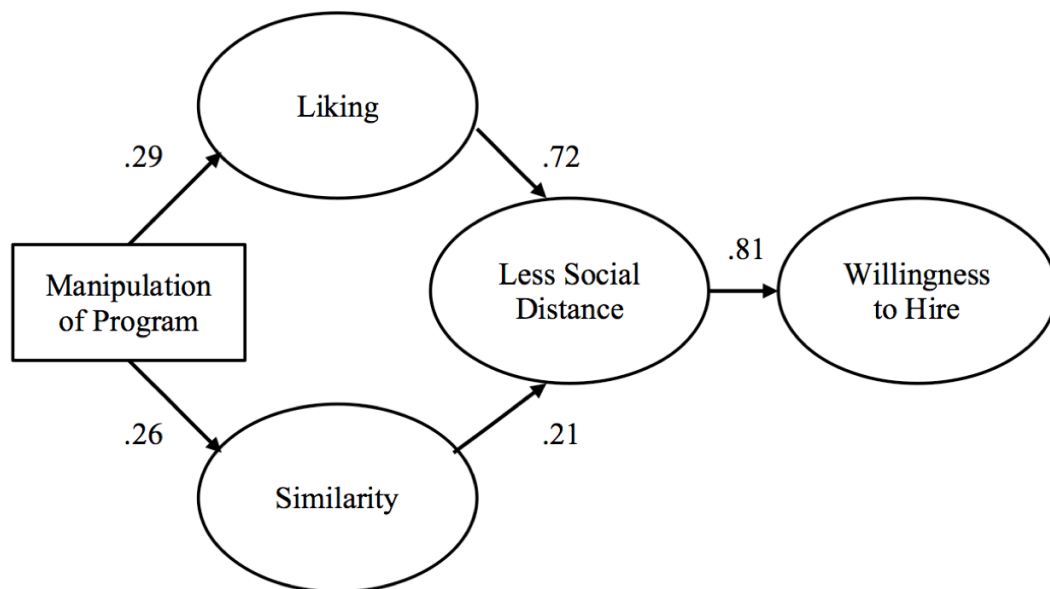
We tested a structural equation model using Amos 19 (with bias-corrected bootstrapping, 5,000 iterations) to examine the mediating role of perceived likeability and similarity on the relationship between type of reform program (-1 = no mention of program, +1 = global citizen program) and prejudice (i.e., social distance), and subsequent willingness to hire the ex-offender. We parceled the likability and social distance items. Identical to Study 3, we allowed the disturbance terms for liking and similarity, and ratings of social distance and willingness to hire variables to covary. Additionally, we allowed the manipulations of type and severity of offense to covary with all the variables in the model. The predicted model adequately fit the data,  $\chi^2(104) = 231.52$ ,  $p < .001$ , RMSEA = .070 [.058, .082], NFI = .946, CFI = .969.

As shown in Figure 2, the manipulation of type of program predicted perceived likeability ( $\beta = .29$ ,  $p < .001$ , CI = .168 to .407) and similarity to the self ( $\beta = .26$ ,  $p < .001$ , CI = .134 to .379). Likeability ( $\beta = .72$ ,  $p < .001$ , CI = .589 to .840) and similarity to the self ( $\beta = .21$ ,  $p = .007$ , CI = .058 to .368) predicted social distance, and social distance ( $\beta = .81$ ,  $p < .001$ , CI = .718 to .891) predicted willingness to hire the ex-offender. The indirect effect of the manipulation of program on social distance was reliably carried by perceived likability and similarity to the self ( $\beta = .27$ ,  $p < .001$ , CI = .157 to .368). Additionally, the indirect effect of the manipulation on willingness to hire was reliably carried through the mediators ( $\beta = .22$ ,  $p < .001$ , CI = .126 to .304). In other words, the liking and greater similarity to the ex-offender who completed a global citizen reentry program (vs. no program) predicted less distancing (i.e., less prejudice) which, in turn, predicted greater willingness to hire the ex-offender. We also conducted a second structural equation model to test the reversed causal model (i.e., condition predicting willingness to hire, willingness to hire predicting social distance, and social distance predicting likability and similarity to the self while controlling for type and severity of offense). The reversed model showed less appropriate fit to the data,  $\chi^2(105) = 257.12$ ,  $p < .001$ ,

RMSEA = .076 [.065, .088], NFI = .940, CFI = .963. Additionally, the final predicted model showed lower AIC (329.53) and ECVI (1.32, CI = 1.16 to 1.52) values than the reversed model (AIC = 353.12; ECVI = 1.42, CI = 1.24 to 1.62). Thus, the predicted model showed a better fit than the reversed causality model.

## 15. Discussion

The results of Study 4 replicate studies 1-3 by showing greater willingness to hire an ex-offender after completing a global citizen reentry program (vs. no program), with the exception of an ex-offender who committed a violent felony. Furthermore, the path model from Study 3 was replicated. The results highlight the limit of the benefits of crossing a positive identity with an extremely negative (i.e., violent felon) identity.



**Figure 2. Structural equation model of program (-1 = no program, +1 = global citizen) predicting willingness to hire, controlling for type and severity of offense (Study 4). All standardized betas are significant at  $p < .007$ .**

## 16. General Discussion

The purpose of the present studies was to examine the influence of a reentry program's framing on individuals' perceptions and endorsement to hire ex-offenders. We predicted, and found, that participants responded more favorably and showed a greater propensity to endorse hiring an ex-offender who completed a global citizen program (vs. no program). Notably, current reentry programs (religious faith, job skills) showed no significant advantage compared to no program in reducing bias against ex-offenders seeking employment. Additionally, endorsement to hire the ex-offender was limited to less serious offenses. Furthermore, we predicted, and found, that the greater

endorsement to hire ex-offenders who complete a global citizen program (vs. no program) can be partly explained by greater liking and similarity to self, which predicts less prejudice (i.e., social distance) toward ex-offenders.

Since discrimination is the main cause of unemployment for ex-offenders (Fletcher, 2001), reducing discrimination should lead to a greater willingness to hire. Prior research suggests that the stigma, prejudice, and discrimination experienced by the ex-offenders are likely the result of them being categorized as part of a low status and devalued outgroup (Turner et al., 1987). The goal of the present research was to create the perception of a common identity between the employer and the ex-offender through crossed categorization (i.e., ex-offender *and* global citizen). A wealth of research shows that making multiple identities salient reduces intergroup bias (Crisp & Hewstone, 1999; Crisp et al., 2001) by increasing the perceived commonality between ingroup and outgroup members (see Hall et al., 2009). The results from the present studies indicate that participants in the global citizen condition rated the ex-offender as more honest and likeable, reported less desire to distance themselves socially from the ex-offender (i.e., less prejudice), and expressed greater endorsement to hire the ex-offender than those in the control condition. Thus, the results across the four studies support prior crossed categorization research (Crisp & Hewstone, 1999; Crisp et al., 2001; Hall et al., 2009) showing reduced prejudice toward outgroup members. Importantly, the model in Studies 3 and 4 show that participants expressed less prejudice (i.e., lower social distance) and were more willing to hire the ex-offender who completed a global citizen reentry program (vs. no program) partly because the ex-offender was viewed as more similar to the self and more likable. In other words, pairing the negative label (i.e., ex-offender) with the more inclusive and positive label (i.e., global citizen) blurred the boundary between the ingroup and outgroup. These results suggest that ex-offenders who participate in a program that focuses on global citizen identity, and highlight this identity in job applications, are less likely to face discrimination as a result of stigma, and be hired, than ex-offenders who do not participate in a reentry program focusing on a positive superordinate identity.

An alternative explanation of the obtained results is that the prosocial nature of the global citizen identity could be the driving force behind participants' reactions. A description of a productive citizen who is aware of the cultural diversity of the world and embraces differences between people, and shows dedication toward helping others and working within the community to promote equality and environmentally sustainable societies may alone elicit positive ratings and a greater willingness to hire from others. However, participants' perception of global citizens as valuable employees did not differ between conditions in Study 3. Likewise, a description of an individual who has accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, and is committed to returning to the community as a productive citizen by living by God's Word (e.g., religious faith program) could be expected to produce similar results. Although the global citizen and religious faith conditions were not significantly different, only the global citizen condition differed from the control condition (i.e., no reentry program) in Study 2.

Another alternative explanation of the obtained results is that participants in the global citizen condition

were primed to feel more responsibility or intergroup empathy toward the ex-offender. In line with a sociocultural perspective of prejudice (Adams, Biernat, Branscombe, Crandall, & Wrightsman, 2008), prejudice and discriminatory behaviors can be primed by aspects of individuals' everyday environments. Therefore, participants in the global citizen condition may have reacted with greater liking and willingness to hire the ex-offender because they were primed to act in a manner consistent with the identity (i.e., intergroup empathy and helping). However, we would have expected to see a similar reaction in the religious faith program in Study 2 as both programs highlighted prosocial identities. We suggest that global citizen is a more inclusive superordinate category (vs. religious group membership) that predicts greater perceived similarity and liking, reduced bias, and greater endorsement to hire the ex-offender.

### *16.1 Limitations and Future Directions*

The present studies, like most, are not free of limitations. Principally, the ability to generalize the results is limited for several reasons. The sample of undergraduate college students who are not all actual employers makes the results harder to generalize to the greater population. College students may not be representative and actual employers might react differently to the hypothetical situation than individuals who are imagining themselves as employers. However, we replicated the general finding in Study 4 with business students. This sample was older and, compared to psychology undergraduates, may more easily place themselves in the role of employer. We constructed measures of willingness to hire the ex-offender, similarity to self, and perception of global citizens as good employees. Although the items appear face valid and showed adequate reliability, further research regarding the validity of the measures is needed. We did not assess whether participants were knowledgeable of the legal difference between a misdemeanor and a felony. Although we found differences between conditions in an expected direction (i.e., less likely to hire a violent felon), we are unsure whether participants understood the legal distinction in severity of the reported charges. Furthermore, participants may have held prior attitudes regarding ex-offenders that influenced the results (e.g., psychology and business students may differ in perceptions of ex-offenders). Although we randomly assigned participants to conditions, prior attitudes may moderate willingness to hire ex-offenders. Additionally, although we suggest that making a positive identity salient simultaneously with the ex-offender label is reducing bias, we are unsure whether participants noticed or were aware that a crossed categorization was salient.

The present research is also limited by the use of self-reported attitudes and use of vignettes. Research suggests that the majority of employers who consent to hire an ex-offender never actually do (Pager & Quillian, 2005). It could be argued that participants might not give the same reactions in a real life situation as they did in response to the vignette that only describes a hypothetical situation. Although past research has shown that vignettes can reliably yield similar results to real life situations (Reysen, Landau, & Branscombe, 2012; Robinson & Clore, 2001), future research would benefit from a laboratory or field study where actual behavior can be observed. Furthermore, the vignettes in the



present research may vary from what ex-offenders present in applications. Recommendations for obtaining employment are often a major focus of reentry programs (Mellow & Christian, 2008). In general, reentry guides and career advisors suggest that ex-offenders emphasize skills rather than offering a chronological job history, avoid hiding the offense if asked, and when explaining the offense to emphasize the positive outcomes and learning experience of being convicted of a crime (Carter, 2009). As shown in the present research, highlighting positive characteristics gained in a reentry program may reduce bias toward ex-offenders.

The initial findings from the present studies offer a variety of future research directions. In general, ethnic minorities (e.g., Black, Hispanic) in the United States are more likely to have been incarcerated than White individuals (Connor & White, 2013), and racial stereotypes often link particular ethnicities to criminal acts (Welch, 2007; Welch, Payne, Chiricos, & Gertz, 2011). Thus, there is a tendency for minorities, especially Black individuals, to be passed over for a job compared to White ex-offenders (Pager, Western, & Bonikowski, 2009; Pager, Western, & Sugie, 2009). In the present research, we intentionally held race of the ex-offender constant to avoid confounding participants' stereotypes or imagined race of the target ex-offender. Future research may examine whether adding a positive identity in the job application reduces bias against racial minority ex-offenders, similar to the reduced bias shown in the present studies. Furthermore, although we tested the limits of endorsement to hire depending on type and severity of offense in Study 4, it is likely that varying descriptions of the ex-offender in terms of the type of job he/she is applying to, type of charge(s) (e.g., drug charge, embezzlement, assault), length of incarceration, demographic characteristics, and past work experience could yield fruitful research avenues.

Lastly, the present results provide initial, but promising, evidence that greater emphasis on prosocial identity reentry programs may positively influence potential employers' attitudes and hiring decisions. However, at present, such a program does not exist. Reysen and Katzarska-Miller (2013a) show that greater global awareness (knowledge of and felt interconnectedness with others in the world) and normative environment (valued others prescribe a global citizen identity) predict identification with global citizens. Identification then predicts endorsement of prosocial attitudes and behaviors. A global citizen reentry program, or a revision of a current reentry program, should focus on these two predictors of global citizenship identification. Current reentry programs often focus on education (Mellow & Christian, 2008). Recent research shows that increases in curriculum focusing on global topics (Reysen, Larey, & Katzarska-Miller, 2012), individuals' perceived knowledge about the world (Reysen, Katzarska-Miller, Gibson, & Hobson, 2013), and individuals' cultural competence (Reysen & Katzarska-Miller, 2013c) predict greater identification with global citizens (and prosocial outcomes). A first step in creating a global citizen reentry program may include revising the curriculum currently used in reentry programs to encompass a greater emphasis on learning about global topics (e.g., cultural diversity, social justice and environmental problems, oppression).

A second step is to focus on the normative environment of the program (see Reysen & Katzarska-Miller,

2013b). Research shows that individuals in one's everyday environment (Gibson & Reysen, 2013), the cultural environment itself (Katzarska-Miller, Reysen, Kamble, & Vithoji, 2012), and the social groups in which one is embedded (Plante, Roberts, Reysen, & Gerbasi, 2014) predict greater global citizenship identification (and prosocial outcomes). To accomplish this, instructors can emphasize a global citizen identity, create a separate community ran section of the jail or prison for program enrollees to teach civic duties (this method is currently used in some jails), and organize partnerships with civic and activist organizations that aid others, the environment, or strive to mitigate global problems. In other words, construct an environment where offenders who are accepted into the reentry program are immersed in activities and other individuals promoting a global citizen identity. Although some aspects of such a program (e.g., creating separate section of a prison) may be less feasible, revising curriculum and organizing activities related to helping others is feasible.

## 17. Conclusion

The results of the present studies show that reentry program framing influences individuals' perceptions of ex-offenders. Participants who evaluated an ex-offender that purportedly completed a global citizen program (vs. no program) were rated more positively, elicited less prejudice, and garnered more endorsement for employment. We suggest that highlighting a prosocial identity aided in reducing the intergroup boundary by increasing likability and similarity with the ex-offender, which then predicted less prejudice and greater endorsement to hire. Based on the present findings, reentry program coordinators are encouraged to acknowledge the stigma that ex-offenders face upon release in addition to individual rehabilitation. In other words, reentry programs should not only attempt to give offenders the skills to effectively function in work environments, but also prepare them for the stigma that they will face upon release. The present research suggests that one method is to infuse reentry programs with global citizenship education, or focus on the prosocial values associated with global citizenship (e.g., intergroup helping, intergroup empathy, responsibility to act). As suggested by Maruna (2001), ex-offenders can only desist from crime once they have developed a prosocial identity. Perhaps a global citizen identity, which is related to numerous prosocial values, could also contribute to desistance by providing the ex-offender with a new prosocial identity.

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