

**LEADING OFFENDERS TO WORK:
BRIDGING THE GAPS BETWEEN PRISON, COMMUNITY SUPERVISION,
AND EMPLOYMENT**

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LEADING OFFENDERS TO WORK

Work is considered an essential component of prisons important to both institutional management and offender change. Although considered essential, it is the least studied of all institutional or community corrections programs with little known about how prison labor and work programs are structured, integrated into core correctional practices, or aligned with other evidence-based interventions such as cognitive behavioral treatment, education, and life-skills based programs. With few exceptions, research ignores the potential variation in prisons and inmates' institutional experiences, fails to consider difference in types of work, isolates prison labor and work programs from other correctional interventions, generally ignores the role of staff in creating and sustaining work environments with integrity, and fails to connect the prison work experience directly to community supervision and civilian employment. Thus, an important overarching research question remains concerning offender employment,

“Does participation in different types of prison labor and work programs enhance the institutional experiences of corrections staff and inmates, increase offenders’ success during reentry, and signal to employers in the community an offender’s redemption and willingness to engage in successful employment?”

To answer this question, the proposed study, through a researcher-practitioner partnership, will embed an advanced researcher in a large men’s medium security prison for a year to analyze via a mixed-methods approach how prison labor and work programs are implemented according to core correctional practices and the principles of evidence-based treatment. During the second year, the same researcher will be embedded in a community justice center and a work release program located in an adjoining community to the prison to analyze via a mixed methods approach how community supervision utilizes work as a supervision strategy to transition inmates from the prison to employment. During the community supervision

phase of the study, those employers who regularly hire ex-offenders will be studied to determine the attributes of “redemption” viewed by employers to influence their hiring decision.

Qualitative and quantitative methods will be used to map how work may be implemented within a continuum of care and to assess whether a clear pathway exists, or may be developed, across correctional settings to purposefully guide inmates’ into civilian employment and successful reintegration. This study will meet the priorities set by NIJ and fill several gaps in the literature.

NIJ Research Priorities

The proposed study is important to addressing *three of NIJ’s Research Priorities for 2015*: (1) the effects of the prison experience on reentry; (2) offender employment and redemption; and (3) improving the wellbeing of staff. **First**, this study emphasizes the effects of the entire prison experience on reentry and employment. Work in prison does not occur separately from treatment, education, custody assignment, and other social/environmental contexts within the prison, but instead is integrated into the prison experience. Placing work at the center of the prison experience is justified as it consumes a significant portion of an inmate’s day, is considered essential to prison management, and crucial to offender change initiatives. The study of prison labor and work programs provides a practical and useful understanding of how the prison experience translates into successful outcomes in the community.

Second, this study bridges the gap between prison and the community by directly connecting the prison experience of inmates, especially that of work, to offender employment and redemption in the community. The utility of this study is to inform policymakers throughout the prison to civilian employment pipeline whether prisons, community supervision, and ex-offenders are in sync with the realities, expectations, and the willingness of employers to consider ex-offenders as redeemable assets to their businesses and the community. Researchers

and policymakers have yet identified a clear, evidence-based pathway for offenders from prison to community supervision and civilian employment.

Finally, although the integrity of treatment providers are considered critical to treatment outcomes in other offender change programs, little is known about how staff responsible for implementing labor and work programs influence inmate experiences, offender change, and outcomes. In addition, little is known about how correctional officers who supervise inmates within prison work environments experience these positions and whether it contributes to their professional and personal wellbeing. Anecdotal evidence suggest that staff choose these positions to minimize exposure to the general inmate population, to normalize work interactions by engaging inmates beyond traditional custody roles, and to increase feelings of safety thus reducing stress. Little is known about how the provision of prosocial, effective programs for inmates may benefit corrections staff and their professional development and wellbeing.

Gaps in the Prison to Community Employment Research

It is commonly believed that a conviction and a prison sentence are detrimental to gainful employment and long term reintegration into the community after prison. Research has addressed the effects of prison on employment from multiple perspectives. One area of research tests the general effect of spending time in prison on the likelihood of gaining post prison employment. These studies generally suggest that prison appears to erode human capital and creates experience gaps that result in being less likely to become employed, earn a livable wage, and sustain employment over time (see Apel & Sweeten, 2010; Bushway & Reuter, 2002; Ramakers, Apel, Nieuwbeerta, Dirkzwager, & van Wilsem, 2014; Solomon, 2012; Visher, Debus-Sherrill, & Yahner, 2011). A few studies have found that prison has a short-term positive

effect on employment, but these effects dissipate over time (Lalonde & Cho, 2008; Pettit & Lyons, 2009).

A second area of research tests for the specific effect of prison labor, such as correctional industries (CI), on institutional behavior, post prison employment, and recidivism. These studies tend to measure whether prison labor and work programs increase human capital through the provision of real world work experience and training. A few of these studies show no effect of CI on employment and recidivism (Maguire, Flanagan, & Thornberry, 1988; Richmond, 2011), while other studies and recent meta-analyses show significant increases in employment and reductions in arrests (Aos, et al., 2011; Camp and Saylor as cited in Richmond, 2011). One of the few studies to directly connect correctional industries to employment in the community by means of a reentry work program shows significant increases in employment and reductions in recidivism (Duwe, 2015).

The third area of research tests the effectiveness of providing vocational training, work education, and employment opportunities during prison or after release on employment and recidivism. These studies generally conclude that work programs are promising, build human capital, increase the likelihood of post-prison employment, increase wages, and are cost effective (Aos, et al., 2011; Visher, Debus-Sherrill & Yahner, 2011; Visher & Travis, 2003). Yet, the fourth area of studies that considers how offenders' transition from prison to work in the community suggest a complex combination of factors influencing success during the process from prison to successful reentry. These studies overall tend to find that most men and women struggle to find a steady job with sufficient income to support themselves or others. Embedded within these findings, however, is the discovery that those who worked prior to prison, held jobs in prison, had a job arranged pre-release, possessed a photo identification post-release, were over

age 26, have strong family ties, and were given even modest employment opportunities tended to do significantly better than those who did not (see Berg & Huebner, 2011; Lalonde & Cho, 2008; Uggen, 2000; Visser, et al., 2011). In addition, those who use any drugs post-release, have chronic physical or mental health conditions, have skill deficits, or who did not desire to join the labor market were significantly less likely to gain employment after release (Apel & Sweeten, 2010; Berg & Huebner, 2011; Visser, et al., 2011).

Finally, there is an emerging body of work that tests whether ex-offenders are less likely to gain employment due to the attitudes of employers toward hiring convicted felons. This research shows that a majority of employers are less likely to hire applicants with criminal records and non-white offenders experienced the greatest barriers to being considered for employment (Pager, 2003). However, employers appear to be more forgiving of those who were convicted for drug or property offenses, and less forgiving of those who are convicted of violent crime (Visser, et al., 2011). In addition, even with a criminal conviction employers valued offenders with prior work experience or relevant skills (Visser, et al., 2011). There is also some evidence that employers view ex-offenders who are still under supervision as more likely to be prompt, sober, hardworking, and reliable with lower turnover rates than other workers competing for jobs in the low-wage labor market (Piehl, 2009). Also, companies with local hiring authority are more likely to hire ex-offenders than those made by corporate headquarters (Piehl, 2009).

Although recent research shows the increasing support for developing effective work and prison programs to improve post release employment and reductions in recidivism, little is known about how work programs are implemented and what configurations of prison labor, work programs, and other offender change programs may lead to improved outcomes. In addition, there is no clear understanding of whether corrections staff or inmates have a dedicated

plan to navigate offenders through the corrections system to guide inmates toward meaningful prison employment followed by a job in the community. Given the growing emphasis on evidence based practice and the importance of work to institutional management and offender change, it is surprising that the integrity of work programs has not garnered more in depth attention from researchers, policymakers, and treatment providers.

The proposed study fills several gaps in the existing literature crucial to building an understanding of how prison labor and work programs may be implemented to provide a clear pathway for inmates from prison to employment in the community. *First*, work is often inaccurately specified in research compared to how it is actually implemented in prisons and community corrections environments. *Second*, work is generally viewed as an intervention, but rarely discussed in terms of the “dosage” necessary to influence outcomes. *Third*, work is generally measured separately as occurring in prison or the community, but rarely together and how they may be linked through a continuum of care/work. *Fourth*, offender employment during community supervision is rarely examined in the context of supervision practices and whether work is developed as an intervention or merely checked as an element of offender compliance. *Finally*, it is still unknown what community employers identify as “redemption” when hiring ex-offenders and whether the correctional process is in sync with employers’ needs and expectations. Thus, unlike other correctional interventions, employment has not been thoroughly examined to determine its potential as a purposeful intervention within a continuum of care versus a generic activity to keep inmates and ex-offenders out of trouble while passing through the system.

Operationalizing Prisons and Work as Static Variables vs. Dynamic Constructs

Work participation in the community is usually conceptualized along a continuum of experiences and viewed as critical to an individual's sense of self-worth, position in society, ability to support one's family, pride in one's expertise or skill set, and in criminology, as critical to desistance from a criminal life style (see Uggen, 2000). Civilian work is also viewed as multidimensional along a continuum from unskilled to highly skilled. Yet, work in prison is rarely constructed as having meaning to inmates, but is instead pragmatically implemented with a focus on achieving institutional goals such as reducing inmate idleness, tending to institutional maintenance, and the servicing of hundreds of inmates each day. Thus, work in prison, even in an era of evidence based practice, is too often conceptualized as a natural part of punishment (historical sentences of "hard labor") or just what inmates do because of their life situation. Unfortunately, researchers have tended to accept this normative definition of work in prison and upon reentry to the community through the over simplistic operationalization of work as an offender having a job (yes/no), working each week (hours) for consecutive increments of time (weeks), for an earned wage (amount).

Work in corrections, however, should be conceptualized similar to work in society as encompassing both static and dynamic elements. Therefore, we define *prison labor* as static. This is work that has little meaning to the individual and is not intended to enhance a person's skills, self-worth, or career development, but is often experienced as necessary to survival—it is what one is mandated to do in prison while serving time or during supervision to achieve compliance. We define *work programs* as dynamic. Work programs refer to work assignments in environments that are intentionally designed to enhance a person's human capital by addressing criminogenic needs and developing skills, work ethic, a sense of self-worth, and/or career

development. Due to the narrow operationalization of work in research and practice, little is actually known about how work is structured in prisons according to core correctional practices, whether inmates are purposefully assigned or allowed to select work opportunities devoted to offender change goals, and to what extent work is purposefully used in prisons and community supervision to actively promote successful outcomes.

Similarly, “prison” is often operationalized in research as a binary construct (yes/no) when determining the relationship between serving time in prison and post-prison employment. It is impossible to fully know the effects of prison on employability without understanding first how the corrections system is structured to provide for inmates (i.e., custody level, capacity, prison environment, and programs). Prisons obviously differ in their capacity to provide programs that are known to improve offender’s personal wellbeing (mental health, substance abuse treatment, social support), skills (basic education, work training, family), or prosocial activities (prison jobs, religious services, hobbies) relevant to ensuring a person’s ability to assess and sustain work during prison and after release. A significant shortcoming in many studies of prisons’ effect on post prison employment is consideration of the interaction between the prison environment and the structure of prison labor and work programs. How work is both implemented and experienced by inmates, if not accounted for in research, tells us little about what works and for whom it works.

For instance, studies of “real world” work in prisons, as implemented through Correctional Industries (CI), often compares CI as a static binary measure (CI vs non-CI inmates) in relationship to institutional and post-prison outcomes (see Maguire, et al., 1988 Richmond, 2012). The shortcomings of such research are many. Such methodologies often count all jobs within CI as equal instead of varied along a continuum of static (unskilled) and dynamic

(skilled) positions that may produce different outcomes (see Richmond, 2012). These studies also ignore individual differences among inmate workers and their experiences within CI with some engaging work as a means to signal they are ready to desist from crime versus participating in work merely to pass time as they move toward release (see Bushway & Apel, 2012). In addition, researchers often fail to account for non-CI inmate comparison groups working in positions that may also replicate dynamic “real world” work (electricians, plumbers, construction, food preparation, clerical work, and other skilled or meaningful work assignments) and therefore suppressing the effect of CI as a “real world” work program. A failure to understand how work is actually implemented in prisons has led to a shallow conceptualization of how prison and work within prison may influence post prison employment above and beyond the challenges of stigma resulting from a criminal record.

Therefore, most prior research tells us little about how prisons are structured to either sabotage or successfully integrate work into offender change initiatives; and how prison labor and work programs may be designed and implemented to build human capital. These results may be due to the primary methods of studying the effect of prisons, prison labor, and work programs based on administrative record data versus qualitative observations, interviewing, and process evaluations. The proposed study will fill this gap by implementing a mixed methods approach to assess and map the process of how prison labor and work programs are implemented, determine how inmates are selected for various work assignments, determine whether work programs are coordinated with other offender change initiatives, and whether there is a clear pathway, understood by correctional staff and experienced by inmates, that lead offenders to employment in the community. Thus, “prison” and “work” will be conceptualized and measured as dynamic constructs that interact with inmate characteristics and experiences to influence outcomes.

Work as an Offender Change Intervention: Dosage and Implementation Integrity

Surprisingly, it is generally unknown whether prison labor and work programs have the structural integrity necessary to be considered as dynamic interventions capable of influencing offender change according to the principles of effective interventions. The principles of effective treatment programs include interventions that are intensive and behavioral in nature, target known predictors of crime, use standardized assessments tools, match programs characteristics with offender characteristics, are firm but fair, hire well qualified and trained staff who can relate to offenders, provide relapse prevention strategies, and adhere to a high degree of advocacy and brokerage with other agencies (see Andrews & Bonta, 2010). Programs that adhere to these principles by targeting offender risk and needs through responsive approaches (RNR) have been shown to be effective in achieving program goals related to increasing prosocial outcomes.

Many work programs strive to meet the definition of rehabilitation because they are “a planned correctional intervention that targets for change internal and/or social criminogenic factors with the goal of reducing recidivism and, where possible, of improving other aspects of an offender’s life” (Cullen, 2002, p. 255). In line with this definition, the National Correctional Industries Association promotes work environments that replicate employment expectations in the community by teaching *technical skills* that qualify offenders for jobs and cognitive-behavioral *soft skills* that help offenders keep jobs by knowing how to interact and communicate with supervisors, co-workers, and clients (Colwell, 2009; National Correctional Industries Association, 2015). Similarly, work release programs purposefully focus residents on finding employment, engaging treatment, reunifying with family, and life skills development (Washington State Department of Corrections, 2015). Thus, if work is considered to be an offender change strategy and intervention then it needs to be assessed as such to understand its

potential impact on targeted goals (institutional behavior, post prison employment, recidivism) and in relationship to other evidence based treatment.

In order for work to be effective then it must be of an appropriate dosage to influence outcomes. In medical terms, “dose” generally refers to a specific quantity of a therapeutic agent occurring at a single time. “Dosage” is the administration of the therapeutic agent in a specific quantity at prescribed intervals. Although correctional interventions are not as precisely measurable as therapeutic agents administered in medicine, attempts have been made to measure the dosage of various prison and community corrections interventions on offender behavior (see Center for Effective Policy, 2014). Within corrections, dosage is generally measured by the number of contacts between officers and offenders, the type of contact, the quality or purpose of the contact, and the length of the contact. Duration usually includes the time spent with offenders during each visit (dose) or the number of visits over time (dosage). Too few quality contacts and the dose may not be strong enough to have an effect. Too many or poor quality contacts and the dose may do more harm than good.

Although not always conceptualized as “dosage,” the strength or integrity of interventions has been measured within corrections at the agency, program, and individual level. At each level it is clear that the duration, content, and quality of programs delivered over time matters (see Taxman, 2008; Taxman, et al., 2004). At the *agency level*, several studies show that the greater the number of RNR elements and attributes implemented in accordance with core correctional practices the greater the reductions in recidivism (Aos, et al., 2011; Lowenkamp, Latessa, & Holsinger, 2006; Lowenkamp, Latessa, & Smith, 2006). This is also true at the *program level* where the stronger the adherence of service providers to the guiding principles of the intervention or model the greater the likelihood of achieving intended outcomes (Andrews &

Bonta, 2010; Barnoski, 2004; Lipsey & Cullen, 2007). Similar, at the *individual level*, studies show that the actual time exposed to evidence based treatments within each session (a minimum of 16-39 minutes) the better the outcomes (Bonta, et al., 2011). Promoting staff skills is important to ensuring program fidelity (see Lutze, 2014). In addition to the quality of time spent within each contact, research shows that the amount of time necessary to achieve intended outcomes also matters with greater face-to-face contact recommended for high risk/need offenders (300 contact hours) compared to moderate (200 contact hours) and low risk/need offenders (100 contact hours) (Center for Evidence Based Public Policy, 2014). Thus, how work assignments and programs are implemented should produce different outcomes depending on their design and alignment with the principles of effective interventions.

Work dosage has been indicated as an area of concern in several studies of prison labor and work programs. For instance, Maguire, Flanagan, and Thornberry (1988) in one of the first studies of CI suggested that the lack of significant differences in outcomes may be due to the fact that most of the sample experienced CI employment for 18 months on average, for 26 hours per week, during the middle of their sentence, and made \$12 per week. They suggest the truncated work week, immersed in a prison environment with a “dearth of constructive activities with which to structure time” severely weakens any anticipated effects and represents a minimal intervention (Maguire, et al., 1988). Many studies tend to use six months or one year as the minimum length of involvement in work to have a potential effect (Richmond, 2012; Lalonde & Cho, 2008), but as Richmond, (2012) points out this is generally an arbitrary decision. Rarely measured are attributes related to the content of the dose such as quality of the work (menial vs. skilled), quality of the work environment (staff interaction, peer support), the utility and meaning of the work to offenders (career achievement, certification, pay financial obligations, social

support, prison niche), or how the benefit of work assignments may be coordinated, or interact, with other offender change programs to influence outcomes. Corrections programs, whether work related or not, are often delivered through a fragmented service model that makes it difficult to know what, when, where, or how offenders are receiving services and even more difficult to measure the potential dosage received without direct observations (Duwe, 2015).

In short, there is little known about the effectiveness of work programs, yet the existing literature on evidence based practices and the principles of effective corrections interventions strongly suggest that work in prison and the community may be implemented in ways that have utility beyond institutional management and keeping offenders busy. When work is considered a dynamic construct it can be used as a framework to build human capital that can be spent during and after prison to gain and sustain employment. Human capital includes social, psychological, and practical skill sets important to maintaining prosocial and conventional roles at work.

This study will advance existing research by assessing prison labor and work programs according to the principles of effect interventions and whether work as implemented in prison and the community possesses the integrity to be considered an evidence based practice. It also will determine how inmates experience work programs with treatment integrity compared to those without and how this experience transfers to community supervision and gaining employment.

Inmates' Prison Experiences, the Prison Environment and Work

Rarely are inmates asked about their prison experiences and how working in prison alters the their plans for the future. Using proxy measures for the prison experience instead of interviewing or surveying inmates directly prevents us from knowing whether work serves as a place where inmates create a healthy niche where they can cope maturely with the challenges

posed by being in prison and whether work builds social capital that then extends to other aspects of their incarceration and ultimate release. Current research on work too frequently isolates inmates from the realities of where they live—this in spite of the fact that we consider where they live upon release and how this may affect outcomes.

Research on inmate adjustment, social support, and prison environments shows that the prison environment matters to how offenders cope and adapt to civilian life after release (Goodstein, 1979; Goodstein & MacKenzie, 1989; Haney, 2001; Hochstetler, DeLisi, & Pratt, 2010; Lutze & Kigerl, 2013). Prison environments that provide social support and are less hostile have positive effects on reentry and long-term reintegration (Hochstetler, et al., 2010). In addition, inmates often seek out “niches” in the prison environment that provide structure, support, safety, and emotional feedback (Johnson, 2002; Lutze, 1998). Work, vocational training, and education programs are often cited as places that provide inmates with a refuge where they can “be themselves” away from the public spaces of the prison where they must constantly defend against potential threats (Johnson, 2002).

The current study builds about prior research by surveying inmates about their experiences in the prison environment, how they experience work, and whether the prison environment possesses attributes that are aligned with the principles of effective interventions. This study also asks the same of staff to determine whether they emphasize the environment similarly.

Community Supervision as a Tool to Enhance Employment

There is little known about how work is used as *a community supervision strategy* beyond enforcing the rules for offender compliance. There is an inherent assumption that any job after release places ex-offenders in compliance with supervision and will lead to success no

matter how tedious, poorly paid, demeaning or in direct conflict with achieving related goals known to be important to long-term success such as physical and mental health, addiction, parenting, and other conditions.

Community corrections officers clearly understand the difficult task of finding work after release from prison and they often cultivate work opportunities and know of businesses that will hire ex-offenders (see Lutze, 2014). Recent research by Duwe (2015) reports that proactive support of offenders by community corrections officers to find work has a significant impact on increasing employment, finding work that pays a livable wage, and reducing recidivism. Similar findings were also reported by Morash (2010) for women on supervision and how a livable wage helped women avoid unsafe housing, abusive relationships, and situations highly correlated with relapse or recidivism. In addition, recent research is beginning to focus on how community corrections officers trained in adhering to core correctional practices and the principles of effect interventions improve outcomes for offenders (see Lutze, 2014 for a review).

Thus, the proposed study will build upon prior research by gaining a better understanding about how work programs in community corrections align with core correctional practices and whether community corrections officers use compliance with supervision and mandatory work as leverage to keep ex-offenders employed. It will also determine whether officers are similar to employers in identifying when offenders are signaling their readiness to desist from crime and worthy of redemption.

Employers, Offender Redemption, and Employment

Many employers hire offenders after release from prison. Although most research has shown that the stigma of a prison record certainly works to narrow options for job seekers (Solomon, 2012), recent research shows that employers are focused on job skills and work

experience (Visher, et al., 2011). In spite of this, there is little understanding about how community supervision, ex-offenders, or employers are incentivized or sabotaged by current labor laws, corrections' policy, or practices unrelated to stigma. In addition, it is unknown whether it is possible for those offenders who are committed to desisting from crime to signal to employers that they are ready for redemption (see Bushway & Apel, 2012; Wells, 2014). It is also still uncertain how corrections prepares offenders to communicate to employers that they are different from the masses of offenders being released from prison and one who is worthy of their investment. Bushway and Apel (2012) suggest that training completion is a clear indicator of potential good, while others have indicated that after approximately five years post prison ex-offenders are no different than those without a criminal history (see Solomon, 2012).

The current study will build upon existing research by understanding what aspects of prison employment programs may prepare ex-offenders to signal to employers that they are ready to participate in the workforce again as reliable employees. There is still a lot to be discovered about how corrections implements work across correctional settings, how inmates experience prison, and whether they are prepared for redemption by employers in the community.

METHODOLOGY

An overreliance on administrative data to explore the connection between prison, community supervision, and offender employment has led to a limited understanding of how prison labor and work programs are implemented in corrections. This study remedies this shortcoming by employing a mixed methods longitudinal design inclusive of a process evaluation (using qualitative and quantitative measures) and a quantitative outcome evaluation directly informed by data collected during the process evaluation. The study will be conducted

over a two year period (January 2016 to December 2017) by embedding an advanced researcher with the agency, first in a men's medium and low security prison complex, and then in a community justice center and prison work release program. The process evaluation will examine the flow of programs and offenders from institutional corrections to community supervision and community employment to document the conduits and barriers to achieving a cohesive work continuum. The quantitative analyses will assess an offender's individual characteristics, prison experiences, work experience while incarcerated, and community supervision experiences on their likelihood to sustain employment, successfully complete community supervision through reductions in technical violations, readmission to prison, and new convictions.

Research Setting

The Washington State Department of Corrections (DOC) is a progressive agency focused on building offender change initiatives that are evidence-based and meaningful to offenders' success in prison and in the community. Approximately 30% of adult offenders in Washington State are employed post-release and the DOC has set a goal to increase offender employment to 40% in the near future. To reach this goal, Washington, like other states, need a better understanding of how prison labor and work programs are implemented in relation to core correctional practices and evidence based treatment.

Washington incarcerates approximately 18,200 inmates and it is required that all inmates who are assessed as capable of working be provided a work assignment in prison. One of Washington's largest prisons is the Airway Heights Correctional Center (AHCC) located a short distance from the City of Spokane, WA (population 211,000; Spokane County, 400,000+). In addition to the prison, Spokane also has the Brownstone Work Release Facility for men and the Eleanor Chase House Work Release for women, the WA DOC Community Justice Center,

several traditional supervision state offices, and Community Oriented Police Substations to supervise offenders living in the community.

AHCC's rated inmate capacity is 2,152 male, long-term minimum and medium security level offenders and its average daily population is exceeded by 25-30 inmates. Fifty-one percent (N=1,104) of AHCC inmates are employed through both general work assignments (n=432) and Correctional Industries (n=672). AHCC provides a diverse offering of work assignments and work programs. Education programs are provided through the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges with course work in basic education (GED), vocational skills classes, and English as a Second Language.

In addition to these work assignments Correctional Industries has a large presence at AHCC with inmates working in food production, optical manufacturing, textiles, warehouse services, commissary, laundry, and administrative services. CI and DOC education are working together to link Standard Occupational Classification codes that link CI jobs to occupational codes used in community employment. In each of these areas of industry, inmates can earn certificates of proficiency as well as professional certifications for those who meet specific criteria such as ophthalmic laboratory technician, forklift operator, washroom technician/laundry manager, office administration and records keeping. In addition to traditional work assignments and educational opportunities CI also attempts to strengthen inmates' "soft skills" through a new program "Makin it Work" where inmates are taught to develop the cognitive and behavioral skills necessary to be successful in the workforce. Staff in CI are considered role models in the workplace that offenders can learn from through observation and CI staff are trained in cognitive coaching.

There are approximately 2,000 offenders in Spokane City/County on WA DOC Community Supervision. These offenders have been assessed as 33% high violent risk, 28% high non-violent risk, 22% moderate risk, 15% low risk, and 1% unclassified. Community corrections supervision provides both in-house programs such as “Thinking for a Change,” stress and anger management, moral recognition therapy, parenting programs, and job skills enhancement. Community corrections also partners with several providers including Spokane Mental Health, Work Source, Department of Veterans Affairs, Spokane Community College, Goodwill Industries, SNAP, and local substance abuse treatment providers. Community service opportunities are also provided to offenders through community work crews where offenders on supervision are able to complete their community service hours.

Research Design: Mixed Methods Longitudinal Case Study

This study employs a mixed methods longitudinal design inclusive of a process evaluation (using qualitative and quantitative measures) and a quantitative outcome evaluation. The study will be conducted in two phases: Year 1—prison phase and Year 2—community supervision phase. A process evaluation will be conducted during both phases and an outcome evaluation will be conducted at the end of each phase. This study will abide by the protection of human subjects and will be reviewed by the Washington State University Internal Review Board for the protection of human subjects before implementation.

Research Sample. Only inmates who are employed at AHCC will be included in the study (N=1,104). Propensity score matching (PSM) will be used to match non-CI employed inmates (n=432) with CI-employed inmates (n=672). PSM will result in a reduced sample estimated to be ~400 from each group resulting in a reduced sample of approximately 800 inmates (see Appendix Figure 1). In addition, it is estimated that during the period of study,

January 2016 to June 2017 approximately 60 inmates will be released from AHCC directly to Spokane (CI = 36; non-CI = 24). These inmates will be targeted for inclusion in the study separate from the PSM groups. These inmates will be followed from the prison setting and followed directly into the community. This group will allow for a direct examination of the continuum of work from prison to the community and employment. In addition to inmates, staff will also be interviewed and surveyed about their experiences providing custody and supervision within work programs. Approximately 30 staff members working within CI and 30 staff members leading work crews in non-CI work will be interviewed and surveyed.

In addition to following inmates who participation in work, a similar methodology will be used to study offenders being supervised in the community (see Appendix Figure 1). Only offenders being supervised through the Spokane Community Justice Center (n~300) and the Work Releases will be included in the study (n~110). In addition to offenders, employers will also be included in the community phase of the study. These will include approximately 40 employers divided between those who hire ex-offenders and those who do not.

Year 1 Process Evaluation: Prison Work Continuum and Employment

During the first year of this study an *embedded researcher will spend 20 hours per week* at the prison to conduct a process evaluation that includes the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data. The process evaluation will assess parallel processes occurring simultaneously that are important to understanding the complexity of work in prison. The first element of the process evaluation considers the alignment of prison work opportunities with core correctional practices. In other words, *how is prison labor and work programs implemented in the prison according to best practices?* Are work programs in prison structured in a manner that has integrity and are they likely to produce the intended outcomes for the institution and staff? This

portion of the process evaluation will determine whether a continuum of work exists from the point of arrival to the institution, assignment to a living unit and work, involvement in offender change programs, reentry planning specifically related to gaining employment, to release to the community (see Appendix Figure 2).

The second element of the process evaluation considers how individual inmates' experience work during their incarceration. In other words, *how do different types of inmates experience work in prison and does participation in dynamic work programs enhance offender outcomes compared to static prison labor assignments?* In this portion of the process evaluation it will be determined whether prison labor and work, when implemented according to core correctional practices and the principles of effective interventions, provides a work “dosage” worthy of influencing outcomes (see Appendix Figure 3). The following measures are based on those deemed important in prior research and identified as gaps in the literature necessary to understand the effects of work in prison.

Inmate Characteristics. Institutional record data will be collected for each offender related to personal characteristics (demographics, criminal history, risk/need assessment, chronic health conditions, employment history, education, and family), program participation (education, vocational training, substance abuse treatment, etc.), and institutional behavior (infractions, disciplinary sanctions, work termination) (see Figure 3). Original data collection will be used to measure inmates' prison experience and how these relate to work during prison and post release (see measures below).

Prison Characteristics. The attributes of the prison may be important to whether the institution can adhere to core correctional practices and implement effective programs. Thus, several measures will include *institutional characteristics*, *staff characteristics*, and the types of

offender change programs available at the prison (see Figure 2). These data will be collected from institutional record data, internal institutional reports, external reports and studies if available, and interviews of administrative leaders.

Core Correctional Practices and Work Assignments. A diverse set of work assignments are available for inmate participation as general prison jobs and Correctional Industries. These jobs range from minimally skilled labor to highly skilled positions within each occupational category (see Figures 2 and 3). Both existing data sources and original data collection will be used in this portion of the study. First, *quality of work* will be measured by the *Quality of Work Checklist* and will be based on written materials provided by the institution and direct observation. The *Work Assignment Check List* will be used to record the key elements of each work assignment to establish a general baseline for understanding how work varies within occupational assignment by skill level, formal certifications, complexity of work tasks, wages, and ability to achieve certification.

Second, *work dose* will be measured through multiple constructs. *Work program integrity* will be measured according to measures core correctional practices and the principles of effective interventions. Staff and inmates who work within each occupation will be interviewed to determine whether their work meets the basic standards for CCP and the principles of effective interventions. The interviews will be structured according to the *Evidence Based Implementation Survey (EBIS)* to measure how work programs are being implemented according to CCP (van Wormer, 2014). The EBIS tool was developed by van Wormer (2014) as an alternative to the *Correctional Program Assessment Inventory (CPAI)*, and is currently being used in Washington State to assess offender change programs. It includes five areas: (1) program referral and entry procedures, (2) program operations—logistics, (3) program operations—skills

and coaching, (4) staff training and qualifications, and (5) quality assurance and fidelity. The content of the interview will be recorded onto an interview schedule form during the interview, and later entered into SPSS for scoring, and analyses of each program. *Duration of work* will be measured according to traditional measures related to length (weeks), time (hours per week). *Dynamic and static work* assignments will be assessed based on an index created from the cumulative scoring results from the EBIS interviews, prison environment inventory, and the work assignment checklist.

Third, staff and inmates will be surveyed to assess the *institutional climate* as it relates to the dimensions of effective use of authority, appropriate modeling and reinforcement, problem solving, effective use of community resources, and quality of interpersonal relationships. An adapted version of the *Prison Environment Inventory* will be used to measure these dimensions (see Haas & Hamilton, 2007; Lutze, 1998). In addition, both staff and inmates will be surveyed about their *adjustment to the work environment* regarding safety, work ethic, work utility to achieving offender change, stress, and whether the work place provides a prison niche that serves as a place that promotes professional wellbeing (see Lutze, 1998). Minor adjustments will be made to accommodate variations in staff and inmate roles.

Process evaluation Year 1 conclusion. The results of the process evaluation conducted during the first year of this project will provide:

- A continuum of work map showing whether a clear pathway exists for inmates to fully prepare for employment during incarceration through release to the community.
- Determine whether work programs and other offender change programs are coordinated into a seamless continuum of care or result in a fragmented provision of services
- Identify what types of work assignments adhere to core correctional practices and the principles of effective interventions.

- Determine whether work dose can be effectively measured and used in future research as a guide to determine the strength necessary to influence outcomes.

Outcome Evaluation Year 1: The data collected during the process evaluation and the administrative record data for each inmate will be used to conduct a multivariate outcomes (see Figure 1 for sample estimates). Propensity score matching will be used to match CI employed inmates with non-CI employed inmates on multiple offender characteristics. These inmates will then be compared on institutional outcomes related human capital and inmate behavior.

- Determine whether participation in quality, dynamic, work environments influences institutional behavior.
- Determine whether there is a cumulative effect between work and other offender change programs on institutional outcomes.
- Utilize a multivariate statistical models to determine the significance of the quality of work programs, inmate characteristics, and inmate experiences on institutional outcomes and set the stage for examining post prison outcomes related to community supervision, employment, and recidivism.

Process and Outcome Evaluation Year 2: Community Supervision and Employment

Process Evaluation. During the second year a researcher will be embedded in the Spokane Community Justice Center to conduct a process evaluation to assess how work and work programs are implemented during community supervision (see Appendix Figure 4). The same parallel processes assessed in the prison will be replicated in the community. The first element of the process evaluation considers the alignment of community work opportunities with core correctional practices are implemented within community supervision. In other words, *how do community corrections work programs implemented to assist offenders gain employment align with core correctional practices?* Are work programs in the community structured in a manner that has integrity and are they likely to produce the intended outcomes for the agency and offenders? Many of the same measures used during year one will be adapted for use in the

community during year two of this project: agency characteristics, staff characteristics, offender change programs, core correctional practices, agency climate, work experiences, duration, type of work, dynamic vs static, adjustment to the work environment (see Figure 3). Offender information will carry forward from year one of the study or be collected through record data for additional subjects during Year 2 for offenders at the Community Justice Center and Work Releases.

The second element of the process evaluation considers offender redemption and employers willingness to hire ex-offenders released from prison. This portion of the process evaluation will answer the questions, *how do inmates show redemption and signal to employers that they are ready for employment; and what do employers look for when taking a chance on hiring an ex-offender?* This portion of the process evaluation will assess whether inmates' prison experiences, especially work experiences, transfer in a planned and meaningful way to gaining community employment. Interviews with employers who hire ex-offenders and with employers who are known by community corrections officers not to hire ex-offenders will be used to assess whether prison and community corrections programming is in sync with employer's expectations.

Employer Expectations. First, the *business' characteristics* will be recorded regarding type of service/product produced, number of employees, ownership, longevity in the community, and type of labor required. Employers will be interviewed with a focus on employee characteristics that represent *skills, experience, and redemption*. Another focus will be to identify the *contextual, legal, or business practices* that serve as barriers or incentives to hiring ex-offenders.

Outcome Evaluation. The outcome evaluation will capture data from Year 1 and Year 2 of the study. The outcome evaluation will determine the effect of offender change programs in prison, inmates' institutional experiences, and type and strength (dose) of prison work assignment on community supervision compliance (technical violations, program participation), employment, and recidivism during the first year of reentry.

Process Evaluation Year 2. The results of the process evaluation conducted during the second year and the project's outcome evaluation will provide:

- Determine whether work programs and other offender change programs are coordinated into a seamless continuum of care or result in a fragmented provision of services
- Identify what types of work programs in community corrections adhere to core correctional practices and the principles of effective interventions.
- Determine whether there is a cumulative effect between work and other offender change programs in the prison and during community supervision that set the stage for achieving the goals of increasing ex-offender employment and decreasing recidivism.
- Utilize multivariate statistical modeling to determine the significance of the quality of work programs, inmate characteristics, inmate experiences, and community supervision on post prison outcomes related to community supervision, employment, and recidivism.
- Determine to what degree prisons and community supervision can help offenders to build human capital that is relevant to post prison employment.

This study will provide policymakers and professionals with a basis to evaluate and identify strengths and weaknesses in the implementation of prison labor and work programs according to core correctional practices and the principles of effective interventions. It will also provide researchers with a foundation to begin their research based on a refined definition of what constitutes work in prison and its effect on offender employment. The implementation of work and the experiences of staff and inmates is a complex and important component of corrections

and has the potential to have a significant impact on correctional goals within the institution and in the community.

Dissemination Strategy

In brief, the findings of this research project will be disseminated *to practitioners, researchers, and policy makers* through multiple venues and formats. Dissemination to practitioners will include research reports and presentations to the CI and DOC at the end of each phase of the study. The DOC will receive preliminary findings through *research reports* throughout the project and will distribute the findings via their *website* and *newsletter*. Broader dissemination to the practitioner community will include *NIJ Publications, practitioner focused journals*, and presentations at *practitioner oriented conferences* (National Association of Probation and Parole, National Correctional Industries Association, etc.). Dissemination to the scientific community will include presentations at national and regional conferences (ACJS, ASC, etc.), *NIJ Publications* and *peer reviewed journals*. The project will also be distributed via COS—Pilot and LinkedIn. WSU will also sponsor and develop a project specific *website* highlighting project goals, findings, and contributions to the scientific community. Dissemination through education will utilize *educational forums* such as DOC staff training, WSU graduate seminars, and undergraduate courses. Dissemination of the data. Finally, the original, intermediate and final (de-identified) dataset will be provided to *NIJ for dissemination*. The finding of this study will be added to the *WSU DOC data repository* and made available for future research.