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Backgrounds and motivations of faith-based halfway-house volunteers.

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BACKGROUNDS AND MOTIVATIONS OF FAITH-BASED HALFWAY-HOUSE
VOLUNTEERS

by

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B.A., Western Kentucky University, 2009

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUNDS AND MOTIVATIONS OF FAITH-BASED HALFWAY HOUSE VOLUNTEERS

Andrew S. Denney

April 4, 2012

This study examines the backgrounds and motivations of individuals who volunteer for a Protestant Christian faith-based halfway-house for recently released offenders. Drawing on eight in-depth interviews with volunteers from a faith-based ministry located in a Southern city, the study examines how and why volunteers come to their positions and what they perceive as rewards of their work. Typically, volunteers report receiving more benefits themselves than they perceive offender clients receiving. Chief among perceived rewards are a transparent community in which volunteers could safely share personal aspects of themselves than what they could experience elsewhere. This study provides valuable information to scholars, legislators, and correctional professionals by showing that faith-based ministries do not necessarily emphasize the religious aspect of their program.

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INTRODUCTION

Prisons continue to remain a popular institution for punishment throughout the United States. For the estimated 1.5 million inmates that are currently incarcerated, prisons offer programs in the form of education and work programs in order to occupy inmates' time while they serve-out their sentences. However, the trend of state and federal prisons offering programs to inmates is quickly becoming a thing of the past. The presence of once common programs, such as faith-based programming, in both state and federal prison systems has continued to fade away throughout the past three decades.

The absence of once common programs is likely the result of the enormous cost that accompanies the implementation of mandatory-minimum sentencing; such sentencing practices emerged as a part of the War on Drugs and greatly increased the total population of inmates throughout the country. To illustrate this point, the total number of individuals incarcerated in both state and federal prisons has steadily risen until 2007, originating from the implementation of the War on Drugs that began in the 1970s. In 1980, there were an estimated 319,598 incarcerated (i.e. jails and prisons) in the U.S. ("Correctional populations," 2009). Since 1980, this number has increased to 743,382 in 1990, 1,316,333 in 2000, and it is now estimated to be at 1,524,513 as of 2009, a 377% increase ("Correctional populations," 2009). One can also see an increase

in expenditures during this same time period with an estimated $20 billion in 1982 being spent on state and federal corrections and $74 billion in 2007, a 270% increase ("Correctional populations," 2009). As a result of the rising numbers of incarcerated persons and costs associated with housing these inmates, programs are being cut at both the state and federal levels in order to lower the financial impact that these rising costs are having on respective budgets. One program that is quickly being eliminated is faith-based programming, leading to corrections' officials seeking help from mostly Protestant Christian faith-based organizations to fill the void that in-house programs once provided.

As stated above, in-house faith-based programs are becoming less-and-less common as corrections' budgets continue to rise. A program that is increasingly becoming subject to elimination from state and federal prisons is the employment of full-time chaplains, once a core fixture in U.S. prisons. Some examples of states cutting these programs are North Carolina, with a $70.4 million budget shortfall, and South Carolina with a $33.6 million shortfall. South Carolina cut approximately 24 of the 47 chaplains in 2001, while it is not clear how many positions North Carolina has cut. (St. Gerard, 2003). As a result of these cuts, many prisons (at both the state and federal level) are seeking faith-based organizations and volunteers affiliated with these groups to fill the time and perceived benefits that these activities once led by chaplains provided for their institutions (Tewksbury & Dabney, 2005). The largest group that has offered to volunteer for this role is primarily Protestant Christian affiliated organizations. This augment in volunteerism from Protestant Organizations will likely continue in the coming years with increased funding being available from federal grants through the Bush Administration's faith-based initiatives that will be discussed further below. Although the increase in faith-

based prison ministry groups seems to be eminent, little-to-no research has been conducted on the backgrounds and motivations of faith-based organization volunteers that are allowed access inside prisons, and that work closely with recently released inmates. It is vital that more is known on this group of volunteers due to the likelihood of their increased involvement with current and former offenders.

This study seeks to fill the gap in literature on volunteers in these groups by exploring the backgrounds and the motivations of the individuals that participate in Protestant Christian faith-based halfway-house organizations. This study examines one prison ministry with individuals that volunteer for a loosely affiliated faith-based halfway-house for recently released inmates.

Some of the benefits that this study hopes to provide are to better educate correctional administrators on exactly what motivates these individuals to volunteer their time and resources to this often neglected segment of the population. Additionally, this study hopes to educate state and federal officials on the backgrounds and motivations of volunteers inside non-profit faith-based halfway-housing where many inmates seek asylum once they are released from custody. This issue is especially important since many of these former inmates are still under state custody in some capacity (i.e. parole or probation), which can have a significant effect on future recidivism. This added knowledge will help jail and prison administrators, legislators, and academics better understand the mindsets of volunteers offering both financial resources as well as their time in order to positively impact the lives of former inmates. Also, this study hopes to reveal the end goal that volunteers hope to achieve by providing their monetary and other resources to helping former inmates. In addition, this study will help place the

organization and actions of these groups in a broader context in order to have a more thorough understanding of these groups by providing demographic characteristics, background information, and the general motivations of those willing to volunteer in faith-based prison ministries.

Role of Religion in the Development of U.S. Prisons

Religion, especially in the form of Protestant Christian principles, has had a strong hand in the conception and development of the U.S. penal system. One of the first and most prominent examples of Christian principles being infused into the development of U.S. prisons is the enormous influence that the once prominent religious sect, the Quakers, had in the development of the American penal system. The Quakers emerged as one of the primary groups that contested harsh punishments in Europe prior to their migration to the U.S. with many of these ideals towards Christianity's role in punishment eventually being carried-over to the U.S. (Patterson, 1972). These Quaker ideals eventually established the groundwork for the development of the U.S. penal system soon after their migration to the U.S.

In the last quarter of the 18th century, the Quakers formed the Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons, which soon after led to the development of the now well-known Walnut Street Jail (Depersis & Lewis, 2008). The Walnut Street Jail holds great importance due to the fact that it served as a precursor to modern prison facilities based-upon its design and overall organization. In addition, the Walnut Street Jail became a popular format that surrounding cities, states, and other countries toured to model their own system. The main benefits of this system perceived by surrounding

cities, states, and countries were that it was initially seen as both efficient and effective in containing a large amount of offenders. However, the perceived benefits of this system are what helped lead to its downfall once the numbers of inmates began to climb. The Walnut Street Jail was originally envisioned to require inmates to spend their sentence reflecting on their misdeeds that led to their imprisonment, while only being provided a Bible to read to fill their time (Depersis & Lewis, 2008; Roberts, 1997; Smith, 1972). Additionally, this model required inmates to remain completely silent while doing their "penitence," resulting in the later development of the word "penitentiary" now synonymously linked with prison facilities (Depersis & Lewis, 2008; Roberts, 1997). The Walnut Street Jail model also called for inmates to remain in solitary confinement, soon leading to housing issues immediately after its widespread implementation, which will be discussed further below. Although solitary confinement eventually posed housing issues, it was hoped that inmates would repent from their sins and become productive members of society (Depersis & Lewis, 2008; McGowen, 1995; Smith, 1972). This was the first example in the U.S. of punishment principles being focused towards rehabilitation as the ultimate goal in hopes of changing an inmate from being morally bankrupt to morally sound -- considered an "improved" moral state -- thus integrating religious ideals with the concept of rehabilitation.

The joining of rehabilitation to religious ideals with the concept of punishment was a perspective likely bolstered by the actions of Thomas Eddy, warden of State Penitentiary in Connecticut during the 1790s (i.e. also known as "Newgate" prison) (McGowen, 1995). Eddy operated a religious-Quaker school with rehabilitation emphasized as its primary purpose that soon gained the attention of other Quakers in the

area (McGowen, 1995). Additionally, notable Quakers William Allen and Elizabeth Fry organized groups to go inside prisons to minister to inmates throughout England; such actions set strong examples for other Quakers in both England and the U.S. to do the same or similar actions that embody their religious teachings (McGowen, 1995). The primary belief behind ministering to prisoners was that it was important for inmates to have positive role models that embodied the Christian teachings of the Quakers in order to have their best chance for rehabilitation while incarcerated (McGowen, 1995). Soon after the implementation of their programs, Allen and Fry had a following that would send individuals inside prisons to minister to inmates – both male and female – in order to reverse their worldly and spiritual fortunes (McGowen, 1995). This occurrence served as the first recorded instance of a faith-based organization being organized for the sole purpose of going inside jails and prisons to minister to inmates.

The American Quakers continued the tradition of maintaining Christian ideals within prisons with rehabilitation-centered teachings well into the nineteenth century (McGowen, 1995). Although this form of incarceration may have been popular, it quickly dissipated once issues of overcrowding became a notable problem, which was foreshadowed as being a potential issue with this particular model by penal theorist Samuel Romily in the mid-1800s (Depersis & Lewis, 2008; Heath, 1963). The issue of overcrowding soon led to the growth in popularity of the Auburn prison system in 1812 that emphasized productivity in the form of manual labor, that in-turn produced great economic benefits for states and independent proprietors. The Auburn system quickly replaced the costly and economically unproductive Quaker-influenced Walnut Street Jail model (a.k.a. the Pennsylvania system). In addition, the Auburn model introduced harsh

working conditions that rivaled plantation-style slave labor models. Although the change in ideology from rehabilitative-based to labor-based programming was highly profitable, rehabilitation would once again take the forefront of penal ideology.

Rehabilitation infused with religious principles would again take hold of the penal paradigm of U.S. prisons approximately fifty years after the Walnut Street Jail lost its initial appeal to the economically profitable Auburn system model. In 1870, the National Congress of Penitentiary and Reformatory Discipline established the "Declaration of Principles" that formally made rehabilitation the central focus and purpose of incarceration (Bosworth, 2010). Along with rehabilitation now being the primary focus of U.S. prisons, "moral regeneration" was seen as the primary facet necessary for true rehabilitation to occur, and this could only be possible in the eyes of this Congress by instilling Protestant Christian principles in inmates' lives (Bosworth, 2010). This move by the National Congress of Penitentiary and Reformatory Discipline brought back some of the beliefs promoted by Cesare Beccaria nearly a century earlier in his belief that religion could be useful in resolving any moral faults of inmates (Heath, 1963). To further illustrate the belief in the role of prisons during this time period, one prominent penal theologian from the mid-1800s, Frederick Hill, often referred to prisons as being "moral hospitals." This approach further cemented the concept of illegal acts as being moral flaws that could be corrected with proper faith-based instruction (Roberts, 1997). One important caveat noted by the National Congress of Penitentiary and Reformatory Discipline was that the two traits of commitment and time must be present to achieve any success in rehabilitating these individuals with the feasibility of these characteristics being quickly tested with decreased budgets and impatient lawmakers (Bosworth, 2010).

Alternatives to incarceration began to appear more frequently towards the

conclusion of the nineteenth century. One of the very first examples of alternatives to

incarceration appearing was with some of the very first halfway-houses being opened

throughout New York, primarily for women. The trend of opening halfway-houses would

become even more prominent soon thereafter with the inclusion of male halfway-houses

(Roberts, 1997). The officially sanctioned goal of rehabilitation through Christian

teachings would alternately lose and gain favor throughout most of the 1900s, until social

unrest resulting from the events and respective backlashes of the Great Depression, Civil

Rights protests, and the rise of the drug subculture. Additionally, prison riots -- with

infamous instances at Folsom Prison and Attica -- helped alter public and governmental

sentiment towards rehabilitation's role in the U.S. penal system to a more punitive-

themed approach (Bosworth, 2010). The demonstrations of social unrest and the

backlashes that resulted from the significant events of the Great Depression, Civil Rights

protests, the rise of the drug subculture, and prison riots provided a dangerous

atmosphere for the rehabilitation of inmates to survive as the primary facet of corrections,

at least formally. Additionally, these social events led many to believe that the goal of

rehabilitation was indeed a failure. Consequently, more punitive measures were enacted

towards the close of the 1970s to compensate for the perceived failure of the

rehabilitative-approach. The result of many of the dramatic social uprisings throughout

the decades prior to the 1970s led to the development of mandatory-minimum drug

sentencing, seemingly changing the ideology of prisons overnight from an officially

rehabilitative-mindset to an almost strictly punitive stance. This new punitive-approach

was accompanied with severe repercussions of overcrowding and expanding budgets that would continue well into the new millennium.

Overview of Faith-Based Prison Organizations

As one can see, religion, in the form of Christianity, has been a common occurrence within U.S. prisons since their initial development, as discussed in detail above. The influence of Christian principles within prison includes the instruction of religious ideals, religious conversion after one's wrongdoings, and the hopeful rehabilitation of the offender. Although the religious ideals that were once a part of state and federal prison systems have lost their once powerful influence, the popularity of faith-based programs within prisons still remains at a high-level despite the drop in attendance rates for Protestant Christian services outside prisons in recent years ("Churchgoing among U.S.," 2009). It is estimated that there are currently 350,000 separate religious congregations within the U.S. with each congregation averaging between 100 and 400 members ("Faith-based programs," 2011). Additionally, almost every U.S. jail and prison facility offers some type of faith-based service with 93% of facilities having a prayer group that meets regularly ("Faith-based programs," 2011). Tewksbury and Collins (2005) show the sizeable popularity that these faith-based services have by stating that out of the estimated 1.46 million prisoners in 2003, 30% of inmates are known to have participated in some sort of faith-based service available to them. In addition, Johnson (2004) found that out of all of the self-improvement programs (i.e. anger management, substance abuse, etc.) offered within prisons, faith-based programming typically has some of the highest attendance rates of all.

There are a number of important facets that faith-based organizations provide to corrections' institutions. One of the most important aspects in regards to faith-based prison organizations that rely almost solely on volunteers is that it is at no or very little cost to institutions. In 1993, it was estimated that there were roughly 4,000 active volunteers within the Federal Bureau of Prisons; however, more recent statistics are not available (Tewksbury & Dabney, 2005). One main benefit that these organizations provide is a structured and somewhat time-consuming activity that allows prisoners to participate with one another and receive a number of documented benefits, as will be discussed below. Additionally, faith-based programming has been shown to increase in popularity depending on characteristics of the inmate population. To illustrate this point, Koenig (1995) found that older inmates without the option of parole have shown to become more religious over time. This shows that the aging population of inmates (due to mandatory-minimum sentencing) may result in an even higher demand than currently seemingly exists for faith-based programming.

Benefits of Faith-Based Organizations

There are a number of reported benefits that faith-based organizations within prisons have been shown to provide for both inmates and institutions as a whole. One benefit that inmates perceive they receive from attending these programs is that it increases their chances for early release with parole boards (Beckford, 2001). This claim made by many inmates has not, however, been either supported or challenged through research efforts. Also, Adler, Burnside, Loucks, and Tendayi (2008) found that many inmates may use these faith-based services as a form of coping-mechanism to deal with the stresses inherent within daily life in prison. Although some inmates attend these

programs for the sole purpose of seeking an early release, this benefit cannot be generalized to be the only reason as to why all inmates attend these programs.

There are a number of other core benefits that inmates have reported from participating in faith-based programming. One of the main benefits often reported by inmates from attending faith-based programming within prison is that it allows inmates to put their past misdeeds in a stronger and more meaningful context that allows them to be positive and hopeful towards their future personal and career prospects (Kerley & Copes, 2008). Additionally, Kerley, Matthews, and Blanchard (2005) found that participating in faith-based activities helps reduce overall levels of antisocial behaviors, thus reducing the potential for violence. Faith-based programming also has been shown to encourage inmates to practice behaviors deemed as being pro-social (Kerley et al., 2005). As one indicator of the success from such an approach, inmates expressing belief in a higher power are 73% less-likely to be involved in a physical altercation when compared to inmates who do not express belief in a higher power (Kerley et al., 2005). This finding also supports a previous finding by Koenig (1995) that states that the more an inmate attends a Bible study, the less-likely they are to be classified to a medium-security facility or as a high-risk inmate within a particular facility. Although such results seem to be promising, McDaniel et al. (2005) found in a review of literature on the benefits of faith-based programming that recidivism rates only seemed to drop when inmates were on the middle-to-high side of the attendance rates, thus making explicit benefits less clear to identify.

Another documented benefit that inmates can receive from participating in faith-based programming currently offered in prison is that it can reduce the tendency for inter-

inmate violence (Kerley & Copes, 2008). There are a number of explanations that have

been offered as to why faith-based programming has the potential to reduce levels of

violence among inmates. One of the main explanations is that these programs help

inmates direct their negative emotions and place seemingly small actions into a larger

cause-and-effect context with the now added potential of seeing repercussions of both

positive and negative actions (Kerley & Copes, 2008). Although these benefits are vital

to all inmates involved, perhaps the most important benefit of these organizations is their

emphasis on developing positive social support systems within prison and outside prison

upon their release.

Emphasis of Increased Social Support

The importance of social support systems that faith-based organizations provide

to inmates cannot be underestimated due to the expressed need for the development of

positive relationships and role models within their lives. Kerley and Copes (2008) found

that in order for an inmate to be successful at avoiding re-arrest and maintaining faith-

based principles; that they must rely on the positive social support systems present in

addition to their religious experiences. Faith-based organizations often stress that inmates

must join and be associated with positive influences and avoid negative influences at all

costs (Kerley & Copes, 2008). Kerley et al. (2005) found that by influencing inmates to

develop stronger social support networks that they will be better able to have the

emotional support that has most likely been absent prior in inmates' lives, thus reducing

the potential for current and future violent and other criminal behaviors. Spitale (2002)

discusses how it is vital for faith-based organizations to urge inmates to be integrated

within a church in the outside community in order to refrain from future offending (and

subsequently prison), thus showing that strong and positive social support systems are stressed both inside and outside of prison to prevent future recidivism.

There are a number of reasons as to why social support networks are a central feature provided and emphasized to inmates in faith-based organizations. One of the main reasons is that social norms are distributed from these social support networks, and the hope is that inmates will now associate with positive social support networks to receive these positive norms (Kerley et al., 2005). Kerley and Copes (2008) found four central benefits for inmates seeking positive social support, which are: allowing inmates to share with one another, allowing time for self-reflection, making positive relationships/avoiding negative relationships, and being able to perform faith-based practices in a community setting. Although having individual Christian-based faith was found to be important, one cannot maintain their faith without being involved with others --functioning similar to a support group -- with similar backgrounds and Christian faith (Kerley & Copes, 2008). In addition, many faith-based organizations stress the need for inmates to recruit others to both strengthen their own social support network and offer the potential benefits of social support to others (Kerley & Copes, 2008). This emphasis on increasing one's social support network introduces the notion of inmates using faith-based prison programs as a bridge to successful reentry into the community upon their release from incarceration.

Known Volunteer Background Characteristics

There has been very little research conducted on the backgrounds of volunteers associated with Protestant Christian prison-ministries and faith-based halfway houses.

There currently is an estimated 45 million regular volunteers nationwide for government-affiliated social service projects with an estimated 22.5 million of these volunteers believed to have come from faith-based organizations ("Faith-based programs," 2011). Tewksbury and Dabney (2005) found that 65.5% of the volunteers in their sample of all volunteers at a medium-security institution in a Southern state were men with 71.7% being white men. Also, it was found that the majority of the volunteers were middle-aged with only 13.6% being under the age of 35, and 17% being 65 and above (Tewksbury & Dabney, 2005). It was also found that 47% of the volunteers had a 4-year college degree or above (Tewksbury & Dabney, 2005). Hence, volunteers are formally educated, middle-class, white males. Tewksbury and Collins (2005) shed further light on these issues focusing on chapel volunteers, interestingly they reported that a substantial portion of such volunteers had a criminal background; approximately 17% of the volunteers reported at least one prior criminal conviction with the majority of the women volunteers sampled having at least one criminal conviction (Tewksbury & Collins, 2005). This is an area where future research needs to be strengthened due to the possible motivations that volunteers have in attempting to better the corrections' system, or to possibly do harm to the system.

Research has also looked at the overall satisfaction levels reported by faith-based organization volunteers. Faith-based volunteers tend to report very high levels of satisfaction with their roles (Kerley et al., 2010; Tewksbury & Collins, 2005; Tewksbury & Dabney, 2005). Furthermore, Kerley et al. (2010) found that greater involvement by volunteers leads to an overall greater degree of passion for their work. Tewksbury and Dabney (2005) found that 41.9% of male and 30.8% of female volunteers felt like they

had a direct hand in rehabilitating inmates. Education also has shown to have a role in volunteers perceiving benefits from their work. Tewksbury and Dabney found that 30.3% of college educated volunteers stated rehabilitation as the primary goal behind their work, and 52.2% of volunteers without a college degree stated that rehabilitation was their main intended goal. This finding shows the potential effect that a volunteer's education has in their perceived influence and intended goal. This also shows that there could be a link between motivations to volunteer and a volunteer's educational background.

It is interesting that even though Protestants as a whole are more likely than other religious groups in the U.S. to support punitive crime measures, they are a growing population volunteering inside prisons (Kerley et al., 2010). Kerley et al. (2010) state that although protestants have been shown to be more likely when compared to other religious groups and sects to favor punitive criminal measures, they have also been shown to grant "forgiveness" by funding and giving support for rehabilitative programs. One of the main explanations offered for this seemingly contradicting phenomenon is that this group supports individuals being held responsible for their actions (Kerley et al., 2010). This finding also supports some of the key requirements that many protestant groups expect of their volunteers, which are the characteristics of: mentoring, teaching, adding a nurturing relationship that is absent in prison, and befriending inmates (Rabney, 1999). The sparse literature available on the background characteristics of volunteers highlights the need for the continued research on their backgrounds.

Known Volunteer Motivations

Motivations behind why individuals volunteer for faith-based prison and halfway house volunteers is another characteristic on which little research has been conducted. Perhaps the most prominent motivation of volunteers is that volunteers' report that they are or have been "called by God" to participate in these programs. Tewksbury and Dabney (2005) found 49.2% of prison volunteers report a religious desire or calling to share their Christian faith among prisoners. Among volunteers that stated their primary purpose of volunteerism as being faith-based, 26.2% reported only wanting to help people in general (Tewksbury & Dabney, 2005). Tewksbury and Collins (2005) found that 50% of their sample reported that they felt like they had been called by God into prison ministry. Spitale (2002) echoes this finding by stating that an individual must be "called into" prison ministry in order to be an effective volunteer. Kerley et al. (2010) summarizes the characteristics of successful volunteers as: being called into the ministry, feeling comfortable and safe around inmates, and having a special connection to prison. The sparseness of the literature available on motivations of faith-based volunteers is another benefit that this present study hopes to provide by adding more overall depth, especially with increased funding opportunities brought about by the faith-based initiatives of the George W. Bush Administration.

Bush Administration Faith-Based Initiatives

Religion, primarily in the form of Christian teachings, is once again becoming a popular alternative approach to solving issues of recidivism and its byproduct of overcrowding. As of 2002, the Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that approximately 66% of state and federal prisoners released every year are rearrested within three years of their release (Hughes & Wilson, 2002). Religion is hoped by many to be one of the

solutions to reducing these high-levels of recidivism, therefore reducing the issue of overcrowding simultaneously. Additionally, increased funding opportunities via the "Charitable Choice" terms of the 1996 welfare reform bill and the George W. Bush Administration (2000-2008) have helped spur interests in the development of these programs for non-profit faith-based organizations that are willing to volunteer time and resources to current and former inmates (Daly, 2009).

The Bush Administration established the Office for Faith-Based Initiatives in 2001 that gave faith-based organizations increased access to federal grants and other monies for providing volunteers and resources to current and former inmates (McDaniel, Davis, & Neff, 2005). This office was an expansion to the "Charitable Choice" provision that was a part of the welfare reform brought about by the Clinton Administration in 1996. The central belief in the development of this office was that religious principles, primarily Christian, can have a tremendous impact in current and former inmates' future offending trajectories (Mears, Roman, Wolff, & Buck, 2006). Many of the beliefs surrounding increasing funding for faith-based programs focus on the development of social networks throughout communities in order to best achieve successful community reintegration (e.g. no recidivism) (Carlson-Thies, 2009). In a review of literature on benefits reported by faith-based programs in relation to the reduction of recidivism rates, Johnson (2002) shows that it is unclear whether or not faith-based programming actually reduces recidivism rates. Johnson (2004) also found that an eight year window following release, no differences in recidivism rates emerged between offenders who did and did not participate in a Prison Fellowship (specific branded program) based program. These findings show that the core belief that these programs are centered around of reducing

recidivism through instilling Christian principles is unclear as to actually having any impact, positive or negative.

Although benefits provided by faith-based programming may not be readily apparent, the Office for Faith-Based Initiatives has provided funds for the development of a number of programs. Some examples of programs that have developed through the use of the Office for Faith-Based Initiatives are the Ready4Work program that helps inmates find employment through building positive social networks upon release and Mentoring Children of Prisoners that helps alter the criminal trajectories of prisoners' children (Carlson-Thies, 2009). Another example of a program developed from this initiative is a program developed by Charles Colson, former Nixon aide and Watergate Seven member. Prison Fellowship emphasizes Christian teachings for their purely rehabilitative purposes (Ebaugh, Chafetz, & Pipes, 2006). Although the social benefits of these programs remain unclear, many perceived the development of this office as a politically motivated move by the Bush Administration due to Protestant Christians being among Bush's strongest supporters in both the 2000 and 2004 elections (Green, 2009). Even though many individuals predicated the end of these initiatives once President Bush left office, President Obama announced plans to expand and improve upon the Office for Faith-Based Initiatives in 2008, ensuring its continued presence (Daly, 2009; Green, 2009).

As a result of increased funding opportunities and added support by President Obama, the numbers of non-profit faith-based prison ministries and halfway-houses will likely grow in the next coming years. Great controversy has also accompanied the faith-based initiatives brought forth by the Bush Administration and continued by the Obama Administration. This controversy is due to the billions of dollars that certain faith-based

groups can receive for their work when the benefits of said work are not entirely clear and/or certain (McDaniel, Davis, & Neff, 2005). Although many uncertainties remain about the benefits that these faith-based programs can provide, there is strong support for the further implementation of these programs. Even though there is sizeable support for large scale implementation throughout the U.S., many believe it will be a difficult task due to anti-discrimination laws for employment practices and strong sentiment regarding the separating of church-and-state, regardless of successes reported by these initiatives and inmates that have participated in them (Daly, 2009; McDaniel et al., 2005). This strong likelihood of even more faith-based prison ministries being created and receiving federal money further stresses the need for the study of the backgrounds and motivations of individuals that volunteer for these programs.

The Present Study

The present study seeks to further understand the backgrounds and motivations of individuals who volunteer with offenders outside of prisons for the benefit of former offenders. More specifically, this study seeks to gain a more complete understanding on what motivates these individuals to volunteer their time, services, and financial resources to "reach" former offenders. In addition, this study will examine what it is that these volunteers actually intend to accomplish. Assessment is based on original interviews with one specific group of individuals that volunteer at a faith-based halfway-house for recently released offenders. The findings of this study will help state and federal legislators and correctional professionals' in deciding whether or not to increasingly rely-upon these groups to reach former inmates, or to seek alternative ways of providing services to former inmates.

METHODS

The methods of this study involved conducting original interviews with eight volunteers that work with former offenders released to a non-profit halfway-house. Each individual that volunteered for this study was interviewed face-to-face with the researcher. In addition, interviews lasted an average of approximately 30 minutes. Each interview was tape-recorded and transcribed in full. Interviews were also conducted in various locations (i.e. coffee shops, restaurants, etc.), and at varying times of day depending on the availability of the volunteers. All interviews were examined to identify patterns and themes, along with any commonalities that may exist between volunteers. Interviews were semi-structured in nature, included only open-ended questions, and focused on how volunteers perceived various aspects of the ministry.

The data for analysis consists of eight original interviews conducted for this particular study. The following demographic variables were collected per interviewee: age, sex, race, Christian denomination, present/past occupation, total years of volunteerism specific to this ministry, prior criminal conviction(s) (if applicable), and prior incarceration time (if applicable). In addition, interview questions from this study had subjects respond to topics regarding the following issues: explaining the purpose of the ministry in their own words, explaining what types of offenders are allowed access into the ministry, how they became involved in the ministry, what it is about this

particular ministry that attracts them versus other ministries, personal connections in their

life to prison (i.e. self, family, friends, etc.), the perceived overall effectiveness of the

ministry/evidence to support their opinion, feelings of being unsafe, evidence of assault

on volunteers (i.e. physical, verbal, and sexual), personal ultimate goal with the work

they are doing, maintaining contact with former house-members, and advice they would

give to a new volunteer that has no prior experience working with former offenders.

Sample

The sample is comprised of eight individuals who serve as volunteers in a non-

profit and Protestant Christian-based transitional-living house. At the time of data

collection, a total of nine volunteers were active at the halfway-houses. All but one

volunteer agreed to participate in the study, yielding an 88% participation rate.

All interviewees were affiliated with a non-profit Protestant Christian-based

organization located in a Southeastern state. The name of this ministry is not revealed in

the present study in order to protect the privacy of the ministry, clients, and the

volunteers that participated in this study as fulfillment of the informed consent forms

required by the IRB (i.e. Institutional Review Board). Each volunteer participated in a

weekly Bible study at the halfway-house that lasted approximately two hours. Volunteers

were responsible for guiding the weekly Bible study, as well as providing dinner for

current clients for each night of the Bible study. These tasks were divided among the

volunteers for responsibility. Some added roles that volunteers would also occasionally

assist with are mentoring current house members, and helping them find

temporary/permanent employment.

Data Analysis

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted by the researcher with eight volunteers (seven male and one female) of a Protestant-Christian faith-based halfway-house. In addition, all interviews were conducted one-on-one. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed in full. Data was organized by grouping each volunteer's response according to the relevant overarching theme pertaining to the semi-structured question they were asked. A content-analysis was then performed on the responses. Multiple readings were conducted on these responses by the researcher with each reading focusing on a specific theme (i.e. motivations for involvement, past connections to prison, personal benefits of volunteering). All findings reflect the concepts and themes that emerged from the data.

FINDINGS

The goals of this study are to identify the backgrounds and motivations of individuals that volunteer their time and resources to those who are living in a Protestant Christian-based halfway-house. The main themes that this study found were the following: volunteers perceiving the ministry as providing clients to new social networks while not actively assisting with this goal, Christian principles taking a secondary role to traditional societal benchmarks (i.e. obtaining/maintaining employment, having continued housing, getting married, etc.), not entirely convinced of the total effectiveness of this ministry, and questionable motives of volunteers that are not former offenders themselves. These findings show similarities in how each volunteer defines the ministry, and also shows differences in the personal benefits that they report receiving from the work that they are doing.

There were a number of key similarities and differences between themes that emerged in this study. One of the main similarities is in regards to how each volunteer defines this particular ministry's goals. Volunteers defined the goals of this ministry in broad themes that describe the ministry providing a mentor to current/former clients, connecting clients with the community at large, and especially connecting clients to a local church community. However, these goals were only spoken of by volunteers and

were not evident in most volunteers' actions during the period of five months that the researcher observed this group, especially in what role they perform in the ministry. Although commonalities existed between the perceived goals of the ministry, differences emerged within the personal benefits reported being received by the volunteers. Differences in the personal benefits received ranged from boosting one's self-esteem to providing a humbling experience by seemingly making volunteers' personal problems incomparable to issues that clients are persistently facing. The primary similarities and differences foreshadow the overarching theme found throughout this study that volunteers report receiving more personal benefits than they believe clients receive, thus bringing into question the motivations of volunteers.

Demographics of Volunteers

Among the volunteers, seven volunteers were male and one volunteer was female. The average age of volunteers was 56.3 years of age. The racial make-up of the volunteers was seven white and one African-American. The religious-affiliation that the volunteers self-identified as was surprisingly varied because volunteers were not all affiliated with the same church, thus showing diversity in how this group is organized and how they came to volunteer with this particular ministry. There were a total of five different denominations of Christianity represented, which are as follows: Methodist (1), Southern Baptist (2), Baptist (1), Non-Denominational Christian (3), and Christian Church (i.e. Disciples of Christ) (1). The average length of volunteerism was 5.5 years; however, the majority of volunteers (6) had been involved with this ministry for less-than five years. Three volunteers reported having a criminal history themselves including convictions for drug possession, Wanton Endangerment, Assault, and Sexual Abuse of a

Minor. Among the three volunteers that had prior criminal convictions, they had

themselves previously served an average of just less than one year incarcerated. Only one

of these three volunteers served time in prison with the other two volunteers serving time

in jail.

Purpose of the Ministry

How volunteers define the goal and overall purpose of the ministry provides a

context that is vital to understanding the entirety of actions by volunteers. By respondents

defining the purpose of the ministry, it allowed for a comparison-and-contrast of what

volunteers perceive the ministry's goals to be, and if volunteers are actively taking steps

to achieve these goals . Responses highlighted a number of similarities through the

emergence of common themes and components, as well as some differences between

what individuals see as the primary purpose of the ministry. The most common elements

represented were as follows: provide positive relationships, assist in offenders'

transitioning back into society, connect with an encouraging community/avoiding

negative community, provide stability (i.e. housing and employment), and some type of

spiritual relationship with Christ.

Positive Relationships

Volunteers emphasized the importance of this ministry in providing positive

relationships in former offenders' lives. These positive relationships discussed often

came in the form of volunteers serving as a mentor to halfway-house residents. The

mentor role was something seen as having been absent from the client's life prior to that

point. One volunteer discussed the origins of this specific halfway-house in how it

changed its focus from simply providing resources to primarily being about the provision of relationships by saying, "We didn't have any housing facilities. I was reluctant to get into that because of the amount of resources required and the energy going into the facility itself... (we thought) why not just work on relationships." The previous quote shows how individuals involved with the initial organization of this goal realized that relationships were more valuable than the resources that the organization could provide. Another volunteer --who is a former client of the house -- discussed the importance of relationships in the role that they play on former offenders being "successful" when he says, "It's about just being available to do the small things, the itty bitty things to keep you out of trouble."

Volunteers often perceived serving as a positive role model as being one of the primary functions of their role as volunteer and as a primary purpose of the ministry itself. It is the presence of these volunteers -- albeit typically only one night a week -- that these volunteers see as being part of the purpose of the ministry and their duties in particular. Volunteers often believe that their dedication of showing up on a habitual basis will serve as a positive influence in clients' lives due to the dedication that it indirectly shows by being committed and following through with their promises. This dedication and effort shown by a "stranger" as far as the client is concerned is believed to show that not all people are bad, and that some individuals do care about the clients' well-being. Additionally, clients within the houses know that the majority of volunteers have a full-time career, families, and other commitments outside of their responsibilities at this particular ministry. It is the hopes of the volunteers that clients see that "good"

people do exist, and that there is someone in their life that is taking a vested interest in them and their particular situation.

Transitioning

A second common theme that was present in volunteers' perspectives on the purpose of this ministry was that this ministry's main purpose was to help offenders transition back into society. Interviewees often introduced the theme of transitioning in order to emphasize the differences that exist between life incarcerated and life outside of prison. For example, one volunteer stated, "Our ministry is a program that assists men and women transitioning from prison back into society." Another volunteer stated, "Well...it's an organization that's dedicated to helping men who are coming out of prison...to... transition back into a productive life in the community." These statements by these two particular volunteer demonstrate how volunteers believe this program serves as a bridge from incarceration to successful re-entry into society. Additionally, this view also indirectly introduces the belief among volunteers that the criminal justice system is not doing an adequate job of facilitating this transition for offenders. Further support for this belief regarding this ministry filling a void left by an inadequate criminal justice system is when one of the volunteers that is a convicted felon stated:

> When they (clients) come out, I think the judicial system is not that good. It's not as adequate as it could be to prepare men for when they are released. So, what (name of the ministry) does...it tries to do just that, give them a haven where they can catch their breath, transition into society, find out what that means....Just some guys have been locked-up for decades and society has changed.

The above quote shows how an individual that has been through the criminal justice system is able to identify the weaknesses of the system and believes that this program helps provide services that the criminal justice system does not. One of the

volunteers even mentioned the failure of other groups similar to this particular ministry to address particular issues. This particular volunteer told a story regarding how an individual that he first tried to help prior to the development of this program kept returning to prison due to failures of the criminal justice system and even other ministries by saying:

> ...it became apparent that we could do things that we would think would be helping, but really weren't helping...So we searched around a little, found Prison Fellowship and some others. There are a lot of people doing ministry inside prison, maybe a weekly/sporadic basis. That's what Prison Fellowship was doing. But there were very few people – even today – doing much on the outside, which is the hard part.

Volunteers see themselves as filling a much needed void that is left many times between when an individual is incarcerated and is released back into society. Only two of the volunteers had reported being part of a prison ministry at some point in their lives that goes inside of prison in addition to this halfway-house ministry, however, nearly all explicitly or implicitly addressed the failure(s) of the criminal justice system in effectively dealing with the needs of offenders. Additionally, it is the volunteers hope that programs similar to this ministry will provide the direction in the clients lives that they need in order to not recidivate.

Community

Provision of community was a third key theme that emerged in volunteers' definitions of the purpose of this ministry. More specifically, keeping offenders away from a bad community and connecting former offenders to a "positive" community – especially a Christian community in the form of a church -- was the main thrust of the belief that emerged with describing the ministry's primary purpose. One example of a

volunteer discussing the importance of this program keeping clients away from an "unhealthy community" is when the volunteer states:

> I explain it and understand it in the best way that we are to protect each man and woman that comes through our program from an unhealthy community that can pull them back in through their drugs and maybe, former behaviors and crimes. Also, we are to protect them from a judgmental community who are not willing to give a chance.

The volunteer that spoke the previous quote was the only one to frame the purpose of the ministry in terms of "protecting," however, other volunteers indirectly mentioned this when discussing the community aspect of the ministry. Not only did volunteers discuss the importance of this ministry keeping individuals from their previous "negative" communities, but they also discuss the purpose of this ministry providing a new community for the individual to receive "positive" benefits. One example of a volunteer discussing how this ministry's goal is to connect clients with churches in the community is when one volunteer states, "That was part of the whole thing with (name of ministry), they had to be plugged into a church or some kind of Bible study somehow…They came to (name of ministry), to change…to get their feet on the ground, plugged into a community."

These statements provided by the volunteers when discussing one of the primary perceived purposes of this ministry are fairly weak. When one takes into consideration that providing a stable community for current clients to be welcomed into and become an active part of is one of the primary perceived purposes of this particular ministry, then one can see that these statements by volunteers mention a vague idea and concept of the ministry that they themselves may not have actively seen. Volunteers are discussing an idea that they have of the ministry without necessarily having experiencing or taking part

in any of these actions firsthand. This fundamental disconnect between the perceived purposes of this ministry and the actual actions of this ministry in regards to the viewpoints of these volunteers will be a theme discussed in more detail below in the Discussion chapter.

Housing and Employment Stability

The role of this program providing a sense of stability in clients' lives was a fourth common theme that emerged throughout the volunteers' explanations of the purpose of this particular ministry. This stability described can come in the form of both housing and employment. One volunteer stated that many of their clients would have been homeless if it was not for this ministry, "…our program is really for people who are considered homeless." Another volunteer stated that, "… (name of ministry) was started to help guys coming out of prison that didn't have anywhere to go." This statement not only shows the purpose of this ministry taking on a role of providing housing, but yet again indirectly suggests the failures of the criminal justice system in assisting with effective transitioning from incarceration to society. One of the founders of the ministry who continues to serve in a volunteer capacity discussed the importance of providing stable housing by saying:

> As it turns out, the facility is really important in the process because it provides a focal point. These guys are not real good at getting around or planning ahead for very long. So, having the place where they could come live has been really important.…I think we're in general sort of careful not to get too big a group because it's less like a home and more like an institution.

The above quote discusses how the housing stability is believed to play a key role in the transition process. This is because it provides a home, and perhaps family atmosphere that has been absent prior to clients' arrival at this particular ministry.

Stability in regards to clients' employment was another commonly reported purpose of this ministry. Employment stability was generally connected with other common social indicators for success, such as maintaining a consistent residence and sometimes even getting married. One volunteer discusses this when he says, "Eventually, you (metaphorical client) worked on getting a job, getting out, and getting their own place." Another volunteer discusses how this ministry tries to work on clients' behalves in order to develop rapport with potential employers by saying, "We are an advocate for them with employers...from getting them an identification to getting them into school. So, that's basically who, we're an advocate basically." Therefore, volunteers see the purpose of the ministry and the purpose of their role within the ministry as providing a mentoring role for clients. These volunteers see that they are assisting clients with basic processes – such as obtaining a driver's license – in order to decrease their dependency on others to hold a job and pay rent, thus believing to be decreasing their likelihood of recidivism. Clients having a house or a steady job were often reported as being vital for a client to be considered "successful."

Spiritual/Religious Aspect

A fifth theme in how volunteers defined the purpose of the ministry was offered by exactly one-half of the volunteers. This is the idea of the ministry and the volunteers efforts providing offenders with a Christian or spiritual benefit. However, it is also important to note that fully one-half of the volunteers did not identify this aspect as being a primary goal of this non-profit Protestant-Christian based halfway-house. One explanation for this is that volunteers see the real-world aspects such as finding employment and stable housing being more urgent than the spiritual/religious aspect. In

the opinion of the researcher, this is the reason due to high prevalence of programs

available within the ministry that focus on one's job skills in addition to one's

employment status often being the focal point of conversations throughout the five

months of observation by the researcher. For those volunteers who did mention the

religious aspect, it was typically in a secondary or supporting role to other perceived

purposes of this ministry that came towards the end of their explanation (i.e. housing,

employment, plugged into the community, etc.). Only one-half (n=4) of the volunteers

specifically mentioned Christianity or any religious goals when defining the purpose of

the ministry. One example of Christian and religious goals coming in a secondary nature

in defining the purpose of the ministry is when one volunteer says, "So, the ministry tries

to assist in some of the social issues they face, some of the work issues that they

face…and the causes of a faith-based kind of ministry. Spiritual aspects as well." One of

the newer volunteers discussed a current client in the house and how his story parallels

the "purpose" of how the volunteer sees this ministry by saying, "He is learning to have

rapport and relationships when he is not in the penitentiary setting. He's trying to have a

positive, Christian spin on that. Where we can show people the relationship they need

with the Lord."

Another volunteer continues this trend by stating:

> I would say it's to give people a sense of worth once they're outside the prison
> walls. People that don't have family or any place to stay. We give them a sense of
> worth before they move on…I think the Christian aspect of it helps prepare them
> to get back into society.

The previous statement by this particular volunteer shows that the Christian

aspect of this ministry is not vital, but that it certainly helps an individual return to

society because it gives them a sense of purpose that was perhaps absent prior to their incarceration. It is perhaps this sense of purpose that is what volunteers see the Christian aspect fitting into the overall picture of the work that they are doing. That is, the ministry does not dwell on Christian beliefs and practices, but bases all actions on a Christian perspective so that clients can see the bigger picture in regards to their daily actions. More specifically, the Christian principles forces clients' reasoning from short-term oriented to long-term oriented. The religious component allows clients to have a large scale perspective of their actions. The individual that was one of the founders of this ministry that now serves in a volunteer capacity underscores the almost secondary nature that Christianity and religious principles has in the main purpose of this ministry when he says:

> ...there's no requirement that you've (a client) got to be a Christian, but he (client) has got to be very accepting of a Christian approach to it and all of that sort of thing. We try to address the basics of the faith...what it is being a Christian -- grace and mercy -- how we establish a relationship with Christ and all of that sort of stuff.

The last quote by one of the founders of this particular ministry shows how the basics of Christianity are there for clients to see, but they are not believed to be vital to the "success" of an individual to not recidivate. As a result, it is possible to be "successful" by societal standards by getting a job, getting a house, and providing for oneself independently; however, the Christian aspect is there to give them a sense of purpose in their life that may have been absent prior to their coming to this ministry. Therefore, Christianity and its principles are not the focus of this faith-based halfway-house, but the program and its volunteers theoretically serve as ambassadors of this religion in order to influence clients to live a certain way. The secondary role that

Christianity and other religious principles plays in the overall purpose of this ministry as discussed by these volunteers is a surprising finding that will be discussed further on in greater detail.

Volunteers' Understanding of Types of Offenders Accepted

Although it was understood by the researcher which types of offenders were allowed and which were not allowed access into this halfway-house, it became apparent through conversations with volunteers that they were not entirely clear on what type of offenders were granted access to this ministry. This particular ministry allows all offenders access except for sex offenders and arsonists. The reasoning behind not allowing sex offender's access is that it is believed that they have a different set of issues that this ministry cannot provide for them and due to the close proximity that some of the ministry's locations have to schools. Arsonists, however, are not allowed due to homeowner's insurance reasons. There were only two volunteers that reported directly or indirectly no knowledge of the types of offenders that were allowed access to this ministry. One of the first examples of this is when a volunteer discussed the types of offenders allowed access to this ministry by saying, "And it wasn't a violent offender, couldn't have been any murderer, assault, and those kinds of major offensive crimes like that." The second volunteer that did not know which types of offenders were allowed access to this program said:

> They don't tell us anything about the prisoners. We have no access to their file. We don't know, but over time we find out. And, in my assessment is most of the guys have somewhere in their lives had drugs in their life, and it may be that as a byproduct of drugs it leads to other things like armed robbery. They may not have money for drugs or whatever. They need money for drugs, which can also lead into violent crimes, which I know some have been in for manslaughter and for

murder ultimately. That's really…at first I didn't really think we would have guys like that, but we do, and they don't seem any different than the guys that haven't been violent.

The above statement by the volunteer shows that there exists a fundamental misunderstanding by volunteers in the types of offenses that a client can have prior to be granted access as a client of this ministry. Withholding, neglecting to inform, and/or misrepresenting the types of offenses that clients have been charged with within the halfway-house may serve as a tactic by this ministry's employees in recruiting volunteers due to the possible affect of being privy to knowledge that there are violent offenders may increase the difficulty in recruiting and maintaining volunteers. Early conversations with an employee of this ministry revealed the struggle that this ministry has in finding volunteers. The employee discussed the difficulty of a ministry catering towards former offenders in recruiting volunteers, and compared it to the relative ease of a ministry serving handicapped children in finding volunteers. Even though there was uncertainty as to the types of offenders allowed inside this particular ministry with the two volunteers previously mentioned, all of the remaining volunteers knew at least that sex offenders were not allowed.

Although all of the remaining volunteers knew that sex offenders were not allowed, only one volunteer mentioned arsonists in addition to sex offenders. It is interesting to note that sex offenders came to the forefront of every volunteer's mind of what type of offender was specifically not allowed as a client. This could be because volunteers have preconceived notions of what sex offender's look and act like, or perhaps there are other explanations that include deep fears or stigmas attached to sex offenders.

The volunteer that was one of the founders of this ministry discussed why sex offenders were not allowed in this ministry when he said:

> It's open game for everything but sex offenders. The reason we don't have sex offenders is that we've always had houses that are too close to schools or something. I don't know. I think that's a good thing under any scenario because sex offenders have a whole different profile of issues to deal with....

The previous quote reflects that this volunteer does not believe the way the program is currently designed is equipped with the necessary tools that a sex offender needs to be successful when compared to any other type of offender – excluding arsonists. A former client of the halfway-house that now serves in a volunteer capacity shed further light on the uncertainty that even clients of the ministry have in regards to what types of offenders are allowed access to this ministry when he said:

> I'm not completely sure...they take any body. Any religion, any faith is what I'm getting at, but since I've been here they've had everything up to murderers. They've had a couple of murderers. The only thing that I'm not familiar with...I don't think they've had any sex offenders. Other than that, I think anyone. That's not to say they don't take sex offenders that happens to be – in my time—and career with (name of ministry) I haven't ran across any.

The only volunteer to know exactly what type of offenders that are/are not allowed inside this ministry is a volunteer that began participating in this ministry out of the fear that he had regarding a neighbor who happened to be a sex offender. This volunteer shared that he had sought this ministry to help break down some of the preconceived notions he had on individuals who had been incarcerated previously due to the shock he had received regarding a neighbor that was a sex offender. He discussed how he had been reassured by employees of this ministry that they do not allow sex offenders and arsonists into the house. However, he later discovered that one of his fellow volunteers was a registered sex offender, and how he felt strong anger towards the

employees of the ministry because he felt as if he had been deceived. This story

foreshadows stories behind how volunteers became involved in this ministry, which is the

next topic that needs to be discussed in order to reveal more background information on

the volunteers of this ministry.

Initial Involvement in Ministry

Volunteers' individual stories regarding how they initially became involved with

this particular ministry reveals not only how volunteers became involved, but also assists

with understanding their motivations. Previous studies have highlighted how volunteers

often report that they felt "called by" God to volunteer for a prison ministry, however,

this answer was largely absent from volunteers' answers to how they became involved in

this ministry (Tewksbury & Collins, 2005; Tewksbury & Dabney, 2005). In fact, only

two volunteers stated that they were "called by" God in some form into this ministry. One

of the first examples of this is when a volunteer says, "I don't work for (name of

ministry), God has called me into this, He has prepared me." A second volunteer

insinuates how God led him to this ministry when reflecting on his time volunteering by

saying, "… [it] just feels like that is what I was led to do." The lack of a "calling" by God

is a surprising finding that will be discussed at the conclusion of this study.

The remainder of all volunteers stated how they became involved in this ministry

in rather mundane/routine ways when compared to previous studies that reported

volunteer feelings of divine intervention. One of the most common ways that individuals

became involved in this ministry was through word-of-mouth at their respective

churches. An example of this is when one volunteer stated:

> I'm a deacon out at (name of church) church…they talked about the (current house manager) at (name of ministry) … he mentioned (ministry) a few times, but I wasn't able to help out. My work schedule didn't work out with it. I was wanting to get involved with it, and finally when it did change with it being mentioned in the Deacon's meeting and (current volunteer) had mentioned it a time or two that they're needing, after (house manager) left, an additional fella to come down on Thursday nights if possible. In that fashion is how I got involved.

The above quote shows how this relatively new volunteer was persuaded to help out with the ministry after a number of different mentions through word-of-mouth and being involved in the leadership of his church. Another example of a volunteer getting involved through word-of-mouth with his church is when they say:

> …I've actually been friends with (one of the founders of the ministry) for a number of years. Actually, you know (founder's name), he's the guy that pretty much heads up the volunteer aspect on Thursday nights. He had said something to me and invited me to be a part of it years ago.

The previous statement reiterates the relatively mundane way that individuals became involved in the ministry. Three out of the four remaining volunteers became involved through both indirect and direct advertising efforts of the ministry through various facets of their churches with the remaining volunteer being a former client of the house. Another one of the volunteers who is also a deacon discussed how members of the ministry spoke at a Wednesday night service that his church held by saying:

> It was on a Wednesday evening, and sometimes we will have special groups come in, missionaries come in and give a presentation…This Wednesday, I was doing the special music…and stayed around for the talk afterwards…some of the guys from (ministry) came and talked about the house and what was going on, they were asking some of the guys from (his church) to get involved. So, my pastor knew I had an interest in helping out with outreach and asked if I could spear-head a group to go down there once a month and do a dinner and Bible study with the guys.

The above statement shows how indirect and direct advertisement within a church from the specific ministry was used to gain an individual who would organize a group of

potentially more church members to volunteer at the house. Another example of indirect/direct advertisements in church being used to attract volunteers is when one volunteer states that his Sunday school class was asked by the ministry to plant flowers at one of their locations for a service project by saying, "So, the church guided us to the halfway-house, if you will, of (name of ministry) to plant flowers. It seemed like a crazy kind of project, but they needed it and our group was looking for projects, we said okay we'll do it."

The above quote by a volunteer shows again that both indirect and direct advertisement directly from the ministry through contacting church members was used in recruiting volunteers. The final example discussing how indirect/direct advertisement for the ministry attracted volunteers is when the previously mentioned volunteer that joined due to his neighbor that was a sex offender said that when he was feeling guilty for his actions of alerting other neighbors (and forming a neighborhood watch directed towards this specific neighbor) about the sex offender neighbor's status that, "…I heard an ad at (his church name) from the pulpit. I heard them say that there were people from (ministry) at the back of the church after the service to talk to…I met with (an employee of the ministry) and got involved."

Although how volunteers became involved in this particular ministry is an important question that reveals part of their motivations, it is the question of what attracts these volunteers to keep volunteering that reveals even more insight into their motivations. In addition, the factors that go into what attracts volunteers to this particular ministry begin an even sharper contrast between the findings from this study and previous studies, especially in regards to volunteer intentions and desires.

Ministry-Specifics that Attracts Volunteers

There were a number of characteristics that emerged when individuals discussed what it was specifically that drew them in to this particular ministry over volunteering for other ministries that involved a different clientele. The two main characteristics that emerged when individuals discussed what specifically attracts them to this ministry were the special connections with certain clients that can/have been made, and experiencing a transparent environment that is often absent in other religious settings. Transparency refers to individuals feeling as if they can reveal aspects of their personal lives that they may not usually be inclined to reveal about themselves. The characteristic of transparency also refers to being more open and honest about one's own life, in addition to the expecting the same from others present.

Special Connections

A number of the volunteers stated that they are able to make connections with various clients throughout the house, or are able to develop some sort of positive relationship with a client. It is this connection/relationship that helps distinguish this ministry from other ministries in the volunteers' eyes. One example of this is when a volunteer states that she shared a connection with a young woman that came through the women's program that was struggling with alcohol issues by saying:

> ...we had nothing in common, but we had everything in common. She was a young woman who was a mother, and I had been a mother. She had dreams and hopes but they had been dashed and destroyed by her own choices. So, I had a heart for her...for you know brokenness and whatever.

The former statement shows how volunteers are able to connect with individuals who are actively suffering with an issue that they can perhaps relate to, such as family

issues or possibly issues that they have themselves dealt with in the past. To shed further light on this particular example, this volunteer shared that she had a daughter with alcohol addiction issues, resulting in multiple DUI arrests. The volunteer's son also had a good friend that had killed a number of individuals in a DUI accident. Also, the volunteer herself had alcohol issues as an adolescent. This volunteer also discussed how they used to work at Starbucks and applied the company motto of connect, discover, respond to their volunteer services when they said, "You connect with people, you discover what they need, and you respond to it." This also introduces a topic that will be discussed further below that the transparency in individuals attracts volunteers to this ministry over other ministries or programs for which they could volunteer.

Another example of a volunteer who discussed the special connections that this ministry provides with individuals in how it attracts them to the ministry is when they say, "...there's just a certain amount of comfort getting in, going down, talking with the guys...interaction." Although developing special relationships from volunteer to client does occur, special relationships tend to form more often between the volunteers than anything else. Throughout the approximately five months that the researcher observed this ministry, there was a clear distinction between volunteers and clients. Volunteers often sat together during the meal that was provided on the nights of the Bible study discussing how each other's job was currently going. Also, volunteers that attended the same churches would discuss current events of the respective church that were brought up during deacon meetings. There were even several volunteers that would socialize with each other outside of the Thursday night, and often would attend local college basketball games together. These relationships would not have occurred otherwise if it were not for

this ministry because they attended other churches and did not know each other prior to their involvement with this ministry. This finding of special relationships suggests that the social aspects that this ministry provides serve as a key attraction point for volunteers. This is an important point which will be elaborated and discussed in more detail next.

Transparency

A second theme that emerged when volunteers discussed what attracted them to this ministry was that this ministry provided a sense of community for them that was transparent. Again, the term transparency refers to individuals feeling as if all aspects of their personal lives are open for discussion without the need to conceal any side of their life with one another. Also, individuals expect others to feel comfortable enough to discuss both good and bad parts of their lives without fear of judgment or any negative sanctions. In addition, transparency often includes religious components referring to personal struggles that they may be experiencing in their Christian faith. This sense of community felt by individuals was often described by using the word "fellowship," which refers to being able to be open or "transparent" with a group of others that is centered on their Christian faith. The newest volunteer of the group stated, "I like actually, the interaction, the fellowship is good…and again I can appreciate the fellowship." Another volunteer reiterates this statement by one of the newer volunteers when he says:

> So, I started going every Thursday, or as much as I could, and the benefits for me, I really miss it now if I don't get there on Thursday night and stuff. I think the guys realize I'm sincere about being there, they've opened up…they are more willing to share if you are sincere about it.

As this volunteer's comments suggest, being or portraying oneself as sincere is considered a vital characteristic for this environment to function, however, other volunteers discuss the sincerity/transparency as being one of the primary draws of this ministry. One of the founders of this ministry explained this attraction by saying:

> I can see God working in guy's lives. That's really fun in a social environment that I'm here, as well as at our church. Everybody looks pretty cool, they've got it together, but that's not really true. These guys (clients), you can really see what's going on in their lives. One of the things about prison is that all of their sins are laid bare, their lives destroyed…Everybody knows everything about everybody, and its easy to see God work in a life when you can see that they've changed as a result of a process where they become familiar with the Gospel.

Another volunteer continues this theme when he discusses how this ministry allows one to see the failures of others when he says, "…you can also see failures…but you know, you can help them through those too." This volunteer continues this theme by saying:

> …because of the Bible Study…in that environment we develop a connection that is personal, but is also faith-based. And you…you learn a lot about each other in the context of doing that, you know. There is something about studying the Bible together and talking about it, you develop a trust in one another. You open up and become a little more transparent about your own life. So, in the context of doing all of that, you develop a relationship that's got some depth to it.

The above statements show how one of the primary characteristics that draw volunteers into this program is the sense of community that exists within this group. It is gathered by the statements of these volunteers that they see both other volunteers and clients within the group as being more genuine than other types of Christian gatherings. This is because individuals are free to discuss past addictions, criminal offenses, or other issues and they feel as if they are safe from judgment. Throughout many of the sessions that the researcher attended, questions were often posed to the group by the volunteer leading the Bible study of what issues/addictions others (i.e. both clients and volunteers)

in the room have struggled with in the past or presently. In addition, all Bible studies were concluded with a prayer request session where both clients and volunteers were given the opportunity to share certain issues that were going on in their life. Both volunteers and clients used this time to share very personal stories of struggle that one may not find in a typical Christian community due to fear of judgment. To further illustrate the sharp disparities volunteers believe exist between the level-of--transparency of traditional church Bible studies and one like the focus of the present study, a volunteer states, "Exactly...I don't think there is any comparison between to two." Consequently, transparency is one of the intrinsic benefits volunteers associate with this ministry, and it will be discussed in more detail in the *Personal Benefits of Volunteers* chapter.

Connections to Prison (Self, Family, and/or Friends)

In addition to the above discussed issues that drew volunteers to the ministry, so too is the issue of connections to prisons an important attractor of volunteers to the ministry. This personal connection could have come in the form of their self going to jail/prison, having a family member go to jail/prison, and/or having a close friend being incarcerated. Two of the volunteers had no connection whatsoever to prison. They could not think of any family members, nor did they have any friends that had ever been incarcerated in any form. Three of the volunteers self-identified as being convicted felons with only one serving his time in a prison and the remaining were incarcerated in jail. The last three volunteers had an acquaintance or distant family member that was incarcerated.

As previously stated, three out of the eight total volunteers that participated in this study self-identified as being convicted felons with their incarceration length varying considerably. One volunteer that was a convicted felon for a felony drug connection discussed his personal and family connection to prison by saying:

> ...my mother and father were in and out of the penitentiary; myself...I was a convicted felon up until 2005. I was convicted in 2000 for drug possession, 2nd offense. From 2000 to 20001, I completed a Drug C.O.R.E. (i.e. Comprehensive Offender Rehabilitation and Education) program that was 13 months instead of going to prison.

The previous quote shows how this particular volunteer had experienced a life of having members of his family, especially with his mother and father; continue to go in and out of prison throughout his childhood and adult life. This volunteer continued to discuss how witnessing his mother struggle with drug addiction and constantly returning to prison had a lasting impact on his life. His father's struggles were not as apparent to him because he was not around his father much during his life. This volunteer also discussed how when he was struggling with his own addiction issues that his mother told him she expected nothing less of him. This volunteer used his personal struggles in addition to his family issues to fuel his quest for sobriety in addition to his role as a positive mentor in others' lives.

Another one of the volunteers that self-identified as a convicted felon discussed his experiences of incarceration and how it helps him identify with clients in the program by saying,

> ...I've been locked-up before for the most part of a year. I spent some time...so that's what really has drawn me to the program because I can identify with some of those guys. Not fully, being locked-up for a year is still a lot different than being locked-up for 10 years. There are big differences, but at the same time I can

identify better than people who have not been locked-up before. I can identify with the guys somewhat in all of the dynamics that play into that.

The former quote by this volunteer shows how his previous experiences of incarceration have led him to believe that he can establish a better connection with clients that he believes is ultimately superior to what volunteers who have not been incarcerated can establish. This was a belief shared by the other two volunteers who had been incarcerated, however, it was not a belief shared by those who had not been incarcerated.

The remaining three volunteers discussed how they had a distant family member or some acquaintance that had been incarcerated that solidified a personal connection with the current struggles of the clients in the house. One volunteer discusses how he had a great-uncle growing-up that was in jail throughout his life for multiple DUI's, and that his grandmother would take him to visit him from time-to-time while he was incarcerated. This same volunteer also discussed how his step-mother embezzled money from a company that his father and step-mother owned. His step-mother was then faced with a lengthy prison sentence due to the amount of the money, and she committed suicide instead of going to prison. This volunteer shared that he was able to see the despair that exists in some individuals prior to incarceration, and that he wants to help with that despair.

Another volunteer discussed how her son had a good friend in high school that was involved in a DUI crash that killed two people. It was through seeing the trials and tribulations that this girl went through and with her daughter receiving a DUI that led her to this ministry. In addition, knowing those that struggled with alcohol addiction and

alcohol-related issues helped her eventually develop a close relationship with certain members in the house that struggled with these same issues.

The final volunteer that discussed knowing someone who had been in prison was one of the founders of the ministry. The man he knew was a friend from high school, but the volunteer had lost contact with him over time. However, it was when he met this individual later in life, and that the individual discussed his struggles that he actually got the idea for this particular ministry. The volunteer stated that, "Somehow...I think that God keeps you in affinity with some people. That's kind of why I'm attracted to it (the ministry)."

These personal stories from the volunteers show that individuals do not necessarily have to have a personal connection to prison in some manner, however, that there can be little-to-no connection at all. A personal connection to someone incarcerated does seem to be prevalent among these volunteers, but this connection does not have to be present for all. These personal connections to incarceration can either be from an individual being themselves incarcerated, or even knowing someone who has been incarcerated. This personal connection helps put a face with the struggles that one hears regarding individuals making the transition from incarceration to outside society. When one compounds the personal connections that volunteers have to various aspects of incarceration with other individuals that are going through the same or similar issues, one can see how these volunteers become immensely involved in these "strangers'" lives. It is this personal connection that makes the volunteer experience even more intimate due to the personal connections of relating one's experiences to another.

Staying in Contact with Former Clients

As previously stated, volunteers discussed how important it was to connect clients to positive aspects of the community or church-community in order to increase their chances for "success" as being one of the main perceived goals of this ministry. It was generally considered that by surrounding these individuals with a positive support group that they were more likely to develop pro-social behaviors (i.e. attend church, hold a steady job, maintain a stable residence, etc.), and were less-likely to recidivate. In continuing with this theme, volunteers were asked if they stayed in contact with former clients once they left the program, resulting in a client's departure from the house. Only three out of the eight volunteers reported having at one point maintained contact with a former client of the house. In addition, it is important to note that two out of the three volunteers that did report maintaining contact with former clients were retired. The remaining volunteer that said yes was near retirement age, but he also owns his own business that allows him to have a flexible schedule. This is an important implication that will be discussed in more detail at the close of this section. The volunteer that was the most dedicated to maintaining contact with former house members and eager about maintaining future contact with more clients was the former client turned volunteer. In explaining his commitment to such contacts, this volunteer stated:

> Constantly, constantly…I mean this is…I've got a few phone numbers, they have my phone number. It's just a touch and go situation. Well…we're told not to loan them money and help them financially. That's a touch and go situation. I will do things with them and for them, but my communication is wide open. It's just, I'm available at their desire because they do have my phone number.

This statement by the former client turned volunteer shows how important he believes it is to maintain contact and develop relationships with individuals once they

leave the house. It is unclear whether or not this former client and current volunteer had a volunteer when he was a client of the house be available to him once he left, but it is evident that this individual sees it as being of great importance. The majority of other volunteers do not share the sentiment of the volunteer from the previous example. A second volunteer who discussed maintaining contact with former clients once they've left the house actually goes inside prisons – if clients return to prison -- to visit them if he can locate them. As he explained his approach, this volunteer stated:

> Yeah…yeah I do, even the guys that go back to prison. There's two guys I'm currently writing in prison, regularly. They were both residents at (ministry), at the (one location). They're in two separate prisons. There's one that I visit on a regular basis.

The above example is the only volunteer that was not a former client of the house that reported actively seeking out these relationships once they were not obligated to socialize within the confines and structure of the house. The last volunteer that discussed maintaining contact with former clients brought up the difficulty of this since he had been involved for nearly twenty-five years as one of the founders of the group when he says, "Because the guys move around a lot typically it's hard to keep track of them. There are a few guys that kind of from the past that I kind of keep in contact with." This volunteer went on to discuss how he primarily maintains contact with one former client of the house who now has multiple health problems from previous alcohol addiction issues, and that he assists this former client with taking him to the doctor in addition to other related tasks. Other than the relationship previously mentioned, this volunteer only discussed maintaining contact with former clients if they return to the weekly Bible study.

The consensus from the data shows that volunteers do not actively seek-out or maintain contact with former clients once they have left the house. As previously stated, volunteers' defined one of the primary purposes of this ministry as being to connect individuals with the community, perhaps via church, and ultimately providing a positive influence in their lives. However, volunteers are not actively pursuing one of the primarily perceived goals of the ministry. Therefore, it needs to be questioned why volunteers are not actively pursuing what they perceive as being one of the primary purposes of this ministry.

The volunteers that did not report maintaining relationships or contact with former clients stated a number of reasons for not doing so. These reasons ranged from the lack of personal time to doing so perhaps being against the policy of the ministry, which is not the case. One volunteer discusses how he has talked with some of the former clients that are now members of his church, but that he is not close friends with them. He elaborates further and by discussing the experience as if volunteers are not supposed to perform this role by saying, "The (lead volunteer) gave us kind of a list of do's and don'ts and stuff about contacting and stuff. He said it is okay to give a cell-phone number and things like that, but nobody has really asked for it." This statement shows again that volunteers are not actively pursuing relationships outside of the ministry, and are rationalizing their actions with a perceived policy of the ministry as their foundation. A final example that shows how volunteers do not maintain contact with former clients outside of the ministry is when one volunteer stated, "No...nuh uh. There's been a couple of them (former clients) that I've wanted to, but I just realized it's not in the best interest."

The previous examples show that volunteers are not fulfilling what they see as one of the primary purposes of this ministry. This is a fundamental conflict between what they perceive as one of the primary purposes of this ministry, and what they actually help fulfill. As previously stated, this could be due to the fact that volunteers feel that they are already giving up enough time and resources in the role that they serve already. Another possible explanation is that they actually do not have enough personal time to take on this perceived "extended" role when one accepts the actual duties of the volunteers. Two out of the three volunteers that did actively maintain contact with former members of the house were retired with the remaining volunteer being near the age and self-employed, thereby having significant flexibility in scheduling. It is perhaps a flexible schedule that is necessary for volunteers to "expand" their roles from the current roles that they serve. When one takes into account the entire scope of volunteers' answers, one will see that maintaining contact with former clients is seen as an undesired part of the ministry even though it is perceived as being one of the main purposes of it. Most volunteers do not see benefits for them personally in maintaining contact with former clients; therefore, they do not pursue them. This again shows a lack of dedication to the ministry's goals from the volunteers, further suggesting that volunteers are only volunteering for personal gain.

Uneasy Feelings while Volunteering

As revealed in the previous section, the majority of volunteers feel uneasy with the notion of interacting with former clients outside of the ministry setting. Therefore, it is important to explore any uneasy feelings volunteers may have with clients *within* the structured setting. Although the setting is structured with programs, there is no security present or any type of authority presence while volunteers are in the house. These

possible feelings of unease were explored when volunteers discussed any personal experiences being physically, sexually, or verbally assaulted while in the halfway-house in addition to potentially hearing of other volunteers having had this happen to them. The vast majority of volunteers reported that there has never been a time that they have felt unsafe while being in the halfway-house. In addition, all volunteers reported having never been or heard of any other volunteers being physically, sexually, or verbally assaulted while working in the house.

There were only two volunteers that did discuss having some feelings of uneasiness in several situations while working in the house. The two volunteers that reported these feelings were two of the longest tenured volunteers in the sample. One of the first volunteers that reported feelings of being unsafe was the only female volunteer in the sample. She discussed how there was a client in one of the houses that she believed had some anger issues, and had been irate about a certain rule that was being enforced in the house. She continued to discuss how the other male clients within the house quickly came to her defense over the situation. This volunteer also mentioned how clients would occasionally escort her out to her car if she is at the house at late hours of the night since one of the locations of the house is in a generally considered rough area of town. When asked if she had heard of any other volunteers having confrontations, she responded no. However, she discussed having witnessed confrontations between an employee of the ministry that is a former deputy warden of a prison and clients that usually resulted from how he talks to clients. In other words, it is her belief that his corrections' demeanor is what has caused several tense situations.

The second volunteer that discussed having experienced uneasy situations in the house where he felt his safety was threatened was one of the founders of the ministry. This volunteer discussed that there were three separate occasions while working with clients that he felt his physical safety threatened. It is important to note that not all of these instances occurred while the volunteer was in the house. The first instance was regarding an individual that had drug addiction issues that was actually arrested within the house. This individual was on drugs around the volunteer, and the volunteer felt threatened when he says:

> ...we had a guy that came to live in the house...we should have never accepted him because we knew he had some drug problems. Corrections kind of imposed on us because he had no place to go. He was the guy arrested in the house. He got all cracked up inside the house one night when I was there. I was a little bit scared of him.

The above statement makes reference to the previously mentioned theme regarding the clients that caused trouble as never should having been accepted in the first place. This particular volunteer makes this statement with each instance of an individual that caused him to fill uneasy. The remaining two instances involved similar situations as the previous example where clients had gotten high and he felt threatened around them. This volunteer continues to elaborate that the bigger danger involves individuals that the clients know that are not in the house when he says:

> I think that there's a bigger danger than the guys in the house is somebody that they know...and they hear about (the ministry). They talk something about people and all that and these guys might do something. Following them down there, come find us, or something to get back at the guy that lives in the house.

Although this volunteer did not discuss with the researcher a specific instance where the above example may have occurred, the researcher was told by a separate volunteer that the instance described above took place. This volunteer also discussed that

the danger is perhaps bigger with volunteers associated with the women's house due to former love interests outside of the house.

It is important to close this section by re-emphasizing that the vast majority of volunteers in this sample did not report having ever felt threatened or in danger as a result of their association with the ministry. The two previous examples of volunteers that did report feeling unsafe at certain points were two of longest tenured volunteers. Additionally, the remaining majority of volunteers that did not report having felt threatened had been volunteering an average of less-than five years. This seems to be that it is purely a relationship of the longer one is involved the more unsafe feeling instances that they will face, however, most volunteers feel very comfortable/unthreatened working in the halfway-house.

Effectiveness of the Ministry

The perceived level-of-effectiveness is an important insight that sheds light on the true beliefs of volunteers in regards to the quality and impact of the work that they are doing with the ministry. It was assumed that individuals volunteering their time and resources to this particular program would believe their work to be effective. However, this was generally not the case with the majority of the volunteers. Only one volunteer stated that he felt the program was extremely effective by saying, "Extremely, extremely…I'm thinking there should be more places like that around town. I realize it costs money, but I'd say it's real effective." Nearly all of the remaining volunteers stated that the program was fairly effective with providing the necessary tools, but always with

the caveat that it was up to clients to use those tools. One example of this is when a volunteer says:

> I feel it's very effective for the people that are wanting to take and put some energy and effort into it. Some people that are going through the motions just trying to, not really trying to walk-the-walk and talk-the-talk, but just doing what they feel like their probation officer or what they have to do to live there. Somebody that is putting energy and effort they are going to get something out of it they've never gotten. God's going to bless them, their life is going to change.

The previous quote reiterates the previous point regarding the program providing the tools that an individual needs to succeed, but that it is up to that individual in order to make the best of their situation. Another volunteer provides a similar statement by discussing that the program is fairly effective and that there are some success stories and some stories of failure. This volunteer continues by giving some examples of success stories and failure stories from the house and closes by saying:

> So, there's been some great success stories. Unfortunately, there is some…I don't know, I'd like to think it's better than the 66% that normally happens. I don't know what the stats are; you know you can see some real changes in the lives of these men.

The prior statement shows the level of uncertainty regarding the true effectiveness of the program, but that they believe that it is better than nothing. The volunteer that served as one of the founders of this program related the effectiveness to if the client's life has improved any while being at the house by saying, "…the effectiveness of it…to answer that you've got to say what the objectives are...But if they look at that period of time as being a good time, I think that's the objective." The previous statement shows again that the effectiveness of the program is a very personal issue that depends largely upon the actions of the client. However, this particular volunteer believes that any

improvement while in the house should be considered a success, thus showing the effectiveness of the program.

The volunteer that was a former client of the house was a firm believer that the effectiveness of the program was up to the individual that wants to change. He begins by saying:

> I think that the program is designed with designations, but basically the effectiveness of it is a matter of the person, the individual and the desire to just want to attempt to change or make a change within their life so that they can do better and not return to bad habits.

The preceding statement shows further support for the theme that volunteers -- even former clients of the program -- believe that the effectiveness of the program is entirely up to the individual that is in the program.

The remaining volunteers continue the theme of discussing the effectiveness of the program in the same light that it is up to the individual. However, the remaining volunteers even discuss that there is room for improvement in the program in how it is currently operated. One of the first examples of this is when a volunteer says:

> Well...I really feel that it's effective. You know...I think it's got a huge upside that is yet to be realized. I do think there is a need for expanding it to be more inclusive to when these guys move out and are on their own. All of that is...you know...going to be determined by the resources available, but right now it doesn't seem like we have enough to take care of what we've got.

The former example shows that although the volunteer sees the program as being effective that there are areas of the program that can be improved upon. One of the volunteers that was a convicted felon and had been through similar programs after his release from prison provided a similar answer to the one above. This volunteer stated that:

There is no question that it is more effective than what I would call the standard, maybe non-Christian programs that are out there. I've read some figures about the guys going back and what not. In fact, today there was a story on the news about the offenders who have been released, early released, through the I think the Governor...They released I think 900 and some odd guys just in the last month, and 75 are back in...so yeah, (ministry) has a better ratio of keeping guys from re-offending and going back in....

This example summarizes the common theme found throughout the majority of volunteers' beliefs in the overall effectiveness of the ministry. This overarching theme is that the program is effective for those that want to use the tools provided, and that it is definitely a better option than what is currently offered by state and federal programs. However, it is this point where one can more clearly see that the volunteers are not entirely sold on the idea of the program. Therefore, if volunteers do not evidence a strong belief in the idea and success of the program the question of what motivates these individuals re-emerges. As previously stated, one would expect an individual that is volunteering their time and resources to a program without being forced to do so would be enthusiastic regarding the effectiveness of the program. If individuals do not fully believe that the program is effective, then why do they volunteer their time and resources? It is this question that one must keep in mind throughout the discussion of the section regarding the volunteers' personal benefits that sheds more light onto the true motives of the volunteers.

Personal Benefits for Volunteers

As with the previous section of the perceived effectiveness of this ministry, the self-identified personal benefits that volunteers believe they receive helps reveal the true motivations of volunteers. This was perhaps the most pressing issue that the volunteers faced because it forced them to view their "selfless" act in a "selfish" manner. There were

a number of themes that emerged with the personal benefits for volunteers. The main themes that arose were volunteers reporting building relationships (i.e. platonic and familial), helping boost their self-esteem, and humbling them to realize that their current situations are not as bad as others' situations.

Relationships

The personal relationships that the volunteers' reported receiving as being a part of this ministry were by far the most frequently mentioned personal benefit received. Relationships were not only often described in strictly friendship terms, but were even described using familial terms. One of the first examples of this reported benefit is when one volunteer says:

> And in all honesty, the benefit of the relationships. Like I would have never known this guy here (referring to a former client in the room) if I weren't here. I don't think I would know anybody that I would know now that I consider to be the most important people in my life....

The former statement shows that this individual has not only received some relationships from being involved as a volunteer in the ministry, but that they feel as if the relationships made in this relationship have superseded, if not, replaced many of their previous relationships. Another volunteer continues this theme when they say that:

> Just the benefit of knowing good Christian guys, volunteers, and guys that...you know, just talking to some of the guys. One thing that I think that...that I believe...there is no such thing in any way as racial differences between whites, blacks, Hispanics. It's all culture, and I don't have any more in common with a black guy that grew up in Western (city) than I do with (current client) that grew up in the (state) mountains. There are enormous cultural differences between me and both of those guys. It's sort of fun to figure out those differences, why they're there, why they exist, all of that stuff. Those are all personal benefits, just learning about people. Learning how God works in their life.

The above statement shows that this particular volunteer reports that making relationships as not only a personal benefit, but that these relationships may have not even occurred without being involved with this ministry. This statement also suggests that this ministry provides access and exposes individuals to others outside of their cultural class or social circles that they may not normally associate with if it were not for their involvement with this ministry. In continuing with the theme of relationships, another volunteer likened the relationships he has built with clients in the house to raising children by saying:

> I'm just blessed...I'm blessed...by knowing these guys. They're like new friends, and it's amazing how quickly that seems to happen. You know, one thing that helps me is I'm retired, I have time. It's like raising kids, you know, you can talk about quality time. You can't get quality time unless you get volume of time...It's hard for somebody that has a job, family, and that sort of thing to do that. It's not easy to do that. It takes away from other parts of their responsibility as a husband and father...it limits how close they can get.

The previous example continues with the theme of how volunteers feel that the personal relationships that they are able to make by being involved in this ministry are seen as being the main benefit. In addition, this volunteer was the only individual that compared his relationships to those in the house as a father-son relationship, but continued with others as mentioning these relationships in familial terms. In essence, some volunteers feel as if the clients within this ministry and fellow volunteers are a surrogate family. It is essential to point-out that the two previous examples were of volunteers who are either retired or have a flexible schedule. It is perhaps the flexibility in one's schedule described by the above volunteer that is a new element of benefit that can be received by volunteers that have the time to invest in actual relationships. However, the majority of volunteers are middle-age and have families, and other

obligations that they must maintain. Thusly, they cannot invest the amount of time that it may require to develop some of these relationships; therefore, the benefits that they receive are different.

Self-Esteem

The second most common personal benefit reported by volunteers was that being involved with this ministry helped boost their self-esteem. The boost of self-esteem comes from hearing tragic stories from clients in the house discussing unfortunate past/present aspects of their personal lives at the weekly Bible study, as well as feeling good about oneself for being involved in this ministry and helping others. Many of the reports of boosting one's self esteem came indirectly in the form of comparing one's situation to a client; however, some volunteers blatantly stated that they receive a boost in their self-esteem from being involved in this ministry. One of the first examples of this theme is when a volunteer says:

> It's an eye-opener for me to see that as bad as my day has been or situation may be that I'm in, it pales in comparison to a lot of these things. You know, I might think I've got it bad somedays, and I hear about something like the case of (name of current client member) that we were talking about earlier. He didn't know his wife had passed away for a year, his first week in the house he planned to have a reconciliation meeting with her. The day or two after we had the Thursday night study, he found out that she had been dead for a year. Yeah...I think I might have had something bad at work that day, but that's nothing compared to something like that.

The above quote shows how volunteers are continuously comparing their situations to those of clients in the house. In turn, volunteers are seeing how what they may see as a bad situation or something bad that happened to them at work, that their situation is not near as bad as some of the clients in the house. It is this phenomenon that

is boosting volunteers' self-esteems. Another volunteer continues this theme when he says:

> Just my self-esteem, that's the biggest thing, my self-esteem. Feeling that I'm doing something, I am helpful. There is no doubt in my mind that I'm helping somebody, and I look forward to helping them. I see and I feel the positivity that I'm sharing with them, they return it. It's just like anything else...in...when you're familiar with anything or anybody, either you want to be bothered with them or you don't...This makes me feel like it is something, only because when I'm familiar with a person you just throw yourself out...So, they've got to want it and you've got to want to get it. So, you come together on one accord and you've got to do what you've got to do.

The former statement shows how volunteers feel as if they are having some positive impact in some people's lives. In turn, this boosts their self-esteem by making them feel good about themselves for volunteering their time and services. Another volunteer more simply puts it as, "I think anytime you're involved in other peoples' lives, that's positive. That's positive for me. You know, Thursday night's heading home, I'm blessed because of the guys that are there." One of the newer volunteers states that:

> I feel like I've been blessed considerably. You see someone that has been able to get on their feet, change their lives. Be able to be, a small part of that through prayer, contact that we've had with them, just for support. I think that's something we are all commanded by being Christians to do, to give back. That's something that I've gotten from it.

Again, these examples show how being involved in other's lives for their perceived benefit is translated as being a positive in the volunteers' lives. Another facet of boosting one's self-esteem that surfaced as another separate, yet connected theme was the humbling experience that volunteers reported.

Humbling Experience

The last major theme that appeared as a personal benefit received by volunteers was that being involved in this ministry and around clients was a humbling experience. Volunteers reported that being around clients helped them be reminded to always be grateful for what they have, and that it helps them keep focused on what is important in their lives. One volunteer stated that:

> Well…for me, I guess it helps keep me focused on what's important. It helps…I struggle with pride. So, coming down there always help me…reminds me of who I am and that I'm no better than any of those guys. I've been locked up before, and that just brings that reminder back to me. So, it helps me in that capacity.

The above quote shows what was previously mentioned that it helps individuals feel better about their own lives in that they realize that their particular situation is not as bad as what others may have it. Another volunteer continues this theme when he says:

> You know, sometimes you think guys in prison may not be well-educated, well read, may not know the Bible. It just impresses me with the knowledge that these folks have. It's kind of humbling sometimes, I've been in church my whole life, and sometimes these guys run circles around me on these Bible stories and stuff. It's kind of cool and everything.

The previous statement shows that this volunteer's preconceived notions of prisoners and/or former offenders as being illiterate and not very intelligent was shattered. This shattering of his preconceived notions helped humble him because he felt he had a good grasp on the Bible, and individuals that he previously felt were not intelligent knew more about the subject than he did. The volunteer that got involved because of the harsh feelings he had towards his registered sex offender neighbor discussed the humbling benefits that he receives being involved in this ministry by saying:

> I guess I considered myself to be too good to have somebody that had been in prison living next door to me. I had just decided that it wasn't the right thing to

do, the right way to feel. I had it pointed out several times through the scripture. What did I tell you Romans 12 or whatever? That we're no better than anybody else. Justice is the Lord's...I don't know, there's just a certain amount of comfort getting in, going down, talking with the guys.

The above example shows again that being involved with clients shatters many of the volunteers' preconceived notions about who they are and how they perceive prisoners and/or former offenders. As a result, the shattered preconceived notions serve as a force that humbles volunteers. The consistent shattering of preconceived notions creates a transparent and/or genuine environment that volunteers feel comfortable in being present and sharing their own stories. This becomes even more apparent when volunteers discuss the advantages of this environment over other ministry environments.

It became apparent through some of the interviews that not all volunteers were there for complete selfless reasons. This theme emerged primarily, although not exclusively, through both discussions about their perceptions of the question asking what their personal benefits were, as well as other various points throughout the interview. One of the first examples of this is when a volunteer discusses his initial involvement in the ministry when he says:

> Initially, I looked at it more as an obligation. You know, we said we'd do this and I was going, I was just going on the Thursday night we'd do the dinner. Finally, I just had this moment where I said I either need to quit doing this and focus on something else, or I really need to buy into it and go every Thursday and make a relationship with the guys, show I was sincere about it. So, I started going every Thursday, or as much as I could, and the benefits for me, I really miss it now if I don't get there on Thursday night and stuff. I think the guys realize I'm sincere about being there, they've opened up...they are more willing to share if you are sincere about it. I get more out of it now I think, then I provide.

The previous statement shows how this individual that volunteers his time and services for a selfless act is actually admitting that he receives more benefit from his volunteering than the clients do in the house. This very statement was admitted by

another volunteer at the conclusion of their interview when he said, "What I've noticed is a transformation in my own life whenever I show up on Thursday nights. I truly feel like I'm getting more out of the Bible study by being down there than the guys do." One of the main attractions of this ministry that became apparent throughout various interviews is that this atmosphere provides a Bible study environment that is not available elsewhere. This is one of the primary draws of this program. One volunteer stated that, "It's neat to see some of the guys open, this transparency and humility that is honestly difficult to find in a men's group with men who have not been locked-up before. So, that's an encouragement to me." The previous statement shows that it is the attraction of this group where individuals feel as if they can share anything and everything unlike other ministry or small-groups that may be available.

Another volunteer continues this same thought when he discusses the comparison between this group and other men's groups available at church saying, "I don't think there is any comparison between the two." One of the founders of the ministry discusses this transparency and honesty that is present in this ministry versus other programs at churches when he says:

> ...I can see God working in guy's lives. That's really fun in a social environment that I'm here, as well as out at our church. Everybody looks pretty cool, they've got it together, but it's not really true. These guys (clients), you can really see what's going on in their lives...Everybody knows everything about everybody, and its easy to see God work in a life when you can see that they've changed as a result of a process where they become familiar with the Gospel.

The former statement summarizes what the previous examples have been hinting. This ministry provides an atmosphere unlike anything these men have found that is available at church for an individual to get involved. This Bible study provides a

transparent community where everyone knows everything about everyone. There are no "fake" people, and people do not have any motivation or receive any benefit from being "fake." It is this Bible study that attracts volunteers that want a genuine atmosphere not available anywhere else where they can feel comfortable discussing their issues in their lives that is not present elsewhere. This may be due to the fact that clients within the house are not perceived to be in a position to judge, therefore, this provides an environment and community not available elsewhere. This is also apparent when the researcher attended these meetings for approximately five months; volunteers often outnumbered current clients in the house sometimes by a ratio of 4 to 1. On a given night, the average attendance was approximately 13 with only 3 being current clients and 3 being former clients. The remaining number was made up of mostly volunteers. Therefore, it is apparent that volunteers have been looking for and appear to have found a "genuine" place where they can share personal struggles with one another and study the Bible without being surrounded by "fake" people at their church. Thus, the volunteer is the one being fulfilled and not necessarily the client for whom it is intended. This is a topic that will be discussed in further detail in the Discussion chapter.

Ultimate Goal

In continuation with the previous theme of volunteers' personal benefits, volunteers revealed what their personal ultimate goal was with the work that they were doing at the ministry. On this issue volunteers experiences and perspectives revealed differences in their personally defined ultimate goals for involvement. Also, it is notable that what volunteers often reported as their personal, primary goal for involvement -- differed from what they perceived as the primary goals of the ministry itself. The

responses varied from previously reported goals such as connecting clients with the community at large and Christian communities, in addition to other Christian/religious goals (i.e. giving a sense of purpose, teaching concepts of grace/mercy, etc.). Additionally, there was some confusion as to what one's personal goals actually were when asked.

The majority of the Christian aspects that were mentioned in the volunteers' answer to this question regarded either accepting Christ or accepting key principles of Christianity (i.e. grace and/or forgiveness, etc.). The first example of a volunteer mentioning that his personal ultimate goal was that clients would accept Christ was when he says:

> I think just to help as many of these guys coming through the program to accept Christ, to get plugged into the community. Ideally, it would be 100% of them never go back to jail and we realize that is probably a long shot. Just to help get as many of them get plugged back into the community and plugged into the church, to turn their lives around as possible. Every one of them is a victory.

The prior example shows how this volunteer's personal goals are in-line with the goals of the ministry. However, the Christian aspect became the primary goal with clients being connected to the community (Christian community and community at large) and refraining from recidivating becoming the secondary goal. Another example is when a second volunteer says, "The best end-result is, like it is for any man, to catch onto the concept of grace, the good news described in the Bible...that's a goal for anybody, to have a good relationship with Christ." This second example shows again that Christian aspects are seen by some of the volunteers as being one of the primary personal goals. The last volunteer to state a Christian aspect as being one of his personal ultimate goals said:

I hope that in some capacity that I can help men better understand what life is about. That's a pretty general statement, but as they are coming out of the house, what to expect. Give a good spiritual basis. I guess almost say a spiritual basis that is applicable. I think sometimes, having been in prison, and hearing the gospel the way it's presented there. A lot of it has the tendency to be more [of a] charismatic message, which I think sometimes puts too much motion in it versus real-life type stuff. Guys can really plug into the news and life, so that's my desire to be able to help guys understand the Word and understand Christ more...who He really is...what God's really like....

The above statement shows again that this volunteer hopes that he can provide a spiritual basis for clients, and that serves as his primary personal goal. Although the past three examples have shown that volunteers had a clear personal plan, that is not a finding to be generalized to all volunteers in this study. The remaining volunteers that were interviewed seemed confused as to what their actual personal goal was in regards to the work that they were doing at the ministry, showing a lack of direction and clear purpose behind their actions.

A volunteer without a clear goal for their own life in the work that they are doing is an indicator that a volunteer is not entirely sold on the program that they are working for, and that they may be just going through the motions. In addition, a volunteer that does not have a clear and concise reasoning behind their actions with the ministry shows that they may truly be disinterested about the work that they are doing and may only be involved in the ministry for personal gain. One of the first examples of a volunteer not having a clear and definable ultimate goal is when the volunteer says, "...umm, I don't know, I don't really know. To just plant seeds to you know, to keep evaluating how we can improve it. How we can be more effective in our community...." The previous example shows that the individual does not know what their personal ultimate goal is in regards to the work that they are doing, and that they are instead relying upon what they

perceive as the main mission goals to substitute their personal goal(s). Another example

of this lack of clarity in regards to personal goals is when another volunteer says:

> You know, I'm not sure, I'm not sure. I feel like I'm there because God put this ministry in my path. I have...I don't know what the end point is because the guys kind of keep coming and going, there's always kind of new people to get to know and to assist in whatever way I can. I guess until I get some indication that I ought to be doing something else, I mean I like the idea of doing what I'm doing...I never envisioned this...I guess I'll just keep going it until I'm either not effective or something else comes along.

The preceding example shows again how some volunteers have not thought about

or do not have a clear idea of what their personal goal is with the work that they are doing

with the ministry. This lack of clarity in the purpose behind the volunteer's own personal

actions shows how this individual is just going through the motions perhaps because it

feels right or that he is trying to appease those at his church. This particular volunteer

filled-in to do the Bible study because the individual at his church that was previously

leading the study passed away unexpectedly. It is perhaps the same as an earlier example

where the volunteer feels volunteering at this ministry is an obligation because it was

asked of them from members of their church. They may see it as an obligation, and that

they are only going through the motions to appease those around them within their social

networks at their respective churches. Therefore, they are participating in this ministry for

personal gain of appeasing those within their social networks, and not participating in the

ministry for the sake of helping clients.

The last remaining theme that emerged from the volunteers' responses regarding

their personal ultimate goal was that they wanted to give to others what was given to

them in a time of need. This theme happened to be present in the response from two of

the three volunteers that self-identified as being convicted felons with one being a former client of the house. The first individual that discussed wanting to give back said:

> As much as anything, just what (the ministry) is about, Christian ministry. Wanting to give back to people what people, when I first became a Christian, shepherded me, were mentors to me. They gave me positive direction in my life, showed me how to change. They showed me how to change from the Word and live the right life. Is what I'm actually looking to give back in that regard.

The above example shows how a volunteer that has been through the criminal justice system, and has been through similar situations as the clients in the house, is volunteering to give back what has previously been given to him. There was a genuineness that existed in their answers when compared to the other volunteers that had not been arrested or incarcerated at any point in their life. The second volunteer that answered in a similar fashion and was also a former client of the house said:

> With the work I'm doing, my ultimate goal is to be an asset. To be able to say that I'm good for (the ministry). I am, and I have been, and I continue to be something worthwhile. Something that somebody, not look up to, something that somebody will know and feel that I am there to help, assist to do whatever I can to help them do what I've done, or what I'm attempting to do…be successful. Be accepting in society, and make the best of it that I can do until the good Lord calls me to Heaven.

The preceding statement shows again how individuals that have been put in similar situations or the same situations as the clients in the house are currently in want to give back to what they had received. The remaining volunteer not discussed in this section stated that his personal ultimate goal was for him to grow spiritually without mention to helping others. This was the same volunteer that became active in the ministry due to his neighbor that was the registered sex offender. This shows again the emerging theme that volunteers, for the most part, are taking part in this ministry for their own personal benefit.

DISCUSSION

This work has provided in-depth information and detail on the backgrounds and motivations of volunteers for a Protestant Christian faith-based halfway-house. In addition, this study has revealed insights into the backgrounds of volunteers and what motivates them to devote their time and resources to helping recently released offenders that have not been present in previous studies. One of the primary findings of this research is that volunteers see the major purpose of this ministry as providing a new social network for recently released offenders; however, volunteers do not perform many of these functions that they see as vital to the ministry. It was also found that Christian principles were not the focal point of this ministry, and that they took a secondary role to clients achieving traditional societal benchmarks of maintaining a job, stable housing, getting married, etc. The final major finding was that volunteers were not convinced that the ministry is effective. This finding, in turn, actually is what brings their motives for volunteering into question.

This study revealed that volunteers of faith-based halfway-houses have similar background characteristics to those involved in faith-based prison ministries and volunteers with offenders in general. The findings on the demographic backgrounds of volunteers in this study were in-line with findings of other volunteer groups from

previous studies. It was also found that the vast majority of volunteers were middle-aged, college-educated, white males, similar to Tewksbury and Dabney (2005). In addition, it was found that 37.5% of this sample of volunteers had a criminal background, which is slightly higher than what was found with Tewksbury and Collins (2005).

What volunteers saw as the purpose of the ministry varied across a number of themes. The most prevalent themes were to provide offender/clients positive relationships and to help connect with an encouraging community while avoiding negative communities. Although one would assume that religious principles would take precedence over societal measures of success in a faith-based ministry setting, this was found to not be the case. Volunteers perceived the Christian and/or religious aspects of the ministry to be secondary to the goals of the ministry. In addition, volunteers did not actively work towards achieving what they perceived to be as the primary goals of the ministry. One possible explanation for this occurrence is that volunteers believe that clients must have the "worldly" aspects of their lives (i.e. employment, housing, marriage, etc.) in-line before they can begin focusing on the spiritual aspect of their lives. Another possible explanation is that they possibly do not care about whether or not an offender implements Christian principles into their lives. However, the most logical explanation based on the other findings of this study are that volunteers believe they are providing the Christian principles for the clients to use within their lives, and that it is entirely the discretion of clients to implement the spiritual tools provided within their lives. This finding shows the beginning of a trend that can be traced throughout these interviews that volunteers may not be fully dedicated to the mission of the ministry –as how they perceived it to be – bringing into question the true motives of volunteers.

It is also important to discuss the significance of volunteers not fully knowing what types of offenders are allowed access into the ministry. This lack of knowledge of the type of offenders allowed inside the ministry suggests three possible explanations. The first is that this ministry purposely withholds this type of information under the guise of protecting offenders' confidentiality in order to not dissuade individuals from volunteering. For example, a volunteer could feel that their safety is in danger if they knew that half of the clients in the house had committed murder at some point in their lives. The second possible explanation is that volunteers truly do not care what type of offenses clients have committed throughout their lives. The third possible explanation is that volunteers may not want to know; so that their safety does not come into question as such knowledge could contribute to feelings of insecurity. Although these are all possible explanations, evidence suggests that volunteers are only concerned if there are clients in the house that are sex offenders.

The vast majority of volunteers expressed confusion over what types of offenders are actually allowed access into the ministry; however, the majority knew that sex offenders were definitely not welcome. As previously stated, this is likely due to most sex offenses being stigmatized as offenses involving pedophilic behaviors. In addition, it is likely that volunteers do not see sex offenses – especially with pedophilia being the stigmatized behavior – as a relatable "sin" to struggle with versus other behaviors (i.e. substance abuse issues, theft, etc.). This is an important finding because it suggests that even in an environment that is supposed to be forgiving and providing opportunities for individuals to change their lives that sex offenses are still being classified as an unacceptable form of behavior even when compared to murder.

Another important finding to discuss is that volunteers see the Christian aspect of the services that this ministry provides as being secondary to traditional societal achievements. These traditional societal achievements include maintaining a job, maintaining a permanent residence, and getting married. This finding suggests that volunteers see that if clients have their focus taken off-of physically surviving that they can focus on the spiritual aspects of their life. Additionally, volunteers discussed that this ministry provides the spiritual tools for clients, but that it was up to the individual client to use those tools. It was suggested throughout the conversations with volunteers that they see the Christian aspect of this ministry as providing a context into which to place clients' behaviors that has been absent prior to their involvement in this particular ministry. More specifically, this ministry guides clients to regard all of their actions, no matter how insignificant, as having long-term implications. Also, the Christian aspect is believed to give clients a sense of purpose in the world, which is a trait that may have been absent prior to being involved with this ministry. Faith-based ministries providing a contextual basis for clients to analyze their actions and behaviors with is a finding supported by Kerley & Copes (2008). The Christian/religious component being a secondary goal is an important finding because it suggests that although faith-based ministries seem to be basing their purpose around the religious aspect of the program that in all actuality, the Christian/religious aspect is a secondary goal. This is valuable information to legislators and corrections officials that are determining whether or not to provide and/or give access to state/federal funds to groups similar to this ministry due to its religious component.

One of the last major findings of this study was that volunteers were not entirely convinced of the overall effectiveness of this ministry. This brings into question serious concerns regarding the motives of the majority of volunteers. Volunteers, for the most part, saw that the success and effectiveness of this ministry depended considerably upon the individual client. In addition, volunteers suggested that there exists a large amount of room for improvement with the ministry in how it currently operates, although they also noted that it was at least the best option available to recently released offenders. This lack of belief in this ministry's effectiveness brings into question the motives as to why these individuals volunteer their time and resources to a program they do not fully believe fulfills its goals. Also, all of the volunteers that were not retired or had flexibility in their work schedule were not actively pursuing the fulfillment of these goals that they felt were not being achieved. This also brings into question the motives of the volunteers even further, especially in light of the reported personal benefits that volunteers receive from their work.

The personal benefits that volunteers reported receiving stands as perhaps the most important finding of this study. The two main reported personal benefits that volunteers received were that it helps boost their self-esteem and that it provides them with a humbling experience. Volunteers reported that by volunteering and attending the weekly Bible study that they were able to place their seemingly difficult situations in their own lives into a larger context by seeing that whatever their particular situation may be that there are other people that have it much worse. Volunteers reported that seeing other individuals in their "bad" situations helped them feel good about their own particular situations. Therefore, this experience by volunteers brings them a sense of

satisfaction in the own lives, further contributing to their continued motivation to volunteer with these recently released offenders. This finding is supported by Vecina, Chacón, Sueiro, and Barrón (2010) when they found that volunteer satisfaction is a primary reason behind volunteer intent to remain volunteering with the particular organization. The importance of these findings is that it takes emphasis off-of what is perceived as a "selfless" act of volunteering one's time and resources, and places these actions in a "selfish" light. In turn, this helps provide a deeper and more detailed perspective on the motivations of individuals that volunteer their time and resources in assisting with recently released offenders.

Another, related, important personal benefit reported as being received by volunteers in this study was that it provided volunteers with a genuine sense of community. As previously discussed, all volunteers reported attending church on a regular basis at a variety of different Christian denominations. In addition, some volunteers reported that they were looking to get involved in some type of program in their church, but had difficulty in doing so. Also, it was reported that one of the main attractions to this particular ministry was the perceived transparency and authenticity that existed among the members. These findings suggest that volunteers are attending the weekly Bible study and other functions of this ministry because it not only helps them feel better about their own situations, but it is also perceived as being a genuine community that they cannot find at their respective churches or anywhere else. Several of the volunteers discussed that there is no comparison between this ministry and others available where one can have a Bible study. This difference is largely due to individuals feeling that they can be themselves, admit their own faults without judgment from others,

and have reassurance that their situations are not as bad as others have it. The last

difference of the reassurance is especially important because volunteers discussed how

everyone seems like they "have their lives together" at church. It is also evidenced by the

high ratio of volunteers to current clients that participate in many ministry functions. The

finding of the importance of volunteers seeking and maintaining positive relationships is

supported by Boezeman and Ellemers (2009) when they discuss that making a relatable,

secure, and respectful relationship with those involved in a charitable organization is

essential for continued volunteerism. In addition, having a positive relationship with

others involved in a charitable organization was seen as being even more important than a

volunteer's overall job satisfaction (Boezman & Ellemers, 2009). This finding is even

further supported by Barraza (2011) where he found that volunteers that have positive

relationships have a greater intent to continue volunteering with their current

organization.

The findings from this study provide the potential for several important policy

implications. One of the first findings that have the potential for policy implications is

that this research shows that volunteers who are not offenders themselves seem to be

primarily volunteering for selfish reasons. That is, the volunteers seem to be

volunteering for their own needs and not the needs for clients or the ministry as a whole.

However, this also suggests that although volunteers do take the "volunteer" role, they

must also receive benefits themselves – such as positive relationships -- in order to

continue to motivate them to participate. This suggests that both correctional institutions

and/or halfway-house programs may want to provide greater opportunities (i.e. official

acknowledgement of their help, reports regarding the impact that they are having, etc.) to

help motivate volunteers to continue to do their work. Another important finding that this research demonstrates is that faith-based ministries do not necessarily emphasize the religious component as many legislators, scholars, and correctional professionals may fear. This can have important policy implications in regards to faith-based organizations that are Protestant Christian based are not primarily working with current and/or recently released offenders for purely religious reasons as is widely regarded by many legislators, scholars, and correctional professionals. This finding may ease some tensions and possibly restrictions on federal and state grant funding opportunities for faith-based groups. In addition, this study has provided valuable knowledge that can be used at the disposal of legislators, scholars, and correctional professionals that would not have been available otherwise on the backgrounds and motivations of faith-based halfway-house volunteers. This information can be used to help shape current/future funding opportunities (i.e. grants), and institutional policies regarding what types of faith-based organizations are allowed access inside prisons and what types of faith-based organizations that offenders are released to as conditions of their parole/probation. Lastly, this study provides useful information to administrators of faith-based halfway-houses on the need to better educate volunteers on the types of offenders allowed access to this ministry, and what the actual goals of the ministry are. Also, that the administrators of faith-based halfway-houses may want to develop a more comprehensive education curriculum for volunteers, and provide a clear direction that is apparently lacking.

This study has provided useful information on the backgrounds and motivations of faith-based halfway-house volunteers, even though it has done so with some important limitations. One of the first limitations is that the study only involved volunteers from

one specific ministry. It would have been useful to include multiple Protestant-Christian

based halfway-house ministries to see if differences appear in volunteers' responses. This

could not be achieved in the present study due to time limitations and the lack of similar

ministries in the location where the present study was conducted. This is an area that

needs to be studied more in future research. Another limitation is that the study only

involved interviews with eight volunteers; therefore, results should not be generalizable

across all faith-based halfway-house ministry volunteers. The commonly accepted

standard for the number of interviews for qualitative-based research in order to reach the

theoretical saturation point is approximately 25 interviews (Charmaz, 2006; Morse,

1994). Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) found that meta-themes can even be

determined by six interviews and thematic saturation can begin to occur at 12 interviews.

However, theoretical saturation could not be achieved with this particular ministry due to

this ministry only having nine active volunteers. A third limitation is that only one

researcher was involved with the collection and interpretation of the data, consequently

introducing potential biases attached to one's worldviews. Even though these are

important limitations that need to be considered when interpreting these findings, there is

no such prior research that has been conducted on the backgrounds and motivations of

faith-based ministry volunteers in the halfway-house setting. In addition, the exploratory

nature of this research provides a valuable context for future researchers to base their

studies on in order to further research in the area of backgrounds and motivations of those

involved with faith-based ministries intended for both current and/or former offenders.

In the end, this study has provided in-depth information regarding the

backgrounds and motivations of volunteers at a faith-based Protestant Christian halfway-

house. More importantly, this study has provided insights into the motivations of those that volunteer with former offenders that has been absent in prior studies. It was found by this study that most volunteers are participating in these ministries due to not being able to find a ministry with a similar transparent atmosphere at their respective churches. As a result, it is suggested that volunteers are doing-so primarily for personal gain and not for the selfless act that is generally considered to be the motivation for this type of behavior. Although it was found that the majority of volunteers are engaged in this ministry primarily for personal gain, this is not to say that there are not individuals that volunteer for selfless reasons. In fact, the difference here seems to be that only previously incarcerated volunteers reported volunteering primarily for the benefit of others and not themselves. In conclusion, this study provides valuable information to scholars, legislators, and correctional professionals by showing that faith-based ministries do not necessarily emphasize the religious aspect of the program. This study has also addressed the lack of literature on the backgrounds and motivations of those whom volunteer for faith-based offender ministries. Even though this study has provided information to a largely unstudied topic, future research on the backgrounds and motivations of former offender ministries is vital for both scholarly and practical purposes.

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APPENDIX

Interview Question Guide

Demographics to Record: *Age, Sex, Race, Present/Past Occupation, Religious Affiliation, Years of Prison Volunteerism, Prior Criminal Conviction, Prior Prison Time*

1. Please explain the entire purpose of your ministry.

2. How did you become involved in a former offender-specific ministry and this ministry in particular? Did your church advertise it? *Is there anything specific to this program that especially draws you in?*

3. Have you ever been in prison yourself, or had any close friends or family members in prison? If so, please explain. *What kind of connection do you have in your life or past to prison? Family, friends, etc?*

4. How effective do you feel this program is? Why do/do you not think this ministry is effective? *What kinds of evidence have you seen to support your views?*

5. Do you ever feel unsafe or uneasy while working with house members? To your best knowledge, have you or anyone within this ministry that volunteers ever been assaulted physically, verbally, or sexually while at the house for this ministry?

6. What is your personal ultimate goal with the work that you are doing here?

7. Do you maintain contact with any former house members after they've left the house? *If yes, why with these people; if not, why not?*

8. What are the personal benefits of being a part of this ministry that you as an individual receive?

9. If I were to start doing this type of work on a regular basis, what advice would

   you give me? **Frame as "what advice for someone that would be coming in as**

   a new volunteer?

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Thesis: *Backgrounds and Motivations of Faith-Based Prison Organization Volunteers*, Dr. Richard Tewksbury, Chair

B.A.   WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY, History, SociologyDECEMBER 2009
Summa Cum Laude
Minor in Criminology

PUBLICATIONS

Encyclopedia Articles Tewksbury, R., Denney, A.S. (forthcoming 2013). Homophobic Assault. *Encyclopedia of street crime in America.* SAGE Publications

Tewksbury, R., Denney, A.S. (forthcoming 2013). Sexual Exposure. *Encyclopedia of street crime in America.* SAGE Publications

Academic Journal Articles

Denney, A.S., & Tewksbury, R. (under review). Desired partner characteristics and self-presentation in an online BDSM community. *Deviant Behavior.*

Tewksbury, R., Higgins, G.E., Denney, A.S. (forthcoming). Validating a Measure of Work Stress for Correctional Staff: A Structural Equation Modeling Approach. *Criminal Justice Policy Review.*

Tewksbury, R., Higgins, G.E., Denney, A.S. (under review). Measuring work stress among correctional staff: A Rasch measurement approach. *Journal of Statistical Measures.*

PRESENTATIONS

Denney, Andrew S. (2012, February). *Desired partner characteristics and self-presentation in an online BDSM community.* Research findings presented at the annual American Association of Behavioral and Social Sciences, Las Vegas, NV.

HONORS AND AWARDS

Graduate Assistantship Appointment   2011-2012
Department of Justice Administration
UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE, Louisville, KY

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Graduate Research Assistant   2011-PRESENT
Department of Justice Administration
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