Is Religion an Effective Rehabilitation Method? Comparing the Results

by

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ABSTRACT

Faith-based rehabilitation programs receive both praise and criticism from the criminal justice academic community. Critics argue they risk violating inmates' constitutional rights by forcing them to participate and adhere to religious principles and activities. Supporters of faith-based programs claim that they reduce both recidivism rates and high incarceration costs. Current studies evaluating the effectiveness of faith-based programs struggle with methodological issues. This study compares a popular faith-based program to two similar secular programs to determine if there is a significant difference in recidivism rates using an independent t-test.

Keywords: faith-based rehabilitation program, cognitive behavioral therapy, recidivism, InnerChange Freedom Initiative, independent t-test, Moral Reconation Therapy, Circles of Support and Accountability

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InnerChange Freedom Initiative (IFI)

Life Connections Program (LCP)

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The United States has the highest incarcerated population in the world (Gramlich, 2018). The Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that two-thirds (67.8%) of released prisoners are rearrested within three years, and three-quarters (76.6%) of released prisoners are rearrested within five years of release ("Recidivism," n.d., para. 2). There is little empirical evidence and data regarding the effectiveness of faith-based rehabilitation programs used in prison. Critics argue that faith-based programs do not reduce recidivism rates and pressure inmates to participate in activities that they do not agree with such as Bible studies and prayer groups. Faith-based rehabilitation programs face accusations of forcing religious beliefs on inmates, violating individual rights by receiving government funding, and face allegations of violating church and state separation. While no program, whether faith-based or secular, can be one hundred percent effective, many negative connotations surround faith-based programs. There are few studies that apply empirical methods to faith-based programs to determine how effective they really are.

Advocates credit faith-based programs with providing life-changing, improved morality, and learning experiences for inmates who desist from criminal activity upon completion of a faith-based program. Opposing viewpoints claim there is no quantitative evidence of decreased recidivism in comparison to secular programs. Faith-based programs also face scrutiny and allegations of violating the Establishment Clause. It is also difficult to draw correlations from the variables in control groups that are not comparable due to selection of subjects and control groups. Scholars argue that there is a lack of statistically significant studies on faith-based programs or standard definitions of

terms such as “religion” and “faith-based.” Without defined terms, the ability to build on previous standards and measurements is difficult. Faith-based programs are attractive options because they offer minimal costs to taxpayers. They can also offer a variety of rehabilitation strategies and provide a support system that encourages deterrence from criminal activity while potentially lowering costs. Many faith-based programs are gaining credibility as they seek to include elements of cognitive behavioral therapy. Cognitive behavioral therapy programs are achieving credibility, and studies of those programs indicate lower recidivism rates (Lipsey, Landenberger, & Wilson, 2007).

Purpose and Significance

In its simplest form, the purpose of serving a prison sentence is to prevent an individual from committing either the same crime or new offense upon release. Prison rehabilitation programs include educational, vocational, substance abuse, and mental health counseling. According to a study by The Bureau of Justice Statistics, the most widely utilized services that inmates participate in are religious in nature (Hallett & Johnson, 2014). The communal nature of faith-based programs provides a social and supportive network for inmates that not only helps them adjust to life in prison, but also for the life challenges they will face post release.

The low costs of faith-based programs are highly attractive to ever-tightening budgets and a growing prison population. The Vera Institute (Henrichson & Delaney, 2012) reported that the annual cost to taxpayers for prisons is $39 billion. The United States has one of the highest incarceration rates in the world, with 1 in 100 of adults incarcerated (Pew Center on the States, 2008). Budgets constantly face expanding healthcare costs, corrections staff salaries, housing, and food. With increasing scrutiny

and oversight of how to spend limited funds, utilizing effective rehabilitation programs that potentially lower costs can decrease recidivism rates and improve social behaviors.

This study evaluates relevant aspects of two popular faith-based programs to a similar secular program. The purpose of this study is to identify the significance and impact of each program's rate of recidivism and evaluate the extent to which male inmates' continuous interaction post release with community volunteers and mentors impacts recidivism rates. Results of the study should also produce comparisons between each program and whether they contribute to lower recidivism rates.

Examining the similarities and differences of faith-based and secular programs could be an essential component in determining the effectiveness of such programs. Two common faith-based programs (InnerChange Freedom Initiative and Circles of Support and Accountability) will be compared to a similar secular program (Moral Reconation Therapy). Two components are measured in this study: recidivism rates of inmates who have completed each program and the recidivism rates of inmates who continue to meet with community volunteers or mentors following their release from prison. Not all factors or methods of measurement from each program will be equal, but they should establish a comparable baseline.

Definition of Terms

There are two terms referenced throughout this study that can be ambiguous due to lack of agreement and conformity on standard definitions: *recidivism* and *faith-based rehabilitation program*. Because these terms are a main focal point of the data being examined, it is beneficial to define them here.

Recidivism: The National Institute of Justice defines recidivism as: as "a person's relapse into criminal behavior" and "is measured by criminal acts that resulted in rearrest, reconviction or return to prison with or without a new sentence during a three-year period following the prisoner's release." ("Recidivism," n.d., para. 1).

Faith-based rehabilitation program: Scholars struggle to agree on the definition of faith-based rehabilitation program because each one uses varying degrees of religiosity in its materials and methodologies. The most widely used definition of faith-based programs is: "social programs or services that are administered by an organization with some type of religious affiliation" (Dodson, Cabage, & Klenowski, 2011, p. 368).

The terms *cognitive behavioral therapy* and *Moral Reconation Therapy* are also defined to ensure clarity.

Cognitive behavioral therapy: According to the American Psychological Association, "cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is a form of psychological treatment that has been demonstrated to be effective for a range of problems including depression, anxiety disorders, alcohol and drug use problems, marital problems, eating disorder and severe mental illness" ("What Is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy?" n.d., para. 1).

Moral Reconation Therapy: Related to cognitive behavioral therapy, Moral Reconation Therapy "seeks to decrease recidivism among both juvenile and adult criminal offenders by increasing moral reasoning. MRT is systematic and implements a cognitive-behavioral approach, which positively addresses an adolescent's ego, social, moral, and positive behavioral growth" ("Moral Reconation Therapy," n.d., para. 1).

Overview of Programs

Moral Reconation Therapy Overview

Moral Reconation Therapy (MRT) is one of the most widely recognized cognates of cognitive behavioral therapy and teaches specific skills that focus on the underlying processes of an individual's beliefs and thoughts (Clark, 2010). MRT is based on Kohlberg's moral development hierarchy that individuals experience succeeding levels of moral development before reaching the highest level where decisions are based on the principals and values they have learned throughout adolescence (Adler, Burnside, Loucks, & Viki, 2008). By changing an inmate's belief system and moral reasoning, he is better prepared to address life's problems and obstacles. Inmates typically receive treatment and services following release from prison. Empirical studies examining the effectiveness of MRT have shown higher levels of value-based reasoning, leading to reduced rearrests and incarcerations (Little, Robinson, & Burnette, 1991).

Inmates participating in MRT typically attend twelve sessions led by trained facilitators or correctional officers. The program has sixteen steps that treat the following:

- "confrontation of beliefs;
- attitudes and behaviors;
- assessment of current relationships;
- reinforcement of positive behavior and habits;
- positive identity formation;
- enhancement of self-concept;

- decrease in hedonism and development of frustration tolerance; and
- development of higher stages of moral reasoning" ("Moral Reconation Therapy," n.d., para. 1).

Circles of Support and Accountability Overview

Circles of Support and Accountability (COSA) began in the 1990s in Canada by a Mennonite pastor who organized community volunteers to provide a social network and support system for high-risk sex offenders (Fox, 2013). COSA has emerged as a popular program in the U.S. and in some European countries. Research by Wilson, Cortoni, and McWhinnie (2009) and Bates, Saunders, and Wilson (2007) shows that COSA facilitates the rehabilitation of inmates by teaching life-coping skills that increase and cultivate emotional welfare. While each program model differs slightly in design and administration, COSA relies heavily on volunteers as instructors and mentors to teach the curriculum. Volunteers are selected through a screening process and typically trained by the corrections department overseeing the program. Inmates attend group meetings and meet individually with multiple trained volunteers who serve as mentors and help inmates prepare to navigate life after prison. Following an offender's release, they typically meet with a volunteer mentor daily during the first 60 to 90 days and then less frequently for the subsequent twelve months.

Prison Fellowship Ministries Overview

InnerChange Faith Initiative is a rehabilitation program operated by Prison Fellowship Ministries. Prison Fellowship's mission and ministry is to "restore those

affected by crime and incarceration by introducing families to a new hope available through Jesus Christ" ("Prison Fellowship Ministries," n.d., para. 1). Prison Fellowship reports there are more than 26,000 prisoners attend classes and there are more than 11,300 volunteers throughout the U.S. Prison Fellowship's biggest strengths are its extensive network of volunteers and ability to fund itself. Contributions totaled $39,4100,000 in 2017 (Prison Fellowship Ministries Annual Report, 2017). Trainings are offered for wardens who wish to network and exchange ideas about prison reentry. Prison Fellowship draws from a large pool of volunteers to administer the majority of its programs, which include teaching classes and counseling.

Prison Fellowship offers many services to incarcerated individuals including: children's camps and programs and a nationwide Bible study program that are led by members from local churches. IFI is a separate reentry initiative with three units in Texas and Minnesota. Inmates live in separate units for periods of up to 18 months where they participate in classes, Bible study, career readiness, and mentoring sessions to help them prepare for life after prison. Following their release, inmates receive additional counseling and community support for a year (Johnson & Larson 2008).

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer two questions regarding faith-based rehabilitation programs. First, does participation in faith-based rehabilitation programs reduce recidivism? Scholars agree that in order to produce lasting change and desistance from crime, an individual must decide to change and take proactive steps in the process. Proponents of faith-based programs argue that they are the most effective result in lasting

life changes because there is a faith component that restores an individual's soul.

The second research question is to what extent do offenders recidivate if they receive mentoring from faith-based volunteer programs after they are released from prison? In other words, is there a correlation between recidivism rates in faith-based programs that offer mentorship opportunities compared to secular programs? According to Davids (2008), faith-based programs "attract caring and competent volunteers, driven by their religious convictions to devote their own time, talent, and money" (p. 349) to inmates. Mentors can help offenders find housing, jobs, re-adjust to society, and improve prosocial behaviors. But is there a difference when the mentors are volunteers who have received training from a faith-based program? Volunteers who participate in faith-based programs are typically active in a local church and have personal convictions, which are shared in their interactions with inmates (Thomas & Zaitzow, 2006). There may be stronger connections between offenders and religious mentors that fosters permanent change in their lives.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review is divided into several sections to address multiple aspects of this topic. First, a brief background of the history of prisons, advocates of reform in the U.S. and the use of religion in prisons is reviewed. Next, a brief overview of policy encouraging faith-based programs will be examined in addition to court cases and the rulings regarding federal funding of faith-based programs. Studies of faith-based programs and their effects on recidivism will be reviewed including the prosocial aspects of faith-based programs such as how community partnerships and volunteerism contribute to an inmate's conduct. The final section of the literature review is a short review of popular faith-based prison programs.

Historical Overview of U.S. Prisons

To understand the religion-crime nexus in the U.S., it is important to briefly review the role of prison throughout history as a deterrent to crime. Religion was historically a primary influence in corrections (Davids, 2008) The modern prison system in the U.S. can be attributed to the work of the Quakers in West Jersey and Pennsylvania. Its purpose was not just to confine offenders for long periods of times but to also punish them with “hard labor” (Barnes, 1921, p. 37). Concerned citizen groups such as The Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons and The Philadelphia Society for Assisting Distressed Prisoners, were formed to educate and influence the evolvement of the prison system and sentencing. Early reform efforts opposing cruel and unnecessary treatment by American leaders such as Benjamin Franklin, Benjamin Rush, and Thomas Jefferson were primarily influenced by the works of Cesare Beccaria, John Howard, and Jeremy Bentham (Barnes, 1921).

One of the most notable examples of inclusion of religion in prisons is seen after calls to reform the 1718 penal code by *The Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons*, which was founded in 1787 by Franklin and Rush (Barnes, 1921). The Bible verse, Matthew 25:36-40, guided the mission of the society: "I was in prison and ye came unto me;" "and the King shall answer, and say unto them, verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." The group also advocated for new prisons and systems that included physical labor and divisions based on gender, age, and crimes committed (Barnes, 1921). A report issued by the Inspectors of the Western Penitentiary in 1854 praised the prison system for the stability and rehabilitative nature of the Pennsylvania prison system (Barnes, 1921). The report describes the physical and mental services that prisoners received as well as religious training by ministers. The Western Penitentiary in particular received attention and commendation for its cost savings (Barnes, 1921). While religion was not the contributing factor of lower costs mentioned in this report, it is indicative of the cost and drain on resources of prisons that has always existed.

Another example of religious prioritization in prisons is in Alexis de Tocqueville and Gustave de Beaumont's treatise. Upon examination of Philadelphia's Walnut Street prison, Tocqueville and Beaumont wrote that reading the Bible, praying, and participating in religious services were all required of inmates. Prisoners also received access to training in education and life skills, furthering the opportunity for successful rehabilitation (DeGirolami, 2006). One can draw a parallel of past efforts to rehabilitate and implement successful prison reform to today's dilemmas. Finding solutions for such

issues is certainly not a new crisis and is influenced mainly by funding, public policy, court cases and community efforts.

Public Policy

The last few decades have resulted in some of the most significant policies that encourage faith-based initiatives and partnerships that benefit community efforts to help rehabilitate inmates. The Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 (RFRA) and the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act of 2000 (RLUIPA) were both passed to strengthen the passage of legislative proposals favoring religious priorities and rights of prisoners (DeGirolami, 2006). Charitable Choice was one of the first initiatives that allowed religious organizations to apply for government contracts and funding in order to provide social services. It passed as part of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 during Bill Clinton's presidency.

During his terms as Governor of Texas and president, George W. Bush was a strong proponent of faith-based programs for social welfare activities. His belief that religion was the primary factor in rehabilitation and conquering addiction led to his collaborating with faith-based organizations (McDaniel, Davis, & Neff, 2005; Sager & Bentele, 2016). These public-private relationships allowed religious institutions and groups to provide much-needed social services, and in some areas, the sole provider of them (Bielefeld & Cleveland, 2013). During his tenure as governor, President George W. Bush created the Faith-Based Task Force (Kemp, 2007) with religious leaders to establish new positions called "faith-based state liaisons" (Sager & Bentele, 2016, p. 2). The liaisons assisted in providing services and creating social initiatives mainly through the religious community. These positions of considerable influence were occupied by

advocates of faith-based initiatives and continued to grow in other states and reached a paramount during Bush's presidency, known as the Faith-Based and Community Initiative. President Barack Obama later renamed the office the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships; however, the central tenets and objectives of the office remained.

Such relationships between faith-based organizations and government have resulted in legislation—albeit some of it symbolic—that has influenced and encouraged established partnerships (Sager & Bentele, 2016). While encouraging faith-based organizations to have a considerable role in initiatives such as the Community Correction Centers, which had an extraordinary budget of $143,000,000, the Bush administration ultimately had to maintain a selection process that was based on recidivism rates, employment, and decreased costs (McDaniel et al., 2005). Even with these stipulations, such policies have created division in political parties and special interest groups that argue such initiatives favor specific organizations over others. These concerns, however, have not prevented further legislative initiatives encouraging community-based organizations to apply for government funding.

The Second Chance Act, passed in 2008, offers grants for programs designed to prepare inmates for release and establish coalitions for corrections and community-based initiatives. The Act also allows organizations to provide services such as job training, mental health services, and housing (Earley & Wiley, 2011). However, some scholars argue that there is a violation of church and state relations (Kennedy & Bielefeld, 2002) and the Establishment Clause (Persky, 2008) when either state governments or federally fund state or federal funds faith-based initiatives. These issues and court decisions will be

discussed more in-depth below, but it is worth noting in this section because of the potential adverse policy outcomes. Bielefeld & Cleveland (2013) address myriad of adverse results when such policies are implemented. These include reduced financial support from congregants, less influence, freedom to make independent decisions not influenced by outside forces, and a stronger argument against the benefits of faith based programs based on funding and outcomes.

With multiple presidents acting as the champion for prison reform and increased government funding and opportunities, faith-based organizations were highly encouraged to participate in various social reforms. Targeting effective, low cost rehabilitation initiatives resulted in a flood of new proposals that faith-based organizations could not easily ignore. With more resources offered by the government, they had the opportunity to create a more robust program by expanding their outreach efforts both geographically and by recruiting more volunteers. Such policies, however, inevitably raise questions of the government's ability to establish relationships, provide funding, and ultimately the Constitutional stipulation that church and state remain separated (Persky, 2008).

The Establishment Clause

Many faith-based organizations apply for government funds to subsidize their programs. A number of articles discuss the implications of government funding of faith-based organizations in light of church-state relations and the Establishment Clause (Bielefeld & Cleveland, 2013; Boston, 2005; Kemp, 2007; Kennedy & Bielefeld, 2002). Opponents of government funding of faith-based programs argue that such programs are favored over secular ones, forcing people with different religious beliefs to adhere to

principles and beliefs they disagree with. With more policies enacted encouraging faith-based programs, this issue has arisen more, mostly through the lower courts. A series of tests were created to determine a faith-based program's intent and qualifications a result of court opinions and decisions.

Kemp (2007) provides an overview of the most widely used definition of the Establishment Clause from *Everson v. Board of Education of Ewing* and the tests used for determining whether faith-based programs are in violation of it. Opponents of any government funding of faith-based programs argue that policies and initiatives favor and prefer religious groups instead of encouraging participation from a wide range of programs. The most widely used definition of the Establishment Clause by Justice Hugo Black in *Everson v. Board of Education* led to a standard of strict separation of church and state. Justice Black wrote:

> Neither a state nor the Federal Government can set up a church. Neither can pass laws which aid one religion, support all religions, or prefer one religion over another. Neither can force nor influence a person to go to or to remain away from church against his will .... No tax in any amount, large or small, can be levied to support any religious activities or institutions .... Neither a state nor the Federal Government can, openly or secretly, participate in the affairs of any religious organizations or groups and vice versa (Kemp, 2007, p. 1543).

The *Lemon-Agostini* test is a two-part test that was developed after two court cases where the court acknowledged that not all participation between institutions could

be eradicated entirely but warned that the principle of establishment could violate in various ways (Kemp, 2007). The test establishes guidelines to determine whether a religious program is constitutional and qualifies for funding. Since government would oversee the programs and regulate them to a certain extent, it did not violate the Establishment Clause as long as it met the requirements regarding a programs content and intent. Kemp (2007) also discusses the endorsement test proposed by former Supreme Court Justice O'Connor, which focuses on how independent the institutions rare and the dichotomy of support by the government. Such standards helped equalize the entrance of all programs regardless of religion or lack thereof by requiring the same standards. Several court cases demonstrate the controversy of government funding and faith-based programs.

Court Cases

Grudzina (2016) distinguishes two types of cases regarding the Establishment Clause. The first type of case results when individuals are forced to participate or subjected to religious activity or influences (Grudzina, 2016). The second type of case occurs when faith based programs receive partiality from the government (Grudzina, 2016). Establishment Clause cases involved individual issues concerning first Amendment rights for prisoners to establish religion without government interference. These cases include *Fulwood v. Clemmer*, *Cooper v. Pate*, *Cruz v. Beto*, ("Religion in Corrections," 2002) and *Kerr v. Farrey* (Grudzina, 2016). More recently, these cases have centered on the funding of rehabilitative faith-based prison programs and discriminatory practices. Boston (2005) and Persky (2008) review the *Moeller v. Bradford County* and *Americans United for Separation of Church and State, et al.,*

Appellees v. Prison Fellow Ministries, Inc., et al., Appellants cases. Both are examples of faith-based prison programs utilizing government funding. The decisions were both based on First Amendment violations that maintain religious programs cannot receive government funds intended for social services (Persky, 2008). Various arguments were made regarding discriminatory hiring practices, using government monies for purchasing religious materials, and promoting specific religious beliefs and doctrines.

Authors' opinions as to whether faith-based programs should receive government funding varies. According to a literature review of faith-based organizations by Bielefeld and Cleveland (2013), Glenn (2000) and Wilson (2003) support for funding is based on the premise that religious organizations offer more efficient social services. DiIulio (2007) advocates for a neutral approach that is not biased on how long an organization has received government support. Gill (2004) argues against any funding unless faith-based programs adhere to the same requirements as faith based organizations. No single standard has been adopted, however, and the amount of government funds allocated depends on who holds critical government leadership roles.

Faith-based Programs

The role that faith-based programs have in providing rehabilitation services to inmates is a significant topic that many researchers, while acknowledging the importance of faith-based programs, have little empirical evidence that accurately reflect the impact that they have. The popularity of faith-based programs in recent years stems not just from federal initiatives and funding for programs but is also driven by high rates of incarceration and ever-tightening corrections budgets. The need for effective programs,

both in-prison and post-release is excellent, but political barriers are preventing their implementation. Johnson (2008) observes that in efforts not to appear as "taking a 'soft on crime' approach" (p. 3), policymakers are hesitant to endorse programs that employ nontraditional rehabilitation methods such as job skills training or community-based mentoring.

The question that remains, however, is whether faith-based programs actually reduce recidivism rates. Mears, Roman, Wolff, and Buck (2006) maintain that more studies assessing the impact of religion and delinquency rather than religion and how it relates to an adult criminal's desistance from crime, are needed to determine the relationship between faith and crime. In their book, *Effective Interventions in the Lives of Criminal Offenders*, Humphrey and Cordella (2014) review 109 studies evaluating the effectiveness of faith-based programs and conclude that participation in religious programs while in prison is related to lower crime rates. The authors suggest that researchers must take more interest in the impact of religious-related variables and their influence on desistance from crime.

A six-year longitudinal study of IFI concluded that there was a higher reduction in rearrest rates (17% versus 35%) and reincarceration rates (8% versus 20%) in a two-year timeframe (Johnson, 2008). Grudzina (2016) also points out that religious rehabilitation programs are one of the most attractive features because when inmates participate in programs that align with their values and belief system, they are less likely to re-offend and face reincarceration.

Replications of the study, "Hellfire and Delinquency" examining the effects of religion on delinquency by Hirschi and Stark (1969) have been mixed. In the original

research, Hirschi and Stark concluded that there was no correlation between religious participation and delinquency among delinquents. Freeman (1986) and Johnson, Larson, De Li, and Jang (2000) conducted a study of poor, young male African American populations in Philadelphia, Boston, and Chicago. Freeman discovered that this particular population was less likely to commit crimes if they attended church regularly (1986). In addition, Johnson, Li, Larson, and McCullough (2000) conducted a systematic review of forty studies on religion's effect of juvenile delinquency and reported mixed results. Studies that included at least three or four religious variables in their measurements found that religion is a factor in decreasing crime. Studies that did not include this factor produced inconclusive results.

The consensus of several studies (Johnson, 2001; Sumter, 2006) is that people who have religious beliefs are less likely to participate in criminal activity for several reasons. They include: advanced moral development, concern that they will face the consequences from a higher power, they have close connections with family and other relationships, and the ability to handle unexpected stressful situations. The prosocial effects of faith-based programs are a key factor that Johnson and Jang (2010) found by analyzing 270 studies conducted between 1944 and 2010. The systematic review concluded that out of 270 studies, 244, or 90 percent, "find an inverse or beneficial relationship between religion and some measure of crime or delinquency" (p. 120).

Some of the most comprehensive studies and literature reviews by Johnson, Tompkins, and Webb (2002), Midgley (1997), Monette, Sullivan, and DeJong (2005), Lane (2009) and Volokh (2011) each reflect Ferguson, Wu, Spruijt-Metz, and Dyrness's (2007) conclusion that what is currently known about the effectiveness of faith-based

programs is not wholly accurate as a result of the scarcity of studies of faith-based programs and the limited research methodologies used to conduct them. Studies by Ferguson et al. (2007), Fischer (2004), and Ragan (2004) also posit that there is an unidentified aspect of faith based programs that directly corresponds to the positive outcomes. An inmate's decision to become a Christian after participating in a faith-based program does not guarantee that he will never commit another crime or that his life has forever changed. Conversely, the same decision made by another inmate could result in radical life changes and remain in society as a reformed offender. Studies fail to measure these incremental changes and must rely on rearrest and incarceration data.

Suggestions for future research of the effectiveness of faith-based programs include widening the indicators for success in faith-based programs, adding the faith aspect as a programmatic measure and not a contextual one, and create a tool that provides for "faith-based predictor variables" (Ferguson et al., 2007, p. 274). Such variables might include predicting inmates who are more likely to participate in a faith-based program (Camp, Klein-Saffran, Kwon, Daggett, & Joseph, 2006) and using more accurate research methods. John J. DiIlulio, former advisor of faith-based initiatives to George W. Bush and Al Gore, was also the "faith czar" for the White House Office of Faith Based Initiatives and Community Initiatives (later renamed White House Office of Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships) under Bush and Obama. In his article, "More Religion, Less Crime? Science, Felonies, and the Three Faith Factors" DiIulio (2009) proposes an algorithm to help scholars sift through all extant research on this topic in order to learn more about the crime-religion nexus and make better informed policy decisions.

Faith-based programs vary in many ways including the structure of classes, materials used, and the makeup of the staff (chaplains, citizen volunteers, professors) (Lane, 2009). Depending on such structures, measures of success differ. One of the most significant obstacles in determining the validity of studies involving the effectiveness of faith-based programs involves how motivated an individual is to change and shows a propensity towards religion by joining such a program (Volokh, 2011). Unfortunately, few studies have specifically measured behavioral changes in individuals and has left a deficit in this area of knowledge. It has become apparent, however, through these studies and opinions that a different, more efficient methodology should be applied in order to more accurately evaluate faith-based programs.

The Volunteerism Factor and Cost-effectiveness of Faith-based Programs

One of the most widely used arguments by advocates for faith-based programs is their cost effectiveness through use of volunteers and community involvement. Chaplains, pastors, and other church groups that donate large amounts of money play a significant role in administering programs as volunteers. Accessing program resources and hiring chaplains generally cost less than other available programs and with reduced recidivism rates comes diminished prison costs (Grudzina, 2016; Thomas & Zaitzow, 2006). Bielefeld and Cleveland (2013) also observe that, when compared to non-faith-based organizations, the services that faith-based organizations generally provide the same or in some cases, better quality services.

Participation from religious groups were encouraged due to the belief that communication and interaction with others outside of prison offers more support and encourages change from inmates (Duwe & Johnson, 2016; Oliver, 2013) and community

partnerships. As a result, private organizations are more willing to invest more money and resources into prisons and inmates (Earley & Wiley, 2011). Johnson (2008) found that volunteers have a vested interest in their work and participate in more than just faith-related activities including education and essential life skills. Bielefeld and Cleveland (2013) and Musick and Wilson (2008) also note that churches provide the most substantial number of volunteers and are more likely to utilize volunteers in this area than secular organizations.

Mentoring

While reduced recidivism rates are the primary objective of both faith-based and secular prison programs, the measurement or acknowledgment of prosocial behaviors resulting from faith-based programs is an essential factor to consider. Hewitt (2006) recognizes that "Evil, like faith, is beyond empirical explanation, although numerous social correlates of both evil and faith can be tentatively measured" (p. 553). Scholars have discovered that inmate participation in social interactions such as group therapy or Bible studies (Clear & Sumter, 2002; Duwe, 2013; Giordano, Longmore, Schroeder, & Seffrin, 2008; Hercik, 2004; Johnson, 2008; Kerley, Matthews, & Blanchard, 2005) have an impact in an inmate's ability to adjust better to the prison culture (Ellison, Boardman, Williams, & Jackson, 2001; Idler, 1995; and Thomas & Zaitzow, 2006). Similarly, Colson and Nolan (2004) conclude that inmates feel more empowered and that they can change their situation and have a more positive outlook on life. A study by Duwe, Hallett, Hays, Jang, and Johnson (2015) conclude that participation in Bible classes positively influenced individual behavior and reduced infractions by fifteen percent and an overall reduction of infractions by inmates. Other studies have found similar rates of decreased

infractions and overall better well-being of inmates (Camp, Daggett, Kwon, & Klein-Saffran, 2008; Steiner & Woolredge, 2014).

A Review of Popular Faith-based Programs

There are a number of prison rehabilitation initiatives throughout the U.S. that incorporate faith-based principles in their programs, whether it be educational, mental health, or vocational focused. These programs are often questioned on whether they actually provide non faith-related assistance using government funding. Such skepticism has led to the numerous court cases and rulings discussed earlier in the Literature Review. While not an exhaustive list, the following programs represent the range of services provided and resources used.

Ridge House Residential Program

Located in Reno, Nevada, Ridge House is a faith-based halfway house that focuses on substance abuse treatment and vocational training for parolees reintegrating into the community. Parolees' length of stay is typically three months. The program's primary objective is to reduce recidivism by helping parolees grow through increasing their confidence and work towards their life objectives (Roman, Wolff, Correa, & Buck, 2007). It is intended to be a non-denominational program and does not require participants to disclose their religious beliefs. A study of the immediate effects of participants at Ridge House by Roman et al. (2007) concluded that higher participation rates in religious activity during their time in prison positively correlates with completion rates.

Kairos Horizon Program

The Kairos Horizon program began at Tomoka Prison in Florida in 1999. It is a year-long rehabilitation program that focuses on the individual's network and relational aspects. Volunteers from local churches lead sessions and oversee activities that include:

- "anger management and conflict resolution;
- family relations and fatherhood;
- financial management;
- informal mentoring;
- substance abuse prevention and treatment" and
- "attend their choice of religious program activities" ("Rediscovering Compassion, An Evaluation," n.d., p. 2).

A three-year study of all participants was conducted that measured participants' behavior both before and after completing the program. The study concluded that, although there was not a significant change in rearrest rates, the length of time that participants remained out of prison was longer (Roman et al., 2007). However, community participation and inclusion had a direct impact on "rates of discipline reports and segregation stays" ("Rediscovering Compassion, An Evaluation," n.d., p. 18). These results suggest that an inmate's participation in this type of program could create a more positive experience while serving his sentence.

Life Connections Program

The Life Connections Program (LCP) is an eighteen month-long faith-based program run by the Federal Bureau of Prisons that encompasses all religions and provides

educational and religious curriculum based on a participant's religion. Specific educational, financial, and language requirements must be met to join Community "spiritual guides" (Daggett, Camp, Kwon, Rosenmerkel, & Klein-Saffran, 2008, p. 852) are hired to teach the curriculum. A study by Camp et al. (2008) found that results are impacted by the religiosity of participants and their motivation for participating in such programs. The study also concluded that religious programs must be required to meet certain standards to have measurable, meaningful results.

Prison Fellowship Ministries

One of the most well-known faith-based programs is InnerChange Freedom Initiative. Prison Fellowship Ministries was founded by Chuck Colson, aide to President Nixon before being implicated in Watergate. IFI is a three-year long program that consists of three phases; 16-24 months is spent in prison and 6-12 months of the program is provided while inmates are on parole. Staff and trained volunteers teach classes, mentor, and provide support to inmates after they are released ("Our approach," n.d., para. 1).

Numerous studies have been conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of InnerChange Freedom Initiative (IFI) programs throughout the U.S. Johnson et al.'s (2008) study of the IFI program in Texas found that inmates who completed the program experienced fewer rearrests. The program is described as substantially different from other faith-based prison programs because it is the only program that combines religion, academics, and basic life skills training. IFI's mission focuses on creating an encouraging atmosphere based on religion and the spiritual transformation of inmates within prison

walls (Johnson & Larson, 2008). A retrospective quasi-experimental study of IFI in Minnesota by Duwe and King (2012) suggests that the program has a positive impact on recidivism rates if "evidence-based practices that focus on providing a behavioral intervention within a therapeutic community" (p. 813). The study concluded that after completing InnerChange, the potential rearrest rates decreased 26%, reconvictions decreased 35%, and reincarcerations for new crimes decreased 40% (Duwe & King, 2012).

CHAPTER THREE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK DATA AND METHODOLOGY

To provide a better understanding of whether a faith-based program is more effective than a secular one, the comparison of recidivism rates between both types of programs will offer insight into whether a) faith-based programs have a lower rate of recidivism than a similar secular program; and b) if mentoring provided by faith-based programs result in lower recidivism rates than a comparable secular program. As discussed previously, recidivism is the most commonly used dependent variable used to measure the outcomes of rehabilitative programs. Most programs last only as long as inmates are serving their sentences in prison. When an inmate returns to society, he faces many challenges and stigmas. Popular belief says that the time a criminal spends in confinement with restricted contact from the outside world is necessary in order to reform. Unfortunately, after being told what to do and living in a strict, structured environment, an inmate that is suddenly released is likely to feel overwhelmed and as though he is in a foreign country as he adjusts to life after prison. A study by Deloitte (2016) found that building and renewing relationships for offenders is a considerable challenge. The research suggests that offenders' ability to find a stable social network where they create friendships or find mentors who offer instruction and security as they readjust to a new way of life. Community volunteers can help bridge the divide between prison walls and society by helping inmates prepare for employment, find housing, and provide a safe, encouraging social structure that is not always found in one’s family.

A large part of Moral Reconation Therapy (MRT), Circles of Support and Accountability (COSA), and InnerChange Freedom Initiative’s (IFI) objective is to

strengthen an individual's ability to develop cognitive skills and moral reasoning. While it is an important aspect, it is more difficult to establish and measure numeric changes in a person's ethical behavior. Although recidivism is the most significant factor that studies measure when evaluating rehabilitation programs, this study hypothesizes that there are potential effectiveness and impacts that faith-based programs can have on an inmate through interactions with volunteers. IFI is the ideal faith-based program to detect a change in prosocial behaviors because it relies heavily on the work of volunteers, whose influence on inmates through activities such as Bible studies and mentoring can differ significantly from that of correctional officers or other paid teachers or instructors (Stansfield, Mowen, O'Connor, & Boman, 2017). Emphasis placed on measuring the volunteer and aftercare variable of programs may have a significant impact on recidivism.

An independent sample t-test will be used to determine if there is a significant difference between MRT and IFI. T-tests compare the means of unrelated data sets to determine if there is a statistically significant difference. This methodology should provide meaningful data to help answer the research questions and compare and evaluate the overall effectiveness of each program. There must be an assumption of independence within two groups to conduct an independent t-test. IFI, MRT, and COSA are the independent variables and recidivism is the dependent variable for both hypotheses.

CHAPTER FOUR DATA ANALYSIS

Recidivism Rates

Table 1 summarizes the IFI and MRT studies that are used to conduct the t-test to answer the first research question. Johnson and Larson (2008) conducted a mixed methods study to observe recidivism outcomes and qualitative measures. 177 male inmates were selected to participate in the IFI program and 75 completed the entire program. The application process was open to inmates from all religious backgrounds but did exclude sex offenders and those with extensive medical needs (Johnson & Larson, 2008). Entry requirements include that inmates be within a year and a half to two years from release would then be released with parole or supervision. The rationale for the latter requirement is that inmates would have greater access to aftercare services provided by IFI and reduce the geographic distance from friends, family, and IFI volunteers and mentors. It should be noted that the pool of eligible participants for this study was threatened by there not being enough inmates with the "minimum out" custody privileges. This status is granted when inmates exhibit good behavior and minimal infractions or violations. The study was revised to allow inmates who were likely to receive minimum-out custody during the early stages of the IFI program to allow for random assignment. The operational variables for recidivism are arrest and incarceration.

Male participants were chosen for each study. The MRT recidivism rates are taken from a study done by Little et al. (1991). The authors conducted a database search of all 70 male participants in MRT and compared them to a control group with similar characteristics. Recidivism was defined for this study as "an arrest followed by a

conviction where jail or prison time was levied and served" (Little et al., 1991, p. 1,152). The demographic characteristics of both studies are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographics

Programs	IFI Participants	MRT
Race/Ethnicity		
African-American	37%	54.3%
Hispanic	61%	unknown
Anglo	45%	unknown
Age Group		
<35	35%	Average age = 24.5 years
>35	52%	
Offense Type		
Violent	46%	
Property	41%	
Drug	42%	100%

The research questions stated in Chapter One (p. 8) seek to answer two things: first, whether participation in faith-based rehabilitation programs reduces recidivism rate? The second research question asks if there is a difference in recidivism rates if inmates receive mentoring from volunteer-led faith-based programs as opposed to a secular program? The null hypothesis for both of the t-tests in this study states that the two means are equal: H_0: $u_1 = u_2$. The alternative hypothesis indicates that they are not equal: H_A: $u_1 \neq u_2$.

Table 2

InnerChange Freedom Initiative and Moral Reconation Therapy Studies

Study & Author	Sample Size	Findings
InnerChange (Johnson & Larson, 2008)	75 male inmates	17.3% arrested after 2 years
MRT (Little et al., 1991)	70 male inmates	24.3% arrested after 3 years

Methods and Results

A two-sample t-test that does not assume equal variances was conducted to determine whether recidivism rates differed significantly after participating in MRT and IFI. Table 2 shows the results of the test. The results of the analysis show that the t-statistic was not significant at the .05 critical alpha level ($t(143)=1.04$, $p=.300$. Therefore, the test fails to reject the null hypothesis and one can assume that the difference in recidivism rates between IFI and MRT is not significant.

Table 3

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances

t-statistic	1.04
Degrees of freedom	143
Two-tailed probability	.300
Significance level	P<0.0001

Community Volunteers and Mentors

A second aspect of this study is the statistical impact that volunteers have in the lives of inmates following their release from prison. By having positive societal

interactions with other people outside of the prison culture, it is hypothesized that faith-based programs that utilize volunteers contribute to lower recidivism rates. The social networks that inmates build during prison can encourage desistance from crime upon release. Studies have shown that the first six to twelve months after being released is crucial to an offender's re-acclimation into society.

Both IFI and COSA train and use community volunteers to counsel inmates both while they are in prison and for up to twelve months after release. While open to everyone who wants to volunteer, the COSA program evaluated in Duwe's study primarily utilizes college students that serve as mentors to participants. IFI, on the other hand, typically recruits its volunteers from churches and congregations. Inmates who meet with IFI volunteers have typically gone through the program while serving their prison sentence. The comparison data for the t-test analysis is taken from a randomized control trial by Duwe (2012) and Johnson and Larson, (2008). The population for IFI is the same one in Table 2, and the sample for COSA consisted of 31 male inmates serving time for sexually-related crimes. Duwe measured recidivism as: "(a) rearrest, reconviction, reincarceration in prison for a new offense, (d) reincarceration for a technical violation revocation, and (e) reincarceration for either a new offense and/or a technical violation revocation" (p. 357). The summary of the findings from both studies are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4

InnerChange Freedom Initiative and COSA Studies

Study & Author	Sample Size	Findings

InnerChange (Johnson & Larson, 2008)	75 male inmates	16.7% of inmates with regular mentor contact arrested
COSA (Duwe, 2012)	31 male inmates	38.7% of inmates with regular mentor contact arrested

Methods and Results

A two-sample t-test that does not assume equal variances was conducted to determine whether recidivism rates differed significantly after participating in COSA and IFI. Table 5 shows the results of that test. The results of the analysis reveal that the t-statistic was not significant at the .05 critical alpha level ($t(206)=2.82$, $p=.005$. Therefore, the test fails to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the difference in recidivism rates between IFI and COSA is not significant.

Table 5

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances

t-statistic	2.82
Degrees of freedom	206
Two-tailed probability	.005
Significance level	P<0.0001

CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings and Discussion

The conclusion is that there are no significant differences found in the outcomes of a faith-based and non-faith-based program concerning recidivism and mentorship rates. Several observations can be made as a result of this study. First, there is no significant difference in recidivism between IFI, MRT, and COSA. Additional studies of IFI suggest that faith-based programs are most effective when they use evidence-based principles combined with a restorative environment that continues after program completion (Duwe & King, 2012). Assessing whether one program is better or more effective than the other based on one study is challenging. IFI, MRT, and COSA are all voluntary programs that require inmates to be motivated and actively participate. Inmates who have no intention of reforming are unlikely to join such a program. However, changed behaviors is difficult to measure apart from recidivism rates.

Limitations

The studies selected for the data analysis were chosen because of the similarities in the definitions and measures applied; however, there are four limitations that potentially affect the accuracy of the analysis. These include lack of prior research on faith-based programs, study design limitations, small samples, and human error. Perhaps the most significant limitation is the lack of prior research on faith-based programs. The lack of defined variables and measurements within existing studies threaten the accuracy of such programs and would be greatly aided by formal definitions and more studies. The most popular program, IFI, has resulted in several studies that have provided a glimpse

into the potential results of faith-based programs; however, more research is necessary. More meta-analysis studies can provide greater accuracy and insight into the effectiveness of faith-based programs.

Another limitation is the time variance in the studies used for the analysis. The time difference of two and three years when recidivism rates were reported in the first t-test is a potential issue because offenders are most likely to commit the same or a new crime within five years of release. For example, the rate of rearrests of offenders who participated in MRT is higher than that of IFI participants, but that could be in part because the data was collected twelve months later than the latter. In addition, the results might have varied if a different program was evaluated. An alternate MRT-based program with lower success rates or different measurements may result in a significant difference between the IFI results or vice versa.

A third limitation is the small sample size used to conduct the t-tests. Small samples can potentially undermine the internal and external validity of a study, and a large sample size generally results in more accurate measurements. Unfortunately, all three of the studies measured contained small populations. The demographics of the population sizes either varied or were unknown (see Table 1, p. 28), which could result in skewed or unknown biased variables. In addition, the populations in this study focused on male inmates. Future studies that include females may yield different results.

Human nature and error will always exist regardless of the accuracy of the studies that cause discrepancies in studies. MRT, IFI, and COSA are programs that prisoners voluntarily participate in, showing a higher propensity for change and desistance from

crime. The effectiveness of volunteers depends in part how committed each individual is to playing an active, influential role in inmate's lives. A lack of training can be a significant factor in success rates. Another aspect is the offenders themselves. MRT, IFI and COSA are programs that prisoners voluntarily participate in, which tends to correlate with a higher propensity for change and desistance from crime. Inmates who commit less harsh crimes and are serving lighter sentences tend to have higher rates of participation in such programs. These factors all contribute to potentially distorted rates of recidivism.

Future Research

It is essential that faith-based programs continue to be evaluated with the same standards as secular programs. There are four potential areas for future research. Although not explicitly addressed in this study, other studies have already shown some effects in reduced recidivism rates; however, minimal costs, fewer technical violations, and increased community support are all critical factors to consider when evaluating faith-based programs but has not been the focus of many studies. Second, studying the influence of mentorship on an offender's prosocial behaviors, both in and out of prison, would produce valuable insights. Very few secular programs have the resources or potential to affect other factors besides recidivism. Faith-based programs are attractive to both state and federal criminal justice systems that already suffer from limited resources because they require minimal costs to implement and utilize volunteers and the community.

An offender's motivation to make life changes can drastically change upon being released from prison, and it is important that he has a support network to help assimilate

back into society. Both faith-based and secular programs can provide critical social environments that determine the successfulness of an offender's rehabilitation. Finally, future studies examining the rates of recidivism using a female sample might yield different results as opposed to males. A closer examination of these factors could be a significant predictor of reduced recidivism following an offender's release from prison.

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