Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies

2020

A Phenomenological Study of Christian Conversion and Recidivism in Ex-Prisoners

Christopher Featherstone
Walden University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations

Part of the Psychology Commons

Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Christopher Featherstone

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Sharon Xuereb, Committee Chairperson, Psychology Faculty
Dr. Christie Nelson, Committee Member, Psychology Faculty
Dr. Robert Meyer, University Reviewer, Psychology Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2020

Abstract

A Phenomenological Study of Christian Conversion and Recidivism in Ex-Prisoners

by

Christopher Featherstone

MA, Liberty University, 2013

BA, Ohio Dominican University, 2009

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Forensic Psychology

Walden University

August 2020

Abstract

Recidivism rates are high in the United States. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, within 5 years of being released, 77% of ex-prisoners are arrested, with 37% arrested within the first 6 months and 57% arrested within the first year. Past research has indicated that religiosity functions as a protective factor in relation to criminal behaviors that is consistent across genders and developmental periods. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine Christianity as a protective factor against offending. The theoretical framework of the study, self-determination theory, with its focus on individuals' growth tendencies based on self-motivation and personality integration, was relevant to the impact of ex-offenders' autonomous motivation to remain devoted to Christianity. The research question addressed how conversion to Christianity while in prison contributes to an offense-free lifestyle after release. A series of interviews with ex-offenders was conducted, and emerging themes were developed from the transcriptions and notes taken during and following each interview. Although the widespread view of Christianity to the participants initially was negative, through either their upbringing, influence, or impression from other Christians, their conversion to Christianity while in prison not only gave them an entirely different worldview to treat others differently after being released, but also have a desire to share the gospel to others. This study may contribute to positive social change by providing more information on the impact of Christianity on ex-offenders who decide to make a lifestyle change while in prison.

A Phenomenological Study of Christian Conversion and Recidivism in Ex-Prisoners

by

Christopher Featherstone

MA, Liberty University, 2013

BA, Ohio Dominican University, 2009

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Forensic Psychology

Walden University

August 2020

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Recidivism rates are high in the United States. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that, in the 5 years between 2005 and 2010, 68% of former inmates were arrested for a new crime within 3 years of release from prison, and 77 % were arrested within 5 years of being released; in addition, 37 % were arrested within the first 6 months, and 57 % within the first year (Durose, Cooper, & Snyder, 2014). In a follow-up study in 2015, the Bureau of Justice Statistics re-collected the criminal history of the same sample of prisoners, and the number only showed a difference of 3,350 prisoners, from 404,638 to 401,288 (Alpher, Durose, & Markman, 2018).

A significant factor in helping inmates reduce the feeling of being unwanted in society is religion. Spiritual devotion and meditation are instrumental in creating a positive mentality, which is essential in reducing stress, anxiety, and depression. Labbe and Fobes (2010) conducted a study on whether spirituality has a direct impact on levels of stress and anxiety. They concluded that "participants with higher ratings of spirituality had lower state anger and respiration rate to a stressful event compared to participants who scored lower on the spirituality score" (p. 145). Engaging in religious activity such as prayer and embracing a paradigm shift in worldview can assist in reducing stress levels after being released from prison.

There is a need for further investigation of the psychological aspects of the stigma process among offenders to better understand its effect on behavior and how ex-offenders withdraw from community activities, leading to poor community functioning, lower levels of employment, and less motivation/self-efficacy to be involved in their

communities (Moore, Stuewig, & Tangney, 2015). In prison, religious conversion serves as a coping strategy for those attempting to make sense of their lives as well as seeking forgiveness and reparation (Robinson-Edwards & Kewley, 2018).

Background

Prison ministry is a vital component of religiosity contributing to reduced recidivism. Literature indicates the positive impact of Christianity and its influence on inmates while in prison (Palacio, 2012). Bakken et al. (2013) highlighted how, after release, a higher level of devotion to faith has a positive impact in contributing to reduced drug and alcohol use. Once individuals are out of prison, religiosity is helpful in creating a new worldview. As Johnson and Schroeder (2014) stated, commitment to religion helps to promote and enhance beneficial outcomes such as well-being, hope, meaning and purpose, educational attainment, and charitable giving.

Conversion in prison involves a prisoner heading in the opposite direction from negative behavioral patterns. While research on spiritual conversion suggests that there is little change in personality traits during this process, there is profound change in mid-level personality domains such as personal goals and self-identity (Maruna, Wilson, & Curran, 2006). Popular Christian ministries in prison, which include Prison Fellowship and Kairos Prison Ministry, provide opportunities for prisoners to be introduced to the gospel as well as strategies to maintain Christian living. Prison Fellowship "walks with prisoners through the different stages of their journey" (Gerace & Day, 2010, p. 324), and Kairos Prison Ministry International is commissioned to "bring Christ's love and forgiveness to all incarcerated individuals, their families and those who work with them, and to assist in the transition of becoming a productive citizen" (Gerace & Day, 2010, p.

324). Although it is possible for individuals' motives to be insincere, positive reasons for religious conversion in prison include the motivation to maintain an offense-free lifestyle, the desire to achieve direction and meaning in life, and a need for hope concerning the future, as well as for peace of mind and positive self-esteem (Sexton, 2015).

Although studies of the impact of prison ministry and religious attitudes shaped by prison experiences are important, Miller (2012) focused on the importance of follow-up studies after release, in that someone who is incarcerated can use religion—especially Christianity—as a tool while in prison to help with the determination of parole while having no desire to remain religious following release. Parole board members are more likely to be lenient toward those who have converted to Christianity while in prison than to adherents to any other religion (Miller, 2012).

Ultimately, in order to provide the proper tools for ex-inmates to retain the support they have acquired from prison ministry, faith-based programs need to be available (Miller, 2012). Religiosity and delinquency are inversely related (Dodson & Cabage, 2011). Using an evidence-based assessment, Dodson and Cabage (2011) concluded that faith-based programs contribute to reduced recidivism. Additionally, programs that are rooted in faith-based organizations can be effective in reducing deviant and criminal behavior.

Problem Statement

Religious devotion and meditation are instrumental in creating a positive mentality and can be essential in reducing stress, anxiety, and depression. Palacio (2012) explored the impact that the Christian message had on graduates of the Kairos Prison Ministry. The Kairos Prison Ministry goes into more than 300 prisons throughout the

United States, with the goal of bringing the incarcerated closer to Christ. Findings indicated positive change in 75% of the men who went through the program, whereby they were less likely to engage in violence and more likely to engage in prayer (Palacio, 2012).

In exploring the relationship between religion and criminal behavior, it should be noted that religious devotion has a direct effect on desistance from drug and alcohol abuse (Bakken, Gunter, & Visher, 2013). For individuals released from prison, religion/spirituality and community-based resources may have a direct impact by assisting with the transition into the community, as well as reducing the impact of environmental triggers to use drugs (Binswanger et al., 2012). The protective relationship of religiosity in relation to criminal behaviors is consistent across both gender and developmental periods of adolescence and young adulthood (Salas-Wright, Vaughn, & Maynard, 2014).

However, according to Stansfield, Mowen, O'Connor, and Boman (2017), there is a lack of research regarding inmates who convert to Christianity while in prison and their lifestyle choices after they are released. Specifically, there is little information available on whether such individuals passionately uphold a Christian worldview post incarceration. In addition, there is a need for more rigorous empirical tests of the relationship between religious support and postrelease outcomes (Stansfield et al., 2017).

Gardner (2011) emphasized that more follow-up study is needed to examine the correlation between Christianity and recidivism. Although religious faith plays an important part in mitigating crime, it has been viewed as a "forgotten factor" in research. Although recent studies have focused on the impact of faith among adult prisoners in

intervention-outcome terms, the influence of faith for people who want to avoid future incarceration has been "largely unexplored" (Gardner, 2011, p. 23).

Purpose of the Study

As Stanfield et al. (2017) stated, there is a need for further examination of the relationship between religiosity and postincarceration outcomes. Currently, there is a positive trend in faith-based programs in the American correctional system, and the argument frequently made on behalf of these programs is twofold. The first argument is that faith-based programs provide services at a lower cost than the government can, and the other argument is that faith-based programs provide services that the government cannot provide. Faith-based programs are based in the loving-kindness of volunteers who are motivated by love and not money, who act as armies of compassion devoted to changing individuals' hearts (Hallett & Johnson, 2014).

The importance of this study resides in the effort to address an alarming recidivism rate, as well as to develop a better understanding of both the mental and emotional framework of ex-offenders to commit a crime, as well as recidivate. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the influence of Christianity on ex-prisoners' lifestyles, exploring whether upholding a Christian worldview is a protective factor against offending. Using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), I explored the impact of a Christian influence in prison on maintenance of a lifestyle of Christianity outside prison.

Research Question

This study was guided by a single research question: How does conversion to Christianity while in prison contribute to an offense-free lifestyle?

Theoretical Framework

Self-determination theory (SDT) focuses on the investigation of growth

tendencies based on self-motivation and personality integration (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Within the SDT model, there are three basic personal needs—competence, relatedness,

and autonomy—as well as environmental factors that can hinder or undermine self-

motivation, social functioning, and personal well-being. Competence is essential to

wellness, and feeling effective in one's environment has a link to understanding what is

personally important. Relatedness involves feeling cared for and connected to others, as

well as a sense of belonging and a feeling that one matters. Autonomy involves behavior

that is self-endorsed; when individuals have autonomy, they can be wholeheartedly

behind their actions, which produces better results.

Intrinsic motivation involves willingly doing an activity for the sake of finding it

exciting and enjoyable, whereas extrinsic motivation involves doing an activity because it

leads to a separable consequence, such as avoidance of punishment, social approval, or

rewards (Ryan & Deci, 2013). Klein and Baxter (2008) explained that in order for

individuals to learn a certain mental model or paradigm, they must unlearn some existing

thoughts. Rough mental models need to be replaced with more sophisticated ones.

However, people may be reluctant to abandon an old thought pattern for a new one as

they try to explain and justify inconsistencies.

Nature of the Study

Using phenomenological methodology, interviews were conducted with former

inmates who were offense free in order to determine whether offending had decreased.

Phenomenology focuses on conscious experience as lived from a first-person point of

view, as well as how individuals make sense of their experiences (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). As such, obtaining firsthand information from former inmates was a primary objective for this research.

The essence of phenomenology from a psychological standpoint stems from Husserl's *Ideas*, in which the essence of understanding the lived experience entails direct seeing. This phenomenon surpasses sensory experience and looks beyond individuals' natural attitude to the actual experiences being investigated (Tufford & Newman, 2012). Instead of making general claims about experiences, researchers conducting IPA aim to examine detailed personal experiences, as well as to focus on topics that are complex, ambiguous, and emotionally laden (Smith & Osburn, 2015). For the researcher, IPA requires patience and openness to see the world through someone else's eyes and retain the voice of the participant's personal experience (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

Definitions

The following terms are defined in order to help the reader gain a better understanding of the context used for certain words in this study.

Chaplain: A clergyperson who has been commissioned by a faith group or an organization to provide a pastoral service in an institution, organization, or governmental entity (Mowat & Swinton, 2007).

Christianity: The faith tradition that focuses on the figure of Jesus Christ (Stefon, 2020).

Conversion: "The turning of a sinner to God" (in the Christian faith; Easton, 1897).

Ex-offender: Person who was arrested, convicted, or incarcerated in connection with a criminal charge before becoming a study subject (Visher, Winterfield, & Coggeshall, 2005).

Recidivism: "A person's relapse into criminal behavior, often after the person receives sanctions or undergoes intervention for a previous crime" (National Institute of Justice, 2014, para. 1).

Prison ministry: "Ministry in prison, which takes forms such as reading novels and discussing virtue with juvenile delinquents, providing an oasis of hospitality for those who have traveled far for a visit with an incarcerated friend or family member, or seminary students and prisoners studying theology together" (Center for Christian Ethics, 2012, para. 1).

Assumptions

One assumption of this study was that the participants were living a godly lifestyle as Christians, and that their faith influenced their decision to lead offense-free lives. I conducted interviews with people who stated that they had converted to Christianity in prison and that their devotion to the Christian faith was the ultimate influence on decisions that they made. I made an assumption that the Christian converts whom I interviewed shared the same worldview. Although there are many groups whose members call themselves Christians, the participants were expected to believe that God sent his Son, Jesus, to come down to earth in order to bear the sins of the world while living a life without sin (John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:21), and that the teachings of Jesus as recorded in the Scripture are the only method by which one can live as a Christ-follower (Gal 1:8; 2 Cor. 11:4). Another assumption involved the belief that the interviewees

answered the questions about their offense-free lifestyle honestly. In particular, I assumed that they were honest in the form of not returning to prison post incarceration.

Scope and Delimitations

This study was focused on the impact of Christian conversion in prison on recidivism. Interviews were conducted with former inmates who were serving in their churches, whom I selected from a database created by contacting churches.

The study was delimited to Christianity and not any other religion. An argument could be made that religion as a whole could reduce recidivism rates, but personal experience with the Christian lifestyle and worldview led me to significantly narrow this study's focus in terms of faith/religion. Former inmates who became Christian converts in prison may draw upon elements of the Christian worldview that they adopted as they seek to make offense-free decisions. The findings of this study may be transferable in the sense that they apply to former inmates who decided to convert to Christianity while in prison, as well as to how the decision to convert helps with maintaining the Christian worldview, serving in ministry, and reducing devious, selfish behaviors that could result in criminal actions. The findings do not apply to people who were Christians before entering prison, or who converted to Christianity after being released.

Limitations

Because participants' personal experiences could not be tested, a limitation was that participants might have exaggerated certain points. In that each person's experience was used for the study, specifics of how long a person has been out of prison were not gathered, as well as any comparison to an ex-offender's length of time away from prison

and their likelihood to reoffend. Quantitative methods might be used to gather such information in future research. The study showed how devotion to a Christian lifestyle may result in living an offense-free life, and this expectation of the ex-offenders regarding remaining offense-free and devoted a Christian lifestyle remains following the interview. The period over which participants' lives were understood to be "offense free" spanned from the time of release to the time of the interview. A long-term follow-up study will not be conducted to determine whether those interviewed for this study continued to have an offense-free lifestyle. Other limitations included my subjectivity in leading the interviews and analyzing the data.

Significance

In the quest to discover ways to reduce recidivism, the relationship between spiritual and psychological factors is often overlooked. The significance of this study resided in the effort to explore whether, and how, conversion to Christianity may cause a decrease in the desire to commit a crime, based on a mental shift from being caught up in personal desires to being more concerned about the desires of others. Moreover, individuals may find "peace of mind" and personal contentment through conversion to Christianity (Zaitzow & Jones, 2012) that they did not experience while engaging in criminal activity, which could significantly assist them in not pursuing carnal desires and instead focusing on the desires of God.

I considered several possible explanations for why ex-offenders might remain offense free after being released from prison as a result of conversion while incarcerated. Additionally, I considered hurdles that those seeking to maintain an offense-free lifestyle must overcome, the change in worldview that individuals experience during conversion,

and what might prevent ex-offenders from ceasing to identify as Christian after being released from prison. In that social support can be absent in the reentry process, and affiliation with other Christians can fill a void in ex-offenders' lives (Denney, Tewsbury, & Jones, 2014), whether the support of other Christians helps ex-offenders remain offense free was among the topics addressed.

The findings may assist those creating faith-based programs to be readily available to individuals who are released from jail to help them maintain an offense-free lifestyle. This study explored the desire to grow humbly before God, from the standpoint of the Christian worldview, with the hope of following a lifestyle that reflects biblical principles of love and community. A move toward a mindset that involves loving and serving others and abandoning selfish desires may promote growth in individuals that leads them to enact positive social change through contributions to their communities.

Summary

Recidivism rates remain high in the United States for a variety of reasons. Devotion to religion can help prison inmates reduce feelings of being unwanted in society as it allows them to develop a more positive mental and emotional framework. As such, prison ministry and faith-based programs can be vital in reducing defiant behavior, improving offenders' opportunities for parole, and preventing recidivism after release. With a research question focused on how conversion to Christianity while in prison contributes to an offense-free lifestyle, the purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the influence of Christianity on ex-prisoners' lifestyles, exploring whether upholding a Christian worldview is a protective factor that serves to prevent offending. Interviews were conducted with ex-offenders who had been released and were serving in

ministry. Through these interviews, I gathered information using a phenomenological

approach to explore the impact of Christianity in recidivism reduction.

The second chapter of this study includes a review of relevant studies regarding

Christian conversion in prison and its effect of recidivism, leading up to identification of

the gap in the literature that this study was conducted to address. Chapter 2 also addresses

the study's theoretical framework and topics such as successes of prison ministry, suicide

risks for inmates, and the importance of chaplains in prisons.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction

The gap in the literature that this study was conducted to address involves what happens when inmates who undergo conversion to Christianity while in prison are released. I sought to explore whether such individuals maintain their passion for being a Christian to the point that it reduces their desire to commit crimes. In keeping with the claim of Stansfield et al. (2017) that there is a need for more rigorous empirical tests of the relationship between religious support and postrelease outcomes, more follow-up study is needed to examine the correlation of religiosity and recidivism. Moreover, although studies have shown a relationship between prison ministry and attitude while in prison, further study is needed on the postincarceration effects of prison ministry.

Stansfield et al. (2017) stated that there is a need for further examination of the relationship between religious support and postincarceration outcomes. The purpose of this study was to examine religiosity—more specifically, Christianity—and how it influences ex-offenders to maintain offense-free lifestyles. Using IPA, I explored the impact of Christian conversion in prison on maintenance of a lifestyle of Christianity outside prison. In addition, I sought to discover whether a Christian lifestyle reduces the desire of a former inmate to recidivate.

Targeting the behavioral health of inmates is an essential aspect of the release process, specifically to have a psychological advantage on treatment, as well as developing strategies to assist with adequate therapy for behavioral health problems. There is an expectation that an inmate whose behavioral health problems have been treated will have a lower chance of recidivating. As a way to transition away from

behavioral issues through a change in thinking, Christian conversion in prison could lead inmates to reduce their desire to commit crimes, thus lowering rates of recidivism.

Literature Search Strategy

The terms *Christianity* and *recidivism* formed the basis of my literature search. I sought relevant research on the research problem as well as information on each topic within the study independently. Related terms included *religion*, *Jesus*, *Christ*, *faith-based*, *Bible*, and *religiosity*. To locate information on recidivism, I also conducted searches using synonymous terms such as *return to prison* and *recidivate*. I conducted most of my searches using Google Scholar. Additionally, I conducted searches using EBSCO through the Walden library.

Because of the limits in research, there was a limited selection of authors regarding this topic, although Baylor professor Byron Johnson had published several peer-reviewed articles on the topic of Christianity and crime. A significant portion of the research that I located was published after 2000, but in this literature, I found few articles about Christianity and its effect on recidivism. Due to the very limited number of articles published within the past 5 years on this topic, the time frame for the articles that I used extended back to the early 2000s. In addition to including older studies among the literature reviewed, I reviewed studies not directly linked to reoffending.

Theoretical Framework

SDT focuses on the investigation of growth tendencies that involve self-motivation and personality integration (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The utility of SDT in facilitating and explaining health behavior change and maintenance is causing a rapid increase in its importance (Silva, Marques, & Teixeira, 2014). Along with explaining

how humans achieve their goals or perform activities in keeping with their psychological or cognitive responses (Leung & Matanda, 2013), proponents of this theory examine three basic personal needs—competence, relatedness, and autonomy—as well as environmental factors that can hinder or undermine self-motivation, social functioning, and personal well-being.

Competence is essential to wellness, and feeling effective in one's environment has a positive link to understanding what is personally important. Individuals must perceive that the work they do is important and leads to significant results (Manganelli, Thibault-Landry, Forest, & Carpenter, 2018). Relatedness involves feeling cared for and connected to others, as well as a sense of belonging and a feeling that one matters. It refers to the desire to belong and be rewarded and accepted as a member of a significant social group (Ten Cate, 2013). Autonomy involves behavior that is self-endorsed and is supported by feelings of choice, interest, deep personal relevance, and internal causality (Legault & Inzlicht, 2013). Autonomy allows individuals to be wholeheartedly behind their actions and thus produces better results.

Intrinsic motivation involves willingly doing an activity for the sake of finding it exciting and enjoyable, whereas extrinsic motivation involves doing an activity because it leads to a separable consequence such as avoidance of punishment, social approval, or rewards (Ryan & Deci, 2013). Extrinsic motivation, in other words, leads individuals to partake in an activity to attain an outcome separate from the activity itself. Extrinsic motivation can be divided into integrated, identified, and introjected components. The integrated form of extrinsic motivation is the most self-determined form of motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2009) and relates to pursing an activity due to its congruency with other

personal values and needs. For instance, a nurse might seek to alleviate patient suffering but not considering the actions involved in this effort to be enjoyable. Identified regulation, which is further along the self-determination continuum (Noels, Pelletier, Clement, & Vallerand, 2000), involves partaking in an activity because one accepts the value of the activity. Individuals exhibiting this form of motivation engage in particular behaviors as long as they perceive the usefulness or instrumental value of doing so. As a result, identified regulation encompasses a moderately high degree of self-determination (Areepattamannil, Freeman, & Klinger, 2011). Introjected motivation involves partaking in an activity because of internal pressures such as guilt and shame (Taylor, Ntoumanis, & Standage, 2008).

SDT indicates that an individual will seek fulfillment, striving for a good life and running away from a bad one (Tracey & Hanham, 2017). Motivation to achieve a good life is a vital component of recidivism reduction, as a former inmate who converted to Christianity while incarcerated may seek to exchange a bad life driven by malicious and selfish desires for a positive life that involves appreciating and valuing others. The importance of SDT in relation to Christian conversion is also important for inmates regarding long-term autonomy, in that approaches that pressure people to change over the short term can cause an increase in recidivism (Moller, Ryan, & Deci, 2006). God as the central destination of one's life requires a search for a healthy sense of self and personal autonomy. In this quest, although one gives up some measure of autonomy that involves personal power and control wrapped up in narcissism, violence, or addictive behavior, one gains understanding, self-worth, and the ability to form personal judgments of wrongdoing by others and take action to care for oneself (Mahoney & Pargament, 2004).

As a result, conversion in prison and subsequent programs to reframe behaviors reduce recidivism risks.

<div align="center">**Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts**</div>

Success of Prison Ministry

Prison Fellowship, as the largest and best-known prison ministry organization, has developed partnerships with several states to provide a model for prisons (Thomas & Zaitzow, 2006). Johnson (2012) demonstrated that faith-based prison programs have stronger results than those that are not faith-based by providing statistics of programs that are not faith-based only showing a 5% to 10% recidivism rate. Comparatively, there are several studies that show faith-based programs causing a lower recidivism rate. For example, an evaluation of the Texas Prison Fellowship program found that inmates who completed the program were 50% less likely to be rearrested within two years of release compared to a matched comparison group (Roman, Wolff, Correa, & Buck, 2007). In a systematic review of 29 studies, Ferguson, Wu, Spruijt-Metz, and Dyrness (2007) described five studies that explored how faith and religion specifically contributed to particular programs' outcomes. These studies indicated that inmates in faith-based prison programs as well as former prisoners in social readjustment groups had lower recidivism rates than inmates and former prisoners in comparison groups (Ferguson et al., 2007).

Faith-based programs such as The InnerChange Freedom Initiative, which offers around-the-clock religious programming in prison environments for prisoners who have 18 to 24 months remaining on their sentences and no disqualifying incidents (i.e., sex offenses or capital murder), have shown significantly lower rates of arrest for participants following release from prison (Fields, 2005). According to Fields (2005), inmates in this

program take classes on the basics of the Christian faith, the impact of crime on victims and their families, self-esteem, and other subjects. In addition, inmates in the program have access to other individuals' expertise in Christian teachings and belief, as well as Bibles, speeches, concerts, and church services. The benefits of the InnerChange program include greater ability for inmates to practice religion, enhanced safety, augmented probability of parole, and other improvements to inmates' quality of life. Christian inmates in the InnerChange program are more able to practice and explore their faith than they would be in prison housing units. There are 995 active participants in the InnerChange program, with approximately 600 volunteers. The program is a family of seven long-term residential treatment programs and one community-based, outpatient treatment program, which serves nine United States cities, which include Hurricane Utah, St. George Utah, Spanish Fork, Utah, Saratoga Springs, Utah, Eureka, Montana, Los Angeles, California, Klamath Falls, Oregon, and Ashland, Oregon.

Programs such as InnerChange create a social community that gives inmates a sense of belonging and may prompt them to change in response to social cues (Helliwell, 2014). With a basis in faith, these programs lead inmates to focus on Christ rather than selfish desires. According to an InnerChange study, about 17 % of the program's graduates were arrested in a 2-year period following release from prison, in comparison to 35 % of nonparticipants in the program. About 8 % of InnerChange graduates were incarcerated in the 2 years following release, compared to 20 % of matched nonparticipants (Management & Training Corporation [MTC] Institute, 2005).

Rate of Recidivism in the United States

Recidivism, or the act of an offender to reoffend, is a phenomenon that the criminal justice system continues to develop strategies to reduce. Prison life can become damaging to a person's self-esteem, self-worth, and overall outlook on life, to the point that some individuals become suicidal due to suffering they have endured while incarcerated (Haney, 2017). Collaborative efforts of the criminal justice system and mental health system are important and necessary to address issues that cause former inmates to reoffend. To the mental health specialist, an act of recidivism stems from the mind, and factors such as socioeconomic status and environmental influence are directly linked to committing crime (Williams, Priest, & Anderson, 2016).

Hall (2015) stated that a recidivism study conducted by the Department of Justice reported a recidivism rate of 68% within 3 years of release. James (2015) noted that a Bureau of Justice Statistics report in 2005 showed that within 5 years of release, nearly three-quarters of ex-offenders came back into contact with the criminal justice system. Ex-offenders are less educated, less likely to be gainfully employed, and more likely to have a history of mental illness or substance abuse—all risk factors for recidivism— compared to the average American.

Prisoners Wanting to Be Treated in a Fair and Decent Way

In a study conducted by Beijersbergen, Dirkzwager, Molleman, van der Laan, and Nieuwbeerta (2013), 20 % of prisoners reported that correctional officers treated them fairly, whereas another 20 % did not think that officers treated them fairly. Around 38 % felt that they were treated with respect in prison, and 36 % had positive feelings about their relationships with officers. Concepts of fairness and legitimacy are critical to life in

prison, with a particular emphasis on order and well-being (Liebling, 2011). Judgments

of fairness are determined on the basis of perceived relationships with staff (Liebling,

2006). Crewe (2011) described the "soft power" method regarding the staff-prisoner

relationship, whereby prisoners are encouraged to regulate their own behavior, govern

their own conduct, address their own offending behavior, engage positively with the

regime, and accept responsibility if they fail to do so.

Fair treatment in prison may signal inmates' belonging to society and may result

in intrinsic motivation to obey the law. Moreover, fair treatment brings inmates a stronger

sense of value, self-esteem, and well-being (Dalbert & Filke, 2007). Conversion to

Christianity can offer a sense of community and promote hope as the individual joins

with fellow believers to overcome negative feelings of not being treated fairly (Maruna,

Wilson, & Curran, 2006).

Importance of Prison Visitation

One factor that has been shown to be beneficial to inmates regarding a sense of

belonging to family and community is prison visitation (Denney, Tewksbury, & Jones,

2014). Inmates' ability to see loved ones is important for stabilizing them and increasing

their sense of hope. There has been increasing recognition of the importance of prisoner

visitation over the past few years, primarily due to the belief that it has a direct

connection to recidivism reduction. Although research has been too limited to support

definitive conclusions on the impact of visitation, studies have found its benefit in

allowing inmates to have a community outside prison, which may generate a greater

sense of community loyalty and thereby lessen individuals' chances of going back to

prison (Davis, Bahr, & Ward, 2013). For inmates, Christian conversion can lead to

stronger feelings of community by allowing them to develop positive relationships with Christian program instructors to assist with growth and maturity, as well as fellow converts for the sake of accountability (Hlavka, Wheelock, & Jones, 2015).

Factors in reducing recidivism through prison visitation include the person or persons providing a buffer against the immediate prison experience and increasing the chances that the inmate will be supported and monitored post release (Mears, Cochran, Siennick, & Bales, 2012). Prison visits may reduce inmates' chances of misconduct by providing them with access to valued others, emotional support, relief from isolation, and distraction from the other discomforts of confinement (Siennick, Mears, & Bales, 2013). Release from prison constitutes a critical transition to civilian life, and social support stands as one of the most likely factors determining the success of this transition and reducing the rate of recidivism (Bales & Mears, 2008). For those in prison, visits from family and friends offer a means of establishing, maintaining, or enhancing social support networks (Duwe & Clark, 2013). For offenders who have lost the trust of loved ones and ruined important relationships, relationships with clergy can be helpful in not only reframing their worldview to reflect Christ, but also promoting reconciliation through forgiveness (Duwe & Johnson, 2016; Webb, Hirsch, Visser, & Brewer, 2013).

While prison visitation is beneficial to prisoners from a social and emotional standpoint, visitation from the Christian community adds a much-needed spiritual element that has a resonating effect with inmates (Barkman, n.d.). Research has shown that in addition to general positive effects such as reducing feelings of isolation, shame, loneliness, and despair, Christian visitors help inmates navigate their life in prison by guiding them toward a change in outlook, offering a sense of hope and motivation to set

future goals (Duncan & Balbar, 2008). Other important effects of prison visitation (Duncan & Balbar, 2008) include motivation to establish trusting relationships, ability to see the current situation in a more positive light, and a strong level of support. As one inmate explained, "They bring out the best in me. They make me see that I do have a future, that it is possible to start again" (Duncan et. Al, 2008, p. 312).

Personal Recidivism Accounts

Is there a sense of hopelessness in these accounts? Hopelessness is among the reasons that someone might choose to recidivate. Defined as a system of negative expectancies concerning oneself and one's future (Kroner et al., 2011, p. 779), hopelessness is key to the assessment of suicide risk, as well as a factor in how receptive and responsive offenders are to interventions (Kroner et al., 2011). In a documentary (VICE, 2018), Jason Bobbitt described how he found himself heading back in prison 15 years after being released. Bobbitt became hopeless after failing to find a job that would allow him to take care of his wife and five children. As a result, he committed the same crime he had committed before and faced up to 10 more years in prison. This documentary supports the notion that the prospects of ex-offenders in the job market are almost always worse than for nonoffenders with comparable credentials (Bierens & Carvalho, 2010).

Nally, Lockwood, Ho, and Knutson (2014) also stated that former inmates find it difficult to compete in the job market with law-abiding citizens. According to their study, unemployment rates were in the range of 92-97 % for released offenders. These rates decreased during relatively strong economic conditions in 2006 and 2007, when ex-offenders became more likely be employed in a variety of industrial sectors. However,

the unemployment rate was still higher for ex-offenders than for the general population. Throughout the period from 2005-2009, there was a similar pattern of unemployment rates across different types of ex-offenders.

Humber, Emsley, Pratt, and Tarrier (2013) explain the Cry of Pain model and its effect on inmates who feel hopeless. An important factor in this model is a lack of rescue such as social support, which increases the risk of suicide in the prison. According to their study, inmates feeling hopeless was the top diary item, which linked to the feeling of "I want to hurt myself." Jared Rudolph, founder of the Prisoner Reentry Network in northern California, stated how inmates find it difficult to migrate back into society. This is compounded with personal inmate accounts of prejudices and inability to understand technology due to being improperly trained, along with former inmates being unable to get birth certificates for months and going to social security offices and hearing from the employees that they "don't exist" (Yuhas, 2015). Johnathan Barker was released from a Colorado prison in 2009, and applied for 60 job openings while living in a halfway house. Randall Countryman of Chula Vista, California was released from prison after serving 21 years for attempted murder and redirected his steps by maintaining a 4.0 GPA. However, even with an impressive grade point average and applying for over 90 positions, Countryman was only able to land a five-week temporary position. Both men voiced concern of their jobs being insufficient to pay bills, which heightens their temptations to reoffend."

As shown from the examples, a sense of hopelessness increases the temptations to recidivate. Moreover, it is the strongest predictor of suicide risk among inmates, along with depression (Mandracchia & Smith, 2015). Christian conversion in prison provides a

sense of hope to the inmate regarding a future. In addition, it has a positive effect with maintaining behavioral patterns that operate as a protective factor against negative behaviors such as crime and delinquency, while reducing anti-social behavior and building social networks (Kerley, Matthews, & Blanchard, 2005).

Berean Prison Ministries (2015) recalls a man who was incarcerated in May of 2010, feeling hopeless and overwhelmed. However, he then heard his cellmate say, "Hey man. It doesn't matter what it is, Jesus will take care of it." While he was still struggling to find hope, he started seeking God to help him overcome his hopeless state. Through this process of seeking, he gave his life to God, and adopted a new way of thinking about his situation. The inmate was later released, and maintained being clean from drugs and alcohol following his release.

As shown in this experience, the Christian conversion reframed the thoughts of the inmate and led him to living a life conducive to reflecting Christ. The hopelessness changed to hopefulness in a future. This sense of hope allows people to discover promise, which projects one to look at the future. Ultimately, hope is an essential part in the testimony of a Christian convert from a life of brokenness and despair (Sremac, 2014), which is an important factor for the converted inmate.

Importance of Support Base for Inmates and Its Impact on Recidivism

The attachment of an offender from social networks and removal of sources of support are some of the most difficult challenges inmates face (Cochran, 2013). To further this dilemma, many employers are not willing to hire someone with a criminal background, as they feel the former inmate may harm a customer (Stoll & Bushway, 2008). In addition, states such as California, Colorado, Kentucky, and Connecticut have

all released prisoners deemed at low-risk of reoffending in order to cut costs and assist

with the budget. In a span of four months from an early release program of 10 inmates in

Colorado, three of them returned to prison (Tahmincioglu, 2010). Without a foundation

of community support, recidivism risks increase (Tahmincioglu, 2010).

Daggett, Camp, Kwon, Rosenmerkel, and Klein-Saffran (2008) described the Life

Connections Program, which is an 18-month, faith-based correctional program operating

in five Federal Bureau of Prison institutions. Results of the study showed that Bible study

had a significant effect on community integration. In a study of the impact of prison

visitation since 1991, prisoners who were visited had significantly lower recidivism rates

and lived longer in the community without re-offending that those who were not visited

(De Claire & Dixon, 2017). Since prison visitation is one of the most prominent sources

of prosocial support for prisoners and associated with reduced misconduct and

recidivism, faith-based programming can offer prosocial support, as well as improve

inmate behavior within the institution (Duwe, 2017). The stronger community developed

through faith-based programming and prison visitation are important factors in recidivism

reduction.

The father-child relationship is important in the prison visitation structure.

Providing faith-based groups that attempt to minister to the spiritual needs of a prisoner

could be effective in working towards a family-based model. As children of God, the

power of religion lies in its ability to infuse spiritual character and significance into a

broad range of worldly concerns (Mahoney, Pargament, Murray-Swank, & Murray-

Swank, 2003). As a result, this gives the inmate a better understanding of the importance

of nurturing a relationship with family. Along with these elements, volunteers from faith-

based programs can visit inmates who do not have strong family ties (Swanson, Lee, Sansone, & Tatum (2012). These visits from faith-based volunteers can be used for either creating a bridge between inmate and family, or help the inmates through negative feelings of not having any family members as a support base for both mental stability in prison and reentry.

Suicide Risk for Inmates After Release

Suicide is a major factor in prison, but has not received a significant level of attention (Suto & Arnaut, 2010). Despite this, suicide is on the decline, but it is still at a rate that requires safeguarding. This is often done by transferring suicide-risk inmates to a suicide-resistant cell, which has items such as safety smocks and blankets made of heavy nylon fabric that is very heavy and difficult to tear (Hayes, 2013). Suicide risk is also a major factor post-release due to the transition of life outside of prison. In a study of nearly 27,000 prisoners over a period of five years, 920 deaths were identified, of which 127 of them were from suicide. This made the suicide risk among released prisoners 18 times higher compared to the non-convicted general population (Haglund et al., 2014). According to recent research, the protective effects of religion, particularly Christianity, can be critical in suicide prevention (Norko et al., 2017).

In a study from Binswanger et al. (2010) of all inmates released from the Washington State Department of Corrections from July 1999 through December 2003, 30,237 were released. Out of the total number released, 443 died during a mean follow-up period of 1.9 years. The risk of death among former inmates was 3.5 times higher than the general population, with suicide being one of the top four causes of death. Suicide

was a more common cause of death among persons under 45 years old, largely due to either an underlying mental illness or psychological stress of reentry.

Not only does suicide cause a major risk among inmates released, but mental health issues are a factor as well. Reingle-Gonzalez and Connell (2014) stated that although mental health orders have consistently exceeded rates of such disorders in the general population, access for inmates to have proper treatment has been sporadic. In addition, individuals with untreated mental health conditions may be at a higher risk for correctional rehabilitation treatment failure and future recidivism on release from prison. As a result of factors including a lack of community-based mental health services, mass downsizing of state psychiatric institutions, and a legal system with a limited capacity to discern underlying mental health problems, many people with serious mental illness continuously move between crisis hospitalization, homelessness and the criminal justice system (Baillargeon, Binswanger, Penn, Williams, and Murray, 2009). Since perceptions and entrapment and low levels of coping skills are a risk factors to suicide (Gooding et al., 2015), Christian conversion can lead to a mental framework that can expand positive emotional experience (Sandage & Moe, 2013), so inmates who make this decision in prison will reduce certain emotional triggers that lead to suicidal tendencies.

Since Christianity as a religion deals with someone being focused on the significance and meaning of life, conversion in prison can reduce the sense of hopelessness and an inmate's desire to take his or her own life. The religious conversion, particularly Christianity, allows the inmate to experience purpose in their lives, as well as have a sense of meaning and coherence about ultimate truths (Steger & Frazier, 2005). In addition to religion being a protective factor towards suicide, it also gives converts a

newfound perspective on the meaning of life, as well as practical actions such as self-development, self-efficacy, sharing, and restraint (Mandhouj, Aubin, Amirouche, Perroud, & Philippe, 2013). For the inmate, these factors are critical to both letting go of a mental framework of addressing negative emotions with violence or crime, but valuing and appreciating others too much to commit a crime.

Mandhoui et al. (2013) add that religion and religiousness (the doctrinal practices of religion from a social and behavioral standpoint), help people to cope more effectively with facing stressful life events. A 2011 study was conducted at the short-stay prison of *Bois d'Arcy* in France. The majority of the sample found spirituality and religiousness as an important way of coping. Additional studies show that spirituality and religiousness could also be associated with decreased suicide risk and the prevention of future offenses (Mandhoui et al., 2013).

Ways of Reducing Recidivism

Reframing an inmate's desire to reoffend. Reframing one's mind not to re-offend is an important factor in recidivism reduction, and there are various ways to do this. Prison rehabilitation programs is a key factor in reframing, as the emphasis is for inmates to improve in areas such as education and mental health (lao.ca.gov, 2017). Shortcomings of some prison rehabilitation programs include the institution falling short in adhering to the key principles for reducing recidivism – the program being evidence-based, evaluated for cost-effectiveness, and focusing on highest-risk or highest-need inmates, not using all of the rehabilitation program slots despite waitlists for such programs, and having a flaw approach to measuring program performance.

Cognitive behavioral therapy is used for understanding cognitive process in determining mood and behavior, and facilitates many opportunities for inmates to gain increased understanding and control of their behavior by recognizing and coping with triggers, modifying cognitions, and replacing alternate behaviors that serve similar functions (Sampl, Wakai, Trestman, & Keeney, 2008). Kersten, Cislo, Lynch, Shea, and Trestman (2015) describe the START NOW evidence-formed coping skills therapy designed for incarcerated individuals using a CBT framework. Inmates who attended each program session resulted in a 2% reduction in the odds of rearrest and reincarceration.

Religion, particularly Christianity and scripture, can be helpful in modifying maladaptive thoughts and behaviors associated with negative moods, and is a positive response to stressful situations in order to create more rational patterns (Paukert et al., 2009). Cognitive-behavioral therapy with the influence of Christianity allows the inmate to apply these patterns in their lives in self-statements such as "God will give me the strength to get through this," and produces coping responses to get through stressful situations due to believing that God is always with them (Paukert et al., 2009).

Social ties and their effect on the desire to reoffend. Giles, Paris, and Whale (2016) discuss the importance of art education in relation to recidivism. Qualitative research shows a positive comparison between the two, with prisoners and ex-prisoners being able to use creation in order to enable learners to master skills, materials, and techniques, as well as express abstract ideas and become visually literate. This growth can lead to increased civic and social awareness, which can both differentiate between self and others, as well as between present and past selves. In addition, this type of

learning can increase self-esteem and self-worth, which can reduce negative patterns leading to a reduced level of offences both in prison and outside of prison. Art therapy combined with Christianity creates an opportunity for inmates to not only reframes one's desire to do evil, but also creates a community in prison to express thoughts artistically (Hansen, 2018), and the Ecclesiastical decree that "two are better than one". Art therapy enables inmates to escape from the mental strain of the prison environment. However, art therapy from a Christian conversion perspective provides a sense of redemption and faith to the inmate. Crosses are one of the most frequent images in jail, and it is perceived to represent suffering, humiliation, atonement, transformation, and faith (Hanes, 2005). While art therapy allows an inmate to escape from reality, art therapy from the vantage point of Christian allows inmates to address these negative feelings with an understanding that there is a savior that died for our sins. Particularly, that God's love and forgiveness are connected through Scripture, and art therapy allows others to trust the process of the creative work, which parallels with trusting the process as spiritual growth as a Christian (Hansen, 2018). This also gives inmates a strong desire for evangelism, encouraging others, through their art, to come to Christ as well.

Art therapy has also been linked to an increase chance in desistance – when an offender stops offending – from crime. Not only does music and art activities assist with creating a better culture within the prison system, but it also has a positive effect on offenders' behavior and attitudes when addressing the needs of damaged communities outside of prison (Bilby, Caulfield, & Ridley, 2013). Desistance from crime involves an openness to change, exposure and reaction to turning points for change, imagining and believing in a "replacement self," and a change in the way that offending and deviant

behavior is viewed. Since desistance relies on positive self-change and a maintenance of a crime-free behavior, successful education can assist the inmate and former inmate to gain a better understanding and awareness of their actions, while replacing the negative patterns with positive ones (Bilby, Caulfield, & Ridley, 2013). Since art therapy has the ability to change one's interpretation of how he or she views life (Blomdahl, Gunnarsson, Guregård, and Björklund, 2013), using this from a faith-based approach gives the inmate the expression to reflect the ways of Christ in an artistic manner, as well as reduce recidivism by changing the desires of the inmate to offend.

For the inmate, Christian conversion ties in with art therapy regarding using it as an outlet to create a lifemap of the journey. This therapy can be used to create significant faith-related moments in one's life, constantly reminding the inmate of where he came from and where he is going (Hodge, 2005). Inmates can create sketches of significant events in their spiritual journey as a Christian, such as drawing a cross to depict their conversion. In turn, the devotion to maintain one's maturity as a believer is better illustrated and tangible, which could present a heightened awareness and accountability to reflect tenets of Christianity.

The Good Lives Model is a strength-based perspective concerned with promoting offenders' goals alongside managing their risk (Ward, Mann, & Gannon, 2007). With this model, the belief is that enhancing personal fulfillment will lead naturally to reductions in criminogenic needs, and will focus more of satisfying basic goods such as friendship, enjoyable work, loving relationships, creative pursuits, sexual satisfaction, positive self-regard, and an intellectually challenging environment (Andrews, Bonta, & Wormith, 2011). The 11 classes of primary goods include life (healthy living and functioning),

knowledge, excellence in play, excellence in work, excellence in agency (autonomy and self-directedness), inner peace, friendship, community, spirituality, happiness, and creativity (Ward, Yates, & Willis), 2012). Since spirituality is consider a basic criminogenic need in the Good Lives Model (Chu, Ward, & Willis, 2014), aligning faith with enhancing personal fulfillment is a healthy approach for ministers to use in prison for inmates in the goal to shift their paradigm to live a life that reflects Christ and reduces the urge to fulfill fleshly desires. GLM provides a framework in assisting offenders to achieve their goals, as well as managing their risk for reoffending. This model states that human needs can be viewed as states of deprivation that motivate people to seek certain outcomes to successfully meet the question (Barnao, Robertson, & Ward, 2013). Since GLM is based around the two core therapeutic goals of promoting human goods and reducing risk (Ward & Birgden, 2007), the pursuit of a better life through the realization of goals is important for inmates to maintain a sense of hope.

Impact of Chaplains on Recidivism

According to a Pew Forum of Chaplains regarding religion in prisons, one chaplain stated that the usefulness of the gospel message and Christian ministries in the prisoner rehabilitation and re-entry process are underrated. In addition, these ministries are as effective as educational programs in prison, but receive a small fraction of the funding and manpower. (Lugo, Cooperman, Boddie, Funk, & O'Connell, 2012). As a whole, the role of a chaplain is to serve the spiritual needs of all people in institutions, and correctional chaplains are trained in corrections of knowing what works and what does not work in helping offenders desist from crime and make the public safer (O'Connor, Duncan, & Quillard, 2006). Along with this, O'Connor, Duncan, and

Quillard (2006) explain that chaplains are among the best people to have appropriate knowledge, skills, and aptitude to engage, train, and supervise a diversity of religious volunteers. As a result, this increases the need for investment in the development of these personnel to strengthen faith-based programs in institutions. Chaplains are there to shoulder the primary responsibility for identifying and serving the various religious needs of the incarcerated population, and must balance the religious rights of the inmates with the correctional facility's need for safety and security. Despite these crucial roles, chaplains are still an understudied group in the prison community (Hicks, 2012). Bright and Graham (2007) describe the importance of chaplains to recidivism, such as the Horizon Program in Marion, Ohio that has shown a favorable recidivism rate.

Chaplains have an important role in the reduction of recidivism rates, as they provide faith-based efforts to give inmates hope and encouragement to become successful outside of prison and reentry into society (Chui & Cheng, 2013). Since ministers and chaplains are used in prisons to work in inhibiting deviant behavior, recidivism reduction is a primary focus in their relationship with inmates (Chui & Cheng, 2013). In addition to helping prisoners adjust psychologically to incarceration, chaplains are essential in recidivism reduction by helping inmates find meaning and purpose, as well as assisting with job-skills training, communication with family, support in the reentry process through providing resources and access to social networks; which all indirectly reduce recidivism (Braswell, Steinkopf, & Beamer, 2016).

In a study by Kerley, Deitzer, and Leban (2014), 30 women were interviewed from a faith-based halfway house, with most classifying themselves as Christian converts. The women used their newfound Christian belief system as the key approach

for framing the problems and temptations they would face after release. Since the temptation of going back to their old ways were great, the women were taught to submit control to a loving God. In addition, they were taught to transition from control by one external force (drugs) to control by another external force (God). 13 of the 30 interviews subscribed to a view of God being in full control, with them acting as a passive role. One of the interviewees stated, "The only way I'm gonna live life in the fast lane is with God driving cause life in the fast lane didn't get me anywhere. Got me a lot of fines to pay, a lot of bail money. It got me nowhere. But this time, Jesus got the wheel" (pg. 857). Another person stated, "It's a sin problem. It's a selfishness problem. I am letting go and letting God, because it's all in his hands. He already has everything planned out for you and all you got to do is walk it out. … I'm letting God lead" (pg. 857). Another 12 viewed more of a collaborative approach, which involves following God and doing what is right as expressed through the Scriptures and promptings of the Holy Spirit. "I've always heard God speak to me and guide me through my spirit," one person said. "At times that I should've listened, I didn't, and let's just say I was in the wrong place at the wrong time and consequences happened and now I'm more aware of that conscience," (pg. 861). She added that when the Holy Spirit tells her, "don't do that," she pays more attention to it, understanding that there are major consequences if she doesn't.

The law of attraction is described by Martiz and Stoker (2016) as an all-powerful, impersonal, unbiased and universal law that is always working without any exceptions, and determines every moment of one's life by responding to either positive or negative thoughts. Sayings such as "like attracts like" and "birds of a feather flock together" are common sayings for proponents of the law of attraction. While this can be a great

approach regarding the importance of association, a backlash for this is the doctrine of positive confession, which has undergone a considerable amount of scrutiny in the Christian culture.

Bridging the Gap

Christianity and how its tenets promote a life that focuses on loving and caring for others. For the Christian, Jesus is the ultimate example of how to live humbly and lovingly. As a Christian, devotees identify with God intimately in the person of Jesus Christ, and who they are in the eyes of God. Jesus reconciles man to God, extends an invitation for man to surrender to God (Sandelands, 2017), and allows the Holy Spirit to intervene in daily thinking and actions. Pazmino (2008) explains that Jesus embodied a new humanity who is both radically open to God and in relationship with all his earthly neighbors embedded in the totality of creation. Moreover, the discovery of one's true self is suggested in the two great commandments that Jesus taught — loving God with one's heart, soul, mind and strength, and loving neighbors as yourself. True transformation in one's life, in every area, comes from acceptance of God's grace.

Kotze (2013) expresses the importance of ex-offenders worshipping God and attending church, and its assistance in social reintegration and desistance from crime. This reintegration becomes stronger due to the ex-offenders being involved within a longer termed sustainable network of social support, particularly aiming to use faith and church involvement as an intrinsically rewarding source of agency and affiliation to increase desistance from crime (Kotze, 2013). Inmates who have become motivated by Christianity have attributed their desistance from crime with the importance of personal

responsibility and social support, as well as the necessity of both doing their part and continuing to feed themselves spiritually (Hallett & McCoy, 2015).

    Prison Fellowship. As explained by Oliver (2013), Prison Fellowship was birthed out of a desire for former Special Counsel to Richard Nixon, Chuck Colson, to reform the prison system. Colson, retired U.S. Senator from Iowa Harold Hughes, and former chairman of the Postal Rate Commission Fred Rhodes headed to the bureau in June of 1975 after praying together. The three scheduled a meeting with bureau director Norman Carlson, and Colson began to express how the current prison system is not working and failed to rehabilitate. He felt that the only person who could break the cycle of habit, deprivation, and the desire to re-offend was Jesus. Colson proposed to Carlson that he, Hughes, and their associates would enter federal prisons and be taught principles of Christian fellowship with the aim of returning the inmates to their institutions with the knowledge and support necessary to seed and nurture a network and study groups and prayer cells among their fellow prisoners. Being reminded of a recent moment when an inmate prayed for him, and being encouraged by Colson that the inmate prayed for him because he loved him, Carlson issued the order, and Prison Fellowship was birthed. From its inception in 1976 to its current state, Prison Fellowship has an annual budget of over $40 million and around 15 thousand certified volunteers.

    As a conservative, Colson favored the view of criminals being responsible for their crimes and prison should not be for the purpose of rehabilitating criminals, but to punish them, deter other criminals, and keep society safe. This is opposing the liberal view of crime, which is that a person is the product of economic and social influences, and as a result, these factors cloud his judgment, making the crime only partially his fault.

After pleading guilty to charges of obstruction of justice due to his involvement in the Watergate scandal, Colson turned his life around and decided to surrender to Christ.

Colson's view towards prison also changed, and he wrote a book called Born Again, which argued that prisoners can be rehabilitated if they are infused with spiritual purpose. Although Colson felt that the need for prisons was still important, he believed that Prison Fellowship could rehabilitate some inmates to be truly remorseful for the crimes committed and become a legitimate member of society. Prison Fellowship feels that it is important to organize the lives of inmates to take care of themselves once they are released, and are assigned a mentor for a minimum of six months following their release (Carlson, 1992). Prison Fellowship has renewed interest in in the potential for faith-based programs to address a range of social problems for both incarcerated individuals, as well as free individuals (Kerley, Allison, & Graham, 2006).

Along with reduced prison infractions, a study shown that inmates who participated in Prison Fellowship, which includes a maximum of 50 hours of Bible study and several days of intensive seminars annually (Johnson, 2012), were nearly three times less likely to be rearrested during the 12 months following their release, compared to other inmates who were not involved in the fellowship (Sherman, 2013). According to the philosophy of Prison Fellowship, religious conversion in the life of a former inmate can serve as a cogent means of reducing recidivism, and it not only has the potential to reduce recidivism but also the rate of infractions in the lives of the formerly incarcerated.

Johnson (2004) conducted an eight-year follow-up study of former prisoners and found that they were unlikely to re-offend with the increase in number of Bible studies attended. More than half (22%) of regular Bible studies attenders in the study were

rearrested compared to the 45% who attended less. Johnson adds that additional research confirms that religious conversion and spiritual transformation were significant factors of ex-offenders gaining and retaining employment and in overcoming other obstacles of reentry. This also applied in the eight-year follow-up with former inmates with no prior adult convictions. Due to the limited amount of studies regarding this topic, older studies are used to show the importance of prison ministry to the inmate, particularly the differences in worldview when committed to the programs, as well as recidivism reduction. As mentioned, the level of relevant, recent studies are rare, causing the use of older studies. A 1996 study was conducted at the Lieber Prison in South Carolina, and 19 percent of the inmates participated in Prison Fellowship activities. Out of this number, less than 10 percent incurred prison infractions, compared to the over 23 percent who had not participated (Sherman, 2003).

Regarding recidivism, a 1997 study found that former inmates in New York that had participated in Prison Fellowship Bible Studies were nearly three times less likely to be re-arrested during a 12-month follow-up period. The 1995 "Loyola Study" of Prison Fellowship tracked recidivism data over an 8-14 year follow-up period for 180 graduates of the Prison Fellowship Washington Discipleship Seminar, and matched a comparison of 185 inmates who did not attend the seminar. Based on the study, seminar graduates had lower rates of recidivism compared to the control group. In addition, 19 percent of the Prison Fellowship women attendees recidivated, compared to the 47 percent who did not. For the men, the ratio was 45 to 52, still favoring a lower percentage of recidivism for attending the fellowship.

Change in identity when converted. Regarding the importance of focusing on the prison community, Maruna, Wilson, and Curran (2006) explain that prison conversion includes factors such as creating a new social identity to replace the label of prisoner or criminal, imbuing the experience of imprisonment with purpose and meaning, empowering the largely powerless prisoner by turning him into an agent of God, providing the prisoner with a language and framework for forgiveness, and allowing a sense of control over an unknown future. When an inmate becomes converted, not only the prescriptions of the Christian faith are adopted, but also the language and vocabulary as one continues to mature in Christ. This new system of rhetoric also provides and interpretative system that offers new guidance and meaning to the convert, and allows the inmate to read the world differently. Since the life of a Christian should be geared towards understanding Jesus Christ and to emulate his actions (Nibley, 2017), loving our neighbors as we love ourselves includes "the undocumented immigrants, the new age crystal-gazers, the Baptist missionaries (pg. 269)" and others who disagree regarding issues such as politics and loudness of music.

The mission for Kairos Prison Ministry International is to "share the transforming love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ to impact the hearts and lives of incarcerated men, women and youth, as well as their families, to become loving and productive citizens of their communities" (mykairos.org). The volunteers and staff must be conscious of their roles in Kairos and represent the ministry by being an example of Jesus Christ. Factors that reflect the ministry regarding a volunteer or staff member include complying with direction and authority of the local leaders within Kairos, showing no favoritism with guests, avoiding inappropriate language or gestures, dressing appropriately, and ensuring

that all Kairos events are alcohol free. The ministry was established in 1976, and operates faith-based programs in prisons in Florida, Ohio, and Arizona. In 2004, the nation's first faith-based prison program for women opened in Tampa, Florida (Hewitt & Regoli, 2007).

Faith-based prison ministry have a direct impact on both equipping tools for inmates to have a successful reentry process, as well as shift the focus from the negative desires of oneself to fulfilling the desires of Christ. The Kairos Horizon prison ministry program assists prisoners, ex-prisoners, their families, communities, correctional institutions, and state social service agencies in building important social bonds that will lead to recidivism and increased independence (Hewitt & Regoli, 2007). The Florida Department of Corrections ran the faith-based dorm, and 59 inmates who entered the six-month program were compared to eight inmates who didn't complete the six months, 741 inmates at the Tomoka Correctional Institution who did not participate at all, and 54, 997 inmates at other Florida prisons. Inmates who completed the six-month program had lower rates of disciplinary reports, compared to 37.5% of non-completers, 17% of non-participants, and 12% of inmates at other prisons (Volokh, 2011).

These statistics show the impact of spiritual rebirth of learning about grace and how faith may work in the life of an inmate, particularly compared to those who did not complete the faith-based programs. For example, InnerChange focuses on a transformational model rather than therapeutic, which reduces recidivism through preparing inmates into reentry through becoming good citizens and being equipped with educational, ethical, and religious instruction (Hewitt & Regoli, 2007).

Johnson (2008) states that prison ministry is a safer service opportunity for religious volunteers and organizations compared with reentry, mainly because prisoners often appreciate the attention they receive from the outside world, and these exchanges tend to be overwhelmingly positive and nonthreatening for volunteers. Faith-based organizations typically opt for in-prison ministry as opposed to out-of-prison services because reentry and aftercare are not as easy or safe. Johnson adds that it is unclear how many faith-based prisoner reentry programs are operational, although it is likely they exist in many of the communities where prisons are located. Still, with these shortcomings, studies have shown that young Black males from poverty tracts in Boston, Chicago, and Philadelphia were much less likely to be involved in crime and delinquent behavior if they regularly attended church (Duwe & Johnson, 2013). Similarly, highly religious low-income youths from high-crime areas are less likely to use drugs than less religious youths in the same disadvantaged communities (Johnson, 2008).

Clear, Hardyman, Stout, Lucken, and Dammer (2000) record the value of religion in prison by individual and group interviews from prisons in Delaware, Texas, Indiana, Missouri, and Mississippi. During the last two months of the 10-month participant observation, 50 interviews were conducted with a variety of religious and nonreligious inmates. Religion in prison was understood by the inmates confronting the truth in their live regarding the attack against the self, and religion holding possible routes out of the dilemma, because it not only explains the cause of the failure, but it also prescribes the solution. With this study, Christianity was one of the two dominant religions that were used. To address guilt, one of the biggest struggles for inmates, evangelical methods were used such as offering unconditional acceptance and the programs promoting that Jesus

can save the inmates. One inmate account stated, "My faith was not as strong until after being incarcerated. Suddenly, I found myself alone and with no one. That is when religion and belief in God became stronger. It kept me sane" (pg. 62).

Operation Starting Line is an evangelical prison ministry program designed to introduce every inmate in the United States to Christianity, and is an arm of Chuck Colson's Prison Fellowship. OSL echoes Colson's argument that prisons are not going to stop the crime problem, not matter how tough you get, because it is a result of a breakdown of moral values. The OSL program represents a collaborative effort of 25 separate faith-based organizations, and is typically held on a large stage overseeing an open-air arena in order for organizers, staff and volunteers to share the message of Christ with the inmates. Conversations vary from everyday life to prayer, and religious literature is distributed at the end of the event. The hope from the organizers is that the one-day event extends past the moment, and life are committed to Christ based on the ministry that is given through entertainment and conversation. Based on their results, between 29 and 45 percent of the sampled OSL attendees experienced less worry, stress, sadness, coldness, fear, and bitterness. There was also reductions in fighting, arguing, and being punished by the prison staff (Kerley, Matthews, & Schultz, 2005).

Positive impacts of a Christian worldview. Van der Walt (2017) states that while the answers to the struggles of everyday life will not all be answered from a Christian worldview, it can still equip one with worthwhile decisions. Seeing how the way we see life is the way we walk through life, one who subscribes to the Christian worldview engages in a full and active Christian life, understanding that it is a gift from God, full of love, and requires growth and maturity. Once a person adopts a Christian

worldview, he has a responsibility to challenge others to become better, while seeing one's own areas to continue to become sharpened (Van der Walt, 2017).

Hanson shares how a convict who is a new convert shows marked improvement in his life and attitude, although still being weak and sinful. The convert has his own peer group of other Christians that he associates with and they gather for church services or Bible studies in prison. As a result of these acts, the Christian acquires less write-ups, demerits or derogatory prison records that prevent them from becoming eligible for Department of Correction programs.

Christian counseling. Christian counseling and psychology programs have focused on how to integrate for over 40 years, and relevant theories have emerged. Randall Sorenson, using Bowlby's attachment theory – which focuses on how the quality of one's relationship bonds impact key areas such as intimacy, relational satisfaction, and emotional health throughout life – proposed that attachment principles relate not only to emotional health, but also the student learning of integration theory and applied skills (Garzon & Hall, 2012).

Garzon, Worthington, Jr., and Tan (2009) explain four classifications of lay Christian counseling – Active Listening, Cognitive and Solution-Focused, Inner Healing, and Mixed. Active Listening combines principles such as empathy, positive regard, and basic listening skills with spiritual resources such as prayer and the Scriptures in the care of hurting people; Inner Healing, under the leading of the Holy Spirit, seeks to uncover how personal, familial, and ancestral experiences are thought to contribute the troubled present; Cognitive & Solution-Focused incorporate Scripture and prayer as key methods

of cognitive restructuring; Mixed gives a more in-depth examination of the role of the flesh and the demonic in emotional distress.

Brault (2014) explains the criminogenic needs most predictive of criminal behavior in order of influence. These include 1) pro-criminal attitudes and beliefs, 2) poor impulse control and problem-solving abilities, 3) disconnection from pro-social support systems and affiliations with anti-social, criminal peers, 4) weak or inconsistent family support or family role models, and 5) substance dependence and abuse. Through the means of pastoral Christian counseling, religious services often become the primary access point through which inmates access culturally relevant communities, experiences, and ideas. Religion also creates a conviction that carry specific attitudinal and behavioral expectations, such as how to treat others, or how to respond to hard times that counter typical criminal attitudes and behaviors.

Methodological Literature Review

Johnson (2004) gives a long-term follow-up study on religious programs and recidivism among former inmates. A quasi-experimental design was used to extend the study of Prison Fellowship programs by performing survival analysis. The study expanded on the previous study that the recidivism window extends from 1 to 8 years and new approaches to operationalizing program participation. The data was used from 201 male inmates from four prison who participated the PF activities. Findings showed that the effect of Bible study attendance was larger than the effect for a record of violence throughout the eight-year study period, and the largest using the two-year endpoint.

Clear, Hardyman, Stout, Lucken, and Dammer (2000) discuss the value of religion in prison. Individual and group interviews were conducted in prisons in

Delaware, Texas, Indiana, Missouri, and Mississippi. Based on the interviews, one of the main themes that religious inmates provide in discussing the importance of their faith is that it has changed them. One inmate stated that his faith has created a sense of excitement to go home, and anther interviewee stated that religion is a guide not to get out of hand, but instead gives an inmate or ex-inmate a straight path (Clear, Handyman, Stout, Lucken, and Dammer (2000).

Conclusion

By making the decision to being a Christ-follower, one decides to make a choice to be set apart and rid oneself of former desires (Van der Walt, 2017). This also allows the former inmate to reduce feelings of suicide, depression, guilt, and shame. As a result, the inmate shares the gospel with others both inside and outside of prison. Since purpose can be defined as "an open-ended willingness to to embrace present uncertainty with a hope for good bad," Programs auch as Prison Fellowship and InnerChange sparks up a purpose of the inmate, and others in the community also challenges the innate.

Chaplains, along with family members, are significant factors in the growth of a convert in Prison.. While some groups are non-Christians, the support group by Christians results to reducing redivism, due to the need of maintaining accountability (Braswell, Steinkopf, & Beamer, 2016). While there can be atheist volunteers as well, Christian converts have easier access to these support bases, and a stronger willingness to accept them.

Summary

While the rate of recidivism continues to be a major concern in the prison system finding strategies to reduce the rates is an essential task for the correction system.

Elements such as helplessness and a lack of support base are common factors to increase

the likeliness for an inmate to recidivate (Nally, Lockwood, Ho, & Knutson, 2014;

Kroner et al., 2011; Labbe and Fobes, 2010), and ways to counter this is creating a stable

community for inmates to feel included. From a psychological standpoint, reframing

one's mind through the conversion to Christianity is imperative in the mission to reduce

recidivism, since inmates who convert to Christianity inside prison and remain devoted to

a Christian worldview are less likely to recidivate (Johnson, Larson & Pitts, 2007;

Kerley, Deitzer, & Leban, 2014).

The impact of halfway houses is an important factor of recidivism, with art

education being a positive form of therapy for inmates (Giles, Paris, & Whale, 2016), and

faith-based halfway houses provide tools for successful re-entry, as well as teachings in

live a Christ-centered life and apply biblical principles to daily living (Denney &

Tewksbury, 2013).

Ultimately, a converted inmate who focuses on adopting the Christian worldview

in thought and action will become more others-focused, being led by the Holy Spirit to

give wisdom to weigh out consequences much better than before conversion with the

understand of loving our neighbors as ourselves (Nibley, 2017). While a life of perfection

does not come with being a Christian, and there may never be answers to certain hurdles

that each day brings (Van der Walt, 2017), living a life that acknowledges one's sins and

how Christ forgave them (Das, 2018) creates a strong foundation for a former inmate to

reduce the desire to offend again.

Chapter 3: Methods

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the research methodology for this qualitative interpretative phenomenological study regarding how conversion to Christianity while in prison contributes to an offense-free lifestyle. The selected approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the change in worldview that occurred within ex-offenders through conversion, and how conversion influenced their choices to reflect Christ outside of prison. The interpretative phenomenological approach is described in this chapter, with the research question as the basis of the study. I also explain my role as the researcher and how his role influenced the interview process with ex-offenders who converted to Christianity while in prison. SDT was the theoretical framework used in this study, particularly with reference to how autonomous motivation is used to drive Christian converts in prison to maintain a Christian lifestyle.

The role of the researcher has an influence on this study regarding the experience of interviewing and theological studies. These factors were important in my conversations with ex-offenders in this study. Because phenomenology involves exploring a phenomenon to understand the meaning that participants ascribe to it (Teherani, Martimianakis, Stenfors-Hayes, Wadhwa, & Varpio, 2015), interviews were geared toward gathering experiences of the Christian life after converting in prison and its impact on ex-inmates' desire to offend. The list of questions used for the interviews are included in this chapter, along with the data analysis collection and plan. Additionally, the factors of trustworthiness—transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability—are addressed in this chapter.

Research Design and Rationale

The research question was the following: How does conversion to Christianity while in prison contribute to an offense-free lifestyle?

Qu and Dumay (2011) presented two metaphors to describe research techniques. First, they compared the researcher to a miner, in that the researcher probes for nuggets of essential meaning in a manner similar to how a miner unearths buried material to refine and purify it. They then likened the researcher to a traveler who interprets the conceptualization of knowledge as a story to be told upon returning home. The goal is for the traveler to be transformed by the experience, sharing it with the people traveled with along the way.

The theoretical framework for this study was SDT, which focuses on the investigation of growth tendencies based on self-motivation and personality integration (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Proponents of SDT posit three basic personal needs—competence, relatedness, and autonomy—while also examining environmental factors that can hinder or undermine self-motivation, social functioning, and personal well-being. The theory depicts a positive approach to seeking a fulfilling life, whereby individuals strive to exchange a bad life for a good one (Tracey & Hanham, 2017).

Motivation is a key element of SDT. SDT defines motivation as psychological energy directed at a particular goal and emphasizes the importance of motivational quality in addition to quantity (Patrick & Williams, 2012). The term *internalization* is vital regarding SDT, in that it describes the process by which behaviors become more autonomously regulated over time. This is in contrast to external motivation, which relates to engaging in behaviors to gain some reward or avoid negative contingency

(Patrick et al., 2012). Regarding ex-offenders, the hope is that conversion to Christianity in prison leads to a life where better, less violent decisions are made, such that conversion is not simply a decision that individuals make in prison to lessen a sentence or increase the possibility of being paroled.

As a Christian, the importance of SDT is relevant regarding inmates having long-term autonomy since increases of recidivism is caused by approaches to change inmates on a short-term basis (Moller et al., 2006). Christian conversion can be consistent with SDT regarding motivation. For example, a person with autonomous motivation would attend church due to feeling that doing so is of personal importance and consistent with deeply held values. In contrast, a person with controlled motivation would go to church in order to avoid criticism by others (Soenens et al., 2012).

Qualitative research requires researchers to constantly distinguish between another's world and their own while getting close enough to the life of another that it can be both experienced and analyzed. Qualitative approaches allow researchers to interact skillfully with others as they make sense of reality as well as describe and explain the social world (Morse & Field, 1996). Qualitative research typically refers to a range of data collection and analysis techniques that include semistructured, open-ended interviews (Choy, 2014). This approach is concerned with individuals' life experiences. Moreover, it focuses on phenomena, how individuals' experiences are unique from those of others, and how people talk about objects and events (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). This approach was used in this study for the purpose of documenting experiences from former inmates who had devoted themselves to a Christian lifestyle.

While researchers conducting quantitative studies focus on the quantity of data consumed, and subsequent comparison to give closed-ended responses to a hypothesis, those conducting qualitative research looks toward the quality of research collected, focusing on questions of "why" rather than "how much" or "how many." Additionally, qualitative researchers seek to isolate and define phenomena/categories during the research process for the purpose of comprehending and learning. The qualitative research process includes elements such as thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying, and reporting (Fink, 2000).

In addition to attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings that people bring to them, qualitative researchers turn the world into a series of representations through fieldnotes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self (Jindal, Singh, & Pandya, 2015). This form of research involves the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data that are not easily reduced to numbers and that relate to the social world and the concepts and behaviors of people within it (Anderson, 2010). Personal contact over a period of time between the researcher and the group being studied is a vital part of qualitative research, in that building a relationship with study participants can lead to deeper insight into the context under study, adding richness and depth to the data (Tuli, 2010).

An interpretative phenomenological approach was used for this study. Researchers using interpretative phenomenology recognize that different people perceive and experience the world in very different ways, depending on their personalities, prior life experiences, and motivations. Researchers adopting this approach attempt to explore, understand, and make sense of the subjective meanings of events, experiences, and states

of individual participants (Smith & Osborn, 2004). This approach was founded by Martin

Heidegger (1889-1976), student of the founder of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl.

Heidegger adopted this interpretative method by extending hermeneutics, defined as the

philosophy of interpretation (Reiners, 2012). Heidegger sought to study the concept of

being in the world rather than knowing the world and used hermeneutics to move beyond

descriptions of experience to pursue meanings that are embedded in everyday

circumstances (Reiners, 2012).

Other qualitative traditions would not have adequately fit this study, in that my

emphasis was on personal experience as communicated through individual interviews

regarding how conversion to Christianity while in prison leads to an offense-free

lifestyle. Thematic analysis, for instance, allows a researcher to see and make sense of

collective or shared meanings and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2012). However, it is

more useful within an applied research approach (Braun & Clarke, 2014) that is used for

finding a solution to a practical problem. The narrative approach is used to explore the

lives of individuals, specifically focusing on the events that have occurred in their lives

(Khan, 2014). Whereas the narrative approach involves the exploration of a single

phenomenon, IPA focuses on individual lives. A narrative approach entails a focus on the

chronological order of story events, which would not have added value to this IPA study.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher in this study, I had 22 years of experience in ministry and had

been a small group leader for 11 years. I held a Master of Arts degree in theological

studies and was a certified life coach. No participant had a direct relationship with me, so

conflict of interest was not a factor to induce any kind of imparted bias. The selection of

participants was made from different local churches and faith-based organizations, and no prior relationship existed to influence the questions asked or the expectation of the answers given.

I also brought over 10 years of journalism experience to the study. As a journalist, I had interviewed over 150 people in the areas of religion and sports media. I had also coached many Christians who were ex-offenders and had gained an understanding of the change in worldview that occurs in inmates who convert to Christianity. In addition, as a mental health specialist, I had worked with both children and adults.

I did not collect data from my own church for the sake of preventing bias. Although the goal was to prevent biases throughout the study, bias may have occurred in the form of assuming that the people interviewed were honest in stating that they were maintaining an offense-free lifestyle and were actively involved in ministry. There was also an assumption that living a Christ-centered life results in a spiritual transformation by means of a paradigm shift.

Two passages from scripture reflect further assumptions behind my conversations with the ex-offenders in this study. Titus 1:15 states, "Everything is pure to those whose hearts are pure. But nothing is pure to those who are corrupt and unbelieving, because their minds and consciences are corrupted." Romans 12:2 states,

> Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you
> into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know
> God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

These passages reflected assumptions that I made during discussions with the participants, which could have caused me to veer away from hard questions that might

have dug up background knowledge for the purpose of the study. In that these two passages represent a template for my life and a biblical mandate for every Christian, I could not allow the passion of fellow believers being devoted to Scripture create any bias or assumptions.

In striving to maintain a high level of professionalism, I did not get into much personal testimony that might influence the interviews. In addition, I ensured that my notes and codes were based on what participants actually said, and I was attentive to ethical issues that might arise from asserting anything more than what was said or leading the interviewees to answer questions in a certain way.

Methodology

The participants were former inmates who had been released from prison. They had been convicted of a range of offenses, including armed robbery, attempted murder, and domestic violence. Data were gathered from local churches and faith-based organizations in the state of Ohio. Pastors from different churches were contacted via phone or email (see Appendix A) and asked if they would allow me to seek participants for the study within their congregations. Those pastors who accepted the invitation were asked to send a general email to their congregation (see Appendix A) or place an insert in their church program for a number of weeks seeking potential participants who were former inmates who had converted to Christianity while in prison. Those who emailed were contacted for further steps regarding the interview process. The goal was to interview around eight applicants who were former inmates and were involved in church services. Data saturation would be reached when there was enough information to

replicate the study, when it was not possible to obtain additional new information, and when further coding was no longer feasible (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Inclusion criteria for a study include the key features of the target population that the investigator will use to answer the research question. In contrast, exclusion criteria include additional characteristics of potential study participants that could affect the success of the study and increase the chances of an unfavorable outcome (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). For this study, the inclusion criteria encompassed converts to Christianity who were male ex-offenders but were currently involved in the ministry of a Bible-based Christian church. This excluded both former inmates who converted outside of prison and those who did not uphold a devoted Christian lifestyle following release from prison. A devoted lifestyle includes referring to the Bible as the ultimate guide for personal and spiritual growth, as well as viewing faith as a valued and necessary part of one's relationship with God (Polonyi, Henriksen, & Serres, 2011). Polonyi et al. (2011) noted that personal study, reflection, and church attendance are also components of Christian growth.

Although, as Bernard (2012) stated, the number of interviews needed for a qualitative study to reach data saturation is not possible to quantify (and researchers may take what they can get), interview questions should be structured to facilitate asking multiple participants the same questions (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Consent forms were sent to individuals who accepted the invitation to participate in the study, who then responded through email with the statement "I consent." Participants also provided verbal consent before the interviews started.

Instrumentation

Removing bias is a primary focus when it comes to instrumentation. Guarding against bias protects the validity of the research from any threats and thus impacts reliability for future studies. Interviewing was the method of data collection. This process takes training and practice to ensure that objective open-ended questions are not migrated to closed-ended questions during the interview process (Chenial, 2011). As the researcher, I was an instrument in the interview process; as such, it was important to ensure that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved my proposal based on my strength as an instrument.

In this phenomenological study, the goal was to find out from a personal standpoint whether factors of SDT were strong influences in individuals' decisions to commit crimes. More specifically, I sought to determine whether SDT was still a factor in having the temptation to recommit after being released. Based on the research question ("How does conversion to Christianity while in prison contribute to an offense-free lifestyle?"), the following were the interview questions:

- How would you describe how your life was before you were incarcerated?

- What was your view on Christianity before you became a Christian?

- What led you to convert to Christianity?

- What are the biggest factors that have kept your devotion to Christianity after converting in prison?

- What advice can you give others who are heading down the path you once did?

- How is your current Christian worldview different to what it was before? How has this change impacted your lifestyle, in terms of offending or not?

- How has the support of other Christians in prison helped you remain offense-free? What about outside prison?

- What kept you from stopping being a Christian when you were released from prison?

- What are the biggest hurdles you have experienced in living an offense-free lifestyle?

- How does being a Christian help you maintain an offense-free lifestyle?

Data Collection Procedure

The primary type of data was interview data. Having a sample of ex-offenders who were devoted to their faith by way of a church was helpful with the purposive element of having "predetermined criteria relevant to a particular research objective" (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006, p. 61).

The interviews were expected to last about 60 minutes in a private room, inside of a library, with personal permission to record and take notes, as shown by the consent form. I collected the data myself as the interviewer, interviewing each participant once. If I had recruited too few participants, I intended to send invitations to more potential interviewees. These invitations, similar to the initial process, would have been sent via email, with a consent form sent to those who accepted the invitation. I set up the interviews with the questions listed in this chapter, followed by debriefing.

Data Analysis Plan

To ensure the quality and trustworthiness of the data (Bengtsson, 2016), the raw data gathered from interviews was transcribed and coded. The data used was from the interviews conducted from ex-offenders who converted to Christianity while incarcerated. This data was analyzed and coded, with the intent to direct the material gathered back to the research question; particularly, how Christian conversion in prison has influenced an offense-free lifestyle. Results from all the interviews were analyzed to find this common theme. The data analysis plan included a thematic analysis of interviews using coding, and reflexive journal data.

The first step was reading the data collected from the interview transcripts and recordings. Recollections from the interviews was recorded, including observations from the transcript. These observations was recorded in a notebook. These notes and observations was a point of reference throughout the interview process to develop themes. The second step required getting familiar with the notes and observations, growing a firmer understanding of specific ways the participant talks about, thinks, and comprehends an issue. If applicable, further notes or comments were added with subsequent readings. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2012) described three processes in which exploratory commenting can be conducted. These include descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual. Descriptive focuses on describing the content of what the participant has said and the subject talk within the transcript; linguistic focuses on exploring the specific use of language by the participant; conceptual focuses on engaging at a more interrogative and conceptual level. While portions of these three were used in the data analysis plan, the primary focus was on descriptive comments for coding and themes.

Step three included developing emerging themes from the transcription and notes. This created a more streamlined way of bringing together materials from the interview, forming them into a more concise version for better understanding. Step four involved finding connections within these emerging themes, seeing how the themes fit together with the original transcript. After this is done for one participant, step five required moving on to the next participant to repeat the process. The sixth step involved finding patterns throughout each interview.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is essential for a research study, because it cannot be perceived as trustworthy by those in other fields, as it is a yardstick with which to assess and ensure quality (Loh, 2013). The elements of trustworthiness include credibility – the truth of the findings, transferability – whether the findings have applicability in other contexts, dependability – whether the findings are consistent and can be repeated, and confirmability – a degree of neutrality to where the findings are shaped by the findings of a study and not researcher bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility seeks to ensure that a study measures or tests what is actually intended (Shenton, 2004). Much qualitative research involved purposive sampling – the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2015). The measure of participants fulfilled the intent to interview people who were incarcerated in prison and maintains a Christian lifestyle while being converted during their time served. The triangulation included individual interviews, as well as a wide range of people to interview. A consent form included the willingness for the interviewee to participate in the interview, as well as notifications that he can refuse to participate, along with the

interview not being paid nor his name directly being used in the study. This assisted with ensuring honesty in the answers of the interview questions. Another method included rephrasing questions to draw a level of consistency in the answers.

Transferability relates to the degree to which the study has made it possible for the reader to apply the findings in the situations investigated to similar situations (Ponelis, 2015). This is why it is important to report all evidence for the reader to confirm that the findings flow from the data and experiences rather than from the bias and subjectivity of the researcher (Ponelis, 2015). Transferability is achieved when findings are useful to persons in other settings (Connelly, 2016). Since providing rich description is an important component of transferability (Tracy, 2010), making sure that the interviews were detailed was a major part of the study. Another factor of transferability is to evaluate the extent to which the findings apply to new situations, and for the readers and users to transfer the results (Polit & Beck, 2010). Thick descriptions are also important for transferability, as this refers to making explicit the patterns of cultural and social relationships and puts them into context. (Holloway, 1997). For this study, the interviews were from Christians who converted in prison, and this can be used in future studies as secondary information for recidivism reduction. The importance of thick description was relevant in this study regarding how the type of relationships change after conversion to Christianity, and how this assists with living an offense-free lifestyle. This was done through gathering information from the interviews with the former inmates.

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results of an inquiry could be confirmed or corroborated by other researchers (Anney, 2015). Confirmability requires documentation of all activities in a research study, and it should not create an ethical

dilemma regarding confidentiality and anonymity (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001). It requires the researcher to demonstrate how conclusions and interpretations have been reached, and usually established when credibility, transferability, and dependability are achieved (Ryan, Coughlan, Cronin, 2007). Another part of confirmability includes reflexivity, which includes researchers acknowledging the changes brought about in themselves as a result of the research process and how these changes have affected the research process (Palaganas, Sanchez, Molintas, & Caricativo, 2017). Effective strategies for confirmability include preventing research bias, as well as taking and transcribing notes during the interviews, and keeping reflexive journals. Particularly, a reflexive journal, which is a dairy where a researcher regularly reflects on the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Ethical Concerns

All studies that involve human subjects must have the approval of the IRB. Prior to the data collection, I obtained approval from the Walden University IRB, #01-03-19-0618663. Making sure the interviewers remain confidential and agree to the consent was a top priority throughout the study. To maintain the validity and reliability of the study, following the methods as outlined in the chapter created the direction of effective and unbiased data collection and analysis. However, this did not negatively affect the findings, due to the people interviewed voluntarily agreeing to participate based on the selection process. If a participant refused participation or withdrew early, another person was selected to replace the former participant. A debrief letter was sent to all participants to show appreciation for their time considering the opportunity to be interviewed. This can be seen in Appendix B. The data, which will maintain the confidentiality of the

interviewers, could be used for further studies, but the identity of the participants will remain concealed.

Confidentiality was also upheld, as a location for interviews was selected that will seclude anyone from hearing the content of the interview, particularly the answers given from the interviewee. These factors hopefully decreased any reluctancy to share information, as well as gained confidence in the interviewee to honestly and accurately share information that is relevant to the study. The transcription of the data is reported anonymously to maintain confidentiality, and filed securely in a password protected document to prevent others from viewing what has been documented. The recording device will also be filed with the documents for the sake of confidentiality and security.

If the participant is experiencing distress, the interview was stopped to assess the mental status. Questions were asked to the participant including what thoughts they are having and how they are feeling. If the participant was able to continue, the interview was resumed. If not, the participant was asked if he needs to take a little time to reduce the distress. If the participant did not wish to continue, the interview was terminated.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was introducing the research methodology used in the study, as well as the data collection plan and analysis. The research design and rationale included interpretative phenomenology, which highlights how different people perceive the world. In relation to this study, the research design involved interviewing Christians who converted in prison, and discuss how life is as a Christian outside prison. Moreover, recorded how this devotion to Christ has prevented the desire to recidivate and actively living an offense-free style. The methodology was explained, particularly how the data

will be collected for local pastors and faith-based organizations. This selection required

removing bias, so the instrumentation was explained. Since trustworthiness is essential in

research study, the areas of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability

were addressed. Along with this, possible ethical concerns were also addressed and

strategies to reduce these concerns. For the next chapter, the pilot study, setting,

demographics, data collection and analysis, effects of trustworthiness, and results will be

addressed.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Lack of education and lack of employment are risk factors for recidivism (Hall, 2015). For individuals who have been released from prison, commitment to religion helps to promote and enhance outcomes including a state of well-being, hope, meaning, purpose, educational attainment, and charitable living (Johnson & Schroeder, 2014).

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of Christianity on ex-prisoners. Using IPA, this study explored the impact of Christian influence in prison, and how it led to a maintained lifestyle of Christianity outside of prison. This chapter contains the results of the phenomenological study conducted to answer the following research question: How does conversion to Christianity while in prison contribute to an offense-free lifestyle?

A qualitative phenomenological research design was used to collect data through a series of semistructured open-ended questions for the participants. The questions were aimed at allowing participants to share their stories of their view of Christianity before prison, their conversion experience inside prison, and what was causing them to continue a life as a Christian post release. This chapter covers the analysis of the phenomenological study, and how this relates back to the research question. In addition, this chapter includes sample demographics, as well as the process used to analyze the transcripts. Using thematic coding, comparison was done on each level to sharpen the emerging themes from the collection of data. Vignettes are also used in this chapter to highlight key themes from the data collected. Additionally, discussion of the issue of trustworthiness is presented in this chapter.

Setting

Each participant involved in this study was in the state of Ohio. Data were obtained by sending out a consent form to participants who fit the criteria for this study, through ministerial references via a pastor invitation recruitment flyer. Data collection took place as outlined in Chapter 3. The set of questions was the same for all participants, although there were nuances in the follow-up questions and comments from each interview. The interviews were conducted by way of live video. Audio recordings of the interviews were maintained for the sake of records. Each partcipant consented verbally to conducting the interview via video. Participants reported that they were in areas where they felt that their confidentially was not compromised. I conducted each interview at the same location, which was my private office, with no one else able to hear any part of the conversation.

Demographics

There were five ($N = 5$) participants in this study. Each participant met the criteria of being an individual who had converted to Christianity inside prison. Each participant was still very active in a Christian lifestyle and had been away from prison for more than 3 years. The number of years since conversion varied among the participants, but all fit the criteria required to be eligible for the research study. All of the participants were male, and they ranged in age between 30 and 60 years. Both Black and White males participated in the study. Educationally, the level started at high school, with some using their conversion to Christianity to proceed with college-level education. One of the participants had obtained a master's seminary degree due to his zeal to learn more about the Christian faith on a scholastic level.

Data Collection

The IRB approved my study on August 20, 2019, and the data collection process began on August 20. Due to the difficulty of securing participants who fit the criteria, the first interview was conducted on October 28, 2019 after recruitment flyers had been sent via email to several pastors and church leaders. A message was sent via social media to pastors who wanted to assist with the dissertation study. Several pastors responded, but no participants were recruited from the initial wave of flyers sent. A pastor referral was given to a faith-based organization, and three interviews were established from this contact. The other interviewee was identified as a result of another social media post hiding the nature of the study, to which a pastor responded with a referral. Each participant consented to an interview with me after I had confidentially provided more detail on the criteria for participation. After each participant responded with consent to participate, interviews were scheduled, initially in person.

The first interview was scheduled to occur in person, but a conflict in scheduling resulted in changing the interview to a virtual face-to-face format. This format remained for the following interviews, as all participants agreed that it was best for their schedules and convenience. I sent a personal thank-you email to the participants that included agency contacts for therapeutic intervention in the case of distress. The fifth and final interview was administered on January 14, 2020. There were no new emerging themes from the interviews, outside of each participant's personal road to Christ inside prison. My dissertation chair suggested that I conduct another interview to solidify saturation, but difficulty in finding participants for the study resulted in capping the number of interviews at five.

Each participant was interviewed based on a template of questions approved by the committee. The interviews were originally scheduled for 60 minutes; actual duration ranged between 16 and 50 minutes. I also offered to send transcripts to each participant upon request. The interviews were recorded via audio and uploaded to my private, password-protected computer. These interviews were transcribed via Temi software, after which I reviewed the files via Microsoft Word to edit any errors made by the software.

Variations in Data Collection

The original plan was to interview eight participants for the study. However, because it took 5 months to obtain five interviews, I capped the participant number at five. The length of each interview was intended to be 60 minutes. The actual time varied across interviews due to differences in participants' level of sharing for each question. All participants were very open in sharing their personal stories, but some were more detailed in sharing their experiences.

Although the original plan was for each interview to be conducted in a public library in a private room reserved for the participant and myself, the format for all interviews changed to virtual, via video, after scheduling conflicts for the first interview proved time consuming. It became clear that scheduling face-to-face interviews would have taken too much time, given that planning for the interviews had already been difficult. The virtual format also allowed the participants to feel more comfortable, as they knew that the interview would be confidential and they were able to choose a private location to take part in the interview.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using IPA, which allows researchers to examine detailed personal experiences involving topics that are complex, ambiguous, and emotionally laden. IPA requires patience and openness to see the world through someone's else's eyes while retaining the voice of the participant's personal experience (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith & Osburn, 2015). The data analysis produced five themes, with three to five subthemes for each one. This was done through analyzing and interpreting the data from the interviews and using thematic coding to create the themes and subthemes. Listening to and coding the interviews were time-consuming tasks, but they gave me a better connection with the interviews to develop stronger themes.

Each interview transcription was initially analyzed through software but retyped using Microsoft Word. As I carefully and repeatedly reviewed the individual interviews, themes began to emerge. The types of questions posed to the participants created a way to develop themes, especially in that there was a story that was being built from each person's experience from before prison, to during prison, to after prison. I had the transcription in front of me as I was listening to the interviews, which also helped with creating themes and subthemes.

The next step was finding connections within the emerging themes and seeing how they fit together with the original transcript. This was also done by repeatedly listening to the interviews and reviewing and analyzing the transcripts. This fit into the fifth step of the process, because it was done for every participant, in addition to an overview of all transcripts together. This step was further developed by having every transcription up at once and continuing to comb through each while themes emerged. As

a result, the sixth step was developed, which involved finding patterns throughout each interview. The themes and subthemes are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Themes and Subthemes

Life before conversion to Christianity	View of Christianity before conversion	Conversion to Christianity	Maintaining Christianity outside prison	Christianity causing a shift in thinking
Being influenced by the wrong crowd by drugs	Negative view of Christians	Petrified after crises	Building good relationships with other Christians	Now setting affections above
No capacity of fulfillment	Personal carnal desires	Seeing a murder	Plugging into a church	Considering walking with God a privilege
Chaotic environment which caused abandonment	Bad example from other Christians	Getting shot "point blank"	Creating a support group	Sharing the Gospel with others
		Reflecting after chaotic moment in jail		

When the data analysis process was completed, the themes of the interviews lined up with each person's experience with Christianity before, during, and after prison. For the five themes, 13 total subthemes were formed, based on the personal experiences of the participants from the common themes. For example, life before Christianity for the participants was influenced by negative community and drug use. Participant 1 mentioned "just a lot of, you know, chasing a lot of things that had no capability to give me fulfillment involved with, you know, criminal activity and drugs and things of that nature." Participant 2 stated,

I hung around with a lot of drug dealers, cause that's what I was raised to do. So,

the influence around me was, you know, drug dealers and people robbing,

stealing, you know, and that what I did at a very young age.

Discrepant cases are described as data that do not fit neatly into the theme of

analysis or embrace all instances of an interaction (Coleman, Guo, & Dabbs, 2007).

When this happens, the trustworthiness of the study becomes compromised. In this study,

there were no discrepant cases found.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility ensures that a study measures or tests what it is intended to measure

(Shenton, 2004). I conducted each of the interviews was conducted with participants who

affirmed that they had served time in prison for committing a crime. All participants also

stated that they converted to Christianity while in prison and were actively living a

devoted Christian lifestyle. I was instrumental in all aspects of the investigation, and all

participants consented to the criteria that were sent to them in the form. Throughout each

interview, I reiterated what the criteria were for each participant, and I emphasized that

the criteria needed to be met in order to proceed with the conversation. Triangulation

included individually interviewing a range of people with different ethnicities and at

different points of their walk with Christ post incarceration, as well as member checking.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree which the results of qualitative research can be

transferred to other contexts with other respondents, and it is achieved through thick

description and purposeful sampling (Anney, 2015). It is important to report all evidence

for the reader to confirm that the findings reflect the participants' experiences rather than the biases and subjectivity of the researcher (Ponelis, 2015). Thick description involves the researcher making clear the research processes, and purposeful sampling refers to selecting individuals or groups based on specific purposes associated with answering a research study's questions (Anney, 2015).

In this study, the research process was made clear through the direct quotes used from the interviews of the participants. The research dealt with the influence that conversion to Christianity in prison has on recidivism rates post incarceration. Thick descriptions are important for transferability, as they make explicit patterns of cultural and social relationships and put them into context (Holloway, 1997). The thick descriptions were done through gathering information from the interviews with the former inmates. The quotations used from the research show how each person's relationship with Christ changed drastically. The data in this study could be useful for further studies of the impact of Christian conversion in prison and the change in lifestyle that individuals experience if they remain devoted to a Christian lifestyle after being released from prison. This study also provides data on the change of worldview from a criminal mindset to a Christian mindset.

Dependability

Dependability involves participants evaluating the findings, interpretations, and recommendations of a study to make sure that they are all supported by the data received from the informants of the study (Anney, 2015). Dependability was established in this study through an audit trail; all transcriptions, emails, and recordings have been retained for any potential audit. The data have also been coded and recoded, with emerging

themes and subthemes documented. I was also assisted throughout my dissertation journey by my research committee, which consisted of a committee chair and second committee member as a second reference to every chapter submitted, as well as the oral presentation. Each committee member provided pivotal feedback to assist me through fine-tuning the research process, collecting data, and writing each portion of the dissertation.

Confirmability

Documenting all activities in a research study, avoiding the creation of ethical dilemmas regarding confidentiality and anonymity, and demonstrating how conclusions and interpretations have been reached are all factors of confirmability (Anney, 2015; Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001). None of the names of participants are shared in the results to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, and the results are based solely on the interviews of the participants, without any of my personal biases.

Reflexivity is also a factor of confirmability and was used in this research. Reflexivity, which involves reflecting one's thinking back to oneself, enables a holistic approach to psychological research; in addition, the aim of IPA is to understand individuals' experiences by gaining an insider perspective (Shaw, 2010). I was able to use reflexivity to recognize and rid myself of biases regarding prison life, as well as use participants' phenomenological experience to reflect on my own personal journey to Christ. Although I was aware of my personal biases as a Christ-follower, I approached this study with an objective lens, eagerly waiting to hear the experiences—both good and bad—of each participant. Following the interviews, I performed member checking, emailing each interviewee with a thorough and detailed synopsis of the interview,

including quotes for some participants, along with an open invitation for each participant to provide feedback. Three of the five responded affirming my synopsis, and one of the participants responded with affirmation as well as additional information to further explain his thoughts on a particular topic discussed.

Results

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the influence of Christianity on ex-prisoners' offending lifestyles, exploring how Christianity is a protective factor against offending. Data were collected from five male ex-offenders who had converted to Christianity while in prison. All interviews were conducted via video. Ten questions were asked to each participant, with follow-up questions to bring more clarity. One research question was addressed in this study: How does conversion to Christianity while in prison contribute to an offense-free lifestyle? The five themes and 13 subthemes that emerged to answer this research question are explained in the remaining sections of this chapter.

Theme 1: Life Before Conversion to Christianity

During each conversation with the participants on their life experience, the theme of a life before Christianity emerged. The following subthemes also emerged: being influenced by the wrong crowd, no capacity of fulfillment, and chaotic environments causing abandonment. The participants described having held a generally negative view of Christianity before their conversion, whether from a perception that the Christian lifestyle is weak, or from their experience of looking at other Christians in a negative light. Such views had led to a lifestyle focused on fulfilling fleshly, selfish desires.

Subtheme 1.1: Being influenced by the wrong crowd. The participants expressed how being influenced by the wrong crowd was a major factor in living a

lifestyle that led to imprisonment. Moreover, many of the participants stated that drug influence was the reason why they went down the wrong path in life. P1 stated, "I feel like being exposed to the negative side I think kind of like opened me up and triggered some interest and things of that nature. So, you know, I feel like you've kind of made it easier for me to go down that path… I feel like being exposed to the negative side I think kind of like opened me up and triggered some interest and things of that nature." P2 stated, "I came from a family of nothing but hustlers… Pimps. I mean, you name it. I mean, it was there. So, I was exposed to a lot of dope content at a very young age... I hung around with a lot of drug dealers cause that's what I was raised to do. So, the influence around me was, you know, drug dealers and people robbing, stealing, you know, and that's what I did, uh, at a very young age." P3 stated, "I ended up getting with the wrong crowd and making the wrong decisions in life. Ended up on drugs and things of that nature in and out of jail thinking that was the life to live because the surrounding I was with, so I figured that was okay."

P4 also discussed how being around the wrong crowd by way of drugs had a negative influence on his life path, stating, "I was involved in the drug trade, illegal drug trade trafficking… there were times when I was probably within minutes or hours of, of being killed… because of the, the positions I put myself in." P5 stated about his influence, I never was around drugs till I was 18 years old. So her and I, when we started dating day one was the first time I was around drugs. So… within 14 days, I tried every drug that I would try. So, when I went in I, I kinda went into the pain and uh, we had cocaine, crack, acid, a bunch of pills. But um, so I became more and more violent, more and more suicidal at the time. And I had no control in my life it seemed like."

Subtheme 1.2: No capacity of fulfillment. Whether it was leading up to making bad decisions, or reflecting after making bad decision, each participant expressed how these choices still did not lead to ultimately being satisfied psychologically. P1 stated, "I would say it was, um, it was unfulfilled honestly, and I felt empty, but I, I didn't really know exactly what I needed to, you know, to kind of give me that fulfillment that I needed." P2 stated, "I held a lot of resentment toward my mom and dad, the way they were raised me… I know the right way, but I still held this resentment in my heart. P3 stated, "Never was comfortable in that lifestyle, but you know, just taking risks, thinking that was the only way to live." P4 describes his unfulfillment, stating, "So although at the time I thought I was, um, I had it together, it was really complete chaos and life was hanging by a thread at times." P5 stated, "I would tell people that I didn't have any feelings, but I didn't realize at that time that anger was a secondary emotion in that there's a whole lot of stuff going on inside that I was kind of suppressing and hiding behind walls."

Subtheme 1.3: Chaotic environments causing abandonment. The participants interviewed felt a sense of abandonment as a result of chaotic environments. Whether it was a result of their parents, or peers, the instability of their surroundings led to a large amount of chaos in their own personal lives. P1 stated, "it was probably like a… free for all to um, just [to] sum it up." P2 stated, "I mean, I, I grew up in jails and institutions. Really." P3 commented regarding his chaotic environment, but still having the desire to fit in, "I would just want to try to fit in, you know? Basically, most of the time we just want to fit in with, we're looking for, we're actually looking for love and especially us as me, and we're looking for a figure to help us and guide us not knowing that we're here

now destruction and the person, the people were in there hanging out with us, we're

hanging out with really don't know which way they going. So we're all just going down

the same road. It's just, it's crazy."

P4 reflected on the chaos that was going on in his life before becoming a

Christian, "I'm surprised I didn't end up dead or, or worse. And, and there were times

when I was probably within minutes or hours of, of being killed." P5 had an experience

of the chaos in his life stemming from family doing a poor job being there for him, as he

stated, "My mother left when I was three. I didn't know her till I was 16 years old and in

and out of foster home, things like that. So, I just didn't have a sense of belonging. And

everyone that said that they loved me showed with displays the exact opposite of what we

would say is loving actions."

Theme 2: View of Christianity Before Conversion

The second theme that emerged from the discussions was the view of Christianity

from each participant prior to their conversion while in prison. Although some of the

participants had experience of church being committing a crime and going to prison, none

of them made a personal decision to surrender to Christ and adopt a Christian worldview

and lifestyle.

Subtheme 2.1: Negative view of Christians. The participants had a negative

view of Christians, which heavily influenced their outlook on Christianity in general. P1

was not opposed to Christianity, but his Christian influence was not strong enough for

him to commit to it. He stated, "I just never had subjected myself as submitted to it. So,

you know, I thought it was good. I just didn't think it was for me during the times that I

was, you know, doing what I was doing." P2 had a severely negative view on Christians

and Christianity, stating, "I thought… Christians were a bunch of weak people and they didn't know what they [were] talking about. I mean, I didn't believe, I didn't believe in Jesus Christ. I thought religion was a form of control, you know, controlling people, you know, and all those different types of things." P3 respected the "church mothers" based on his experience prior to becoming a Christian. However, his view what he saw from the males was alarming, stating, "I never saw too many, uh, men that was so-called Christians, but they would say they was Christian, but they were still living the same lifestyle that we was living."

P4 was exposed to Christianity as a child, but it did not influence him positively to believe in the faith. In fact, he became an agnostic, stating, "I kinda went off on my own… started living my life on my own… I thought it was a scam. I thought it was a crutch. I thought it was something that was just, uh, in place to, to kind of… control people, control the masses, control the weak, and, uh, everything I seem to listen to at the time, music, uh, arts, stuff like that was, um, very blasphemous in nature. I was, uh, I was an agnostic. I mean [a] borderline atheist, but at the same time I was very angry at a, God I thought didn't exist." P5 stated, "so my grandmother was a Pentecostal preacher and everyone in my family claimed to be Christian. So, there was a lot of, uh, we'll say tongue talking and things like that going on around. I would say that there was a part of me that was maybe believed it in another part that didn't believe it. Another part of it was very skeptical of it."

Subtheme 2.2: Personal carnal desires. Each participant, whether exposed to the Christian faith before their conversion or not, each stated that their personal carnal desires led them to a state of committing poor behavior, which led them to prison. P1

stated that he was "chasing a lot of things that had no capability to give me fulfillment involved with, you know, criminal activity and drugs and things of that nature." P2 stated, "I had got convicted on a robbery, uh, armed robbery case at a young age." P3 stated that he "ended up on drugs real bad… I mean real bad. I, I had a habit like from 500 to a thousand dollars a day, snort cocaine, smoking crack, uh, smoking heroin." P4 stated, "I went to prison for drug charges… and was pushing dope… I was involved in the drug trade, illegal drug trade trafficking." P5 stated, "I was a very selfish man. I was a very violent man. I was a man that wanted to be loved, but I didn't know how to love. I wanted to be respected, but it didn't respect people. It was like all the things that I wanted. I didn't know how to even give it myself."

Subtheme 2.3: Bad example from other Christians. Another subtheme that emerged from the participant's' view of Christianity before they were incarcerated was the bad example of other Christians they came in contact with or had a relationship with. P1 was affected by his church experience never getting him to have a genuine relationship with God, stating, "I grew up, you know, in church and so I didn't necessarily have a relationship with God. I had a relationship with church." P2 stated that although he knew the right way, he held a lot of resentment in his heart towards his parents, stating, "I held a lot of resentment toward my mom and dad, the way they were raised me… I know the right way, but I still held this resentment in my heart. I felt like I didn't have to go through all of what I went through to get to Christ." P3 reflected on how the Christian men created a sour impression towards Christianity, stating, "I didn't have that much respect for them because growing up on the streets, we always had this mentality,

we're not going in the house of God if we're not… And to see men come out and do the same thing we're doing. It was kind of, no, I don't want that."

P4 reflected on how his mother was a devout Christian, but when she was diagnosed with bipolar schizophrenia, support from the church was not there for her. He stated, "she succumbed to a nervous breakdown and was diagnosed with bipolar schizophrenia. And when healing didn't come and when support from the church didn't pull through when she needed it most, um, that's when I really started believing it was all a scam." P5 reflected on his experience of Christians talking about others and sinful things, which caused him to reject it, stating, "There was nothing like someone tongue-talking and saying they're filled with the Holy Ghost and the next instance they're talking behind some sisters so-and-so's back and, you know, doing violent things or doing drugs and stuff like that. So… I thought if Christianity was true, the people that I was witnessing and experiencing didn't have the true Holy Spirit that they profess to have or they did."

Theme 3: Conversion to Christianity

To go along with the focal point of this study, each participant had a unique and indelible experience of how they converted to Christianity while in prison.

Subtheme 3.1: Petrified after critical moments. The subtheme that emerged most clearly from this is that each participant converted during a critical moment. This was done though a fellow inmate proselytizing, protection from the fight in jail from a fellow inmate, and reflection in prison from being shot point blank range. Also, being among fellow inmates and reflecting on how much time he will spend in prison, as well as one of the participants gaining inspiration due to a reconnection with his mother. P1

stated, "I was in a holding cell, getting ready to get sentenced. And there was a young guy in there, he was on trial for murder and he had… gone to someone's house to purchase some marijuana, but his intention wasn't to actually purchase marijuana was actually a try to rob the guy and the guy wasn't… trying to let that happen. And so they ended up getting into a tussle and he ended up shooting and killing the guy and he's telling me about his situation and then he stops, you know, telling me about his situation and said, man, enough about my situation. What do you know about Jesus? And so, just in that moment… I submitted my life to Christ and, you know, because of all things that he was talking about, you had enough on his plate and you know, for him to, to really abort what, you know, his near future was looking like to start witnessing to me about Christ. You know, it was kind of amazing to me. So, you know, literally I got led to Christ by a man on trial for murder."

P2 stated, "I met an older gentleman after a fight… they [were] talking about making me out of a girl. So I wasn't going. I was taking my food. So I've gotten a fight and one of them would have a tray and then one of these older gentlemen, we called them OGs back then, said… stop now he doesn't smash you with this tray. You know, now he got my protection, leave him alone. So, I proved myself, and he was the biggest influence in my life during that [time] led me to Christ." Light-skinned skinny males are fresh meat for people in jail, unfortunately. Meaning, other inmates look at them in a sexual or submissive way. He had to fend off prey, essentially.

P3 reflected on a critical moment that led him to reconsider some things and was pivotal to his conversion in prison after meditating on his constant poor decisions. He stated, "I got shot, point blank range in the heart. And… that changed my whole life.

There's no way in the world if you could see my medical report, it would have stunned you. When I was shocked, point blank range in the heart, I had an awakening at that time. But as I look at my record and I knew it was God, uh, the bullet, our hearts are placed on the inside of a sack. And so what happened, the bullet went inside that sack. It punctured my heart and went down and sitting in the back of my back and I knew I ain't supposed to be here. Uh, but once I came out of that, I said, I have to make some changes."

P4 depicted a moment of chaos while he was jail, which allowed him to have a moment of clarity and realize that this was not the life he wanted anymore. He stated, "it was a bunch of chaos. They were cussing up a storm, you know, playing dominoes, watching Jerry Springer and all I could think of, wow, I'm potentially looking at 20 to life of this. And I didn't know what to expect. I thought it was gonna be a very violent place. And I remember throwing up a very desperate prayer to whoever was there. It wasn't essentially or necessarily to the Christian God, but it was to whoever would listen." He further experienced clarity when he realized that "the only people coming to the jail and really for the 15 year sentence, I served in prison, those who were coming to prison to love on us, to encourage us, to give us hope were only Christians. No one else was coming. So, although I rejected Christ and didn't want him to be God… what led me over were the best examples of the Christian faith in the volunteers who would come into the prison. So essentially the volunteers, the Christian volunteers of ministers who came to us at a time when we least deserved it, became the living word, the incarnate word. And Jesus jumped off the pages of the Bible and became more, more meaningful, more real to me. And that's when I started taking notice of Christianity."

P5 recalls a rocky relationship he had with his mother, but how he was inspired from her reading the Bible when she converted to Christianity. This inspired him to read while in prison, which became life-changing. However, his mother went back out of his life, and he went to the Bible for answers. Not only did he get answers, but he began to notice a change in worldview. He stated, "So the initial agreement was that we would read the same chapters and then we would talk about it. So, what it did is it gave my mother and I something to talk about. After two months of it, mom kind of left again out of my life and I continued to read the Bible. You know, it was one of the things where, painstakingly, I read seven or five chapters one day a week and three chapters of the rest of the days a week… after about four months of reading, I started to look at just life in the world a little bit differently. And I just noticed myself thinking like, wow, that's wrong over there. That's wrong. This guy shouldn't do that to that guy. Well I shouldn't think this about that guy. And I'm thinking like, where am I getting this from? And I would say that happened somewhere between month two to four and then somewhere between four and six. The conviction of the Holy Spirit really sunk down on me. And it's like I knew that God was real, that everything that I studied in philosophy up until that time, logic itself necessitates God's existence.

Theme 4: Maintaining Christianity Outside Prison

For each participant, their conversion did not end while in prison, neither did their loyalty to God cease. Each discussed how they have maintained Christianity outside of prison, and the subthemes revolve around factors that have helped maintain their devotion to Christ outside prison.

Subtheme 4.1: Building good relationships with other Christians. While their experience with Christians were mostly negative prior to conversion, a new worldview generated an affinity to fellowshipping with fellow Christ-followers, and how this accountability has assisted them. P1 stated, "we have to realize that people who have not gone down the same road that we've gone down can play just as important of a part as people who has, because the same, it's the same power, right? The same power that brought me out is the same power that kept them from, and so, you know, it's really good to understand that and they have some good advice to offer me for how they were able not to get involved in the craziness."

P2 stated, "friends and family who are Christians, that's really been an impact in my life… You gotta have a support system." P3 stated, "I have plenty of friends that when I got out, they told me what I should do and who I should connect with, the things I should do. And by the grace of God, now I have the opportunity." P4 stated, "it's vital so that we don't slip back into the secret life. Right? It's important to be in accountable relationships. It's important to be connected with people on a regular basis." P5 stated, "God put a lot of people in my life. He put a lot of Christian men in my life, like every time that I needed something, I would say He showed up in a big way."

Subtheme 4.2: Plugging into a church. Plugging into a church was a vital factor for each of the participants. This has helped each of them stay grounded in their faith. P1 stated, "when I was growing up, they put fear and eternity but not value in eternity. And so they'd preached it from a, 'you're going to go to hell' perspective. And so, you know, now what I've learned is, is that to teach it and preach it, to not do away with the fact that there's a hell, but that there's a value in eternity and to help people." P2 stated, "And [my

Apostle] being in my life, I meet with him quite often, you know, cause my dad's gone now, so I've got to have somebody that I'm held accountable to." P3 stated, "my church, they helped me a lot. I mean the leadership there, when I first got there, they knew that I was converted, but you know, I still had a little rust on me cause now I'm in a free environment, I have to be accountable to myself as well. And so, I got these guys in the church that I surround myself with… they helped me along this walk."

P4 stated, "It's vital that we're connected to a, um, at the very least a share group, but more importantly to a church community that is also missional in their focus of reaching out to not just the lost, but the underdeveloped in the faith." P5 was very pleased with not only his church experience after being released from prison, but also his experience with other churches, stating, "it is beyond belief what was given to me coming out of prison and how, how the church always helped out. And, and it's not just like the church that I attended, multiple churches."

Subtheme 4.3: Creating a support group. In addition to church, other Christians in each participant's lives are imperative to have accountability from a day-to-day basis. The participants understand that the journey not to reoffend is not always easy, but their support groups and accountability partners are there to remind them that it is worth it. P1 stated, "I feel like building good relationships with other Christians has definitely played a part in my walk," and P2 believes that his support group encouraging him to do ministry is the reason why he is still on the straight and narrow. He explained, "I became a youth pastor. I believe that if I had never, if God never had gave me the opportunity to become a youth pastor, eventually I would have went back out and re-offended. So, I

understood this based off of what my support was telling me, that I had to get busy for the Lord and get my hand on the plow."

P3 praises the support of his Christian brothers, stating, "they're an example and they always tell me someone is watching. Someone is watching you to make a decision." P4 credits his support group as an extra sign of validation that he would not return to reoffending, but also keeping him accountable. He stated, "had I not had the support of this team that surrounded me, I'd like to think that I wouldn't go back to my way of life. But… I'm confident, I feel confident that I wouldn't have, but I don't know what someone would do, um, in a very desperate situation." P5 stated that he has a close relationship with his wife and her sister, stating, "she's my number one supporter." He shared his thoughts on the power of community, stating, "He didn't design us to be in isolation, but he designed us be in community."

Theme 5: Christianity Causing a Shift in Thinking

Overall, Christianity has created a paradigm shift in the worldviews of each of the participants. Before, their view of Christians and Christianity was widely negative. However, each credit the Holy Spirit not only transforming their mindset on Christianity, but also now giving each the desire to adopt and live by a Christian worldview.

Subtheme 5.1: Now setting affections above. Since converting to Christianity, each have exchanged living a selfish life that fulfilled any carnal desire for a life that is now geared toward what pleases God. P1 stated, "scripture says to set your affections on things above and not on things beneath. And so realizing that I've not only been saved from, but I've been saved for something and you know, that kinda like drives me to… do the right things and not recommit and honor the father." P2 stated, "all I gotta do is keep

my faith exclusively in the finished work of what he's already done for me. And that's the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And that's what Paul told us to do is keep that in memory. So, I'm now focused on that. And as long as I don't lose focus on that, I never have to worry about going out re-offending, going back to prison."

P3 stated, "each and every day I ask God to help me, help me be a husband to my wife, help me be a father. What things I shouldn't say, what things I should say to my daughter. I have to be an example to my daughter today because I know… the reflection of the man she going to choose is going to be a reflection of her father. P4 stated, "depending on God's grace to change me as he exposes me, right? That being exposed in areas that need to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, to the person of Jesus Christ. And knowing that I'm powerless against it since I have a propensity to, to lean that way… without his help. And just relying on God daily, confessing to him daily of areas that he's continually exposes in me. And so as we just deal with sin, it takes care of the crime issue." P5 stated, "God is constantly watching and he is my father. And I don't want to disappoint him."

Subtheme 5.2: Considering walking with God a privilege. Since their conversion to Christianity, each participant does not talk walking with God lightly. Instead, they are honored to now be Christians and consider it a privilege. P1 stated, "in our Christian walk, we make decisions to either do or not do something, not necessarily because we want to or don't want to. Um, but because this what the Bible says, right? And so, I feel like that's an eternal perspective. It's a Holy pursuit. It's like, Lord, I normally wouldn't do this in and of myself, but because I know this is what you would prefer, I'm going to try to do my best to line up with that… I feel like…it is Jesus, man,

that, and my belief in the scriptures, that keeps me from recommitting. P2 shared, "being a Christian helps me maintain, because the power of God, my faith in Jesus Christ, you know, is what maintains me… through the power of the Holy Spirit." P3 stated, "Well, being a Christian today, because I don't take that name lightly, I take that name as a privilege that God has allowed me."

P4 shared, "so after I had tried all there was to try, I find myself at a place where not only was I not deserving, I really had nothing to offer Christ but a broken life. Yet he was still there. He was still there for me. His people were still there for me. And, the power to change my life first on the inside. And then over time the things on the outside started coming into place." P5 emphasized the awe-stricken relationship he has with Christ, stating, "I am filled with the love of God. I'm filled with the conviction of the Holy Spirit. To deny Jesus, to deny his existence, to walk away from him, it would be like walking away from a, my wife… it would be the ultimate betrayal. It would, it, when a man walks away from his wife and he cheats on and things like that. He's betraying her. It would be the ultimate betrayal."

Subtheme 5.3: Sharing the gospel with others. As a result of their personal conversions to Christianity, each participant now has the desire to share the gospel to other people. While the gospel was not worth sharing based on their worldview prior to becoming a Christian, it has not radically changed to a strong desire to spread the gospel. Each participant expressed a change of worldview, and the importance of the gospel being ministered to others. In sharing the gospel and radically shifting their worldview, each participant's view on crime has also changed. P1 shared, "going back to the place where I did my time… and being able to go back there and you know, teach Bible study

and interact with the guys and things of that nature… and just offer that amount of hope to them who might be hopeless or whatever and helping them understand that just the same way that God was able to keep me and sustain me and bless me upon my release, that he's no respecter of persons, man. And he can do the same thing for them as well." He added, "realizing that I've not only been saved from, but I've been saved for something and you know, that kinda like drives me to, you know, to want to like, you know, do the right things and not recommit and, you know, honor the father. And just that eternal perspective, I think is what's kinda been helping me a lot."

P2 stated, "we go the… correctional based facilities for men and women, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. And that's what keeps me anchored in me and my wife and my family… So I'm pastoring my family and doing a lot of pastoral duties in the penal system." Regarding his view on crime, he stated, "my biggest thing is he's not going to give you the outcome. He's going to paint the picture and, and show you all of the prizes, but he ain't going to show you your reward, which is bad in the end." P3 stated, "so now I have the opportunity, I go back and do the same thing and minister to those guys, not only just minister to them, I'm not just going to just preach the gospel, but be an example to them and let them know that same God that did it for me, he'll do it for you because someone came and someone had invested in me. So… I think is my opportunity to invest in them." He also highlights the importance of accountability regarding his outlook in crime, stating, "we don't need men that pat us on the back and tell us it's gotta be okay. I need a man that gonna look me in the face and say, brother, you don't get it right your head out and same road. And a lot of people don't want to accept that, but I think that is the only thing that's going to change us." P4 expressed his

desire to minister to others being a key factor to not desiring to recidivate, stating, "being committed to the service of others on behalf of Jesus Christ is a, it's just a very practical way to not offend. It's hard to steal from people you're giving to, right? It's hard to, it's difficult to do both, right? When you're helping the needy, you're not abusing the needy. And, um, and so it's not something that I do, but it's just something that I've become." He also expressed a similar importance of accountability as P3 in relationship to his current outlook on crime, stating, "being mentored by these men, I started seeing changes in my life where my character was being transformed and I no longer had the desires to do what I used to want to do. I no longer had the, the, uh, the taste really for the sin that I was always so ready to allow myself to take part in. And, and when you begin to sense that transformation and experience it for yourself, it's hard to turn back." P5 stated, "So one of the churches that I was involved in, they sent me a lot of books, was in prison and they kept my classes going in prison... Now I teach Bible study Sunday morning there, you know, right before church starts up." He expressed the importance of repentance to change from a criminal mindset to a Christian mindset, stating, "if you don't change, you're gonna lose it all. But like, it's, it's true if you don't change, if you don't repent."

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of Christianity on ex-prisoners. The data collection used were the interviews of the participants. The experiences described in the themes and subthemes were from five male ex-offenders, who continue to live a devoted lifestyle outside of prison. These experiences were conducted through semi-structured interviews, all done virtually. During the interview

process, 5 themes and 13 subthemes emerged from the experiences of the participants to answer the research question.

Although the widespread view of Christianity to the participants initially was negative, through either their upbringing, influence, or impression from other Christians, their conversion to Christianity while in prison not only gave them an entirely different worldview to treat others differently after being released, but also have a desire to share the gospel to others. In chapter 5, I will provide an interpretation of the findings, the limitations of the study, further recommendations, and the implications for positive social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

IPA was used in this study to explore how conversion to Christianity while in prison contributes to an offense-free lifestyle. Previous studies focused on the positive impact of Christian conversion while in prison and how it allows inmates to experience a sense of purpose in their lives, as well as acquire a sense of meaning (Steger & Frazier, 2005). The intention of this phenomenological study was to explore the impact of Christian conversion in prison and how it influences inmates to not recidivate. I used a phenomenological approach to further understand, analyze, and develop the information gathered by way of lived experiences. These experiences helped in formulating a conclusion that correlates to the research question.

The results of the five semistructured interviews showed that when individuals are fully persuaded to submit to Christ, their worldview can drastically change for the better, and their concern for others living a positive life increases.

In the remaining portion of this chapter, I discuss the findings of the current study in relation to chapter 2, as well as limitations of the study, recommendations for further study, implications for social change, and the conclusion of the study.

The findings of the study, which provided insight into the experiences of former inmates who converted to Christianity while in prison, included the following themes:

1. Life before conversion to Christianity

2. View of Christianity before conversion

3. Conversion to Christianity

4. Maintaining Christianity outside prison

5. Christianity causing a shift in thinking

Interpretation of the Findings

The literature review in Chapter 2 focused on the gap in literature regarding this subject, specifically pertaining to what happens when inmates are released from prison and whether they maintain the passion of being a Christian to the point of reduction in the desire to commit a crime. Although there have been many studies on the lifestyle changes of inmates who convert to Christianity while in prison (Johnson, 2012), there have not been studies that focus on the lifestyles of inmates post conversion. The findings of this study confirm the positive influence of Christianity for ex-offenders when it comes to recidivism reduction.

The organization of the findings corresponds to the themes that emerged from the interviews. These themes included (a) life before conversion to Christianity, (b) view of Christianity before conversion, (c) conversion to Christianity, (d) maintaining Christianity outside prison, and (e) Christianity causing a shift in thinking.

Finding 1: Life Before Conversion to Christianity

The first conclusion is that participants described having a selfish motivation in life before converting to Christianity. The responses from the participants indicated a negative life before Christianity that was filled with selfish ambition and a lower level of concern for the well-being of others. Being influenced by the wrong crowd, having no capacity for fulfillment, and chaotic environments causing abandonment were among the subthemes derived from the participants' remarks about their lives before prison.

From a Christian perspective, sin corrupts the world and individuals' lives. Sinful pride makes the focus only on self-interest and neglects both God and others (Esqueda,

2011). Participants' statements about their lives before conversion reflected this worldview. In particular, participants expressed how being around the wrong crowd triggered negative interests, which resulted in bad decisions. In addition, chaotic crowds caused a sense of abandonment while also creating a desire to fit in. As a result, they were persuaded to follow the wrong crowd. This finding aligns with current literature indicating that a sinful worldview influences individuals' desire to be persuaded by the wrong crowd to make costly decisions (Peels, 2011). This worldview also influenced the participants to use drugs, which led them down a negative path to eventual imprisonment.

Prior to conversion, the participants felt a sense of unfulfillment. Whether they experienced emptiness, resentment, never feeling comfortable in a sinful lifestyle, or self-deception, their lack of fulfillment led to dissatisfaction with their lives, ultimately leading to imprisonment. Once individuals convert to Christianity, they exchange hopelessness for hope (Johnson et al., 2014). This kind of hope involves the belief that there is a way out of the present situation through the sovereignty of God, as well as His supernatural intervention in human affairs (Ekeke, 2016). In this way, Christian conversion creates a sense of meaning and coherence about ultimate truths. In addition, criminogenic needs are exchanged for a newfound perspective on life, and goals such as self-development, self-efficacy, sharing, and restraint are adopted (Mandhoui, Aubin, Amirouche, Perroud, & Philippe, 2013) in the Christian worldview as a replacement for negative desires. Additionally, the doctrinal practices of religion are helpful in coping more effectively when facing stressful life events (Mandhoui et al., 2013). The information gathered from the participants aligned with current literature that describes

how individuals' lives may be filled with brokenness and despair before conversion to Christianity (Sremac, 2014).

Finding 2: View of Christianity Before Conversion

Another finding of this study relates to the offenders' view of Christianity before converting in prison. The participants were not unanimous in their view of Christianity before prison. For instance, some were influenced positively in some form by Christianity, while others felt that Christians were "weak people." Despite their varying perspectives on Christianity before prison, none of the participants had an experience that was positive enough to cause them to be personally influenced by the Christian worldview while growing up. Personal carnal desires became more important than the needs of others, and the decisions made by the ex-offenders were a reflection of these priorities. Actions such as chasing selfish desires, robbery, drug use, and violence were among those that participants described. While engaging in criminal activity, the participants did not experience peace of mind and personal contentment, and they did not focus on the desires of God (Zaitzow & Jones, 2012). Indeed, participants' statements indicated that they were chasing things that "had no capability to give me fulfillment" and that they were "selfish" and "violent." These malignant desires did not lead to personal contentment, and they led the participants to an insatiably sinful lifestyle, which resulted in incarceration. Participants expressed how their personal carnal desires led them into poor behavior, noting that habits such as drug use and violence ensured that they continued down the wrong path. Their selfishness and violent desires led to more negative actions, and their lack of contentment led to higher levels of criminal activity.

A lack of social ties was also a major factor in the desire to offend. This finding lines up with current research. P1 was affected by his church experience, and P3 developed a sour view of Christianity based on him perceiving that the actions of many Christians were similar to those of non-Christians. Therefore, neither P1 nor P3 found a connection with Christianity. Similarity, P2 developed a lot of resentment toward Christianity due to the feeling that his Christian influences did a poor job of showing him a model Christian lifestyle. P5's experience with Christianity also created a negative perception, in that the Christians whom he observed were not living a lifestyle that reflected their faith. Although P4's mother was Christian, the church was not helpful during her illness, which caused a major backlash in his perception of the religion as a whole. The research developed from the research question shows the importance of social ties.

This finding relates to research regarding the Good Lives Model. The Good Lives Model indicates that enhancing personal fulfillment leads naturally to reductions in criminogenic needs, such that the individual may turn his or her focus onto satisfying basic goods such as friendship, enjoyable work, loving relationships, creative pursuits, sexual satisfaction, positive self-regard, and an intellectually challenging environment (Andrews et al., 2011). Three of the 11 primary goods are friendship, community, and spirituality (Ward et al., 2012). Individuals flourish when these needs are met; failure to meet these needs results in stunted lives, psychological problems, and social maladjustment. Negative consequences of such unfulfillment include a poorly integrated self, frustrating and unsatisfying relationships, and self-esteem disturbances (Ward & Maruna, 2007). Involvement in the church community fulfills all three of these primary

goods, as such involvement assists in social reintegration and gives ex-offenders a long-term network of sustainable support. Additionally, spirituality has a direct impact in reducing environmental triggers to use drugs (Binswanger et al., 2012), thereby addressing a significant factor in transitioning into the community.

Finding 3: Conversion to Christianity

Although the participants had unique conversion experiences, conversion resulted from feeling petrified at critical moments. For P1, conversion occurred after a person on trial for murder shared the gospel with him when he was in a cell. In that moment, he realized that his life needed to radically change, and he decided to give his life to Christ. P3 experienced a critical moment after being shot at point blank range, which allowed him to reflect on his life in a sudden way and significantly influenced his decision to convert to Christianity while in prison. This finding aligns with studies of how religion and its doctrinal practices can help people cope more effectively when facing stressful life events, and can also be associated with prevention of future offenses (Mandhoui et al., 2013). P1 making a radical decision to convert to Christianity in a critical moment also aligns with how conversion allows inmates to experience purpose in their lives, as well as have a sense of meaning and coherence about ultimate truths (Steger & Frazier, 2005).

P2 had a conversion experience due to an inmate having a social bond with him as a protector, which increased his openness to hearing the gospel. This friendship in prison was what led to his conversion to Christianity. Based on Brault's (2014) explanation of criminogenic needs, disconnection from prosocial support systems and affiliations with antisocial, criminal peers are among the most predictive factors of criminal behavior.

This also correlates with current studies that indicate how antisocial bonds in prison can lead to greater misconduct and increased offending upon release (Rocque, Bierie, & MacKenzie, 2010). It also correlates with how positive social bonds in prison may represent a stabilizing influence for inmates whose lives were out of control prior to incarceration (Rocque et al., 2010).

P4 experienced a crossroads after reflecting on the chaos in prison and realizing that incarceration was going to be an unpleasant experience. He stated that the only support that he received was visits from Christians, which had a major influence on his decision to convert to Christianity. Prison visitation from the Christian community adds a much-needed spiritual element that has a resonating effect with inmates (Barkman, n.d.). Christian visitors provide a change of outlook toward a new, regenerated life, which provides a sense of hope and motivation to set future goals (Duncan & Balbar, 2008).

Finding 4: Maintaining Christianity Outside Prison

The participants expressed how they had continued as Christians following their release. The current literature mainly focuses on the positive impacts of conversion to Christianity while in prison. However, discussion with the participants revealed a more developed understanding of how their conversion had been the core factor in not returning to prison. Building good relationships, joining a church, and developing a support group were major contributors to the participants' conversion experience post incarceration.

Attending church and worshipping God are key factors assisting ex-offenders with social reintegration and desistance from crime (Kotze, 2013). As ex-offenders become involved within a longer term, sustainable network of social support, their

reintegration becomes stronger. In particular, faith and church involvement may serve as intrinsically rewarding sources of agency and affiliation to increase desistance from crime (Kotze, 2013). Hallett et al. (2015) stated that inmates who have become motivated by Christianity attribute their desistance from crime with the importance of personal responsibility, doing their part by continuing to invest in their spirituality.

Building good relationships was an essential part of remaining offense-free. The participants stressed the importance of accountability as Christians, and how this helped them feel less likely to offend. Current studies tend to focus on the impact of building good Christian relationships inside prison and their impact after release. Along with reduced prison disciplinary infractions (Johnson, 2012), Sherman (2013) found that Christian prisoners were nearly 3 times less likely to be arrested during the 12 months following their release compared to inmates not involved in the ministry. The current study extends this finding by highlighting how these benefits continue even after release from prison.

Regarding support groups, Stansfield et al. (2017) noted than there is a need to further examine the relationship between religious support and postincarceration outcomes. Denney et al. (2014) stated that social support can be absent in the reentry process, and affiliation with other Christians can cause ex-offenders to have a sense of filling a void in their lives. However, research focusing specifically on the relationship between Christianity and postincarceration life is scarce. All of the interviews showed the importance of support groups in relation to recidivism. Building good relationships with other Christians was instrumental to their Christian walk post incarceration, and support groups were credited as a driving force in their continuing involvement in ministry. This

extends from the current literature, as Stansfield et al. (2017) stated that there is a need for more tests on the relationship between religious support and postrelease outcomes. P4 stated that his support group kept him accountable, and P5 explained the importance of familial support. Each of these elements that positively affected the participants' Christian worldview is additional information different from the current literature and supports the importance of support groups post incarceration.

Finding 5: Christianity Causing a Shift of Thinking

Findings from the literature review were confirmed by the responses of the participants regarding their change in worldview after converting to Christianity. As a result of their conversion, the participants turned from concentrating primarily on selfish desires to putting their focus on the needs of others. Pazmino (2008) explained that the discovery of one's true self is suggested in the greatest commandment of loving God with all of one's heart, soul, mind, and strength, and loving neighbors as oneself. P3 emphasized the importance of asking God to be a good husband and father.

The radical shift in worldview following release from prison is also additional information regarding the change of identity when converted apart from the current literature. Maruna et al. (2006) focused on the prison community, stating that conversion involves creating a new social identity to replace the label of "prisoner" or "criminal" and providing the prisoner with a language and framework for forgiveness. In addition, conversion allows the inmate to read the world differently. This was confirmed in the interviews in this study, in which participants addressed how staying focused on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ kept them from being concerned about reoffending and prompted them to continue exposing areas in their lives that did not

reflect Jesus as they relied on Him daily to deal with these issues, which helped them to stay out of the mentality to recidivate.

P1 emphasized the importance of scripture, describing how it says to set one's affections on things above and not beneath. This aligned with the statement of Paukert et al. (2009) that religion, particularity Christianity and scripture, can be helpful in modifying maladaptive thoughts and behaviors associated with negative moods, and is also a positive response to stressful situations in order to create more rational patterns. Religion also creates a conviction that carries specific attitudinal and behavioral expectations, such as how to treat others and respond to hard times that counter typical criminal attitudes and behaviors (Brault, 2014).

As a result of their conversion to Christianity, all participants stated that they were zealous about sharing the gospel with others, but from a state of humility. The participants did not take their walk with Christ lightly, because it brought them out of a state of brokenness. Not only did the participants adopt a new worldview of overcoming negative thoughts, but they also strongly desired to tell others about Christ. The participants shared how their conversion to Christianity sparked a desire to return to prisons in order to share the gospel with inmates. Current literature focuses on organizations such as Prison Fellowship, Kairos, and InnerChange and how these organizations positively impact those who convert to Christianity while in prison. However, more focus in needed individually on ex-offenders who return to prison to minister to inmates, and how maintaining a Christian lifestyle post incarceration develops a desire in ex-offenders to share the gospel with others.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was Ryan and Deci's (2000) SDT, which focuses on the investigation of growth tendencies based on self-motivation and personality integration. The theory examines the three basic personal needs of competence, relatedness, and autonomy, as well as environmental factors, that can hinder or undermine self-motivation, social functioning, and personal well-being. Competence is essential to feeling effective in one's environment and has a link to understanding what is personally important, relatedness is feeling cared for, connected to others, and a sense of belonging, and autonomy is a self-endorsed behavior of wholeheartedly being behind one's own actions, which produces better results. It also deals with intrinsic motivation, which is willingly doing an activity for the sake of finding it exciting and enjoyable, compared to extrinsic motivation, which is doing an activity because it leads to a separable consequence such as avoidance of punishment, social approval, or rewards. Intrinsic motivation deals with participating in a particular behavior for one's own sake, and autonomy refers to one's active desire to perform particular actions (Chan, Lo, Tam, & Lee, 2019), and this reflects the radical shift in worldview of the participants after converting to Christianity. All ex-offenders explained how they have radically changed by now being devoted to a Christian lifestyle, and this lifestyle has created a passion to reflect Christ and share the gospel to others. The autonomy is in the desire to actively and intentionally live a life that reflects Christ and be a godly example to those in their sphere of influence.

Conversion to Christianity while in prison, and its influence on former inmates' post-incarceration, has been highlighted throughout this study. As opposed to an increase

in recidivism of people who are pressured to change on a short-term basis (Moller et al., 2006), SDT is relevant to understanding the influence of conversion to Christianity on offending behavior because it helps explain how Christianity gives inmates long-term autonomy. Christianity gives people long-term autonomy in the way of personal devotion to Christ leading to a lifestyle that reflects positive biblical values. Regarding motivation, SDT can be consistent with Christianity regarding someone attending church due to feeling that it is of personal importance and aligns with deep-held values, compared to someone attending in order to avoid criticism by others (Soenens et al., 2012). The participants recorded motivation consistent with SDT based on their desires to plug into a church for personal growth, meaning that it was intrinsic motivation. Research shows that intrinsic motivation is more strongly related to an offence-free lifestyle than extrinsic motivation due to having a more long-term effect (Shaul, Koeter, & Schippers, 2016). SDT can also be instrumental in the former inmate's desire to share the gospel. Since each are motivated by the radical change of worldview after converting to Christianity, as well as their fleshly desires that led to incarceration, the participants show their relatedness to a Christian lifestyle by their devotion to live godly and share the gospel to people both inside and outside prison.

<div style="text-align:center">Limitations of the Study</div>

This study provided in-depth knowledge of the lived experiences of ex-offenders who converted to Christianity while in prison, and are living an offense-free lifestyle post-incarceration. However, there were some limitations. Firstly, since the personal experiences were trusted at face value, the authenticity of their statements are not testable. As an interviewer, I had to go into the interview with the assumption that their

integrity as Christian men would cause them to answer open and honestly. The participants were also all male, so the impact of recidivism after conversion to Christian while in prison does not apply to the female population based on this study.

The time out of jail was also not specified in the study, although, during the interviews, some of the participants gave a timeframe of how long they have been out of prison. According to the Durose et al.'s (2014) report of recidivism rates, 68 % of inmates were arrested for a new crime within three years of release from prison 77 % were arrested within five years of being released. Since the time from release was not specified with the participant interviews, it is unknown from this study whether the findings are largely due to the possibility that many participants had not been out of prison for a very long time.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study was conducted to explore the relationship between conversion to Christianity while in prison and its influence on recidivism reductions post-incarceration. Current studies on this topic focus on conversion to Christianity in prison, and its positive impact on an inmate while still incarcerated. Further quantitative study can explore the comparisons of Christianity with other religions that inmates convert to while in prison. These findings can assist prisons in understanding the importance of Christian ministry to prisoners, as well as compare the change of lifestyle of each religion to examine which one has a greater impact for faith-based programs.

Amount of time in prison, from a quantitative approach, is also a recommendation of further study. This can show how much an inmate's conversion to Christianity has more of a long-term effect post-incarceration. The Bureau of Justice statistics show that

77% of prisoners are arrested within five years of being released. From a quantitative standpoint, collecting data of former inmates who have been released over five years and inmates who have been released before five years, and comparing the lived experiences and desire to offend, could be beneficial in a heightened demand of pastoral care for the demographic with a higher chance to recidivate. It also could create additional faith-based programs to assist with a more long-term effect within the first five years of release.

All of the participants were male, and further studies can be done to gather the lived experiences of females who converted to Christianity while in prison, as well as compared these experiences to the male converts. Comparing studies between men and women can assist with establishing how to address the psychological differences between men and women in order to create faith-based programs that are geared to be more gender-specific in recidivism reduction. A qualitative study of exclusively women can also be helpful in developing increased pastoral care in women's facilities.

Since social support was a vital part of each participant remaining committed to Christianity, additional studies can also be conducted on the importance of church attendance post-incarceration, and whether this reduces the desire to recidivate, compared to a person who converted to Christianity post-incarceration but does not attend church regularly. The results of these studies could highlight the importance of church affiliation, which could increase the need to link inmates up with churches post-incarceration to assist with recidivism reduction.

Implications for Social Change

Recidivism rates continue to remain high in the United States (Durose et al., 2014), and exploring ways to prevent it is necessary for communal growth. Exploring the relationship between religion and recidivism is important to examine, specifically its psychological impact on ex-offenders who decided to make the lifestyle chance. This study showed the importance of Christianity in prison, and how conversion causes a radical change in thinking from fleshly desires to focusing on the needs of others. For each participant, the decision to convert to Christianity has resulted in a lifestyle that was not experienced before conversion, and this zeal to life for Christ has caused each of them to share the gospel with others in prison. This IPA study has developed a better understanding of why it is important for Christianity to be a part of prison reform. Here are a few implications for social change proposed based on the finding of this study.

Based on the lived experiences of the participants, conversion to Christianity is a serious step, with important implications. It was a decision made by each participant due to realizing that what they were doing was not working. The inmates in prison had unfortunately made a decision that caused them to be incarcerated, but for the ones who have an opportunity to have second chance at life, a change of worldview is necessary. Not only is it essential for the released inmates to change their worldview, but have a radical change in worldview to reduce negative desires to recidivate. Based on this study, conversion to Christianity is a vital instrument in radically changing one's worldview (Johnson et al., 2014), and this instrument should be more exposed to current inmates. The participants' lived experiences showed that conversion to Christianity while in prison has not only decreased their desire to recidivate, but it has also commenced a lifestyle

that has given them hope, which is something that all of them were devoid of prior to conversion. Additionally, the participants also expressed how someone else sharing the gospel to them was strongly influential in shifting their worldview, so this has created the desire for them to share their experiences to those in prison with hopes to convert others to Christianity.

Current literature emphasizes the positive impact of chaplains to provide inmates hope and encouragement to become successful outside prison and reentry to society (Chui et al., 2013). Based on the participants' experiences, church affiliation has been a vital part of maintaining an offense-free life. Therefore a greater emphasis on having pastors speak to prisoners can be established. While chaplains inside the prison can assist with providing hope and meaning to prisoners, pastors coming into prisons to share the gospel can both promote the Gospel and also create a better linkage to inmates to connect to a church post-release. As the former inmate connect to the church, the ministry can provide a set of resources for better reentry and lessen the stress involved with finding shelter and employment. Since former inmates find it difficult to compete in the job market (Nally et al., 2014), their linkages with ministries can provide a stronger chance of acquiring both housing and stable employment. Additionally, an increase of faith-based programs inside prisons can provide resources to reduce the stress of the former inmate upon reentry.

Conclusions

Interpretative phenomenological analysis was used to explore the lived experiences of five former inmates who converted to Christianity while in prison and were currently living an offense-free lifestyle outside of prison. The participants all

discussed their experiences and worldviews being converting in prison, and how

Christianity had, and still has, created a radical shift in their worldview. This finding

from this study reveal that converting to Christianity while in prison has a positive

influence on reducing recidivism. This not only confirmed that inmates who remain

devoted to a Christian worldview after converting inside prison are less likely to

recidivate (Johnson et al., 2014), but it also presented new information as to

understanding important factors as to why recidivism is reduced by continuing to live a

Christian lifestyle. As a scholar for positive social change, I believe that the influence of

Christianity is a vital part to radically changing an inmate's desire to carve their own path

of positive social change after being released from prison. Additionally, this study has

shown that living for Christ not only helps an individual, but it creates a burning desire

for a converted Christian to share the gospel to others who are going down the wrong

path.

References

Anderson, C. (2010). Presenting and evaluating qualitative research. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, *74*(8). doi:10.5688/aj7408141

Andrews, D. A., Bonta, J., & Wormith, J. S. (2011). The risk-need-responsivity (RNR) model: Does adding the Good Lives Model contribute to effective crime prevention? *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, *38*(7), 735-755. doi:10.1177/0093854811406356

Anney, V. N. (2014). Ensuring the quality of the findings of qualitative research: Looking at trustworthiness criteria. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies*, *5*(2), 272-281.

Arbach-Lucioni, K., Martinez-García, M., & Andrés-Pueyo, A. (2012). Risk factors for violent behavior in prison inmates: A cross-cultural contribution. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, *39*(9), 1219-1239. doi: 10.1177/0093854812445875

Areepattamannil, S., Freeman, J. G., & Klinger, D. A. (2011). Intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and academic achievement among Indian adolescents in Canada and India. *Social Psychology of Education*, *14*(3). doi: 10.1007/s11218-011-9155-1

Bailey, K. (2007). The causes of recidivism in the criminal justice system and why it is worth the cost to address them. *Nashville Bar Journal*, 6-9.

Bakken, N. W., Gunter, W. D., & Visher, C. A. (2013). Spirituality and desistance from substance use among reentering offenders. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 58*(11). doi:0306624X13494076

Barkman, L. L. S. (n.d.). *Towards a missional theology of prison ministry*. Retrieved from https://www.agts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/38-53-Barkman-Theology-of-Prison-Ministry.pdf

Barnao, M., Robertson, P., & Ward, T. (2010). Good Lives Model applied to a forensic population. *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*, *17*(2), 202-217. doi: 10.1080/13218710903421274

BBC News. (2007). Ex-prisoner: I had an overwhelming feeling of hopelessness. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/news/av/uk-38760297/ex-prisoner-i-had-an-overwhelming-feeling-of-hopelessness

Beijersbergen, K. A., Dirkzwager, A. J., & Nieuwbeerta, P. (2016). Reoffending after release: Does procedural justice during imprisonment matter? *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, *43*(1), 63-82.

Berg, M. T., & Huebner, B. M. (2011). Reentry and the ties that bind: An examination of social ties, employment, and recidivism. *Justice Quarterly*, *28*(2), 382-410. doi: 10.1080/07418825.2010.498383

Bierens, H. J., & Carvalho, J. R. (2011). Job search, conditional treatment and recidivism: The employment services for ex-offenders program reconsidered. *The BE Journal of Economic Analysis & Policy*, *11*(1). doi: 10.2202/1935-1682.2361

Binswanger, I. A., Krueger, P. M., & Steiner, J. F. (2009). Prevalence of chronic medical conditions among jail and prison inmates in the United States compared with the general population. *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*, *63*(11). doi: 10.1136/jech.2009.090662

Binswanger, I. A., Nowels, C., Corsi, K. F., Glanz, J., Long, J., Booth, R. E., & Steiner, J. F. (2012). Return to drug use and overdose after release from prison: A qualitative study of risk and protective factors. *Addiction Science & Clinical Practice, 7*(1). doi: 10.1186/1940-0640-7-3

Blomdahl, C., Gunnarsson, A. B., Guregård, S., & Björklund, A. (2013). A realist review of art therapy for clients with depression. *The Arts in Psychotherapy, 40*(3), 322-330. doi: 10.1016/j.aip.2013.05.009

Boddie, S. C., & Funk, C. (2012, March). *Religion in prisons: A 50-state survey of prison chaplains*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.

Braswell, R., Steinkopf, B., & Beamer, A. (2016, November 9). Law enforcement chaplains: Defining their roles. *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, 11-16.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2014). What can "thematic analysis" offer health and wellbeing researchers? *International journal of qualitative studies on health and well-being*, *9*. doi: 10.3402/qhw.v9.26152

Braun, V., Clarke, V., Hayfield, N., & Terry, G. (2012). Thematic analysis. In P. Liamputtong (Ed.), *Handbook of research methods in health social sciences* (pp. 843-860). Singapore: Springer.

Bright, L. C., & Graham, M. G. (2007). Faith-based programs give facilities a helping hand. *Corrections Today*, *69*(5), 137-139.

Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2014). *3 in 4 prisoners in 30 states arrested within 5 years of release [Press Release]*. Retrieved from http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/press/rprts05p0510pr.cfm

Camp, S. D., Daggett, D. M., Kwon, O., & Klein-Saffran, J. (2008). The effect of faith

program participation on prison misconduct: The Life Connections Program.

Journal of Criminal Justice, 36(5), 389-395. doi: 10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2008.07.004

Carlson, T. (1992). Deliver us from evil: Prison Fellowship's saving grace. *Policy

Review, 62*, 72.

Center for Christian Ethics. (2012). *Portraits of prison ministry*. Retrieved from

https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/163167.pdf

Choy, L. T. (2014). The strengths and weaknesses of research methodology:

Comparison and complimentary between qualitative and quantitative approaches. *IOSR

Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, *19*(4), 99-104. doi:10.9790/0837-

194399104

Chui, W. H., & Cheng, K. K. Y. (2013). Self-perceived role and function of Christian

prison chaplains and Buddhist volunteers in Hong Kong prisons. *International

Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, *57*(2), 154-168. doi:

10.1177/0306624X11432128

Coleman, Guo, & Dabbs (2007). The State of Qualitative Research in Gifted Education

as Published in American Journal: An Analysis and Critique. *Gifted Child

Quarterly,* 51(1). 51-63. doi: 10.1177/0016986206296656

Connelly, L. M. (2016). Trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Medsurg Nursing*, *25*(6),

435-437.

Costanza, S. E., Cox, S. M., & Kilburn, J. C. (2015). The impact of halfway houses on

parole success and recidivism. *Journal of Sociological Research*, *6*(2), 39-55. doi:

10.5296/jsr.v6i2.8038

Dalbert, C., & Filke, E. (2007). Belief in a personal just world, justice judgments, and

their functions for prisoners. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 34(11), 1516-1527.

doi: 10.1177/0093854807306835.

Das, R. (2018). Becoming a follower of Christ: exploring conversion through historical

and missiological lenses. *Perichoresis, 16*(1), 21-40. doi: 10.2478/perc-2018-

0002.

Davis, C., Bahr, S. J., & Ward, C. (2013). The process of offender reintegration:

Perceptions of what helps prisoners reenter society. *Criminology & Criminal

Justice*, 13(4), 446-469. doi: 10.1177/1748895812454748

Denney, A. S., Tewksbury, R., & Jones, R. S. (2014). Beyond basic needs: Social support

and structure for successful offender reentry. *Journal of Quantitative Criminal

Justice & Criminology*.

Dodson, K. D., Cabage, L. N., & Klenowski, P. M. (2011). An evidence-based

assessment of faith-based programs: Do faith-based programs "work" to reduce

recidivism?. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, *50*(6), 367-383. doi: 10.1080/

10509674.2011.582932

Durose, M.R., Cooper, A.D., & Snyder, H.N. (2014). Recidivism of prisoners released in

30 states in 2005: Patterns from 2005 to 2010. *Bureau of Justice Statistics Special

Report*. Retrieved from http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/rprts05p0510.pdf.

Duwe, G., & Clark, V. (2013). Blessed be the social tie that binds: The effects of prison

visitation on offender recidivism. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, 24(3), 271-296.

doi: 10.1177/0887403411429724

Duwe, G., & Johnson, B. R. (2016). The effects of prison visits from community

   volunteers on offender recidivism. *The Prison Journal*, 96(2), 279-303.

   doi:10.1177/0032885515618468

Easton, M. A. (1897). Conversion. In *Easton's bible dictionary*. Retrieved from

   https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/eastons-bible-

   dictionary/conversion.html

Ekeke, E.C. (2016). The Necessity of Hope: A Philosophical and Theological Appraisal.

   European Scientific Journal, *12* (5). 371-385. doi: 10.19044/esj.2016.v12n5p371

Epperson, M., Wolff, N., Morgan, R., Fisher, W., Frueh, B. C., & Huening, J. (2011).

   The next generation of behavioral health and criminal justice interventions:

   Improving outcomes by improving interventions. *Center for Behavioral Health*

   Services and Criminal Justice Research, Rutgers, the State University of New

   Jersey, New Brunswick, NJ.

Esqueda, O. (2011). Sin and Christian Teaching. *Journal of Christian Education, 8*(1).

   164-175. doi: 10.1177/073989131100800111

Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling

   and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*,

   5(1), 1-4. doi: 10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11

Ferguson, K. M., Wu, Q., Spruijt-Metz, D., & Dyrness, G. (2007). Outcomes evaluation

   in faith-based social services: are we evaluating faith accurately?. *Research on*

   Social Work Practice, 17(2), 264-276. doi: 10.1177/1049731505283698

Fields, R. R. (2005). Perks for prisoners who pray: Using the coercion test to decide

   establishment clause challenges to faith-based prison units. *U. Chi. Legal F.*, 541.

Fink, A. S. (2000, December). The role of the researcher in the qualitative research process. A potential barrier to archiving qualitative data. In Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: *Qualitative Social Research*, 1, (3).

Fusch, P. I., & Ness, L. R. (2015). Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative research. *The qualitative report*, *20*(9), 1408-1416.

Gardner, J. (2011). Keeping Faith: Faith talk by and for incarcerated youth. *The Urban Review*, *43*(1), 22-42. doi:10.1007/s11256-009-0149-7

Garzon, F. L., Lewis Hall, M. E., & Ripley, J. S. (2014). Teaching Christian integration in psychology and counseling courses. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, *42*(2), 131-135. doi: 10.1177/009164711404200201

Garzon, F. L., Worthington Jr, E. L., Tan, S. Y., & Worthington, R. K. (2009). Lay Christian counseling and client expectations for integration in therapy. *Faculty Publications and Presentations*, 53.

Gerace, A., & Day, A. (2010). Criminal rehabilitation: The impact of religious programming.

Giles, M., Paris, L., & Whale, J. (2016). The role of art education in adult prisons: The Western Australian experience. *International Review of Education*, *62*(6), 689-709. doi: 10.1007/s11159-016-9604-3

Hallett, M., & Johnson, B. (2014). The resurgence of religion in America's prisons. *Religions*, *5*(3), 663-683. doi: 10.3390/rel5030663

Hall, L. L. (2015). Correctional education and recidivism: Toward a tool for reduction. *Journal of correctional education*, *66*(2), 4.

Hallett, M., & McCoy, J. S. (2015). Religiously motivated desistance: An exploratory study. International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 59(8), 855-872. doi: 10.1177/0306624X14522112

Hamilton, Z. K., & Campbell, C. M. (2014). Uncommonly observed: The impact of New Jersey's halfway house system. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, *41*(11), 1354-1375. doi: 10.1177/0093854814546132

Hanes, M. J. (2005). Behind steel doors: Images from the walls of a county jail. *Art Therapy*, 22(1), 44-48. doi: 10.1080/07421656.2005.10129462

Hansen, K. (2018). The Parallels Between Art Therapy and Christianity: Integrating Identities as a Christian and an Art Therapist.

Hanson, A.D. (n.d.) *Personal witnessing in jails and prisons*. Retrieved from https://www.ylm.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/witnessing.pdf.

Hayes, L. M. (2013). Suicide prevention in correctional facilities: Reflections and next steps. *International journal of law and psychiatry*, *36* (3-4), 188-194. doi: 10.1016/j.ijlp.2013.04.010
Helliwell, J. F. (2014). Social norms, happiness, and the environment: closing the circle. *Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy, 10*(1), 78-84. doi: 10.1080/15487733.2014.11908126

Hlavka, H., Wheelock, D., & Jones, R. (2015). Ex-offender accounts of successful reentry from prison. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, *54*(6), 406-428. doi: 10.1080/10509674.2015.1057630

Hodge, D. R. (2005). Spiritual lifemaps: A client-centered pictorial instrument for

    spiritual assessment, planning, and intervention. *Social work, 50*(1), 77-87. doi:

    10.1093/sw/50.1.77

Hoerr, K. (2015). *Letter from the Chairman*. Retrieved from

    https://bereanprisonministries.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/2015-Q1-Berean-

    Newsletter_compressed.pdf

Holloway, I. (1997). Basic Concepts for Qualitative Research. London: Blackwell

    Science.

Humber, N., Emsley, R., Pratt, D., & Tarrier, N. (2013). Anger as a predictor of

    psychological distress and self-harm ideation in inmates: A structured self-

    assessment diary study. *Psychiatry research*, *210*(1), 166-173. doi:

    10.1016/j.psychres.2013.02.011

Hunt, K. S., & Dumville, R. (2016). *Recidivism among federal offenders: A

    comprehensive overview*. United States Sentencing Commission.

James, N. (2015). Offender reentry: Correctional statistics, reintegration into the

    community, and recidivism. Congressional Research Service, Library of

    Congress.

Jindal, A. K., Singh, G., & Pandya, K. (2015). Qualitative research in medicine–an art to

    be nurtured. *Medical Journal Armed Forces India*, *71*(4), 369-372. doi:

    10.1016/j.mjafi.2014.11.006

Johnson, B. R. (2004). Religious programs and recidivism among former inmates in

    prison fellowship programs: A long-term follow-up study. *Justice Quarterly*,

    21(2), 329-354. doi: 10.1080/07418820400095831

Johnson, B. R. (2012). Can a faith-based prison reduce recidivism? *Corrections Today*, *73*(6), 60-62.

Kerley, K. R., Deitzer, J. R., & Leban, L. (2014). Who is in control? how women in a halfway house use faith to recover from drug addiction. *Religions*, *5*(3), 852-870. doi:10.3390/rel5030852

Kersten, L., Cislo, A. M., Lynch, M., Shea, K., & Trestman, R. L. (2015). Evaluating START NOW: a skills-based psychotherapy for inmates of correctional systems. *Psychiatric Services*, *67*(1), 37-42. doi: 10.1176/appi.ps.201400471

Khan, S. N. (2014). Qualitative research method-phenomenology. *Asian Social Science*, *10*(21), 298.

Klein, G., & Baxter, H. C. (2008). Cognitive transformation theory: Contrasting cognitive and behavioral learning. In *Interservice/Industry Training Systems and Education Conference, Orlando, Florida*.

Knight, V. (2015). Television, emotion and prison life: Achieving personal control.

Kotze, J. (2013). Developing collaborative and sustainable networks of social support – Community chaplaincy, faith communities and the successful reintegration of ex-prisoners. *International Journal of Community Chaplaincy, 2*(1), 3-13.

KPBS News (2010). *Life In Prison: A Project Documentary*. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=alcK_QBE7h8.

Labbe, E.E., & Fobes, A. (2010). Evaluating the interplay between spirituality, personality and stress. *Applied Psychophysiology & Biofeedback, 35*: 141-146. doi: 10.1007/s10484-009-9119-9

Lanctot, J. D., & Irving, J. A. (2010). Character and leadership: Situating servant leadership in a proposed virtues framework. *International Journal of Leadership Studies*, *6*(1), 28-50.

Legault, L., & Inzlicht, M. (2013). Self-determination, self-regulation, and the brain: Autonomy improves performance by enhancing neuroaffective responsiveness to self-regulation failure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *105*(1), 123. doi: 10.1037/a0030426

Legault, L. (2017). Self-determination theory. *Encyclopedia of Personality and Individual Differences*, 1-9.

Leung, L. S. K., & Matanda, M. J. (2013). The impact of basic human needs on the use of retailing self-service technologies: A study of self-determination theory. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *20*(6), 549-559. doi: 10.1016/j.jretconser.2013.06.003

Lewis, S. (2015). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches. *Health Promotion Practice*, *16*(4), 473-475.

Lincoln, YS. & Guba, EG. (1985). Naturalistic Inquiry. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Loh, J. (2013). Inquiry into issues of trustworthiness and quality in narrative studies: A perspective. *The Qualitative Report*, *18*(33), 1-15.

Mahoney, A., Pargament, K. I., Murray-Swank, A., & Murray-Swank, N. (2003). Religion and the sanctification of family relationships. *Review of religious research*, 220-236. doi: 10.2307/3512384

Mahoney, A., & Pargament, K. I. (2004). Sacred changes: Spiritual conversion and

transformation. *Journal of clinical psychology*, *60*(5), 481-492.

https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.20007

Mandhouj, O., Aubin, H. J., Amirouche, A., Perroud, N. A., & Huguelet, P. (2014).

Spirituality and religion among French prisoners: An effective coping resource?.

International journal of offender therapy and comparative criminology, 58(7),

821-834. doi: 10.1177/0306624X13491715

Mandracchia, J. T., & Smith, P. N. (2015). The interpersonal theory of suicide applied to

male prisoners. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 45(3), 293-301. doi:

10.1111/sltb.12132

Manganelli, L., Thibault-Landry, A., Forest, J., & Carpentier, J. (2018). Self-

Determination theory can help you generate performance and well-being in the

workplace: A review of the literature. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*,

20(2), 227-240. DOI: 10.1177/1523422318757210.

Marti, G. (2016). "I Was a Muslim, But Now I Am a Christian": Preaching, Legitimation,

and Identity Management in a Southern Evangelical Church. *Journal for the

Scientific Study of Religion*, 55(2), 250-270. doi: 10.1111/jssr.12261

Maritz, D. J., & Stoker, H. G. (2016). Does the Christian worldview provide a place for

the law of attraction? (Part 1): An apologetic evaluation of the roots of this

doctrine. *VERBUM et Ecclesia*, *37*(1), 1-9. doi: 10.4102/ve.v37i1.1571

Maruna, S., Wilson, L., & Curran, K. (2006). Why God is often found behind bars:

Prison conversions and the crisis of self-narrative. *Research in Human

Development*, *3*(2-3), 161-184. doi: 10.1207/s15427617rhd0302&3_6

Mears, D. P., Cochran, J. C., Siennick, S. E., & Bales, W. D. (2012). Prison visitation and recidivism. *Justice Quarterly*, *29*(6), 888-918. doi: 10.1080/07418825.2011.583932

Mills, J. F., & Kroner, D. G. (2005). Screening for suicide risk factors in prison inmates: Evaluating the efficiency of the Depression, Hopelessness and Suicide Screening Form (DHS). *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, *10*(1), 1-12. doi: 10.1348/135532504X15295

Miller, M.K., Lindsey, S.C., & Kaufman, J.A. (2012). The religious conversion and race of a prisoner: Mock parole board members' decisions, perceptions, and emotions. *Legal and Criminal Psychology, Vol. 19*.: 104-130. doi: 10.1111/j.2044-8333.2012.02063.x/

Moller, A.C., Ryan, R.M., & Deci, E.L. (2006). Self-Determination Theory and Public Policy: Improving the Quality of Consumer Decisions Without Using Coercion. *American Marketing Association, 25* (1). 104-116. doi: 10.1177/0146167206288008

Moore, K. E., Stuewig, J. B., & Tangney, J. P. (2016). The effect of stigma on criminal offenders' functioning: A longitudinal mediational model. *Deviant behavior*, *37*(2), 196-218. doi: 10.1080/01639625.2014.1004035

Morse, J. M., & Field, P. A. (1996). The purpose of qualitative research. In Nursing Research (pp. 1-17). Springer, Boston, MA.

Mowat, H., & Swinton, J. (2007, February). What do chaplains do. In *The role of the chaplain in meeting the spiritual needs of patients. Report No. CSHD/MR001. Aberdeen: Mowat Research Limited*.

Management & Training Corporation Institute. (2005). *Success for Life: Evidence-Based Programming to Reduce Recidivism*. Retrieved from https://www.mtctrains.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Success-for-Life-Evidence-Based-Programming-to-Reduce-Recidivism.pdf.

National Health Expenditures 2016 Highlights. Retrieved from https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Statistics-Trends-and-Reports/NationalHealthExpendData/downloads/highlights.pdf.

National Institute of Justice. (2014). *Recidivism*. Retrieved from https://www.nij.gov/topics/corrections/recidivism/Pages/welcome.aspx

Noels, K. A., Pelletier, L. G., Clément, R., & Vallerand, R. J. (2000). Why are you learning a second language? Motivational orientations and self-determination theory. *Language learning*, *50*(1), 57-85. doi: 10.1111/0023-8333.00111

Norko, M. A., Freeman, D., Phillips, J., Hunter, W., Lewis, R., & Viswanathan, R. (2017). Can religion protect against suicide?. *The Journal of nervous and mental disease*, *205*(1), 9-14. doi: 10.1097/NMD.0000000000000615

O'Connor, T. P., Duncan, J., & Quillard, F. (2006). Criminology and religion: The shape of an authentic dialogue. Criminology & Public Policy, *5*(3), 559-570.

Orb, A., Eisenhauer, L., & Wynaden, D. (2001). Ethics in qualitative research. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, *33*(1), 93-96.

Palacio, P. T. (2012). Evaluation of Kairos Prison Ministry at California State Prison Sacramento: A Qualitative Case Study (Doctoral dissertation, Drexel University).

Palaganas, E. C., Sanchez, M. C., Molintas, M., Visitacion, P., & Caricativo, R. D. (2017). Reflexivity in qualitative research.

Patrick, H., & Williams, G. C. (2012). Self-determination theory: its application to health behavior and complementarity with motivational interviewing. *International Journal of behavioral nutrition and physical Activity*, *9*(1), 18. doi: 10.1186/1479-5868-9-18

Paukert, A. L., Phillips, L., Cully, J. A., Loboprabhu, S. M., Lomax, J. W., & Stanley, M. A. (2009). Integration of religion into cognitive-behavioral therapy for geriatric anxiety and depression. *Journal of Psychiatric Practice®*, *15*(2), 103-112. doi: 10.1097/01.pra.0000348363.88676

Pietkiewicz, I., & Smith, J. A. (2014). A practical guide to using interpretative phenomenological analysis in qualitative research psychology. *Psychological Journal*, *20*(1), 7-14. doi: 10.14691/CPPJ.20.1.7

Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2010). Generalization in quantitative and qualitative research: Myths and strategies. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, *47*(11), 1451-1458. doi: 10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2010.06.004

Polonyi, M. A., Henriksen, Jr., R. C., & Serres, S. A. (2011). A matter of faith: A qualitative study with evangelical Christians. Retrieved from http://counselingoutfitters.com/ vistas/vistas11/Article_102.pdf

Ponelis, S. R. (2015). Using interpretive qualitative case studies for exploratory research in doctoral studies: A case of Information Systems research in small and medium enterprises. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, *10*(1), 535-550. doi: 10.28945/2339

Qu, S. Q., & Dumay, J. (2011). The qualitative research interview. *Qualitative Research in Accounting & Management*, 8(3), 238-264. doi: 10.1108/11766091111162070

Reiners, G. M. (2012). Understanding the differences between Husserl's (descriptive) and Heidegger's (interpretive) phenomenological research. *Journal of Nursing Care*, *1*(5), 1-3. doi: 10.4172/2167-1168.1000119

Rigsby, M. (2014). Religious conversion in prison: Prosocial v. antisocial identities. *International Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, *1*(4), 61-77.

Ristad, Jr, R. N. (2008). A stark examination of prison culture and prison ministry. *Dialog*, 47(3), 292-303. DOI: 10.1111/j.1540-6385.2008.00403.x.

Roman, Wolff, Correa, & Buck (2007). Assessing Intermediate Outcomes of a Faith-Based Residential Prisoner Reentry Program. *Research on Social Work Practice, 17*(2). doi: 10.1177/1049731506295860

Ryan, F., Coughlan, M., & Cronin, P. (2007). Step-by-step guide to critiquing research. Part 2: Qualitative research. *British Journal of Nursing*, *16*(12), 738-744. doi: 10.12968/bjon.2007.16.12.23726

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2009). Promoting self-determined school engagement: Motivation, learning, and well-being. In K. R. Wentzel & A. Wigfield (Eds.), Handbook on motivation at school (pp. 171–196). New York: Routledge.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American psychologist*, *55*(1), 68. doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68.

Salas-Wright, C. P., Vaughn, M. G., & Maynard, B. R. (2014). Buffering effects of religiosity on crime: Testing the invariance hypothesis across gender and developmental period. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, *41*(6), 673-691. doi: 10.1177/0093854813514579

Sampl, S., Wakai, S., Trestman, R. L., & Keeney, E. M. (2008). Functional analysis of behavior in corrections: Empowering inmates in skills training groups. *The Journal of Behavior Analysis of Offender and Victim Treatment and Prevention*, *1*(4), 42. doi: 10.1037/h0100455

Sandage, S. J., & Moe, S. P. (2013). Spiritual experience: Conversion and transformation. *APA handbook of psychology, religion, and spirituality*, *1*, 407-422.

Schmitt, J., & Warner, K. (2011). Ex-offenders and the Labor Market. *Working USA*, 14(1), 87-109.

Shaul, L., Koeter, M. W., Schippers. G. M. (2016). Brief motivation enhancing intervention to prevent criminal recidivism in substance-abusing offenders under supervision: a randomized trial. *Psychology, Crime & Law*, *22*(9), 903-914. doi: 10.1080/1068316X.2016.1202248

Shaw, R.L. (2010). Embedding reflexivity within experiential qualitative psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 7(3), 233- 243. doi: 10.1080/14780880802699092

Sherman, A. L. (2003). Faith in communities: A solid investment. *Society*, *40*(2), 19-26.

Sentencing Guidelines Commission: State of Washington (2007). *Recidivism of Adult Felons*. Retrieved from https://www.cfc.wa.gov/PublicationSentencing/Recidivism/Adult_Recidivism_FY2007.pdf.

Sexton, J. S. (2015). Toward a prison theology of California's ecclesia incarcerate. *Theology*, *118*(2), 83-91. doi: 10.1177/0040571X14559159

Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, *22*(2), 63-75. doi: 10.3233/EFI-2004-22201

Siennick, S. E., Mears, D. P., & Bales, W. D. (2013). Here and gone: Anticipation and separation effects of prison visits on inmate infractions. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, *50*(3), 417-444. doi: 10.1177/0022427812449470

Silva, M. N., Marques, M. M., & Teixeira, P. J. (2014). Testing theory in practice: The example of self-determination theory-based interventions. *European Health Psychologist*, *16*(5), 171-180.

Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2015). Interpretative phenomenological analysis as a useful methodology for research on the lived experience of pain. *British journal of pain*, *9*(1), 41-42. DOI: 10.1177/2049463714541642.

Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2004). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Doing social psychology research*, 229-254.

Soenens, B., Neyrinck, B., Vansteenkiste, M., Dezutter, J., Hutsebaut, D., & Duriez, B. (2012). How do perceptions of God as autonomy supportive or controlling relate to individuals' social-cognitive processing of religious contents? The role of motives for religious behavior. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, *22*(1), 10-30. doi: 10.1080/10508619.2012.634781

Sremac, S. (2014). Faith, hope, and love: A narrative theological analysis of recovering drug addicts' conversion testimonies. *Practical theology*, 7(1), 34-49. doi: 10.1179/1756073X13Z.00000000027

Stansfield, R., Mowen, T. J., O'Connor, T., & Boman, J. H. (2017). The role of religious support in reentry: Evidence from the SVORI data. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, *54*(1), 111-145. doi: 10.1177/0022427816657578

Stefon, M. (2020). Christianity. In *Encyclopædia Brittanica*. Retrieved from https://www.britannica.com/topic/Christianity

Steger, M. F., & Frazier, P. (2005). Meaning in life: One link in the chain from religiousness to well-being. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *52*(4), 574. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.52.4.574

Sung, H. E., Mellow, J., & Mahoney, A. M. (2010). Jail inmates with co-occurring mental health and substance use problems: Correlates and service needs. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, *49*(2), 126-145. doi: 10.1080/10509670903534811

Suto, I., & Arnaut, G. L. (2010). Suicide in prison: A qualitative study. *The Prison Journal*, *90*(3), 288-312. DOI: 10.1177/0032885510373499.

Swanson, C., Lee, C. B., Sansone, F. A., & Tatum, K. M. (2012). Prisoners' perceptions of father-child relationships and social support. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 37(3), 338-355. doi: 10.1007/s12103-011-9132-4

Tahmincioglu, E. (2010). Unable to get jobs, freed inmates return to jail. Retrieved from http://www.nbcnews.com/id/35263313/ns/business-careers/t/unable-get-jobs-freed-inmates-return-jail/#.VbWQ1rNVikp.

Taylor, I. M., Ntoumanis, N., & Standage, M. (2008). A self-determination theory approach to understanding the antecedents of teachers' motivational strategies in physical education. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 30(1), 75-94. doi: 10.1123/jsep.30.1.75

Thomas, J., & Zaitzow, B. H. (2006). Conning or conversion? The role of religion in prison coping. *The Prison Journal*, 86(2), 242-259. doi:10.1177/0032885506287952

Teherani, A., Martimianakis, T., Stenfors-Hayes, T., Wadhwa, A., & Varpio, L. (2015).Choosing a qualitative research approach. *Journal of graduate medical education*, *7*(4), 669-670. doi: 10.4300/JGME-D-15-00414.1

Ten Cate, O. T. J. (2013). Why receiving feedback collides with self determination. *Advances in Health Sciences Education*, 18(4), 845-849. doi: 10.1007/s10459-012-9401-0

Tighe, S. (2015). Born again, again: Conversion in Christian families as a process punctuated by grace. *Christian Education Journal*, *12*(1), 58-80. doi: 10.1177/073989131501200105

Tracey, D., & Hanham, J. (2017). Applying positive psychology to illuminate the needs of adolescent males transitioning out of juvenile detention. *International journal of offender therapy and comparative criminology*, 61(1), 64-79. doi: 10.1177/0306624X15591242

Tracy, S. J. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight "big-tent" criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(10), 837-851. doi: 10.1177/1077800410383121

Tufford, L., & Newman, P. (2012). Bracketing in qualitative research. *Qualitative social work*, *11*(1), 80-96. doi: 10.1177/1473325010368316

Unnever, J. D., Cullen, F. T., & Applegate, B. K. (2005). Turning the other cheek: Reassessing the impact of religion on punitive ideology. *Justice Quarterly*, *22*(3), 304-339. doi: 10.1080/07418820500089091

van der Walt, B. J. (2017). Sharing an integral Christian worldview with a younger

generation: Why and how should it be done and received?. *In die Skriflig, 51*(1),

1-11.

Vaughn, M. G., DeLisi, M., Beaver, K. M., Perron, B. E., & Abdon, A. (2012). Toward a

criminal justice epidemiology: Behavioral and physical health of probationers and

parolees in the United States. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, *40*(3), 165-173. doi:

10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2012.03.001

VICE, (2008). Revolving Doors: An Ex-Con's Journey Back to Prison. Retrieved from

https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/ne98gg/revolving-doors-james-burns-jason-

bobbitt-documentary.

Visher, C. A., Winterfield, L., & Coggeshall, M. B. (2005). Ex-offender employment

programs and recidivism: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Experimental

Criminology*, *1*(3), 295-316. doi: 10.1007/s11292-005-8127-x

Walters-Sleyon, G. (2013). Studies on Religion and Recidivism: Focus on Roxbury,

Dorchester, and Mattapan. *Trotter Review*, *21*(1), 4.

Ward, T., & Birgden, A. (2007). Human rights and correctional clinical practice.

Aggression and Violent Behavior, *12*(6), 628-643. doi: 10.1016/j.avb.2007.05.001

Ward, Yates, & Willis (2012). The Good Lives Model and the Risk Need Responsibility

Model: A Critical Response to Andrews, Bonta, and Wormith. *Criminal Justice

and Behavior*, 39(1). 94-110. doi: 10.1177/0093854811426085

Webb, J. R., Hirsch, J. K., Visser, P. L., & Brewer, K. G. (2013). Forgiveness and health:

Assessing the mediating effect of health behavior, social support, and

interpersonal functioning. *The Journal of psychology*, 147(5), 391-414. doi: 10.1080/00223980.2012.700964

Williams, D. R., Priest, N., & Anderson, N. B. (2016). Understanding associations among race, socioeconomic status, and health: Patterns and prospects. *Health Psychology*, 35(4), 407. doi: 10.1037/hea0000242

Yuhas, A. (2015). *'Out here, I still don't know how to live': 6,000 drug convicts brace for release*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/oct/30/prisoners-released-jail-return-society.

Zaitzow, B. H., & Jones, R. S. (2013). Redemption from the inside-out: The power of faith-based programming. *Special needs offenders in correctional institutions*, 319-344. doi: 10.4135/9781452275444.n11

Appendix A: Pastor Email Invitation

Hello,

My name is Chris Featherstone, and I am a PhD candidate at Walden University, specializing in Forensic Psychology. Currently, I am in the data collection stage of my dissertation, and I would love for you to be a part of my journey.

The topic of my dissertation involves Christian conversion in prison, and its influence on recidivism reduction. At this time, I am looking to having one-on-one interviews with ex-offenders who may are actively involved in ministry to see the impact of how living a Christian lifestyle links to having an offense-free lifestyle.

My request from you is if you insert an IRB-approved flyer in your program or an email blast to the members of your congregation with the following invitation:

Hello, and thank you for the time to read this invitation. This invitation is solely geared towards those who converted to Christianity while serving time in prison. We are asking for you to discuss your experience with a current PhD candidate who is covering this topic for his dissertation study. If this is you, please response promptly to [my email] stating that you are interested in being interviewed. Moreover, when you email me, I will be in touch to share the consent form with you, so that you have more detailed information about the study.

Thank you in advance!

Appendix B: Debrief Letter

How Conversion to Christianity While Incarcerated Leads to an Offense-Free

Lifestyle

I want to personally thank you for your consideration in participating in the study. Your time is valuable, and the time that was spent to be a part of the interview process in any way is greatly appreciated.

This study is designed to examine how conversion to Christianity leads to an offense-free lifestyle. While previous work mainly focuses on the effect of conversion in prison, the interest in this study focuses on the influence of the conversion outside of prison. Participants were selected based on an invitation letter, and a consent form was signed in order to proceed with the interview. The results will be evaluated following the conclusion of the interviews to generate common themes.

In the unlikely event that you feel distressed after this interview, please refer to the following agencies for therapeutic intervention:

- Associates in Family Care: (614) 626-2696

- WellSpring Counseling: 614-538-0353

Thank you again for your time, and may your days be blessed and prosperous.

Chris.