

THE NONPROFIT SECTOR'S INVOLVEMENT
IN PRISONER REENTRY: A MIXED
METHODS ANALYSIS

by

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ABSTRACT

THE NONPROFIT SECTOR'S INVOLVEMENT

IN PRISONER REENTRY: A MIXED

METHODS ANALYSIS

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The 1990's were plagued with crime and high recidivism rates, and the State of Texas responded by embarking upon the largest expansion of a criminal justice system in its history. Having served their sentences, record numbers of offenders who were sent to prison in the 1990's are now flooding the streets. At the time of their release, some of these offenders will have unmet needs, such as a lack of food, housing, and clothing. Others may need help enrolling in school or finding a job. Whatever their needs, a host of nonprofit organizations stand ready to assist ex-offenders in their transition from prison to the communities they will rejoin.

This is a study of the needs of ex-offenders being released into Tarrant County, Texas, and of the programs and services provided by nonprofit organizations intended to assist offenders in meeting those needs. Mixed methods were employed in the research: Quantitative data was obtained through the use of questionnaires given to offenders attending their regularly-scheduled parole meetings, and qualitative information was obtained through one-on-one interviews with representatives of local nonprofit organizations who offer assistance to ex-offenders. An analysis of the data reveals the existence of several nonprofit organizations with programs ranging in size from one that is managed by a single volunteer, to another that employs 45 paid staff with hundreds more volunteers to assist them. There are programs and services offered to help every type of offender, from the drug addict who committed property theft to support his or her habit, to the violent sex-offender. There are programs to assist offenders with the most pressing needs, such as food, clothing, shelter, and medical care. Other programs offer assistance with maintenance issues, such as substance-abuse treatment, sex-offender counseling, and job preparation and placement. The cumulative effect of the nonprofit organizations researched for this paper provide opportunities to enable those who have served time in prison—whether it was one year or 20—to become healthy, responsible, and law-abiding members of the communities to which they return.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the United States, there are approximately 4,055,514 people currently on probation and another 840,676 on parole. Each year, another 708,677 people are added to those ranks (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2012). Released offenders have a host of needs, from securing a place to live, food to eat, and clothes to wear, to obtaining employment and complying with numerous conditions of their release. A high percentage of them have health-related issues, including past histories of drug and alcohol abuse (see Table 1.1). The difference between whether they succeed on the outside or return back inside the iron gates is dependent on their ability to get these needs met. Everyone benefits when they become law-abiding citizens, contributing to the economy by purchasing goods and services and paying taxes, as opposed to draining tax dollars sitting in a prison cell.

The purpose of this research is to better understand the life and needs of offenders recently released on parole in Tarrant County, Texas, and to examine resources that exist in the nonprofit sector to assist them with that transition. This study seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) What are the primary needs of ex-offenders released from prison back into society, and (2) What types of programs and services are available and provided by the nonprofit sector to assist ex-offenders in meeting those needs?

According to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), there have been 24,289 people released on parole in Tarrant County since 2004 alone, and an undetermined number released before that (Table 1.1). These men and women returning to our communities will become our neighbors and co-workers. They might even have children who play in the park with our own. Almost all of them will be faced with obstacles stemming from their criminal convictions. Some will have difficulties complying with conditions of parole or probation and others will have to deal with past issues of drug or alcohol

dependency, which perhaps led to the commission of the criminal offense(s) that sent them to prison to begin with. Some may be returning to live with family and loved ones where everything they need is provided. Others may not have anywhere to sleep that night or clothes to wear the next day. In attempting to start new lives, all will face a daunting enough challenge getting past the record of their criminal convictions and the collateral consequences that follow.

Table 1.1. Parole Statistics as of September 30, 2012 (unless otherwise specified).

| | |
|---|--|
| 1) number of offenders currently on parole statewide; | 87,314 |
| 2) number of parolees released into Tarrant County; (* Totals of releases prior to 2004 are not available.) | 2004 2,472 2005 2,570 2006 2,592 2007 2,572 2008 2,822 2009 3,057 2010 2,800 2011 2,809 2012 2,595 (through 10/26/2012) Total 24,289 |
| 3) number of parolees supervised by each of Tarrant County's three Parole Division Offices; | DPO 1 1,867 DPO 2 2,522 DPO 3 2,223 |
| 4) number of parolees statewide who have a documented history of past drug/alcohol abuse; | 81,718 (through 10/25/2012) |
| 5) number of parolees statewide who are required to attend NA/AA or similar substance support groups; | 62,164 (through 10/25/2012) |
| 6) number of parolees currently serving parole in Tarrant County, who were convicted of drug offense after September 1, 1996. | 2,609 (through 10/26/2012) |

Source: TDCJ Executive Services

All in society share a common interest in the ex-offender who gets out of prison and gets their life in order. Faced with reduced tax revenues in the wake of the worst economic recession in 80 years, governments are slashing programs that had been vital resources for these men and women. If these folks are unable to get the help they need to start them on the right track and they return to crime, anyone could be his or her next victim. Everyone will bear the cost of the re-arrest, administrative or judicial proceedings, and additional time spent in custody if they reoffend. This issue is even more relevant today, considering the current financial crisis. Congress and state legislatures are being forced to make tough decisions when it comes to their budgets. Criminal justice expenditures remain among the largest discretionary spending bills voted on by legislatures in several states, including the State of Texas, which is the focus of this study. Table 1.2 itemizes funding allocated by the Texas Legislature for this year, showing criminal justice costs as compared to other legislative allocations.

Table 1.2 Funding Allocations by Texas Legislature 2012-2013

| | For the Years Ending | |
|--|----------------------|------------------|
| | August 31, 2012 | August 30, 2013 |
| ARTICLE I - General Government | \$1,074,975,284 | \$993,843,714 |
| ARTICLE II - Health and Human Services | 13,288,277,041 | 9,611,871,497 |
| ARTICLE III - Agencies of Education | 24,607,201,999 | 21,309,631,627 |
| ARTICLE IV - The Judiciary | 191,055,487 | 190,207,926 |
| ARTICLE V - Public Safety and Criminal Justice | 4,102,221,877 | 4,101,082,129 |
| ARTICLE VI - Natural Resources | 319,626,093 | 318,779,507 |
| ARTICLE VII - Business and Economic Develop | 287,521,211 | 290,424,268 |
| ARTICLE VIII - Regulatory | 131,627,241 | 132,731,871 |
| ARTICLE IX - General Provisions | 0 | 0 |
| ARTICLE X - The Legislature | 161,887,523 | 177,475,550 |
| GRAND TOTAL, General Revenue | \$44,164,393,756 | \$37,126,048,089 |

Source: Texas Legislature, 82nd Session, General Appropriations Act

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Building the Monster

The 1990's saw unprecedented prison growth, particularly in Texas. The State added nearly 100,000 prison beds in a decade, and at one point in 1994 the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) opened prisons at a rate of one per week. In terms of the number of people it employs, the TDCJ, which oversees the prison and parole systems, became the largest department in the State and its budget ballooned 300 percent in 13 years. This rate of growth is outlined in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 TDCJ Operating Budget and Prisoner Population Count

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Operating Budget (\$millions)</u> | <u>Total TDCJ Population</u> | <u>Incarceration Rate (per 100,000)</u> |
|-------------|--|----------------------------------|---|
| 1990 | 793 | 48,320 | 284.5 |
| 1991 | 937 | 49,608 | 285.5 |
| 1992 | 1,094 | 51,592 | 290.5 |
| 1993 | 1,343 | 64,313 | 354.4 |
| 1994 | 1,418 | 91,875 | 480 |
| 1995 | 1,705 | 127,559 | 658.8 |
| 1996 | 1,931 | 130,904 | 677 |
| 1997 | 2,066 | 138,641 | 704 |
| 1998 | 2,078 | 143,803 | 716.2 |
| 1999 | 2,084 | 146,930 | 717.9 |
| 2000 | 2,316 | 151,100 | 724.6 |
| 2001 | 2,281 | 145,391 | 682.6 |
| 2002 | 2,496 | 145,225 | 667.5 |
| 2003 | 2,583 | 147,993 | 669.1 |

Source: Texas Department of Criminal Justice; Criminal Justice Policy Council; Legislative Budget Board.

Despite locking up record numbers, governments at all levels did little to adequately prepare and equip offenders with sufficient resources to aid in their successful reentry once they were released. Going all the way back to the 1970's, legislators and prison administrators failed to account for the 95 percent of those incarcerated who would eventually get out one day, advocating instead a policy of "nothing works," following initial studies that determined nothing did (see, e.g., Martinson, 1974). Texas spent less per inmate than any other state, except Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2004). Legislators got exactly what they paid for—rising recidivism rates. Recidivism—calculated based on re-arrest within three years of release—climbed right along with the incarceration rate, rising from 35 percent in 1984 to 41 percent in 1991, and peaking out at 49.1 percent in 1999 (Texas Criminal Justice Policy Council, 2000).

Challenges to Successful Reentry

Offenders being released from prisons face a myriad of obstacles to their continued success and freedom. Travis, Solomon, and Waul (2001) identified some of the key challenges surrounding prisoner reentry. Those include issues related to offenders' history of substance abuse or mental health disorders, as well as their physical health. Pogorzelski, Wolff, Pan, and Blitz (2005) reported that nearly 60 percent of all state prisoners have a history of substance abuse. While they remain in prison, the responsibility of providing for the medical and psychological needs of prisoners lies with the jurisdiction housing them under the Cruel and Unusual Punishment Clause of the Eighth Amendment to the United States Constitution (*Estelle v. Gamble*, 1976). Yet, once the punishment of incarceration ends and the offender is released, it is their responsibility to obtain medical or psychiatric treatment where they can.

The results published by Travis, et al. (2001) were confirmed by Wheeler and Patterson (2008), who also found that those released from custody have a higher likelihood of suffering from mental illness and having a history of alcohol or drug abuse. The study's results were even more bleak, noting ex-offenders all-too-often return home lacking an education, a job, and employable skills. The study found that in many cases they have little or no clothing, nothing to eat, and sometimes no place to go. Wheeler

and Patterson proposed that the reentry process begin *prior* to the date of release, to ensure that the “transition from prerelease services to community services [is] seamless” (p. 146).

Collateral Consequences Indirectly Related to Criminal Conviction

When they become a convicted felon, serve time in prison and later on parole, their freedom is not the only thing ex-offenders lose. They also suffer additional civil penalties as a matter of law or regulation. Often referred to as “invisible punishments,” these numerous collateral sanctions were not directly a part of their criminal conviction, but serve as extensions of the formal punishments they received (see Mauer & Chesney-Lind, 2002, and Travis, J., 2002). Some of these sanctions last a lifetime. For example, a person convicted of just one felony offense for, e.g., theft of property is prohibited under federal law from *ever* having in his or her possession a gun--or even a bullet (18 U.S.C. § 922(g)). Anyone who has been convicted of a drug charge after 1996 is prohibited from receiving any federal assistance, such as food stamps, housing assistance, or student loans (21 U.S.C. § 862; 42 U.S.C. §§ 13661-13663; 20 U.S.C. § 1091). There are currently 2,609 parolees in Tarrant County who fit this description (Table 1.1). Many more additional sanctions are imposed as a matter of state law. For example, in Texas, one felony conviction can result in the person being denied a license to work in over 50 different occupations, ranging from an attorney to a barber (Tex.Occ.Cd., § 53.021). In cases where the individual already has a license and works in the field as his or her career, their license can be revoked for life.

Sex-Offender Laws

Those most serious and severely restrictive collateral consequences are imposed on those convicted of sexual offenses. Haralson and Cordeiro (2012) discuss the difficulties experienced by sex offenders and the numerous collateral consequences that make it difficult to rebuild their lives after their release from prison. Under state and federal law, anyone convicted of a number of sexual offenses is required to register as a sex-offender, with the threat of facing additional criminal charges for failing to do so (42 U.S.C.A. § 16901; Tex. Cd. Crim. Proc., article 62). In many cases, sex offenders are not only

restricted in where they can live and work, but also restricted in the places they can go and routes they can take to get there. They are also required to attend sex-offender therapy sessions and forced to submit to polygraph examinations, where they are required to answer very personal questions with threat of arrest if the examinations reveal deceit (Tex.Govt.Cd., § 499.054). If that weren't enough, those convicted of certain sexual offenses are required to submit to global positioning electronic monitoring devices, where their location and every move is tracked in real time (Tex.Health & Safety Cd., § 841.082).

Characteristics of Successful Reentry

Graffam, Shinkfield, Lavelle, and Mcpherson (2004) identified six domains that influenced offender reintegration. These include the personal condition of the offender, his or her social network, accommodations, the criminal justice system, rehabilitation and counseling, and employment and training support. Within each domain they established variables that would determine success or failure. Their study found that the ex-offenders who succeeded in avoiding re-arrest were those who showed a readiness to change, had achieved stable housing and obtained employment, avoided illegal activity and complied with mandatory reporting, abstained from past drug or alcohol dependencies, and addressed basic education and training needs. It is critical that these opportunities be present.

Nelson, Dees, and Allen (1999), conducted a study which included interviews with releases in New York. They noted the importance of a support group representative meeting the offender at the earliest possible moment after his or her release. The support of family and loved ones was strongly correlated with the returning offenders' success during the first month after their release. Five of the 49 offenders interviewed in this study did not have family or friends to live with, but instead were living in shelters at the time they were interviewed. Forty-four of the respondents acknowledged a past history of substance abuse, thus increasing the importance of their remaining connected with their support network.

A study similar to this one conducted by Bahr, Armstrong, Gibbs, Harris, and Fisher (2005) included interviews with 51 parolees over a three-month period immediately following their release from prison. The study found that the variables most associated with successful reentry included the number of

close relationships the offender has, the offenders' employment status, and whether they have stable housing. The findings suggested the importance of ex-offenders' overall network of family and friends who are willing to help by giving the parolee a place to live, work, or some other type of assistance that brings more stability to the offender's life. The stronger the bonds the offender has to law-abiding people, the more likely they are to continue to obey the law themselves. This life course perspective suggests that "[m]otivations for crime are influenced by the encouragements and reinforcements parolees receive from primary group[s] such as family and peers" (p. 246).

Employment

In their study of releases in New York City, Nelson, Dees, and Allen (1999) found that landing a job was the greatest concern of most of those interviewed. Lipsey (1995) conducted a meta-analysis of 400 different studies and determined, likewise, that having legitimate employment opportunities was the single most important factor in reducing recidivism. The difficulties faced by ex-offenders are not only directly related to their past criminal records, but also because of the fact that so many lack educational or job-related skills. One survey conducted in four major U.S. cities found employers to be more reluctant to hire those who have recently been released from prison than *any* other demographic, including welfare recipients and those who have been chronically unemployed (Holzer, Raphael, & Stoll, 2002).

Texas had a program that helped ex-offenders in their job search for the first year after their release from prison. Project RIO, or **Re**Integration of **O**ffenders, was a program that was administered through the Texas Workforce Commission to assist ex-offenders with jobs and job search skills during the first year after their release (Tex. Lab. Cd., § 301.001, *et seq*). However, when the financial crisis hit in 2007, the Texas Legislature cut funding for Project RIO and discontinued the program without creating an alternative.

Social Networks

Lynch and Sabol (2001) characterized reentry as a time of social reintegration. Experts have acknowledged the importance of social networks in successful prisoner reentry (See, e.g., Brown & Ryan-Krane, 2000; and Schultheiss, 2006). While social structure is important, one study suggests that many offenders feel out of touch with the community they return to and are less reluctant to ask for help (Haney, 2006). Another study shows that the longer a person serves in prison, the more difficult it is for them to integrate into the social structure that exists outside of prison after their release (Goodstein, 1980). Though strong bonds among family and friends within the community offer desistance from crime and recidivism (Maruna, 2001), not everyone has these resources awaiting them.

Religion and Religious Services

Prisons in America have a historic relationship to the church. As noted by Johnson (2008), several terms used to refer to prison or its purpose can be traced to religious origins. These include such terms as *penitentiary*, *reformation*, *restoration*, and concepts such as *solitary confinement* (see, e.g., McGowen, 1995; and Peters, 1995). Religious groups volunteer their time visiting jails and prisons, conducting Bible studies and similar programs of hope and change for the many prisoners who attend. One report, following 13,986 face-to-face interviews with inmates, reported religious activities to attract more participants inside America's prisons than any other extracurricular activity, work and educational activities excluded (Johnson).

Religion has been found to "act as a social control mechanism" (Camp, Klien-Saffran, Kwon, Daggett, & Joseph, 2006, p. 532). Studies have shown that religious commitment and regular involvement in religious activities are both linked to reductions in deviant behaviors (Baier & Wright, 2001; Johnson, Tomkins, & Webb, 2006). These benefits of religion on crime prevention exist, regardless of race (Freeman, 1986; Johnson, et al., 2000), or socio-economic status (Jang & Johnson, 2001).

In their study of offenders who rely on their faith to help them succeed on the outside, Camp, et al. (2006) discovered that those with religious convictions were less likely to be rearrested than a comparison group. A similar study conducted by Prison Fellowship, the largest prison ministry in the nation, found that those who participated in religious programming while in prison were significantly less likely to be arrested during a one-year follow-up period (Johnson, Larson, & Pitts, 1997).

A six-year study of the InnerChange Freedom Initiative implemented in one Texas prison was conducted by Johnson (2003). This was a program in which participants, all of whom voluntarily attended, were separated from the rest of the prison population and housed separately with others in the faith-based program. The published results determined that those completing the program had less than half the likelihood of being rearrested.

Nonprofit Organizations and Prisoner Reentry

Camp, et al. (2006) noted nonprofit organizations' involvement in prisoner reentry. Several others have reported on their success across the country. For example, one organization in Rochester, New York, called Prodigal Sons and Daughters reported an 11% recidivism rate for those who participated in their reentry program (Sorrentino, 2001). This is only one-third the national average. Likewise, in their review of 32 published studies, Seiter and Kadela (2003) identified reentry programs that worked. Particularly, they found vocational training and work release programs to effectively reduce recidivism and to better prepare offenders for jobs; drug treatment reduced the likelihood of future relapse, drug-related crimes, and parole violations; halfway house programs reduced severe criminal behavior; and prerelease programs reduced recidivism.

However, the literature suggests that the mere existence of a reentry program guarantees nothing. For example, Wilson and Davis (2006) evaluated The Vera Institute's *Project Greenlight* reentry program and found that those participating actually had an increased likelihood of re-arrest (31%) than a comparison group (22%). Not only did they have a higher likelihood of being rearrested, but "intervention participants [were] arrested at higher rates for more serious crimes as well" (p. 319).

The Second Chance Act

On January 29th, 2001, President George W. Bush issued Executive Order 13199, creating the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (Government Printing Office, 2004). Then, in his 2004 State of the Union speech, President Bush advocated on behalf of prisoners across the country, stating that:

This year, some 600,000 inmates will be released from prison back into society. We know from long experience that if they can't find work, or a home, or help, they are much more likely to commit more crimes and return to prison.... America is the land of the second chance, and when the gates of the prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life (2004 State of the Union address).

President Bush followed up his speech with action, endorsing the Second Chance Act (2008), which was signed into law on April 9th, 2008. This included a \$300 million grant program under the newly-created Prisoner Reentry Initiative (currently renamed the Reintegration of Ex-Offenders (RExO)) program. The RExO program is "designed to strengthen urban communities through an employment-centered program that incorporates mentoring, job-training, and other comprehensive transitional services" (Department of Labor, 2007). The program provides grants to faith-based and community organizations that provide vocational programs, job training, and mentorship to ex-offenders navigating the process. The overall purpose of this bill was to strengthen the coordination between criminal justice agencies and faith-based and other community nonprofits. The Second Chance Act made it easier for these organizations to apply for and receive federal grant money to implement programs that assisted ex-offenders with educational or vocational programs and jobs. The program also incorporated a mentorship, in which a member of the community and representative of the nonprofit organization implementing the funds would oversee and report on the offender's progress.

Good and Sherrid (2005) discussed the potential benefits of offering mentoring to adults released from prison, "to provide for them a life coach to assist them in navigating through the world of work and

other major life challenges” (p. 16). In fact, they discovered that employers were much more likely to hire an ex-convict if they had a community sponsor who could vouch for their character. In his support for this the Second Chance Act, President Bush acknowledged that government is ill-equipped to “provide for the mentoring, care, and social supports that are essential for any effective and holistic plan for prisoner reentry” (Johnson, 2008, pp. 9-10). That is the responsibility of volunteers and nonprofit organizations.

If it is determined that nonprofit organizations can be better suppliers of programs, governments often cut the budget for the direct supply of these programs and instead opt to increase public financial support for nonprofits to enable them to succeed in what they do best. Many researchers (e.g., James 1987, 1993; Salamon 1987; Smith and Lipsky 1993; Frank and Salkever 1994; Kapur and Weisbrod 2000; Gronbjerg and Paarlberg 2001) have observed this relationship between governments and nonprofits. Matsunaga, Yamauchi, and Okuyama (2010) referred to this sort of financial relationship between the two as “the complementary financing hypothesis” (p 185). Afraid to take the entire risk themselves, governments are more willing to offer financial support to nonprofits.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This project sought to answer the following research questions:

- (1) What are the primary needs of ex-offenders released from prison back into society; and
- (2) What types of programs and services are available and provided by the nonprofit sector to assist ex-offenders in meeting those needs?

Offender Needs

The first phase of this research sought to determine the needs of ex-offenders recently released from Texas prisons into Tarrant County and the surrounding area. With approval granted by UTA's Institutional Review Board and the TDCJID through the Parole Division Regional Director's Office, questionnaires were passed out at all three Tarrant County (Fort Worth), Texas, parole offices. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to parolees during their regular monthly/weekly parole visits. The racial, cultural, and socio-economic status of parolees living in the three parole districts in Tarrant County differ significantly. Thus, to minimize bias associated with these and other factors, the questionnaires were evenly distributed among the three offices, with 134 questionnaires handed out at the District I office and 133 each at the offices in Districts II and III. The questionnaires were offered to offenders over a five-week period, beginning on March 12, 2012, at the District II office, and ending on April 6th, 2012, at District I.

The researcher stood outside the main entrance of each parole office and introduced himself by name and as a researcher conducting research for his master's thesis. The potential participant was notified of the topic of the thesis research and invited to participate by taking home, filling out, and mailing

back the 2-page, typed questionnaire. Envelopes were also provided, with postage prepaid and affixed, to ease this process and in hopes of receiving a higher response rate.

Every parolee visiting the parole office(s) was offered the questionnaire. Some of them brought their wives, girlfriends, parents, or some other relative or friends with them. In these instances, the researcher asked if one or more of those individuals was on parole, and offered questionnaires to those who answered in the affirmative. Each person offered the questionnaire was informed of the purpose of study – to determine the impact of the nonprofit sector on prisoner reentry – and examples were provided so the potential participants would better understand. Each person was notified that their participation was voluntary only, that they could decline, and that if they did choose to participate their identity would remain anonymous (see Appendix A). During the four weeks that this research was being conducted, only three parolees declined to accept the questionnaire. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed.

The questions sought information concerning respondents' time spent on parole. This included questions regarding the offenders' length of time spent in prison, the date of their release, whether they had a history of drug or alcohol abuse or drug convictions on their record, whether they are required to attend substance-abuse peer groups, their current employment status, and any potential difficulties they encountered in their search for employment (see Appendix B).

Fifty-two questionnaires were returned to the post office box each of the envelopes had been pre-addressed to, for a return rate of 13 percent. Each envelope had been marked to determine which of the three offices the respondent had been approached and handed the questionnaire. The responses were logged into a spreadsheet and statistical comparisons were made against statewide data provided by the TDCJ.

Nonprofit Organizations

The second phase of this research sought to discover the types of programs and services provided by the nonprofit sector which are available to assist recently-released ex-offenders in meeting their primary needs. This was accomplished by conducting in-person interviews with representatives of nine nonprofit organizations that provide programs and/or services to ex-offenders in Tarrant County, Texas, and one organization that assists those released in Johnson County, bordering Tarrant County to

the south. Potential organizations targeted for interviews were identified through snowballing. The author came into the study with prior knowledge of one of the organizations interviewed. One organization was chosen after it was the subject of a full-page report in a local newspaper (Mitchell, 2010). Other organizations were found after speaking with parole officials during the first phase of the research and by referrals from organizations interviewed throughout the research.

Eight interviews with nonprofit personnel took place on-site at the respective organization's offices. Two of the interviews took place in two different Starbucks Coffee Shops. Prior to the beginning of the interview, introductions were made and each participant was advised as to the nature and purpose of the study. Each person interviewed was provided an Informed Consent Form (Appendix C). The details outlined in the Informed Consent Form were explained by the researcher and each participant was asked if they had any questions.

After consenting to be interviewed for the study, each participant was asked a number of questions regarding the organization each represented, what that organization did, who it helped, and how. The interviewer used an approved protocol as a guide (Appendix D), but questions asked and topics discussed varied for each interview based on responses to the main questions. The interviews were audio recorded and ranged from 20 to 61 minutes. The audio recordings were later transcribed to text and coded in thematical categories for analyses.

CHAPTER 4
ANALYSIS OF DATA

Expected Outcomes

Offender Questionnaires

In a study directly involving released ex-offenders, the expectation is that those who respond would complain about difficulties they have had since their release. Following the literature, it is expected that the chief complaint of offender respondents would be difficulty obtaining and/or maintaining employment. The researcher anticipates high unemployment rates stemming from ex-offenders' lack of education, vocational skills, and/or work experience. The respondents should also complain about economic factors associated with their difficulty finding employment. For those who lack a supportive family or social structure upon their release, others issues that should come up include problems maintaining payments for food, housing, as well as a vehicle or transportation costs. Some will likely complain about parole conditions.

The offenders are being asked to make self-admissions as to whether they have a history of alcohol or drug abuse. Judging by previously published studies, these percentages should be high. It is hoped that the offenders are addressing these issues by attending some form of recovery or 12-step program. The researcher expects that a high percentage of respondents are required to participate in such programs as a condition of their release.

A great majority of releases should report that they have sought the assistance of others immediately following their release. These others include nonprofit organizations that provide programs and services to ex-offenders, including but not limited to those interviewed for this study. Considering the legal or administrative restrictions placed on grant money, several may complain that they have been denied the help they asked for and needed due to the nature of their convictions.

Interviews with Nonprofit Organizations

Common characteristics ought to exist in describing the organizations that help ex-offenders. They are expected to be small, have little outside funding, and may have been met with adversity from those living in and around the neighborhoods in which they sit. However, public (government) support for their programs ought to be high, considering the TDCJ's reliance on these programs for the fulfillment of parole guidelines, and because the State provides no alternative. As is normally the case with nonprofit organizations, funding ought to be the biggest obstacle to providing their services.

Results from Ex-Offender Questionnaires

Out of 400 questionnaires handed out at the three Tarrant County parole offices, 52 were completed and returned to the post office box to which each envelope had been pre-addressed, for a 13 percent response rate. Of those, 13 were passed out at the District I office, 18 at District II, and 20 at District III. One questionnaire was returned in an envelope other than the one provided, so it cannot be determined which office it was handed out at. Those responding had been initially released from prison as far back as September of 1993 and as recently as April 4, 2012, just a few days prior to the beginning of this research. They had been incarcerated for periods of time ranging from five months to 27 years, or an average of 8.25 years. Most were a part of the prison expansion that took place in the 1990's, as previously discussed, above, and as presented in Table 2.1.

Offender Employment

When asked to describe their most difficult struggle while on parole, 18 of the respondents replied getting a job and sufficient money to live. There were 25 who said they needed assistance in finding employment immediately following their release. Of those, 11 sought the assistance of nonprofit organizations that help ex-offenders find jobs, but only one responded that they were actually hired. At the time the study was conducted, only 18 of the respondents said they were employed, with three saying they were disabled and, thus, could not work. The remainder of 31 respondents said they were currently unemployed and looking for jobs, a 59.6 percent unemployment rate. Table 4.1 illustrates how these numbers compare to statewide parole data obtained in an open records request to TDCJ.

The responses suggest the exercise of diligence in their search for jobs—applications submitted during their job searches averaged approximately 25 per person. Only five of respondents said they did not have a high school diploma or G.E.D., with two college graduates, one of whom has a master’s degree. Thirty-six responded that they believed they had been denied jobs they otherwise qualify for based on their criminal histories alone. Nine said they had actually lost jobs after being hired when employers later became aware of their criminal records.

Table 4.1. Comparison of Respondents to Statewide Parole Data.

| | Parolees statewide | Respondent data |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Unemployed | 51% | 59.6% |
| History of substance-abuse | 93.6% | 67.3% |
| Required to attend 12-step group | 71.2% | 53.8% |

Source for statewide data: TDCJ Executive Services

Other Offender Needs

Though the specific needs of the offenders varied, some common themes appeared. Thirty respondents said that they lacked food, housing, or sufficient clothing at the time of their release. Thirty-four said that they had sought these items from others, including 25 who said they sought help from one or more of the organizations researched in this study. Twenty-five responded that they required medical services immediately after their release. Other responses given describing the most difficult struggle while on parole included the lack of transportation and dealing with parole conditions. Thirty five of the respondents admitted past history of drug or alcohol abuse and 32 of these were required to attend substance-abuse treatment peer groups such as *Alcoholics Anonymous* or *Narcotics Anonymous* (see Table 4.1). Nineteen credited the support of a church, peer support group, aftercare treatment center, professional counselor, or some other organization helping them with sobriety and continued obedience to law. Though, 25 responded that they did not attend church services at all.

Results from Interviews with Nonprofit Organizations

The organizations interviewed varied by size, from a maximum of 45 full-time, paid staff, to no paid staff at all. The oldest organization, also the largest, was founded in 1992; the newest began operations in 2008. Seven of the 10 organizations involved in this research had been formed in 2005 or after. When asked to estimate the number of people each organization had assisted, all but one said they had helped more than 100, with the two oldest responding that they had each helped thousands.

The largest organization made part of this study receives large grants from three federal agencies, including money from the Second Chance Act. They operate a facility employing 45 full-time staff and had an estimated 788 volunteers last year alone. The services they provide begin with the necessities—food, clothing, and housing. There is a food pantry on-site. The organization runs a thrift shop the size of a retail shopping store which is open to the general public, and companies such as Ralph Lauren, Abercrombie & Fitch, and others donate clothing to be distributed free to ex-offenders who need them. The Department of Housing & Urban Development provides grant money for this organization to use as rental assistance for housing ex-offenders. Additional services include educational and vocational training, career counseling, and a program that assists those who have skilled trades with the purchase of tools so they can get to work. As if that weren't enough, the facility includes a free medical and dental clinic, with eight doctors from different disciplines who donate their time to perform everything from a routine check-up or teeth-cleaning, to actual surgical procedures!

Administrators of one organization on the border with an adjacent county next to Tarrant began as a domestic violence shelter in 2005, but expanded its program to include reentry programs in 2009. It currently houses approximately 50 men and 12 women. Some of them are housed under the State's Temporary Housing Assistance Program (THAP). Those programs include housing, clothing, food, educational and job training, and weekly peer support groups and Bible studies. They won a grant for job access for first commute, enabling them to provide transportation so ex-offenders can conduct job searches and attend interviews. In addition, they have secured the trust of several local employers who have hired some of the residents staying at their facility.

One organization prides itself concerning its capability of assisting those with mental health disorders by working closely with MHMR-Tarrant County, Rehabilitation Alternatives for Parolees (Project RAPP), and the Tarrant County Acute Treatment Program (TCAT)—all three programs which are coordinated through governmental agencies. They receive referrals from these agencies, but one of their biggest referral sources is directly from parole officials in Tarrant and Parker Counties. The organization works with the court system, allowing access to its facilities for criminal defendants to fulfill community service obligations. In many cases with those completing community service, it is determined that they have other needs that the organization can meet. At the time of the interview, administrators were testing a pilot program with a Tarrant County judge to get prostitutes off the street. The founder and executive director of the organization reported that they currently had taken in five prostitutes under the pilot program. Of those, four had jobs, one was receiving disability benefits, and two were reportedly working on college degrees. On occasion, this same judge also requires probationers who have failed drug tests and are awaiting placement in 30-day, government-funded rehabilitation programs to be temporarily housed at the facility.

Faith-Based

All but two of the organizations interviewed identified themselves as faith-based. Use of the words Lord, God, Christ, Jesus, faith, and references to ministry, or to spiritual or biblical principles during all ten interviews totaled 237, or a mean of 24. The two organizations that receive the largest amounts of public grant money for its funding were the only ones not to use any of these words; they were also the oldest of the organizations the researcher met with. During one interview with an organization that identified itself as faith-based, the respondent was asked whether they would accept someone of non-Christian faith, such as a Muslim, into their program. He said he would accept a Muslim, though none had ever applied for the program. He followed that response by stating that “if we can win him to Jesus, all the better.”¹

¹ *Id.*

Programs

When considering issues of prisoner reentry, one thinks of the time period beginning on the date the ex-offender is released from confinement. Yet, the process of reentry actually begins prior to the release date, and the offender must begin to plan and prepare long before that date comes up. At least three of the organizations researched in this study begin their processes through correspondence received from the offender while they are still serving their time.

Some of those interviewed mentioned the restrictions on their ability to assist sex-offenders, whether by statute, governmental regulation, or according to the terms of grants or donations received. While these restrictions limit the assistance nonprofits can offer to those convicted of sexual offenses, two of the organizations particularized their services to meet the needs of sex offenders only. One of these organizations operates two houses where ex-offenders previously-convicted of sexual offenses live together. State-mandated, sex-offender counseling is offered weekly on-site to ease the ex-offenders' compliance with special conditions of parole. Ten men live in one of the houses and two live in a second house that is currently being renovated to house more. It was discovered that they live together as family, eating at the same table and praying together each night. There is an honor code and disciplinary chain-of-command in the event problems arise among those living in the facility, though no major problems had ever occurred. The other organization catering to sex-offenders has a smaller facility capable of housing two offenders, though only one was living there at the time of the interview. The founders of these organizations, both of whom were interviewed as part of this research, said neither had any problems with their neighbors or city officials. It eases the work of parole officials, who appreciate the fact that they can visit more than one client at the same address.

The two organizations who provide services exclusively to sex-offenders discussed the limitations on the livelihood of their clients. As the literature suggests, these include global positioning (GPS) satellite electronic monitoring and limitations on the routes they take to and from work and any other place that has been approved by parole officials, in order to avoid child-safety zones within specified distances from churches, schools, parks, and other areas where children may be present. The representatives of both of these organizations discussed sex-offender legislation, in general, and its application in the ordinary lives

of offenders serving the remainder of their parole term on the streets, in particular. Both organizations actively supported legislative changes to bring “reasonableness to the laws” applied to sex-offenders.² One of the two interviewed wrote a book on the subject and, in addition to running an organization that houses men with the dual diagnoses of sex-offender and some other mental health disorder, he meets with legislators and gathers support for changes to sex-offender legislation.

One of the organizations interviewed offered assistance to women only. They owned a house where their clients lived and they offered services such as GED and vocational education classes at their office. In addition, the organization assisted women with resumè writing and job interview skills. Computers were provided to assist women in their job searches.

Reliance on Governmental Agencies

All of those interviewed discussed Special Condition “S,” which requires parolees to attend substance-abuse recovery groups, such as *Alcoholics Anonymous* or *Narcotics Anonymous*. Four of the organizations researched provide programming that TDCJ accepts as the fulfillment of these conditions. Data provided by the TDCJ as part of the research for this project reveal the actual numbers of releases who have this Special Condition “S”. These include 81,718 statewide (Table 4.1). Additional information received from TDCJ in an open records request for this project acknowledges that, despite adding this condition as a parole requirement, the State does not provide these peer group programs, but instead relies on nonprofit and community organizations to provide them instead (Appendix E).

The largest organization involved in this study has contracts or agreements with every level of government. Including its grants from the federal Departments of Justice, Labor, and Housing & Urban Development, the organization also has entered into formal agreements with Tarrant County, the Tarrant County Sheriff’s Department, the City of Fort Worth, and at least one criminal district court.

The ministry bordering Parker County reported how well they work with parole officials, from whom they have received many referrals and requests to expand their facility to allow room for more ex-offenders to be housed there. The organization’s founder stated that parole officials were relieved to work

² Anonymous Personal Communication, June 4th, 2012.

with them because they are making parole officers' jobs easier. She went on to say that parole officials in Johnson and Tarrant Counties "love what [they] do."³ Every organization researched in this project expressed their mutual appreciation of TDCJ and parole officials, and vice versa. Many prisoners come up for parole but don't have anywhere to go. One of those interviewed in this study noted that, without an approved address to parole to, the prisoner(s) will not be released. By providing housing for those released from prison, seven of the organizations are assisting the TDCJ in reducing costs.

Reliance on Other Nonprofit Organizations

The representative of the largest participant organization in this study says that his organization first makes contact with the ex-offender after being referred by one of their 110 "network partners."⁴ He then went on to explain how they relied on other local nonprofit organizations to refer their clients, and that they involve the referring organization in the implementation of an offender case plan. The larger organization then provides the resources, as necessary, to affect that plan, "to produce a fuller array of support services for that individual."⁵ He noted his organization's main focus was "helping others do their programs."⁶ Evidence of the coordination between the groups of organizations studied as well as their coordination with outside entities to which each is independently associated was supported by all the interviews conducted in this research. For example, one mentioned his organization's membership in, both, the International Network of Prison Ministries, which has about 4,000 members, and the Full Gospel's Fellowship of Churches. His explanation says it best:

People need to know that someone cares. And they are scared to death of the idea of coming out because the world has changed. They don't know where to go to find help. And sometimes that leads them to do something to get back to prison. Because at least in prison they know the rules. They know how to conduct themselves. They know who to hang out with and who to stay away from. Who to protect and who to be mindful of and watch. And in the free world they'll tell you

³ Anonymous Personal Communication, September 8th, 2012.

⁴ Anonymous Personal Communication, April 26th, 2012.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

they don't know all that. Well, we exist to help them find those answers by connecting them with other people who care and who will give them some guidance.⁷

Each person interviewed was asked about their marketing, or how potential clients become aware of their services. At least three of the organizations interviewed have their names and contact information on approved offender housing lists maintained by the TDCJ. The TDCJ makes these lists available to prisoners approaching their release dates. Information about the other organizations is relayed by word of mouth, past clients, or from someone else in the network of reentry nonprofits. Everyone who agreed to be interviewed was familiar, and in some cases very good friends with most, if not all of the others interviewed. Almost all of those interviewed either currently or in the past had worked with one or more of the other organizations in some capacity, either as an employee or as a volunteer. In addition, the organizations network with one another and market themselves to the public through social media outlets such as Facebook, where five of those interviewed have pages devoted to their mission and supporting the missions of others.

One of the interviews occurred at a local church from which the respective organization operates. Another uses a church facility for its peer support groups, meals, and other organization-sponsored events. After plugging newly-released offenders into programs and services in the process of rebuilding their lives, this organization then takes the ex-offenders back into a local jail and a TDCJ prison to minister to prisoners about their own stories of success.

One organization had as its primary mission family reunification—that is, working with both the recently-released offender and his or her family and loved ones. The individual interviewed made the point that the offenders' family members are doing time on the street while their loved one is on the inside. Both will be in store for major changes once the offender is released. The organization's three full-time employees and others who volunteer their time help the offender participants establish healthy expectations and boundaries.

⁷ Anonymous Communication, April 10th, 2012.

Impediments to Success

As mentioned above, one of the organizations in this study is the recipient of three large federal grants, and they also reported that they receive several other grants specifically geared toward the ex-offender. Every organizations interviewed was not as fortunate. Five of those interviewed reported they received no grant money at all. The organizations brought in revenue to pay for their programs through a variety of means. As discussed above, the largest organization relies on several government grants from the federal, county, and city levels. Some of the organizations operated purely off of private donations, while others held fundraising events. The organization that focuses on helping women only raises money by sponsoring an annual golf tournament at a very nice golf course in North Fort Worth. The organization based in Johnson County sells its t-shirts and other merchandise and holds fundraiser dinners, where they charge attendees per plate. Three of the organizations that offer housing as part of their services charge a flat monthly fee from the offenders participating in their programs.

There has been a growing awareness of the need to offer programs and services to those being released from prisons and jails throughout the State of Texas. Still, half of the organizations interview complained that their lack of funding and public support was an impediment to their even greater potential for success. The founder of one organization discussed the need for better lines of communication to offenders who need a place to go when they are released. Referring to the THAP program, he noted that that TDCJ has lists of approved transitional housing that they provide to those who are about to be released. Yet, he went on to mention that “transitional houses are very poorly maintained... there’s addresses and locations for transitional homes that haven’t been there for years.”⁸ He went on to acknowledge “there wasn’t really any organization that gave contact points to the men that were inside a prison.”⁹ The system could throw them into prisons, but there was little preparation for their release outside the nonprofit sector. Moreover, the names, addresses, and phone numbers of businesses who supposedly hired ex-offenders which were given to them by prison officials prior to their release were reported to be inaccurate and/or outdated as well.

⁸ Anonymous personal communication, June 11th, 2012.

⁹ *Id.*

Measuring Success

In its simplest terms, the success of these organizations is measured by the number of ex-offenders who participate in their programs and avoid re-arrest. Four of the organizations did not disclose these numbers, if they are even available. They included the three largest organizations and the one smallest. The rest gave the number of failures they had had since their founding. One that had helped approximately 900 ex-offenders over the years had only 11 who had reportedly been re-arrested. Two others estimated they have each helped approximately 100 people, with only one known failure for one and no known failures to date for the other. All of the organizations mentioned that they try to stay in contact with former clients, some of whom are invited back to work as volunteers within the ministry.

CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion

The failures of criminal justice agencies that were evident in the 1990's have given rise to a growing number of nonprofit organizations who have among their primary mission to serve the ex-offender by providing assistance throughout the transition from prison to the streets. Judging by the number of employment applications submitted and organizations contacted for that purpose, it does appear that finding and maintaining employment is one of the biggest factors affecting the daily lives of ex-offenders. It remains unclear which of the organizations the 11 reportedly contacted seeking help with finding a job, the fact that only one reported actually being hired calls into question the success of nonprofits in overcoming what the majority of offenders said was their biggest obstacle. There is no explanation for why the respondents' unemployment rate (59.6%) is so much higher than the statewide parolee unemployment rate (51%) (see Table 4.1).

With 27 of the respondents saying they attended church, 11 saying they did so more than twice a week, and four saying they attended daily, the fact that all but two of the organizations emphasized the faith-based nature of their programming is useful. However, there remains some concern about the faith-based aspect, especially in light of the fact that the questionnaire responses revealed that nearly half (25 respondents) said they did not attend church services at all. There doesn't seem to be sufficient programming for non-believers, or non-Christians. Though there has been much success with those who have participated in their programs, a continuing concern exists for ex-offenders who do not have a spiritual or faith-based belief system, yet who still need the assistance the programs offer. One organization has had ex-offenders decline the services on that basis alone.

Through the research it was discovered that neither TDCJ, nor any other governmental agency provides the facilities for offenders to attend 12-step, alcoholism and/or substance-abuse peer groups (Appendix E). These are generally provided by groups such as *Alcoholics Anonymous* and *Narcotics*

Anonymous—nonprofit organizations. Without nonprofit organizations, these resources would not be available to offenders, nor would many who are required to attend these meetings be able to fulfill the requirements of their parole release. That said, it was welcoming to see that TDCJ prison and parole officials coordinate well with each of the organizations interviewed. Only one of the participants reported past difficulties with parole authorities, but it is more likely this was a negative result of his having once been a tenured employee of the Parole Division and, thus, may be seen as a traitor in administrators' eyes higher up the chain of command. Otherwise, every organization expressed their appreciation for the relationships they had established with TDCJ officials and other governmental agencies. It is the interdependency between and amongst the government and the organizations interviewed that explain the success of the programs discussed above.

The most surprising result concerned the two organizations that help sex-offenders only. The literature was, both, supported and contradicted. It was supported, considering the struggles endured by this demographic, with all the collateral consequences that follow people who have been convicted of these types of crimes. What was unexpected, however, was their success with one another and their ability to gain the acceptance of the neighbors surrounding them. In fact, it was good to see and hear about how every nonprofit organization researched had gotten to know and been accepted into their respective community as neighbors.

Recommendations

Additional Research

The days of prison building in Texas have long since come to an end. In 2011, the State actually closed down one of its prisons for the first time since its inception into the Union. The most recent recidivism rate is 27.9 percent, lowest in the State's history (TDCJ, 2011). Crime is at its lowest rate since 1973, as lawmakers shift their priorities "from lock 'em up justice to rehabilitation programs" (Ward, 2011). Though these reductions began to occur simultaneously with the expansion of nonprofit organizations that focus their services on recently-released offenders, no known studies have been conducted or published reports written to determine whether any correlation exists between the two. While the success/failure rates provided by the organizations interviewed are a welcoming sign, they could not be

verified. Additionally, possible bias may exist considering the self-reporting of the organization participants, who may exaggerate their successes and report their statistics in a way more favorable to themselves and their organization.

Likewise, there is no way to determine the accuracy of information provided through the ex-offender questionnaires. The answers given could be skewed to emphasize difficulties they face, or to minimize their roles and responsibilities. Moreover, the limitations of this study prevent reliable follow-up of the success of each individual offender, or of the organization(s) involved. Names and contact information of offenders were not sought in either phase of the research. For a more thorough examination of the impact these programs have on the lives of ex-offenders, a longitudinal study tracking offenders' lives more directly is needed. To better assess whether job-search programs offered by nonprofit organizations are more or less successful than those previously offered by the State, this data could be compared to archived data that was gathered by the now-defunct Project RIO program.

Policy Recommendations

As noted above, all but three of the organizations made part of this research began their work within the last five years, *since* the introduction of the Second Chance Act. One of the organizations receives Second Chance Act grants directly from the federal government and they coordinate with and assist some of the other organizations in meeting their missions. Though, as mentioned above, there is no hard data to confirm whether any correlation exists between the passage of the Second Chance Act and reductions in crime or recidivism, from a policy perspective, it appears the Second Chance Act has been a success when considering the number of nonprofit organizations that have been created in the last five years with their resources focused on helping those returning to communities after serving time in prison. Considering the amount money saved by not having to re-incarcerate offenders who take advantage of the assistance offered, but instead go on to live their lives in obedience to the law—not to mention the number of citizens who will not have to go through the experience of being the victims of their crimes not committed—Congress should continue to offer grants and other financial or tax-credit incentives enabling nonprofits to do this work. Specifically, Congress should continue and expand current grant programs allotted to the states to be transferred to nonprofit organizations that provide programs of

opportunity to ex-offenders returning to communities across the country. The ReXO program and Second Chance Act grants appear to have been successful; in that, they have enhanced the incentive available to individuals who are interested in creating organizations whose primary mission includes helping recently-released offenders in their quests for employment.

The Texas Legislature and the citizens they represent have an interest in cutting costs for services provided by the State, particularly in situations where evidence suggests the same or better quality of service could be provided outside the umbrella of a governmental agency. This research did not attempt to make that determination. However, legislation should be written requiring TDCJ and the organizations that work with ex-offenders to maintain accurate records of those who have come to them for help. This should include demographic and geographical information, standardized needs-assessment data, and information gathered from periodic follow-ups with offenders seeking assistance in order to determine their current status and whether or not their needs had been met. The collection of this information would enable lawmakers in making future legislative proposals that are evidence-based. In the case of programs and services provided by, both, a State agency or agencies and nonprofit organizations, information would be available to allow the legislature to determine which is most successful and/or cost-effective and the degree to which they coordinate and work with one another.

The results indicate that communication between the TDCJ and at least some of the organizations interviewed was inadequate. The Texas Board of Criminal Justice, in conjunction with the TDCJ – Executive Services Division, should consider implementing administrative policies and regulations formally acknowledging all organizations that help offenders with any need and at every stage of the criminal justice process. These policies should include the names and contact information of the organizations, as well as the types of programs or services each offers. To maintain the accuracy of the information, it should be updated at least annually. With improved coordination between the TDCJ and nonprofit organizations, those involved could provide a continuum of service, beginning with the preparation of the offenders' release while they remain inside prison, and continuing to the date of his or her release into the community.

No person or organization of people can make anyone else change. While they may provide resources of all kinds and be able to motivate and encourage, ultimately it comes down to the actions of the individual. However, if a person just recently released from prison really wants to change for the better, the resources exist within the nonprofit sector here in Tarrant County to see them through. This is true no matter the resources he or she has available—or not—when beginning their journey outside prison gates.

APPENDIX A

INTRODUCTION GIVEN TO OFFENDERS
INVITING PARTICIPATION
IN QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction to Ex-Offenders

“My name is Michael Woods. I am a graduate student at the University of Texas at Arlington and I am currently conducting research for my master’s thesis. The topic of my thesis is on the nonprofit sector’s involvement in prisoner reentry. Simply put, I am gathering information from ex-offenders regarding their participation in programs offered by nonprofit organizations. Some examples of nonprofit organizations include churches; substance-abuse treatment peer groups, such as Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous; as well as housing, clothing or food assistance, and educational or job-placement programs specifically designed for people who have recently been released from jail or prison. My goal is to determine what impact, if any, these programs have on offenders’ successful transition from jail or prison to freedom. The results of my research could possibly support requests to the legislature or TDCJ officials to expand these programs to help yourself and others in the future.

“I am asking for your participation in filling out this questionnaire and returning it to me in the pre-addressed, stamped envelope I have included with the questionnaire. You will notice that I am not asking for your name, TDCJ number, or any other identifiable information. You will remain anonymous. In addition, you are not required to participate at all; your agreement to participate is entirely voluntary. By completing this questionnaire and returning it to me, you are providing your implied consent to be a part of this study. Would you be willing to participate?”

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE GIVEN TO EX-OFFENDERS

Questionnaire for Ex-Offenders

1. [Note the gender of the subject]
2. When were you released from confinement?
3. How long were you locked up?
4. Do you currently have a G.E.D.? If not, are you aware of organizations that help people get their G.E.D.'s?
5. Do you have a history of drug use?
6. Since your release, have you attended any self-help or 12-Step meetings? If so, where?
7. Do you attend a church or other religious meeting place on a regular basis? If so, where? How often do you attend?
8. Does your church offer any special programs aimed toward ex-offenders or others in recovery? If so, do you attend?
9. Upon your release, did you seek the assistance of any organization, close closet, food pantry, shelter, or transitional house? If so, where?
10. Upon your release, did you have any of the following needs but were unable to meet them on your own or with the help of others close to you:
 - a. Medical, dental, eye examination, including any needed medications;
 - b. Housing, clothing, or food;
 - c. Educational (G.E.D., trade, college, etc...);
 - d. Employment;
 - e. Disability/Social Security;
 - f. Substance-abuse counseling and group support; or
 - g. Mental health treatment?
11. Have you ever used the assistance of anyone who says they help ex-offenders get jobs? If so, describe this experience and whether or not you did get a job.
12. Do you currently have a job? If so, how long did it take you to get a job after your release from confinement? About how many companies did you submit applications and/or resumes to before being hired?
13. Have you been denied jobs you otherwise qualify for on the basis of your criminal conviction(s) alone?
14. Have you lost a job on the basis of discovery of your criminal conviction? Was it a result of your having lied on the application?
15. Upon your initial release from prison, did you lack sufficient food, clothing, or a stable place to live?
16. Did you seek anyone's assistance for any of the above needs

17. Have you *ever* contacted, worked for, or received services from any of the following organizations:
- a. Cornerstone Staffing
 - b. The Gateway Foundation;
 - c. Goodwill Industries of Fort Worth
 - d. Haven's Rest Ministries in Fort Worth;
 - e. Mercy Heart in Haltom City
 - f. Project RIO
 - g. Texas Reentry Services in Fort Worth
 - h. Winner's Circle
18. Are there any other organizations not mentioned above who have provided you free or discounted services since your release from jail or prison?
19. What have been your most difficult struggles since your release from confinement and how are you dealing with them?

APPENDIX C
INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR
LOCAL NONPROFITS

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

The principal investigator for this project is Michael Jay Woods, currently a master's degree candidate at the University of Texas at Arlington, School of Urban & Public Affairs, whose contact information is: P.O. Box 48794, Watauga, TX 76148, Cell Tn (817)353-1118.

FACULTY ADVISOR

My faculty advisor on this project is Dr. Karabi Bezboruah, who can be contacted at the University of Texas at Arlington's School of Urban & Public Affairs, located at 601 S. Nedderman, 511 University Hall, Box 19588, Arlington, TX 76019, or by phone at 817-272-3071

TITLE OF PROJECT

The Nonprofit Sector's Involvement in Prisoner Reentry.

INTRODUCTION

You are being asked to participate in a research study about the nonprofit organizations' role in prisoner reentry. Your participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate or discontinuing your participation at any time will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Please ask questions if there is anything you do not understand.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this research is to determine the primary needs of offenders exiting the prison system in Texas, what programs and services exist in the nonprofit sector to meet those needs, and whether and to what degree those programs or services are successful?

DURATION

The duration of your participation is approximately 30 minutes.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

The number of research participants in this study is 300-400.

PROCEDURES

The procedures which will involve you as a research participant include a personal interview, in which I will ask you a number of questions relating to the type and manner of services you

and/or your organization provide to ex-offenders. The interview will be audio-recorded. After the interview, the tape will be transcribed, which means they will be typed exactly as they were recorded, word-for-word. The tape will be destroyed after transcription.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS

Possible benefits to you, specifically, include a heightened awareness of your organization and the services you provide to those who read the results of this research.

POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

There are no perceived risks or discomforts for participating in this research study. Should you experience any discomfort please inform the researcher, you have the right to quit any study procedures at any time at no consequence.

COMPENSATION

No compensation of any kind will be given to you for your voluntary participation.

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES

There are no alternative procedures offered for this study. However, you can elect not to participate in the study or quit at any time at no consequence.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to decline participation in any or all study procedures or quit at any time at no consequence.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every attempt will be made to see that your study results are kept confidential. A copy of this signed consent form and all data collected, including audio recording and typewritten transcriptions of those recordings, from this study will be stored in University of Texas at Arlington's School of Urban & Public Affairs for at least three (3) years after the end of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming you as a participant. Additional research studies could evolve from the information you have provided, but your information will not be linked to you in anyway; it will be anonymous. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, the UTA Institutional Review Board (IRB), and personnel particular to this research have access to the study records. Your records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above. The IRB at UTA has reviewed and approved this study and the

information within this consent form. If in the unlikely event it becomes necessary for the Institutional Review Board to review your research records, the University of Texas at Arlington will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law.

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS

Questions about this research study may be directed to Michael Woods, whose address is P.O. Box 48794, Watauga, Texas 76148; or Dr. Karabi Bezboruah, whose address is 601 S. Nedderman, 511 University Hall, Box 19588, Arlington, TX 76019. Any questions you may have about your rights as a research participant or a research-related injury may be directed to the Office of Research Administration; Regulatory Services at 817-272-2105 or regulatoryservices@uta.edu.

As a representative of this study, I have explained the purpose, the procedures, the benefits, and the risks that are involved in this research study:

Signature and printed name of principal investigator or person obtaining consent

Date

CONSENT

By signing below, you confirm that you are 18 years of age or older and have read or had this document read to you. You have been informed about this study’s purpose, procedures, possible benefits and risks, and you have received a copy of this form. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you sign, and you have been told that you can ask other questions at any time.

You voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits, to which you are otherwise entitled.

SIGNATURE OF VOLUNTEER

DATE

APPENDIX D

GUIDE QUESTIONS FOR NONPROFITS

Questions for Nonprofits

1. What is the name of your organization and how many does it employ?
2. What are the characteristics of those your organization accepts as clients, and are there any requirements???
3. What types of services do you provide to ex-offenders?
4. Do other organizations provide the same services in or around your area?
5. Is there a limit to the time or amount of services clients can receive?
6. Does your organization have any formal agreements or contracts signed between it and the State of Texas or a division of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice?
7. To what extent, if any, are you regulated?
 - a. Do you receive any public money to operate?
 - b. Are there conditions on any of the money you receive?
 - c. Must you accept all clients, regardless of criminal offense history, past gang membership, or any other characteristic?

- d. If you receive placement of clients into your program or for your services directly from governmental officials, must you accept all of those referrals?
 - e. Are there any other stipulations governing what you do or how you must do it not mentioned above?
-
- 8. Do your clients come to you on their own accord, or are they sent by another organization or governmental entity, or do you employ both methods?
 - 9. Can the parole board--courts for those on probation—require as a condition of the release, that the releasee participant in your program?
 - 10. Are there any impediments, whether legal, financial, or administrative, that prevent you from providing even better service? What, if anything, could be changed?
 - 11. How do you measure your success?
 - 12. Do you keep in touch with your clients after they are gone?

APPENDIX E

TDCJ RESPONSE TO OPEN
RECORDS REQUEST

3/8/2012

Please find listed below information responsive to your request. Upon receipt of your subsequent request, modifications were made to provide information specific to Dallas and Tarrant counties.

1. Does the TDCJ or Parole Division have any written contracts or agreements to send referrals to nonprofit organizations for treatment programs or some other service to the offender?

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) contracts with nonprofit organizations to provide substance abuse services to those offenders assessed in need of services. All contracted substance abuse providers are not necessarily nonprofit organizations.

2. What are the names of the nonprofit organizations parole officials recommend or make referrals to regarding education (G.E.D.), employment, aid managing finances, childcare, substance-abuse counseling or group meetings, sex-offender counseling, or other offender needs?

Referrals are made to many different types of community resources, such as the Texas Workforce Commission for employment services and Project COPE (Community Opportunity Program in Education) for the educational needs of the offender. The following are contracted Nonprofit substance abuse treatment providers located in Dallas and Tarrant Counties in which offenders are referred for substance abuse: Phoenix Associates Counseling (Dallas/Fort Worth) and Volunteers of America (Fort Worth).

There are currently no nonprofit organizations contracting with TDCJ for sex offender counseling services.

3. What percent of offenders are required to submit to substance abuse counseling and attend 12-step meetings as a condition of their release?

As of January 31, 2012, there are approximately 88% offenders on active parole supervision located in Dallas County and 89% offenders on active parole supervision located in Tarrant County have a special condition requiring substance abuse treatment program.

4. Does the State of Texas, Parole Division, or any other public Agency pay for or provide a forum for 12-Step meetings to occur between paroled ex-offenders maintaining their sobriety while on parole?

Specific 12-Step meetings are not paid for by the Parole Division and meetings may be conducted in certain district parole offices or in the community.

5. What percent of offenders are required to submit to sex-offender treatment or counseling?

As of January 31, 2012, there are approximately 7% offenders on active parole supervision located in Dallas County and 6% offenders on active parole supervision located in Tarrant County have a special

condition requiring sex offender treatment.

6. Does the State of Texas, Parole Division, or any other public agency pay for or provide a forum in which to conduct sex-offender treatment?

The Parole Division may pay for subsidized sex offender treatment if an offender is determined to be indigent,

7. What percent of parolees are required to be attending school to attain a minimum standard of education up to obtaining their G.E.D.?

As of January 31, 2012, there are approximately 9% offenders on active parole supervision located in Dallas County and 10% offenders on active parole supervision located in Tarrant County have a special condition requiring basic educational/vocational training.

8. Does the State of Texas, Parole Division, or other state agency provide G.E.D. tutoring and testing of parolees?

The TDCJ has a Memorandum of Understanding in place with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) in order for offenders to be served for their educational needs.

9. What are the names of organizations that the department contracts with to provide mental health or sex-offender counseling pursuant to Sec. 508.316, Tex. Govt. Cd.?

The Tarrant County LHMA is the contract which provide parole case management in Tarrant county.

The following are TDCJ contracted providers in the Dallas and Tarrant counties who provide sex offender counseling: William Bruner (ACT Counseling), Jeffrey Clark, Sharon Cressey, Kathy Higgins, Ezio Leite (Psychotherapy Services and Yokefellows), Maria T. Molett (The Counseling Institute of Texas, Inc.) and Greg Thompson.

10. What are the addresses of locations of businesses or organizations who received money in the last three years in Denton, Johnson, Parker, or Wise Counties from the department for providing temporary housing to those recently released to parole or mandatory supervision pursuant to Sec. 508.157, Tex. Govt. Cd.?

There are two locations that provide temporary housing assistance through the Temporary Housing Assistance Program (THAP) and have received monies in the last three years.

Denton County- 2532 Charlotte, Denton, Texas 76201
Johnson County- 402 Wells Court, Keene, Texas 76059

11. Are there any other nonprofit organizations the department contracts with to provide services to those recently released?

Yes, there are additional nonprofit organizations the TDCJ contracts with to provide services to offenders recently released from an In-Prison Therapeutic Community (IPTC).

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Prior to the completion of this project, Michael Woods earned his B.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies, with foci in political science, criminal justice, and psychology, from the School of Urban & Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Arlington in 2010. He has an interest in issues regarding criminal justice and the Civil Rights of those incarcerated. From 2001-2003, he was a member of the Executive Steering Committee of the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition—by far, the State’s largest (and most-respected) criminal justice advocacy organization, and from 2001-2002 he chaired the Fort Worth chapter of the Texas Inmate Family’s Association—the largest inmate family organization of its kind. He regularly communicates with lawmakers in the State and provides testimony regarding prison and parole issues when the Texas Legislature is in session. Mr. Woods currently resides in North Richland Hills, Texas.