Re-Entry Partners: Employees and Volunteers Helping Men Who Have Been Incarcerated to Transition to Society

Demetrius Solon Semien

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Sociology.

Chapel Hill
2009

Approved By:
Andrew Perrin
Barbara Entwisle
Peggy Thoits
Margarita Mooney
Saundra Westervelt
ABSTRACT

DEMETRIUS SEMIEN: Re-Entry Partners: Employees and Volunteers Helping Men Who Have Been Incarcerated to Transition to Society (Under the direction of Andrew Perrin)

This study documents and examines efforts made by community members, known as Re-Entry Partners, in a region of North Carolina who volunteer or are employed in occupations where they assist formerly and currently incarcerated men during their transition back into society. It provides insights into why this social group becomes involved in re-entry work as it captures what members report about their motivations. Religion emerges from the interview data as a primary motivation factor and as the cultural dimension of transition efforts as community members discuss how religion impacts and shapes their experiences as they serve this population. Additionally, the study documents three models of re-entry work operating in the region: Community Mentorships, Faith Teams, and Round Tables. These models represent the structural dimensions of transition efforts, indicating where efforts to assist this population take place inside and outside of prison. Finally, it highlights three major social consequences of re-entry work: (a) the benefits, costs, and health impacts on Re-Entry Partners who perform this type of work; (b) the social stratification demarcations which are traversed as men and women from different social locations come together to assist a population of predominantly low-income African American men who have been incarcerated; and (c) the impacts on the social networks of
Re-Entry Partners as they socially engage with former and current residents of the criminal justice system.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the following Angels in my life:

My Great-Grandmother, Lydia McBride, who showed me the value of lemon trees

My Grandmother, Bernice Finnell, who taught me to honor hard work and keeping my word

Brian Tucker – whose memory and example motivate me to be a better person

Yervant and Maria Andelian – who taught me to love myself

Dan Cox – who led me out of the darkness and into the Sunlight of the Spirit

Mackenzie Brown – his mentorship, love and “faith” encouraged me to fulfill my potential

My Mom Lydia – who taught me the value of family and education
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful for my strong support network. They enabled me to complete my dissertation and fulfill my life-long dream to become a professor. I thank everyone who has participated in my education, especially those who encouraged me in my darkest of hours.

I extend my gratitude to the Re-Entry Partners of North Carolina and Kentucky, those men and women who serve people who have been incarcerated as they re-enter society. You have taught me how essential it is to value humanity. Particularly, I thank those volunteers and employees involved in re-entry work who allowed me to interview them about their experiences and agreed to participate in my research project. Your support, honesty, and insights informed and gave life to my dissertation. I am honored to walk with you.

To you, Andrew Perrin, I express my deepest respect and appreciation. You taught me the methods of discourse analysis which allow me to present the voices of the communities I research. As my advisor, you encouraged my walks on the “edges” as I pursued my calling to teach, honor family commitments, and serve as a community activist during my academic career. Yet, you always maintained an authoritative presence in my life that kept me focused on completing my academic studies. I am grateful for your “push” into the job market a year early that led to my employment at Berea College. As my M.A. and
dissertation chair, your guidance greatly improved the quality of my dissertation. Finally, through your example of maintaining a balance as a researcher, mentor, teacher and family man, and as my friend, you nurtured my personal and professional development. Thank you.

Barbara Entwisle, you have supported me during my entire journey at UNC. Thank you for devoting your time and energy to serve on both my M.A. and Ph.D. committees. Your encouragement of my development as a teacher and researcher was invaluable.

Additional thanks are due to the other members of my dissertation committee. I thank Peggy Thoits for her commitment to my work and for guiding me to incorporate significant research on volunteers and health effects. Margarita Mooney’s expertise in race and religious studies helped my writing process and will prove essential to my publishing plans. She provided crucial insights that improved the dissertation. Finally, Saundra Westervelt’s knowledge of relevant criminology research and statistics also proved valuable.

I am grateful to Elon University who awarded me a Pre-Doctoral Minority Fellowship and to the American Sociological Association and AKD (Sociology Honor Society) who awarded me a Minority Fellowship Program Dissertation Fellowship, which gave me the time and opportunity to conduct my research for this dissertation. Particularly, thanks are due to Jean Shin and Karina Havrilla for their support.

Thanks are also due to my Friend and Research “Partner-In-Crime” Michael Roettger. Michael helps me to face valuable truths about myself that make my journey at UNC and in life much more enjoyable. His insights contributed substantially to my dissertation.

I thank you, Andrea Abrams, for your assistance in editing and preparing this dissertation for submission to UNC. Your support through the final stages of my writing was
greatly appreciated. I believe your love and encouragement gave me the strength I needed to complete this research project. I look forward to the rest of our walk together.

I appreciate the “families” who love and support me: the Carlton family – Shaunna, Nick, Britney, and Dale; Ilona and her family; Mr. and Mrs. Housel; the NC Men’s Bible Study; the Mechams of KY; the Marleys of CA; and Aunt Poochie and the Semien clan.

Thanks to Jeff Fromm, for being my “Twin” and “Partner in Crime” in KY.

I thank Kim Jones for encouraging me to pursue my dream to become a professor.

I am grateful to Siobhan Brooks – for her appreciation of how difficult it has been to overcome the poverty of my youth to become a Community Activist and Professor.

I am eternally grateful to Dr. Jackie Burnside, Dr. Jill Bouma and my colleagues at Berea College for inviting me to serve our students while I completed my dissertation.

Thanks to Rick and Jill Eden and my support network at United Church of Chapel Hill for sponsoring my walk in faith as I prepare for my teaching ministry at Berea College.

I will always be grateful to Friends of Bill and their Sister affiliates in CA, CT, TX, NC and KY, who have supported my walk in sobriety and freedom. Particular thanks are extended to Don, Michael and Scott, who served as my guides during my time at UNC, and to Jed, Shauna, Serge, Steve, Dan, Jay, and others who walked with me.

Thanks are offered to my biological and adopted “siblings” who raised me as much as I helped them grow up – Senee, Rashonda, Imran, Amir, John Weir, Luke Richey, Ed Roberts (Communitas!), Christine Housel, D.C. Kevin, Brett Bartow, Mariano, Nisha and Nathan Brown, Jeff George, and Corey Robinson. Thank you for believing in me.
I most sincerely thank all of my parents: my biological dad and friend Charles Semien, who taught me to honor and embrace the man that I am; Mackenzie and Mama Chuck, who marched me across the dissertation finish line; my Grandma, who always looked after me; Mama Maria; and my Mom, Lydia, who taught me how to care for others.

Thanks go out to my nieces and nephews – Lydia, Jazzy, “JQ,” “MJ,” and Gian. You are all my heart. I am happy to be your “Uncle Demetrius.”

Finally, I thank my former and current students at UNC, UNC-Greensboro, Central Carolina Community College, Elon University, Greensboro College, and Berea College, for their patience, tolerance, support, and constructive criticism.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .................................................................................................................................. xii
LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................................................................................ xiv
LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................................................................................ xiv

I. INTRODUCTION .............................................................................................................................. 1
   Background ...................................................................................................................................... 7

II. METHODS ....................................................................................................................................... 28
   Re-Entry Partners Study Interview Questionnaire ........................................................................ 31

III. RE-ENTRY PARTNERS AND RE-ENTRY WORK ........................................................................... 36
   Re-Entry Partner Demographics .................................................................................................. 36
   Models for Re-entry Work in North Carolina .............................................................................. 47
   Social Location Sites of Re-entry Work ...................................................................................... 67
   Re-entry Work and Religion ........................................................................................................ 70

IV. MOTIVATIONS OF RE-ENTRY PARTNERS ............................................................................... 80
   Re-entry Work Volunteer Motivations ......................................................................................... 80
   Re-entry Work Employee Motivations ........................................................................................ 91

V. BENEFITS, COSTS AND HEALTH IMPACTS OF RE-ENTRY WORK ......................................... 111
   Re-Entry Partner Benefits ......................................................................................................... 111
   Re-Entry Partner Costs .............................................................................................................. 125
   Health and Well-Being ............................................................................................................. 140

VI. RE-ENTRY WORK AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION .................................................................... 147
   Race and Ethnicity Effects ......................................................................................................... 147
LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1 Re-Entry Partners Age Demographics ................................................................. 38
Table 3.2 Re-Entry Partners Race Demographics ............................................................... 39
Table 3.3 Re-Entry Partners Sex Demographics ................................................................. 39
Table 3.4 Re-Entry Partners Race and Sex Demographics Combined ............................. 41
Table 3.5 Re-Entry Partners Ex-Offender Demographics ............................................... 42
Table 3.6 Re-Entry Partners Education Demographics .................................................... 46
Table 3.7 Number of Times Community Mentors Types Reported ................................. 50
Table 3.8 Round Table Awareness and Attendance ......................................................... 63
Table 3.9 Social Location Sites of Re-entry Work ............................................................. 69
Table 3.10 Religious Gateways ....................................................................................... 71
Table 3.11 Religious Affiliation ...................................................................................... 71
Table 3.12 Attendance and Frequency at Religious or Spiritual Services ....................... 73
Table 3.13 Volunteer/Paid Work Affect Upon Religion/Faith ......................................... 74
Table 3.14 Religion/Faith Affect Upon Volunteer/Paid Work ......................................... 76
Table 3.15 Social Stratification Dynamics Affect Upon Religion ..................................... 78
Table 4.1 Frequency of Re-Entry Partner Motivations ..................................................... 108
Table 5.1 Re-entry Work Volunteer Benefits ................................................................. 116
Table 5.2 Re-entry Work Employee Benefits ................................................................. 121
Table 5.3 Frequency of Re-Entry Partner Responses per Benefits Category .................. 124
Table 5.4 Re-entry Work Volunteer Costs ..................................................................... 132
Table 5.5 Re-entry Work Employee Costs ................................................................. 134
Table 5.6 Frequency of Re-Entry Partner Responses per Costs Category ..................... 139
Table 5.7 Impact of Volunteerism/Employment on Health and Well-Being .................. 143
Table 5.8 Impact of Health and Well-Being on Volunteerism/Employment .......................143
Table 6.1 Social Stratification Dynamics – Race and Ethnicity........................................148
Table 6.2 Social Stratification Dynamics – Gender..........................................................152
Table 6.3 Social Stratification Dynamics – Age................................................................154
Table 6.4 Social Stratification Dynamics – Social Class and/or Background......................159
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1 Conceptual Map of Structural Locations Affecting Social Statuses ..................68
Figure 4.1 Conceptual Map of Re-Entry Partner Volunteer Motivations ............................82
Figure 4.2 Conceptual Map of Re-Entry Partner Employee Motivations ...........................93
I. INTRODUCTION

Lock them up . . . as long as we don’t have to look at ‘em, then they don’t really exist. And I think most people feel that way. . . . They don’t have to deal with offenders. They don’t have to deal with anything that’s out of the norm. . . . It’s not in their little world, their little box. They don’t have to deal with that. Little do they know that the large majority of homeless people have substance abuse and mental health issues and the population is growing; as is the population of people being released. . . . And the fact of the matter is that they are coming back to your community and you either need to do something about it . . . and try to turn some lives around or you’re gonna have total chaos. I don’t mean that people are going to be out pillaging and robbing and all this kind of stuff, but people do desperate things when they get in desperate situations.

– 60-year-old white female who counsels men released from prison

Who are the people who see that offenders “really exist” and are showing up to “do something about it”? Why do they help this population and what costs and benefits do they incur for their efforts? This paper serves as a descriptive study of the efforts made by members of the mainstream population in North Carolina to assist incarcerated men during their process to re-enter society. It represents an attempt to gain insight into the motivations, benefits and costs experienced by Re-Entry Partners, or community members who volunteer or are employed in occupations where they support incarcerated men or male ex-offenders to transition back into society. This work also examines dynamics associated with socio-demographics of Re-Entry Partners and highlights re-entry models and prevalent themes that emerged during an analysis of the discourse from the interviews conducted in this study.
Re-Entry Partners engage in Re-entry Work. “Re-entry Work” refers to anything that is done to help men who are inmates prepare for their transition out of prison and back into society. The term “Re-entry Work” also applies to any actions taken to help men who have been released from prison, commonly known as “ex-offenders,” adjust to their new lives and become more stable as they rejoin society. Re-Entry Partners mentor, tutor, assist with job placement, help to address substance abuse and recovery issues, offer services for housing, transportation or other needs, and help reunite current and formerly incarcerated individuals with their families. This dissertation highlights re-entry work efforts that take place in North Carolina.

This dissertation explores how Re-Entry Partners address a major social problem largely ignored by the government and our nation as a whole. People who are incarcerated find it almost impossible to return to mainstream society and find a viable economic and social niche that will sustain them. What I deem “Second Sentencing” occurs. The first sentence takes place as these men and women serve time in prison. The “Second Sentencing” takes place upon their release as they “serve” more time being treated as non-citizens as they deal with collateral damages (Travis, 2005), such as the difficulty of finding employment (Pager, 2003), and confront the stigma of being treated as social pariahs. This is a major social problem that affects all of us in many ways, including in the form of higher taxes, families that are left without fathers, and social programs and public policies are affected as those with criminal records are unable to participate in the political process affects the outcomes of local and national elections (Uggen and Manza, 2002).

In response to this social problem, some community members have come forward in North Carolina and throughout the U.S. to serve as Re-Entry Partners to focus on efforts to
assist those who are incarcerated to transition back into society. These men and women (Re-Entry Partners) appear to see beyond the negative media images and public stigma attached to those who are incarcerated. They seem to view those who have been incarcerated as human beings who need assistance from the community and who deserve a Second Chance to be re-socialized and reintegrated into society (re-entry work). This study is an initial venture into naming and exploring the social boundaries of re-entry work.

A primary focus of this study is to examine the role of religious influence on re-entry work. Consequently, I compare two samples of the general population: faith-based volunteers and secular employees. Faith-based volunteers are those community members who are involved in congregations or faith-based networks. Secular employees are mainly a set of people who work for government or community agencies that are not explicitly identified as religious or faith-based organizations. By comparing these two distinct samples, I expected to discover differences in terms of the motivations and the discourse about their motivations that would set these two groups apart and highlight how religion may motivate one group in distinct ways from the other group with a non-religious orientation to get involved in transition-related efforts with this population of offenders.

Another leading theoretical question posed in this work is why employees and volunteers choose to become Re-Entry Partners. Employees in the criminal justice system and in the community at large choose to be employed in occupations that lead them to do re-entry work. Often, some of them even appear to go beyond their work requirements to assist men with criminal records to re-enter society. Like employees in general, they seem to be motivated by pay and job benefits. However, something else – an X-factor – seems to move this sub-group of employees to seek jobs that involve helping this population of male inmates
and ex-offenders to transition. One of the main challenges of this study is to identify what that X-factor (or set of X-factors) is. Thus, the general theoretical model for employees is Pay/Job Benefits + X = Re-entry Work involvement.

Examining motivations for volunteers highlights the need to identify another X-factor or set of X-factors. The majority of volunteers who do re-entry work openly identify themselves as members of faith communities. However, only a small percentage of people of faith in the area participate in re-entry work. Thus, the general theoretical model for volunteers is Faith + X = Re-entry Work involvement. The present study sets out to identify what the X-Factors are that motivate volunteers and employees.

For my research, I conducted semi-structured interviews with twenty volunteers and twenty employees of organizations or government agencies who serve as Re-Entry Partners. Most of the volunteers are members of churches or faith-based communities who are engaged in efforts to create viable support networks for male inmates or men who have served time in prison to receive services and re-enter society successfully. The employees include former correctional officers, educators, spiritual counselors, addiction specialists, and others who work in occupations where they assist incarcerated men or ex-offenders to assimilate into mainstream society. Some of the employees work for the Department of Corrections, helping inmates to navigate the transition process while they are still incarcerated. Volunteers and employees establish social ties and offer services to improve the life conditions of current and former prisoners as they re-enter the general population. A significant sample of the volunteers and employees interviewed include former inmates, who provided valuable “insider” information into their own re-entry experiences.
In this dissertation I also examine the discourse of formerly incarcerated men who are now involved in the re-entry process as employees and volunteers. As men who were released from prison, many of them have struggled with the stigma and obstacles associated with being “ex-offenders.” Interviewing these male ex-offenders presents a unique opportunity to gain insight into the perspectives of men who have been imprisoned and to gauge how re-entry efforts may be processed and viewed by former prisoners. This study also points to benefits and costs incurred by these male ex-offenders as they work with or volunteer to help current male inmates or ex-offenders return to mainstream society.

This work further explores distinct social stratification and cultural dynamics associated with re-entry work. For example, re-entry efforts take place along the boundaries of race and class with a large percentage of volunteers and employees being middle-class whites and prisoners predominantly being low-income blacks. Social stratification barriers are also shown to be crossed as the discourse of female volunteers and employees relate how their sex affects the relationships they have with male inmates and ex-offenders. Overall, I examine what employees and volunteers report about how their personal characteristics relate to how male inmates or ex-offenders treat or perceive them. The five social stratification markers I explore are race and ethnicity, gender, age, social class and background, and religion.

During the analysis, three major models of re-entry work emerge: Faith Teams, Round Tables, and Community Mentoring. Many interviewees articulate that re-entry work efforts often occurred in one or more of these three arenas. All three models speak to the presence of social support networks that are associated with re-entry work. These social support networks represent community responses to incarceration and exist as a result of
community members acting to address the needs of incarcerated men once they are released into mainstream society. Faith Teams consist of churches that form committees to work directly with prisoners and/or ex-offenders. Round Tables are monthly community gatherings, originally started by a formerly incarcerated individual, where networks of Re-Entry Partners, volunteers and employees, come together to coordinate actions to assist current and former residents of the criminal justice system. Community Mentors consist of individuals who volunteer to mentor or sponsor inmates or work with people who have been released from prison. These three models are often, but not always, interrelated. For example, the interviews show that there are Community Mentors who are part of Faith Teams and attend Round Tables. However, some interviewees also report that they only know about one or two of these models. All three of these models consist of employees and volunteers serving as Re-Entry Partners.

Four major themes consistently surface during my analysis of the interview data. They are Sacrifice, Disappointments, Redemption, and Family Involvement. These four themes emerge in the discourse as respondents discuss various aspects of re-entry work. Sacrifice involves the commitments made by volunteers and employees as they risk or surrender key aspects of their lives to do re-entry work. Disappointments are experienced by Re-Entry Partners as they invest time, energy and other resources to assist male inmates and ex-offenders only to witness many of these men return back to prison. Redemption refers to the stories of “success” Re-Entry Partners share about how they have witnessed the men they help “transform” and transition back into society. Family Involvement refers to how family members of Re-Entry Partners either have influenced them to become involved with re-entry work or have directly become involved themselves with re-entry work over time. These
themes and other significant data emerged as this paper analyzes interview discourse offered by community members in North Carolina who discuss their re-entry work experiences.

**Background**

Currently, the U.S. leads the industrialized nations of the world in the number of people it incarcerates. 2 million people are imprisoned in the country’s jails and state and federal prisons (Petersilia, 2003). 700,000 by some accounts) people are released from state and Federal prisons every year (Travis, 2005). There are 12 million people with felony records walking around the U.S.; most of whom are unable to secure viable employment (Pager, 2003). In fact, recent U.S. unemployment statistics have been artificially low in comparison to European counterparts because they do not include those who have been incarcerated (Pettit and Western, 2004). The vast majority of men and women released from prison return. A significant percent of them violate parole or probation for minor infractions such as drug use. A large part of the reason for this high rate of recidivism stems from structural and cultural forms of discrimination.

Re-entry work efforts take place within this milieu of historic race and economic relations that have converged to create a dominant culture where structural discrimination and practices adversely affect the lives, potential achievements and levels of incarceration of a particular segment of U.S. citizens. This group is disproportionately composed of low-income, working-class citizens. It is also largely disproportionately composed of African American men (e.g., Collins, 2004; Wacquant, 2001). The criminal justice system has historically moved from a system slightly open to rehabilitation and reform to become one of
harsh punitive measures without redemption. Even upon release from prison, men who have served their time continue to receive negative sanctions due to their criminal records.

In terms of confronting the consequences of incarceration, low-income African American men are affected to a much more severe degree than any other racial and ethnic or socioeconomic group in the U.S. For African American men this is one more modern link in the chain of historic discrimination and racism they have encountered (e.g., Du Bois, 1903; Myrdal, 1944). As a consequence of hypersegregation (Massey and Denton, 1993) and institutional racism which act to reduce interracial contacts in neighborhoods, the workplace and schools, the mainstream population primarily encounters low-income African American men through the distorted media blitz of negative images displayed in the news and across television or movie screens (Hurwitz and Peffley, 1997). The mainstream culture cultivates fear and a feeling of distrust which, set against the backdrop of historic race relations, further perpetuates the forms of discrimination practiced against this racial group (Collins, 2004). African Americans, as a whole, suffer discrimination as they contend with racial disparities across health, employment, and other life indices in comparison to European Americans (Darity and Myers, 1999).

Consequently, African Americans as a racial group are disproportionately poorer than other racial and ethnic groups. Poverty is largely linked to the motivations for why people commit a large number of crimes, such as drug-related offenses and theft. (Mauer, 1999; Reiman, 2001) Faced with few job options that pay a livable wage and the need to take care of their families, many low-income African American men get involved in criminal activities. As a consequence, public perceptions of criminals are largely conflated with the image of incarcerated African American men (Hurwitz and Peffley, 1997). These images are
presented by the media publicly without arguments or explanations being offered on a mass
level for how these stereotypical images help to create the current reality. These stereotypes
often influence juries and others in the criminal justice system to view African American
men as a public threat and to enact policies and make decisions that lead them to being
incarcerated at a disproportionate rate. “Blacks are arrested, convicted and incarcerated at far
higher rates than whites or any other ethnic or racial group” (Kennedy, 2001, p.1).

Few public media presentations discuss how historic race relations have created a
consciousness that helps to perpetuate modern forms of racism that limit the life options of
African American men (Omi and Winant, 1994). Nor, are there a multitude of media
assessments to explain how economic hardships exacerbate the life choices of this
population. Modern-day Marxian theorists claim that mass incarceration of this population
by the mainstream population occurs in order to address the problem of what to do with a
large surplus of African American men, who are mainly urban residents with limited
education and low skills in terms of competing viably on the job market (Wacquant, 2001;
Marable, 2000). Explaining how modern capitalism affects this social group, as well
as other low-income urban populations, Davis (1998) offers the following:

Corporations are allowed to close shop in the United States and transfer
manufacturing operations to nations providing cheap labor pools. In fleeing
organized labor in the U.S., to avoid paying higher wages and benefits, they leave
entire communities in shambles, consigning huge numbers of people to
joblessness, leaving them prey to the drug trade, destroying the economic base of
these communities, thus affecting the education system, social welfare—and
turning the people who live in those communities into perfect candidates for
prison. (p.288)

There are large disparities by race in both being a victim of crime and being arrested and
incarcerated. “Because arrests and prison stays often fracture families and reduce future
labor-market opportunities, these high rates of involvement with the criminal justice system are correlated with the reduced economic opportunities of Black families” (Blank, 2001). Some theorists argue that the U.S. penal institution is modern economic slavery, creating an arena where labor can be bought and sold cheaply at huge profits (Wacquant, 2001; Davis, 1998).

All people, African Americans and other racial and ethnic groups, released from prison are stigmatized by the mainstream culture with the label and status of being “ex-offenders.” Being stigmatized as deviant further reduces life chances in the community and increases social isolation (Reiman, 2001; Erikson, 1966; Goffman, 1963). Thus, formerly incarcerated people serve their sentences and then are made to face a set of constraints because the mainstream culture continues to stigmatize them for the rest of their lives. In essence, those who have been incarcerated for crimes serve two sentences – one in prison and a second as a devalued member of society after they are released from prison. “The stigma associated with a criminal past significantly affects one’s chances of finding and keeping a job, personal relationships, and housing – and these difficulties ultimately also affect public safety” (Petersilia, 2003, p.11). With limited options, many of these people commit more crimes.

Society also creates structures that impose harsh sanctions on these “ex-offenders.” For example, they are often unable to get federal education loans. Many of them were incarcerated for drug offenses, and government policies have established special penalties for these largely victimless crimes (Reiman, 2001). For similar reasons, ex-offenders are barred from working in public schools and hospitals. Evans (1968) found that success in the labor market was an important factor in parole success. Recent findings by Pager (2003)
demonstrate how difficult it is for men to find jobs when they have criminal records. Historically, there have even been questions about whether or not people who are incarcerated should still be considered citizens, even after they have served their time in prison and have fulfilled the requirements of their probation and parole. Angela Davis (1998), for instance, highlights how the 13th Amendment excluded prisoners.

With the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment, slavery was abolished for all except convicts—and in a sense the exclusion from citizenship accompanied by the slave system has persisted within the U.S. prison system (p.292).

Today, the right to vote, seen as one of the fundamental rights of U.S. citizens, is still withheld from people who have served time in Kentucky and Virginia. Facing structural constraints, economic hardships, and limited personal options, most people released from prison return.

With the large reduction in public services in the last two decades, the majority of this “ex-offender” population also contends with untreated mental health and substance abuse habits that complicate their life options. Pete Earley (2006), a Washington Post reporter and author, cites research by Renee Turolla who documented the plight of the mentally ill in the criminal justice system in a 1985 report called *Mentally Ill Criminals in Dade County, Florida*. Through a series of case studies, her report demonstrated that the jail had become a “revolving door.”

One of [case study] was a young inmate who had bipolar disorder. In 1982, he was arrested 51 times for minor crimes associated with mental illness, such as loitering, panhandling, and trespassing. In 1983 . . . he was arrested another 44 times . . . . At no time did anyone in the mental health system or justice system try to help him with his disorder. He simply kept being punished. When Turolla asked jail officials why they weren’t doing anything to treat mentally ill inmates, one of them snapped, “We’re not here to treat ’em, our job is to keep ’em locked up.” (pp.79-80)
Earley offers that in 1955 some 560,000 U.S. citizens were being treated for mental problems in state hospitals, which would lead us to expect to find 930,000 patients in state mental hospitals today. However, the vast reduction in state mental hospitals in the U.S. over the past couple of decades has resulted in fewer than 55,000 patients who currently receive treatment in state mental hospitals. “Where are the others? Nearly 300,000 are in jails and prisons. Another half million are on court-ordered probation” (Earley, 2006, p.3). Nationally, the U.S. appears to have criminalized a substantial medical problem. Without mental health treatment and drug treatment being available in our nation, many individuals are labeled “crazy” and continue to go through the “revolving doors” of the criminal justice system.

Stigma and incarceration also affect the families and communities of prisoners who feel the stigma that “accompanies not only incarceration but all the other stereotypes that accompany it – fatherlessness, poverty, and often . . . diminished love” (Braman, 2004). Negative stereotypes have dire consequences for those who are incarcerated and their families. For example, Braman (p.10) offers testimonies from family members about “the ways in which criminal sanctions are intricately involved in the dissolution of the families the stereotypes describe.” Pueschel and Moglia (1977) also found adverse effects of imprisonment for families of those incarcerated and for society in general.

Given mainstream culture and its associated punitive structural constraints with regards to low-income working class men who have been incarcerated, individuals from mainstream society are seeking employment and choosing to volunteer to provide services and support for this population. People (Re-Entry Partners) appear to be responding to a need for avenues to open up to allow a way for men who have been incarcerated to receive a
second chance and return to society. For example, one of the re-entry work employees, who counsels male inmates, highlighted why there is such a need for this type of support from community members:

A lot of inmates have burned bridges with their family. So, it’s kind of hard to get that family’s support. I have had inmates tell me I am going to stay with my mother, and then the mother comes out, “No, he can’t come back here.” . . . They need somebody they can count on to help them if they want to make that transition back into society the right way. . . . I think they have to have some type of support; . . . someone to guide them at first because everybody can’t go out here like, “Okay, I am going to change my life. It’s just what I’m going to do.” Some of them need that guidance . . . they need someone to support them.

As part of the task of assisting these men to re-enter the mainstream population, Re-Entry Partners appear to be developing a Re-entry Culture and building social networks to help men gain access to housing, education, jobs, and other services. One re-entry work volunteer, for example, described how community members on Faith Teams attend court sessions to offer their support.

That’s the other function that the teams do. When these guys have to go to court for traffic offenses, we go. . . . When it’s time for them to go up in front of a judge, the team will go and stand behind them. Just not say anything . . . because we need to be in relationship.

Consequently, some judges have responded positively to the presence of Re-Entry Partners, acknowledging the criminal justice system as a whole also needs them to support these men.

People across the U.S. are getting involved in re-entry efforts, serving as volunteers and employees – inside and outside of prison – to help currently and formerly incarcerated men transition back into society. This study focuses on those people (Re-Entry Partners)
who are helping men transition out of prison (re-entry work) in a particular geographic area of North Carolina. What motivates them to participate in re-entry work?

Due, in part, to regional effects many of these employees and volunteers are religious or spiritual people who are affiliated with faith-based organizations. What role does religion play as a motivating factor to get people involved in re-entry work? Employees and volunteers from secular organizations also participate in re-entry efforts. What motivates them to do so? What benefits and costs are related to these social behaviors? Some of these social actors argue publicly for the need for prison reform and for the rehabilitation of current inmates and for better services or options for formerly incarcerated men. This group of re-entry-minded citizens counters the mainstream culture through their efforts to assist current male inmates and ex-offenders to find ways to stay out of prison after they are released. They often view these men as citizens who can contribute to society. This dissertation offers some of their story as it presents their discourse to explain why many of them are involved.

Re-Entry Partners: Volunteers

Wilson (2000) identifies volunteering as any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group or cause. Silva and Thomas (2006, p.43) define “volunteering” as “work in some way to help others for no monetary pay” that is “not based on obligation.” Current literature clearly documents that in recent decades there has been a decline in civic life in almost all arenas with one notable exception – volunteerism (Putnam, 1995, 2000; Galston and Lopez, 2006). Among the elderly, college students and young adults, volunteerism has been steadily rising. Many of the people involved in re-entry work stem
from these demographic groups as many of them are people in retirement, young adults, and college or graduate students.

Drawing from two waves of the Americans' Changing Lives panel study (1986-1989), Wilson and Musick (1999) find that the people who were most likely to volunteer in the second wave were those who were more educated, reported higher rates of social interaction, had a strong commitment to volunteer work (measured by hours volunteered in the first wave) and engaged in church-related volunteering. Wilson (2000) states, “Less attention has been paid to contextual effects on volunteering and . . . the impact of organizational, community, and regional characteristics on individual decisions to volunteer remains a fruitful field for exploration.” (p.215) This study contributes to the understanding of how context affects volunteering as it documents the reasons and social contexts of individual volunteers who do re-entry work.

An additional motivating factor often correlated with volunteerism is religion. Thus, a major part of this study focused on how religious ideological commitments influence re-entry work. I studied how actions to assist male inmates or ex-offenders, including the behaviors of people employed in secular-based professions, may be influenced by religious orientations. The interviews show that some people are motivated by their religious convictions to volunteer or work in occupations to rehabilitate prisoners or assist ex-offenders. Cultural orientations like religion may motivate people to work and volunteer in ways, such as involvement with re-entry efforts, we would otherwise not expect given their gender, race, and/or class. Without religious convictions, socially-constructed roles or historic-patterns of segregation often keep groups who are socially stigmatized as deviant,
like those who have been incarcerated, isolated and separated from mainstream populations. (Erikson, 1966)

Previous studies have focused on interaction effects between gender and volunteerism with varied results. Consistently, men spend fewer hours of volunteering per month (Fischer, Mueller, and Cooper, 1991). Fischer, Rapkin, and Rappaport (1991) also found an interaction effect between gender and types of volunteerism among 169 elderly community volunteers. Elderly women who served as leaders felt they had more influence and autonomy than those in non-leadership positions. Men who were leaders had a lower sense of influence and autonomy. Fischer et al. also found that work history is a significant predictor of leadership jobs for men but did not find this significant for women. Men who had worked in prestigious jobs before retirement felt their volunteer roles were less influential than did men who had been in lower status jobs before retirement.

Fischer, Mueller, and Cooper (1991) find older men and women are equal when it comes to volunteering with the main difference being that they tend to conform to gender expectations in terms of the type of volunteer service they perform. Women provide more person-to-person care and are more likely to volunteer for churches or social welfare and health organizations than men. This study contributes to our understanding of how gender relates to volunteerism as it explores interactions between female re-entry work volunteers and men who have been incarcerated. It also augments work done by Abrahams (1996), who explored how women get involved in community actions as a bridge across class and race and ethnic identities.
Additionally, this study examines the benefits and costs associated with volunteering to do re-entry work. For many people volunteering is how they express their identity, or their values. Wilson and Musick (Sociological Forum, 1999) finds that level of volunteerism is positively correlated with the number of social contacts people have. Serving as a Re-entry Partner may have positive effects on participants’ social networks. Day and Devlin (1988) noted results suggesting a return for volunteering amounts to 6-7 per cent of annual earnings. Research also confirms that volunteering in a religious context may be especially conducive to good mental health (Wilson and Musick, Law and Contemporary Problems, 1999). Thoits and Hewitt (2001) also found that volunteerism positively impacted life satisfaction and happiness, psychological well-being (self-esteem and a sense of mastery or control over life), and two health-related indicators of well-being (physical health and lower depression).

Volunteering also has been found to contribute to better mental health in older volunteers (Li and Ferraro, 2005, 2006). As this study examines various aspects, such as health and well-being, related to re-entry work, its findings contribute directly to our understanding of the health effects of volunteerism.

Re-Entry Partners: Employees

Literature on the benefits and costs associated with employment primarily centers on extrinsic and intrinsic rewards that motivate people. Extrinsic rewards include high income, job security, prestige, authority, autonomy, and fringe benefits. Intrinsic rewards include feelings of job accomplishment, being informed about the job, and participating in decision-making. Numerous studies examine the effects of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Kalleberg
(1977) noted the degree to which workers feel they earn job rewards is related to the degree of control they feel they have over their employment situations. Also, Deming (2000) found employees tend to be intrinsically motivated to do a good job when they work in an environment without fear and coercion and likewise to be de-motivated by extrinsic rewards stemming from the work performances they do not control. He argued that extrinsic reward systems “squeeze out from an individual, over his lifetime, his innate intrinsic motivation, self-esteem, dignity” (p.124). Capturing data on the benefits and costs associated with re-entry work in the discourse of the interviews with re-entry work employees contributes to our understanding of how intrinsic and extrinsic rewards relate to work.

People offer many reasons to explain why they are employed to assist male prisoners or ex-offenders. Research on correctional officers – the main occupational group involved with prisoners that has been studied – points to negative factors and stigmatization which affect this population of workers. Hughes (1958) defined dirty work as occupations that are viewed by society as physically, socially, or morally tainted. Socially tainted occupations could be considered those with close contact with groups or people that are themselves stigmatized, e.g., correctional officers. Stigma becomes socially attached to correctional officers because they engage in “dirty work” as they are marked “guilty by association” for associating with inmates, who are stigmatized as the “wrong crowd” or “dirty” people.

Correctional officers are isolated and stigmatized and often experience occupational stress. Huggins, Capeheart, and Newman (2006) conducted research on prisoners and officers at two women's state prisons in Texas. Correctional officers expressed high degrees of job dissatisfaction, despite asserting that prison work represented the best jobs available to them. The result was a racially homogenous, poorly paid population, inadequately trained
and forced to put in long hours at a job that was not their first choice of careers.

Rosenmerkel (2005) noted that job strain on correctional officers manifests as heightened levels of stress, burnout, physical ailments, personal or family problems and depression. He observed that occupational correlates (e.g., lack of role in decision making, institutional dangerousness, lack of administrative support, negative job stigma) and organizational correlates (e.g., job satisfaction, career advancement) impact the level of stress that affects correctional officers. This study offers additional insight into the motivations of correctional officers as it contains a sub-sample of former correctional officers who discuss their motivations for involvement in jobs associated with inmates.

Literature clearly documents the negative impact of working as a correctional officer. However, the research of Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) suggests that the stigma of “dirty work” in some occupations may foster the development of a strong occupational or workgroup culture. Further, chaplains and case managers in prison camps might believe they could find work outside of the prison institution and view themselves as having transferable skills. Consequently, they may have intrinsic or extrinsic rewards that correctional officers might not experience. Finally, there may be gender differentials among the correctional officers. Zimmer (1987) found that female guards perform the job differently from men guards because women often face structural and discriminatory barriers on the job and because most women have prior experiences, skills, and abilities different from those of most men. The interview information gathered from North Carolina Department of Corrections prison employees further elucidates some of these cultural, occupational, or gender aspects.

Another aspect of this study is to examine how being involved in service occupations affects motivations or job satisfaction among the employees interviewed. People, men and
women, employed in re-entry work often provide social services and other needs. Why? Ross and Mirowsky (1996) studied a representative national sample of 1,286 employed persons about the types of employment rewards they valued. They found that women get more interpersonal work rewards than men and that these rewards correlate negatively with earnings. However, they also report no differential between men and women with respect to how much they valued interpersonal work rewards or economic work rewards. Ross and Mirowsky also found earnings increase women's psychological well-being more than men's and recognition from others increases men's sense of personal control more than women's. Mooney Marini, Fan, Finley and Beutel (1996) report no gender differences in the value placed on extrinsic rewards and a persistent gender effect, with women valuing intrinsic rewards more.

*Employees and Volunteers*

There is sparse sociological literature on re-entry volunteers and employees, with the exception of some literature on correctional officers and chaplains (see above) and some quantitative reviews that show the effectiveness of agencies and organizations who participate in transition efforts. The present study attempts to contribute to the literature by interviewing men and women who volunteer or are employed in positions where they do re-entry work. Acting in their roles as employees and volunteers, people create social structures – mentorship teams, faith teams, and round tables of community advocates – where ex-felons are accepted as church members, friends, or “restored” citizens with rights within society.
Employees and volunteers often use a discourse that centers on redemption, “second chance” possibilities, and/or rehabilitation. Many of them work to create structural avenues to accomplish these goals. The state of North Carolina, burdened with an overcrowded prison population that is often mandated to serve life sentences, has a large number of inmates who are becoming senior citizens and this is costing the state a bundle in terms of the accompanying health care costs involved. Consequently, in recent years the Department of Corrections has committed to training transition specialists and adopting other re-entry initiatives to reduce recidivism rates, costs, and imprisonment rates. Advocacy of re-entry work volunteers and employees has focused on helping ex-offenders find housing, receive substance abuse and mental health treatment, job promotion, and acquiring other needed services and support. The main approach taken by Re-Entry Partners in the area has been to connect these men to social networks of support. My dissertation documents these transition efforts.

Re-entry work employees and volunteers socially interact often with men who have criminal records. These men become part of their social networks. Consequently, re-entry work employees and volunteers seem to be less fearful than members of the mainstream population of men who are released from prison. They appear to be more receptive to drug treatment services and other forms of rehabilitation being offered to this population. Among this group there seems to be a marked decrease in the stigma associated with male inmates and male ex-offenders. Some re-entry work volunteers have hired ex-offenders. Others live with these individuals. Why? What benefits do they derive from this work? What costs do they pay for their involvement in re-entry work? The answers to these questions may help
lead to the development of public policies to encourage people to serve as Re-entry Partners and reduce recidivism rates.

Braman’s work (2004) on the families and communities of inmates discusses the positive and negative impact of incarceration on the traditional social networks of exchange and mutual aid of those who are imprisoned. These social networks share the burdens of incarceration as well. Consequently, they are constantly under pressure and often dissolve. Family members and friends will often “withdraw from these relationships, effectively reducing their exposure to these costs.” (p.7) A decrease in the number of people available in the social networks of men who are incarcerated or who have been released from prison also means a reduction in the amount of support and resources available to them. Braman also notes how public policies impact the strains on social networks, such as when public funds for substance abuse or mental health services are reduced.

With the potential to be exposed to the costs of incarceration, what motivates people who are not in the original family and social networks of these men to become involved in re-entry efforts? Where do these people come from? As citizens in this country, we are all exposed to the mainstream culture and its viewpoints on criminals. Negative images of black men and of criminals in general are widely circulated in our society and many people often conflate these two groups. It is likely that something has happened in the lives of employees and volunteers who participate in re-entry efforts that leads them to step forward on behalf of prisoners and ex-offenders. What distinguishes these participants from the rest of the mainstream population? Are employees simply involved for the extrinsic rewards available (e.g., monetary compensation, job benefits) or are there other factors at work promoting them to work in re-entry–based occupations? This dissertation examines what those factors may
be. Why are people involved with this work? This research looks at the benefits gained and costs associated with being employed and volunteering in organizations to help this population.

Social Stratification Dynamics and Re-entry Work

Often when re-entry efforts take place, social divides are crossed along age, gender, and racial and ethnic lines. This research study examines some of the factors that motivate disparate groups to work together on this issue. For example, predominantly upper-middle-class white men and women, many of whom are involved in faith communities, are forming bonds with primarily poor, incarcerated black men to promote their successful re-engagement into society. Markham and Bonjean (1995) studied middle class and upper class women to examine their attachments to different levels of civic action. The “higher-status” women in their study gave some of the lowest ratings to two key areas related to re-entry work – urban revitalization and race relations. Discourse from my interviews with “higher-status” men and women who volunteer and examining the age, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and social class of re-entry workers may contribute to the literature on who volunteers and with whom.

McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook (2001) find that similarity breeds connection-the homophily principle—and structures network ties. Social networks tend to be homogeneous with regard to socio-demographic characteristics. Homophily in race and ethnicity creates the strongest divides, with age, religion, education, occupation, and gender following in that order. Social network ties between non-similar individuals also dissolve at a higher rate. Suitor, Pillemer, and Keeton (1995) suggest that having experienced a similar status
transition is more important than structural similarity with regard to age and gender in determining sources of emotional support and stress following stressful life events. In contrast to their findings, and recognizing that re-entry is a stressful life event, this study investigates why and how non-similar relationships are formed across racial, class, and gender lines when it comes to re-entry work; even though most Re-Entry Partners do not experience the status transition of incarceration and social stigma of having a criminal record like the men they assist.

*Social Support Networks and Re-entry Work*

Community ties with friends and relatives are a principal means by which people get support and resources. Strong ties provide emotional aid, small services, and companionship. (Wellman and Wortley, 1990) Friends, neighbors, and siblings make up about half of all social networks and provide stable support. The present study examines the roles of social support networks between Re-Entry Partners and the population they help to transition into society.

Studies have demonstrated that social support may also moderate the effects of stressful life events (e.g., Turner, 1981). Wethington and Kessler (1986) report a stress-buffering effect is most consistently found when support is measured as a perception that one's network is ready to provide aid and assistance if needed. Thoits (1982) also states that the concept of social support needs to be examined to see how it may moderate the impacts of stressful life events upon mental health. Haines, Hurlbert, and Beggs (1996) found that religion, size of social network and community attachment have a significant positive effect on short-term recovery support. Social networks may also have a direct impact on helping
inmates and ex-offenders change their perspectives and life habits as they prepare to re-enter society. How so? Kiecolt (1994) offers that awareness of and access to structural and social supports often affects a person’s decision to change following a critical event. With regard to re-entry work, is there any evidence of this?

In particular, support networks may have a significant effect on a population like the incarcerated that is predominantly African American. Chatters, Taylor, and Neighbors (1989) demonstrate that informal networks help provide assistance to blacks during a personal crisis. Chatters, Taylor, Lincoln, and Schroepfer (2002) also found that both family and non-kin church members were important sources of support for blacks. This study suggests that social networks of incarcerated men and male ex-offenders of all races often consist of non-kin volunteers. It also offers insight into social dynamics that take place as social networks are created and operate.

A lot of the employees and volunteers engaged in re-entry work are also ex-offenders themselves. Although a lot of quantitative research documents the adverse risks of incarceration and some literature depicts how imprisonment affects the lives of ex-offenders (e.g., voting rights, unemployment), there is very limited qualitative sociological literature about the support networks and lives of ex-offenders who transition back into society.

This dissertation contributes to our understanding of ex-offenders as it focuses on the experiences of those employees and volunteers who assist them during their re-entry process. It also sheds light on the fact that there are a number of men who were formerly incarcerated who now are employed or volunteer to help male inmates and/or other ex-offenders to transition. Reissman (1964) argued that the poor themselves are the best advocates for the
poor. Instead of adopting a patronizing approach, which is sometimes exhibited by the non-
poor, those who are poor often identify and respect others who are poor.

Of course, if it is held that help for the poor is to come only from the outside, from
above, to be patronizingly doled out, then only the great needs of the poor and monies
to meet these needs can be stressed. But will there be a sufficiently propelling force
to win the enormous programs required, including gigantic public works, if the poor
themselves are not deeply involved in generating these demands? (Reissman, p.417)

Similarly, my dissertation shows that ex-offenders who serve as Re-entry Partners are often
very effective at leading efforts to help inmates and other ex-offenders transition to society.

Re-entry work efforts often receive public support because ex-offenders and people
without criminal records work together to lead re-entry efforts as volunteers and employees.
My study confirms and challenges some of the findings in the literature on volunteers that
depicts most volunteers as being middle-class members who volunteer because they have the
leisure time to do so. (e.g., Wuthnow, 1991; Putnam, 2000)

In fact, the literature provides considerable evidence on how people of higher socio-
economic statuses volunteer more frequently. Wuthnow (1991) states, “Voluntarism is, and
has been from its inception, largely a feature of the middle-class.” In his work he found that
72 percent of those with college degrees, for example, had donated time to a volunteer
organization at some point in their lives, compared with only 42 percent of those with a high-
school diploma. (p.307) Further, Wilson and Musick (1997) asserted that people with higher
status occupations (e.g., managers v. blue-collar workers) volunteer more. Additionally,
Thoits and Hewitt (2001) also discovered that people with “socioeconomic resources (e.g.,
education) and personality ‘goods’ (e.g., happiness, self-esteem, low depression) who are
socially integrated (i.e., active members of religious and other organized community groups)” are the citizens who volunteer their time and effort. (p.27) Whereas many of the respondents in my study do fall into these higher socio-economic status categories, my findings also highlight that many of the interviewees – people from working-class backgrounds, minorities, ex-offenders – break with this pattern. Interviewing volunteers and workers who also happen to be ex-offenders provides insights into perspectives of inmates and ex-offenders on the effectiveness of re-entry efforts.
II. METHODS

This paper examines and documents Re-Entry Partners, volunteers and employees who are engaged in assisting inmates and former inmates with transition efforts (re-entry work). This research project relies upon data that emerged from interviews with twenty volunteers and twenty employees who assist male inmates and ex-offenders with the re-entry process. Drawing upon interview transcripts, I coded what respondents said about their volunteer and employment experiences working with men who were incarcerated to transition back into society. This paper highlights patterns that emerged from the data.

For my dissertation I conducted a set of forty semi-structured interviews with a sample of employees and volunteers who work with male inmates and ex-offenders. These interviews were then analyzed to discern any significant patterns that seem to pertain to re-entry work. I also performed an analysis of these interviews to search for motivations and benefits that lead many people to engage in re-entry work, paid or unpaid, and to note some of the costs this group experiences. This research was approved by the UNC Institutional Review Board, protocol number 07-1174.

I interviewed twenty employees and twenty volunteers involved in re-entry-related work. For this study my operational definition for “volunteers” was “a person who chooses to do unpaid work in some capacity with incarcerated men to assist them to transition back into society.” Volunteers consisted of community members, mainly from church or faith-
based centers, who engage in unpaid work to help acquire housing, transportation, job connections and other services. These volunteers help to create viable communities where former and current residents of the criminal justice system can feel supported and receive assistance to re-enter society successfully. Also, I considered the three Re-Entry Partners who hired inmates or ex-offenders to be re-entry work volunteers since they are not employed by someone to hire these men and because they made deliberate choices to put their own livelihoods at risk to assist men in transition. For this study my operational definition for “employee” was “a person who is employed in an occupation that requires them in some capacity to assist incarcerated men or male ex-offenders to transition back into society.” Employees include educators, social workers, addiction specialists, and others who are paid to assist incarcerated men or male ex-offenders to transition back into society.

Volunteer respondents for interviews were selected in three main ways. First, due to my own experiences as a volunteer in the community I knew a number of the people who either participated in or led re-entry-based efforts. Many of these people were willing participants of my study. Some of them also served as gatekeepers and identified other volunteers who were willing to be interviewed. Finally, I generated contact lists at a couple of the Round Table events to ask those who were willing to be respondents to sign up. Then, I randomly called some of them back at a later date to set up interviews with them.

Respondents for the study who were employees came from four main sources. First, some of them were employees who worked at two of the minimum-security prison camps in the area. I had encountered them during my volunteer work and approached them about participating in my study. Also, I randomly called people who had identified themselves as employees on the Round Table contact lists who said I could interview them. Additionally, a
couple of the employees I from the Round Tables emailed me to set up interview times. Finally, I contacted local government and community agencies that sponsor re-entry-based programs to interview employees about their work.

Interviewees in this study were men and women from various racial and ethnic backgrounds and of various ages. I also generated referrals from my volunteer gatekeepers to gather a sample of volunteers that covered a broad range of demographics (age, race, sex). Thus, I was able to construct a sample that “blanketed the field,” or included as many distinct experiences as possible. Significantly, while no one in the study was a current inmate or on parole, a significant sub-sample of the interviewees did include former inmates who currently engaged in re-entry work as volunteers and employees.

I had only a few refusals. Re-entry work employees who did not want to be interviewed consisted of people who were unavailable because they worked extra shifts during the holiday season when my interviews took place. Only two volunteers were unavailable to be interviewed. One was sick. The other was out of the country at the time I wanted to interview her.

As part of my research process, I trained and supervised a team of five students to help transcribe the interviews. Training consisted of teaching this team the basics of the transcription process. All team members achieved certification for the Human Participants Protection Education for Research Teams through the CITI on-line course. All five transcribers participated in 1.5 hour-long training meetings for two months.

Interviews took place in study rooms at local libraries, restaurants, and coffee shops. Typically the interviews were 2-3 hours in length. A couple of the interviews had to be
conducted in two-day session and lasted for 4 hours. At the close of each interview, respondents were given a $10 Food Lion card for their participation in appreciation of their time and effort.

Semi-structured interviews proved better than formal surveys to address my research questions. First, this approach allowed for in-depth responses and data to be collected from the respondents about their experiences. Second, interviews created room for follow-up questions to be asked in order to gain a better understanding of re-entry dynamics. These in-depth responses made it possible to gather rich data on the motivating factors, benefits and costs associated with volunteer and paid re-entry work activity.

Re-Entry Partners Study Interview Questionnaire

I constructed an interview questionnaire (see Appendix A) for this study to gather data on the Re-Entry Partners’ motivations and the benefits and costs they experienced while they performed re-entry work. The initial questions of the interview questionnaire collected basic demographic information. They also served as “warm-up” questions to help establish a rapport between the interviewer and the respondents. Some of these questions were

When were you born?
What race or ethnicity would you say you are?
What is the highest level of education you have completed?

After the initial demographic questions were asked, interviewers offered the following definition statement in order to make clear to each respondent what was meant by “re-entry efforts”:
For the purposes of this study the term “re-entry efforts” refers to anything that is done to help men who are inmates get better prepared for their transition out of prison and back into society. The term “re-entry efforts” also applies to any action taken to help men who have been released from prison, who are commonly referred to as “ex-offenders,” adjust to their new lives and become more stable during their transition back into society.

The next set of questions gathered data about what re-entry efforts in the area look like in general and were asked to both volunteers and employees engaged in efforts to help inmates or ex-offenders. Some of these questions included:

What do you think are some of the main issues men face when they are released from prison?

Do you know of any re-entry efforts that exist to help current inmates or ex-offenders? If yes, can you talk about what these efforts are?

What do you think are some other things that could be done to help inmates or ex-offenders transition back into society?

After these initial questions were asked to every respondent, the rest of the interview was divided into sections: volunteers, employees, and religiosity markers. The first two sections – volunteers and employees – consisted of questions about volunteer or employment activities associated with re-entry work as respondents assisted incarcerated men or male ex-offenders.

The set of questions (see Appendix A) in the volunteer and employment activities section was aimed at capturing data on the motivations, health and well-being, and benefits and costs of involvement in re-entry work. Some questions also helped to define the social space (i.e., questions to indicate whether the work or volunteering was done inside or outside of prison) of where re-entry activities are conducted. This set of questions also solicited data about social interactions between the volunteers and employees and the men being helped along the lines of social stratification markers (e.g., gender, race, age, class standing) to provide data on whether or not these social factors affected re-entry work in any way.
Consequently, these questions elucidated some understanding of the extent to which these social stratification markers influence the quality of re-entry work.

One of the main findings during my preliminary interviews was that religious beliefs appeared to be highly influential in terms of the decisions respondents made to do re-entry work. Thus, I included a set of questions aimed at specifically capturing the religiosity of those who participated in the study. These questions (see Appendix A) were standard ones utilized to measure religiosity. They measured spiritual or religious identity, belief in God, religious or spiritual tradition or affiliation, and attendance. An example of one of these types of questions was, “Do you believe in God?” This section ends with three questions specifically tailored for re-entry work volunteers and employees to find out how religion interacts with their re-entry work experiences. The first two questions examine the interaction between faith or religious beliefs and re-entry work with male inmates or ex-offenders:

Do you think your faith or religious beliefs have anything to do with how you think or act when it comes to helping/working with inmates or ex-offenders? Why or why not?

Do you think helping/working with inmates or ex-offenders affects your faith or religious beliefs? Why or why not?

The last question examined religion as a social stratification marker:

Do you ever feel that your religion or religious beliefs affect how you are treated or perceived by incarcerated men or male ex-offenders? Why or why not?

At the end of the interview I asked respondents if there was anything else they wanted to say about re-entry efforts in case they had more to say about re-entry work that I had not asked. I thanked the respondents for their participation and gave them $10 Food Lion cards.

Analyzing the data, I examined how re-entry work volunteers and re-entry work employees compared when it comes to assisting incarcerated men or male ex-offenders with
the re-entry process. Based on the interviews, I created a coding scheme to document their experiences helping men with the re-entry process. This information provided the social contexts in which these re-entry efforts occurred. I also coded the motivational factors that prompted respondents in the sample to be employed or to volunteer to assist with the re-entry process. Finally, I coded other aspects associated with re-entry work, such as the benefits and costs Re-Entry Partners reported about their involvement with men in transition. Similarities between the two groups surfaced as both groups discussed their engagement in re-entry work. However, I also found some distinctions due to the different socialization effects and experiences based on the diverse social roles, expectations and structural locations of re-entry work volunteers and re-entry work employees.

In this study the designation for Employees is “E” and there are 20 of them. For example, “E-4” is the fourth employee that I interviewed. Volunteers are marked with a “V” and a number to indicate when they were interviewed. For example, “V-12” was the twelfth volunteer interviewed. I categorized the responses from these interviews. For example, I designated “Motivation” as the category under which I placed all responses given to the questions about how the respondent became involved with re-entry work. In this section I placed the actual stated reasons respondents provide for why they believe they volunteered or took their particular jobs. There were a multitude of factors promoting respondents to volunteer or work with incarcerated men or male ex-offenders. So, this section and the other category sections were inclusive. When more than one response was provided for any given category, all responses given were coded.

I provide tables to show demographics and dimensions of re-entry work. Also, I have created Conceptual Maps to indicate the Structural Locations of Re-entry Work that affect
the social statuses of volunteers and employees and to depict Re-Entry Partner Motivations. The numbers by the responses on the Conceptual Maps indicate the number of times the responses were given. Responses with no numbers indicate that those responses were only given once by Re-Entry Partners in the study.

There are a few limitations with this research. First, this exploratory study is not a national, regional or state representative sample. Thus, it is impossible to generalize the responses of the sample of employees and volunteers who were interviewed to reflect a broader population. Consequently, this study’s descriptive design prevents any causal conclusions about employment and volunteerism with respect to re-entry efforts.

Regional effects may also have impacted the motivational factors behind people’s involvement in re-entry work. The southern United States is often considered a more religious region than other parts of the country. Thus, I may have unintentionally over-sampled a faith-based group of respondents.

Despite these limitations, an analysis of the interview data to examine how participants discussed their re-entry experiences proved valuable. The forty cases I obtained for this study provided a sample that allowed me to discover broad patterns in the employees’ and volunteers’ thoughts and feelings about the motivations, benefits and costs they experienced when they performed re-entry work.
III. RE-ENTRY PARTNERS AND RE-ENTRY WORK

This chapter serves as an introduction to the Re-Entry Partners whom I interviewed for my study. It also introduces the structural and cultural parameters within which re-entry work operates in the region of my study. The first part of this chapter examines the demographics of the Re-entry Partners. I present data about their age, race, sex, and education levels. In this section I also highlight and offer information about two special subgroups of my sample – Ex-Offenders and re-entry work employees who used to be correctional and/or parole and probation officers. The next two sections of this chapter examine two structural components of re-entry work. First, I present how Re-entry Partners discuss the three main models of re-entry-related activities in the geographic regional area. Then, I document the social statuses of Re-entry Partners that emerge due to the social locations of where respondents report transition efforts take place. Finally, by assessing markers of religiosity that pertain to my interviewees, I analyze the role of Religion as the cultural factor that appears to be a significant influence leading Re-Entry Partners in my study to engage in re-entry work.

Re-Entry Partner Demographics

My interviews derive from a non-random sample of respondents in the Triangle area of North Carolina. The Re-Entry Partners I interviewed were either gatekeepers of re-entry work activities – employees and volunteers daily involved with re-entry transition efforts, or were,
in line with snowball sampling methods, referred to me by the gatekeepers, or were community members at the Round Tables I visited who agreed to participate in my study. For six months, as part of my preliminary work, I attended and participated in various events in the Triangle area that focused on assisting incarcerated men and ex-offenders with re-entry-related issues. For example, some of the main events in the region I attended regularly were area Round Tables, where professionals, state employees, volunteers, and men and women with criminal records met monthly to discuss current North Carolina re-entry efforts. At these and other events I collected contact information for people who voluntarily expressed an interest in being interviewed for this research study. Consequently, I gathered a lot of contacts who agreed to be interviewed about their employment and volunteer activities involving work with inmates and ex-offenders.

Employee respondents came from organizations that provided services for ex-offenders, such as housing, employment and education. Employees from the Department of Corrections (DOC) that work inside of prisons in the area also agreed to be interviewed. Some of the volunteer respondents came from faith-based community volunteers who spend time with incarcerated men in the minimum-security prison camps in the geographic area of my study.

Volunteers also came from 12-Step-based recovery programs and Yokefellows, faith-based volunteers who host meetings at the minimum-security prison camps in the geographic area of my study to spend time with the men. Also, using the snowball sampling technique, I interviewed “gatekeepers” – leaders of re-entry work in the three counties areas my study covered – and had them refer me to people who also served as re-entry work volunteers.
There was a wide range in ages of the Re-entry Partners sample in the study (see Table 3.1) and the sample of volunteers and employees was fairly similar. The key difference was that there were more employees who were in their sixties and more volunteers who were in their seventies and thirties. Given that a lot of the re-entry work volunteers got involved with transition efforts in their retirement years when they had time available, it is not surprising that 1/5 of them were in their seventies. Research shows that many people also tend to volunteer during their time of active employment and find they have the energy to participate in activities outside of paid work (Wuthnow, 1991). Thus, it is not surprising that 2/5 of re-entry work volunteers are in their thirties and forties.

Given that most people in the United States tend to retire in their late sixties and 1/5 of the re-entry work employees I interviewed were administrators on their way to retirement or working during their retirement years, the data analysis revealed that 1/4 of the re-entry work employees were in their sixties and none of them were in their seventies or older. Also, the fact that the majority of the re-entry work employees in the sample had been employed in the criminal justice system or in re-entry work-related jobs for quite some time may explain why most of them were in their forties and fifties.

### Table 3.1 Re-Entry Partners Age Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
<th>Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70’s</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60’s</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50’s</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40’s</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30’s</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20’s</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.2 Re-Entry Partners Race Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
<th>Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sample of Re-Entry Partners in the study consisted of 16 blacks and 24 whites (see Table 3.2). More white volunteers (14) than black volunteers (6) were interviewed. Mainly this reflects the fact that one county in my study had more whites than blacks volunteering as Re-Entry Partners and the fact that half of the re-entry work volunteers in my sample were from that particular county. There was also some indication from the reports I received from re-entry work volunteers that there are not many blacks involved in entering prisons in the area to volunteer with inmates directly. In contrast to the volunteer sample, I was able to interview an even number of black (10) and white (10) re-entry work employees.

Table 3.3 Re-Entry Partners Sex Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
<th>Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sample of Re-Entry Partners consisted of 13 females and 27 males (Table 3.3). There are more males than females. This reflects the fact that employment-related and volunteer-based re-entry work to assist male inmates and ex-offenders is mainly done by men.

E-6, a black female re-entry work Employee, described her mindset when she first
started working as a female correctional officer in a male facility:

E-6: I was young, coming in from college, and I had to be strong to work as an officer in a male facility because if not you could be eaten alive. . . . You have to develop a tough skin . . . if you’re going to make it. There’s no way to make it if you don’t, or they are going to take advantage of you. . . . You have to be tough. . . . ’Cause everybody can’t make it. . . . Being a female coming in, no experience working in the system, . . . guys will try to play games and see if you’re going to fall prey. . . . But, in order for me to do the job and to do it well, you have to develop a tough exterior to make it, because you have to do your job and stick by the rules . . . to regulate these male offenders. . . . Going into that dorm, making sure that that dorm is running like it should be, per what your sergeant has requested it to do.

A veteran employee of the Department of Corrections, E-6 overcame her initial difficulties as a female employee and reported that she now thoroughly enjoyed her job.

Fears and concerns about safety also either made some of the female Re-Entry Partners hesitant or cautious about volunteering with this population and one female volunteer reported that it kept her from going inside of prison. V-10 (a white female minister) offered a response that clearly indicated how social stratification distinctions like gender are a part of re-entry work as female employees and volunteers have to contend with safety issues and other risks as they assist a male population inside and outside of prison.

She spoke about her motivations and introduction to re-entry work and her concerns about being a female volunteer inside of prison:

Well, someone at church knew about this and I was particularly convicted by a passage of Scripture, Mathew 25, where Jesus talks about when did you see me . . . when did you feed the hungry and clothe the naked and visit the prisoner? And as little as I put stock in ‘I’m doing things because I want to get into heaven,’ I do have some concern when Judgment Day comes. It would be nice that I could say that I actually have fed and clothed. And I find this [faith team work] much easier to do than go to prison. And again, as a white middle-age female, it’s a safer thing for me to do, you know, this kind of thing, at least in my mind, than to go to prison. So, to me, it’s easier than some other thing that might be expected of me as a follower of Jesus than to go to prison. That’s what motivated me.
V-10’s response also highlights an example of the impact of religion on Re-entry Partners as she talked about how Scripture inspired her to join a Faith Team to help ex-offenders. Additionally, her response indicates how the Structural Map of re-entry work applies as she chooses to participate solely as an “External”.

Table 3.4 Re-Entry Partners Race and Sex Demographics Combined

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
<th>Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black Females</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Females</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Males</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Males</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4 demonstrates that I was able to find equal racial representation among male and female Re-Entry Employees and Volunteers with the exception of black females. One black female volunteer gatekeeper in the area, whom I could not interview formally because she was sick at the time I gathered my data, talked to me over the phone about the scarcity of black females volunteering to assist male prisoners. She claimed that this reflects the fact that the majority of black female volunteers involved in re-entry work in the area mainly work with female inmates and ex-offenders. A lot of them feel they can be much more effective with this population because they can identify with their issues more directly. This finding does not mean that there are not black female volunteers involved with re-entry work as can be clearly seen by their presence at Round Tables.

The one black female Re-Entry Partner Volunteer I did interview talked about how she got involved as a direct result of supporting her husband’s mission work:
V-14: [I got involved due to] my husband. . . . because he used to be a correctional officer, and he really feels like this is what God has called him to do, and that, you know, this is his niche. And it’s proven to be true. And since he and I are a couple and a team, then I figure this is probably what I’m supposed to be doing too. So we really do complement each other.

I: Okay, ‘cause . . . some wives might not be so supportive, or as involved as you are…

V-14: Just because my husband and I are a team in just about everything in life, so it is only natural for us to be a team in this.

I: Was that hard for you to make that decision to join or…

V-14: No, he just asked me to come one day and once I started getting to know the guys, it has been easy.

Her involvement in re-entry work came about as a direct result of her husband inviting her to participate in the transition efforts he was engaged in. In the present study, 16/98 (16.3 percent) of the motivations reported by re-entry work volunteers involved being directly asked or influenced by someone they knew who participated in re-entry work. This matches findings in the current literature about volunteerism. “When volunteers are asked how they happened to get involved in their particularly activity, the most common answer is, ‘Someone asked me’” (Putnam, 2000, p.121).

Table 3.5 Re-Entry Partners Ex-Offender Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
<th>Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black Male Ex-Offenders</td>
<td>V-3, V-18</td>
<td>E-4, E-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Male Ex-Offenders</td>
<td>V-2, V-7</td>
<td>E-1, E-10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were two special subgroups included in my sample. The first subgroup was one of Ex-Offenders who serve as Re-Entry Partners (Table 3.5). Gaining the perspectives of
men who had successfully been able to transition out of prison and re-establish themselves in
society addressed two purposes. First, it demonstrates that there are successful transitions
that take place despite the overwhelming obstacles Ex-Offenders encounter, high recidivism
rates, and negative images of these men and women paraded on television every night.
These men once re-established in society are now helping and, in many cases, leading the re-
entry work efforts. They know the terrain of what is involved with transition efforts and are
taking actions to pave the way to make things easier for the next group of men being released
from prison. Second, in contrast to the most prevalent research on volunteerism that focuses
on predominantly white middle-class members using their leisure time to volunteer, the
presence of these Ex-Offenders as re-entry work employees and volunteers demonstrates that
there are groups of people across the socio-economic divide who are participating in re-entry
work, including people society deems least valuable due to their criminal records.

In almost 1/4 of my sample (9 out of 40) of Re-Entry Partners were Ex-Offenders, or
men who had served time in prison. These men now serve as Re-Entry Partners. 4 of them
were volunteers (2 white males and 2 black males) and 5 of them were employed in re-entry-
related agencies or organizations (2 white males and 3 black males). Although I consciously
set out to include a small sample of Ex-Offenders, roughly 4-5, during my interviews with re-
entry work employees and volunteers I discovered that 4-5 more of them were also Ex-
Offenders. For example, in the middle of talking to E-8, a black male who is employed to
help ex-offenders find drug-free transition housing, about the amount of time he also spends
volunteering, I discovered he was an Ex-Offender himself. When he assessed the
effectiveness of re-entry work efforts, he offered an explanation of Yokefellows and
Community Volunteer sponsors as well as giving an “insider’s” view on how these programs helped him:

I: Do you think these efforts are effective?  
E-8: I know they are. Because I was an inmate, and I benefited from some of the exact same services that I am a part of now. . . . One of them being Yokefellows, which is . . . basically a Bible study. A bunch of community volunteers go in, we go in on Monday night, and I have a table, and everybody else, they pick a table and the inmates come in, and they can choose where they want to sit, and one night might be a topic somebody’s going through, . . . some type of an issue. Somebody might want to focus on a particular verse or scripture out of the Bible. Whatever the case may be, just let the Holy Spirit lead it. And go for it. And I know how I benefited from it when I was incarcerated.

I: How?

E-8: Greatly. Greatly. I mean, just to have that connection even to the outside world for one. And to know that there are genuine people who are sincere and love you, even though you’re in prison. To know that there are some people in society who respect you as a man, as a human being. Call you a brother, as a Christian, a brother in Christ. And these are men and women coming in to volunteer for YokeFellows. And I know it was a help to me. It was an encouragement to me. And I try to be that to the people now.

I: So you were helped, and now you are part of the Yoke fellows, helping?

E-8: Exactly, and I could not be more excited about it. I look forward to it every Monday.

I: Are there other ways in which you volunteer?

E-8: I’m . . . they call it a Community Volunteer sponsor. I’m able to pick up individuals from [a minimum-security prison], . . . I can take them to the library. . . . Most of the time, I take them to Church or Bible study. Take them out to eat. I have them at my house to eat.

E-8’s perspective on these programs as a former inmate also offers an idea of how these models of support may be helping current inmates. Further, his discourse stands as an example of how some re-entry work employees are also involved in transition efforts as re-entry work volunteers at the same time.
The other special subgroup in my sample was a set of re-entry employees who had been employed as correctional officers and one employee who had previously worked as a parole and probation officer. I deliberately set out to interview a sample of correctional officers and met with resistance. First, I was unable to secure IRB permission from the Department of Corrections to interview their employees during their work shifts. Second, due to the time of year in which the majority of interviews took place (between November and December of 2007), many of the correctional officers who agreed to be interviewed were not able to find the time to schedule an interview with me.

However, during my interviews with re-entry work employees who do case management work or who serve as administrators of local re-entry-related programs with male inmates or male ex-offenders, the fact surfaced that there were 4 former correctional officers and 1 former parole and probation officer among my respondents. This gave me the opportunity to interview them about their re-entry work with inmates and ex-offenders when they were employed in these positions. For example, E-5, a black female re-entry work employee who is employed by the Department of Corrections to assist inmates with receiving services that will help them transition, reflects on her experience as a corrections officer:

I: When you were a corrections officer, what were some of your specific duties or activities, anything in relation to helping inmates transition?

E-5: . . . Being there to talk to them. I think when you are an officer sometimes inmates are more open about things. Some things not all things. . . . I think when you are an officer they talk to you about bad stuff going on at home, and, they can really get ugly. ‘I just need to talk to you. I don’t want to get written up. I just want to tell you this is what’s going on or this is what I don’t like.’

Also, E-11, a black male re-entry work employee who administers a transition housing program provided this account of how his days working as a probation and parole
officer helped to change his views about ex-offenders because of the relationships he formed with them.

When I started working as a Probation Parole Officer, I started forming a different opinion. . . . I was finding out . . . some of the things they have done. I had done some things that weren’t law-abiding, but it didn’t escalate into the level that it caused them to go to prison, see. . . . Then I started talkin’ with ‘em and working with ‘em, and started developing some pretty good relationships with ‘em. They . . . began to have more confidence or more trust in talking to me, and I said, “This guy is no different than I am, really.” He made a mistake . . . and now he’s trying to change, turn his life around. . . . But I made mistakes too. Maybe not at the level that he made the mistake; but I could have easily. . . . I’m not beyond something happening right now that would put me over on the other side of this desk. That’s what you start realizing. . . . That’s why I . . . have disliked people who . . . would feel better than an inmate. . . . Felt like they were above associating with that person, you know? . . . That bothered me because they made a mistake. I mean, you can’t keep beating him. . . . You can’t hold it over his head the rest of his life. Because a lot of ‘em have turned their lives around and gone on to do a lot of good things.

E-11’s experiences exemplify how most Re-entry Partners in my study changed their views about male inmates and ex-offenders after spending time with them. Many began to connect with these men with criminal records as human beings and to develop social relationships with them beyond simply seeing them as the recipients of volunteer efforts or paid work tasks.

**Table 3.6 Re-Entry Partners Education Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Employees</th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M.D./J.D.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.Div./M.A.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.A./B.S.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s or Some College</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School or Vocational</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The education levels of the Re-Entry Partners (Table 3.6) in my sample covered a wide range of professional and academic degrees and experiences. I did not discern a significant difference in education levels between the two groups. An equal number of employees and volunteers had graduated from a 4-year college with 7 members from each group holding B.A. or B.S. degrees. There were 6 employees and 5 volunteers who had an education level where they had only an Associate’s degree, had attended some college, or held a high school diploma. 9 employees and 11 volunteers held advanced graduate or professional degrees.

Models for Re-entry Work in North Carolina

The structural domain of re-entry work in the Triangle area consists of three main models of social support networks where re-entry work volunteers participate in transition efforts. These three models emerged during interviews as respondents addressed the following question: “Please describe any re-entry efforts you know about that help inmates or ex-offenders.” Respondents talked about the types of formal and informal structures that had been created and were being utilized by Re-Entry Partners as they assist incarcerated men and male ex-offenders to transition into society. Community Mentors, Faith Teams, and Round Tables are the three dominant re-entry work models initiated or largely coordinated by re-entry work volunteers and referenced most often by Re-Entry Partners in the interview discourse.

Before examining the social structures that have been created by volunteers to address re-entry work needs, it is important to note that there are also city, state, and federal
organizations that administer transition efforts for incarcerated men. Many of the re-entry efforts they sponsor were referred to in the interview discourse. For example, the Department of Corrections has an impressive array of GED and college courses, job training classes, and substance abuse treatment programs available in its prison system to help inmates create more viable options upon release.

One of the most successful re-entry programs in the area is the Criminal Justice Resource Center (CJRC). During an interview with an Administrator at the CJRC, I was informed about who is eligible for their program and about how the program works:

We receive notification from the parole commission . . . and they ask us to evaluate that person for our program. We go to the prison and interview the inmate to determine whether they need our services and just get as much information about this individual as possible. . . . The day they get released . . . they get picked up by their assigned probation officer, they come here for intake and assessment, and they either go into our halfway house or they go to their approved home place. Then they receive services here at the Criminal Justice Resource Center for 6-9 months and those include substance abuse treatment, employment assistance, educational services, a lot of community resource referrals and assistance. . . . Clothing, social security cards, ID’s, food stamps, mental health referrals, medication. . . . Pretty much anything you can think of, we try to address. . . . The people we work with are serious violent offenders. . . . Those are people with significant records or have committed very serious crimes. . . . We have a very high number of people that complete their post release supervision, so that’s good. . . . We have maybe 25 in our program a year . . . we have some that are doing exceptionally well.

Beyond state, federal or city-based transition programs and structures like the CJRC, there are also effective community-based organizations like TROSA

E-11: That’s a two-year substance abuse treatment program. They provide jobs. . . . A lot of individuals working at that program are ex-offenders too with drug problems. . . . That program has done a lot for the community and helping these individuals transition back into the community.

and the Human Kindness Foundation
V-17: The Human Kindness Foundation was the first organization that I was familiar with that helped people in prison. They send books... and offered a book called “We Are All Doing Time.” That book is a really powerful book for cultivating a daily spiritual practice and also for connecting people in prison to stories of other people in prison who are on a spiritual path or a path of self-improvement. And I know that they write letters to people in prisons.

and valuable church-based prison ministries in the area like the annual One Day With God Camp run by Forgiven Ministry. Their event allows incarcerated men to spend time with their children.

E-19: What they do is try... to reconcile the incarcerated parents with the children. So [children] get to spend the whole day with their dads... playing games, ... and doing crafts and activities.

This current study, however, primarily focuses on the re-entry work structures and efforts that were most referred to by re-entry work employees and volunteers in the interview discourse.

During my preliminary work and in this study, Community Mentorships, Faith Teams, and Round Tables were cited by most respondents as the foremost volunteer-initiated re-entry work structures and efforts taking place in the area. These three models served as social arenas where social support networks were created as people form social bonds with each other and with male inmates or ex-offenders. Re-entry work volunteers serve as Community Mentors, participate on Faith Teams, or attend Round Tables to help individuals with the re-entry process.
Community Mentors

Community Mentors are re-entry work volunteers who either visit men in prisons or support them once they have been released from prison. They fell into four main categories: Yokefellows, Community Volunteers, Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or Narcotics Anonymous (NA) Sponsors, or Transition Aftercare Network (T.A.N.) members. Given that most of the volunteers involved in re-entry work in the area are faith-based volunteers, it is not surprising that 3 out of 4 of these Community Mentor groups are faith-based groups. Table 3.7 shows how often each type was mentioned by Re-Entry Partners in the study. The most prevalent types cited were AA or NA Sponsors with 13 responses and Community Volunteers with 11 responses. 8 of the Re-Entry Partners gave the reply Yokefellows and 3 of them said T.A.N. members. Many of them mentioned more than one type during their interview and a few reported that they knew about only 1 type of Community Mentor group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Employees</th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA/NA</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Volunteers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yokefellows</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T.A.N.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Community Mentor group most mentioned by Re-Entry Partners, Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous, had a very visible presence. This group assisted with one of the main problems facing inmates in the area – substance abuse issues that influenced
many of them to commit the crimes that led to their arrest and, often, their re-arrest. 12-Step Sponsors offered their services to men in transition to help them stay clean and sober. Members often hosted meetings in prisons to talk to inmates about recovery. They also supported men who had criminal records in their efforts to stay sober when they attended meetings in the community. AA or NA sponsors developed relationships with these men to work one-on-one with them through the recovery process. Some AA or NA members became Community Volunteers in order to be able to take men out of prisons to meetings.

Community Volunteers (CV’s), the second Community Mentor group that was cited most often by Re-Entry Partners, were men who were trained and approved by the Department of Corrections to take honor grade inmates in minimum-security prisons out on six-hour passes in the community. The inmates allowed to go on passes were men who have been elevated to a high status level because of their “good” behavior (compliance with prison regulations). They were also typically due to be released within six months to a year. Personal relationships Community Volunteers built with these men helped provide a period of re-socialization, an opportunity for inmates to start socializing and interacting with people outside of prison again. These occasions also let them gain some exposure to changes that have happened in society during their periods of incarceration. E-5, a prison employee who counseled male inmates, offered a glimpse into what this process looked like:

E-5: A community volunteer sponsor . . . volunteers their time . . . to take the inmate out into the community to church, to eat. Some take them to their house, to the museum. It’s to reintegrate that inmate . . . to get them some exposure back into society. You might have an inmate that’s been confined for twenty-seven years . . . and just to go out and see how the world has changed so much, it’s a big adjustment for them. We just take it for granted. . . . It wasn’t any ATM machines. Grocery stores were not what they are like now; you check yourself out now. It’s just everything has changed so much. . . . I listen to them. They tell me these things. I had one inmate I took him . . . for an interview. So, we are sitting there. He is eating.
I see him put all his dishes on top of each other, pick them up and go. . . . I said, “Where you going?” He said, “Oh.” I said, “Yeah, they are going to clean the tables.”

I: I see, because that’s what they would have to do inside?

E-5: Yes. I had one inmate. I took him to speak at a school. . . . He said he was in the bathroom . . . all up under the sink, “How do you get this water to come down?” . . . He said he saw someone else come in and stick their hands and the water came out. He said, “I look like a fool.” . . . We laugh about it now but at the time he just didn’t know.

Without these outings with Community Volunteers, it can be a traumatic experience for people to be released from prison. They often need the opportunities Community Volunteers provided them to relearn how to engage with others socially and to become familiar with new technology.

During passes with Community Volunteers, inmates often became acquainted with people in the CV’s social networks who befriended them and made themselves available to support them upon their release. These social networks proved to be a valuable alternative to the social networks that the inmates had prior to their incarceration, especially since these networks often included associates who helped put them in situations that led to their arrests.

E-3, a prison administrator, discussed this aspect of social networks when he talked about how the staff at his prison actively recruited Community Volunteers because of their positive influences.

E-3: We try to get people that are involved in substance abuse. People that are involved in literacy. People that are involved in the volunteer program where they carry inmates out for meals in their homes, or to church, or to movies, or socialization types of things. We try to link people that are here with the people that are trying to get them out into the community. So basically there’s a continuity of people. When they . . . are exposed to more positive influences, they’re able to continue some of those positive influences upon their release. I guess if there’s one thing that we’re
really trying to provide, it is basic support by reasonable and reliable citizenry rather than some of the same people that they’ve had in the communities that have led them back, . . . not necessarily led them, but have been a part of their return to the prison or their coming to prison in the first place.

A lot of mentoring happened as Community Volunteers tried to model appropriate social behaviors for these men and to teach them how to take care of themselves better. For example, Community Volunteers used these opportunities to coach the men as they went with them on job interviews and helped them accomplish other tasks, such as securing driver’s licenses or social security cards. Since most volunteers had a religious or spiritual orientation, these outings often allowed for the inmates to be introduced to church communities or AA meetings where they started to develop social networks that proved valuable when they were released. V-20, a Community Volunteer at two prisons, talked about his experiences and about how his church supported his re-entry work with men in transition.

V-20: I’m a CV sponsor, so I can take men out of the prison on short term passes and get to know them. As the release date approaches, we start talking about that and their anxieties and needs. . . . I will help them look for housing or we will help them look for a used car. . . . [When] they get released, . . . I have taken them around looking at apartments. I have argued with landlords, trying to get them to offer apartments to people who have criminal records. . . . When they have a specific request, I will send out a request over my church’s listserv, asking for help. Like our churches bought a gas card for a released inmate who couldn’t afford to get to and from work . . . and then, gone around collecting used furniture and household items to help furnish apartments.

Yokefellows, another Community Mentor group, is a national organization of affiliated ecumenical church groups who establish weekly meetings at prisons to visit and minister to inmates. Re-entry work volunteer V-7 provided some background information on
Yokefellows and described his experiences with the group that visited the prison where he was incarcerated.

V-7: Yokefellows is a Christian-based prison ministry. The term Yokefellows comes from a Biblical passage about being in the same yoke, pulling like ox in a team. Pulling, wearing the same yoke, as Christ. . . . They will meet usually one night a week and members from the community will come in and take snacks and just visit with the prisoner. It’s not supposed to be a Bible study or brow beating or proselytization session. It’s meant to be just visiting and talking and befriending the prisoners.

Eight of the Re-Entry Partners talked about Yokefellow groups that met at the minimum-security prisons in the geographic area of my study.

Apparently, the Yokefellows groups in the area have developed their own particular characters, perhaps based on the number of inmates and volunteers from the community who chosen to attend the meetings. Re-entry work volunteer V-20, who attended Yokefellows meetings at two prisons in the area, said that each one was different. At one prison in the area there are regularly about twenty volunteers and sixty inmates who get together and have discussions. (V-20: It’s just a time to develop friendships and strike up conversations.) At another prison in the area a much lower number of volunteers attend and about sixty inmates show up. (V-20: So, it often turns into like an organized Bible study and not a time to meet and greet and get to know one another.) Concerning the first prison, he reported that he has only seen a few people engage in a formal Bible study. He said most of the conversations between the Yokefellows, inmates and volunteers, were informal. His experiences with the men he visited were enriching as he found himself part of “another circle of friends.”

V-20: I have seen people . . . bring their Bibles, and they seem to have been working through some kind of curriculum with the inmates that want to do that. . . . That’s a
minority. I think most people just have an open conversation and sometimes it turns to spiritual matters and sometimes it doesn’t. . . . People just sharing stories or reminiscing about the past or talking about their families; things they are worried about. . . . I know some of the Yokefellows volunteers that I go with keep up kind of a wall. The inmates . . . may not know their last name. . . . But . . . the inmates that I work with, they eat in my home. . . . They know where I live. They ask about my daughter. . . . They have met my wife. . . . They know what I do on a day to day basis. I don’t keep anything hidden. We all just know everything about each other. There’s not really any kind of distance. . . . They send me birthday cards in the mail. It’s just like another circle of friends.

The final Community Mentor group, Transition Aftercare Network (T.A.N.), represented an active step by the Department of Corrections to encourage volunteers in communities near prisons to support transition efforts. As part of a grant-funded program the state had, called the Going Home Initiative, there were actions taken to reach out to churches and other citizen groups to form Community Mentors. Consequently, Transition Aftercare Networks developed in parts of the state. Interview discourse indicated there was at least one T.A.N. in the area of my study.

The T.A.N. in the area consists of members who come from different types of denominations and churches that provide funding for the program. However, since the Department of Corrections started the group originally, it is not considered by its members to be a religious-based group. A member of this T.A.N., V-4, talked about how the group operates.

The whole premise behind this particular group is that we want to work with the guys for nine months to a year before they get out. . . . To understand what their needs and desires are, what kind of life they want to lead, so that we can kind of help guide them into the steps they need to take to achieve that. That nine months to a year is very intense. We find out a lot about each other, a lot about what the goals are. Then, using their words as much as possible, their desires, put down that plan. Then, once they get out the gate, they have that plan in place. “Okay, I need to go here. I need to see these people. I need to do this. I need to make these contacts in the next few
days.” . . . We follow these guys for as long as they allow us to, to help them out. . . . We want to be mentors. We accept calls from them as much as possible.

V-4 said that the average time that men have worked with these T.A.N. mentors upon their release has been two or three months. Over the past five years they have mentored thirty individuals.

The local T.A.N. attempted to take a personal approach. When able, they worked with inmates’ families to talk to them about what they think will happen and what their involvement will be once the men were released. They also went with them to meet their parole officers.

V-4: So, their parole officer knows . . . they have a mentor who is following them; as well as to maybe serve as translator on the part of the ex-offender. Because oftentimes the words that are used and told to the ex-offenders, these guys sometimes don’t really understand what it really means and what they are expected to do once they’ve heard these words.

T.A.N. members mainly connected men in transition with resources that they needed. For example, they often took them to Social Services to get basic documents like birth certificates or state Identification cards that they needed when they looked for work. They went with them to churches and AA meetings. V-4 said his involvement in T.A.N. presented him with the opportunity to talk with people in his social network about the criminal justice system. “To slowly change the expectations of society about men who have been incarcerated.”

Different Community Mentor types are often utilized simultaneously by inmates to help them transition. For example, re-entry work volunteer V-7 related how he was able to
create a viable social network of support for years while he was still in prison. Attending Yokefellows and having a Community Volunteer allowed him to gain access to and receive support from a church and an AA meeting during his re-entry process.

V-7: There are different levels of community volunteering. One is where they just come into the prison and volunteer, whether it is tutoring, education, teaching guys to read, teaching the computer skills even, or going to Yokefellows, or Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous. Then, on another level, men at men’s facilities and women at women’s facilities, are able to become Community Volunteer sponsors where they can take guys out on community leave passes, where they can go to church, out to a movie, out to dinner, to an Alcoholic Anonymous meeting, to a Narcotics Anonymous meeting, other functions, or the sponsor’s home for thanksgiving dinner and things. . . . So that program was very beneficial. . . . I met . . . the man who let me come live in his house upon release at YokeFellows. He took me to a church on a community leave pass and I . . . joined the church several years before getting out of prison. . . . And the key is before getting out I was also going with a Community Volunteer to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. I was able to join a group and call it my home group. . . . Through the Community Volunteer program I was able to attend that meeting every week for several years prior to getting out. I was meeting people in the community and practicing new behaviors in the environment of free society. Not just thinking about doing it sitting in prison or practicing an AA meeting in a prison setting, but in the community, at the church. . . . I still go to church about every week.

I: Okay, so you still go to the same church?

V-7: Same church, same AA meeting.

*Faith Teams*

In response to the need for ex-offenders to receive support from communities during their transition periods, one type of structure of support, the Faith Team, has emerged. 5 re-entry work employees and 12 re-entry work volunteers who were interviewed reported that they knew about Faith Teams and said they were effective ways to help men transition. Faith
Teams generally consist of faith-based members who have formed committees to work directly with prisoners or ex-offenders. They typically are composed of faith-based volunteers who work with a criminal justice agency or local prison personnel to navigate how to work with this population. Some faith teams are able to start working with incarcerated men on transition plans six months before they are released. Other faith teams receive referrals from a local criminal justice agency to work with men who have been released from prison and are on probation. These former and current residents of the criminal justice system are often called “Partners.” Faith Teams allow for social bonding to occur between the church or faith-based members and the Partners. Their main tasks often revolves around creating viable support networks around these Partners to help them make decisions and take actions to stabilize their re-entry into society.

Whenever Re-entry Partners answered that Faith Teams were part of the re-entry efforts that they knew about in the local area, I asked them to define what they were. Below are some of the definitions they gave and some of the tasks they said faith teams perform:

E-18: the faith team is like a transition team that consists of churches and members and community volunteers and they work with the inmate to find housing and get a car jobs and support systems and if they want to go out and get hired they will have someone to be there for them

V-14: There will be a group of people that have been identified at a church, and basically the church adopts an ex-offender, and is able to be a support mechanism for the ex-offender. They don’t necessarily house them. They . . . don’t provide housing. But they are a resource. They become friends, mentors, and confidantes for the ex-offender.

E-3: We’ve had volunteers through faith groups . . . that have assisted . . . them in getting jobs. . . . They’ve assisted ‘em with transportation. I know one in particular has actually got a car donated and repaired and given it . . . to the inmate, for his use to get back and forth to work. . . . This is not a proselytizing relationship where they’re trying necessarily to get someone to join a particular religion or faith or church; but, of course, they offer that opportunity to the person. So really what we’re
looking at is trying to establish a new community, new friends, and new opportunities.

These vignettes show that there is a common understanding of what these Faith Teams are and how they operate. The common thread among them and others in my study is that they are composed of faith-based volunteers who create a support network around men who have been incarcerated. Support networks that also authentically include these men as equals.

One re-entry work employee, E-4, used a popular cultural metaphor in reference to Faith Teams as he discussed how the organization he worked for former inmates with Faith Teams. He said the support they provided his clients was well received by them.

E-4: We are . . . asking the clients, inmates, would they like to be supported by this group of people. And those that are, they just applaud it. They applaud that support. They are like Christian-based programs, religious-based programs. . . . No matter what that person does, they still support him. They support him back to the prison. They support him in the prison. We have to slow them down though cause we know the inmate and manipulative ways. We have to ask them don’t just flower them with finances, be there for them, and leave. But, . . . I’ve seen that faith-based ministry come in here and help guys. . . . The ones that are open to support. They stand up for them in court. They help them to get their license. They will call a job for them . . . and say, “Hey, we think this guy is a good guy and we support him.” . . . People like that. They know that . . . you’re an inmate. Then, they see this group of people behind you. It’s like the Verizon commercial. . . . The networks! You got a network behind you. . . . And he works, with employment. . . . They support the families if there are deaths. . . . We don’t recommend anyone unless they are drug free. . . . because we don’t want anybody working with someone and they are still using. But if they do use . . . [Faith Teams] don’t beat ‘em up, they support them.

Only one potential critique was raised in the interview discourse about Faith Teams.

In regards to their religious orientation re-entry work volunteer V-1 said

They’re called faith teams because they’re usually associated with the church . . . and in many cases, the person’s religion seems to be the motivation . . . for helping people. Personally, I prefer just to call them support teams because I don’t think they
have to be associated with the church or with any religion at all. But, the fact is that most of the people who get involved do get involved through their church.

To find out more about these support networks, especially with regards to the “Christian” nature of these groups, I interviewed one of the main founders of the Faith Teams. The Faith Team coordinator is a white woman who told me the Faith Teams were created by an interfaith community-based organization.

During my interview with her, the Faith Team coordinator also described Faith Teams and told me how they operate to help men who have been incarcerated transition into society.

Faith Teams Coordinator: A faith team is a group of between five and ten people who have been trained; who have . . . made a covenental agreement to be in a loving relationship, a supporting relationship with a person coming home from prison . . . One thing that we see that these folks need are . . . other people to vouch for them . . . They are able to receive a community of support that they really need. Most of them come home and they cannot be a part of their former friendship circle. They need a new friendship circle. And the church, the faith teams . . . can vouch for them. Be references for jobs, can help them connect with the community . . . We don’t provide services but we help connect them with services . . . Be a sounding board . . . and just what we all have in our lives, which are supportive compassionate people.

I: Thank you. What kind of services do they connect them with?

Faith Teams Coordinator: Everything from housing, mental health, physical health, you know like dentistry, . . . help get a driver’s license, help get ID’s, . . . education, a GED. . . . We helped one guy apply for his Pell Grant and get into [a NC college]. Connect with their families. . . . We just went bowling with one of our new partners and with his daughter and his family for the first time. It’s a way. It was a supportive environment for him to do that and . . . jobs. Most of all . . . employment.

I: How successful are these Faith Teams?

Faith Teams Coordinator: We’ve built ten teams, in churches, and . . . all volunteers. . . . They’re all Christian so far, but we’re an interfaith organization. . . . We can do interfaith faith teams. We had this one team, we had an Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Methodist, Jewish, . . . so it was an interfaith, ecumenical team. . . . Of the 20 people that we’ve served, 1 has returned to prison, he relapsed. And another person relapsed,
and he’s in jail right now, awaiting trial. . . .We’ve been in business now for almost four years, so that’s not bad. And we keep up with everybody.

I: So, how many members have left faith teams, and never returned?

Faith Teams Coordinator: I would say out of about . . . 75 people, I would say we’ve retained almost everybody. . . . I would say maybe 10. Yeah. That’s incredible. It’s because of the glorious nature of this work. It is so rewarding. It is so exactly what God wants us to do that people get that. It’s transforming because you’re doing real love. You’re loving in difficult situations. You’re loving people that you’re not going to get anything back from. It’s not like your child or friend. Your soul grows, and you end up being a more loving person.

Faith Teams serve a vital need for those who are incarcerated. In a hostile world where there is a strong cultural norm to ostracize this population, Faith Teams supply them with social networks and companionship and help them gain access to social services.

However, as can be seen in the discourse of the interview with the Faith Team Coordinator, Faith Teams also serve a valuable purpose for re-entry work volunteers who join them. As Re-entry Partners worked as employees or volunteers to help men transition, many of them expressed not only did they see many of the men be redeemed (see Ch. VII) but they also claimed they themselves were transformed (e.g., into “more loving persons”) as a result of their support or acts of “love.”

Although Faith Teams originate from the re-entry work in North Carolina, they are similar to Circles of Support and Accountability (COSA) which originated in Canada and operate in Vermont, Colorado, and, recently, Kentucky. “Volunteers help the returning offenders find jobs and apartments, give them rides and advice, and socialize with them. The idea . . . is that former inmates who feel connected to the places where they live are less likely to break laws again.” (Russell, 2007) COSA groups aim at Restorative Justice, or
working with people who have been incarcerated as they make right the harms they committed to victims and society as well as assisting them to rejoin communities.

Each offender works with a small team of volunteers, who begin meeting with the offender before he or she leaves prison. The teams are supervised by local community justice centers, state-funded agencies that work with crime victims and offenders. Paid coordinators, who are employed by the centers, lead the groups and help make sure offenders stay on track. The offenders have been released from prison under state supervision; all have counselors or probation officers who also keep tabs on them. (Russell, 2007)

Faith Teams in the area work very much like Circles of Support and Accountability, working with probation officers, the Department of Corrections, prison officials, and/or the Criminal Justice Resource Center to monitor and support men in transition.

Round Tables

Founded by an ex-offender almost five years ago, Round Tables are monthly community gatherings where social networks of Re-Entry Partners, volunteers and employees, come together to coordinate actions to assist currently and formerly incarcerated men. These Round Tables have proven quite successful in the past two years, starting in the Triangle area and spreading out like wildfire to several counties in North Carolina. The Department of Corrections has partnered with the community-based organization that coordinates the Round Tables and publicly supports them. The Round Tables are very effective in terms of encouraging community volunteers to come together to assist men with their transition efforts.

One question in the study in particular generated dialogue about Round Tables:
Are you familiar with any public forums in the Triangle area that focus on re-entry efforts? If so, can you please describe what these forums are like? What do you think about these forums? If they know about them, ask “Have you ever attended a public forum on re-entry efforts? Why or why not?”

This question allowed me to find out more about the public forums, Round Tables and other public gatherings, which were in the area. Table 3.8 shows that 12 of 20 re-entry work employees and 12 of 20 re-entry work volunteers knew about Round Tables. In terms of attendance, 10 of the volunteers and 10 of the employees reported that they had been to a Round Table event. Thus, most of the Re-Entry Partners who knew about Round Tables also attended them. 6 re-entry work employees said they attended them as part of their job responsibilities. 1 employee and 6 volunteers in the study said they participated in hosting a Round Table and 2 employees and 4 volunteers helped to start one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Employees</th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knew About Them</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended At Least One</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended “As Part of Job”</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosted One</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Started One</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were 5 NC prison-based employees in the sample who attended Round Tables. They did so as part of their job requirements (1/20), because they were invited by a Re-Entry Partner (1/20), or because they were simply interested (3/20) in learning more about re-entry work activities. The NC Department of Corrections has publicly supported the Round Tables. It has also committed itself to creating Transition Specialists, or employees whose specific task would be to assist inmates in minimum-security prisons with their efforts to re-enter the mainstreams population successfully.
I interviewed the main Round Table coordinator in the area. He discussed that the Round Tables do not make promises about any particular material help they will provide to help men transition. Instead, they offer a different type of guarantee to men in transition.

Round Table Coordinator: One of our things that we always say at our roundtables . . . is that, “We don’t guarantee a job. We don’t guarantee housing. We don’t guarantee human services. We don’t guarantee education to you. Although I know that you want those things, and you’re needing a house, and you’re needing a job, but I’ll tell you what we’ll guarantee you, that there won’t be anybody that has more hope for you than we do. We guarantee you that there won’t be anybody fighting for you more than we do. There won’t be anybody who has more want to help out and to be with you than us.” So we provide hope and opportunity I think and that’s probably our strong point.

For the coordinator, the social support these Round Tables offered the men was paramount.

Re-Entry Partners who talked about Round Tables often talked about the Round Table Coordinator and how important his leadership was for the building of community partnerships to do re-entry work in the area. For example, V-5 emphasized that the Round Table Coordinator’s method of inviting all community members to participate in re-entry work allowed for social divisions to be overcome as diverse groups interacted to create social support networks.

V-5: [They are] directed by somebody who actually is an ex-offender. . . . He has Round Tables that . . . attempt to bring people together monthly in the community around the issue of re-entry and . . . what you can do for folks that are in prison to help them to prepare for re-entry. He doesn’t just invite ex-offenders. . . . He doesn’t just invite people whose jobs it is to work on these issues. He really asks everybody to come together under one space which really builds relationships across the divisions that maybe artificially keep us separated from the issue in many cases. One piece of work that he’s doing is trying to help other . . . towns . . . set up these Round Tables as a model for trying to create those networks of support around the whole issue, as well as . . . to help individuals, specifically as they start exiting.
Also, V-9 pointed out that Round Tables provided access to resources for people who were released as they were connected to caring communities. Again, the Round Table Coordinator played a vital role as he encouraged more faith-based communities to engage in re-entry work.

V-9: So that when people come out . . . they’re able to access the kind of resources for housing, education, training, jobs, whatever. . . . So, that they . . . are connected to caring communities that are helpful. . . . and he’s reaching out to the faith community. He’s really asking people, challenging people, to do the work, the spiritual work, which is to love one another and to care for one another.

One more aspect of Round Tables important to note was that they served as a way for men (and women) to have a social arena where they could tell their stories and connect to others. The sharing of stories allowed for negative images and social stigmatizing of this group to be challenged as attendants started to see people with criminal records in a different light. E-20 talked about how essential it was for these stories to be heard, especially by potential employers, in the process of developing social support networks to assist this population.

E-20: I hear stories every day, but it’s good to see that person who is telling their story connect with someone else. Then, it starts a network with them to kind of build a support system. So that part is really good, the testimonial part of it . . . just having the ex-offender tell their story. Sometimes people . . . think ex-offenders look a certain way and that’s not necessarily true. You see an individual standing up there with a tie and a nice shirt . . . and it’s like, “Oh wow, I would’ve never known unless you told me.” So, kind of bringing down that brick wall that people have this perception of what an ex offender looks like. . . . Being in the profession that I am, I hear those stories. But the business that I am talking to doesn’t hear that story. They just hear me saying, “Please, please give this person a job.”

Models of re-entry work – Community Mentors, Faith Teams, and Round Tables – demonstrate the importance of social networks that are formed and sustained by Re-entry
Partners to assist men with the transition process. These social networks provide crucial support to help men who have criminal records alter their life paths. The interview discourse contains a multitude of stories about how much Re-Entry Partners are aware that the men they assist often have not historically had the most positive social networks of support.

V-5: One of the reasons people go to prison is because they haven’t had the network of support, aid, or community needed to help them reach their goals in their life, support them with whatever struggles they might have, and keep them accountable to what might be family, neighborhood or community norms actually generally followed that keep people out of the criminal justice system.

Re-Entry Partners step forward to teach the men they assist valuable social skills that they need. They also supply them with viable social networks. Community Mentors, Faith Teams, and Round Tables are examples of the types of social networks that are created to help incarcerated men to re-enter society successfully. They also represent the social vehicles and models often used by these rehabilitated men to help other men come home from prison.

Additionally, Re-Entry Partners express that they too benefit directly from being part of these support networks. For example, V-4 describes how T.A.N. members gather to share about the concerns and challenges of re-entry work, especially when the men they serve “abuse the process” when they commit new crimes or violate their parole or probation and return to prison.

V-4: We’re able to get together and talk about our experiences with these guys and kind of get some opinions from someone who’s not so close to each situation about what they see is going on here. That’s been helpful. We’ve certainly had to temper the view of all these guys are out to play us and use us as much as they can with [the view] these guys are afraid and may not understand what’s happening to them outside. It’s been an interesting journey . . . to not put up that wall totally just
because we’ve seen a few folks abuse the process. . . . We use this “case management” process where we meet with others to see how to help [our men] reach their plans.

One of the most important aspects of these social support networks, and a significant finding of my study, is that the Re-Entry Partners involved in them are also transformed in the process of giving support and help to men who have been incarcerated as they re-enter society.

Social Location Sites of Re-entry Work

Re-entry Partners engage in transition efforts in three social status positions based on the structural locations of re-entry work: Internals, Externals, and Border Crossers. Employees and volunteers who are “Internals” remain completely inside of the prison structure as they do re-entry work. They assist the men who are incarcerated as they prepare to make the transition back into society. For example, there are people who come to assist these men with 12-step recovery meetings to help many of them to address substance abuse issues. Then, there are employees and volunteers who are “Externals.” They perform activities to assist the men (e.g., teaching them at community colleges or hiring them) once they are released. Finally, there are employees and volunteers who serve as “Border Crossers” who work with the men while they are incarcerated to prepare for life outside of prison. For example, there are people who serve as Community Volunteers (CV’s), taking the men to churches or helping provide them with transportation to take care of essential tasks, such as obtaining driver’s licenses. Figure 3.1 offers a conceptual map of the structural locations which affect the social statuses of Re-entry Volunteers and Re-entry Employees:
### Figure 3.1 Conceptual Map of Structural Locations Affecting Social Statuses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employees</th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal</strong> -</td>
<td><strong>Internal Volunteers</strong> –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely in prison</td>
<td>Yokefellows, education classes, AA and NA meetings held inside prison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External</strong> -</td>
<td><strong>External Volunteers</strong> –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely out of prison setting</td>
<td>People who assist with services once men are no longer incarcerated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Border Crossers</strong> –</td>
<td><strong>Community Volunteers</strong> who</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go in/in already and take prisoners out</td>
<td>take prisoners to meetings, church, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Educators</strong> –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>who take men off campus to attend events</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During my interview analysis, I mapped out the structural location sites where re-entry work takes place among the North Carolina Re-Entry Partners in my study. Re-Entry Partners in my sample interact with male inmates and men released from prison and provide services to them. Examining the structural map based on the discourse offered by volunteers and employees in my study (Table 3.9), it became apparent that most of the Re-Entry Partners I interviewed are Border Crossers. 3 of the employees and 2 of the volunteers in the study are Internals with their re-entry work taking place inside of prisons with men who are incarcerated. 5 of the employees and 3 of the volunteers participate as Externals, focusing their re-entry work efforts solely upon assisting ex-offenders once they have been released from prison. The vast majority of re-entry work, however, takes place as Re-Entry Partners serve as Border Crossers, going in and out of the prison domain in order to work with male
inmates and male ex-offenders. 12 of the employees and 15 of the volunteers in my study are Border Crossers.

Table 3.9 Social Location Sites of Re-entry Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Employees</th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internals</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Externals</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Border Crossers</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fact that the majority of employees and volunteers are Border Crossers demonstrates that the prison walls in North Carolina are somewhat permeable for those willing to do this level of re-entry work. People are interacting with inmates to discover their needs and working on how to address their needs as they help these men prepare to re-enter society. Many Re-entry Partners volunteer to venture into prison to teach and attend Yokefellows and AA meetings and to become Community Volunteers while attending Round Tables and serving as part of Faith Teams. Whereas employees, in general, work primarily in roles and structural arenas that would appear to lead them to be classified as Externals or Internals, in reality they often serve as Border Crossers, specifically when they act in ways to help male inmates or ex-offenders transition into society. Significantly, a number of re-entry work employees in my sample also currently volunteer during their off-duty hours by hiring ex-offenders, attending Round Tables, and in other ways.

A special note must be made here about those Re-Entry Partners who are employed in prisons and their various social statuses in regards to their re-entry work locations. This group of prison-based employees comprises 8 out of the 20 re-entry work employees that I interviewed. In my sample there are 4 Department of Corrections’ employees, 2 teachers and
1 chaplain who are employed to perform most of their tasks inside of prisons. 2 more re-entry work employees also do a fair amount of teaching inside of prisons as part of their paid work. Additionally, there is also one additional person who now currently works in an administrative position mainly as an External employee but in the past was employed as a correctional officer. Prison employees are often Border Crossers, working outside of prisons as part of their job duties to provide other transition-related services (e.g., helping inmates get to job interviews, secure social security cards). One prison employee, E-14, a white male prison employee who counsels inmates, said that he even plans to become a re-entry work volunteer when he retires.

E-14: Well, that’s just a continuation of who I am and what I do; maybe not here; but maybe at another facility. . . . I just have a bent toward, you know, helping and assisting other people, and I’ll probably continue to do that. . . . I think I have some expertise and some sensitivity to their plight, their needs, and, will exercise any giftedness I might have in this area to help.

Re-entry Work and Religion

One of the main motivations people gave for their involvement in re-entry work during my preliminary interviews was their faith or religious beliefs. Consequently, to explore further the impact of religion on the decision to help men transition, I included a set of questions to gather data on the religiosity of the study’s participants. These questions represented standard questions utilized to measure religiosity. An example of the types of questions asked was, “Do you think of yourself as a religious or spiritual person? If yes, in what ways?”
God Beliefs, Religious or Spiritual Identification and Impact of Moral Beliefs

All respondents said they believed in God, they were religious or spiritual, and that their moral beliefs directly influenced their re-entry work as volunteers or employees.

Religious Gateways to Re-entry Work

Gateways are the entry points (e.g., there was a job available working with inmates) where people got involved with re-entry efforts. 12 of the 20 re-entry work volunteers and 2 of the 20 re-entry work employees said that their gateway was a religious one (Table 3.10). An example of a religious gateway was that the minister invited them to participate. Thus, more religious gateways to re-entry work were accessed by volunteers than by employees.

Table 3.10 Religious Gateways

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Employees</th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Religious Affiliation

To find out the religious affiliations of the Re-entry Partners, I asked, “Do you have a particular religion or spiritual tradition? If yes, what is it?” Table 3.11 shows their responses. Most of the sample (37/40 respondents) identified that they had a religious or spiritual tradition. Only 3 Re-Entry Partners reported that they did not have one; 2 of whom were volunteers and 1 of whom was an employee. 15 re-entry work volunteers and 17 re-entry work employees (32/40 total respondents) said they were Christians of various

Table 3.11 Religious Affiliation
denominations. There was a wider range of variance among the volunteers in terms of their denominational affiliations with no particular denomination taking a dominant role.

Employees, on the other hand, identified as Baptist, Catholic, simply “Christian”, or Methodist. The majority of them (13/20) said they were either Baptist (7/20) or “Christian” (6/20). There was one Muslim volunteer and the other 4 Re-Entry Partners expressed they had different faith traditions.

**Attendance and Frequency at Religious or Spiritual Services**

As a whole, to the questions, “Do you attend religious or faith-based services? If yes, how often?” the Re-entry Partners reported (see Table 3.12) they attended religious or spiritual services on a fairly regular basis. Only 4 of them – 3 employees and 1 volunteer – said they do not attend them at all. 17 of the re-entry work volunteers and 8 re-entry work employees reported they attended services at least once a week. 4 employees and the remaining 2 volunteers responded that they attended religious or spiritual services either two
or three times a month. The rest of the employees (5/20) attended services more sporadically, going two or three times per year or even less frequently. One employee said he went twice within the past nine years. Thus, although the majority of re-entry work volunteers and re-entry work employees attended religious or spiritual services frequently, the attendance rate for the employees was lower as a whole than the one for the volunteers.

### Table 3.12 Attendance and Frequency at Religious or Spiritual Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
<th>Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2x/week</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4x/week</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily (non-church)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2x/month</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About 3x/month</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3x/year</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5x/year</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2x/9years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Employment or Volunteerism Effect on Religion or Faith*
In the preliminary observations and interviews religion had seemed to play a major influence in terms of motivating Re-Entry Partners to be involved in re-entry efforts. Consequently, I included questions in the study to gather more insight into whether or not the paid work or volunteerism of Re-Entry Partners affected their faith or religious beliefs. Thus, I asked the volunteers, “Do you think helping inmates or ex-offenders affects your faith or religious beliefs?” and I asked the employees, “Do you think working with inmates or ex-offenders affects your faith or religious beliefs?” The responses to this question are provided in Table 3.13.

**Table 3.13 Volunteer/Paid Work Affect Upon Religion/Faith**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Employees</th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of the Re-Entry Partners reported that their re-entry work affected their faith or religious beliefs. 14 re-entry work employees said their paid work affected their faith and 6 of them said it did not affect their faith. For example, E-3 expressed his work affected his faith positively because he felt he served the same kind of people that Jesus served.

E-3: Well, obviously it affects it because . . . who did Jesus deal with. He didn’t seek out the people in the church and the people that were the pious and the ones that believed they were the good people. He sought the people, the prostitutes, and the sinners, and the people that had all these horrible flaws in their life; because it’s in overcoming those that we become better people. So, yeah I see that in them and I see that in myself and it’s a positive thing.

Regarding the re-entry work volunteers, 17 of them said their volunteer work affected their faith or religious beliefs and 3 of them felt it did not affect it. For example, V-13 expressed
that his volunteer work with male ex-offenders kept him engaged in reading the Bible and other Christian texts in order to prepare himself for various situations concerning faith matters.

V-13: It keeps me reading and . . . studying the Word more; reading the Bible and other books that are out there about prayer and faith. . . . Because, like I said, you never know what situation you may be in. You never know what the person that you’re going to talk to, what their thought process is. Some of them . . . may have given up on God. Some of them may not want to hear about God. Some of them think that they have done all they can and they’re just trusting themselves. They’re not trusting anybody or God to get them out. So, you have to really adjust your thinking process when you go out to talk to these people.

In another example, V-17, who was not a Christian, said that performing re-entry work service challenged her spiritual beliefs and inspired her to reexamine her original Christian roots.

V-17: I think I am open to being challenged in my beliefs because they are not concrete. So, I am open to working with an inmate or ex-offender and hearing their perspective or their belief system. So, I am open to being affected.

I: Do you think you have been so far?

V-17: Yeah.

I: How so?

V-17: Especially at the One Day With God, these guys were really praying Christian prayers and I had taken a step away from [my] Christian roots, Catholic roots more specifically. To see these guys just kind of humbly and wholeheartedly participating in the prayer, really helped me kind of question what was it that made me turn away from that? And can I bring a little bit of that back into my life? So, yeah it did.

I: Are you taking steps on that level?

V-17: I have a picture of Jesus. . . . I dusted it off and got it out of the closet.

Religious Effects on Volunteerism or Employment
I also collected data on whether or not the faith or religious beliefs of Re-Entry Partners affected their paid work or volunteerism. The question I asked re-entry work volunteers to gather this information was, “Do you think your faith or religious beliefs have anything to do with how you think or act when it comes to helping inmates or ex-offenders?” To re-entry work employees I asked, “Do you think your faith or religious beliefs have anything to do with how you think or act when it comes to working with inmates or ex-offenders?” Table 3.14 contains their answers. Both sub-groups of Re-Entry Partners, volunteers and employees, offered responses that clearly showed they felt their religious beliefs affected their re-entry work activities.

**Table 3.14 Religion/Faith Affect Upon Volunteer/Paid Work**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Employees</th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19 out of 20 of the re-entry work volunteers expressed that their faith or religious beliefs impacted their re-entry efforts. V-11 admits that taking the men he helps to church with him affects their relationships. Everyone he has helped has at some point attended church with him. “I recognize that if the men aren’t comfortable with me taking them to church, I don’t have the same connection as I would with those who enjoy going to church with me. Not that that’s a requisite. It’s just that it puts more on the same plane of understanding.” They attend services, meals, and special programs at his church. This gives them time to get to know each other for a “committed” amount of time with each other, “spending time to communicate” with each other.
In regards to the re-entry work employees, 19 out of 20 of them also expressed that their faith or religious beliefs affected their re-entry efforts. E-1, for example, who had also spent time in prison, expressed that his spiritual beliefs helped him treat his clients fairly. To the question I asked, he replied,

Yes, in the employment situation, most definitely because . . . if I didn’t have spirituality in my life, I could have taken advantage of these guys. . . . They were giving me cash payments . . . and I could have told them that it was X amount of money and only reported half of that. And they couldn’t have said anything because I could have violated them. If I didn’t have these moral, . . . lines I wasn’t willing to cross, because . . . I want to sleep good at night, . . . then . . . it could have easily been completely corrupt.

Another re-entry work employee, who was a black male Christian, offered that Jesus served as the model he used to show him how to treat inmates. He answered the question saying,

Yes, yes, yes. I say this because I think that if any man or woman, but particularly black men, if any man wants a perfect model of what a man should be and what a man should do and what people should do, look at Jesus. If you really want to know how you should be, look at Jesus. . . . I have to check myself sometimes with this too. You see people on the street begging. Why you gonna judge what they do with your money? It’s the condition of your heart when you give it. . . . Jesus didn’t trip off of whoever was doing whatever. And once you start tripping off of whoever is doing whatever, how you gonna say you helping somebody? . . . Jesus was the perfect model. And for me, it affects how I deal with the inmates because I try that, “What Would Jesus Do?” I take that seriously. That ain’t a bumper sticker for me.

Religion Effects and Social Stratification Dynamics

To determine how much religion as a social stratification marker affected social interactions between Re-Entry Partners and male inmates or ex-offenders, I asked respondents, “Do you ever feel that your religion or religious beliefs affect how you are
treated or perceived by incarcerated men or male ex-offenders?” Table 3.15 shows the responses I received.

### Table 3.15 Social Stratification Dynamics Affect Upon Religion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion Effects</th>
<th>Re-entry Work Volunteers</th>
<th>Re-entry Work Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whereas volunteers (16/20) overwhelmingly said their religion or religious beliefs did affect how they were treated or perceived by inmates or ex-offenders, employees (16/20) overwhelmingly said they did not. Part of the reason why there were so few re-entry work employees who felt religion did not affect how they were treated or perceived by these men was because most of the men did not know their religious affiliation. Most of them stated that they seldom discussed religion with their clients, especially if they worked for the state. On the other hand, most of the volunteers were visibly faith-based, especially if they were involved with Faith Teams or one of the faith-based Community Mentor groups.

Whether or not religion affected the social interactions between Re-Entry Partners and the men they served in a negative or positive way, depended in large part on the religious affiliation of the men in transition. For example, V-4 reported that there was a religious effect on a positive level as he provided a positive example of being a Christian male and on a negative level as he witnessed one person turn away from him because he was Catholic. During his re-entry work with men in transition, he found out that some of the “historic ideas” against Catholics were still out there. He had been “preached to by the guys during
Bible studies” on how he is “not truly Christian.” “I did take from that that I shouldn’t talk about my particular denomination until these guys have a chance to know who I am first.”
IV. MOTIVATIONS OF RE-ENTRY PARTNERS

How does faith serve as a motivating factor for some people to volunteer or to work in arenas side by side with incarcerated men or male ex-offenders? What other motivating factors – e.g., humanitarian principles, democratic ideals – are in motion to lead people to work or volunteer to help this population re-enter society? How do motivational factors help sustain the stability of workers and volunteers in this re-entry work, especially when they experience setbacks or contend with the fact that most of these men will return to prison?

Re-entry Work Volunteer Motivations

Talk about the motivations for their re-entry work was stimulated among re-entry work volunteers in response to the interview process as a whole. For example, when asked about re-entry efforts that they knew about, many volunteers in the sample simply discussed their own re-entry work efforts and often offered (or were prompted by me to reveal) stories about why or how they got involved with these efforts originally. Generally, information about motivations came as a direct response to the questions on the Re-Entry Partners Interview Questionnaire that asked specifically about their reasons for being involved. The two main questions that prompted these responses were, “What motivated you to help male inmates or male ex-offenders?” and “How did you get involved with this type of volunteering?” As a whole, re-entry work volunteer responses about their motivations could be sorted into six categories or sets of motivations (see Figure 4.1). These categories are
The main sets of motivations re-entry work volunteers offered could be broadly divided into two main categories: Religious or Spiritual and Non-Religious. This simple categorization may be misleading. All of the Re-Entry Partner volunteers and employees in my study stated that they were religious or spiritual and that they believed in God. Also, most of the re-entry work volunteers offered a multiple set of motivations – religious or spiritual ones and non-religious ones – to explain their reasons for being involved in re-entry efforts. Further, the largest category of responses was not the Religious or Spiritual category but the Personal Relationships with Inmates and/or Ex-Offenders category. However, given that 3 out of 7 of the main sets of motivations were from the Religious or Spiritual category and 15/20 volunteers mentioned religious or spiritual motivations, the Non-Religious and Religious or Spiritual designation seems appropriate. The main Non-Religious motivations provided were to Help People (10/20 responses), prior Exposure to Inmates (6/20), to Make a Difference in Society (6/20), and it Feels Good (5/20). The main Religious motivations offered were Religious/Spiritual Peer Effect (5/20 responses), Christian Duty/Practice (4/20), and Religious Authority Effect (4/20).

The Personal Relationships category was any volunteer motivation directly related to interactions with inmates or ex-offenders or with people (e.g., Re-entry Partners) who had direct contact with them. There were 17 different types of responses in this category and it was the largest category with 31 total responses. Among these responses, prior Exposure to Inmates (6/20 responses), having a Family Member in the Criminal Justice System (3/20),
Figure 4.1 Conceptual Map of Re-Entry Partner Volunteer Motivations

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS
- Exposure to Inmates (6)
- Connect to Re-Entry Partners (3)
- Teach This Population (3)
- Family/Friends Served Time (3)
- Ex-Offender Helps Ex-O's (2)
- Help Ex-Offenders Acquire Jobs (2)
- Use Testimony to Help Other Inmates/Ex-Offenders (2)
- Exposure to Ex-Offenders (2)
- Prior Ministry with Inmates
- Exposure to CIS as a Child b/c Father in Prison/Ex-Offender
- Exposure to CIS as a Child b/c Mother in Law Enforcement
- Relationships w/ Ex-Offenders to Address Community Problems
- Example for Ex-Offenders
- Results of Helping an Ex-Offender
- Asked to Teach by Inmates
- Ex-Offender Husband’s Stories

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTS
- Opportunities to Assist Inmates in Transition
- Supportive Correctional Staff and Chaplain
- Volunteer-Friendly Opportunity for Service Available at the Prison
- University Provides Avenue for Teaching in Prison

SPIRITUAL, or RELIGIOUS
- Religious/Spiritual Peer Effect (5)
- Christian Duty/Practice (4)
- Religious Authority Effect (4)
- A Calling/Opp. to Minister (3)
- God (2)
- Scripture Reference (2)
- Spiritual Journey
- Address Failure of Church
- Judgment Day Concern
- Safer for a Woman to Join Faith Team Than to Do Prison Ministry

CIVIC DUTY
- Help people (10)
- Make a Difference/Duty (6)
- Aware of the Need (3)
- Response to Society Injustice (3)
- Prior service work
- Make Streets Safer
- Give Back to Community (1 Person of Privilege; 1 Ex-Offender)

PERSONAL INTEREST
- Feels good (5)
- Curious (2)
- Had Time to volunteer

FAMILY AFFAIR
- Family model/example of Volunteering (2)
- Spouse Invite (2)
- Support Spouse’s Calling
Connection to a Re-entry Community Group (3/20 responses), and desire to Teach This Population (3/20) were the most prevalent reasons for involvement offered. An example of how Exposure to Inmates and Connection to Re-entry Community Group was offered as a motivation comes from V-4, who is a white male who volunteers to work with a Department of Corrections’ sponsored community mentor group to help meet the needs of men who have been released from prison. He offered,

When I first started working with these guys and understanding some of the frustrations and roadblocks that they’ve been running into, it kind of made me determined to say I’m a part of society and I can do something and it has really steeled my resolve to do what I can. . . . [My involvement] started with an invitation from a deacon in my church. He and his wife had recently moved here from Texas where they had a prison ministry. . . . I don’t know why I was interested, but I went to his meeting anyway to kind of find out. So, that’s where we got started. We started doing Bible study.

The deacon later introduced him to the community mentor re-entry group. “So, that furthered my education about . . . why I should be doing what I was doing rather than thinking it’s just a nice thing to do. It helped to provide . . . a more definite purpose behind what I was doing.”

Due to the variety and prevalence of the responses offered by this particular motivation, I have designated “Exposure to Ex-Offenders” as the “Ex-Offender Effect.” The “Ex-O Effect” surfaced in the Personal Relationships motivation category in a number of ways. There were re-entry work volunteers who reported that they got involved due to Exposure to Ex-Offenders (Ex-O Effect; 3/20 responses), had Family Members or Friends who had been incarcerated and were now contending with life as Ex-Offenders, or they were Ex-Offenders themselves Helping Other Ex-Offenders.
An example of the “Ex-O Effect” that involved family members can be seen in the following response given by re-entry work volunteer V-6. He is a black male who volunteers by teaching job-training classes to inmates and by hiring ex-offenders to work for his own personal business. In this passage V-6 discusses watching his childhood exposure to the Criminal Justice System (CJS) as he witnessed his father and other family members deal with the effects of incarceration:

I saw my father have a tough time trying to get a job. I have seen a lot of folks that have gone into prison that I have been related to or familiar with, and it’s tough trying to find a job out there. And I know, just not even having a record, it’s tough to find a job. So that only compounds the problem. . . . I was introduced to the prison system early in life, and just having that shape my view of the world gave me . . . more of a sense of, instead of just kind of watching things go by, there’s got to be some way I can help get involved in the whole thing. So when opportunities arise to go into the prison or help people that are out there. I will take that. You know, I take those opportunities because I think it’s my duty to do something. I can either sit there and watch or I can get in the game and play. And I prefer to play. . . . It’s a lot easier for me to get involved and learn as I go. It’s not like I know everything, but it is something that you have to have some familiarity with or have to have impact your life in some way. Since it has impacted my life, I figured, ‘Hey, why not?’

The Religious or Spiritual category consists of any volunteer motivation directly related to any specific religious or spiritual references made by volunteers, prior to the Morality question and Religious questions of the Re-Entry Partners interview questionnaire, to explain why they were motivated to participate in re-entry work. Significantly, 15 out of 20 re-entry work volunteers gave specific religious or spiritual reasons when they discussed their motivations.

There were 10 different types of responses in this category and it was the third largest category with 24 total responses. The main Religious or Spiritual category motivations offered were Religious/Spiritual Peer Effect (5/20 responses), Christian Duty/Practice (4/20), and Religious Authority Effect (4/20). Other responses in this category included: the
person had a calling or opportunity to minister (3/20), God directed them (2/20), and a
Biblical reference or a proclamation made by Jesus to minister to the poor inspired them
(2/20).

Religious or Spiritual Peer Effect involved being directly influenced by a religious or
spiritual person. These religious or spiritual “peers” either gave a public presentation,
usually at a church, to inspire participation in transition efforts or they invited someone
directly or they were an example to someone of how to be engaged in re-entry work.

Christian Duty or Practice, where my respondents claimed their re-entry work was
part of a Christian ritual or spiritual discipline, had 4 responses. V-20, a white male graduate
student who volunteers as a Community Volunteer and a Yokefellow, talked about how Lent
served as the impetus for him to do re-entry work:

V-20: It was Lent and someone . . . at church said, ‘Well, you shouldn’t just give
something up for Lent, you should take on a discipline. Take on a spiritual
discipline.’ So, I said, ‘Well, I know people at our church visit inmates. I will just do
that for Lent.’ I thought I would just do that for about six weeks, but then I made too
many friends and I had to keep coming back. And then I saw them getting ready to
be released and the needs of being released . . .

I: What is Lent?

V-20: Lent is the forty days that precede Easter; when you often take on fasting or
spiritual disciplines. It’s to look at the time that Jesus spent forty days in the
wilderness, fasting and praying and being tempted. . . . It’s a time for weeping. It’s a
time for self-reflection. And so I thought it would be a good time to take on a
spiritual discipline of visiting prisons.

I: For six weeks?

V-20: For six weeks. . . . Then I just kept going. . . . We get into patterns but also I
met specific people who would be disappointed if I didn’t come back. . . . I felt like it
was a rich part of my Christian life that I didn’t want to give up. And I think . . . Lent
is actually supposed to do that. Allow you to take on a spiritual discipline and it
sticks, right. That’s supposed to happen any number of ways. Whether that’s like,
you know, waking up at 5am to pray every morning for six weeks. You do that for
six weeks you might as well just keep doing it. You know what I mean? Right. Take on a spiritual discipline, right. But here’s one I did as well and I just found it
was a really good addition to my life.
Finally, the Minister or Religious Authority Effect, another prevalent area in the Religious or Spiritual category had 4 responses. These responses demonstrate that an important aspect of re-entry work is that it relies heavily upon social networks and social connections being made between Re-Entry Partner leaders and potential recruits. Four people said that they got involved because a religious or spiritual authority figure persuaded them in some way to do so, usually through direct invitation or as the result of a presentation they gave to their church. For example, V-19, a white female who volunteers to teach inmates how to read and write in prison and also helps to coordinate a Round Table, talked about how she was persuaded to become a re-entry work volunteer due to the actions of a religious authority. “Well, initially, my interest came as the result of a presentation that the chaplain made to our adult forum at church. He brought three inmates who spoke so eloquently and really generated interest and enthusiasm for me.” In another instance, V-12, a white male from Eastern Europe who works as a Border Crosser offering prayers and services to inmates and ex-offenders, relates how a religious authority figure invited him to do re-entry work:

V-12: At one point there was a gentleman in Texas who told me that there are people who are in need of your service. . . . I didn’t know I could help them. I always liked to help people but I didn’t know I could help them. So, I went with the brother a couple of times. And I noticed the eagerness and the thirst for their wanting to be with people; wanting to . . . benefit from them. So, after that I provided my service, even though financially I was not okay at all. Many times I had to look in my ashtray for pennies to pour gas to go to prison. And God knows that. And I went there and I never asked for any money. . . .

I: So, this man in Texas, how did you meet him?

V-12: He was the imam for the mosque. And he was acting in the prison and he said that there is an opening there. And we went there.

I: Thank you. What motivates you to help these men?
V-12: Just, really because the need was there, and I saw something I could do. I had time. So, I just did it for the sake of... helping. That's all.

The variety of types of responses and the prevalence of responses in the Religious or Spiritual category and the fact that 15 out of 20 of my respondents had responses in this category highlights the significance of religion or spirituality as a cultural dimension of re-entry work. More about this social phenomenon will be discussed in Chapter V.

In the Civic Duty category volunteers discussed how they were motivated to do their part to help make the world a better place. Although there were only 7 different types of responses in this category, it was the second largest category with 26 total responses. This category also included the main response volunteers gave in the study as their motivation for involvement in re-entry work – their desire to Help People (10/20). Other prevalent responses included to Make A Difference/Do Some Good/Duty (6/20 responses), Awareness of Need for it (3/20), and as a Responses to Societal Injustice (3/20). The Give Back to Community response in the Civic Duty category was mentioned by a Re-Entry Partner (V-7) who is an ex-offender who volunteers to assist other ex-offenders and by a re-entry work volunteer (V-9) who feels her socio-economic privileges merit her to take civic action for those who are less fortunate. The remaining responses in the Civic Duty category, mentioned only once by respondents, included: Prior Service Work had been done and to Make the Streets Safer.

One example of the types of response provided in the Civic Duty category was supplied by Re-Entry Partner V-7, a white male ex-offender who volunteers as a Community Volunteer and Yokefellow to assist other ex-offenders. He discusses a non-religious “calling” to “make a difference” and “do what’s right” by engaging in re-entry work:
I: How does it make you feel to be able to help these men?

V-7: I get a good warm thing from it. I feel like I am doing the right thing, like I am doing what I am supposed to be doing. Doing what I am being called to do and what’s intuitive for me now.

I: A call? What do you mean?

V-7: Well, just like an inner pull . . . Well, I know that I want to be a good selfless contributing member of society, which is the opposite of what I was before. I was selfish, self-centered and wanted instant gratification, hence alcohol, drugs, all things to make me feel good immediately.

I: What do you mean about the term call? Like what does that mean?

V-7: Like it’s intuitive now for me to reach out and help guys . . . I have this inner sense that that’s what I need to be doing . . . Just wanting to make a difference and do what’s right.

This example illustrates how Re-Entry Partners who were formerly incarcerated have been transformed by their re-entry experiences and now work hard to offer support to others.

In another example of Civic Duty re-entry work volunteer V-9, a white female who helps to facilitate faith teams, discusses how her motivation to Make the Streets Safer and willingness to have a Response to Societal Injustice motivates her re-entry work participation:

Because so many people are getting shot and killed in [NC city], and shot and injured. Our streets are unsafe, our neighborhoods are unsafe. Children are being traumatized, simply by living in certain neighborhoods, and that is so unbelievably unjust. And I recognize that our ability to solve that problem is our ability to listen to those who have been involved in the problem. . . . So, one motivation is to be in authentic relationship and to listen to folks who have gone through it and can advise on what we need to do differently. And because . . . every time someone goes to jail, it really is an expression of the failure of the church. It’s a tangible manifestation . . . of what we have not done. And so it’s a reconciling ministry for me, because I know that my privilege and what I enjoy has been gotten on the backs of other people. And so I have some reconciling to do.
Her response illustrates how Civic Duty responses were integrated with responses from other key categories (Religious or Spiritual and Personal Relationships).

The Institutional Effects category related to volunteer opportunities that were made available through connections to a social institution. As the smallest category, it contained only 4 responses. For example, prisons provided opportunities to assist inmates in transition and supportive correctional staff and chaplain. One person said that his university provided information on how to teach classes in prison and that he encountered peers engaged in re-entry work. V-15, a retired white male Border Crosser who helps inmates and ex-offenders find jobs, offered that the structure and culture of different prisons makes a huge impact on volunteer satisfaction [a motivation from the Personal Interest category] and transition efforts for inmates:

Here in [a minimum-security state prison facility], we’ve got a progressive superintendent, and we’ve got the opportunities for the six-hour releases. I volunteered as a visitor a little while . . . up at [a maximum-security federal prison facility] . . . and it’s really very frustrating in comparison. It’s high security. They didn’t want to let me in a couple times because I was wearing khaki pants and that’s what the inmates wear. . . . The chaplain would forget to approve us ahead of time. We had to wait forty-five minutes for him to approve us. So, the time of driving either way, the approval of the chaplain, the high security when you go in, to visit guys who are mentally disturbed to begin with and may or may not want to participate in visitation in a big visiting room; it was very frustrating. Whereas at [the minimum-security state facility], we have the opportunities for the six-hour release passes. We have opportunities for Yokefellows, where the security is minimal, and opportunities to work on work release. It’s just a whole lot more satisfying than it is in Prison Volunteer Services at [the max-security federal facility]. I don’t say that PVS, or Prison Volunteer Services, is not useful, it is. But in comparison, opportunities for volunteer satisfaction, and I think the opportunities for assisting prisoners in transition, is much, much higher. We had guys released from [the federal facility], but there was no way to really support them prior to or subsequent to their release. They’re released in different areas of the country with no passes. . . . There’s a difference there. . . . I’m not suggesting it’s not useful to do visitation there. It’s just that in contrast the satisfaction at [the min-security state facility] is much higher for the volunteer.
Examining how social institutions like prisons and universities affect rates of re-entry work volunteerism represents a key avenue of research that needs to be done in future endeavors.

The Personal Interest category had 3 different types of responses – Feels Good to do it (5/20), Curious (2/20) about re-entry work, and Had Time to Volunteer (1/20). For example, one re-entry work Volunteer (V-8, an elderly retired white male) who serves on a faith team to help ex-offenders said he got involved out of “interest and curiosity; just to see what it’s like. The idea being that if we could do some good, it’d be worthwhile.” Responses like this one were placed in the Personal Interest category.

The second smallest category was Family Affair with 3 different types of responses and 5 total responses. Parental or Family Model or Example of Helping was referred to 2 times, Spouse invite to do re-entry work was said 2 times, and one volunteer (V-14, the black female volunteer discussed in Ch.III) said she got involved because she felt a Commitment to Support her Spouse’s Calling. V-11, a white male who is a Community Volunteer and Yokefellow, serves on a Faith Team and hires ex-offenders provided a Spouse Invite response to explain why he first attended Yokefellows:

I think [my wife] had been going for almost a year until she was able to talk me into [attending the program]. . . . I didn’t see any reason for it. . . . At the time in my walk it was irrational. I had the same mindset that a lot of people have. They were there for a reason. You hear it from the general public, ‘Why would I want to help somebody who doesn’t want to help themselves?’ You know, all the negative attributes that one labels on an offender was pretty much my realm as well. I don’t think I was any different than the majority of the public in their understanding. It wasn’t until I started a little deeper in my spiritual journey and I went out on a limb and recognized that this is somewhere I can help make a difference that it really became instrumental in my life. It made a difference in me spiritually as well as personally. Who I am today and how I treat others, especially offenders. And I find it gives me great insight into a number of men as well that I wouldn’t have without the experience.
The role of family in the lives of Re-Entry Partners was an unexpected and significant theme that emerged throughout my interviews and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter IX.

Most of the responses, as can be seen in the examples above, that the re-entry work volunteers offered, could fit into more than one category. For instance, V-13 (a black male who volunteers inside of prisons as a Yokefellow and also works with a Faith Team helping ex-offenders) gave a response that clearly fit into the Religious or Spiritual category as it was mainly a God-inspired motivation:

Well, it’s . . . not my choice I say. I say that because I just now [am] becoming a believer and faith-based and Christ-based. It was God and my passion because when I was growing up I always wanted to help people. . . . I’ve always had a heart of seeing somebody and just going to help him. I guess He was preparing me back then for what I’m doing now. So, that’s something I grew up doing, saw my parents doing growing up, my grandmother do growing up. So it was something that was already in place. Just God really. Just doing the plan, the thing I already know; things that have been placed there before me. So He just chose, you know; His choice to use me. But I guess it’s something, somewhere, that He wants me to do.

However, V-13’s response also has elements that fit into the Civic Duty (Help People) and Family Affairs (Family Model of Volunteering) categories. Thus, multiple categories were often utilized by re-entry work volunteers as they talked about their motivations.

**Re-entry Work Employee Motivations**

Similar to re-entry work volunteers, re-entry work employees I interviewed often started to discuss their own stories about why or how they got involved with re-entry work in response to the initial general re-entry questions I asked. At times the interview process almost seemed cathartic as both samples of respondents, people I knew and strangers I had never met, appeared eager to talk to me about their personal re-entry work experiences with inmates and/or ex-offenders. As expected, however, the majority of re-entry work
employees provided information about their motivations for having re-entry work-related jobs in direct response to the specific questions about employee motivations on the Re-Entry Partners Study Interview Questionnaire. The two main questions that prompted responses were, “What motivated you to work with male inmates or male ex-offenders?” and “How did you originally get into this line of work?” Re-entry work employee responses about their motivations were sorted into five categories of motivations (see Figure 4.2). These categories are Personal Relationships (with Inmates and/or Ex-Offenders), Career-Oriented, Spiritual or Religious, Civic Duty, and Personal Interest.

The majority of re-entry work employees offered motivations for being involved in transition efforts that fit into multiple motivation categories. For re-entry work employees the largest category of responses was the Career-Oriented category with 41 total responses and the smallest category was the Spiritual or Religious category with 8 total responses. The main motivations provided were to Help People (13/20 responses) and Needed Job or Money (13/20 responses). Other prevalent motivating factors that were cited were to Help Inmates (5/20), Likes Job (5/20), Prior Work with Inmates or Ex-Offenders (5/20), seeing Client Success (4/20), to Help Ex-Offenders (4/20), and obtained a Promotion or a Better Job Position (4/20).

Career-Oriented was the largest category of motivations with 41 responses total. The fact that Needing a Stable Job or Money to pay bills was mentioned 13 times matches the current literature that shows employees are often motivated by extrinsic rewards. (e.g., Cappellari and Turati, 2004). It is tied with Help People (in the Civic Duty category) as the number one motivation for re-entry work Employees. Other Career-Oriented responses
Figure 4.2 Conceptual Map of Re-Entry Partner Employee Motivations

**PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS**
- Help Inmates (5)
- Prior Work w/ Population (5)
- Client Success (4) Help Ex-Offenders (4)
- Teach Inmate Population (3)
- Exposure to Ex-Offenders (2)
- Cousins were Correctional Officers (2)
- Father "Visited" Jail Regularly

**CAREER-ORIENTED**
- Job/money (13) Likes Job/boss/coworkers (5)
- Promotion/Better Position (4) Build Career (3)
- Has Been My Life/Career (3) Good Job Opportunity (3)
- Use College Coursework/Degree (3)
- Boss Recommdtn (2) College Counselor Rec (2)
- Work Challenge Presented (2) Good at Job

**SPIRITUAL or RELIGIOUS**
- Opportunity to Do Ministry (3)
- God (2)
- Active w/ Church Prison Ministry
- Scripture Reference
- Use Divinity School Degree

**CIVIC DUTY**
- Help people (13) Educate Public about CIS (2)
- Give Back to Community (Ex-Offenders) (2)
- Fighting Channel 11 and the System
- Contribute to Society Help Fellow Veterans
- Love for People Reduce Crime

**PERSONAL INTEREST**
- Feels Good (3) Serendipity/ "Accident" (3)
- Friend Recommendation/Invite (2)
- Not Committing Crimes/Not Going Back to Jail (2)
- Curious about Criminal Mindset/Motives
- Ego
mentioned regularly were Likes their Job (5), to Build their Career (3), having a Good Job Opportunity (3), that doing re-entry work has been their Life Work or Career (3), the fact that they received a Promotion or acquired a Better Position Available (3), and the opportunity to Use their College Coursework or Degree (3). The fact that their Boss Recommended (2) or College Counselor Recommended (2) them to take a Re-entry-related position, Work Presented a Challenge (2), they were Good at their Job, and they wanted some Work To Do in Retirement were the other responses given in this category.

E-3, a white male prison administrator, provided a good example of the responses “Need a Stable Job or Money to pay bills” and “College Counselor Recommended”:

Well, the thing that, that motivated me to do it was I needed a job. That was what brought me to it. I needed food on the table, and, let’s see… I can’t remember if my wife was pregnant with my first child at that time, but it was pretty close to that. . . . But I wanted to help people. You know? And it had already been suggested by my counselor

A “Likes their Job” response was given by E-5, a black female who counsels inmates in prison, who talked about how much she enjoys her boss, co-workers, and work environment:

I like what I do. I’m good at it. And that’s not to be arrogant or anything. I am a people person. I listen, definitely talk. So, it doesn’t really take a lot of motivation. . . . I don’t care where I work, I am going to come in and do my job. . . . I don’t really need any particular items or persons to motivate me. I pretty much come in and do my job and I like working here. I have a good staff. . . . Good [supervisor]. It’s just a pleasant place to work. There are not a lot of major issues or drama going on. So, when you can come to work and have a peace of mind, it’s just easy to get through your day.

An example of the “Work To Do in Retirement”, Need a Job or Money, re-entry work has been my “Life Work or Career” motivations was offered by E-11. After working in
Probation and Parole Services, E-11 retired briefly before he decided to accept a position as the administrator of a transition house for men on probation. About his motivations, he said,

My desire to help people and my passion for helping people. And it’s pretty much been my life, really. You know being in probation and parole for thirty years. And I had a big concern when I retired . . . ‘What type of work would I go into?’ . . . I was home for about six months trying to decide what I would do next because I was too young just to not do anything. And plus I have a son in college, too, so . . . you never can make too much money. So I got a phone call from the Board Chair of this facility . . . and he said, ‘[Name], how’d you like to serve as director of this halfway house?’ I said, ‘Oh yeah, I like that.’ And uh, that’s how it started, you know, so I didn’t even have to really apply for anything. . . . And you know I said, ‘This is right up my alley.’ Because it’s something I like doing. It’s something I’ve done all my life. So that’s the good thing about it.

His motivations also include a “Help People” response from the Personal Relationships category.

E-13, a white female who is an administrator for a program that provides transition services to assist ex-offenders, received a Promotion as she made a career move to a Better Position that was Available. The new position offered challenges and more pay.

E-13: I was already working within the system and making that specific step was a career move for me because I went from being a social worker to an assistant director.

I: So, it was a promotion?
E-13: Yeah, well it was, going to a different program. But, yeah, in some ways.

I: Okay. . . . Was that program more attractive to you or that position more attractive?
E-13: Well, the position was challenging because it was a brand new program. . . . So I was there starting up a program from nothing. . . . That was the challenge. . . . I love doing new programs. I still do. It’s challenging. It’s trying to figure it out and build consensus; . . . from the problems there have been to the operation to the budget.

I: So when this challenge or opportunity came up you took it. Did it mean more pay?

For many re-entry work employees, a combination of Career-Oriented motivations was presented as motivations for their transition efforts. For example, “Needing a Job,” the
ability to “Use her College Degree,” and a “Recommendation from her Boss” were the motivations that led E-20, a black woman who helps Ex-Offenders find employment, to be employed in re-entry work:

E-20: Motivated me? Needed a job. . . . Going to [Name of School]. The Criminal Justice Department was awesome . . . I mean really good. And so I think just that knowledge that I received . . . was really good and it kind of pushed me to want to . . . [work] with inmates and the ex-offender population. . . . They were talking about re-entry in 2001, 2002. Not really thinking of re-entry as like a big problem. But now, being in it, it’s like, ‘Wow.’ . . . So, I think just the knowledge that I received from [Name of School] was great. Kind of pushed me into doing this work. . . . Once I graduated . . . I was a secretary with [a city government] office. And then the grant opened up for [a state program for re-entry work]. And the money was funded through that department. . . . The lady who was my supervisor said, ‘. . . We have a great opportunity. You are awesome. How about it?’ I had never done work with ex-offenders before and was kind of thrown into it. Been here ever since.

The next category of motivations is Personal Relationships. Any employee motivations directly related to social interactions with ex-offenders or inmates or with people who interacted with them as part of their job were placed in the Personal Relationships category. For example, 2 of the re-entry work employees, E-5 and E-6, black females who counsel inmates in prison, said they were encouraged to apply for their jobs by cousins who worked as Correctional Officers:

E-5: At that particular time, I had a cousin who graduated from Central and he was an officer. And there were not a lot of female minorities working in the prison system. So, he was like, ‘I am telling you, they are just going to hire you just like that.’ ‘I don’t want to work with no inmates.’ ‘No, I am telling you, you know what to do. You know what to say.’ I was like, ‘okay, okay.’ So, I applied and I got hired and have been going for eleven years.

E-6: I just applied because, looking for a job, I put applications in all across the state at different places, and it just so happens that [name of prison] hired me first. . . . Coming out of college, I needed a job. I graduated in criminal justice, and . . . I said I never wanted to work in a prison. But it was just employment. I just applied to
different state positions. And this was one of them. I had a cousin that actually
graduated in criminal justice as well and she was working in a female institution and
she referred me. She told me that it wasn’t as bad as I was thinking it was and told
me I should try to apply.

Responses from E-5 and E-6 also demonstrate a common theme in my findings indicating
family members play a major role in the lives of those who do re-entry work (see Ch. VII).
E-6 also gave the motivation “Using her College Degree,” an example of the Career-Oriented
category.

There were 26 different types of responses in the Personal Relationships category,
making it the second largest category of motivations for re-entry work employees. 5 out of 8
motivation factors that received 4 or more mentions – Help Inmates (5), Prior Work with
Inmates or Ex-Offenders (5), seeing Client Success (4), and a desire to Help Ex-Offenders
(4) – were in this category. Other responses in the Personal Relationships category were
Prefers or Likes to Teach the Inmate Population (3), Prior Exposure to Ex-Offenders (2), and
one re-entry work employee’s Father “Visited” Jail Frequently due to his excessive alcohol
abuse.

An Example of the Help Inmates response can be seen in the response provided by
E-18, a white female who counsels inmates in prison. She discussed why she got involved
in re-entry work out of her desire to serve inmates.

Well, when I first started out, I needed a job. And I love it. I get so much out of it. I
get as much as they do and I get paid. I get paid to work with them. Self-satisfaction
to know I’m helping people and helping North Carolina and helping inmates, helping
families. I help families by helping their husbands or daddies; getting them
straightened out to where they can be a father again or a husband again or get a job
and have a job when they get out. We have programs . . . for fathers. We always got
programs here to help them be better people. . . . It’s something that our chaplain
does. . . . It teaches them to be better. Because when we let them out of prison, they
are going to every county in North Carolina. My job, maybe they won’t go out and
be criminals. Maybe we have changed them and taught them different ways of doing things. . . . I guess I wanted to . . . work with them. . . . I wanted to be part of the direct recovery of inmates. I like to help people. I’m a people person. . . . I like working for the state and I love working with people.

E-18 also conveyed how much she “Needed a Job” (a Career-Oriented category response) and views her work as “Helping People” (a Civic Duty response) in North Carolina in general.

Four re-entry work employees said that seeing Client Success helped to motivate them. In Chapter VII more will be said about how the theme of the “Redemption” of male inmates and ex-offenders – stories about successes they experienced that show how much they change during the re-entry process – surfaced often during my interviews. The theme of “Redemption” represents one of the main benefits many Re-Entry Partners gain as they participate in transition efforts. An example of a “Client Success” response was given by E-13, a European female who administers a city program that provides transition services to assist ex-offenders:

I like it when we have a successful case. I like it when we have a case who, watching them from when they first come from prison, and those six-to-nine months that we have, and how . . . some of them grow and feel better about themselves. And just take on and are grateful for what we offer them. Some of them are resistant initially and they actually smile at some point. But just watching those small steps and progressions, it’s very interesting to me. And you know, I am curious as to why people do what they do. . . . For just a few small minor decisions in your life, anyone could be in some of those situations.

A “Prefers or Likes to Teach the Inmate Population” response from the Personal Relationships category arose during the interview with E-17, a black male who teaches inmates in prison. Concerning his motivations for his involvement in re-entry work, he responded:
The fact that I needed a job. I knew that, well, that there were conversations that I wanted to have in my classrooms that I could not have with younger students. I wanted to teach adults. . . . I knew there were issues in society that I wanted to talk about and touch on and you can’t do that with minors. . . . I came looking for whatever I could do at the community college because I wanted to work with adults and ended up talking with the director that had an opening in the prison. . . . So, that is really how I ended up working with incarcerated people. . . . Having gone to school to teach, it was what I wanted to do.

E-17’s response also served as an effective example of a “Needed a Job” and “Use College Degree” responses from the Career-Oriented category.

The “Ex-O Effect,” or “Exposure to Ex-Offenders,” influenced the decision for people to be employed in re-entry work also played a role with re-entry work employees. E-7, a black male who teaches inmates in prison, talked about how his encounter with former residents of the criminal justice system who were financially successful professionals led him to re-entry work.

I bumped into a couple of guys . . . and come to find out they were ex offenders. And they were doing fantastic. I mean up in the 50, 60, 70,000 dollar range. So we got to talk. And I said, ‘Well, okay, okay, you made your mistake. You’re inside, you’re paying for it. It’s paid for, the debt is paid.’ ‘Right.’ ‘Now you want to come back out into society. But they don’t want you. But you have people in society that have done the same thing you do but haven’t gotten caught.’ ‘Right.’ I said, ‘Okay, let me take another look at this picture.’ . . . And so then that’s when I started getting involved. I mean that was about seven or eight years ago. . . .

E-13, a white female who is an administrator for a program that provides transition services to assist ex-offenders, also provided an example of a “Prior Exposure to Ex-Offenders” response. She discussed her various job roles that put her in contact with ex-offenders prior to her current position:

E-13: I was a social worker. I was a domestic violence counselor. I was teaching classes. I was a GED instructor . . . I taught survival skills for men. . . . It’s a curriculum that was designed, well not specifically for the offender population, but
It’s pretty much taught in a lot of community-based corrections programs. . . . I didn’t specifically start or set out to work with that population. . . . It was a natural progression from the work. I meant I started working with the offenders of probation. . . . I told you earlier I moved from social work to domestic violence job protective services. . . .

I: Okay. So, . . . what you’re saying is that whole time, even though it wasn’t directly . . . you always encountered ex-offenders in . . .

E-13: In the criminal justice system and the court system and people touching the system somewhere. As a victim, as an offender.

The “Ex-O Effect” also emerged as ex-offenders talked about helping other ex-offenders. In the interview with E-16, an ex-offender who hosts Round Tables, teaches inmates, and leads transition efforts for ex-offenders, this effect was demonstrated. As a re-entry work employee, E-16, expressed how his experiences in prison led him to “Help Inmates and Ex-Offenders.”

I saw firsthand the need when I was incarcerated for the six years that I was incarcerated. I saw the need, and I think that’s what [a fellow inmate] gave to me that he doesn’t realize; that he allowed me to step into this role . . . as establishing a leadership and personal development forum. . . . Not a forum, but a place for people to learn about life skills and be connected to resources. And he did that for me by allowing me and giving me the privilege to help him get his G.E.D and learn how to read.

E-1, an ex-offender who worked with the electronic monitoring of men on parole and probation, talked about how his re-entry work was motivated by a “Need for Job or Money” and his “Ego” (responses from the Career-Oriented category) and his “Exposure to Ex-Offenders” (from the Personal Relationships category) as he worked with ex-offenders and associated with them at 12-step meetings.

E-1: At first it was the money. . . . I am a convicted felon. I had talked my way into being a paralegal at a law firm by doing landscaping for the lady at first, and then I
answered the phone one day and I got people skills, because I used to con people. . . . And she liked it. . . . I used the negative parts of . . . my addiction . . . to get a good job. . . . I used that to get a better job. . . . and, of course, it was all money. It was cool. I cared about the service work. I liked the fact I could go to sleep at nights knowing I was doing a good thing instead of . . . ripping people off. But a big piece of it was the money. . . . It was a company that was coming from California and all this big time ego shit. And then what happened was once I got established in it, I got to see the actual benefit of what the product was and what it did for people, [it lowered] the recidivism rate. And that changed me. That took it away from the money to the fact that I actually fundamentally believe in what I’m doing. At the same time, work outside of the job with ex-offenders or people in Alcoholics Anonymous, things like that, sponsoring people . . . it really changed what my beliefs are, what I’m like as a human being. From money to the fact that seeing some people grow is a fulfilling aspect. So, that all kind of happened but the initial . . . catalyst was money.

Thus, the “Ex-O Effect” played a significant role in the lives of a lot of the re-entry work employees and responses in the Personal Relationships category demonstrated this effect.

The Religious or Spiritual category consists of employee motivation responses directly related to any specific religious or spiritual references prior to the Morality question and Religious-oriented questions of the Re-Entry Partners Study. It was the smallest category of responses for re-entry work employees with only 8 total responses. Religious or Spiritual category motivations offered were Opportunity to Do Ministry (3/20), God Directed them (2/20), Involvement in Church Ministry, a Scripture or Biblical reference, and the Opportunity to Use My Divinity School Degree.

An example of an “Opportunity to Do Ministry” response was displayed in the discourse of E-9, a black male who teaches male inmates in a Federal medium-security prison:
In regards to finding that it’s very rewarding, one of the things I find I like most about it is, although it is “employment” for me, because I am a minister, I find it is ministry as well. In regards to fulfilling my secular employment and my need to work, it also satisfies a need to be involved with ministry. So I think they overlap . . . because ministry deals a lot with communication and connection. So I have a lot of communication with the inmates but I also find that from a religious standpoint the spirit of God within me can identify or connect to individuals I’m interacting with throughout the day. So, once a connection takes place, from a secular employment standpoint, it actively transitions into a ministry standpoint.

“God Inspired Me” to participate in re-entry work efforts was a response offered by E-15, a white female who does substance abuse and employment counseling with ex-offenders:

I truly believe in my heart, and this is my spirituality, that God gave me a gift. Even though I come across as being real tough sometimes, I think that God gave me the ability to help people help themselves. . . . I think that God gave me a gift to be able to get along with . . . a lot of different types of people. If I did not think that I was successful in what I was doing, with God’s help, then I wouldn’t stay in it. If I did not have a passion for this work . . . because believe me it’s frustrating at times, it’s aggravating at times, sometimes you just want to throw your hand’s up in the air. . . . if I didn’t have passion for this job, I wouldn’t be in it. . . . I just have a passion for it. . . . When the world says you’re not gonna do something, you’re not capable of doing something, I like to prove the world wrong.

Her motivations for doing re-entry work also included “Help People” (a Civic Duty response).

One re-entry work employee, E-14, discussed how his experiences at seminary led him to “Use his Divinity School Degree” to do re-entry work. E-14 is a white male who is employed as a prison chaplain. He discusses how he serves male inmates:

When I was in seminary . . . I did an internship at a women’s prison. And that’s what created the interest for me. I had a good experience there at the women’s prison. And . . . upon graduation, . . . I sought employment as a chaplain. Having had that experience, that positive experience . . . while I was a student . . . I felt that I could contribute. Certainly knew of the need that people had for someone. So, I responded
to that... Hopefully by, you know, being there as a source of hope and encouragement too. And offer some guidance... or a listening ear... and be an advocate for them as I interact with the public. And try to get across their plight as inmates. Circumstances they live in and face.

Three responses from the Religious or Spiritual category—“God Inspired,” “Involvement in Church Ministry” and “Scripture Reference”—were among the responses supplied by E-19. She is a white female respondent who works for a Christian-based organization coordinating church-based programs to support prison inmates and provide opportunities for their children to spend time with them during holiday seasons. She talks about her motivations for being employed in re-entry work:

E-19: My job? I mean God. Really that’s the only thing I can say to you. Was it something I was looking for? No. Was it something God did? Yes. You know, He opened the door to this particular position knowing that... I would be coming in contact with inmates and former inmates, former residents. And so, I needed to be open to whatever God was doing or I would have closed the door on the job all together. And my love for people... and my belief that if God created them, they are not junk and they have a purpose. And He created them on purpose for His divine purpose. Just because they’re in prison or been to prison doesn’t mean that it has interrupted His purpose.

I: So what led you to the job? How did He navigate you to this one?

E-19: Oh, Okay. I... had been in prison... the other ministry I was in for a number of years, and they did cut back due to do finances. So, I couldn’t afford to cut back from forty hours to fifteen hours a week. That wasn’t going to work with our finances in our home. So, I needed to start looking for something else. And so I began to pray and I knew that God was calling me away. He just made it abundantly clear that He was calling me away and I asked Him to make it crystal clear that He wanted me to change. And He obliged me and He answered my prayer and He made it abundantly clear; and so I started looking. The job became available and I applied. The rest is God’s history.

I: Why did you take this particular job?
E-19: God. . . . It was God. He showed me in His Word, Isaiah 61, once before where He said, ‘I have anointed you to proclaim the good news.’ He said to . . . to free the captives. To free from bondage those who’ve been imprisoned. I can’t remember the words exactly. ‘God, are you taking about prisons here?’ I really felt like His Word was confirming it.

Beside the religious-based motivations, secular motivations can also be seen in her discourse. The “Need for a Job or Money” (a Career-Oriented category response) and “Prior Work with Inmates” (a Personal Relationships category response) played a role in her decisions as well. Although E-19 is one of the most explicitly religious respondents I interviewed, especially since she works for a Christian-based organization, all 20 of the re-entry work employees in my study expressed having religious, predominantly Christian, beliefs or spiritual orientations that motivated their employment in re-entry-related jobs.

Employees in the Civic Duty category discussed how they were motivated by their desire to contribute to society. There were 8 different types of responses and 22 responses total in this category. As stated earlier, Needing a Job or Money to pay bills was tied with Help People with 13 citations each as the 2 main responses re-entry work employees gave in the study. All the other responses in this category were only mentioned once or twice. They were to Educate the Public about the Criminal Justice System (2/20), the Desire as an Ex-Offender to Give Back to Community (2/20), to Contribute to Society, to Fight Channel 11 and the System, to Help Fellow Veterans, due to a Love For People, and to Reduce Crime.

An example of “Help People” (a Civic Duty category) was submitted by E-8, a black male ex-offender, talks about how the support he received during his own re-entry experiences encouraged him to assist other ex-offenders to find transitional housing:
My own personal need for help coming out of incarceration myself. Yeah, that’s what motivated me to wanna help somebody else. I knew I needed help. And somebody helped me. So I wanna be there for somebody else.

Another ex-offender, E-10, a white male who serves as the administrator of a transitional housing and substance abuse program, discussed how his experiences as an ex-offender and recovering drug addict inspired him to do re-entry work:

That’s because that’s where I came from, and I got an opportunity once in life, and I took it. . . . And I wasn’t good at crime, so I had to do something else. . . . And that’s why I did it, because somebody helped me one time, and helped changed my life. So I owe. You have to give back.

These examples illustrate how Re-Entry Partners who were formerly incarcerated have been helped by people who helped them to re-enter society successfully. Due to their positive experiences and the help they received from others, they now support other ex-offenders.

Similarly, the fact that E-12, a white male, is a veteran himself played a pivotal role in his decision to “Help Veterans” by finding employment for veterans who are ex-offenders.

E-12: Well, I started this job working with veterans and my duties require me to case manage homeless veterans, and previously incarcerated veterans. And I have really thought strongly about that they need help and somebody needs to step up and help with things. And I’ve gotten a little more involved than just what the job requires. . . . because it feels good, especially with veterans. It’s kind of like a fraternity if you like. Any veteran that you talk to; it’s like you know you’ve been through the same kind of stuff, basic training and other things. So, there is a camaraderie there of some sorts.

I: Thank you. So, what motivated you to take this job?
E-12: I was unemployed. . . . That was the primary motivator. (laughs)

I: I see. And how did you get into this line of work?
E-12: Well, just the fact that I like the thought of working with veterans. And it just was an opportunity and it was a good one. I just stumbled into the opportunity and it sounded like a good one. So I took it.
I: Why did you think it sounded like a good one?  
E-12: Well, just because it’s working with veterans. I enjoyed my military experience, my father was a veteran, and my father-in-law was a veteran.

“Needing a Job” and “Good Job Opportunity” (Career-Oriented motivations) and “Feels Good” (a Personal Interest motivation) also featured prominently in E-12’s discourse about his reasons for being employed in re-entry work. Further, the discourse shows that E-12 identifies closely with the population he serves due to their shared veteran statuses. This identification dynamic is similar to how ex-offender Re-Entry Partners in the study empathize with other ex-offenders they assist due to their common experiences. The ability to identify with male ex-offenders enables these Re-entry Partners to be effective as they help men to re-enter society successfully.

Beyond his “Exposure to Ex-offenders” (the Ex-O effect), E-7, a black male who teaches inmates, expressed how other factors (Involvement in Church Ministry; a desire to Teach Inmates; Client Success) motivated him to seek employment in re-entry work, including his daily personal battle with Fighting Channel 11 and the System:

Then, my church at that time had a prison ministry. . . . I became part of that prison ministry. We would go . . . out to the prison and talk to the inmates. I was like, ‘Okay, I like this, I like this.’ So, that’s when I kind of got involved. Another thing, to kind of help me transition into that, . . . I did a hitch in the school system as a teacher and as a counselor. I think I was just a little rough around the edges for the classroom area so I felt I needed to get with the adults, had to work for the adults. . . . It feels good. . . . When I see [former students], I say, ‘What are you doing now?’ ‘Oh, I am going to school’ or ‘I am still working’ or ‘I found another job.’ I say, ‘Okay, great, fantastic,’ to make them feel good. My wife and I were [out] one weekend, and [someone] came running up to me and hugged me. I introduced them to the family and everything. This is what makes me feel good. Only thing that makes me feel bad is the first 8-10 minutes of the news. 11 o’clock is all about crime. . . . That gives me the motivation to keep doing what I’m doing also. . . . It’s like I am fighting the system. I am fighting Channel 11; because . . . I look at the news and
I see all the negative stuff they are doing, and I look over here and see how I am turning them out over here. They are going to the system, and . . . I am bringing them out over here. I’m like, ‘Yeah, . . . you on Channel 11, you got 2 tonight, I got 15 coming out.’ My wife says, ‘What are you talking about.?’. . . I say, ‘They’re only talking about incarcerating 2 today. I got 15 in the program!’ It just keeps me motivated like that. I love seeing the light bulb . . . when they accomplish something.

The Personal Interest category was the second smallest category and had 12 responses. “Feels Good” to do it (3/20) was exemplified in the response provided by E-12 (see above). Due to “Serendipity or by Accident” (3/20) and a “Friend Recommended or Invited” me to do it (2/20) were also in this category. “Desire Not to Commit Crimes or Go Back to Jail” (2/20) was one of the reasons provided by E-1 who said, “I liked the fact I could go to sleep at nights knowing I was doing a good thing instead of . . . ripping people off.” “Curious about Criminal Mindset and Motives,” and the job position “Boosted the person’s Ego” (also given by E-1; see above) concluded the types of responses in the Personal Interest category.

Re-entry Work Employee versus Re-entry Work Volunteer Motivations

Examining the amount of responses given by re-entry work employees and re-entry work volunteers per motivation category (see Table 4.1), I discerned some overall similarities and differences between the two samples. A major similarity is that the two samples had four categories – Personal Relationships, Spiritual or Religious, Civic Duty and Personal Interest – in common. Civic Duty also appeared to be on a similar level of importance in terms of serving as a motivational factor for Employees (22 responses) and Volunteers (26 responses). On the other hand, Career-Oriented was the largest category for Employees
Personal Relationships with Inmates and/or Ex-Offenders was the largest category for re-entry work volunteers.

### Table 4.1 Frequency of Re-Entry Partner Motivations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Re-entry Work Motivations</th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
<th>Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Relationships</td>
<td>31 (31.63%)</td>
<td>26 (23.85%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career-Oriented</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>41 (37.61%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Duty</td>
<td>26 (26.53%)</td>
<td>22 (20.18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual or Religious</td>
<td>24 (24.49%)</td>
<td>8 (7.34%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Interest</td>
<td>8 (8.16%)</td>
<td>12 (11.01%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Affair</td>
<td>5 (5.1%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Effects</td>
<td>4 (4.08%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A major difference between the two groups was the emergence of the Career-Oriented category for re-entry work employees and of the Institutional Effects and Family Affair categories for re-entry work volunteers. Career-Oriented makes sense given the question prompted the employees to discuss their motivations for doing paid work with this population and volunteers either were in retirement or had non-re-entry work employment.

There were some aspects about the Institutional Effect category that should also be considered. Institutional Effect may not be an explicit motivational factor for re-entry work employees because those who worked with inmates had direct access to prisons as a part of their job responsibilities and it appeared to be a non-issue for other employees whose work did not involve trying to access institutional barriers. On the other hand, there may be some kind of Institutional Effect at work for some of the employees. For example, some
employees who work in prisons mentioned that a cost of their work is that they often feel locked up as well since they are always behind guarded gates along with the inmates (see Employee Costs in Chapter V). Further, 3 employees went into re-entry work in order to utilize their college or divinity school degrees and this in some sense might also be construed as part of an institutional effect as well.

Personal Relationships was the largest category for re-entry work volunteers with 31 responses and the second largest category for re-entry work employees with 24 responses. This similarity demonstrated that the existence of personal connections to men who were or had been incarcerated served as a very relevant motivation for both samples of Re-Entry Partners. Significantly, the main motivation both groups provided was “Help People” with 10 responses for Volunteers and 13 for Employees (tied for first place with the “Need for a Job or Money”). Employees also had “Help Inmates” and “Help Ex-Offenders” and if these responses were combined into the “Help Others” motivational factor it would have 22 responses, which would make it the main motivating factor for employment in re-entry work.

Although all of the re-entry work volunteers and employees in my study said they were religious or spiritual and that they believed in God, the two samples differed substantially when it came to naming how religion or spirituality influenced their re-entry work. The Spirituality or Religion category was the smallest one for Employees, whereas 3 out of 7 (Religious/Spiritual Peer Effect, Christian Duty/Practice, and Religious Authority Effect) of the main reasons given by volunteers for their motivations were from the Religious or Spiritual category. Additionally, the Non-Religious and Religious or Spiritual designation seems more appropriate for volunteers with almost a third of their responses in the
Spirituality or Religion category and not for the employees with only 8 of their overall responses being in this category.
V. BENEFITS, COSTS AND HEALTH IMPACTS OF RE-ENTRY WORK

In the first part of this chapter I examine the ideas Re-Entry Partners in the study provided as they discussed the benefits they derived from working with male inmates or ex-offenders. Next, I analyze the costs re-entry work volunteers and re-entry work employees reported they experienced as a result of assisting men to transition back into society. Finally, this chapter concludes by assessing discourse offered by Re-Entry Partners on the interaction between their involvement in re-entry efforts and their health. This discourse offers the health-related benefits (e.g., increased mental health) and costs (e.g., stress) that were identified by the Re-Entry Partners.

Re-Entry Partner Benefits

To gather data on the benefits Re-Entry Partners received from working with male inmates and ex-offenders, I asked, “How, if at all, has your work with/helping incarcerated men or male ex offenders benefited you?” Responses I received from them fit into five main categories (see Table 5.1 and Table 5.2) that applied for both re-entry work volunteers and re-entry work employees. These categories were Re-entry Work, Community Connections, Personal Growth, Tangible Rewards and Spiritual or Religious Rewards. Each of the categories had a specific definition that I will offer below.

“Re-entry Work” referred to benefits that were related to the direct exposure to the
Criminal Justice System (CJS) or their interactions with male inmates or ex-offenders.

“Understand the Criminal Justice System, Crime in NC and the Criminal Mind” was the most common response (7) in this category for re-entry work volunteers. Other multiple responses that re-entry work volunteers provided were made Friends with Former CJS Residents with 6 responses, witnessed “Partner” Success with 5 responses (“Partners” was a name used by many volunteers to refer to the men that they helped), Helped CJS Residents and Their Families with 5 responses, and experienced “Partners” Give Back or Show Gratitude with 4 responses. Re-entry work employees expressed that seeing Client success (8 responses), Helping Inmates (3 responses), and Understanding the CJS and the Criminal Mind (3 responses) were the main benefits they received.

Re-entry work volunteers had 32 responses in the “Re-entry Work” category. One example of a response from the “Re-entry Work” category came from V-9, who said that one of the benefits she received was that she better understood the nature of crime. She also mentioned that being involved in re-entry work allowed her to make new friends, see new parts of a major urban North Carolina city, and live out her faith.

V-9: It’s benefited me by learning about the criminal justice system. It’s benefited me by understanding the nature of crime in [a NC city]. It’s benefited me from just having great new friends. It’s benefited me by exposing me to parts of [a NC city] that I never would have seen and known about. It’s benefited me in me meeting families that I never would have known and have grown to love. And it’s benefited me from kind of expanding my understanding of the world and giving me the chance to live my faith.

Another example from a re-entry work volunteer with a response in this category came from V-6, who hired ex-offenders saw many of them become “productive citizens” and expressed how much satisfaction he gets knowing his service also helped their families and social networks.
V-6: I feel it’s a necessary thing to do. I can’t afford to sit on the sidelines and see people not get an opportunity when I know I can give them an opportunity. And someone has to do it . . . give them an opportunity, kind of create an environment that they can thrive in. . . . My little piece of that puzzle is small right now and I think it should be a lot bigger. But I get a lot of gratitude out of seeing people go from a spot where they are incarcerated to being a productive citizen and being someone who can take care of their family. . . . I’d love for that to be the norm. I would love for everyone that I hire to just be able to stay on or go to work for either me or someone else and say, “Hey, this guy right here is a good worker. He is working out as one of my top people you know.” Sometimes that happens, sometimes that don’t. But I think it gives me a tremendous amount of satisfaction to say I can help handle that. . . . It’s . . . not so much just helping the ex- offenders; it’s also helping the people that they’re associated with. You don’t know how many people you can affect by being able to do something to help one person. That one person turns into 10, 15, 50, down the road. . . . It’s in my nature to be able to kind of help people anyway. That was ingrained in me by my mother. It’s not how much you can do as long as you are doing something. . . . I feel like I can . . . not just look at the society and say things are going to hell in a hand basket, and not try to do something about it. So that helps me. I just think everybody can benefit. It’s a win-win if you look at it the right way, if you approach it the right way. They get employment; you get valuable service that’s needed. And everybody comes out on top.

Re-entry work employees reported 19 responses that fit into the “Re-entry Work” category. For example, re-entry work employee E-5 had a response for this category. As a prison employee she stated that one benefit she received as part of being employed in a position where she performed re-entry work was that she gained insight into the Criminal Justice System and learned about the options that were available for people released from prison. She was also very clear that the main benefit she derived from her employment was the Tangible Reward of having job security.

E-5: Job security, 99% job security. . . . I know that’s wrong but . . .

I: Why would you think, why is that wrong?
E-5: I don’t want it to sound harsh, but as long as they come to prison, I have a job. So, I am going to say 99% job security. . . . I work in a profession that I know I am always going to have a job.

I: Any other ways that it benefits you?

E-5: Like I said, just giving me an insight on the criminal justice system – division of prison, department of corrections, all the other areas inside parole or probation, community corrections. I just learned a great deal. So I think that has benefited me because it has exposed me to a great deal besides, “Okay, you are working with inmates,” the negative part. There’s a lot of good things going on out there. So, I think it has helped me in that way.

“Community Connections” consisted of benefits associated with ties to the wider community or society. The leading number of responses in this category for re-entry work volunteers was that 5 of them said they could “Better Understand People or Society” and 4 expressed they benefited because it allowed them to “Contribute to Society or Do My Duty.” For re-entry work employees there were no responses given in this category that were mentioned more than twice. “Contributes to Society” and ‘Understand Humanity Better” led the category with two responses each.

Re-entry work volunteers reported 14 responses that were placed in the “Community Connections” category. V-14, for example, discussed the benefit she felt she received as she developed an “Understanding of People” who had been incarcerated and how their incarceration affected their communities and social networks.

V-14: I’ve got to meet some really . . . nice men who I would’ve never been in contact with; and it’s opened my eyes to people and how people make decisions, good and bad. It’s exposed me to a culture that I never would’ve known about. . . . It affects so many . . . because one in every 3 or 4 people know someone that’s been incarcerated. So, it just helps you to understand where people are coming from and what they are facing. You realize that it doesn’t just affect the person that’s incarcerated. It affects everyone that their lives touch. . . . We, I, have an opportunity
to impact so many people through working with guys who have been incarcerated. So, it’s been good.

Re-entry work volunteer V-12 also provided an example of a response that belonged in this category when he talked about the fact that he performed his re-entry work because “the job needed to be done.” He also talked about how seeing “Partner Success” and “Partner Gratitude” (from the “Re-entry Work” category) were also beneficial.

V-12: Well, spiritually it has benefited me, but physically it has not. But . . . I should have . . . cut down on my programs, you know. But it has benefited me. It’s seeing their lives better. I’m in touch with some of ‘em. They thank me. But it’s not really much about benefits other than the job needed to be done. You know. I didn’t get a paycheck or nothing but it needed to be done so I did it. You know. I just had to do it. That is a benefit, you know.

Re-entry work employees reported 10 responses that were placed in the “Community Connections” category. Prison Employee E-3, for instance, stated that the re-entry work he does makes him feel like he is “making a contribution” and that he also gains personal perspective into his own life (a “Personal Growth” response). He also offered his view on why volunteers come to work with inmates – they get something out of the connections they make.

E-3: One of the reasons volunteers like coming out here to work with these guys is because, when you see them progress and respond, you get something out of it. I may be paid for my services but I get something out of it. I get personal perspective into my own life. . . . I’m in a job that I not only generally enjoy doing – you know, there’s not a job you’re always gonna like and there’s no perfect job; there’s down times for everything – but it’s a job I like and it’s a job where I feel like I’m making a contribution.
“Personal Growth” represents all of the discourse concerning benefits that was given by Re-Entry Partners that were associated with personal improvements in their lives that

---

**Table 5.1 Re-entry Work Volunteer Benefits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RE-ENTRY WORK</th>
<th>COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS</th>
<th>PERSONAL GROWTH</th>
<th>TANGIBLE REWARDS</th>
<th>SPIRITUAL or RELIGIOUS REWARDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understand CJS, Crime in NC and Criminal Mind (7)</td>
<td>Better Understand People/Society (5)</td>
<td>Feels Good to Help or Enriches Life (10)</td>
<td>Not Back in Prison &amp; Employed (2)</td>
<td>Spiritual Rewards (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Partner” Success (5)</td>
<td>Able to Educate the Public about CJS</td>
<td>Gratitude about My Life (3)</td>
<td>Political Exposure and Contacts</td>
<td>Satisfaction from Responding to Jesus’ Call to Serve Prisoners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help CJS Residents and Their Families (5)</td>
<td>I Am a Now a Productive Member of Society</td>
<td>Reinforces Recovery (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Partners” Give Back or Show Gratitude (4)</td>
<td>Less Taxes to Pay with Ex-Offenders Employed</td>
<td>Bored Without it due to Retirement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoys Teaching Population (2)</td>
<td>Rewarding to See “Partners” Credibility with Public Officials</td>
<td>Gained Insights into Business</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith Team Friends</td>
<td>Valuable Community Service Is Provided</td>
<td>Healing to Work with Inmates and Other Ex-Offenders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Employees and Good Relationships with</td>
<td></td>
<td>Help Myself by Helping Others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---
Employees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To Serve as an Example to Former CJS Residents</th>
<th>Made Friends Across SES and Racial Lines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

occurred as a result of their involvement in re-entry work. The majority of responses re-entry work volunteers said were “Feels Good to Help and/or Enriches Life” (10 responses), they became a “Better Person” (4), and they had more “Gratitude” about their lives (3). Re-entry work employees provided multiple responses for “Feels Good, Enjoys Job and/or Enriches Life” (10 responses), they became “Better Persons” (5), they had “Gratitude for Life” (4), they “Care and Respect People More” (3), they had “Insights into Family Dynamics” (3), and “Accept Different Perspectives and/or Meet Diverse People” (3).

Re-entry work volunteers gave 35 responses for the “Personal Growth” category. V-1 talked about how good it was to assist men with their transition efforts because it allowed her to “keep busy” and avoid being “Bored during her Retirement” years.

V-1: It’s made [my life] much more fulfilling. I think I’d be absolutely bored if I didn’t have this. Once you retire, you’ve got a lot of time on your hands and too much time to think about what’s ailing you. It’s good to keep busy and it’s wonderful to be busy in a constructive sort of way. I like it a lot and I enjoy it.

This benefit offered by V-1 matched volunteer research findings reported in a Li and Ferraro study that, “Social role absence becomes a more important predictor of volunteer activities in later life as people experiencing major role-identity absence may take on a volunteer role as a means of social engagement.” (Li and Ferraro, 2006, p.512) Also, they offered that retirement has been shown by Mutchler et al. to lead to an increase in volunteer work. This factor may also explain why people who have served time in prison volunteer if it is in response to a role loss and to develop more positive forms of social engagement.
Another example of a “Personal Growth” categorical response was that re-entry work volunteer V-17 said working with these men made her “Grateful” for her freedoms and “Reinforced her Recovery”.

V-17: It has helped me to realize the power of freedom, the power of education, the power of being able to choose what I eat . . . Just being really grateful for my freedoms and that benefits me. It also benefits me because I am more aware of the cycle of crime and incarceration. And it also benefits me because it reinforces my recovery, and the importance of my sobriety. . . . A lot of the men that I’ve worked with have had some sort of drug or alcohol issue before they went in and in recovery we usually say that if left untreated, addiction and alcoholism will end in death, hospitalization, or incarceration. So, it just brings that point home and that keeps me sober.

Re-entry work employees gave 31 responses for the ‘Personal Growth” category. E-6 offered that it made her a “Better Person” because she had to be strong to work in prison.

E-6: I think it makes me a better person. . . . I grew up in a religious household where I went to church every Sunday. I believe in helping people and I have a care for people. I think I have a caring heart for people period. But, overall, I would say it just made me a stronger person by having to deal with some of the stuff that you have to deal with in here. It makes you have to stand tall and speak loud . . . to get your point across. I think it’s just made me strong.

“Gratitude for Life” was the response E-16 gave as he talked about the challenges he saw other ex-offenders deal with versus the support system and family he had to help him transition.

E-16: I think that has probably taken my gratitude for life to a new level. I’ve been married . . . this coming May for twenty-five years. . . . My children, [my wife] and I are still a tight . . . family, and the fact that we’re in good health, and the fact that we don’t have major issues. When I have that, and to see people on a daily basis who don’t, who are wondering where they may lay their head that night. When they’re wondering when is the next time they’ll talk with their daughter or their son, or going through substance abuse issues or mental health challenges. It keeps me, it’s a humility check to know that I can see folks are dealing with things and I really appreciate life. The fact that I’m blessed to have had a support system and to be able
to not have dealt with a lot of the issues people deal with. So, I think that’s one of the
great things that possibly emerges out of this, is the gratitude.

Finally, E-8, who teaches in a prison, said he had “Gratitude for Life” as he was reminded
daily that he could “walk back out” of prison after work. He also responded he liked to see
Client Success (“Re-entry Work”) and was reminded how good God was as he saw people
change.

E-8: I would say it helps me. It enhances my life. It gives me that constant reminder
to be grateful. Anytime I go to [prison] and look at that barbed wire, that razor wire
on that fence, I walk in that gate, and know I’m getting ready to walk back out. I
can’t help but be grateful. Anytime I’m able to help somebody accomplish something
in their life . . . seeing marriages get put back together, a man reconnecting with his
children, being a good father to them, stuff like that, . . . that’s just where it’s at for
me. . . . It’s a constant reminder to be grateful. It has just shown me all over again
just how good God is and what He’ll do for people.

Although Table 5.1 shows the responses provided for most categories, due to space
limitations, not all of the responses were provided for the “Personal Growth” category for the
re-entry work volunteers. Other responses given by re-entry work volunteers that were
sorted into the “Personal Growth” category included: “learning from helping one person to
help the next person”; “it was a learning process”; “the opportunity to tell my story”; “better
at conversation with people from rough neighborhoods and poor backgrounds”; “break from
normal life and routines”; “changed how I treat others”; “I feel confident about work I do
with a variety of people”; I was able to give up old ways of thinking and living”; “it’s good
to keep busy”; “I’m more aware of my own deficiencies”; and “I’m able to see different parts
of NC cities.” The Personal Growth category for re-entry work employees also included
these responses: “I am able to read people and situations better”; “I am able to remember the
past”; “I can deal with life situations better”; “I have gratitude for my family and support network”; “It helped me grow up”; “I learned how much fun life can be”; “I am more outspoken”; “I care more for myself”; “I have perspective into my own life”; and “I realize we can overcome dark places.”

“Tangible Rewards” are extrinsic rewards or actions that had material, visible results that Re-Entry Partners identified they receive as a result of being involved in re-entry work efforts. No responses were given more than twice in this category by re-entry work volunteers. Two people said they were “Not Back in Prison and Employed,” one person said he “Writes Better Academic Papers,” and one person said he gained “Political Exposure and Contacts” as a result of their participation in re-entry work activities. There was only one Tangible Reward that was mentioned more than once by re-entry work employees. Six of them said Pay or Income to provide for their Families.

Re-entry work volunteers submitted only 4 responses that fit into this category. V-7 offered that the re-entry work he did allowed him to be “free” from incarceration and employed. It also helped him stay sober (“Personal Growth”) and a productive member of society (“Community Connections”).

V-7: I am sitting here sober and free, not on probation, parole, or in prison. I am employed. I, for the most part, feel like a respected member of society, productive in the community. All those are gifts.

Similarly, V-18 said that his involvement gives him “extra incentive” to take the necessary actions to keep him out of prison and to be “stable.”

V-18: It gives me extra incentive to know that I ain’t going to do nothing wrong; to know that I am stable in my thinking, stable in my understanding. Now, I say this to everybody. I don’t see myself going back to prison and I am working on this part.
I: So, do you see any other ways that you benefit from this work?

V-18: Man, always. . . . I am; totally, mind, body, soul, and spirit. I benefit everywhere, every way that I could possibly benefit with this work, which is why I do it, which is why I put in the hours that I do; because you got to have a reason to get out of the bed in the morning. . . . I choose to get out of bed every day and meet with people because I want to help somebody not be where I was.

Table 5.2 Re-entry Work Employee Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RE-ENTRY WORK</th>
<th>COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS</th>
<th>PERSONAL GROWTH</th>
<th>TANGIBLE REWARDS</th>
<th>SPIRITUAL or RELIGIOUS REWARDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Client Success (8)</td>
<td>Contributes to Society (2)</td>
<td>Feels Good, Enjoys Job or Enriches Life (10)</td>
<td>Pay/Income for Family (6)</td>
<td>Spiritual Rewards (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help Inmates (3)</td>
<td>Understand Humanity Better (2)</td>
<td>Better Person (5)</td>
<td>Don’t Commit More Crimes &amp; Don’t Return to Jail (2)</td>
<td>Opportunity for Ministry (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand CJS and Criminal Mind (3)</td>
<td>Aware of Community Needs</td>
<td>Gratitude for Life (4)</td>
<td>Job Security</td>
<td>Be Part of God’s Solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client Gratitude (2)</td>
<td>Aware of Our Vulnerability to CJS and Its Flaws</td>
<td>Care and Respect People More (3)</td>
<td>Recognition from Boss</td>
<td>Fulfills My Destiny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoys Teaching Population</td>
<td>Feel Good Beating Ch. 11 and System</td>
<td>Insights into Family Dynamics (3)</td>
<td>Work in Nice Environment</td>
<td>Keeps Me Spiritually Grounded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve Re-Entry Program</td>
<td>Opportunity to Effect Change</td>
<td>Accept Different Perspectives/Meet Diverse People (3)</td>
<td>Work Presents a Challenge</td>
<td>Learned Life Is Not Just Material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serve Other Ex-Offenders</td>
<td>Opportunity to Give Back</td>
<td>Learn Things (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Obedient to Scripture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help People Less Fortunate</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reinforces Recovery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12 responses were supplied by re-entry work employees for the “Tangible Rewards” category. Echoing V-7 and V-18, E-1 said that his employment benefited him by keeping him from committing more crimes and because he worked with people with whom he could relate (“Personal Growth”).

E-1: Wow, how has it not? I mean the only reason I’m sitting here today with you, is because I do that shit, you know what I mean? I’m not the type of person who will just work a 9-5 and be okay with it. I want the giant gold medallion and the Lamborghini, you know what I mean, and I want it in three weeks, so I will go flip keys, you know what I’m saying? Like that’s the kind of person I am, and, you know, doing this stuff is what keeps me not doing that... Being employed benefited me because that was being able to talk with people who are like me; just made it a nicer work environment. Oh yeah, they’re like ex-cons, you know what I mean?... I relate to those people. So, it was nice to at least work with those guys instead of a bunch of people I don’t relate to.

Re-entry work employee E-14, a prison chaplain, stated that the “Tangible Reward” he received was that he was able to make a living and that he obtained a “Re-entry Work” benefit from “Helping Inmates” get through various disappointments they encountered.

E-14: Well, it’s provided me with a living; kept me fed and a roof over my head. I think I have gained a sense of satisfaction from working with ‘em; trying to... help guys... The rewards are... the satisfaction you get out of... the thanks and... and knowing you’ve been there with ‘em during... very difficult times in their life. More particularly, in my position... I’ve sat with ‘em and cried with ‘em as they lost loved ones and had disappointments in being turned down by the parole board or not getting a level change... I’ve been with ‘em through some dark, troublesome times, and... they recognize that. That’s the reward... I feel good about that, about being able to be with ‘em. Most times I feel awesome about that.

“Spiritual or Religious Rewards” were responses, such as “God’s gift,” Re-Entry Partners said were benefits that explicitly included religious or spiritual terms, ideas, or
expressions. For both re-entry work volunteers and re-entry work employees the only response in this category mentioned more than twice was Spiritual Rewards with 4 responses.

Re-entry work volunteers presented 6 responses for the “Spiritual or Religious Rewards” category. V-19 said she was satisfied and grateful that her re-entry work allowed her to respond to Jesus’ “call” to serve prisoners. She was also informed about the CJS.

V-19: I’m certainly being educated about the penal system, for better or worse. So, I’m more highly educated, and it has fulfilled . . . my need to be of service. Again, I don’t know how often Jesus mentions prisoners, but certainly he does directly include them among those whom we should be serving. So, there’s the satisfaction and gratification of feeling that I’ve responded to that call.

There were 11 responses provided by re-entry work employees for the “Spiritual or Religious Rewards” category. Re-entry work employee E-4 talked about their being a “spiritual side” to the work that keeps him “spiritually grounded.” He also discussed how he received spiritual “rewards” from “working with those guys.” Additionally, E-4 claimed re-entry work made him a “better person” (“Personal Growth”) and that he enjoys seeing “Client Success” (“Re-entry Work”) and “Client Gratitude” (“Re-entry Work”).

E-4: I understand the inmate population. I understand the criminal side of life. I don’t applaud it anymore, where before I would have, saying it’s okay. I don’t condone it. So, it has made me a better person from working with them. I’ve learned from them. . . . There is a spiritual side to it that just can’t be replaced. . . . I have worked with guys I thought were going to make it and I might pass them in life and they are doing wonderful. They approach me, and it’s not an ego thing. . . . They said, “Man, thank you for what you said or what you did.” So, it . . . helps keep me spiritually grounded. . . . I’m a member of the AA program as well as the Narcotics Anonymous program. . . . I am a servant of God and this is the way that I give back. . . . So, spiritually it helps me because of the art of giving. . . . I could be doing a number of things. I even had a client I treated, he wrote me, and said, “You know, since I came through your program man, I got this and I got that,” and I was kinda like, “Maybe I’m in the wrong profession.” . . . But then at the same time, it’s not all about the material things you know. It’s just seeing someone going from being hopeless to having a lot of hope. So, I get greatly rewarded. I just can’t explain it to you in detail the rewards that I get spiritually. Working with those guys, if I can help
someone in becoming a father or someone that’s serving God, then I’m okay with that.

Table 5.3 Frequency of Re-Entry Partner Responses per Benefits Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Re-entry Work Benefits</th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
<th>Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Re-entry Work</td>
<td>32 (35.16%)</td>
<td>19 (22.89%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Connections</td>
<td>14 (15.38%)</td>
<td>10 (12.05%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Growth</td>
<td>35 (38.46%)</td>
<td>31 (37.35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangible Rewards</td>
<td>4 (4.4%)</td>
<td>12 (14.46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual or Religious Rewards</td>
<td>6 (6.59%)</td>
<td>11 (13.25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Re-entry work volunteers in the study supplied a total of 91 responses with regards to the number of benefits they reported. “Feels Good to Help and/or Enriches My Life” was the most frequent response and was mentioned 10 times. The second highest response was “Understand the CJS, Crime in NC and Criminal Mind,” which had 7 responses. The “Personal Growth” category contained the most responses (35) and “Re-entry Work” contained the second highest number of responses (32). Table 5.1 offers the majority of the responses given by the re-entry work volunteers for each different category.

A total of 83 benefits were offered by re-entry work employees. “Feels Good, Enjoys Job and/or Enriches Life” was the most frequent response and was mentioned 10 times. The response “Client Success” was given 8 times and was the second highest one given. Similar to re-entry work volunteers, the “Personal Growth” category contained the most responses (31) and the “Re-entry Work” category contained the second highest number of responses.
Table 5.2 has the majority of re-entry work employee responses given for each different category.

Overall, in this study, as demonstrated in Table 5.3, re-entry work volunteers reported more benefits (92) than re-entry work employees did (83). Two main similarities existed between both sub-groups of Re-Entry Partners. First, the main responses for each group of Re-Entry Partners, although they referred specifically to either volunteering or employment, were comparable in that both groups referred to how their re-entry work made them “feel good” and “enriched their lives.” Second, the top two categories of responses (Personal Growth and Re-entry Work) were the same for both groups. Further, the main three responses for the “Personal Growth” category – re-entry work feels good and enriches their lives, they become “a better person,” and it increases their “gratitude” for their own lives – for both groups were identical. However, for the re-entry work volunteers, the number of responses (32) was substantially higher than the number of responses given by the re-entry work employees (19) for the “Re-entry Work” category.

There were also significant differences reported between the two groups. For one thing, re-entry work employees provided more responses (12) for Tangible Rewards than the number of responses re-entry work volunteers provided (5). The most relevant finding, however, is that the re-entry work employees reported more benefits (11) than the faith-based re-entry work volunteers (6) for the “Spiritual or Religious Rewards” category. Thus, volunteers in the study mentioned religious motivations more often than employees, while employees mentioned more religious-based benefits than volunteers.

**Re-Entry Partner Costs**
This study also collected data on what Re-Entry Partners in the study reported about the costs they experienced while assisting male inmates and ex-offenders. Specifically, I asked re-entry work employees, “What, if anything, has working with incarcerated men or male ex-offenders cost you?” and “Do you feel like this work has cost you anything else?” The total number of costs for re-entry work employees was 56. Similarly, I asked re-entry work volunteers a set of corresponding questions: “What, if anything, has helping incarcerated men or male ex-offenders cost you?” and “Do you feel like volunteering with these men has cost you anything else?” The total number of costs reported by re-entry work volunteers was 71. As can be seen in Table 5.4 and Table 5.5, 5 different categories of costs were commonly reported by both subgroups of Re-Entry Partners: Tangible Costs, Emotional & Physical Health, Harmed by Inmate or Ex-Offender, Family Matters and Their Kind Not Welcome Here. The “Comes With the Job” category characterized a set of responses that were only given by re-entry work employees. On the other hand, the “Choices Beyond the Call of Duty” category only applied to re-entry work volunteers. A few Re-Entry Partners also said they had not experienced any costs at all.

“Nothing,” was the cost of re-entry work reported by a couple of Re-Entry Partners. For example, when asked about the costs of being employed to work with male ex-offenders, E-4 talked more about the benefits he received as his re-entry work activities kept him from returning to jail and taught him more about humanity. He could not think of any costs at all.

E-4: Years of freedom. (Laughs) No, not negatively, positively. . . . I mean I haven’t been back to jail. I mean it’s just so rewarding. Financially, it hasn’t cost me a dime. I don’t know if I answered that correctly.

I: No, I’m just listening because it sounds like that’s a benefit.

E-4: Yeah, that’s what I’m saying! It’s not a negative, it’s all positive, it’s all positive. Man, I’ve learned so much, about humanity.
I: So, you said it hasn’t cost you a dime, what about other kinds of cost, outside of financial?

E-4: Well, nothing negative. No, it hasn’t cost me anything. I just can’t think of anything negative. All of my benefits for working with inmates have been so rewarding.

With follow-up questions and probing, however, the majority of them mentioned other costs. Even then, most of them said the costs were worth it compared to the benefits they received and the changes they witnessed in the lives of the men they served. Re-entry work volunteer V-18, for example, is aware of costs he incurs but privileges the peace of mind people receive because his volunteering prevents most of the men he assists from committing more crimes.

V-18: Nothing. And when I say nothing – the gas, the time, the travel – it’s nothing. Compared to the peace of mind that little Suzy got while she is playing on the playground and that molester ain’t trying to get her. The peace that Mr. Wayne got when he got in his car, and nobody hit him in the head and tried to jack him for his Mercedes Benz. The peace that little Yolanda got that even though mommy ain’t got home from work today, she can go in the house and there ain’t no burglar in there. . . . Every time you turn the TV on, somebody’s been carjacked, someone’s house been broken into, somebody’s been raped. Well, the lives that I have touched, the individuals that I know that do those things were not the individuals that did it to them. . . . So, the costs, nothing compares them to the peace of mind.

Overall, the Re-Entry Partners in the study reported quite an array of costs they experienced.

The Tangible Costs category contained responses by Re-Entry Partners that pointed towards extrinsic costs or concrete, material objects associated with re-entry work. Three of the four most commonly reported costs given by re-entry work volunteers in the study were Time (16 responses), Money (13 responses), and Gas (5 responses). All of these responses
were in the Tangible Costs category. For re-entry work employees in the study, “Time” was also the most commonly reported cost, receiving 10 responses; “Money” was given 3 times.

With 36 responses the Tangible Costs was the largest category for re-entry work volunteers. An example of a response where re-entry work volunteers referred to Time was V-5, who talked about the time it takes to develop relationships with male inmates.

V-5: I think you know the only thing I can think of is that . . . relationships take time right. So, I think . . . free time is the only thing I may have lost . . . just because . . . you are not in too much control over how much time that takes. Or, you kind of have to do it based on the time that they or the system designates that they have. So, I would say time is the only thing that sort of got lost.

Time and Money were both costs identified by V-7. As a member of Alcoholics Anonymous and as a former felon, he paid these costs as part of his way to give back to society. Also, he talked about his past experiences as an inmate being helped by re-entry work volunteers and how he used to help Community Volunteers pay for meals and other items when they took him out of prison on passes. Further, V-7 told me that he had talked to his pastor about establishing a church fund to help volunteers pay for expenses they incur when they help with re-entry efforts. Finally, he ended his response to this question by informing me that he planned to move closer to the prison so he could have more time to assist male inmates.

V-7: Small costs associated with getting them some food and different stuff like that, which is basically inconsequential, but I am basically just paying back what was given to me when I was in prison on passes. When I was in prison on passes though, we were allowed to have up to forty dollars cash on us. They changed that. Now it’s a card. So, in the past when I was able to go out on community volunteer passes, I would try to buy the volunteer something to eat or whatever. . . . Because their time in helping me to get out in the community and interact and be out of prison period, not
just looking at the benefits of practicing a new way of life, but . . . just the thrill of
being out of prison was benefit enough, and was enough effort . . . from the volunteer,
that whenever I was able to, I would try to relieve some of the financial burden on
them. Because many of the men, or some of them, are wealthy; but many of them are
not. Many of them live humbly. . . . But unfortunately guys can’t have any cash. So,
at one point I had proposed to the pastor at the church I go to . . . that there be a fund
set up to help community volunteers fund outings with prisoners; as far as being able
to pay for movie tickets and meals and things like that because often the men who
have the time don't have the money. And often the ones with the money don't have
the time. So, then the church can be like an intermediary between the two

I: What was the response?

V-7: I think it was positive at the time, but I have not pushed it since. But, as a
member of AA, I kind of let it go, because it’s part of me giving back to society. . . .
Part of Alcoholics Anonymous is repaying our old debts. I committed financial
crimes against people I can’t find and don't know who they were. They were
anonymously committed crimes. So, I kind of consider the money I spend, which is
not nearly as much as I stole, to be part of paying that back. So, I kind of . . . let that
go. But there are men . . . who just can’t financially do it . . . and that would be good
for them and the pastor, and I know of other churches I think that have done that in
the past.

I: So, outside of financial costs, are there any other costs?

V-7: Mm, the time involved. Often it’s very time consuming. . . . Often what I would
want to do was take guys out to meetings, AA meetings, and it would be after work
so I would go from work to the prison to pick the guys up and then we generally
would go to . . . a meeting and then drive back . . . after that. So, it’s an added hour.
. . . I been thinking about moving, when I find my own place, closer to the prison, so
it will be easier to pick guys up and take them out, without having the obstacle of
saying, ‘Well am I not going to have time,’ because if I am living close to the prison
then that won’t be an issue.

Re-entry work employees had 15 responses in the Tangible Costs category, making it
the largest category for them as well. E-7, for instance, said the re-entry work cost was time.

E-7: Oh cost me? . . . Nothing but a little time. Just a little time that’s all . . . and
then that doesn’t bother me. . . . I just have to keep my schedule right. I need to be on
time because I stress being on time. I stress being on time.
As another example in this category, E-8 discussed time-related and financial costs as a sacrifice.

E-8: Well, it can cost you financially sometimes. If somebody’s hungry, you ain’t gonna let them stay hungry. They don’t have anything to wear, you gonna make sure they got something to wear. . . . The whole thing is a cost because you’re volunteering; the gas, the time, everything. It’s a sacrifice. It’d be a lot easier to be at home with kids tonight. It’s difficult enough for most people to get up and get their family ready and go to church, but now you gotta get up a little earlier and swing by a prison camp, and pick somebody up to take to church with you. Convince your wife that this is what we should be doing. It’s a cost. It’s not an easy thing to do and I have the utmost respect for the people that’s been doing this for twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years.

Emotional & Physical Health included all cost-related replies from Re-Entry Partners where they cited their emotional or physical health had been impacted by their involvement in re-entry work. “Emotional Investments or Hurts” with 5 mentions was the fourth response provided the most by re-entry work volunteers. Although this category contained the widest variety of responses for re-entry work volunteers with 9 different types of responses, other than the “Emotional Investments or Hurts” response, there were no other responses that were mentioned more than twice that fit into this category. Similarly, the “Tangible Costs” category also had the widest variety of responses for re-entry work employees with 8 different types of responses and consisted of no other responses that were supplied more than twice.

This category, with 15 responses, was the second largest category for re-entry work volunteers. V-11, for example, talked about the “emotional connections” he made with the men he helped and about the “anxiety” and “remorse” he felt when “something detrimental” happened in their lives. Also, he discussed that volunteering often required the Tangible
Costs of time and money being spent. However, he expressed that the benefit of spiritual enlightenment that came from helping people was worth it.

V-11: Financial cost in sponsoring them in that when you take someone to the movies . . . it’s another twenty to thirty dollars. So, there you are spending money. And it may not be a lot, but if you’re doing it weekly or twice weekly, it can cost you some money. Time, there’s definitely a commitment to time. If you’re going to really help someone in a sponsorship; if they ask you and you both commit to being a sponsor, then there’s time involved: time that might have been spent watching tv, reading a book, working at home, raking the leaves in the yard. You’ve made a commitment to time, and you can’t put a financial basis on time, but time is an element in one’s life. Emotionally, when you invest yourself and your time and your money . . . you create an emotional connection as a friend, as a brother, or even as just someone you’re trying to help. You may not have that deep emotional connection but if something detrimental happens in their life you feel that pain; just a little bit of anxiety or remorse. So, I guess you feel it emotionally, financially, time. But in light of all that, I think that the spiritual component is always reinforced by the good times, by the things that transpire that are positive and optimistic. . . . The spiritual enlightenment or the feeling that one has to your spiritual, emotional self; you just know that you are doing something to help someone and you feel good about it.

It was the third largest category for re-entry work employees with 13 responses. E-20 felt tired and stressed a lot because her employment involved dealing with male ex-offenders. She took her job very personally at first and felt upset when they failed to help themselves.

E-20: I feel mentally challenged. I am stressed out a lot. . . . I am tired all the time, very tired. . . . Sometimes we don’t have success. It makes me upset when we don’t have a success; but I know I’ve done all that I can do and sometimes people don’t want to be helped, and I have to realize that. I think that I am kind of getting around to knowing that people have to be able to help themselves. So, I am doing a lot better. But at the beginning, it was just like you want to strangle the person.

The “Family Matters” category consisted of responses that detailed the costs of re-entry work that families of Re-Entry Partners experienced. Often, families suffered because Re-Entry Partners became less available the more time they spent assisting men with re-entry
efforts. “Relationship with Children Impacted” with 5 responses and “Relationship with Wife Strained” with 4 responses were the most common ones (Table 5) offered by re-entry.

**Table 5.4 Re-entry Work Volunteer Costs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TANGIBLE COSTS</th>
<th>EMOTIONAL &amp; PHYSICAL HEALTH</th>
<th>FAMILY MATTERS</th>
<th>HARMED BY INMATE or EX-OFFENDER</th>
<th>THEIR KIND ARE NOT WELCOME HERE</th>
<th>CHOICES BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time (16)</td>
<td>Emotional Hurts (5)</td>
<td>Lost Family</td>
<td>Beaten up by Ex-Offenders</td>
<td>Discouraged by Correctional Staff (2)</td>
<td>Affects Academic Progress (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money (13)</td>
<td>Feel Anxiety, Pain, Remorse or Disheartened When Setbacks Happen to Ex-Offenders (2)</td>
<td>Relationship with Wife Suffers</td>
<td>Burned By Ex-Offenders – Lying, Stealing, and Betrayal</td>
<td>Disappointed and Frustrated at Not Being Able to Find Employers to Hire Inmates or Ex-Offenders</td>
<td>Postponed Buying Dream House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas (5)</td>
<td>My Ego and Sense of Self (2)</td>
<td>Skepticism and Critiques from Family</td>
<td>Changed Mentality – Not Everyone Helped Will Be a Friend</td>
<td>Evicted from Re-Entry House Due to “No Ex-Offenders” Rule</td>
<td>Spent Less Time on Assignments and Writing Papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mileage (2)</td>
<td>Feel Guilty &amp; Can't Sleep If Refuses to Help Others</td>
<td>Impacts Time with Family</td>
<td>Disappointed b/c Students Opportunities Refuse to Learn</td>
<td>Prejudice v. Volunteer b/c Ex-Offender Associates</td>
<td>Spent Savings on Re-Entry House for Ex-Offenders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lose Sleep</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
work employees. Each response by re-entry work volunteers in this category (Table 5.4) was only given once.

Re-entry work volunteers gave 4 responses that fit this category. V-4 said it affected his relationship with his wife, “In one sense it cost me a relationship with my wife . . . in the sense of we like to do things together. This is one thing that we can’t do together because she’s scared stiff.” “Skepticism and Critiques from Family” was the response supplied by V-19. She said,

It’s cost me maybe some skepticism, on the part of family. . . . I just hope that I’m educating them. That would be my greater hope. But there are far more benefits than costs . . . and the ones there are, I don’t even consider.

There were 14 responses provided by re-entry work employees for the “Family Matters” category. E-11, for instance, lamented that his first career, which involved management of parole and probation officers, and current job, where he operates a transition house for male offenders, cost him “valuable time with his family” over the years.

E-11: I guess my involvement in this type of work has cost me some valuable time with my family sometimes. . . . with my kids, you know, they were in a program or playing basketball, or . . . whatever sport they were involved in, then time with your wife . . . it’s cost me some time there, you know because of my involvement at times. But . . . everything’s a lot better now . . . since I retired. . . . In that management position for ten years . . . gone from sun-up to sun-down. No eight-hour work day. And this job started out that way when I had to rebuild the job in general; personnel. But I guess throughout the time that I’ve been involved in this type of work, it can take time away from your family. That’s what it’s done for me. There’ll be some times, cost me some times that I could have spent with my family.
Table 5.5 Re-entry Work Employee Costs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TANGIBLE COSTS</th>
<th>EMOTIONAL &amp; PHYSICAL HEALTH</th>
<th>FAMILY MATTERS</th>
<th>HARMED BY INMATE or EX-OFFENDER</th>
<th>THEIR KIND ARE NOT WELCOME HERE</th>
<th>COMES WITH THE JOB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time (10)</td>
<td>Energy (2)</td>
<td>Relations with Children Impacted (5)</td>
<td>Disappointment, Pain, Heartache Due to Client Failure, Relapse, or Re-offense (5)</td>
<td>Comments from Professionals That Criminals Are Bad and Deserve to Be Locked Up</td>
<td>Less Financial Gain – More Money Outside Prisons (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money (3)</td>
<td>Mental Health Strain (2)</td>
<td>Strained Relations w/ Wife (4)</td>
<td>Lack of Support from Clients</td>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t Know What Other Career Would Have Been Like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stressful (2)</td>
<td>Sacrificed Relations w/ Family (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No Perks of Academic Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tired/Wore Me Down (2)</td>
<td>Less Time w/ Family (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Initially Did Not Like Job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional Hurts (2)</td>
<td>Family Does Not Behave As Workers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No Long-Term Relations with Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lost Perspective</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Slow Career Advance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another example of a response in this category came from E-19 who discussed the costs to her family. Her employment in re-entry work required too many hours of her time at the expense of her family time. She was adamant about the fact that non-profit ministry work should not require sacrifices of health, family, or a relationship with Christ. As she talked about the work she did to arrange visits between male inmates and their children during Christmas, she also expressed that the costs she paid were nothing compared to the sacrifices children faced when they had a parent who was incarcerated.

E-19: Ain’t no cost. . . . When you’re working with the family and you’re making those calls and you know that that inmate wants that child to get a present at Christmas. And you’re making calls and you’re trying your best to get people to understand that it’s not just about presents, but that’s just the open door of this inmate to show his love to his child, and that this might be the first open door. So that when they read that note that this inmate has written to his child. When they read that note on the present, that’s where you see the tears fall. And you say wait a minute has it cost me anything? No. Not compared to the sacrifice of . . . that child is without a parent. Sure, because that parent made a stupid mistake, a stupid choice . . . and he ended up incarcerated. I make stupid choices. . . . If I were to be caught in the wrong situation . . . I could be incarcerated just like they are, and it may not even be my fault. Maybe I didn’t even do the crime, just being in the wrong place at the wrong time with the wrong people.

I: I’m going to push you a little hard. . . . As much as the cost, whatever it is, is offset by these great things, what does it cost?

E-19: I, we talking about monetary, or are you talking about cost as a sacrifice? Sometimes it cost me being away from my family. So, yeah it does. I have to re-evaluate my boundaries because I don’t believe that Christ calls us to a ministry and at the same time at the cost of our family. So, I’m having to re-evaluate this year. The last year at Christmas I was working sixty, seventy hours a week to try to make
sure every child’s covered. It was crazy... It’s not fair to my family. So, yes, it has costs. There has to be a way, and I am probably speaking for people in non-profit ministries all across the nation, that we have to be smarter about the way we really do what God’s called us to do, because it shouldn’t cost our health. It shouldn’t cost our family. And it shouldn’t cost our relationship with Christ number one.

The “Harmed by Inmate or Ex-Offender” category had responses that discussed physical or emotional hurts directly caused by male inmates or ex-offenders. Re-entry work volunteers gave 4 distinct responses for this category and re-entry work employees gave 6 responses. For example, V-14 described abuses she and her husband experienced as they worked with men in their transition home that led them to the painful realization that they could not be friends with every male ex-offender who became a resident.

For the first, I’ll say six or seven guys, we really felt like we needed to be friends with them... It hasn’t been until recently that we realized that we can help people, but we may not be their friend. It took us a while... and that’s because... it started hurting emotionally because these were friends that were turning their back or lying against us, or stealing from us. So, once we changed our mentality... that everybody that comes out may not be our friend, we may work with them, we may have a relationship, but they may not be our friend, it’s made it easier for us to deal with volunteering and working with them.

The main harms experienced by re-entry work employees with 5 responses given were disappointments or other emotional pains that occurred whenever the men being served relapsed on drugs or alcohol, failed to comply with specific program rules or probation requirements, or committed new crimes. For example, E-14 talked about his vulnerability as an employee who engaged emotionally with male inmates.

I think anytime you work with humans, you open yourself up to... vulnerability, you know, pain and heartache... You’ll get disappointed... It’s cost me some pain... as I hear about guys re-offending. But you... invest your time in. So, that’s I guess the... biggest cost.
Frustration with public displays of distrust or discrimination by mainstream society or community members against men who had served time in prison was voiced in the “Their Kind Are Not Welcome Here” category. There were only 6 distinct responses in this category for the re-entry work volunteers. For example, V-3, a disabled veteran, said some people talked to him in condescending ways and judged his character negatively because of the population that he serves as he experienced what he called “guilt by association.” He offered, “It dawns on me that [a college professor] diminished who I am by who I work with. . . . It dawned on me that the work that I do, I’m being judged by the population that I work with and I’m thinking that might be a good thing.” Only one response was provided by re-entry work employee E-15 that fit this category. E-15 was bothered by negative comments professionals she worked with made about men who had been incarcerated because she felt everyone deserved a “second chance.”

I don’t think it cost me anything unless I personally get involved, which I do a lot. . . . Some of the cases get to your heart and you want everybody to succeed. . . . And this scares me sometimes working with substance abusers as well as people who have been incarcerated . . . that they do not know how to react to success. They will sabotage it in a heartbeat. . . . And I see it happen all the time. . . . So, I don’t think that it costs me anything other than wishing things were different and being impatient that things aren’t different. And hearing some of the comments that I hear from professional people, thinking that people who are incarcerated are all bad, don’t deserve anything, deserve to be locked up. Because if you’ve paid for your crime then you’ve paid for your crime and we need to start over. I think everyone deserves a second chance.

Re-entry work volunteers offered 6 cost-related responses that showed they made “Choices Beyond the Call of Duty.” This category contained extreme actions taken by the volunteers as they voluntarily made sacrifices in their personal lives to assist men in transition. Answers in this category were Affects Progress on Academic Degree (2 responses), Postponed Buying a Dream House, Spent Less Time on Assignments and Writing
Papers, Spent Savings on Re-Entry House for Ex-Offenders, and Too Busy Volunteering to Look For Employment.

Seven distinct responses were placed in the Comes With the Job category, all of which came from re-entry work employees as they discussed costs of being employed in re-entry-related careers. For example, E-5 admitted that she was “not going to get rich working for the Department of Corrections.”

E-5: What has it cost me? . . . I don’t think it’s cost me any. The only thing that it has cost me is financial gain. You are not going to get rich working for the Department of Corrections. . . . I think that’s the only thing that I probably could say it will cost you. That’s why you have to love what you do and appreciate what you do. . . . I think that’s the only thing it cost me. If I wanted to do something else, I probably could make more money outside the prison system.

Also, in this category E-9 expressed that the main costs he experienced were that he did not have the perks of teaching at a regular college and that he was not able to make the same type of long-term relationships with his students who were inmates that he may have developed with traditional college students.

E-9: I don’t think it’s cost me. . . . I don’t think I’ve given up anything for it. Re-evaluating what you really want or what’s best for you, maybe that’s a question. It’s easy to want the big college, big university campus, the office, the traditional students where you can develop relationships outside as well. Teaching the inmate you won’t have all that. There are some limitations; where you can develop a relationship that will likely hold as long as the inmate is there and you are teaching within that complex. But once they’re gone, for the most part, they’re gone. Because it’s too traumatic and I think they desire that you not have connection with them on the outside for however many years. So the relationships are limited…I’ve probably given up the longevity of relationships. But, the quality of relationship that you have while they’re there, while you’re there it’s pretty good.
Table 5.6 Frequency of Re-Entry Partner Responses per Costs Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Re-entry Work Costs</th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
<th>Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tangible Costs</td>
<td>36 (50.7%)</td>
<td>15 (26.79%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional &amp; Physical Health</td>
<td>15 (21.13%)</td>
<td>13 (23.21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harms by Inmates/Ex-Offenders</td>
<td>4 (5.63%)</td>
<td>6 (10.71%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Matters</td>
<td>4 (5.63%)</td>
<td>14 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their Kind Not Welcome Here</td>
<td>6 (8.45%)</td>
<td>1 (1.79%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comes With the Job</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7 (12.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choices Beyond the Call of Duty</td>
<td>6 (8.45%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As part of my analysis, I compared the costs reported by re-entry work volunteers with those provided by re-entry work employees (Table 5.6). Two main similarities between the groups surfaced. “Tangible Costs” was the largest category for both subgroups; although there were more than twice as many responses for the volunteers (36) as there were for the employees (15). Also, Time was the most common cost reported by both subgroups.

Conversely, there were differences that emerged between the two groups. As already discussed, two separate categories, “Comes With the Job” and ‘Choices Beyond the Call of Duty,” emerged for each group based on their specific social locations as re-entry work volunteers and as re-entry work employees. Further, “Family Matters” and “Harmed by Inmate or Ex-Offender” were the smallest categories for the volunteers with 4 responses.
each, whereas the “Their Kind Not Welcome Here” category was the smallest category for the employees and only contained one response. Additionally, re-entry work employees had more responses for the “Family Matters” category (14 to 4) and re-entry work volunteers had more responses for the “Their Kind Not Welcome Here” category (6 to 1).

I made other significant findings as well. The “Emotional & Physical Health” category contained the widest variety of responses for both re-entry work volunteers and re-entry work employees. Each group also gave roughly the same amount of responses for this category; volunteers with 15 responses and employees with 13 responses. Both sets of Re-Entry Partners also reported almost the same number of direct Harms by Inmates or Ex-Offenders with 4 responses for the volunteers and 6 responses for the employees. Overall, there were less costs, 71 and 56, respectively, reported by re-entry work volunteers and re-entry work employees than the number of benefits that were reported by each group, 91 and 83, respectively. This finding suggested that Re-Entry Partners received more benefits than costs for participating in re-entry work. Benefits of assisting male inmates and ex-offenders to transition, as many respondents said, seemed to “outweigh the costs.”

Health and Well-Being

As part of the data I collected on the benefits and costs of re-entry work on Re-Entry Partners, I examined the relationship between their re-entry activities as volunteers and employees and their health and well-being. To gather this data I asked the Re-Entry Partners two corresponding questions: Do you think helping/working with male inmates or ex-offenders has impacted your health or well-being in any way? Has your health or well being ever influenced the decisions you made about helping/working with incarcerated men or
male ex offenders? The results (Table 5.7 and Table 5.8) obtained from their responses indicated that there were some interaction effects between the health and well-being and the re-entry efforts of this population.

Fifteen re-entry work volunteers reported that their volunteerism affected their Health and Well-Being and 5 said it did not. For example, V-3, a disabled Vietnam War veteran, discussed how his re-entry activities used to cause him stress. He talked about how his wife helped him change his lifestyle so he could be more effective with his work with male inmates and ex-offenders and take better care of his health.

I’ve probably been busier this year than in previous years. . . . I have gone from 330 pounds to 271. . . . I have abolished a lot of my stress because I am learning to accept things; like I can’t change nobody. So, I am going along with the flow more so than up against the tide. That has made me feel healthier. I am eating right. And I let my wife manage my schedule so a lot of that stress is gone. She has control of my time.

V-3 also offered that he was more stressed out in his earlier volunteer work.

Because I wanted to save the world and I always wanted to do what was right and I got frustrated when it didn’t work. Now I know it’s not important whether it works or not. It’s important that I plant the seeds. It’s left to God . . . to determine whether it grows or not. My job is to only plant the seed. . . . Under stress, you don’t eat right, you don’t sleep right. I eat good. I sleep good. . . . I’m going with the flow. I am doing something about my post traumatic stress. I am working on me. I love me.

Similarly, 15 re-entry work employees reported that their employment affected their Health and Well-Being while 4 said it did not and 1 declined to give an answer. As an example of a typical response, E-4, who had served time in prison, said his spiritual growth and relationship with his children were affected positively due to his re-entry work.

Spiritually it has made me a better person. . . . Just coming to work everyday and watching people change, it has to have an effect. Also, it helps me to want to work harder with my kids to instill certain values in them so they won’t have to go through what me or [men who have been incarcerated] went through.
Overall, the vast majority of Re-Entry Partners reported that their re-entry work had positive effects on their health and well-being. Positive responses from re-entry work volunteers included:

V-7: Yeah, it’s helped me to have a more positive outlook. . . . My well-being is enhanced by hands-on interaction with guys who are in prison and dealing with issues – not being able to make choices about what to wear, not being able to walk freely and being bossed around by angry prison guards all day, and I realize that I am in great shape.

V-17: Yeah, it’s increased my well-being. Anytime gratitude enters into my life, it increases my well-being, and . . . my awareness of how lucky I am to have the resources I have to take care of myself. It’s a great reminder of that.

V-19: It helps to give me a sense of self worth. So, emotionally, yes, it’s been very positive, the joy that you feel when a student gets it; that kind of wonderfully positive response. Physically, I don’t think it has in any way . . . no. . . . Emotionally and Spiritually, I would say it’s had an extremely positive impact.

Examples of positive responses from re-entry work employees included:

E-1: Mentally, Spiritually, yeah. I think it has affected me in a very positive way. Anytime you’re helping somebody for the greater good and not for your own benefit, it makes you feel better and that exudes on other people. It’s all positive.

E-7: Oh, it’s all been positive. . . . I am always an upbeat person, and when I walk in a classroom I am more upbeat because if you stay upbeat the students are going to be upbeat. . . . [My job] gives me positive power. . . . Being there, . . . I’m in control with a positive outcome and that makes me feel good because I have the power to change things to change individuals.

E-17: My job is rewarding . . . I know that I can at least say every day . . . I get the opportunity to do something for somebody and that’s rewarding. It keeps you healthy. And I laugh all day, every day. . . . I laugh all the time . . . and that’s positive. I don’t have high blood pressure. . . . My cholesterol isn’t high and I’m sedentary. I think my job is rewarding and I have a good time doing it. As a result, my body and my mental well-being, my health, is always upbeat.
Table 5.7 Impact of Volunteerism/Employment on Health and Well-Being

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volunteer/Paid Work → Health and Well-Being</th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
<th>Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declined to Answer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.8 Impact of Health and Well-Being on Volunteerism/Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health or Well-Being → Volunteer/Paid Work</th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
<th>Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examining the effects of health and well-being on volunteerism or employment that involved re-entry-based activities, 8 re-entry work volunteers and 12 re-entry work employees said there was an effect and the rest of the respondents said there was not. Examples from discourse given by re-entry work volunteers about this effect are provided below.

V-7 said that his health let him participate and gave examples of people he knew who had to stop volunteering due to their health deteriorating over time:

V-7: Well, fortunately I am fairly healthy right now and I am able to help any time my schedule permits, but I know other volunteers who have had to stop due to health problems.

I-You do know of some?

V-7: I know one man who has hearing aides and he couldn't go volunteer anymore because the room in which Yokefellows . . . is held is acoustically unsound; so there’s
lots of reverberation. He couldn't hear because it’s loud when you get a room full of people and everybody excitedly carrying on numerous conversations. So, this man had to quit. And there’s a another man who is elderly and used to be a prison volunteer but his health is such now that he is not able to go, and many more age out like that. But we have to continue to try to recruit more volunteers.

V-13 offered that observing other re-entry work volunteers taught him that maintaining boundaries and taking care of his health needs would protect him and others:

V-13: Yeah, because sometimes you have to say no. Because if your body . . . you mentally and physically respect, you can’t do anybody good; because if you’re just tired, you can wind up making the wrong decision. You can wind up getting yourself in a situation that you can get yourself hurt or somebody else hurt because you’re not thinking clearly.

I: Have you had to say no like that in your work in the past? So far?

V-13: Not yet

I: But you suspect that that might happen?

V-13: Yes, just by watching . . . and learning from some people before me that it’s a possibility. That it’s something they’ve had to do themselves and say no to sometimes, . . . and that’s why we have to work together.

V-19 was aware that her age might affect her re-entry work at some point but that it had not played a factor “yet.” She said, “Not to date. I may reach a point in the near future, being 70 years old when my physical well-being will be a factor in my continuing. But that hasn’t happened yet.”

5 re-entry work employees reported that their health and well-being had impacted their re-entry work. For example, E-2 talked about the need to protect one’s self from being harmed by inmates:

Yes, because if you are working with a population that has some potential for violence you need to be aware of that and take proper precautions, and that is part of your training and it becomes part of what you do every day, how you position yourself in a room and places you don’t go and so forth in a prison.
Also, E-14 said being well allowed him to physically perform his re-entry work for years:

    I’ve continued to do this over a period of years because . . . of my well-being. And I don’t think it’s been detrimental to my health.

Additionally, E-16 reported that re-entry work helped him maintain his emotional well-being:

    Well, my health and well-being, not health necessarily, but my well-being has. From an emotional standpoint this is something that I can’t ignore, that I have to do.

There was a significant difference between what Re-Entry Partners said about how their re-entry activities affected their health and well-being and what they reported on how their health and well-being affected their participation in re-entry work. 30 out of 40 of the Re-Entry Partners in the study reported that re-entry work activities affected their health and well-being. These health and well-being effects represent either a cost or a benefit that did not surface for most of them when they were directly questioned about how re-entry efforts cost or benefited them. Most of the interviews indicated that this was a positive effect and, consequently, an unreported benefit. Comparatively, there were fewer Re-Entry Partners (13) who said their health and well-being impacted their re-entry work assisting men with their transition process.

Concerning re-entry work volunteers, there might have been a self-selection effect affecting who was available to be interviewed for the study. Based on interview data, re-entry work volunteers whose health or well-being was affected negatively often cease their involvement in re-entry work activities. Apparently, volunteers often exercise the luxury of being able to “opt out” of re-entry work when it becomes too stressful for their families or takes too much of a toll on their own health. Li and Ferraro find that the physical health of
older volunteers sometimes “emerged as a more substantial barrier to successful volunteer engagement, often limiting helping relationships.” (Li and Ferraro, 2005, p.80) Re-entry Work Employees, on the other hand, have more limited choices given that their livelihoods are contingent upon remaining healthy enough to continue to work in their fields. Thus, the findings of this study suggest re-entry work benefits the health and well-being of most volunteers and employees and that health and well-being does not limit the amount of re-entry work performed by most volunteers and employees.
VI. RE-ENTRY WORK AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

Re-entry work in the geographic area of my study incorporates an array of diversity. One of the major social consequences of re-entry work is that demarcations of social stratification are traversed as people from different social backgrounds engage in re-entry work together to help inmates and ex-offenders transition back into society. The majority of inmates and ex-offenders in the particular area are low-income residents and predominantly black males. Re-Entry Partners, on the other hand, who help men with transition efforts in the area are predominantly white males and females and black men. Both social groups vary considerably along the social stratification boundaries of age, social class and background, and religion. Consequently, a lot of social integration takes place as social boundaries are crossed constantly and social networks form during re-entry work. Social networks are created as former and current residents of the criminal justice system socially interact with employees and volunteers who work with them to re-enter society successfully.

Race and Ethnicity Effects

One type of social stratification line that is often crossed during re-entry work activities occurs as different racial and ethnic groups socially integrate. To gather data about racial and ethnic social dynamics among Re-Entry Partners, I asked respondents, “Do you ever feel that your race or ethnicity affects how you are treated or perceived by incarcerated
men or male ex-offenders?” This question prompted Re-entry Partners to discuss how their race or ethnicity may have affected their social interactions with the men they helped. Since most of the respondents identified themselves as either white or black and were originally from the United States, the responses regarding ethnic differences were limited to only two of the respondents. Often responses also showed how Re-Entry Partners felt about the issue of race in general. Responses from re-entry work volunteers and re-entry work employees (Table 1) show respondents perceive that race and ethnicity dynamics occur as they engage in re-entry efforts.

Table 6.1 Social Stratification Dynamics – Race and Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race and Ethnicity Dynamics Occur?</th>
<th>Re-entry Work Volunteers</th>
<th>Re-entry Work Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analyzing Table 6.1, 29 of the respondents, or almost 3/4 of them, expressed that their race or ethnicity affected how men perceived or treated them as they helped them transition back into society. Eleven of the respondents, or a little more than 1/4 of them, said race or ethnicity did not play a role during their interactions. With regards to the 13 re-entry work volunteers who answered affirmatively, 9 were white and 4 were black. Of the 16 re-entry work employees who said yes, 7 were white and 9 were black. On the other hand, 7 re-entry work volunteers (6 blacks and 1 white) and 4 re-entry work employees (3 whites and 1 black) said it did not.
There was a wide range of responses given by Re-Entry Partners to this question as each one related his or her experiences and observations involving racial and ethnic dynamics. I have selected a few examples from the interview discourse to illustrate the richness of the discourse data obtained from the Re-Entry Partner interviews. These examples offer only a glimpse of the issues that surfaced as Re-Entry Partners talked about the racial and ethnic diversity they encountered during their re-entry work.

One of the Re-Entry Partners, V-2, said he saw no discernible effect in terms of how male inmates or male ex-offenders treated him because of his race. V-2 was a white male and happened to also be an ex-offender. He offered that in his experience while race was an issue among inmates in prison that he felt race did not seem to play much of a role in terms of how men viewed re-entry work volunteers. What mattered to him and his fellow inmates when he was incarcerated was whether or not re-entry work volunteers treated them like human beings.

V-2: I think they’re thinking, ‘Man, how is this man going to treat me?’ . . . For the most part that might be what is going through their head. ‘This guy’s white?’ I don’t know maybe. . . . When I was incarcerated, it was not so much about color as it was, ‘How are they treating me? If they are treating me like a human being, awesome.’ But it really was not a lot about race by people coming in. Race is a big thing in prison. There was a lot about prejudice and race. It’s stick with your own kind. It’s not like that everywhere. It’s a big thing in prison; but as far as people coming in and volunteers coming in? It was never a really big aspect and it never mattered if they were black, white, Hispanic, or Asian. I think for the most part [the thought was that] these [volunteers] are treating us like we are somebody and that is awesome and I never really felt judgment or weird feelings around that.
This “inside” view of how he and other inmates saw beyond race when it came to the volunteers who helped them seems to match his current treatment by the incarcerated men he now serves as a re-entry work volunteer. He feels race does not seem to be a major factor.

Other Re-Entry Partners saw that race played a much bigger role. In most of the Triangle area there appears to be an even dispersion of black and white Re-Entry Players; as evidenced by who shows up at Round Tables and other local public events focused on re-entry-related efforts. However, at one of the minimum-security prison camps in the area there is a paucity of black re-entry work volunteers. The lack of black volunteers seems to be largely due to the smaller proportion of blacks present in that part of the geographic region covered in this study. Unfortunately, it is noticeable and may affect to a degree how the inmates perceive and respond to black and white community volunteers at the prison. The observation V-7 provides below addresses the race dynamics at this particular prison camp.

V-7: There’s people who are racist on both sides . . . of the white-black thing. . . . Sometimes I will reach out to a black guy and get the cold shoulder and I will say, ‘He is just, seeing me as . . . another white guy or whatever,’ and it’s sad, that unfortunately there are not a lot of African Americans, it seems like, that volunteer. The racial ratio of volunteers is predominantly white it seems, . . . which is unfortunate because we need more of both sides helping both sides . . . to reduce the difference, the contrast.

Re-entry work employees also had varied responses about how their race and ethnicity affected how they were treated during their social interactions with male inmates or male ex-offenders. E-2, a white male who answered affirmatively to the race effects question, discussed how his involvement in re-entry work led him to encounter a lot more African Americans.
E-2: I would have to say it’s been more contact with a variety of races, much more with Afro American males than ever before. . . . I had to . . . overcome a lot of my upbringing. . . . I grew up in the 50’s and 60’s in the segregated South in the Jim Crow era with white and colored drinking fountains, ‘whites only’ on doors, and blacks served in restaurants out the back door or side window. . . . I was not brought up by [my parents] to . . . feel like I needed to go out and protest; but I was not brought up that it was right.

Addressing how race impacted the success of his re-entry work activities, E-8 said most of his clients identified with his status as an African American male and as an ex-offender.

E-8: Being that the majority of people I’m dealing with are black, . . . they can identify a little bit quicker with my story. And when I tell them what I got to tell them, even if I’m correcting them or whatever, they would have to be more apt to accept it. As opposed to being able to say, “Man you don’t know or you don’t understand,” I understand. I look just like they do and I got the same criminal record, if not worse than them. . . . So, I think probably it helps in this job.

Even a few re-entry work employees who expressed race or ethnicity did not factor into their re-entry-related interactions provided interesting data and perspectives on race. E-19’s prior ministry experiences and religious beliefs, for instance, helped her not to “look at color.”

E-19: I’ve had contact with all kinds of races all through the twenty years I’ve been in ministry. . . . I don’t look at color. Color is just something man made up not God. We’ll be surprised when we get to heaven and see what color we really are. . . . I love people. . . . I mean anytime I meet somebody – meaning you, meaning anybody, it just enriches my life. It’s just another neat day with God and whoever is in front of me. I can’t explain it. It sounds silly, but it’s true. . . . I’m one of these weird people that I just don’t even think about that. I don’t. I never thought about it. If I think about anything, it’s the sex – my female to their male; making sure that I am cautious on that end.
Gender Effects

I interviewed 13 women and 27 men for my study. I collected data on whether or not Re-Entry Partners would report if there were any gender effects that took place during their re-entry work that affected their social interactions with the men they served. I asked the following two questions to men and women in the study:

a. **For women:** Do you ever feel that being female affects how you are treated or perceived by incarcerated men or male ex-offenders? Why or why not?

b. **For men:** Do you ever feel that being male affects how you are treated or perceived by incarcerated men or male ex-offenders? Why or why not?

Their answers are documented in Table 6.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Effects</th>
<th>Re-entry Work Volunteers</th>
<th>Re-entry Work Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fourteen re-entry work volunteers said that their gender did impact how they were treated or perceived by the men they helped transition. For instance, V-14 discussed how she offered a woman’s perspective to male ex-offenders in the transition home she operated, which helped them understand the women in their lives better and to build better relationships with them.

V-14: One of the things I haven't said . . . is that I provide them with a woman’s perspective. . . . Most of them like a candid woman’s perspective. I can talk to them about relationships that they may have with their wife or girlfriend. I can talk to them about relationships with their mother. I can talk from a woman’s perspective about
things that other men, volunteers, can’t talk about. And . . . I’m not afraid to talk to
them about any issue; from relationships and sex to how to behave around women.

On the other hand, although volunteer V-19 mused about how the men perceived her, she
admitted that she had never actually been given evidence that her gender made a difference
in terms of how male inmates or ex-offenders treated her.

V-19: I haven’t really felt that. . . . I’m sure that there are guys who wonder what on
earth this elderly white woman . . . I expect my motivations are questioned, but I
don’t know that. That has not happened directly. I sort of see glances from time to
time, that kind of say that, but again, nothing has ever been said directly at all, or
intimated even, because I’m female and white.

Besides these examples, there was a lot of rich data collected from the re-entry work
volunteers in terms of their discourse on gender effects.

With regards to re-entry work employees, 14 of them felt that gender did make a
difference in terms of how they were perceived or treated by the men they assisted. E-10, for
every example, felt that being male had a positive impact on his relationships with the men.

I think it is a positive thing, certainly with the male population because they have to
have role-models. Mostly coming from the penitentiary, it’s mano-a-mano and . . .
they look up to you as men.

Additionally, re-entry work employee E-6 discussed how she was initially reluctant to work
with male inmates. She also found she received more respect because of her gender when
she worked as a correctional officer with male inmates.

Honestly, when I started out I didn’t want to work with males. I wanted to work with
females. . . . Being a woman, I didn’t want to work with men offenders. . . . I felt like
I would be more comfortable working with women. But . . . it’s been easy. I have
learned that working with the male population, as a correctional officer, I never had
anybody to really try to harm me. . . . You’d be surprised that guys are more apt to be
respectful to a female working in the facility. Even though you had some that would
do stuff behind your back. But as far as me coming in and working, they were
respectful. I didn’t have a whole lot of issues with the male population. . . . I guess it’s something that’s learned for them to respect the female and I didn’t have a whole lot of problems.

As a whole, the discourse included substantial data on the gender effects reported by Re-entry Partners, volunteers and employees.

**Age Effects**

I also gathered data (Table 6.3) about how much age may affect social interactions between Re-Entry Partners and male inmates or ex-offenders. I asked respondents, “Do you ever feel that your **age** affects how you are treated or perceived by incarcerated men or male ex-offenders?” There was an even distribution of responses for all categories with regards to how much age was perceived as affecting the perception or treatment of the Re-Entry Partners by men they served.

**Table 6.3 Social Stratification Dynamics – Age**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Effects</th>
<th>Re-entry Work Volunteers</th>
<th>Re-entry Work Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, half of the Re-Entry Partners in the study said they did not discern that age made a noticeable difference in terms of how they were perceived or treated. The other half of them, however, reported dynamics taking place due to age demographics.
For example, one re-entry work employee, E-1, who was 23-years-old, offered that he had encountered positive and negative consequences because he was perceived as too young to be in the esteemed career position he held assisting men with the re-entry process.

E-1: I’m young, I’m real young, and I don’t feel like it. I don’t feel like I present myself like it, especially in a professional atmosphere. But, yeah, it was definitely like I’m like the last person a lot of these guys want to see come in there. Technically, from an outside perspective, “Young, successful, white guy . . . putting me on a bracelet and monitoring me.” . . . They just got the feeling, like every single time, there’s absolutely nothing that can go right here. That, “He’s going to screw me in the end no matter what.”

I: Any signs or statements that indicate that age was a factor?

E-1: Yeah, everybody in there always asks me how old I am, and that is . . . professionals and offenders. . . . Everybody wanted to know, “How did you get this job being this young?” because it was kind of a prestigious position for being in my age group.

I: Thank you. Do you think that you were perceived negatively or positively?

E-1: Both. I mean I think it was depending upon the person. Some people view it like, “Wow, he’s doing something really good because he’s young and he’s got this spot,” and others would be like, “He doesn’t know what he’s doing because he’s young and he’s got this spot.”

Some Re-Entry Partners expressed that age allowed them to be more effective with assisting male inmates or ex-offenders. For instance, re-entry work employee E-10 said age helped men connect to him when he was younger because they viewed him as a role model and that it proved an advantage now, in his sixties, as they saw him as a father or grandfather figure.

E-10: I’m sixty. As you get older you get a little white hair. You’re . . . a sage. You could be their grandfather.

I: So you think that some people look at you as a . . .
E-10: Fatherly figure. Oh absolutely. Oh yeah. . . . They need that support. And most women, their mothers or their grandmothers are very powerful in their lives. And that’s another situation. . . . That’s what I am now. When I was in my forties or fifties, I was a role-model and I was a leader. . . . This strength as a forty-year-old man is looked on as more viable maybe, . . . and as you get older you might get more respect, because you know you’ve matured, . . . maybe you’re looking more matured.

Apparently, age can also sometimes have disadvantages when it comes to re-entry work, depending upon the age of the clients being served. V-3, a re-entry work volunteer, offered that being older than some of his “clients” can create conflicts if the men perceive him as a father figure and resent his authority.

V-3: When I have younger clients, they start off resenting . . . the authority and father image. They associate someone wanting to care about them as them wanting to be a father to them and most of them don’t have a relationship with a father.

For female Re-Entry Partners, as seen earlier in the Gender Effects section, there were some concerns about how their presence and re-entry work activities with these men could be misconstrued. The responses by women in the study showed that age can and often does play a factor as they build relationships with these men. Re-entry work volunteer V-9’s discourse on age, for example, demonstrated how social interactions with male inmates or ex-offenders can be affected by the intersection of race, gender, and age social demographics. V-9 noted differences between her re-entry work with men who were former and current residents of the criminal justice system as she talked about dealing with emotional entanglement issues she had with one of the male inmates she helped. She also discussed how her age in general allowed her to have a very positive “motherly” role with most of the men she worked.
V-9: I think a white woman with black older men that’s really . . . difficult for society. . . . But my attitude about that is . . . I am a mother and I am old enough. I think it would have been a lot harder if I was younger, but as an older woman I am safe. Although . . . visiting this guy in prison it has been really hard because all the guys in prison want to connect us. We are . . . close enough in age . . . and . . . he treats me in a very romantic manner, giving me gifts, and . . . he related to me like a sweetheart. . . . And I don’t think he could understand why I cared about him if it wasn’t romantic maybe. . . . And so I finally just said, “Listen, . . . I know you know we are friends. . . . I can’t see you, if this is going to be the kind of dynamic between us. And I am really not willing to give up this friendship because this society has all these ideas about us. I mean I don’t care what other people think. But I do care about what you are communicating to your friends. And so as long as we can be honest and authentic with each other, that this is a friendship, that I am happily married, that I have no interest whatsoever of being your girlfriend . . .” and it was embarrassing to say. . . . So anyway, that all got worked out.

I: Did he change?

V-9: Oh yeah. He said, “Yeah, I know exactly what you mean. . . . He didn’t go into it. But he said, “All right, I won’t do that anymore.” And he hasn’t . . . It’s like, “Are we going to ruin this because society wants to make it sexual?” . . . And he was like, “No, I don’t, because we really are friends.” So, I think with the guys . . . some of them are old enough that I don’t think that’s a problem. I have never had a problem with any of the [Faith Team] Partners out of prison. . . . I mean we are so busy trying to get jobs and pay rent and get . . . teeth fixed and shoes . . . that stuff just doesn’t come up. But in prison . . . everyone is looking at us . . . you get the idea.

I: You have talked about this, but if there is anything else you would like to add, do you ever feel like your age effects how you are treated or perceived?

V-9: Oh totally. . . . I am 52-years-old and I am really, really glad to be this old; because it’s like I am everybody’s mother. . . . If I feel like there is any misunderstanding that’s occurring or anything, it’s like, “I am your mother. Treat me like your mother.”

I: You put that out there?

V-9: Oh absolutely. . . . because I am like a mother. That’s kind of how I feel. I really do. I feel very maternal . . . in a loving way. I feel that way about the world . . . the environment and my neighbors.

On the other hand, re-entry work employee, E-18, responded that age did not cause any complications with her job duties as she worked with male inmates. She felt that her
age, attire, and demeanor allowed her to receive respect from most of them. Also, E-18 briefly alludes to knowing about improper romantic relationships that occur between some inmates and prison employees, offering this would never appeal to her because they “can’t afford me.”

E-18: I don't have a problem with these guys hitting on me and it probably is my age because I am 56. I don't do anything flashy. I wear everything up to my neck. I never wear a dress. I don't do anything to draw attention. I try to conduct myself in a respectful manner. Therefore, they respect you. . . . I know we have had a lot of employees at different prison units, the inmate-employee relationships . . . and it still happens, like the inmates get involved with the employees. Here is the way I look at it: nobody here can afford my cigarettes every day. They make seventy cents. . . . That's a joke I have had. They can’t afford me. I am high maintenance. . . . I would never get involved with an inmate because of my retirement. They don't got nothing I want.

Clearly, there were factors women in particular had to consider when doing re-entry work and their age, how young or old they were, seemed to help them gauge what boundaries were needed.

From the interview discourse age dynamics affected what type of social relations were developed between Re-Entry Partners and the men they helped transition back to society. Even a few of the Re-Entry Partners who saw no discernable age effect were prompted by this question to consider that there may be an age effect they had not previously noticed or thought about before. Re-entry work employee E-8, for example, said that he found that although most of the men he helped were older than him that they listened and came to him for advice. In terms of age dynamics, he expressed that he might have inspired them since he was a young black male and an ex-offender who had successfully reintegrated into society.
E-8: I know that most of the guys I deal with are older than me. I’m 37. But God orchestrates to where it don’t matter. They’ll . . . listen to me. . . . They’ll pay attention to what I’m saying and they’ll appreciate it. And a lot of them will even put it into action. Because . . . if I’m dealing with somebody, they come to me with an issue. I’m not trying to mentor to somebody or . . . counsel somebody. I’m not a clinician or nothing, but I’m in constant prayer. I’m asking God to give me the wisdom and the understanding. I don’t wanna tell somebody something wrong. And I’m real quick to say I don’t know but we can call somebody else and find out. . . . I think my age if anything would be another inspiration for people. Look at what God is doing for this . . . young black male. Convicted felon, used to be a crackhead; but look what he’s doing now. So I guess it would be another benefit.

Throughout the interview discourse age effects surfaced as Re-Entry Partners considered how their age affected their social relations with men who were attempting to re-enter society.

Social Class and/or Background Effects

Re-Entry Partners in the study stem from a variety of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. For example, they have a range of educational and occupational experiences. To collect data on how much of a factor the social class or background of Re-Entry Partners might be affecting their social interactions with men who had served time in prison, I asked Re-Entry Partners, “Do you ever feel that your social class or background affects how you are treated or perceived by incarcerated men or male ex-offenders?” Their responses are given in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4 Social Stratification Dynamics – Social Class and/or Background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Class or Background Effects</th>
<th>Re-entry Work Volunteers</th>
<th>Re-entry Work Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was an even number of re-entry work volunteers who said that social class either did or did not affect how the population perceived or treated them. Ten of them said it played a significant role. V-7, for instance, said it probably influenced how the men he helped viewed him because he had a stable family that supported him during his incarceration. He emphasized that he wanted the guys to know that they could be successful even without family support.

V-7: Yeah, I guess, my family was middle class and the majority of the guys it seems that are incarcerated were from needy families; you know, didn't have many financial means. . . . I hope not because I don't want people to think that, even if my family support was great and my family helped me with a car when I got out. . . . My family hasn't helped me that much. . . . I don't want guys to think you can only make it if you have a supportive middle class family . . . because, especially with the work release program, guys can save some money to give them a start when they get out. I haven't spent a lot of money. I saved money while I was in. I am continuing to save money. . . . I am looking at buying a house and . . . saving up a down payment towards that and other things. . . . I don't want guys to think it’s only because of family, because they can do it. Many times we look for reasons, especially as a prisoner, to say that, “Well, this is why that person made it and I can’t make it; because I don't have that.” Whether it’s, “I am not white,” or, “I don't have education,” or this or that, we have to be taught to develop our assets whatever they be and move forward with them. Look at ourselves instead of what we don't have, but what we do; taking a personal inventory, if you will.

Meanwhile, 10 re-entry work volunteers reported they felt their socio-economic status did not impact their social interactions at all with these men.

Eleven out of 20 re-entry work employees felt their social class or background affected the way the population perceived or treated them. For example, E-1, a white male,
expressed that his status as an ex-offender and person in recovery did make a difference during his encounters.

E-1: If I had grown up, as they first perceived me, you know, rich, white, successful, privileged, etc., I don’t think it would have gone anywhere as good as it did. I think the fact that I did come from my background . . . made it ten times better because I was able to get on that same level. Because when I walked into a room with these guys, I wasn’t like, “I am above you.” I was like, “This is my job and I’ve got to do it; but you’re still a human being and let’s at least have a good time because this is going down.”

I: Did you ever let anybody really know what your background was?
E-1: . . . Yeah, there was a guy . . . this is another habitual DWUI felon and he was about thirty-two years old. He had just had a two-year-old daughter and a four-year-old son.

I: Black or White?
E-1: He was white and he had a landscaping company, and I used to do landscaping too. So we just started off talking about that, and . . . he had all these worries about if he was going to work, . . . and very obviously was avoiding any talks about his alcohol and his drinking. And my personal experience with it I tried to slip in as much as I could occasionally to kind of give him the sense that it was okay to talk about it. . . . “You’re not doing it now, so I’m not going to prosecute you on anything you did in the past.” . . . That was a relationship that had to be developed at first, but by the end of it, . . . I decided that he didn’t know about Alcoholics Anonymous, and I decided to tell him that I’m ex-offender, and had alcohol and drug issues and that it saved my life. . . . I saw him at meeting afterwards, which is a big benefit. But I chose to do that because he was at a point that I felt like I could connect; with his young daughter, . . . and his wife, and trying to get things to work out. It’s just not because he is screwing up every chance he can get . . . it’s his drinking. If he could just get that under control, he would be okay.

On the other hand, 8 re-entry work employees felt their social class or background did not influence their social interactions with the men they assisted with the re-entry process. E-3, a prison administrator, for instance, laughed when I asked the question. During his response, he revealed an aspect of how he felt some people in mainstream society viewed his work.
E-3: What social class and background? I work with the prison department which nobody really respects much, except for the local volunteers that I personally earn that respect. . . . I live in a quiet, little residential part of the neighborhood and I don’t put on no airs and I drive a ten or twelve-year-old car. So, I don’t think people expected much.

Finally, one re-entry work employee expressed he did not know if they impacted his social engagements with male inmates or ex-offenders or not.
VII. RE-ENTRY WORK AND SOCIAL NETWORKS OF RE-ENTRY PARTNERS

Re-Entry Partners view most of the men they work with as human beings who have committed crimes, served their time, and now need a Second Chance to re-establish themselves back into the mainstream community. Re-entry work regularly leads humans (Re-Entry Partners) to interact socially with other humans (formerly and currently incarcerated men). As a consequence, the social networks of Re-Entry Partners are often expanded to include these men. The effects of re-entry work on social networks can be seen through the discourse as re-entry work employees and volunteers discuss the relationships they have with the men they serve. Social network effects are captured largely in four themes that emerged during my analysis of the data: Disappointments, Redemption, Sacrifice and Family Involvement. These four themes in the discourse illustrate how social interactions with incarcerated men and male ex-offenders impact social networks of Re-Entry Partners. They also indicate how the employees and volunteers in my study view and treat the individuals they assist during their re-entry work activities.

Disappointments

One theme related to the social networks of Re-Entry Partners is Disappointment, or the emotional letdowns people encountered as they performed re-entry work. The discourse
indicates two main reasons for why this disappointment occurs: the failure of a return on their investments in these men and the fact that their close ties with these men often lead them to experience empathy as they witness the men confront the challenges of the re-entry process. A lot of time, energy, money and other resources are invested by Re-Entry Partners as they bond emotionally with men to help them transition. Consequently, part of the frustration they voiced in the discourse comes when these investments fail to lead to the successful re-entry of the men with whom they work. Their disappointment is even more pronounced when they feel the men fail to invest in themselves or to appreciate the opportunities they create for them. Most of them, like E-2, learn to focus their energies on those who are more willing to receiving assistance.

E-2: Not everyone is going to be receptive with what we have to offer. Hence don’t waste too much time on them but move on and work with the ones you can. . . . Well, there are those that, [for] whatever reason they are at the point in their life, they are not willing to receive the help and assistance provided.

Another aggravation Re-Entry Partners, employees and volunteers, express having stems from the fact that they develop personal connections with these men. They, too, experience the pains of rejection the men face as they attempt to reintegrate into society. These two factors emerged in the data as the most prevalent reasons for why Re-Entry Partners felt disappointed at times.

As Re-Entry Partners discussed the costs of their re-entry work, some incidents were reported that they said caused them disappointments. Additionally, two specific questions were asked during the interview process to elicit responses about the types of emotional setbacks Re-Entry Partners encountered. The first question was, “Please briefly describe any
low points from your experiences working with inmates or ex-offenders.” An example of a response received to this question came from re-entry work employee, E-5, who discussed that the lowest point of her work comes from the fact that many inmates she works with are illiterate. She expressed particular aggravation that one inmate even refused to learn to read and write.

E-5: I think my lowest point is inmates coming into the facility can’t read or write, or those that had quit school early and refuse to get their GED. I’ve had inmates tell me things like, I’m not feeling it. Or I don’t need it. I had one inmate who was forty-years-old and could not read or write. . . . I said, “Well, I want to put you in a class so you can learn to read and write.” He said, “I don’t need to learn how to read and write. My dad never knew how to read and write. So, I don’t need to learn how to read and write.” . . . So, those are the things we come in contact with. . . . I can give you all the resources in the world; but you do have a great percentage of inmates that don’t want to apply themselves. . . . That’s the lowest point of working in the system.

The other question I asked respondents was, “Have you experienced any struggles or setbacks while working with male inmates or male ex-offenders?” These questions generated many answers.

A primary cause for Re-Entry Partner disappointment is that they often see the men they help experience personal struggles and return back to prison. The discourse showed that one reason for their frustration was that Re-Entry Partners often saw men fail to take advantage of opportunities presented to them or to invest in their own personal growth. Re-entry work volunteer V-6, for instance, talked about how disheartened he was initially to see that some of the inmates he taught were indifferent about learning. He adjusted over time as he witnessed his better students experience success upon their release from prison.

V-6: It’s always disappointing when you see folks with potential and they don’t live up to it. Or, there’s folks who have the opportunity to make the most out of a situation and they tend to want to squander it. I guess you do it . . . with the gambit of
where you have seen folks . . . come out and have become productive. Then, you see folks . . . who are kind of destined to repeat the same . . . pattern of lifestyle. That can be a little bit disheartening. I think I experienced that when we did the class. There are folks in there who always thought they are a little bit smarter than you are. . . . You tell them look you know these rules, these regulations, are in place strictly to help you. . . . You say, “Hey, don’t waste this opportunity.” Then you see that they don’t really care, that they really are not trying to do anything but get as much out of it without having to put anything into it. That was disheartening. And I just thought it was a low point in the whole process. . . . You know at first when I did that it was the first time and it kind of took me off guard. But . . . I realize now it’s no different than anything else in life. You . . . see folks that will take an opportunity, they don’t think of it as an opportunity . . . they don’t take it seriously, you just let them go.

Re-entry work employee E-13 also discussed her aggravation at seeing men commit crimes and return to prison because they did not use their opportunities well or change their social networks.

E-13: I think it’s very disappointing when there are some people that you work with and they are very resistant. . . . They might be doing marginally what is expected of them. They are really still playing the game and they’re still out here hanging out with the wrong people. As soon as we are out of the picture, they go back to doing what they were doing. We know that . . . it’s just a matter of time before they cycle back through the system again. Then, there are some people who we have extended so many opportunities and . . . so much assistance. Then to see them back in . . . and being picked up with possession of a firearm by a felon or trafficking cocaine, . . . all you want to do is go there and smack them upside the head. And you say, “What the hell were you thinking? Didn’t you learn a single thing while you were here?” That’s very disappointing; because a lot of times those are people that you really have extended a lot of assistance to. What else were we supposed to do? Did we give them too much?

Another reason Re-Entry Partners feel disappointed concerned watching men go through the personal struggles of dealing with addictions or relapse and losing ground on some of the achievements they made. For example, re-entry work employee E-12 discussed his experience with viewing one of his “success stories” relapse. E-12 said that part of his disappointment came from feeling that the connection between him and the man was not strong enough for the man to have approached him about his problem. When the man went
to a treatment program, E-12 continued to assist him, interpreting his relapse as “human” and, presumably, understandable.

E-12: Well, I had one disappointment. I worked with one ex-offender and he got out here and he really worked hard and I helped him. . . . He found a job. He found a second part-time job and he was working and doing well. And . . . he started drinking. He got out of the homeless shelter. He had got his own place. And I don’t know if it was the freedoms or what. But he’s going through a program now; so I’m still working with him. It was just disappointing. I feel bad for him and for me because I was all excited. He was one of my big success stories.

I: So how did you deal with that?

E-12: I again felt bad, but I felt bad for him. . . . I think he was embarrassed a little bit that he was human and fell back into some old ways. But I try to encourage him and try to tell him you just have to deal with it and go on. So I think he is making progress.

I: So, although this was disappointing, you . . . didn’t want to stop working with him?

E-12: Oh no. No. I felt bad that I hadn’t heard from him; . . . feeling that, “Oh I wish . . . he had felt good enough, close enough to me, to say I got something going on. I got a problem.” But he didn’t.

With limited social structures or programs in place to make transitions easier and in a culture that rejects those with criminal records, the re-entry process often is difficult for these men coming out of prison. The experiences of rejection Re-Entry Partners witness the men go through affects them as well as they feel empathy for the men and disappointment at society’s response to them. For example, one re-entry work volunteer talked about feeling frustrated when his efforts to find work for inmates failed to produce results.

V-15: Disappointment at the frustration at not finding employers. . . . We thought the manager of [a local area restaurant chain], for example, was ready to hire a guy. Then he came back and said his regional manager had vetoed it. After we’d had taken him for two interviews. And that was frustrating. Not because of the failure of the inmate . . . or the prison.
Another re-entry work volunteer, V-14, related the anguish she felt when the men she helped were evicted from their transitional housing and a community, which accepted them and to which they contributed, due to their criminal records and a new blanket management policy.

V-14: When we first started, . . . we bought a mobile home and the guys lived there. It was in one of the nicer mobile home parks, swimming pool, everything, the guys were living great. But then someone started breaking into houses in the neighborhood and, of course, the home management department made all the ex-offenders that lived in the place leave. . . . He gave us a week to find the guys somewhere else to stay and we ended up having to later sell the mobile home. That was . . . devastating because the guys were doing well. The management said, “I know it’s not your guys. . . . Your guys have been great. They have been an asset around here.” They helped people out. They brought up the community. They actually helped. . . . Because they have carpentry skills, they were helping to fix up . . . other people’s places. . . . But the rule came that all ex-offenders had to leave. . . . Oh it was devastating because we didn’t have anywhere for them to go. So it took us awhile. . . . We had to try to find the guys a place to live for a couple months until we found them a place to stay. So, it was tragic . . . because even your best intentions can get foiled. Because it was nothing that they did; but because of . . . their past. And we couldn’t control it. . . . They were loved in the community. They had developed friends. The place had a pool. They met all the kids. . . . They had settled in.

The trials of re-entering into a society that does not largely welcome people with criminal records can be even more devastating when they are cut off from communities who do accept them. For V-14 this experience came at a cost of social relations to the men and the community and disturbed both her husband and her as re-entry work volunteers. The frustrations of V-15 and V-14 were simply a few of the disappointments Re-Entry Partners related they encountered.

Re-entry work comes with its share of disappointments. Recidivism rates are high due mainly to a combination of the actions of those released from prison and the fact that they are released into a social environment that does not have enough social support and other resources to help most of them transition successfully. Re-Entry Partners step forward
to assist these men. Associating with male inmates and ex-offenders, unfortunately, leads them to experience emotional hurts or disappointments as re-entry efforts often prove ineffective. Re-entry work employees commit emotionally to their work, often going beyond their work expectations to help their clients re-enter the mainstream population. For example, prison employee E-18 talked about how hurt she gets when she sees inmates commit infractions after long periods of watching them take actions to help their re-entry success.

E-18: It hurts me still when I work with an inmate for say two or three years, have ‘em on work release, seeing them change, and then they mess up. And [my co-worker] says, “You should not take it so personally.” But it does, it hurts me. I don’t let the inmate know it. But when you see someone climbing the ladder, being such a good person, not getting write-ups, on work release, saving money, helping their families, sending child support, and then see them do something stupid and mess up; yeah, it hurts me.

As part of their service, re-entry work volunteers often form social networks of support to help these men transition. When challenges arise to disrupt the successful re-entry of these men, Re-entry Volunteers say they experience disappointments. V-11, for example, talks about how the Faith Team he belongs to had to regroup after the man they supported was re-arrested.

V-11: We had a man that couldn’t make it right on the outside. . . . They were put back in jail. It just made us feel bad. It made me feel bad because they had poured themselves into this person and it failed. The church members had poured themselves into something and it failed. But it’s certainly a growing experience for our church as well. It’s been a spiritual journey of our church. . . . [Members were] part of faith teams and recognizing if a man makes a mistake we still love them.”
All of the Re-Entry Partners reported that they had experienced disappointments. Yet, they all also reported that they remain committed to performing re-entry work to help men transition. Some of the Re-Entry Partners openly stated that they simply acknowledged that the emotional hurts are a part of what comes with the territory of providing their services. Others said that over time they learned to detach more emotionally so they could help other men. Re-entry work employee E-10 expressed both of these sentiments as he discussed how devastated he used to feel when he first had to deal with clients leaving the program where he works.

E-10: You’ll be working really hard with somebody and then they’ll leave, and you think, they’re almost there. And that was when I was newer in the game, you know, that was just devastating, because I would go through my mind saying, ‘God if I talked to them more, or spent another hour with them,’ or this or that. So, you’re always thriving to want to help people more, but it used to devastate me a little bit, because I just . . . was giving everything I got to people. . . . I was so connected. . . . I couldn’t separate things at first. So there is always those ups and downs. . . . because what you were trying to do also was make a difference.

Re-Entry Partners learn through their experiences to accept disappointments as part of their efforts to “make a difference” in the lives of the men they invite into their social networks.

Redemption

Redemption referred to the small steps or successes the Re-Entry Partners saw the men they assist during re-entry work take as they transitioned or prepared to re-enter society. It also sometimes signified dynamics Re-Entry Partners witnessed as they perceived inmates and formerly incarcerated males in their social networks transformed or made changes in

The redemption script begins by establishing the goodness and conventionality of the narrator – a victim of society who gets involved with crime and drugs to achieve some sort of power over otherwise bleak circumstances. This deviance eventually becomes its own trap, however, as the narrator becomes ensnared in the vicious cycle of crime and imprisonment. Yet, with the help of some outside force, someone who “believed in” the ex-offender, the narrator is able to accomplish what he or she was “always meant to do.” Newly empowered, he or she now also seeks to “give something back” to society as a display of gratitude. (p.87)

Re-Entry Partners refer often to these redemption scripts, or stories of success, as they witness the men they help reform and build stable lives outside of prison. They often serve as the “outside force,” or people who “believe in” them and support them during their transformations.

Re-Entry Partners were prompted to tell stories about moments of redemption mainly in response to two questions: “Please briefly describe any highlights from your experiences working with inmates or ex-offenders” and “Have you experienced any successes while working with male inmates or male ex-offenders?” Re-entry work volunteer V-18 offered a highlight he experienced that also exemplified how many Re-Entry Partners felt about why it was important to support those individuals re-entering society who are willing to make changes in their lives.

V-18: Highlights are the individuals that actually get work. That actually gets the job and go on the job and we get a good report . . . and they continue to prosper and be better individuals. Because I believe that once again, if you made a mistake or if you didn’t make a mistake and you just dern did it and you decide you want to change your life, there ought to be someone to help you. That really wants you to change your life versus someone just saying, “Come on, change your life.” and they don’t
really want to help you. So, those are the highlights, every time one individual succeeds and don’t sell another rock of cocaine, or another piece of heroin, or molest another child, then my job is done.

Re-Entry Partners discussed redemption acts in cases where the men they worked with received concrete benefits for their re-entry-related efforts. The interview discourse also suggested that because of their personal and emotional ties to these men, Re-Entry Partners themselves also received benefits for supporting these men. Some of them spoke about how these acts of redemption encouraged their further participation in re-entry work. For example, re-entry work employee E-3 said that regular contact and visits from former inmates who are doing well in society inspired his commitment to re-entry work.

E-3: I have had on a regular basis, annually, inmates that return here and not for supervision but to come back to let me know and to let other staff members know that their lives have been turned around. That they’re succeeding, that they’re married, that they have families. As a matter of fact, I had a call from a guy who was serving a life sentence who I had assisted. . . . He was on a life sentence and there was . . . some difficulty in getting him released and we had actually worked out something through psychological services to give him additional pastoral counseling between him and his new wife with our chaplain. . . . This guy has been out now for . . . a year and a half. . . . His wife was supposed to come up here today . . . to just say hello to me, ‘cause he called, and was gonna bring her new child up here to see me . . . and let me know how well things were going. So, that’s the type of thing that helps keep me going because I continue to hear from guys that are doing well and not necessarily on an easy path.

Traditionally, the idea of redemption is a Christian-based reference. The term from a Christian perspective refers to someone being redeemed for their sins as they are reconciled with Christ. One re-entry work employee stated clearly that the prison ministry organization she worked for explicitly engaged in re-entry work to facilitate opportunities for this process of transformation to occur in the lives of prisoners and their families.
E-19: What we do with the prisoner is that we actually try to bring that prisoner to the transformation and reconciliation of his life to God, to his family, to the church and community through Jesus Christ. . . . We try to bring the churches together to equip them with prison ministry, whether it be in prison or aftercare to help equip them with that Biblical worldview thinking that they . . . can go out and seek the transformation and reconciliation of inmates and their families to Christ, to each other, to church, and to community; so that their lives can be transformed and will not go on the same road again.

The use of the term “redemption,” a term largely associated with Christian traditions, for this section demonstrates that Christian understandings were applied by many Re-Entry Partners to describe these stories of success. I adopted the use of the term because it seemed to get at the heart of how many Re-Entry Partners felt about the life-affirming actions of the men they served. I gained this insight after I heard how the term was applied directly by two Re-Entry Partners in the study to refer to the opportunities male inmates and ex-offenders were presented with for the types of transformations the re-entry process often required. For instance, E-2, who used the term in relation to its Christian connotation, used the term when talking about how, in his former role as a correctional officer, he was able to assist male inmates. When he could, he gave them opportunities to redeem themselves, especially when he saw them being harshly punished.

E-2: People would say prison, that is a terrible place, and I said, “Yes that’s why I work there.” What was needed was people with my attitude toward working with others. Regardless of their circumstances or how bad they have been, there was still redemption, to put it in a Christian term, . . . there was the opportunity for redemption to exist. . . . I have given them opportunities to redeem themselves. . . . [I saw] the hammer really fall on them for their misconduct and misdeeds while in prison. . . . The only thing they had done was take advantage of the system and our kindness. [They were being punished] for . . . not being willing to or not being able to recognize an opportunity to change.
This use of the term redemption by a re-entry work employee also demonstrated how religion played a role in their thought process about transition efforts. On the surface, most re-entry work employees, especially those that work for the Department of Corrections, were typically not this public about how religion affected their choices to do re-entry work.

The other use of the term redemption came from E-16 who discussed how he recognized his own redemption process when he was invited to teach inmates by the administration at the prison where he had served his own sentence. He asserted that having ex-offenders who transition successfully return to teach prisoners might be an effective practice to implement.

E-16: Well, to be able to go back, and . . . it’s a place you probably would not want to come back to if you think about the irony of once being locked up there, where you couldn’t leave. And now, to have the very administration that kind of oversaw you as a person, as an inmate, to now have them sign off on the sheet, . . . to say welcome back, come back and teach some of our guys. I think there’s a sense of redemption there . . . . You kind of get the feeling that . . . people are looking at inmates one way; . . . they don’t trust them. “They’re not going to ever be anything.” And to have that same administration now say, “Wow, we like the work you do so much, notwithstanding the fact you were here, we still want you to have some impact on our people who are here.” I think it’s not normal, it’s not normal. Although you . . . it ought to be routine, if you think about it; AA being the largest support group in the world and AA is that way simply because the people who teach the class took the class. So, you would think that it got to be automatic as a model . . . that we bring experienced people back who have gone through the system to actually be the teachers. That should be normal if you think about it.

These acts of redemption help Re-Entry Partners feel good about themselves and their participation in transition efforts. They witness the men they serve take steps to change their lives and be transformed as they experience achievements – obtaining their G.E.D.’s, getting married, finding jobs, etc. – that will help their re-entry processes be successful.
Sacrifice

Sacrifice involves the commitments made by re-entry work volunteers and re-entry work employees as they take certain risks or give up particular aspects of their ordinary lives as a result of their involvement in re-entry work. It takes time and energy to bond socially with incarcerated men and male ex-offenders and to assist them with their transition processes. For many of the respondents there is a price that is paid as these men are included into their lives or social networks. The idea of “sacrifice”, or personal suffering, came up in the interview discourse in general and often arose when I asked respondents about the “costs” of re-entry work. People discussed what they “gave up,” how they personally struggled, or how people in their social networks (e.g., family members) suffered as they served these men. “Sacrifice” as an actual term also directly emerged in the discourse as Re-entry Partners specifically used it to speak about social consequences they encountered due to their re-entry work experiences. This section focuses on some of the sacrifices respondents said they made.

The most prevalent “sacrifice” cited by Re-Entry Partners in the study was time spent away from family members, especially from their children. Time was the number one “cost” reported for both re-entry work volunteers and for re-entry work employees, mentioned 16 and 10 times by each group, respectively. Particularly, conflicts between time doing re-entry work and time spent with family were also documented by Re-Entry Partners as major costs of their transition efforts. During the interviews most employees and volunteers who talked about sacrifices they made did so in relation to time they took away from their families.
Two Re-Entry Partners in the study who are graduate students said that spending time with men in transition led them to make sacrifices that may affect the amount of time it may take them to complete their academic career goals and graduation dates. For instance, V-16 commented on how keenly aware he was that being in Yokefellows and teaching inmates during summer breaks presented a challenge to his academic requirements.

V-16: Has cost me? Time. But, it’s a sacrifice I don’t even think twice about. When I say time, it’s time in a very . . . like I-have-academic-work-to-do sense. So, I mean it’s hard because I do have academic work to do and when I say that, like my chairman of my department asked what I was doing. . . . And he said, “You know, I can see the kind of work you are doing and it’s great, but understand what that means.” And I remember kind of being a little flustered . . . after that. But, . . . if it takes me a little bit longer, I am okay with that. . . . If it means I might not look a 100% but I might look 98%, I am okay with that. . . . The time that I spend in Yokefellows and . . . that I spend teaching [inmates] . . . trying to meet with them . . . I’m like this stuff enriches my life. . . . The great irony is that I don’t think I could have written the papers that I’m talking about if I hadn’t had those experiences. . . . There are some real consequences you know in a particular way. . . . I didn’t put as much time into this particular class or particular paper. . . . But it’s a sacrifice that I don’t think twice about. . . . And in my opinion there is no reason why I can’t . . . take my exams on time. Do everything that needs to be done. So, again the big irony is the books that I am looking at for my exams are books I’m teaching this summer! . . . Some folks have mentioned to me that it might, depending on how long I want to keep doing this each summer,. . . depending on how involved I get, It might take me a little bit longer to do some dissertation writing. It might. . . . If it takes me a little longer I am okay with that – this type of sacrifice. I know I ain’t going to be here eight years. . . . No, I ain’t doing all that. I know myself. . . . But, . . . if it doesn’t all happen in the five, then okay. I’m okay. Really, I’m okay with that.

V-16 clearly saw benefits materialize from his sacrifices as he noted how re-entry work actually strengthened his insights when it came to producing quality academic papers and being a scholar.

Another Re-Entry Partner, V-14, talked about how her dream to purchase a home was put on hold – sacrificed on the economic altar – to help ex-offenders who needed transition housing:
V-14: I actually took the money that I had saved up to build my own house to buy a house for them to live in. And so it cost me my house years ago to be able to help somebody else. . . .

I: It cost you your house?

V-14: Yeah, because I took my savings in order to get their house started. So, we ended up having to stay where we lived longer, much longer, because we put off our dream in order to facilitate . . . helping someone else accomplish their dream of living, outside of prison, . . . a normal life.

I: How does that make you feel?

V-14: You know at the time, I didn’t think about it. . . . Other people go,” I can’t believe you did that. . . . I would have never given up . . . “. . . We had guys that were saying, “I don’t have anywhere to go.” So, we felt like we just had to do something. So, we did.

As seen in the discourse of V-16 and V-14 there were a few examples offered by Re-Entry Partners of sacrifices in the form of goals – academic career plans, buying a house – being thwarted due to re-entry work commitments.

However, in the interview discourse Re-Entry Partners mainly discussed their sacrifices of time with family. E-8, for instance, a Re-entry work Employee who also does volunteer re-entry work discussed how he had to take time off from his volunteer work to spend more time with his family. To be effective with assisting the men in their transition efforts, he said he had to first build a “foundation” at home with his wife and children. Demonstrating how Re-Entry Partners often see their re-entry work as doing their part to make society stronger, E-8 also claimed that the “sacrifice” of his family time and of learning how to balance his work and school commitments with his volunteering was worth it. To him each man he helps get stable represents an entire family being helped, which, in turn, represents society being helped.
E-8: Now, some of my volunteering work at prison, I had to back up off of a little bit, and focus on my marriage, because if home ain’t right, ain’t no need for me to come sit down with you and try to help you with your stuff. So, I understand . . . my priorities today are God first, my Lord and savior Jesus Christ, and then my wife, and then everything else. . . . Recently, I’ve been able to really get back into it. And I’m really, really enjoying it. . . . I have to be careful. . . . I got a wife and I got children at home. But it’s in my heart to wanna help. . . . And then, I was in school, I was working full time . . . during the daytime, and I was . . . at [a NC] University at night. And then still helping inmates. . . . and I was never at home. And that became an issue. . . . You gotta take care of the house first, and make sure wifey feels appreciated . . . and then the kids, and . . . that’s the foundation that you can go out into the rest of the world and try to change things. . . . I think . . . today it’s pretty balanced. . . . I spend plenty of time with the wife and the kids and plenty of time helping ex-offenders. But see that ex-offender thing, it’s like an appointment. You gotta be so and so place on so and so date at so and so time and you just gotta be there. So, sometimes that’s kind of a conflict, but you make the sacrifice. Because, I personally believe if I do something to help a man today, especially a man, then I’m helping whoever, whatever woman he’s gonna end up with, their children or if they’ve already got children. . . . If you can help that man get stabilized and rooted and grounded, then you’re helping out an entire family, which in turn helps out society.

With regards to his health and the relationship with his wife, respondent E-10 offered that the sacrifices he made to do re-entry work had some detrimental but necessary effects:

E-10: There’s a point where it really wore me down. . . . I lost my perspective and my mental health went down. . . . It really was a good thing actually, because it took me to a different level in my life. . . . So, the negative is that . . . in anything you have to sacrifice. That’s just how it goes. . . . You really have to sacrifice a lot, and I think one of the things I sacrificed at first was my family initially. It was just having a new baby, and I’m working sixteen hours, seven days a week, . . . a staff of one, maybe two, and running a program from scratch. . . . I think my wife was affected by it. It affected my relationship, and we’re still building on reuniting that relationship. . . . We’re together, but I think that the family suffers when a person is on a mission. . . . So, of course there was a toll, there has to be. But it is all worth it. . . . That’s part of it. . . . You go through certain things and you come out the other end and you’re still going and whatever your purpose was it was a noble purpose achieved. . . . Look at what you’ve done and look at how many people you might have [helped], and that
to me is what it’s about. And that’s why I did it, because somebody helped me one time, and helped changed my life. So I owe. You have to give back.

For both E-4 and E-10 being Ex-Offenders who were helped by others to transition came with an obligation to make sacrifices to help other men who had been incarcerated to change their lives.

Sacrifice also was mentioned as respondents, especially re-entry work employees, talked explicitly about the impact of re-entry work on their relationships with their children. For example, E-3 shares about his own family concerns as a single parent. He also suggests there may be a trend among corrections personal in terms of the suffering of their families due to job requirements diminishing an employee’s time and availability to be a parent.

E-3: . . . It’s not working with the men that has cost me. It’s the job. Because the job, and . . . having [worked for the Department of Corrections for years] . . . and I’m a single parent. I raised both my children. . . . I’ve raised my kids since they were like in the second, third grade. So, . . . it took my time away from my family at a time that really was important. Trying to do a job that had to been done . . . to make a good career and to support myself and my family. . . . It’s like anybody in a job they get committed to. . . . Other things suffer as a result of that. My daughter’s doin’ real well. She’s a schoolteacher. . . . My son’s having difficulties and . . . I accept some responsibility for not always being there perhaps when I should’ve been. But, . . . maybe families suffer. And I think you’ll find that anybody in law enforcement . . . and corrections, if they’re a dedicated professional, . . . there’s things that suffer in your personal life as a result of it.

For E-4, a re-entry work employee and ex-offender, making the sacrifice to give back to people was his way of safeguarding his sobriety and maintaining his role as a father:

E-4: My wife, she says that ‘You’re always giving . . . giving, giving, giving.’ It hasn’t cost me a relationship or anything. It’s just that it’s time . . . but it’s worth it. It’s worth it. A lot of energy and time and sacrifice. My kids . . . it may have cost me a relationship with my kids, but that’s the only way that I was able to keep what I had
by giving back. . . . I spent a lot of time serving, a lot of time going back into prisons, giving of myself because of my addiction. I was told that you can’t keep what you have unless you give it away. And by me going back into prisons and serving, a lot of times I could have been home helping my kids with homework, I was out helping an inmate. But that’s my just reward you know. And so I had to sacrifice, you know I had to sacrifice, and what they got was . . . they got a father that normally would be there with them but they understood that daddy has got to go because he’s got to stay drug free. . . . And my daughter now is in college. My son, who eventually turned to drugs, is, he has escaped prison anyway. And he is in a halfway house now, and my two youngest kids, they fully understand it all. They got the whole reward of me going out and helping others.

While there may be some clear rewards for some Re-Entry Partners who make sacrifices to do re-entry work activities, V-12’s admission during his interview suggests that re-entry work may also have dire consequences. V-12 discusses how “losing the balance” between spending time with his family and finding viable employment and his commitment to help men re-enter society led to what may be the “Most Extreme Sacrifice” – his family.

V-12: I lost my family. . . . I spent a lot of time . . . dealing with the inmates and prisoners. . . . I lost a balance. My son asked me many times to stay home, be with him. My wife asked me that, and I said ‘No I have to go serve.’ . . . And it came to a point that they had left. They packed and left. They said, ‘You’re not husband to me, your’re not father to me.’ And they left. And I don’t know where they are now. . . . So, . . . it is something in my mind, now, and I regret it a lot. If I was going to do it again, I will never do this again this way. . . . I would do it. I would not do it this way. Because . . . I had three, four religious gatherings a week. I had Thursdays teaching prison. Fridays taking ‘em out for six hours. So, I couldn’t make money. And my wife said, ‘Look.’ And she had to be in a job. And, . . . I continued doing this. And I got hurt. . . . physically, emotionally. Because I’m in divorce four years. . . . And I have really been hurt a lot. . . . Because . . . in anything that you do, if you don’t keep the balance . . . This is a very dark area of my life. . . . Because to lose the balance, the Holy God answers, ‘Not this, nor this.’ . . . Don’t cling it to your neck nor extend it too much. . . . I did that and my family, I had a wonderful family, my wife, my . . . son, I miss them a lot. Yeah. . . . So . . . now I have the complete opposite. Now I don’t have anybody. . . . I have two daughters there in Texas. And I have a son and my wife, . . . they moved to New York. . . . They don’t see me and I don’t see them.
I: I’m sorry. . . . And yet you still help these people?

V-12: Even now, if they call me, . . . I go help them sometime. . . . I mean you have to. . . . We just have to. We have to. Really, I lost everything. I lost everything in . . . this cause. But I still think I have to. What can I do? You know, as long as I’m alive, someone needs help, I have to help.

I: Why?

V-12: Because, . . . if I don’t help then I become more guilty. . . . I can’t sleep at night thinking that somebody asked me for help and I didn’t give them help. . . . This is not my nature. . . . This is . . . maybe I’m the poorest person in the world. (laughs)

I: Or the richest. (laughs)

V-12: . . . So the cost of it was, maybe my family. In my case, my family left because of too much time. And I regret that, that way. You know. I regret that because you have to keep the balance. Even helping others you have to keep the balance. . . . I don’t know what else really to say . . .

What more can be said? There appears to be a sense of sadness and awareness among Re-Entry Partners of some of the negative tolls their decisions to sacrifice time with family have taken as they privileged being engaged in re-entry work. However, with most of those who acknowledge sacrifices have been made, there also seems to be an appreciation of how sacrifices they have made to be involved in transition efforts with these men have helped to enrich their own lives as well.

With some Re-Entry Partners, there seems to almost be a compulsion to serve. They express feeling like they “owed” a debt to society because they were helped or feeling “guilty” for not helping others or feeling that “we just had to do something.” They make these sacrifices at great personal expense and give up a lot in terms of family time, career choices, health, and other needs. Seemingly rational people on the surface, why are some Re-Entry Partners making these kinds of sacrifices in order to do re-entry work?
These sacrifices happen for many reasons. Some of the Re-Entry Partners may sacrifice because they feel like they are “on a mission” (E-10) or contributing to the greater society. To a large extent, their personal experiences shape how willing they are to make these sacrifices. Some make them because they themselves have been helped (E-4, E-10) by others and some do it because of the benefits they receive from the work. It seems, however, that sacrifices may also happen in part because many Re-Entry Partners invite the people they serve to become part of their social networks. Re-entry work volunteers and re-entry work employees may make sacrifices because as they assist these men who have been incarcerated to re-enter society, the relationships they build with these men may start to mean something to them on a personal level. Given the widespread religious or spiritual orientations of the Re-Entry Partners in my study, I also have to wonder how much of a factor religion, especially Christianity with its major sacrifice motifs, plays a role in the decisions to make these sacrifices. The discourse clearly shows that most of those who make these sacrifices do so because to them, “It’s all worth it.”

**Family Involvement**

Family Involvement refers to how the re-entry work activities of Re-Entry Partners led their family members either to become involved with re-entry work or to engage directly with male inmates or ex-offenders. For example, V-14 informed me that the men who come to live in her transition home get to know all the members of their family. She offered, “When we bring guys into our life, we bring them into our children’s lives as well and . . . our kids get to know them and get to be a part of their lives.” Not only do men transitioning out of prison become part of the social networks of Re-Entry Partners, they also meet and get
to know their families. Stories of Family Involvement in re-entry work surfaced during the interviews in many ways.

The most prevalent example of how families in my study were involved in re-entry work was that there were a lot of husbands and wives who volunteered together to assist male inmates and ex-offenders. Four of my interviews were conducted with re-entry work volunteers whose partners were also actively involved in prison ministry or volunteer activities. Also, I interviewed one couple (V-2 and V-17), separately, about their volunteer re-entry work. V-11, for instance, got involved with re-entry efforts because his wife invited him to join her. He talked about how doing re-entry work with his wife allowed men they worked with to see a positive example of a relationship and family.

V-11: I think probably one of the most interesting phenomena takes place when you have a husband and wife team, because most of what I do is typically with my wife and the offender. We share each other’s company together. They get to see – and this is a comment that’s come back to us most often – they can see what a real relationship is about. And they recognize that my wife and I love each other. It’s not only practical but it’s possible. And I think that so many of the men just have never had that either themselves or seen it within their own family. Because many of the men have never had fathers in the home and they see how much we love our children and how much we love our parents and how we interact with our children, our parents, our friends and themselves as being a component of those relationships that they most often have never had. So that when they see us as partners, a husband-wife partnership, and willing to take them into our embrace . . . they see that there’s more possibility for themselves.

Men in transition also get introduced to the families of Re-Entry Partners. For example, re-entry work employee E-8, who also volunteers, allows inmates or ex-offenders to visit his church and his family. Often, his parents take them in and adopt them as members of the family.
E-8: You met my project manager, K. He’s one of those re-entering individuals. He’s been clean now for eighteen months; maybe a little more. He’s been home, and I just recently hired him on. I was taking him to church, and he joined my church, and now he’s an active member at my church. . . . Another thing I do is . . . I take a lot of guys over to my mom and dad’s house because that’s where we normally eat after church. And my mom and dad they pretty much just adopt anybody I bring. They just adopt them in as, “You’re just part of the family now.” K goes and plays golf and eats dinner with my dad, and chops wood or whatever, when I’m nowhere around. He’s just like another son to them. . . . That’s just who we are; that’s what we do. We’re Christians.

Also, re-entry work volunteer V-11 discussed how his family and friends responded in different ways when they brought male ex-offenders to family gatherings with them.

V-11: At first, my family, being my immediate family other than my household, . . . my siblings, or my parents, or even my friends, were a little confused about our zeal to try to help ex-offenders. . . . My family and close friends . . . somewhat wavered between entertained or frustrated because we would talk constantly about the ex-offender program and we would take them to family functions. . . . So, they openly embraced our family. Some of the family found it a little exasperating, although they tolerated it. And with friends, it was oftentimes when they were humored but . . . they were much less . . . enthusiastic about us hanging around with . . . major felons. . . . Probably one of the worst situations is those who have been . . . impacted by a felony previously, personally or someone in their family close.

I: So, in those situations it was even more . . . ?

V-11: More tense. More disconcerting for those who were around them. . . . [They were] less affectionate or more . . . stand-offish, you know, as far as interfacing.

I: Gotcha. What was so exasperating or frustrating for family members?

V-11: (laughing) . . . Well, it was sort of like if the wife and I were coming someplace, they didn’t know whether to expect if someone were coming with me. Not that they didn’t like it. They found it humorous. But it’s like, “Do we set another plate or don’t we? Do we set two plates or one or?”
Some Re-Entry Partners also expressed their family members were unhappy with their involvement in re-entry efforts. Re-entry work employee, E-6, reported that her parents were not happy originally with her decision to work as a correctional officer.

E-6: My family didn’t want me working in the prison system. . . . My mom was afraid. . . . My parents did not want me working in the prison system because . . . they are on the outside looking in. It’s a male offender. You got murderers and rapists and all kinds of guys that have committed all kinds of crimes. They didn’t want their daughter working within that type of environment.

A couple of Re-Entry Partners also offered their wives were concerned about their health and well-being. For example, V-4 said his wife was afraid for his safety because his re-entry work with male ex-offenders took him into poor neighborhoods.

V-4: She fears for my safety. Not necessarily going into prisons to talk to the guys but following them afterwards. Cause a lot of the times when these guys come out they go back to live with family and so they go back into poor areas of town. And so, I go meet them where they are. So, she is afraid for me that I’m not going to come out of those sections sometimes.

I: How do you deal with that tension?

V-4: I explain to her what reality is. What I see when I’m in those neighborhoods. I tell her the things that I do to keep me safe as well as the person that I’m meeting: meeting during daytime hours; well-lit places; in places that I know that a lot of things aren’t going on; avoiding those places where drug deals and things like that do go on. . . . I’ve gotten that education from the guys I work with. They tell me exactly what’s going on and where.

In another example, faith allowed V-13 and his wife to find some peace with regards to their concerns about his safety. Also, as a result of his re-entry work, V-13’s wife started to participate in transition efforts as well.

V-13: One thing my wife and I talked about is just safety. Going into a prison, if something were to happen. . . . Going out to meet an offender somewhere and not knowing what their mindset might be. That was the first thing, the concern we had. But then just going into prayer and knowing that I wasn’t going of my own accord, if
I just go and let God lead me and He is there and He will protect me. He will let me know what I should or should not do. So, that kind of puts that to rest.

I: Is she still put to rest?

V-13: Oh yeah. My wife, she goes with me. . . . She goes with me a lot of times. Whenever she is off pretty much, 'cause she’s a school teacher. . . . That’s good because a lot of these offenders have children and she offers that teacher part of it, as far as education-wise.

Family Involvement was a theme that emerged a lot in the narratives as Re-entry Partners discussed how the men they assisted during their re-entry work became part of their social networks, including in some cases their families. It also came up as they discussed how they were influenced by their families to do re-entry work. V-13, for instance, also talked about how his mother’s work in the criminal justice system affected his view of prisoners.

V-13: She was a detention officer in a jail. . . . I had a lot of contact going inside as a child, seeing how if you commit a crime or something, then you have to pay for it. But they are still human beings. Being incarcerated may have been the very thing that may have saved their life. That’s the way I look at it. So, I don’t have a judgment on them.

Finally, Family Involvement also impacted the children of Re-Entry Partners. For example, V-11 talked about how his social interactions and relationships with men who had been incarcerated affected his own children and young people in his church.

V-11: When we started this, my youngest daughter was probably seventeen or so . . . and she’s now twenty-three. Of course she was the youngest one; the other ones had moved away. But my children had taken a different view of the men that have been incarcerated . . . then they would have ever had before, because they got to know them personally. The men had been able to share a lot of stories of their incarceration and their lives with a lot of the younger people at our church . . . and have made a significant impact on what it’s like . . . to be incarcerated. And my youngest daughter has gone on to do volunteer work in Africa, in teaching at an orphanage, an AIDS
project, and Big Brother, Big Sister programs. And to me... whereas we question... how things work and why we do things, we felt that was a significant result of our own attitudes about how we do our own work with the prison ministries.

I: So, you think that seeing your witness as volunteers... inspired her to volunteer, just in her own way?

V-11: Yes, I think so. I think volunteerism inspires volunteerism.
VIII. DISCUSSION

This study conveys the story of a sample of the men and women who are Re-Entry Partners in the Triangle Area of North Carolina. In the face of a criminal justice system that dehumanizes those who are incarcerated, there are people across the United States – Re-Entry Partners – who are stepping forward to give these human beings a chance to be something other than the possessor of a criminal record or a “convicted felon.” This study offers a glimpse of this social phenomenon. Re-entry Partners in the study do re-entry work, or participate in activities to assist men who have been incarcerated to re-enter society. As this re-entry work takes place, Re-Entry Partners create a culture that promotes assisting people with the re-entry process and structures (i.e., social support networks) to facilitate this process.

As a result of Re-Entry Partner commitments, a major feature of the re-entry process is that men who have served time in prison become part of social support networks and communities. Most Re-Entry Partners simply want to help men who have been incarcerated come out of prison and transition successfully so that they can be restored as citizens who contribute positively to society. Re-entry Partners offer emotional support. Also, they guide these men to services or offer them direct material help as they readjust to being back in society.

Another feature of re-entry work is that the Re-Entry Partners themselves are
transformed due to their participation in the culture and social networks they help create. During the process of their re-entry work they encounter the human beings who are behind the public’s distorted images of “criminals”, “inmates”, and “ex-offenders”; images largely produced by the media which often generates fear within the general population at the expense of these men. As Re-Entry Partners “discover” the humanity of this population, their own lives are transformed. For example, their images of men who have been incarcerated are changed and their social networks are expanded to include these men as “family members” or “circles of friends”. Then, many of these Re-Entry Partners work to convince the inmates or men who have been released from prison with whom they build social and emotional ties to let go of the dehumanized images these men themselves have accepted and bought into due to the media’s influence, lack of viable alternative opportunities, and the general public’s discriminatory actions towards them.

The theme of “humanizing” this population surfaced many times in the interviews. For example, E-15, a counselor who worked with inmates directly for about three decades and now served people who released from prison, offered that she could tell the difference in behavior among inmates between when they were addressed in a derogatory way and when they were treated with respect as humans. She said she spent time, “Watching the difference in behavior when people were addressed like inmates, like they were scumbags.” Consequently, she used to challenge the correctional officers with whom she worked:

“How do you expect behavior to change when you talk to them like they’re nothing, like they’re scum, like they’re always gonna be scum? Because, in fact, they’re not. They’re human beings just like you and I are. No matter what they’ve done.”
Re-entry work volunteer V-19 also shared about how her most important help came in the form of conveying to the men she helped that they “mattered” and had the “potential that each of us has to become a whole human being.”

V-19: I think the deepest thing I have to give is that conveying to the individual the sense that he is someone who matters; and matters very deeply and has the potential that each of us has to become a whole human being. So I think that’s maybe what my greatest gift is in volunteering.

The stories people tell as they discuss their re-entry work service “emphasize the bond that emerges when one human being cares for another human being.” (Wuthnow, 1991, p.307)

Significantly, most Re-Entry Partners connect with these men on a personal level to help them see their humanity and worth. They help these men transition back into society and help them become socially redeemed as productive members of society. Some of these Re-Entry Partners go even further to try to convince others in society – potential employers, their own family members who question their re-entry work activities, etc. – to see that these men are humans and worthy of a second chance at becoming productive citizens. In this re-entry work process, many of the men who are the recipients of the work done by Re-Entry Partners become Re-Entry Partners themselves. Social networks, composed of men who have served time in prison and the Re-Entry Partners who have assisted them, then open up to accept other men and women coming out of prison and help them transition.

Re-Entry Partners in the study seem to be motivated by moral and religious convictions to work towards justice and ideals of what humanity represents. They respond to a criminal justice system that unfairly discriminates against a particular segment of our society. Most of the men who are incarcerated stem from low-income backgrounds,
including a disproportionate number of African Americans. They are often socially
disadvantaged and stigmatized as “violent” or “unworthy.” Recognizing that compassion
often leads people to take actions on the behalf of others, Wuthnow (1991) offers “an
argument that encourages people to recognize the value of transcending class barriers, both in
their deeds of caring and in their attitudes. It suggests that compassion creates diffuse
connections that bridge the various segmented communities in which we live and reinforces a
sense of common membership in the whole society.” (p.307)

A lot of the men who are incarcerated suffer from mental health and substance abuse
issues that are often untreated. For the past three decades this nation has practiced a policy of
criminalizing medical issues and arresting people who could not afford quality health care
rather than providing support and treatment for this population. (Earley, 2006) Already at a
social and economic disadvantage, when members of this population commit crimes they are
disproportionately arrested, tried without juries of their peers, and sentenced longer than
more privileged members of society.

The incarceration of this socially stigmatized population may be considered their
“first sentencing”. This sentencing is often class-biased and/or racially-biased and some of
these individuals are incarcerated for crimes they did not commit. Meanwhile, white-collar
criminals or people with substantial financial means are able to secure legal representation or
receive lighter sentences for their crimes that affect a greater percentage of our national
communities. (Reiman, 2001) After incarceration, these individuals who have served time
for crimes are further placed at a disadvantage due to their criminal records. I refer to this
process as their “Second Sentencing”. Consequently, they are unable to find employment or
Re-entry Work Volunteers

Most of the re-entry work volunteers in the study were faith-based persons. The majority of volunteers (15/20) expressed that they had religious motivations. Yet, only a small proportion of faith-based volunteers in the particular region perform re-entry work. So, my study focused on trying to discern what additional factors may be at work to encourage a subgroup of these faith-based persons to volunteer as Re-Entry Partners.

Personal relationships to others appear to be the primary motivating factor for those who volunteer to do re-entry work. Beyond distorted media images, for most of the mainstream population, this population of offenders and people who have served time in prison is virtually invisible. V-11, for example, drove by the prison where he performs his re-entry work many times without even knowing it was there because it was positioned away from the main road. As people come into contact with people who have been incarcerated or who have spent time exposed to the criminal justice, they make social ties and friends.

During the data analysis of my sample, I discovered there were five major categories of factors related to personal connections that incorporated all of the re-entry volunteers in the sample. Noticeably, a major thread influencing all of the faith-based volunteers in my sample to do re-entry work was direct personal contact with someone in their social networks. Every single re-entry work volunteer either a. had directly been (V-2, V-3, V-7, V-18) an inmate at some point in their lives, b. had a family member in the criminal justice
system as an inmate (V-5, V-6, V-17) or as a law enforcement or correctional officer (V-13, V-14), c. were invited directly by or had an example of a religious authority or "church" member doing re-entry work volunteering (V-4, V-8, V-10, V-12, V-15, V-19, V-20), d. were exposed to inmates or an ex-offender prior to his/her own volunteer re-entry work (V-9, V-16), or e. had directly talked to and been invited by someone to become a re-entry work volunteer (V-1, V-11) A couple of them fit into multiple categories. For example, V-6 grew up watching his father be incarcerated and struggle to find work upon his release and, as an adult, was asked by a re-entry community partner’s agency to teach classes to inmates in prison.

This finding relates to results from the research presented by Becker and Dhingra (2001). When they asked their sample why they volunteered, many of their respondents expressed they volunteered because of connections to friends. “Roughly three-quarters of our interviewees volunteer because of a direct connection to another person, either someone within the organization or someone being served by it. Family ties . . . remain the most important conduit to volunteering.” (p.327) A similar statement was made by many of those in the current study.

V-5: Well, I have some family members who have had some trouble with the justice system for rightly or wrongly. And they are still family members, and we still love them. You know what they did was not necessarily right, and in some cases they were unfairly punished or treated, I think seeing that happen . . . with family members is just one of those things that reminds you. You know those folks, right? So, you have a fuller sense of what they were dealing with and what was going on, and so it makes you a little more tolerant or open-minded about people who get in trouble.
Becker and Dhingra also received other motivations for why their respondents engaged in volunteer work that matched other responses in my interview data. Their respondents “cited caring about people in general, feeling religiously motivated to get involved, wanting to help out people perceived as similar to them, wanting to gain practical experiences in a line of work, and wanting to protect property values.” (Becker and Dhingra, 2001, pp.327-28) Thus, my findings correlated and enhanced the results of other studies on volunteerism.

Re-entry Work Employees

For re-entry work employees, intrinsic rewards like the fact that it “feels good” to do their work and personal relationships with clients seem to be essential motivational factors for their re-entry-related employment. Few of the re-entry work employees in my study explicitly claimed that pay or other extrinsic rewards motivated them. Out of 20 employees interviewed, only 6 said pay or a way to provide for their families was one of the benefits they received from their work. It was also significant that job security was only mentioned as a benefit by one employee when it is clear that with the present criminal justice system the majority of these employees will be able to count on job security for quite awhile. Instead, relationships with men who have been incarcerated, the fact they can witness and be part of helping some of them achieve successes as they transition, and the gratitude for their services expressed by current and former clients, seems to keep many re-entry work employees motivated. They appear to be able to work with the overall population of offenders, a population that will overwhelmingly return, a little easier, knowing their efforts have helped some of their former clients.
Wilson and Musick’s work (1997) may provide a framework for understanding how employees like the ones in this study may serve as perfect candidates for re-entry work. Most of the employees may construe themselves as responding to a sort of “calling” when they choose to work in roles where they can see performing acts for the “common good.” Wilson and Musick cite that public sector employees exhibit a greater tendency to volunteer. “It might be that public sector workers volunteer more because they have chosen their job and their nonwork activities for the same reasons – in order to be a ‘public servant.’ It is also likely that the work of public sector employees exposes them to community problems and the needs of people for help.” (p.268) During their employment in re-entry work positions, they become aware of the needs of the men they serve and become committed to these men on a personal level. Thus, it is not surprising that some employees go “off duty” from their paid re-entry work to go serve as volunteers who do re-entry work.

Re-Entry Partners and the Costs of Re-entry Work

There were some differentials in terms of the costs reported by the two sets of Re-Entry Partners. For example, the re-entry work volunteers said they paid more tangible costs than the re-entry work employees (36 to 15, respectively), especially in terms of their financial contributions (13 to 3, respectively). Given that the employees are in positions where they often have resources at their disposal to assist men in their transition efforts, the fact that they spend less money was not too surprising.

Another major difference in costs that emerged between the Re-Entry Partner sub-groups was that re-entry employees experienced higher costs as a group in terms of how
much their activities impacted their families. 14 out of 20 re-entry work employees reported that re-entry work adversely affected their family relationships compared to only 4 re-entry work volunteers who reported this cost. Given that 12 of the re-entry work employees were of in their 40’s and 50’s, this cost might be partially explained by Li and Ferraro (2006) who argued that the volunteer work of middle-age people (40-59 years of age) who occupied extensive social roles “may place a burden on their busy lives “if it is added on top of family and work responsibilities.” (p.511)

Re-Entry Partners and Religion

As I interviewed the Re-Entry Partners, especially as I heard about some of the “sacrifices” they made, I could not help thinking about how irrational it may be to engage in re-entry work. Also, I wondered how much religious or spiritual beliefs may affect their commitments, given that 38 out of 40 of them reported that their religious beliefs or faith influenced why they participated in these re-entry efforts. How rational is religion? Religion and spiritual beliefs might be leading Re-Entry Partners to make choices, sacrifices, and commitments that stretch boundaries past the point of what most people might consider reasonable.

In the part of North Carolina where I conducted my study there might be a regional effect at work since the state is part of the “Bible Belt,” or a highly concentrated religious area of the South. Part of the reason people are employed in agencies or are volunteering to assist male prisoners and men who were previously incarcerated (i.e., Re-Entry Partners
doing Re-entry Work), according to the respondents in my study, may be due to religiously-motivated ideas that are explicitly or implicitly stated.

Social networks and structures – Round Tables, Faith Teams, Community Volunteers, T.A.N. – that are created by Re-Entry Partners to help facilitate the re-entry process are largely religious in orientation or operated by faith-based volunteers. Current literature suggests there may be a reason for this finding. Wuthnow addresses the question of whether or not faith-based organizations are more effective than secular organizations. He states that arguments are made that faith-based organizations emphasize that people need to undergo personal transformation in order to overcome their problems and can be aided in this process by religious teachings, or that religiously-motivated caregivers do a better job of caring for the whole person, are more altruistic, or are more dedicated and trustworthy. (2004, p.159) The current study certainly supports this position as all of the Re-Entry Partners expressed a belief in God, identified as religious or spiritual, and said their moral beliefs directly influenced their re-entry work.

However, the ways in which religion was expressed varied widely among the Re-Entry Partners. Some of the re-entry work volunteers expressed concerns about the proselytizing that sometimes occurs by religious groups that are involved with re-entry work. For example, V-4 brought up an occasion where there was a difference between his approach and the approach of the faith-based organization that prepared him to work with inmates. When his Community Mentor group received training, V-4 appreciated it (“The materials and training have been helpful and appropriate.”) because they were relevant to his experiences and matched with what the inmates had been telling him. However, he disagreed with some of the organization’s goals.
Certainly, the training, since it was from a Christian group, was heavy on trying to preach the gospel to these men and trying to have them be Christians as well. I guess I don’t necessarily approach it that way a hundred percent. I don’t care if these guys are Christian or not. What I want them to see is faith in action through their interaction with me. If they want to tag along with me to church because they like what I’m talking about, what I do, great. If they want to head to a different church, I’m willing to take them there as well. . . . It’s not the kind of deal where if they’re not Christian, I won’t talk to you. I want these guys to understand it doesn’t matter who they are, where they come from, they’re important.

Other volunteers, on the other hand, reported that they either required (or felt more comfortable with those who did) the men they assisted to attend church or participate in religious activities. This makes sense given the social networks of these Re-Entry Partners are often heavily connected to their church or faith traditions. Either way, the men who have served time in prison or who are still incarcerated, often religious themselves, are able to make some choices regarding which re-entry work volunteers with whom to get involved and associate as they seek assistance from them during their transition process.

The religious context of the Community Mentor structures and support networks established by re-entry work volunteers also serve as arenas where they themselves are able to share their stories and experiences and receive support. Wuthnow discusses the significance of religious contexts for volunteers as sites of “self-concept changes.”

Where some religious contexts play a special role is by providing volunteers with opportunities to reflect more intentionally or over a more extended period of time about their motives. When they do this, they gradually undergo a process of what the sociologist Rebecca Allahyari has usefully termed moral selving. Their self-concept changes. They begin to see themselves as more than volunteers who just happen to have done something helpful on a few occasions. They incorporate messages about the moral worth of volunteering into their self-identity, coming to see themselves as good people and linking this conception of goodness to their volunteering. This is a process that can happen more effectively in religious contexts, where moral values and the identities of whole persons are involved, than in secular settings, where only the instrumental aspects of getting a job done may be relevant. . . . What they receive by being part of a religious group is the opportunity to talk about what they have done and to receive encouragement. They sometimes pray for the people they are helping.
and hear others pray for them, and, above all, they have opportunities to tell their stories.” (Wuthnow, 2004, p.132)

Whereas Wuthnow’s insight may help explain how religious contexts apply to the re-entry work conducted by volunteers, it fails to account completely for dynamics that take place in the secular settings (prison, offices, etc.) where most activities are performed by re-entry work employees.

There were indeed some interesting findings regarding re-entry work employees and religion. Although all of them reported having religious or spiritual beliefs, for example, a low number of them expressed explicitly that they had religious or spiritual-based motivations (8/20) for participating in re-entry work. Also, when directly asked about whether or not religion or spirituality impacted how they were perceived or treated by the men they assisted as part of their employment, only 4 out of 20 said yes.

From the interview discourse, many of them, especially those who were state employees, told me they did not refer to religion while at work. Particularly, some of them said this was due to the separation of church and state. However, behind the scenes, when asked directly if their faith or religious beliefs impacted their re-entry work, 19 out of 20 reported that it played a significant role in how they approached their work. As further evidence of how important religion was in terms of motivating them to do their re-entry work, many of them used religious terms and language (“God Talk”) as they discussed their work – often before being directly asked the religious-based questions. This finding suggested that religion might play a larger role with secular employees involved in re-entry-related efforts than it might appear on the surface.
A case example that illustrated some secular-based employees were sometimes more faith-based or religious was that, as previously reported, one of the prison-based re-entry work employees, E-9, also served as a minister. He discussed how he viewed his job as both “secular employment” and ministry at the same time. For other evidence regarding how religion interacted with their decisions to do re-entry work, many re-entry work employees talked explicitly about how their religious beliefs led them to do re-entry work. E-18, for example, offered insight into how his faith led him to believe in “redemption” in the sense that these men could be forgiven by God and start their lives over as “different” people.

E-18: I believe in new beginnings . . . My faith is . . . at any point you can ask God’s forgiveness and He will forgive you. At any point I feel that these inmates can do the same thing. Or, at any point, it doesn’t matter what you’ve done in your past, you can start over and from this day forward, work toward being a different person.

End Note – Are Re-Entry Partners the Start of a New Social Movement?

This portrait of Re-Entry Partners in this region of North Carolina serves as an exploration of sociological dynamics associated with a growing number of community efforts taking place across the nation to address the social problem of a criminal justice system that is oppressive to low-income communities and takes a heavy toll on our nation as a whole. It represents a small portion of an alternative culture and set of social structures being put in place to assist some of the 700,000 people being released annually from prisons into communities in the U.S. While this is not a representative sample, it is a call to action to study and participate in helping these re-entry efforts, even if it simply leads people to reconsider the media images that dehumanize these people. Many Re-Entry Partners involved in re-entry work even refer to the collective presence of these efforts as a social movement.
V-17: I use the word movement because movement seems more powerful to me than just an idea, or just volunteer work. I feel like this work is helping to reverse the oppression of people in our society that are actively being oppressed and denied their rights. And it’s a cycle that is vicious and it’s continually repeating and repeating, and it seems like something like a movement is necessary to help liberate these people. . . . I said to help liberate these people. But the truth is that when there is oppression in our society, we are all oppressed. So, I feel like this is a movement because we can all feel this oppression. So, as this oppression lifts, we will all be liberated from it.
IX. CONCLUSION

This study depicts Re-Entry Partners and their re-entry work. It takes a small snapshot of a sample of a population in a North Carolina region that engages in re-entry-related activities with men who are in the process of transitioning from prison back into society. It contributes to the literature we have on the subjective effects of volunteerism, or volunteer-like behaviors in terms of re-entry work employees, on those who devote their time and energy to help others. It situates these efforts in a specific time and context. “Social behavior occurs in particular times and particular places, in concert with particular social actors” (Laub and Sampson, 2002, p.87). Thus, the study privileges a view that individual actions must be analyzed within the historical social context in which they occur.

Although I started out to compare a faith-based sample of volunteers and a secular-based sample of employees, I found that both groups of people I interviewed had faith commitments. The volunteer sample contained people who were explicit about their religious commitments and how they led them to participate in re-entry work. The X for this group involved the fact that beyond their religious motivations each of the volunteers had a personal connection with someone involved in the criminal justice system or in re-entry work. Thus, their model was Faith + Social Network Connections = Re-Entry Work.

With respect to the re-entry work employees’ sample, I found two major findings.
First, the analysis of the interviews demonstrated that a population considered “secular” on the surface may actually hold religious or faith-based views. This indicates the need to ask people more directly about their religious orientations in order to see how religion may be influencing their social actions. As a group, the employees were “quiet” about how their religious motivations drove them to occupations that involved re-entry work and influenced their current efforts. As researchers, we sociologists may want to consider what “lurks beneath the surface” and draw out more explicitly what religious motivations may be at work, especially when we examine what seems to be a secular or “non-religious” sample of a population. The second finding for employees was that their motivations were largely connected to the personal connections they had formed with inmates and people released from prison. Thus, the model for re-entry work employees was Pay/Job Benefits + Faith + Social Network Connections = Re-entry Work.

Extending the current research on social networks (e.g., Wood), this work also provides qualitative research that examines the meanings of friendships across status distinctions and how they emerge and become relevant in social contexts which involve volunteerism. In support of Wuthnow’s claims (2003), this research demonstrates how “volunteering may be conducive to actually making friends with disadvantaged people rather than only serving them at a distance” and “that social conditions that facilitate cross-status friends with relatively disadvantaged people may encourage volunteering.” (p.438) Re-Entry Partners discuss the impact on their social networks as the men they help often interact with their friends and family members and, over time, often become a vital part of their own communities. Further, social stratification dynamics are also explored as the respondents talk about how they are treated and perceived by the population they serve. Additionally, themes
– disappointments, moments of redemption, sacrifices, and family involvement – emerge from the Re-Entry Partner interviews about how their social interactions with people in this marginalized segment of our society affect their social networks.

Giving additional weight to the findings of previous literature (Wuthnow, 1991; Thoits and Hewitt, 2001), this study documents some of the effects of religion upon the behaviors and attitudes of people who help others. This research gives weight to and at the same time offers something different than most studies on volunteerism and helping others. It sheds light on how men and women are affected as they work with a highly marginalized population and deal with overcoming the negative images and stigma they have about the population they serve. Significantly, it documents how religious beliefs and faith-based social structures and contexts (e.g., Round Tables) lead people to make choices to volunteer or be employed in settings where they can assist others. This study shows that religious cultural orientations act, even in secular settings like prison where these men are often encountered, and exposes the personal transformations that take place as Re-Entry Partners engage in re-entry work.

Narratives seemed to be created by re-entry work volunteers and employees to counter mainstream “lock ‘em up and throw away the key” retributive narratives. These “counter narratives” largely drew upon religious narratives – mainly ones from the Judeo-Christian tradition (e.g., “redemption”) – available in the mainstream culture that were highly valued in the particular region of this study. Thus, religion played a major role in terms of influencing the re-entry work. It shaped the narratives that were implemented and helped to create the social structures and arenas in which most re-entry efforts took place. This finding mirrored Richard Wood’s findings in *Faith in Action* that demonstrated that religion often
gave social actors cultural and structural tools (e.g., community networks) to affect changes in their social environments. “At its best the faith-based organizing structure provides local leaders with the tools they need in order to influence city priorities and reshape their own neighborhoods, while allowing leaders to interpret this civic engagement in terms appropriate to their own traditions and biographies” (Wood, p.71). The three community models in the study – Community Mentorships, Faith Teams, and Round Tables – which were largely composed of faith-based community members also supported Wood’s findings.

Related to this finding, one question that could be explored in future work is whether or not religious influence on re-entry work can be seen in other regions of the nation. Or, are there other narratives that exist that are being used (perhaps one that might be more secular-based drawing upon democratic and/or humanitarian principles?) by Re-Entry Partners in other parts of the country? Is there something about re-entry work that “requires” faith-based approaches, cultural orientations, or structures in order for people to bear the costs to volunteer or seek employment to work with this highly stigmatized population of offenders?

People who have been incarcerated need a lot of social support in order to make a successful transition back into mainstream society. In recent years in the U.S. there have been many community efforts and faith-based initiatives implemented to assist those who have been incarcerated with their re-entry process. This study contributes to our understanding of what some of these re-entry efforts look like in the North Carolina area and perhaps in our nation as a whole. For example, when I queried re-entry work employee E-13 about what a successful reintegration looks like, he offered this description:

Having a full-time job and benefits. Being able to rent a house or maybe looking at homeownership in the long term. Being a volunteer who is now giving back to the community. Staying drug free and just being a positive, everyday citizen. If you met
him you would never know that he had been to prison and had so many barriers to overcome when he first got out.

The findings of this research may inform programs or policies on how to recruit more employees and volunteers into re-entry work. While none of these findings are generalizable, given the non-random quota sample drawn upon for this research study, the patterns discovered serve to inform us about re-entry work culture and social structures and offers some sense of whom these Re-Entry Partners, volunteers or employees, are who work with men (and women) who are inmates or who have served time.

This study also contributes to academic knowledge, public policy and to society as a whole with regards to the re-entry process. With a significant amount of former prisoners being released into our society every year, gaining a sense of the scope of the issues encountered by this population as well as the structural and community supports that are, or that need to be, in place to assist this population is a major need. This study’s examination of community re-entry efforts and social networks of support represents one of the few in-depth qualitative interview studies on employees and volunteers who work with this population.

Engaging in the interview process seemed to be cathartic for many respondents. Most of the respondents saw value in the study and were eager to share about their re-entry work experiences. Giving the stigma sometimes associated with re-entry work employment and volunteerism, some of the respondents may not have had an opportunity to talk about their experiences anywhere else and may have found that I was a receptive audience. Some of my probing questions also seemed to have provoked some of them to consider their re-entry work involvement on a more conscious level. Overall, the majority of respondents talked very openly about their activities and appeared willing to contribute to any efforts, such as
producing this document, which would in some way help promote others to become involved with assisting this population with their transition efforts.

My dissertation research also directly relates to the literature that assesses the impact of employment or altruistic commitments on the health of employees and volunteers. It examines the mental health and physical health effects – stress, being tired, etc. – on employees or volunteers who assist inmates or ex-offenders to re-enter the mainstream population. This study points towards the need for more qualitative studies and longitudinal survey work to gather information about the effects on the health and well-being of volunteers and employees who participate in re-entry work. 30 out of 40 of the respondents in this study report that their re-entry-related volunteerism or employment affected their health and well-being; most of them reported positive impacts.

Additionally, this study offers a view into what it looks like for people to leave total institutions and return to mainstream society, especially if they receive community support. Currently, people are being released in mass from two total institutions – the military and prison. One population is supported by the mainstream population as containing viable members of society; people who are seen by many as heroes protecting and defending our nation. The other population is stigmatized as a worthless collection of deviants who should be “locked up” forever because they are harmful to our society and recalcitrant. However, neither of these populations is receiving enough government financial support to help their transitions back into society.

There is another relevant connection between these two populations. Many war veterans wind up as residents of the criminal justice system because they do not receive the
appropriate support services or are not connected to viable support networks. For example, re-entry work volunteer V-3, was both a disabled veteran and a man who had served time in prison. Also, re-entry work employee E-12 who helped men released from prison find employment said he often received support from employers if his clients had veteran status:

E-12: I have gotten a lot more positive support from the fact that I am dealing with veterans, just because it’s more in the press now too. These guys need help or support.

I: Do you think it helps that an ex-offender has veteran status?

E-12: I think so. I think it helps a little bit; because they showed in the past that at some time they have had discipline. They have gone through basic training and some leadership roles and showed that they have developed some skills. That type of thing. . . . It’s a horrible human toll, to just not support them, and have them fall back into old ways and end up back in prison again. That’s just not acceptable.

This re-entry study may also have implications for public policy as it might help identify those people who are more likely to want to be employed or to volunteer directly in arenas to rehabilitate men who have been incarcerated, helping them to live in and to contribute to society. Also, it offers some implications for how faith-based organizations are effective. Recruiting Re-Entry Partners will require examining religion’s role further in terms of how it interacts with volunteerism and with employment.

The reason for the large lack of involvement by most people, from all racial groups, seems to be rooted in a systemic problem in society in general. In the U.S. the dominant culture is one of a “lock them up” mentality pushing for harsh penalties towards criminals in general (with some notable exceptions, such as white collar criminals). Consequently, there are only pockets of local community groups and social structures being established sporadically across the nation to help former and current residents of the criminal justice
system. One of the main problems currently with helping this population more effectively transition back to society is the lack of coordination and organization among regional Re-Entry Partners on a national level. It is quite possible that people who perform Re-entry Work could come together to form a national organization of affiliates of local community groups involved in transition efforts, perhaps such an organization could be called Re-Entry Partners. Hopefully, this study and others like it will assist in the creation of such efforts.
APPENDIX

Re-Entry Partners Study Interview Questionnaire

1. What is your date of birth?

2. Are you of Spanish/Hispanic/Latino descent?

3. What race or ethnicity would you say you are?

4. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
   If they have a degree or diploma, what subject or field is it in?

5. What is your current marital or partner status?

6. How many children do you have?

READ:

For the purposes of this study the term “re-entry efforts” refers to anything that is done to help men who are inmates get better prepared for their transition out of prison and back into society. The term “re-entry efforts” also applies to any action taken to help men who have been released from prison, who are commonly referred to as “ex-offenders,” adjust to their new lives and become more stable during their transition back into society.

1. What do you think are some of the main issues men face when they are released from prison?

2. Please describe any re-entry efforts you know about that help male inmates or ex-offenders.

3. Do you think these efforts are effective? Why or why not?

4. What do you think would make these efforts more effective?

5. What do you think are some other things that could be done to help male inmates or ex-offenders transition back into society?

6. Are you familiar with any public forums in the Triangle area that focus on re-entry efforts? If so, can you please describe what these forums are like? What do you think about these forums? If they know about them, ask “Have you ever attended a public forum on re-entry efforts? Why or why not?”
7. What do you think about public forums that bring employees and volunteers together to address re-entry concerns?

8. What do you think about public forums that bring religious or faith-based organizations and non-religious (or secular) organizations together to address re-entry concerns?

9. Before you started spending time with incarcerated men or male ex-offenders what images of these men did you have? Why?

10. When you first started spending time with incarcerated men or male ex-offenders, what worries or concerns did you have? Why?

11. Once you started spending time with incarcerated men or male ex-offenders, did your feelings or ideas about them change? If yes, in what ways? Why or why not?

12. What images do you think most people have of incarcerated men? Why?

13. What images do you think most people have of male ex-offenders? Why?

Volunteers:

1. Do you think your volunteer activity helps incarcerated men or male ex-offenders transition back into society in any way? Why or why not? How does this make you feel?

2. Please describe any specific activities you have participated in to help incarcerated men or male ex-offenders.

3. Please describe any specific actions you have taken to help incarcerated men or male ex-offenders.

4. What motivated you to help male inmates or male ex-offenders?

5. How did you get involved with this type of volunteering?

6. How often do you help incarcerated men or male ex-offenders?

7. How long have you been volunteering to help inmates or ex-offenders?

8. Has any of your volunteering taken place inside of prison? If yes, can you please discuss any steps you had to take to get permission to volunteer inside the prison?

9. Has any of your volunteering taken place outside of prison?

10. Was any of the volunteer re-entry work you participated in done through a church, synagogue, or other religious organization? If so, which one?
11. Was any of the volunteer re-entry work you participated in done through a community or political group? If so, which one?

12. Please briefly describe any highlights from your experiences helping inmates or ex-offenders.

13. Please briefly describe any low points from your experiences helping inmates or ex-offenders.

14. How, if at all, has helping inmates or ex-offenders affected your life?

15. What do you feel you provide when you help incarcerated men or male ex-offenders?

16. How, if at all, has helping incarcerated men or male ex-offenders benefited you?

17. What, if anything, has helping incarcerated men or male ex-offenders cost you? [If they only refer to monetary costs, ask them:] Do you feel like volunteering with these men has cost you anything else? [if they need examples, offer “such as time, energy, emotional investment, etc.?”]

18. How, if at all, do you think your help has benefited incarcerated men or male ex-offenders?

19. Have you had more or less contact with different races as a result of volunteering with incarcerated men or male ex-offenders? How, if at all, has this affected your life?

20. Do you ever feel that your race or ethnicity affects how you are treated or perceived by incarcerated men or male ex-offenders? If yes, how so?

21. Please describe any examples of positive or negative race relations you have experienced during your volunteer work. [if they focus only on positive or negative examples, ask for examples of the type they do not emphasize]

22.a. **For women:** Do you ever feel that being female affects how you are treated or perceived by incarcerated men or male ex-offenders? If yes, how so?

22.b. **For men:** Do you ever feel that being male affects how you are treated or perceived by incarcerated men or male ex-offenders? If yes, how so?

23. Do you ever feel that your age affects how you are treated or perceived by incarcerated men or male ex-offenders? If yes, how so?

24. Do you ever feel that your social class or background affects how you are treated or perceived by incarcerated men or male ex-offenders? If yes, how so?

25. Have you experienced any successes while helping male inmates or male ex-offenders?
If yes, can you please describe some of them?

26. Have you experienced any struggles or set-backs while helping male inmates or male ex-offenders? If yes, can you please describe some of them?

27. Have you ever encountered any positive or negative reactions or comments from people because you help inmates or ex-offenders? If yes, what happened?

   [if they focus only on positive or negative examples, ask for the type they do not emphasize]

28. Do you think volunteering to help incarcerated men or male ex-offenders supports the common good in your community? Why or why not? If yes, in what ways?

29. Do you think helping inmates or ex-offenders has impacted your health or well-being in any way? If yes, how so?

30. Has your health or well-being ever influenced the decisions you made about helping incarcerated men or male ex-offenders? If yes, can you please discuss what happened?

31. Do you think your moral beliefs have anything to do with how you think or act when it comes to helping inmates or ex-offenders? If yes, in what ways?

32. What advice, if any, would you offer to someone who wants to volunteer to help male inmates or ex-offenders?

Employees:

1. Are you employed in a job that involves working with incarcerated men or male ex-offenders? Do you think your job helps these men transition back into society in any way? If yes, how so? How does this make you feel?

2. Please describe some of the specific duties or activities related to your job you have performed that involved working with incarcerated men or male ex-offenders.

3. What motivated you to work with male inmates or male ex-offenders?

4. How did you originally get into this line of work?

5. How often does your job involve working with incarcerated men or male ex-offenders?

6. How long have you been employed in a job that involves working with inmates or ex-offenders?

7. Do any of your job responsibilities take place inside of prison? If yes, can you please discuss any steps that you had to take in order to work inside the prison?
8. Do any of your job responsibilities take place outside of prison?

9. Do you work for a church, synagogue, or other religious organization? If so, which one?

10. Do you work for a community or political group? If so, which one?

11. Do you work for a state or government agency? If so, which one?

12. Please briefly describe any highlights from your experiences working with inmates or ex-offenders.

13. Please briefly describe any low points from your experiences working with inmates or ex-offenders.

14. How, if at all, has working with inmates or ex-offenders affected your life?

15. What do you feel you provide when you work with incarcerated men or male ex-offenders?

16. How, if at all, has your work with incarcerated men or male ex-offenders benefited you?

17. What, if anything, has working with incarcerated men or male ex-offenders cost you? [If they only refer to monetary costs, ask them:] Do you feel like this work has cost you anything else? [if they need examples, offer “such as time, energy, emotional investment, etc.”]

18. How, if at all, do you think your work has benefited incarcerated men or male ex-offenders?

19. Have you had more or less contact with different races as a result of working with incarcerated men or male ex-offenders? How, if at all, has this affected your life?

20. Do you ever feel that your race or ethnicity affects how you are treated or perceived by incarcerated men or male ex-offenders? If yes, how so?

21. Please describe any examples of positive or negative race relations you have experienced while working with incarcerated men or male ex-offenders. [if they focus only on positive or negative examples, ask for examples of the type they do not emphasize]

22.a. For women: Do you ever feel that being female affects how you are treated or perceived by incarcerated men or male ex-offenders? If yes, how so?

22.b. For men: Do you ever feel that being male affects how you are treated or perceived by incarcerated men or male ex-offenders? If yes, how so?
23. Do you ever feel that your **age** affects how you are treated or perceived by incarcerated men or male ex-offenders? If yes, how so?

24. Do you ever feel that your **social class or background** affects how you are treated or perceived by incarcerated men or male ex-offenders? If yes, how so?

25. Have you experienced any successes while working with male inmates or male ex-offenders?

   If yes, can you please describe some of them?

26. Have you experienced any struggles or set-backs while working with male inmates or male ex-offenders? If yes, can you please describe some of them?

27. Have you ever encountered any positive or negative reactions or comments from people because you work with inmates or ex-offenders? If yes, what happened? [if they focus only on positive or negative examples, ask for examples of the type they do not emphasize]

28. Do you think being employed in a job where you work with incarcerated men or ex-offenders supports the common good in your community? Why or why not?

29. Do you think working with inmates or ex-offenders has impacted your health or well-being in any way? If yes, how so?

30. Has your health or well-being ever influenced the decisions you made about working with inmates or ex-offenders? If yes, can you please discuss what happened?

31. When you retire from your job, do you think you will volunteer to assist inmates or ex-offenders to transition back into society? Why or why not?

32. Do you think your moral beliefs have anything to do with how you think or act when it comes to your work with inmates or ex-offenders? If yes, how so?

33. What advice, if any, would you offer to someone who is seeking employment that involves working with incarcerated men or male ex-offenders?

**Religion**

1. Do you believe in God?

2. Do you think of yourself as a religious or spiritual person? If yes, in what ways?

3. Do you have a particular religion or spiritual tradition? If yes, what is it?

4. Do you attend religious or faith-based services? If yes, how often?
Ask Volunteers:

5. Do you think your faith or religious beliefs have anything to do with how you think or act when it comes to helping inmates or ex-offenders? Why or why not?

6. Do you think helping inmates or ex-offenders affects your faith or religious beliefs? If yes, how so?

7. Do you ever feel that your religion or religious beliefs affect how you are treated or perceived by incarcerated men or male ex-offenders? If yes, how so?

Ask Workers:

5. Do you think your faith or religious beliefs have anything to do with how you think or act when it comes to working with inmates or ex-offenders? Why or why not?

6. Do you think working with inmates or ex-offenders affects your faith or religious beliefs? If yes, how so?

7. Do you ever feel that your religion or religious beliefs affect how you are treated or perceived by incarcerated men or male ex-offenders? If yes, how so?

At the end of the Interview:

Is there anything else you would like to say about re-entry efforts?

Thank you for being part of this research study on re-entry efforts.
REFERENCES


