Motivations to Mentor Ex-Offenders

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Dedication

This is dedicated to the mentors of the Community Offender Reentry Program, who provide invaluable support to a demographic that might otherwise have no one.

Abstract

Correctional agencies, scholars and offenders alike have stressed the importance of positive support for someone being released from incarceration. When community members provide support, reintegrative shaming can occur, whereby the offender is welcomed back into the community through displays of forgiveness for their harmful actions. Using qualitative data from the Community Offender Reentry Program, mentors' motivations to work with the incarcerated were explored – a topic largely unaddressed in previous research. Common motivations were identified in the study, including prior exposure to the criminal justice system or incarcerated population. Implications for mentor recruitment are also discussed.

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Introduction

There are some things that cannot be forgotten. There are people who will always stand out in your memory.

Meeting a man who survived his daughter's "violent abduction and murder" (Kelleher, 2000), the trial of her assailants, and a dialogue process with the men found responsible for her rape and murder is one of those things. He is one of those people. Participating in victim-offender mediation allowed Don Streufert and his family to "express their feelings and get answers to questions unaddressed during the trial" (Miller, 1998), but it was a long and often painful process. Although he did not set out to forgive the men, Streufert has said that he "began to experience something like forgiveness" during the mediation process, explaining that "forgiveness was something happening in me that had nothing to do with their behavior" (Miller, 1998).

Maybe Don Streufert isn't memorable because of the tragic events of his past, but because of the immense perspective he maintains today. Even after their mediation ended, Streufert stayed in touch with one of the men. In contemplating this man's possible parole, Streufert has asked classes, "Who will help the man to reenter society once he is released from prison?" The sincerity in his voice as he asks is astounding. His concern for the community and for the man is striking. In this way, Streufert is an advocate for many community programs that work with ex-offenders upon release, but few programs have benefitted from Don's advocacy for community involvement in the reentry process as much or as directly as the Community Offender Reentry Program

(CORP) at SOAR Career Solutions, where he has volunteered both as a mentor and as a group facilitator.

The Community Offender Reentry Program

Originally created to address the needs of displaced homemakers – women who found themselves as the sole support for their families without the skills to obtain employment – Project SOAR became one of the programs offered at the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in Duluth, Minnesota, in 1980. Three years later, Project SOAR chartered as a private, nonprofit corporation separate from the YWCA and continued to serve displaced homemakers as well as others in similar social and economic circumstances. However, as funding streams for its earlier programs dried up, Project SOAR began to look in new directions. The organization saw funding opportunities in the area of community reentry and applied for a grant through the Prisoner Reentry Initiative, which they received. In 2006, the Community Offender Reentry Program was born and the organization's name was changed to SOAR Career Solutions to reflect its expanded focus, which was to offer "short-term [employment] services…and also in-depth, long-term support needed by some to break the cycle of poverty and successfully enter the workforce" (SOAR Career Solutions, n.d.).

Today, CORP assists individuals returning to the Duluth area from incarceration by providing case management, employment services, mentors and pro-social activities. Individuals are referred to the program by their correctional case worker and may begin receiving services pre-release. After release, clients meet with their CORP case manager

weekly to address barriers to their stability and success within the community. In addition to case management services, clients are given the option to participate in recovery and cognitive change groups and to be matched with a mentor.

Mentors are volunteers from the community who agree to meet with an ex-offender mentee for one to two hours each week over the course of one year, acting as a positive social support during that time. Prior to being matched with a mentee, each prospective mentor is interviewed by the mentor coordinator to determine who they might best match. The mentor coordinator asks about their interests, motivations and any hesitations they may have about volunteering at CORP. Mentors also complete an initial training that addresses communication, boundaries and other issues that are meant to prepare them for working with ex-offenders. The initial training offers mentors a definition of their role: they are not a friend, coach, or savior but a supportive peer. Mentors are offered additional training opportunities throughout their time at CORP.

I interviewed to be a mentor in the summer of 2010. Afterwards, I wondered how many mentors have worked with ex-offenders and how mentors for this population are recruited. When I asked these questions, the mentor coordinator did not have an exact count of mentors who had volunteered at CORP. Previous mentor coordinators did not keep records of their matches, making it difficult even to estimate. In terms of recruitment, the coordinator explained that some of the current mentors signed up after seeing a presentation about CORP at a school, church or club; while others heard about the program from someone who was already a mentor and decided to volunteer.

I chose to volunteer at CORP after listening to Don's presentation. I wanted to fill a need in the community and gain experience in my field of study. Why had other mentors chosen to work with ex-offenders instead of at-risk youth or some other demographic? What brought them to CORP? In this study, mentor interviews were analyzed to form a knowledge base about mentors' motivations that will guide future mentor recruitment at CORP. A review of the available literature on reentry programs and key components to a successful reentry illustrated the necessity of mentors to those returning to the community from incarceration. Best practices in mentor relationships were also researched to determine how closely CORP aligns with the recommended programming and how it might improve.

Literature Review

Reentry Programs

Prisoner reentry, also known as community reentry, refers to an inmate's reintegration into society following their release from a correctional institution. Sieter and Kadela (2003) provide a two-part definition of prisoner reentry programs: 1) correctional programs that focus on the transition from prison to community, and 2) programs that have initiated treatment in a prison setting and have linked with a community program to provide continuity of care (p. 368). Using their own definition, Sieter and Kadela (2003) evaluated 32 prisoner reentry programs. Their findings were as follows: vocational and work release programs were found to be effective in reducing recidivism as well as in improving job readiness skills, halfway house and drug treatment programs worked in

easing the transition from prison to the community, and pre-release centers were effective in reducing recidivism rates. There were contradictory results for sexual and violent offender programs (Sieter & Kadela, 2003, p. 375-377). Perhaps Gibbons best explained the possibility for prison research to produce contradictory results when he stated, "poorly implemented programs or ones that have been used with the wrong sort of offenders should not be expected to show positive results" (1999, p. 277).

In terms of educational programs, Sieter and Kadela (2003) found that programs increased achievement scores during incarceration but did not decrease rates of recidivism upon release. By contrast, research conducted by Petersilia (2003) which was based on agency data as well as interviews with correctional officials and scholars, found that educational programming and vocational/technical training do reduce recidivism. Other studies have shown that those who participate in correctional education opportunities have lower rates of recidivism when compared to non-participants (Streurer, Smith, & Tracy, 2001; Wilson, Gallagher, & MacKenzie, 2000). Furthermore, studies on the efficacy of different types of correctional education programs have revealed that post-secondary education has a stronger impact on recidivism rates than other forms of education offered within institutions (Batiuk, Lahm, Mckeever, Wilcox, & Wilcox, 2005; Duwe & Clark, 2014).

The available literature on reentry programs that provide mentor relationships during or after incarceration is limited. Lewis, Maguire, Raynor, Vanstone, & Vennard (2007) evaluated seven Pathfinder projects in Great Britain. The Pathfinder projects all provided welfare needs and cognitive programming to participants, and two of the seven

projects also matched participants to a mentor. The researchers found these provisions significantly reduced barriers to participants' reintegration and, for the two Pathfinders with a mentor component, lowered participants' rate of reconviction. This was especially true for participants who maintained contact with their mentor post-release. Other research has also found that mentors have a greater impact when they are matched to the offenders pre-release and the match continues post-release (Brown & Ross, 2010; Geither, 2012; Jablecki, 2005; Whitehead, 2011).

Mentoring 4 Success, a state-wide reentry initiative in Kansas, is another mentor program cited in the literature. The initiative seeks "to provide a mentor for each offender returning to the community to support their successful reentry" (Roberts, 2012, p. 10). Roberts (2012) informs us that Mentoring 4 Success was operational for nearly seven years at the time of his commentary, and claims that the program has "enjoyed great success" but does not provide any outcome data (p. 10). Similarly, Geither (2012) provides only an overview of the program. Her research does, however, point to several "best practices" that Mentoring 4 Success follows which are also relevant here. First, contact between the mentor and mentee should begin pre-release and continue after release. This fulfills Sieter and Kadela's requirement that programs initiate treatment in the prison setting and continue care in the community post-release (2003). Second, mentoring should be tied to the case plan. This can be achieved by having the mentor meet with the mentee and his or her case manager on a regular basis or by the mentor working on a specific goal from the case plan with the mentee. Third, ongoing communication between all parties (i.e. mentor, mentee, and case worker) is key and

should be a primary concern for the mentor coordinator. Lastly, it is imperative the match

last for a sustained period since there is some evidence that the duration of the

relationship is more important than the length or frequency of contacts between mentor

and mentee (Geither, 2012).

Although little research has been done on programs that provide mentors to ex-

offenders, there is a substantial amount of work stating the importance of support to a

successful reentry, some by inmates themselves.

Supporting Reentry

Richard S. Jones is one such inmate. As a member of the growing group of

convict criminologists, Jones is part of a unique branch of criminology in which

"empirical research [is] conducted and written by convicts or ex-convicts…or by

enlightened academics who critique existing literature, policies, and practices" (Ross &

Richards, 2003, p. 6). Jones (2003) points out that the two most important factors to a

successful reentry are a strong social support system and meaningful employment.

Edward Tromanhauser (2003), another convict criminologist, agrees. He says the three

basic needs for anyone coming out of prison are a place to stay, employment, and

"someone who believes in him or her and will provide support" (p. 93). These needs are

not independent of one another, as research by Baldry, McDonnell, Maplestone and

Peeters (2006) has shown.

> [T]he relationship between social issues and difficulties for prisoners such as
>
> homelessness, mental illness/disturbance, intellectual disability…have indicated a

high level of difficulty for these persons in securing suitable accommodation upon

release. The factors just discussed, along with others such as unemployment, are

interactive with and interdependent upon each other. (p. 22)

Baldry et al. (2006) investigated the extent to which housing and related social factors

affected prisoner reintegration in Australia.

Currently, as many as 80% of ex-offenders are released to community supervision

and are required to write a release plan indicating where they will live, who will be

staying at the residence, what other supports they have in the community, and who their

employer is, if they have one (Petersilia, 2003). Release plans that address survival needs

(i.e. food, employment, housing, support) are integral to the success or failure of an

individual's reentry since they establish the first steps that a person will take once

released from incarceration (Taxman, Young, & Byrne, 2002). When the arrangements

made in a release plan disintegrate, as happens to many ex-offenders, the formal agencies

involved in release planning (i.e. parole or probation agents, social service providers) are

positioned to rally resources to support reintegration (Petersilia, 2003; Taxman et al.,

2002). When no support is in place to receive the person being released – or no formal

plan was established, as is the case for the 20% of ex-offenders who are not released to

community supervision – the likelihood that he or she will be able to meet any of their

needs and refrain from criminal activity is severely diminished. According to Petersilia

(2003), the same formal agencies must also facilitate informal social controls to connect

ex-offenders to churches, law-abiding neighbors and the greater community because

"these informal social bonds are the strongest predictors of ultimate desistance from

crime" (p. 19). This is why mentor relationships are invaluable to reentry: "released offenders need temporary support from the society that has placed them in prisons" (Tromanhauser, 2003, p. 92). Braithewaite termed this phenomenon "reintegrative shaming" and defined it as social disapproval of the offender's harmful actions "followed by efforts to reintegrate the offender back into the community of law-abiding or respectable citizens through words and gestures of forgiveness" (1989, p. 100).

Conforming to the definition of a reentry program presented by Sieter and Kadela (2003), CORP offers transitional services to individuals being released from incarceration to the Duluth area, beginning with assessment and case planning services pre-release and continuing months or even years after release with case management and referral services. CORP has enhanced the continuity aspect of Sieter and Kadela's model by having the same in-house case manager meet with ex-offenders before and after release, essentially offering clients a formal social support person to guide them through the entire reentry process. Emphasizing the impact of this setup, CORP clients who participated in a 2009 evaluation of the program unanimously agreed with the statement, "I feel supported by CORP staff in my transition process" (Carlson, p. 9). In the post-release setting, CORP clients are given the option of being matched to a mentor (an informal social support). Carlson (2009) found that participants liked the mentor component of the program but felt it would be more beneficial to them if there were more mentors available, if the matching process was shorter, and if mentors received training. Study participants indicated that support and community involvement, both of which are increased by a mentor relationship, were important to their reentry. In answering the

question, "What does a successful reentry look like to you?" 10 of the 24 participants indicated that community involvement is part of a successful reentry. Similarly, when asked "What do you feel you need in order to continue transitioning successfully?" one third of the participants pointed to support from their church, CORP, a mentor and/or family.

The Mentor Relationship: Best Practices

Mentor relationships founded between a community member and an offender constitute a relatively new type of mentoring when compared with the traditional education- and occupation-based mentor relationships. Traditionally, the mentor is an older, more experienced person who passes knowledge to a younger, less experienced person (Blake-Beard, 2009; Fischler & Zachary, 2009). Matches between community volunteer mentors and ex-offender mentees, by contrast, do not focus on age and experience so much as the pair's willingness to maintain contact and to work together to achieve goals which allow the mentee to regain their footing and find their place in society.

General mentoring literature has shown that as mentor-mentee pairing is used in different circumstances and between individuals who do not fit the traditional model, there has been a corresponding change in the roles of mentor and mentee. The traditional mentor model "is being replaced by a more learner-centered approach, one that requires a conscious shift in roles for both mentor and mentee and a re-orienting of the learning process" (Daloz, 1986; quoted in Fischler & Zachary, 2009). According to Fischler and

Zachary (2009), the learning process now has seven discernible practices upon which

mentor-mentee pairs can focus: reciprocity, active learning, relationships, partnership,

collaboration, mutually-defined goals, and development.

Reciprocity refers to the duo's equal engagement in the relationship (Fischler &

Zachary, 2009). It represents the idea that each person has something to gain from the

relationship: mentees receive direction which enables them to successfully navigate their

reentry, while mentors can expect to experience satisfaction from sharing their own

experiences, insights, and advice with another person (Hamilton & Hamilton, 1992). For

both parties, reciprocity may serve to expand their perspectives either by affirming what

they already know or by introducing ideas that challenge their current beliefs.

In active learning, the mentee is able to gain an expanded perspective that

includes practical and self-reflexive knowledge (Fischler & Zachary, 2009). Their new

self-awareness can be applied to endeavors outside the mentor relationship.

Relationships, in particular those that are not established naturally, take a great

deal of time and effort to develop trust and mutual respect. Mentoring programs construct

a relationship that is "known to be potent when it occurs naturally" (Hamilton &

Hamilton, 1992, p. 547). Relationships develop naturally as individuals "become close

through contact in their daily lives" but "it is not clear that a program can replicate this

process" (Hamilton & Hamilton, 1992, p. 550). In their study of a mentoring program for

female offenders, Brown and Ross (2010) found both mentors and mentees recognized

the artificial nature of their relationship but that this did not detract from the relationship's

quality. Their work substantiates Hamilton and Hamilton's finding that programs may not

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be able to replicate the natural development of a relationship but suggests that even relationships which are artificial can be powerful.

Partnership is similar to reciprocity within the relationship in that input should come from both the mentor and mentee, but partnership differs by emphasizing the need for the mentee to take the driver's seat. This practice of partnership is one area where a major shift away from the traditional model has occurred: rather than passively receiving knowledge from the mentor, the mentee is now more engaged in the learning process and the mentor is less of an authority figure (Fischler & Zachary, 2009).

Collaboration requires that each person bring their own experiences to the relationship (Fischler & Zachary, 2009). By sharing experiences and learning together, the mentor and mentee can produce shared meaning in their relationship and cement their bond.

The mentor and mentee should also establish mutually-defined goals which serve to expand upon goals set by the mentee (Fischler & Zachary, 2009). Once the mentee has decided what he or she would most like to work toward, the pair can work together to clarify and articulate those goals. This presents an opportunity for the mentor relationship to tie into the case plan, one of the best practices mentioned earlier by Geither (2012). According to Hamilton and Hamilton (1992), having specific and clearly-defined goals in the mentor relationship was a relief to mentors who had previously expressed concern about the vague program goals of building character and competence. As goals are accomplished, the mentor and mentee should revisit the original goal plan to celebrate their successes, to refocus their energies, and perhaps to create new goals. Involving the

case manager in this process would be one way to maintain open lines of communication between all parties, another of the best practices described by Geither (2012).

Finally, development in the relationship should be directed toward the future aspirations of the mentee. Central to the mentor relationship, development requires that each person pause to reflect on and ask questions about the relationship to ensure they are addressing the mentee's needs (Fischler & Zachary, 2009).

If the mentors and mentees are able to implement these practices, they should also be able to successfully bridge the gap between where the prisoner is at the time of their release and where he or she needs to be in order to remain law-abiding and successfully reintegrate into the community.

Exploratory Research Questions

I questioned whether mentors were involved in a religious or faith community which influenced their decision to volunteer at CORP. Religious ministry to the imprisoned dates back to the 15th century, offering historical evidence of the same behavior (Whitehead, 2011). Furthermore, many offender and ex-offender mentoring programs in operation today were born from faith-based initiatives (Jablecki, 2005b). Despite the lengthy history and recent revival of religious involvement in the criminal justice system, there is little research that links religion or religious attitudes directly to an individual's decision to volunteer with the incarcerated (Taniguchi & Thomas, 2011). What is known is that "[m]any people volunteer, though in different ways, inspired by

their religious faiths to serve the needy" (Wuthnow, 1994; quoted in Taniguchi & Thomas, 2011, p. 339).

As a secular mentoring program, CORP may be distinctly disadvantaged when it comes to drawing religious volunteers. In their study of the impact of religious attitudes on volunteering, Taniguchi and Thomas (2011) found that religious exclusiveness significantly promoted volunteering in religious areas only while religious inclusiveness promoted secular and religious volunteering. Therefore, members of religious or faith communities where religious exclusiveness is taught would be significantly less likely to volunteer at CORP because religious exclusiveness downplays the individual's concern for people outside their religious community (Taniguchi & Thomas, 2011).

On the other hand, the research by Taniguchi and Thomas (2011) established that feelings of empathy toward one member of a stigmatized group (in this case, ex-offenders) can result in a more positive attitude toward the group as a whole. Moreover, we have greater empathy for those who are "similar to us, to whom we are emotionally attached, for whom we feel responsible, or whose perspective we adopt" (Batson C. D., Ahmad, N., & Tsang, J., 2002; quoted in Taniguchi & Thomas, 2011, p. 339). This suggests potential mentors will have certain familiar experiences with the ex-offender population that generate empathy and foster their involvement as mentors. An emotional attachment or empathy based on a feeling of responsibility could indicate a personal, familial or intimate relationship with an ex-offender (i.e. friend, son or daughter, spouse). Taken to the extreme, the ability to adopt an ex-offender's perspective could indicate the mentor was once incarcerated. A similar idea was revealed in the Formative Evaluation

of CORP, where it was stated, "There are quite a number of folks who have struggled in the past, straightened up and now want to help" (SOAR Career Solutions, 2008, p. 11). Based on this information, I believed mentors would have experience with the ex-offender population prior to their involvement in CORP. The research was aimed at discovering the types of experience mentors had with the population.

Methodology

Design

The purpose of this research is to identify what motivates mentors to work with the ex-offender population. The research is exploratory in nature and asks: 1) what types of experience mentors had with the offender or ex-offender populations prior to their involvement in the Community Offender Reentry Program, and 2) whether mentors are involved in a religious community which influenced them to volunteer with ex-offenders.

The research uses qualitative information from mentor interviews (see appendix) to determine how and where potential mentors for the ex-offender population may best be recruited. The mentor interviews were conducted previously by a mentor coordinator. I analyzed the interview contents for common motivations to work with the ex-offender population. It was my intention to create a profile of the typical mentor using demographic information from the study; however, demographic data was only available for 15 of the 24 subjects.

Participants were not offered any direct or indirect benefits for their participation in the study. The information gleaned from this study will guide future mentor

recruitment at CORP. If more mentors are recruited and matched to ex-offenders, it is less likely that those ex-offenders will recidivate. For society, this means safer, more unified communities and less money spent on incarceration: for ex-offender mentees, it increases the likelihood of staying out of jail or prison.

An application for approval was submitted to the University of Minnesota's Institutional Review Board (IRB) in October 2010. The review board determined the study, as described, did "not meet the regulatory definition of research with human subjects and do not fall under the IRB's purview for one or both of the following reasons: 1) the proposed activities are a) not a systematic investigation and/or b) not designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge; and/or 2) you will not obtain private identifiable information from living individuals."

Consent

The acting mentor coordinator, as of October 2010, authorized the access and use of the mentor interviews for the purposes of this study. The Institutional Review Board determined that additional consent from the subjects was unnecessary because no private identifiable information would be gathered.

Sample

The sample for this study was drawn from the Community Offender Reentry Program (CORP) at SOAR Career Solutions in Duluth, Minnesota. At the time the study was conducted, there were 26 mentors active in CORP. Due to the small sample size, mentors were only excluded from the study if their interview responses were not documented, as was the case for two individuals. Therefore, 24 mentor interviews were analyzed for the study.

Of the 24 mentors whose interviews were used in the study, 14 were men and 10 were women. Demographic information was available for 10 of the men and five of the women who were a diverse group including whites, African Americans, Native Americans and Hispanic.

Research Method

The research for this study involved content analysis of secondary data culled from mentor interviews. The interviews were previously conducted by a CORP mentor coordinator in order to gather enough information about the mentor (including hobbies, interests, preferences in a mentee, and concerns) to match him or her to an ex-offender mentee. The interviewer's notes, taken during each interview, were analyzed for recurring terms. The manifest content of each interview was coded to show common themes in the mentors' motivations to work with the ex-offender population that aligned with the research questions. This study did not address any latent content contained in the mentor interviews and was not exhaustive.

Reliability of the content analysis was assured through use of the test-retest method. With the test-retest method, the study's reliability is measured by having one person, the researcher, code the interview notes on two different occasions and then calculating the proportion of items which were coded the same on each occasion (Maxfield & Babbie, 2009). According to Maxfield and Babbie (2009), "some time should elapse between the two coding operations" (p. 245). In the present study, the second coding operation took place approximately two years after the first and produced two changes, making the study 99.2 percent reliable. Both changes in the coding operations were due to context. For example, in the original coding operation, a mentor was coded as being involved in a religious community because a church name was written in the interview notes. In the second coding operation, this was not coded because the church reference was not an indication of their personal faith but had been offered as an example of the resources the mentor was familiar with in the community.

Limitations

Due to the sample being comprised only of mentors from the Community Offender Reentry Program, any findings will not be generalizable to mentors in other types of programs. The findings may, however, be useful in similar offender and ex-offender mentoring programs.

There was a slight gender imbalance in the study. The targeted population consisted of community volunteers who were previously interviewed by a CORP mentor coordinator in regards to becoming a mentor. Equal gender representation within the

study was thereby limited to the available mentor interviews. In order to minimize the impact of this imbalance on the study's findings, data was separated according to gender.

All data gathered for this study was taken from mentor interviews, which were recorded by an interviewer (not the researcher) at the time of interview. Therefore, information not included in the notes was unknown to the researcher and was excluded from the study. It is possible that the mentors had more varied experiences with the population prior to volunteering at CORP. Mentors may also have had more themes in common with one another than what the content analysis showed.

The interviewer(s) did not record the date interviews took place. The majority of interviews were completed over a period of 18 months, between October 2009 and early 2011. However, some interviews may have been conducted prior to October 2009.

The research for this study was exploratory due to the lack of previous research conducted on mentors' motivations to work with ex-offenders. Further research could reveal additional motivations among mentors, provide explanations of the causal relationships between these motivations and volunteering with ex-offenders, or turn attention to another aspect of ex-offender mentoring (e.g. the matching process and whether or when it is successful).

Findings

Research Questions

My research questions are: 1) what experiences did mentors have with the population prior to volunteering at CORP, and 2) whether mentors are involved in a

religious community which influenced their decision to volunteer with ex-offenders. I completed a content analysis of the 24 available mentor interviews (14 male, 10 female) and highlighted examples supporting each research question in the interviews. All findings in the study are divided according to gender.

Nearly every mentor in the study (23 of 24) had experience with the population prior to volunteering at CORP. The analysis showed that the types of experience mentors' had differed, and included: a) mentors who were incarcerated or in trouble themselves, b) mentors who knew someone that was incarcerated or in trouble, and c) mentors who were exposed to the system or population. The term "in trouble" was used to represent criminal behavior that did not result in incarceration. For example, one mentor (M4) shared that he had a DWI and said, *"I've made mistakes in life. Fortunately, I didn't end up in jail."* Mentors were counted as being exposed to the system or population if their interview mentioned law enforcement or social service employment, internships or other volunteer work where they would have come into contact with the offender population. One woman (F7) explained that she was motivated to be a mentor by *"the job that I have now. There are so many clients involved with systems, generational involvement."* She wanted to *"make an impact somewhere to stop the cycle."*

More male than female mentors had prior experience with the offender population. This was true for each type of experience found in the study. Fourteen percent (two) of the male mentors in the study had been incarcerated or in trouble themselves, while no female mentors indicated having a period of incarceration or otherwise being in trouble. Thirty-six percent (five) of the male mentors and 30 percent

(three) of the female mentors knew someone incarcerated or in trouble. Ninety-three

percent (13) of the male mentors and 80 percent (eight) of the female mentors were

exposed to the system and/or population prior to volunteering at CORP, making it the

most common type of experience in the study. Table 1, below, shows each mentor's

interview and how it was coded.

Table 1. Mentors Representing Each Research Question

| Mentors | Prior Experience with Ex-Offender Population | | | Active In a Religious Community |
	Incarcerated Or In Trouble Themselves	Knew Someone Incarcerated or In Trouble	Exposed to the System or Population	
Male 1			X	
Male 2			X	
Male 3			X	
Male 4	X		X	X
Male 5		X	X	X
Male 6		X	X	X
Male 7		X	X	
Male 8	X	X	X	X
Male 9			X	
Male 10		X		
Male 11			X	
Male 12			X	X
Male 13			X	
Male 14			X	
Female 1			X	
Female 2				
Female 3		X	X	
Female 4			X	
Female 5		X	X	
Female 6		X		
Female 7			X	
Female 8			X	X
Female 9			X	
Female 10			X	X
Totals (24)	**2**	**8**	**21**	**7**

Seven mentors (five male, two female) had more than one type of experience with the population prior to volunteering at CORP, accounting for 35.7 percent of the sample. When asked what he had to offer in a mentor relationship, one man (M7) shared that he worked in social service, in the welfare and social security offices, for a combined 25 years. Additionally, this volunteer had a *"nephew in trouble"* who motivated him to contribute back to the community through mentoring (M7). When coding his interview, the mentor was counted as knowing someone incarcerated or in trouble and as someone with exposure to the system or population. Both men who had been incarcerated or in trouble also had exposure to the system or population outside of that experience, one getting involved with prison ministry and the other working in treatment centers. However, only one of the mentors counted for both the first and second subcategories, saying that he (M8) *"went to prison for six months at the age of 17"* and that he had a friend who was incarcerated. Six mentors (four male, two female) experienced the combination of knowing someone incarcerated or in trouble and being exposed to the system or population, representing one quarter of the mentor sample and making it the most common combination in the study.

In order to determine whether the mentors were involved in a religious community, the interviews were counted if the mentor referred to their church or faith during the mentor interview. Five male mentors (35.7 percent) and two female mentors (20 percent) indicated they were involved in a religious community. One man (M6) said that he was *"spiritually motivated to help people"* while another mentor (M12) explained that he *"came from a religious background and had an 'if you can help them out, you*

should' attitude". Likewise, a female mentor (F8) shared that she cared for the *"spiritual aspect of self and others"* and had gained *"spiritual direction"* while attending a local college where she became close with her teacher, who was also a pastor. Since this study was confined to the questions asked in CORP mentor interviews, it was unclear if the mentors' religious involvement was a motivator in their decision to work with ex-offenders or if it was merely a coincidence.

Common Themes

While completing the content analysis, four other themes were culled from the mentor interviews: 1) a history of volunteering, 2) having been mentored, 3) experience with addictions, and 4) experience with mental illness. The coding of each mentor's interview for these themes is shown in Table 2.

More than half of the mentors in the study, nine men and six women, mentioned having a desire to volunteer. When answering the question of what motivated her to be a mentor, one woman said that it was *"being able to give back"* (F9). In fact, the phrase "give back" was used by four mentors (three male, one female) in describing their motivations. The phrases "help others" and "volunteer" were also prevalent, with a combined seven mentors (four male, three female) using one or both of the phrases in their interviews. Several of the mentors discussed past volunteering experiences. A few mentioned that they are currently volunteering at other organizations, indicating a tendency for people who volunteer to do so at more than one organization. This finding,

although unexpected, is a huge victory for recruiters, who can expect some return from targeting volunteer-dominated organizations.

Table 2. Mentors Representing Each Theme

Mentors	History of Volunteering	Having Been Mentored	Experience with Addictions	Experience with Mental Illness
Male 1				
Male 2	X		X	
Male 3	X			
Male 4	X	X	X	
Male 5	X	X		
Male 6	X		X	
Male 7	X			
Male 8	X		X	
Male 9				
Male 10	X			
Male 11			X	
Male 12				
Male 13	X			
Male 14				
Female 1				
Female 2	X			
Female 3	X	X	X	
Female 4			X	
Female 5				X
Female 6				
Female 7	X			
Female 8	X	X		
Female 9	X	X		
Female 10	X			X
Totals (24)	**15**	**5**	**7**	**2**

Five mentors at CORP (two male, three female) shared that they had once had a mentor. One of the men (M4) credited his former mentor with his education, saying she was *"instrumental in encouraging me to go back to school and get a degree. She wouldn't allow me to quit."* He then said, *"Since that time I have looked for ways I could*

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do the same for others," speaking directly to how her influence has motivated him to be a positive role model (M4). Another example proffered by a female mentor (F3) referenced her experiences with addiction and recovery and the role her mentor played in that recovery, saying that *"it's good to have someone other than family to be involved."*

She was not the only mentor who had experience with addictions. Another female mentor (F4) facilitated *"an aftercare group through Women's Transitions,"* a local nonprofit, and Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings. Similarly, one of the male mentors (M6) had *"40 years of sponsoring people through AA."* A cumulative seven mentors (five male, two female) had experience with addictions, and five of the seven indicated that they were once chemically dependent. Regardless of how personal their experiences, the mentors' knowledge of addictive behavior offers another type of experience mentors may have with the population prior to volunteering at CORP. This type of experience is particularly significant when considering that "90% of Minnesota inmates are diagnosed as chemically abusive or dependent" (Minnesota Department of Corrections, 2014a, p. 1).

Two female mentors (8.3 percent) had experience with mental illness. One of the women (F5) shared that she *"has an adult mentally ill daughter"* and *"has advocated for self and daughter with [the] county"*. She expressed feeling criminalized in the process and likened her experiences to those of someone being released from incarceration. Both women's familiarity with mental illness presents an added type of experience mentors may have with the population. Although a low percentage of this sample indicated having experience with mental illness, the fact that 25-65 percent of prison populations are receiving mental health services (Minnesota Department of Corrections, 2014b, p. 1)

indicates the need for this type of experience, or at least training, for anyone working closely with the population.

Discussion

Best Practices at CORP

The research indicated several best practices that mentoring programs for ex-offenders should follow: mentors and ex-offender mentees should be matched pre-release and continue their relationship post-release, mentoring should be tied to the case plan, there should be ongoing communication between all parties, and the match should last for a sustained period of time (Geither, 2012). The Community Offender Reentry Program has implemented each of these best practices but improvements to the program can still be made.

Currently, CORP case managers meet with an ex-offender client prior to their release to conduct an intake interview and identify goal areas for his or her case plan. The same case manager who meets with the client pre-release continues to work with him or her after release in order to provide continuity of care from the institution to the community. If the client identifies pro-social activities and support as one of their goal areas, the case manager informs the mentor coordinator who, in turn, tries to match a mentor to the client pre-release. Rarely does this happen. Often a mentor-mentee match is not made until after release. For the matches that do begin pre-release, contact is more likely to be made through mail than in person, reinforcing the artificial nature of the relationship. CORP can improve by matching more mentors to mentees pre-release. This

might be achieved by having an available (unmatched) mentor accompany the case manager when they first meet with and interview the client. There are inherent downfalls in this setup. The available mentor and the mentee to whom they are matched may have less in common than matches made post-release because there is less time for the mentor coordinator to compare the interests of the mentee and prospective mentor. Furthermore, the travel necessary to meet in person may require a larger time commitment from the mentor at the outset of the relationship. On the other hand, meeting in person can emphasize the mentor's interest in and commitment to the mentee regardless of how much or how little they have in common. By accompanying the case manager, the mentor's travel cost is covered by the program and CORP would not spend any more than if they sent the case manager alone.

The mentor-mentee match is finalized in the match meeting during which both parties (witnessed by the mentor coordinator) sign agreements committing to the relationship and the expectations established by CORP (i.e. meeting 1-2 hours per week for a year). The mentor further agrees to maintain contact with CORP staff regarding the match's meetings and activities, any concerns of mentee involvement in illicit activities, or if they believe the mentee poses a threat to themself or others. The mentor log form, which details when the pair met or spoke, is the primary means of ongoing communication between the mentors and mentor coordinator. While the mentor coordinator may keep the mentee's case manager informed of the match's progress, it is uncommon for ongoing communication to take place directly between the mentor and the case manager. In order to maintain open lines of communication between all parties, the

mentee's case manager should be present at the match meeting to introduce themself to the mentor. This will make later communication between the two less awkward. Currently, mentor groups are held on a monthly basis, offering a regular time and place for mentors to interact with the mentor coordinator and other mentors regarding successes and challenges in their relationships. If CORP case managers also attend these groups, it would further open the lines of communication between mentors and the staff. Finally, mentors should occasionally be invited to attend the weekly meetings between their mentee and his or her case manager. This type of involvement would not only further communication between all parties, but would also present an opportunity for mentors and the mentoring relationship to tie into the case plan.

Presently, mentors do not participate in case management meetings. However, having the mentor present at an agreed upon meeting interval (e.g. once each month, once every three months, etc.) would supply the mentor with detailed information about the goals their mentee has set. In their first meeting together, the case manager and mentor-mentee pair could determine which goals are most important to the mentee and which require immediate attention, and decide together if the mentor is well-suited to assist with a specific goal. For example, if a mentor who is or was a teacher is matched with someone who wants to obtain their general education diploma (GED) and pursue secondary education, the mentor's background is compatible with the mentee's aspirations and the mentor may be better able to assist the mentee than his or her case manager would be. Having specific and clearly-defined goals in the mentor relationship, like the educational attainment just described, was a relief to mentors who previously

expressed concern about vague program goals (Hamilton & Hamilton, 1992). In follow-up meetings, the three parties could discuss progress toward the mentee's goals, refocus their energies, celebrate any achievements, and even set further goals.

Research suggests that the duration of the mentor relationship is more important than the length or frequency of contacts between the mentor and mentee. CORP requires the mentor and mentee to meet 1-2 hours each week for a year. However, for a variety of reasons, many of the program's matches have not lasted that long. Further research is needed to determine why matches dissolve before the year-long contract has ended and what can be done to bolster mentor retention within the program. Future research could also differentiate between mentors who withdraw from the program and mentors who persist in the program, which would enhance recruitment as well as retention efforts.

Implications for Recruitment

The most widespread finding in the study was that mentors were exposed to the criminal justice system or incarcerated population prior to volunteering at CORP, with 21 of 24 mentors indicating they had this type of experience. In terms of volunteer recruitment, this implies that it would be beneficial to seek out individuals working or volunteering in social service agencies and government offices, where there is a high degree of overlap between the agencies' clients and the incarcerated.

The second most common finding, that mentors had a history of volunteering, was noted in 15 of 24 mentor interviews. This finding suggests the best places to find volunteers are at other, volunteer-dominated organizations. This is because volunteers, or

at least the mentors volunteering at CORP, tend to give their time and efforts to more than one cause. Alternatively, CORP and other organizations whose programming depends on volunteers might consider partnering to put on an annual or semi-annual volunteer fair to draw in community members and students from the local colleges. Similar events have occurred irregularly in the past, with some success.

There were relatively low numbers of mentors in this sample who indicated having experience with addictions and mental illness (seven and two, respectively). This finding may be accurate or it may be due to the fact that mentors were not directly asked if they had these types of experiences. Regardless, the prevalence of chemical dependency and mental illness among incarcerated populations makes a strong case for mentors to receive training on both topics.

The mentor coordinator should continue to give presentations at churches and clubs in the area where they have successfully recruited volunteers in the past. Maintaining connections with the African American Men's Group and other clubs whose members are demographically similar to the minority populations overrepresented in correctional facilities is particularly important. In any presentations, the mentor coordinator should remain cognizant of the fact that people are more likely to help those they feel empathetic toward (Taniguchi & Thomas, 2011). Accordingly, the mentor coordinator should try to call attention to similarities between the prospective mentors and mentees in presentations.

Although the findings are not generalizable, they may be useful for program staff at other mentoring programs and at non-profits who depend on volunteers to meet certain programming needs.

Conclusion

A mentor is an essential component to a successful reentry because "released offenders need temporary support from the society that has placed them in prisons" (Tromanhauser, 2003, p. 92). I found that mentors are motivated to work with ex-offenders out of familiarity, which took the forms of: exposure to the population through prior employment or volunteer opportunities, experience with chemical dependency and other addictive behaviors, knowledge of mental illnesses, having a friend or relative who was incarcerated, or being incarcerated themselves. Although there was proof of religiosity among the mentors, the question of whether they were motivated by their faith to work with ex-offenders was not answered. Past volunteering was found to be an indicator of willingness to volunteer again, lending weight to the maxim "the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior." The study also found that experience as a mentee motivated some to become a mentor, demonstrating the far-reaching effects of positive social support and showing how one memorable person can touch the lives of many.

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Appendix: Mentor Interview Questions

1. What motivates you to be a mentor?

2. What do you feel you have to offer in a mentor relationship?

3. How would you describe yourself?

4. Do you have any experience with this population (ex-offenders)?

5. What is your comfort level in working with this population? Ever visited a correctional facility?

6. What are your concerns regarding working with this population? (Boundaries? Safety?)

7. What do you have to offer this population?

8. How do you handle conflict?

9. What is the most important thing in your life and why?

10. Do you have any questions/concerns regarding the time commitment?

11. What are your preferences in a potential mentee?