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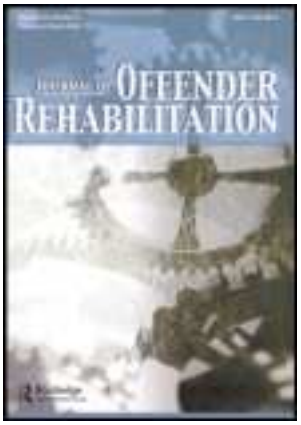

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Faith-based organizations administer many of the prison-based programs aimed at reducing recidivism. Many of these organizations also manage treatment programs for substance abusers, at-risk juveniles, and ex-offenders. Much of the research on religiosity and delinquency indicates that the two are inversely related. Therefore, it seems plausible that faith-based programs, which are rooted in religious organizations, may be effective tools for reducing deviant and criminal behavior. However, it is unclear whether the empirical evidence supports such a claim. This study is an evidence-based assessment of the effectiveness of faith-based programs for reducing recidivism. The results of this study indicate that faith-based programs "work" to reduce recidivism. Directions for future research are discussed.

KEYWORDS faith-based programs, prison programs, recidivism, religion and criminality, religiosity

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of the United States, religion has been inextricably tied to our penal system. The penitentiary was founded on the premise that offenders should not only be punished, but should have the opportunity to repent from their deviant behavior. Early correctional efforts centered on Judeo-Christian

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principles in an effort to reform prisoners. Upon entering the penitentiary, prisoners were given a Bible and housed primarily in solitude. The goal was to allow prisoners time for spiritual reflection in which they offered penitence to God and sought forgiveness. Spiritual transformation was considered the best defense against future offending; therefore, religion was the primary mechanism for explaining and controlling criminal behavior. By the 20th century, scientific knowledge replaced religion as the paradigm for explaining and controlling criminal behavior (Clear, Hardyman, Stout, Lucken, & Dammer, 2000). As a result, religion was no longer considered the best method for correcting or managing crime.

During the 21st century, correctional ideology shifted back toward religious strategies for addressing crime. Conservative politics and the inability of science to "cure" criminal behavior were the primary catalysts for a "religious comeback" (Clear et al., 2000, p. 54). Today, religious organizations administer many of the prison-based programs aimed at reducing recidivism. Additionally, many religious organizations also manage treatment programs for substance abusers, at-risk juveniles, and ex-offenders. However, there is a lack of empirical evidence to support the claim that faith-based programs are effective in reducing recidivism or preventing criminal behavior. The purpose of this investigation is to evaluate the effectiveness of faith-based programs in reducing recidivism.

FAITH-BASED INITIATIVES

Faith-based initiatives can best be described as social programs or services that are administered by an organization with some type of religious affiliation. Faith-based programs fall under the umbrella of what is known as "intentional religion." Intentional religion refers to "the exposure to religion one receives at a particular time in life for a particular purpose" (Johnson, Tompkins, & Webb, 2002, p. 8). Stated another way, individuals are intentionally placed in or receive treatment within a religious organization to meet a specific need. Some examples include: (a) prisoners who participate in a Christian-based prison program that emphasizes prayer, Bible study, and spiritual transformation as a way to avoid future offending; (b) at-risk juveniles are matched with volunteer mentors from a religious organization with the goal of helping the juvenile avoid delinquent behavior; and (c) drug addicts who enroll in faith-based conversion drug rehabilitation programs to achieve sobriety or avoid relapse (Johnson et al., 2002). In summary, faith-based programs offer the same or similar types of rehabilitation programs and services as secular programs, the primary difference being some type of religious component.

Background

In 1996, former President Bill Clinton signed into law the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity and Reconciliation Act. One of the key

guidelines of this legislation is the Charitable Choice (Section 104) provision. The provision has three primary goals: (a) to encourage states to expand the involvement of community and faith-based organizations in the public antipoverty effort; (b) to protect the religious integrity and character of faith-based organizations that are willing to accept government funds to provide services to underserved populations, such as the poor and needy; and (c) to preserve the religious freedom of individuals who seek assistance from faith-based organizations. Charitable Choice extended governmental funding to faith-based organizations, which was a radical departure from previous provisions that had excluded governmental funding to religious organizations. Even so, Charitable Choice went virtually unnoticed until George W. Bush campaigned to expand its provisions during his 2000 presidential bid.

As one of his first acts as president, Bush signed an executive order creating the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (OFBCI). The primary reason for creating the OFBCI was to create "a more open and competitive Federal grant-making process [that would] increase the delivery of effective social services to those whose needs are greatest" (White House Faith-Based & Community Initiative, 2001, para. 2). To facilitate the faith-based initiative, centers have been established in seven federal agencies including the United States Departments of Justice, Agriculture, Labor, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Education, and the Agency for International Development. The primary responsibility of these centers is to promote faith-based initiatives, which includes supporting organizations that provide assistance to people in need, especially organizations that serve at-risk youth, prisoners, the elderly, the homeless, substance abusers, and welfare-to-work families.

The Bush Administration made the claim that federal regulations and restrictions resulted in faith-based organizations being discriminated against when seeking federal funding for their social service programs. According to one report, the administration accused federal agencies of discrimination against faith-based organizations and asserted that nonprofit organizations have long enjoyed a monopoly on federal grant money without having to prove their effectiveness (Wilhelm, 2001). The Bush Administration proposed that Charitable Choice provisions be expanded to include all federal social services programs, and that federal regulatory barriers prohibiting religious organizations from competing for government funds should be removed.

In response to Bush's effort to engage both faith-based and community-based organizations in social services programs, Representative J.C. Watts (R-Oklahoma) introduced The Community Solutions Act in 2001 (H.R. 7). This new legislation included the expansion of the Charitable Choice provisions. Originally, Charitable Choice only covered state programs implemented under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Charitable Choice programs covered under this provision include food stamps, Medicaid, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). In addition,

community and faith-based organizations may provide work programs (e.g., on-the-job training, job-skills training, and GED programs), food programs (e.g., food pantries, subsidized meals, and shopping), maternity homes for unmarried minor mothers or expectant mothers who cannot stay with their parents, and medical and health services (e.g., abstinence education, drug and alcohol treatment, vocational rehabilitation, and health clinics). Under the Watts proposal, Charitable Choice would have extended assistance to state, community, and faith-based organizations under a variety of social services.

It is no surprise that the proposal to expand faith-based initiatives sparked controversy. The primary point of contention seemed to be whether the federal government should allow religious-based organizations to apply and compete for federal grants. Opponents have argued that funding faith-based programs violates the constitutional principle of "separation of church and state" (Feldmann, 2003, p. 2). However, others have argued that Charitable Choice was consistent with the most recent ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court regarding separation of church and state in Mitchell v. Helms (2000). In a 6–3 decision, the Court held that government funded computers could go to parochial schools, as long as the assistance is available to public and private secular schools as well. The Court ruled that the government may support faith-based organizations if the rationale is to further a legitimate secular goal—improving literacy rates, for example—but not to advance religion (Loconte & John, 2001). Faith-based initiatives do attempt to address a legitimate secular goal, namely crime prevention. Based on this ruling, it could be argued that the funding of faith-based programs does not appear to violate "separation of church and state."

Others have argued that the Charitable Choice provision would allow religious organizations to discriminate in their hiring practices. For example, Christian institutions may retain the right not to hire individuals who do not profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Opponents of the bill claim this amounts to federally funded employment discrimination, which is unconstitutional (Loconte & John, 2001). After serious debate on the expansion of Charitable Choice provisions, H.R. 7 passed the House, but failed to pass the Senate.

In an attempt to salvage some elements of his Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, President Bush, along with Senators Joseph Liberman (D-Connecticut) and Rick Santorum (R-Pennsylvania), put forth a compromise version to H.R. 7 (S 1924), the Charity Aid, Recovery and Empowerment Act (CARE) of 2002. The CARE Act emphasizes tax incentives for greater donations to charity, rather than expanding Charitable Choice. This revised bill passed both the Senate and House and was touted as a Bush Administration victory, but in reality it did very little to further the national faith-based initiative.

In February 2009, President Barack Obama signed an executive order that changed the name of the White House Office of Faith-Based and

Community Initiatives to the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. The mission of this agency is to:

> Bring together leaders and experts in fields related to the work of faith-based and neighborhood organizations in order to: identify best practices and successful modes of delivering social services; evaluate the need for improvements in the implementation and coordination of public policies relating to faith-based and other neighborhood organizations; and make recommendations to the President, through the Executive Director, for changes in policies, programs, and practices that affect the delivery of services by such organizations and the needs of low-income and other underserved persons in communities at home and around the world. (Executive Order 13199 Amended, 2009, para. 12)

RELIGIOSITY AND CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR

Researchers have argued that individuals who are involved in religious organizations are less likely to be involved in criminal behavior (Burkett, 1977, 1980; Higgins & Albrecht, 1977). However, Hirschi and Stark (1969) muddied the empirical waters regarding the relationship between religiosity and delinquent behavior with their landmark study, "Hellfire and Delinquency." The researchers examined a random sample ($n = 4{,}077$) of students from public junior and senior high schools in Contra Costa County, California in 1964. Hirschi and Stark (1969) hypothesized that juveniles who believed in the concepts of "sin" and "hell," and who attended church and Sunday school, were less likely to commit delinquent acts. Religiosity was measured by church attendance (e.g., frequent attendance, at least once a month, and infrequent attendance, less than once a month). Delinquency was measured using police records (i.e., official number of offenses committed in the previous three years) and self-report data. The self-report delinquency index consisted of six items (e.g., petty and grand larceny, auto theft, vandalism, drug use, and assault). Contrary to expectations, the researchers found that frequent church-goers and "students who believe in the Devil and in life after death are as likely to commit delinquency as are students who do not believe in a supernatural world" (Hirschi & Stark, 1969, p. 210).

In a replication of Hirschi and Stark's study, Burkett and White (1974) examined a random sample ($n = 855$) of high school seniors from the Pacific Northwest. They also hypothesized that juveniles who attended church were less likely to be involved in delinquency. Frequency of church attendance was used as a measure of religiosity. Delinquency measures included larceny, vandalism, assault, and drug use (e.g., alcohol and marijuana use). Consistent with Hirschi and Stark's study, they found partial support for the hypothesis that those who frequently attended church were as likely to

commit delinquent acts (e.g., larceny, vandalism, and assault). However, the findings revealed a moderately strong inverse relationship between church attendance and use of marijuana and alcohol.

Additional studies indicate that religiosity does have a negative impact on deviant and criminal behavior. Higgins and Albrecht (1977), for example, examined the relationship between religiosity and delinquency in a random sample ($n = 1{,}383$) of Atlanta, Georgia tenth graders. They used two items to measure religiosity (e.g., which church they attend and how often they attend church or religious services). The outcome measure of delinquent behavior included 17 items, which ranged from relatively minor offenses (e.g., skipping school) to more serious offenses (e.g., sold narcotics). The results indicated a modest to moderately strong negative relationship between church attendance and each of the 17 delinquent behaviors. Additional research supports the findings of Higgins and Albrecht (1977) that church attendance and delinquency are inversely related (see e.g., Albrecht, Chadwick, & Alcorn, 1977; Burkett, 1977; 1980; Jensen & Erickson, 1979).

In another study, Evans, Cullen, Dunaway, and Burton (1995) assessed the impact of religiosity on adult criminal behavior using a sample ($n = 477$) of white males from a midwestern, urban area.[1] They used three multi-item dimensions of religion to measure religiosity, which included religious beliefs (hellfire), religious values (salience), and religious activity. They also included a measure of general religiosity. A 43-item scale was used as a measure of adult criminal behavior. The authors found that three of the four measures of religiosity were not statistically significant in reducing adult criminal behavior. However, religious activities had a direct effect on reducing adult criminal behavior. This relationship held even with the introduction of secular controls, and it was not dependent on religious or social contexts.

Johnson, Larson, De Li, and Jang (2000b) examined whether individual religiosity acted as a protective factor against drug use and other illegal activities using a sample ($n = 2{,}358$) of inner city black youths from Boston, Chicago, and Philadelphia. A single-item measure, church attendance, was used as an indicator of individual religiosity. The outcome measures included three crime categories: (a) nondrug crime; (b) drug use; and (c) drug selling. The researchers found individual religiosity was significantly related to a reduction in offending in all three categories.

Additional research indicates that the relationship between religiosity and delinquency may be spurious. For example, a study conducted by Cochran, Wood, and Arneklev (1994) examined a sample ($n = 1{,}600$) of high school students from Oklahoma to determine whether the relationship between religiosity and delinquency would remain when controlling for measures of arousal and social control theories. As noted by Cochran et al. (1994), the ideal indicators of arousal would be to use both neurological and extraneurological (i.e., physiological and self-reported) measures. However, the researchers were unable to use neurological and physiological

indicators and instead settled for self-report data. The arousal scale included measures of thrill-seeking, impulsivity, and physicality (which were strikingly similar to self-control measures). Indicators of social control measures of internalized control (self-esteem and the California Personality Inventory socialization scale), parental control (parental supervision and broken-home status), and institutional control (school attachment and commitment) were included. Three measures of delinquency were examined: interpersonal delinquency (assault and robbery), property theft (larceny and auto theft) and property damage (vandalism, arson, and burglary). Religiosity was measured by two different scales including religious participation (church attendance), and religious salience (importance of church). The findings indicated when controlling for both arousal and social control indicators, the effect of religiosity is reduced to insignificance in the case of assault, theft, vandalism, illicit drug use, and truancy. As a result, the authors concluded that the relationship between religiosity and delinquency is spurious with regard to assault, theft, vandalism, illicit drug use, and truancy. Both religious participation and salience remained significant for legalized substances (e.g., tobacco and alcohol).

THE PRESENT STUDY

The purpose of the present study is to conduct an evidence-based assessment of faith-based programs to determine whether they are effective for reducing recidivism. Others have attempted to assess the effectiveness of faith-based programs. For example, Johnson et al. (2002) completed a comprehensive literature review of the effectiveness of faith-based programs. Our study goes beyond that of Johnson et al.'s (2002) review because we use an evidence-based evaluation that is considered the superior method for assessing the effectiveness of programs designed to reduce or prevent criminal behavior (Sherman, Farrington, Welsh, & MacKenzie, 2002).

METHODS

The Maryland Scientific Methods Scale (SMS) is one of the most widely accepted tools for assessing scholarly works in criminology. It enables criminologists to critically evaluate the effectiveness of various types of justice-related programs including those focusing on crime prevention strategies. The SMS is a 5-point scale that uses specific criteria to assess (or score) the methodological rigor of studies ranging from Level 1 (*least rigorous*) to Level 5 (*most rigorous*).

Some of the criteria used to evaluate the quality of a particular study include the use of pretests and posttests, randomization of the experiments, the use of comparison and control groups, history, selection bias, causal

order, evaluation of measurement error, statistical power, research design, and assessments of internal and external validity (Sherman et al., 2002). If a study has sufficient methodological rigor (i.e., Level 3 or higher), researchers can classify the effectiveness of a program into one of four categories: "what works, what does not work, what is promising, and what is unknown" (Sherman et al., 2002, p. 18).

Programs can be classified as "working" if there are at least two Level 3 to Level 5 evaluation studies that have statistically significant results in the theoretically expected direction, and the preponderance of empirical evidence suggests programs are effective. Programs may be classified as "not working" if there are at least two Level 3 to Level 5 evaluations that conclude the effectiveness of the programs are statistically insignificant, and the preponderance of the empirical evidence indicates the programs are ineffective. Those programs that can be coded as "promising" must have at least one Level 3 to Level 5 evaluation study that has found the effectiveness to be statistically significant, and the preponderance of the empirical evidence suggests that the program is effective. Programs that cannot be classified into one of the three other categories are defined as having "unknown" effects (Sherman et al., 2002).

RESEARCH ON FAITH-BASED PROGRAMS

As previously noted, the research on religiosity and delinquency indicates that individuals who participate in religious organizations are less likely to participate in deviant and criminal behavior. Thus, it seems plausible that faith-based programs, which are rooted in religious organizations, may be effective for reducing criminal offending. Proponents of faith-based initiatives argue that religious organizations provide social services more effectively than public agencies (Johnson et al., 2002). To date, there is little empirical evidence to suggest that faith-based programs are more effective than their secular counterparts (see for exceptions Clear et al., 2000; Johnson et al., 2002). In addition, there is a general lack of empirical support for the claim that faith-based programs are effective in addressing many social ills, including criminal behavior. It is also important to note that there are a limited number of studies that have assessed or evaluated the role faith-based programs have played in the reduction of delinquent and criminal behavior.

Descriptive Studies

A total of three descriptive studies were identified and included in this evaluation of the effectiveness of faith-based programs to reduce delinquent and/or criminal behavior (see Table 1). Two of the studies included in this review

TABLE 1 Faith-Based Programs

Study & author(s)	Sample size	Scientific methods score	Description of intervention & findings
Prison Fellowship Ministry Young, Gartner, O'Connor, Larson, and Wright (1995)	180/185	4 (T and matched C) Multiple sites 8- to 14-year follow-up	Training of volunteer prison ministers. PFM had higher survival rates.
Prison Fellowship Ministry Johnson, Larson, and Pitts (1997)	201/201	4 (T and matched C) Multiple sites 1-year follow-up	Participation in PFM programs (i.e., in-prison seminars, life plan seminars, and Bible studies). PFM inmates most active in Bible studies are less likely to recidivate
Ten Point Coalition Winship and Berrien (1999)	N/A	1 (exploratory study)	Describes a community faith-based outreach program of Boston.
Teen Challenge Hess (1976)	Not reported	2 (exploratory study) (T and nonmatched C)	Comparison of Teen Challenge participants with TC dropouts and noncompleters. TC group had lower recidivism and higher employment rates.
Teen Challenge Thompson (1994)	25	1 (exploratory study)	Examined recidivism in a a group of TC graduates. Significant long- term changes in behaviors and attitudes.
Teen Challenge Bicknese (1999)	59/59	3 (T and matched C)	Examined drug relapse in a a group of TC graduates and short-term inpatients. TC group less likely to need additional drug treatment, more likely to be drug-free and employed.
Humaita Faith-Based Prison Johnson (2002)	148/247	3 (T and matched C) 3-year follow-up	Comparison of a faith-based and industrial prison. Humaita high-risk and low-risk offenders less likely to recidivate.

Note. T = treatment group; C = control group.

are evaluations of the effectiveness of the Christian-based Teen Challenge's drug treatment programs. The first study compared a sample ($n =$ not reported) of graduates (i.e., those who successfully completed the program) with induction center dropouts (i.e., those who dropped out at the beginning of the program) and training center dropouts (i.e., those who were unwilling or unable to complete the program) between 1968 and 1975 (Hess, 1976). A total of 366 individuals were identified but only 198 (54%) of those completed surveys. According to self-report data, individuals who graduated from the Teen Challenge center showed significant and positive behavioral changes when compared to the two dropout groups. Specifically, individuals who graduated from the Teen Challenge program were more likely to be employed, less likely to have sought additional drug treatment, and less likely to have criminal records over the 7-year follow-up period (Hess, 1976).

The second study surveyed former Teen Challenge participants who had successfully completed the four to six month induction program based in Chattanooga, Tennessee (Thompson, 1994). Graduates of the program from a 12-year period (1979–1991) were identified ($n = 213$) and a random sample of 50 was subsequently surveyed. Only 50% of the potential respondents completed surveys ($n = 25$). Thompson (1994) concluded the Teen Challenge graduates have experienced a significant change in both their behaviors and attitudes with long-term effects. This is a curious finding given the small sample size and the lack of a control group with which to compare the Teen Challenge graduates.

Winship and Berrien (1999) investigated whether the Ten Point Coalition (TPC), based in Boston, Massachusetts, had an impact on the reduction of youth violence. The TPC, which consisted of churches and local police departments, joined forces in an effort to reduce youth violence. Prior to these organizations coming together to address youth crime, according to one report, the police lacked credibility in the black community (Winship & Berrien, 1999). When the TPC and police joined forces, many felt that the TPC helped to create an "umbrella of legitimacy for the police to work under" (Winship & Berrien, 1999, p. 67). Ministers within the TPC organized community outreach programs designed to help troubled youth avoid gang involvement. The ministers also began to report offenders who were involved in gang or criminal activity to local law enforcement.

As primary evidence that the program "worked," Winship and Berrien (1999) noted youth homicide rates between 1990 and 1998 had dropped significantly. Specifically, between 1990 and 1998, youth murders dropped from a high of 152 to a low of 35, which is a 78% decline. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (1994), national homicide rates were fluctuating (i.e., there were decreases and increases in youth homicide rates depending on the year) between 1990 and 1993. After 1994, national homicide rates began to decline across the United States (BJS, 2001). As a result, it seems more

plausible that the Boston decline in homicide rates is likely attributed to an overall national decline in homicide rates during this time period.

Multivariate Studies

Two of the four multivariate studies identified evaluated the effectiveness of separate programs affiliated with the Prison Fellowship Ministries (PFM; see Table 1). Young, Gartner, O'Connor, Larson, and Wright (1995) used a longitudinal quasi-experimental design to examine whether a faith-based prison program that trained federal inmates as volunteer prison ministers was effective in reducing long-term recidivism. The researchers compared inmates who received the PFM training ($n = 180$) with a matched control group ($n = 185$) over an eight to 14-year follow-up period. Inmates were furloughed to Washington, DC for an intensive two-week prison ministry seminar, provided by PFM and supported by the Federal Bureau of Prisons. According to Young et al. (1995, p. 101), the purpose of the training "was aimed at deepening the prisoners' Christian faith and preparing them to provide Christian fellowship and support to their fellow inmates." The PFM training did not have the explicit purpose of reducing long-term recidivism, but the researchers wanted to assess whether this was an outcome of the program.

The overall finding of the chi-square test and survival analysis indicated that the experimental group had significantly lower rates of recidivism than the control group, but when disaggregating the analysis some different findings emerged. The PFM training was effective for low-risk offenders, but not for high-risk offenders. By definition, low-risk offenders would be less likely to re-offend in the future than high-risk offenders. It seems that the program worked for individuals who were already at a lowered risk of recidivism. In addition, the PFM training was not effective in reducing recidivism among African American males. Contrary to research expectations, African American males in the PFM group became recidivists at a slightly higher rate than African American males in the control group. The findings also indicate that women who participated in the PFM seminar had a drop in recidivism four times greater than the men. As a result of these findings, one can only conclude that the PFM was more effective for certain groups of offenders than others.

Johnson, Larson, and Pitts (1997) examined the impact of religious programs on institutional adjustment and recidivism rates in two matched groups of inmates from four adult New York State prisons. The PFM group ($n = 201$) was compared to a matched control group ($n = 201$). Both groups were similar on measures of institutional adjustment, as measured by both general and serious disciplinary infractions, and recidivism, as measured by arrest data during a 1-year follow-up period. The programs offered by the PFM included in-prison seminars, life plan seminars, and Bible studies. The in-prison

seminars and Bible studies were designed to assist inmates in "their walk with Christ" and to "provide an ongoing opportunity to study God's word and to enjoy Christian fellowship" (Johnson et al., 1997, p. 151). The life plan seminars were designed to help the offender to reintegrate into society and to enhance their success after release.

The researchers categorized the PFM groups into high, medium, and low participation classifications. The findings indicate that there was no difference in the PFM group and the non-PFM group with regard to general institutional infractions. Although the researchers did not find a significant difference in the groups, they found the high PFM participants were slightly less likely than their non-PFM counterparts to commit general institutional infractions. The findings also show that there was no significant difference in the PFM and non-PFM groups with regards to serious prison infractions. After controlling for level of PFM participation, the high PFM group was slightly more likely than the medium and low categories to commit serious institutional infractions, which was in the unexpected direction. In examining the recidivism data, researchers concluded that there was no significant difference in arrest during the one-year follow-up. After controlling for level of PFM participation, a different pattern emerged. After the one-year follow-up, the high PFM participants were significantly less likely than medium or low PFM participants and their non-PFM counterparts to be rearrested.

Bicknese (1999) conducted a comparative evaluation of the faith-based Teen Challenge drug treatment program using a one-year follow-up. Those who had successfully completed Teen Challenge ($n = 59$) were compared to a matched control group ($n = 59$), which was composed of clients in short-term in-patient (STI) programs funded by Medicaid and Medicare. The groups were similar with regards to demographic and background (e.g., drug use and prior criminal record) measures. Before and after interviews were used to assess the effectiveness of the Teen Challenge program. The outcome measures included freedom from addictive substances, return to treatment, employment, and precipitants of drug use such as depression or cravings. Teen Challenge graduates scored as high or higher compared to their STI counterparts in all areas of the study. Specifically, the Teen Challenge group was more likely to remain sober and maintain employment than the STI group. In addition, fewer Teen Challenge graduates returned to treatment than in the STI group.

In the final study, Johnson (2002) conducted an exploratory analysis comparing the recidivism rates for two Brazilian prisons. Braganca prison was primarily based on a vocational model and the use of prison industry to better prepare offenders for release and to reduce the cost of operating the facility. Humaita prison was the first known prison to adopt a completely faith-based approach to all aspects of prison administration, security, and programming. The Humaita prisoners ($n = 148$) were compared to Braganca prisoners ($n = 247$) on several factors including severity of offense, category

of offense, and time incarcerated. The Humaita prisoners differed significantly from the Braganca prisoners on severity of offense; that is, Humaita prisoners' offense severity was slightly greater (3.9) than Braganca prisoners' (3.4). Humaita prisoners were also more likely to have committed more violent offenses than Braganca prisoners. This means that we would expect the Humaita prisoners to be at a greater risk for reoffending because of their more serious criminal histories.

Recidivism rates of the two prison samples were compared over a 3-year postrelease period from January 1996 through December 1999. The outcome measure of recidivism included a two-item measure of new arrest and reincarceration. The findings revealed the recidivism rates for both prisons were relatively low, Braganca (36%) and Humaita (16%). In comparison, there was a 20-percentage point difference between the recidivism rates of the two facilities, with Humaita's rates being lower. Additionally, this finding held when controlling for high-risk as well as low-risk offenders. These findings indicate that Braganca's faith-based model has long-term treatment effects.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of faith-based programs for reducing recidivism. Proponents of faith-based initiatives often argue that religious organizations provide social service programs more effectively than public agencies (Johnson et al., 2002). Unfortunately, research indicates that there is little empirical evidence that faith-based programs are more effective than their secular counterparts (Johnson, 2002). In addition, few studies have evaluated the effectiveness of faith-based programs and their ability to reduce crime. However, Johnson et al. (2002, p. 21), in a comprehensive literature review of faith-based organizations, concluded their effectiveness to be "positive and encouraging" although his he did not conduct an evidence-based assessment. Based on limited research reviewed here, it appears that faith-based organizations "work" to reduce recidivism.

All of the studies reviewed here were evaluated using the Maryland Scientific Methods Scale created by Sherman et al. (2002; see Appendix A). Three of the studies reviewed were descriptive studies with methodologically weak research designs (see e.g., Hess, 1976; Thompson, 1994; Winship & Berrien, 1999). As a result, it is impossible to draw any definitive conclusions regarding the effectiveness of these faith-based programs and services (although the researchers of these studies did draw conclusions).

In an effort to rule out rival and/or alternative explanations, experimental designs (i.e., the random assignment of groups) are preferable (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). In all of the studies included in this

review, researchers were brought in to evaluate programs after the programs had already been implemented, which means that random assignment was not an option. But it is important to note that all of the multivariate studies reviewed for this study were of strong methodological quality. To be more precise, each of the studies reviewed used quasi-experimental designs (Bicknese, 1999; Johnson et al., 1997; Young et al., 1995). Two studies were longitudinal, which can help to establish whether there are long-term treatment effects (Johnson, 2002; Young et al., 1995).

The most serious flaw with the studies reviewed was that researchers failed to measure religious attachment, which is a key construct that defines the nature of faith-based programs (see for a similar argument Johnson et al., 2002). The majority of studies that investigated the relationship between faith-based programs and crime used "involvement" in church activities or church attendance as proxy measures of religiosity. From a social control perspective, research indicates that involvement in conventional activities is the least empirically supported proposition of the theory. Yet research on faith-based programs and their ability to reduce crime indicates that those who are most involved in church activities or regularly attend church are less likely to be involved in delinquent and criminal behavior. Researchers argue that this relationship may be more complex than the research findings suggest. For example, Benda and Corwyn (1997) claim that it may actually be the attachments that people form with the church or with church members that influence their subsequent behavior. In other words, those individuals with strong social attachments would be less likely to participate in deviant behavior.

The limitations notwithstanding, four studies were identified and reviewed, which had sufficient scientific rigor to draw some preliminary conclusions. In evaluating the programs administered and managed by Prison Fellowship Ministries, the programs appear to work for certain offenders under certain conditions. Young et al. (1995) found that PFM training was effective for low-risk offenders but not for high-risk offenders. In addition, the program did not significantly reduce recidivism among African American males. The PFM training had its greatest effect with females, who had the most dramatic reduction in recidivism. It may be that females form strong attachments within the faith-based programs, which leads to a reduction in recidivism. Future research should investigate why the program seems to be more effective for certain offenders.

Johnson et al. (1997) conducted a similar study evaluating the effectiveness of PFM programs to reduce institutional infractions and recidivism. They found no significant difference in the PFM and the non-PFM groups with regard to reduction in institutional infractions. Additionally, while controlling for level of PFM participation, individuals who reported high levels of participation were slightly *more* likely to commit serious institutional infractions, which is the unexpected direction. However, high PFM participants were less likely than medium and low PFM participants and their non-PFM

counterparts to be rearrested. Once again, researchers should investigate why the program seems to be more effective for certain offenders.

Bicknese (1999) conducted a study of the Teen Challenge program and its ability to reduce drug use. The Teen Challenge group was more likely to remain sober, maintain employment, and was less likely to return to treatment than the comparison group. The findings indicate the Teen Challenge program had at least short-term effects in reducing substance use. Still a longer follow-up period would have been preferable to assess the long-term effects of the program.

The final study conducted by Johnson (2002) examined recidivism rates for two Brazilian prisons. One prison was based on a vocational model and the other on a faith-based model. The faith-based prison showed lower levels of recidivism in the 3-year follow-up period. In other words, the faith-based prison model showed long-term treatment effects. This finding held when controlling for high-risk as well as low-risk offenders, which is encouraging.

We concluded that faith-based programs reviewed work to reduce recidivism. These findings should be tempered by the fact that the research on faith-based programs is limited and much of the research is methodologically weak. On the other hand, it would be premature to abandon faith-based programs. Instead, future research should use more rigorous research designs to determine whether faith-based programs are indeed effective for reducing criminal behavior.

NOTE

1. There were black respondents but they were subsequently dropped from the analysis because their response rates were not representative of the population from which they were selected.

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APPENDIX A

The Maryland Scientific Methods Scale

Research designs

	Before-after	Control	Multiple units	Randomization
Methods Score				
Level 1	O	O	X	O
Level 2	X	O	O	O
Level 3	X	X	O	O
Level 4	X	X	X	O
Level 5	X	X	X	X

Threats to internal validity

	Causal direction	History	Chance factors	Selection bias
Methods Score				
Level 1	X	X	X	X
Level 2	O	X	X	X
Level 3	O	O	X	X
Level 4	O	O	O	X
Level 5	O	O	O	O

Source: (Sherman, Farrington, Welsh, & MacKenzie, 2002).

Note: X = present and O = absent.