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Original Manuscript

Vol. 64, No. 5 (April 2020): 470-497

International Journal of
Offender Therapy and
Comparative Criminology
1–28
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DOI: 10.1177/0306624X19872966
journals.sagepub.com/home/ijo
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Prisoners Helping Prisoners Change: A Study of Inmate Field Ministers Within Texas Prisons

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Abstract

Research on incarcerated offenders trained to help prisoners change is rare because programs that equip inmates with practical capacities for helping others rehabilitate in prison hardly exist. An exception is the Field Ministry program in Texas, which enlists inmates who have graduated from a prison-based seminary to work as "Field Ministers" and serve other inmates in various capacities. We hypothesize that inmate exposure to Field Ministers is inversely related to antisocial factors and positively to prosocial ones. We applied manifest-variable structural equation modeling to analyze data from a survey of a random sample of male inmates at three maximum-security prisons where the Field Ministry program operated. We found that inmates exposed more frequently to the Field Ministry and for a longer time period tended to report lower levels of criminological risk factors and aggressiveness and higher levels of virtues and predictors of human agency as well as religiosity and spirituality.

Keywords

prison, rehabilitation, inmate helper, prison seminary, Field Ministry, peer mentoring, religion

Dating back to the 1950s, criminologists have recognized the unique value of having formerly incarcerated individuals work as practitioners helping current prisoners

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reform (Cressey, 1955). Cressey (1965) identified the rehabilitative value of ex-prisoners being placed into trusted positions associated with positive role expectations. Similarly, Riessman (1965) highlighted rehabilitative benefits ex-prisoners are likely to receive from being in the role of helper (LeBel, Richie, & Maruna, 2015). The benefit, of course, is expected not only for ex-prisoner helpers but also for those being helped. Previous studies, however, tend to focus on the benefit to ex-prisoners rather than the incarcerated recipients of their help. Furthermore, scholars have overlooked outcomes of having prisoners help other prisoners change in prison.

To address this gap in research, we examine whether current prisoners formally trained to help other prisoners change contribute to their rehabilitation. This topic has been understudied mainly because programs that educate and equip inmates with practical capacities for helping (e.g., counseling) others change are limited because correctional authorities tend to prohibit prisoners from having authority over one another due to the potential for mistreatment and abuse (Woodall, South, Dixey, de Viggiani, & Penson, 2015). A rare exception is the newly devised Field Ministry program within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), which enlists inmates from a maximum-security prison who participate voluntarily in the prison-based seminary program. Graduates from the seminary work as “Field Ministers” serving their fellow inmates in various functions including peer mentoring or counseling.

We conducted a survey of a random sample of male inmates at three maximum-security prisons that participated in the Field Ministry program and received Field Ministers. We analyzed the data to determine whether inmate exposure to the Field Ministry program, whether it was through receiving service from Field Ministers or participating in programs led by them, was inversely related to antisocial characteristics and positively to prosocial ones. This article begins with a review of literature to provide a context of the present study, followed by a description of the background and content of the Field Ministry program in Texas prisons. Next, we propose research hypotheses before explaining our sample, data collection, measurement, and analytic strategy. We then present results from data analysis and discuss substantive and practical implications of our findings.

Literature Review

Applying Sutherland’s (1924) differential association theory to changing criminals, Cressey (1955) stressed the importance of deploying ex-offender groups who adopted anticriminal value systems inside prisons, suggesting that ex-criminals who became anticriminal increase the chance of reforming other criminals because of their shared we-feeling (Cressey, 1965). Cressey also posited that in attempting to change others, the ex-criminal identifies with the anticriminal group and reforms himself or herself more than the other criminals, in a process called “retroflexive reformation” (Cressey, 1955, p. 119). Similarly, Riessman’s (1965) “helper therapy principle” stated that the helper benefits from his or her helping role via various mechanisms (e.g., self-persuasion through persuading others, self-motivation to be a role model to help others), whereas, unlike Cressey (1955), he did not suggest that the helpers benefit more than the helped. Regardless, having criminals help criminals change has been proposed to be an effective approach to offender rehabilitation.

Prior research tends to provide some evidence of the rehabilitative effect of reformed ex-criminals on currently incarcerated offenders. For example, Volkman and Cressey's (1963) study of drug addicts admitted to "Synanon," a program run by former drug addicts, showed that about a half of them abstained from alcohol or drugs during a 1-year period of participant observation, whereas the remaining half were dropouts. This "success" rate was higher than that of official institutions, which did not use ex-addicts as practitioners. However, such a comparison was not scientifically warranted because comparability between the subjects in Synanon and those confined in official institutions could not be checked and the institutions did not focus on treating drug addicts.

More recently, Griffiths and Bailey's (2015) review of 23 studies in the United Kingdom, which examined a peer support program designed to address self-injury among offenders in prison, also yielded positive evidence. That is, studies published between 1998 and 2014 generally found that the program contributed to preventing self-injurious behavior in prisons. Similarly, experts in policy, practice, and academic research concerning peer interventions in prison tended to agree that peer-delivered programs improved health outcomes, both for the peer deliverer and recipient (Woodall et al., 2015). Furthermore, experts emphasized that mental health outcomes might be more pronounced for peer deliverers than recipients, such as increased levels of confidence and self-esteem.

Based on the "wounded healer" (White, 2000) literature, Lebel, Richie, and Maruna (2015) discussed why allowing formerly incarcerated persons (FIPs) to be in formal helping roles in corrections can be beneficial, particularly, for the FIPs.[1] It offers wounded healers (i.e., FIPs) a chance to earn redemption by making amends in their life and the lives of others, demonstrating that they are assets, not liabilities to be supervised. They accomplish this goal by engaging in "generative" activities (Maruna, 2001; Maruna, LeBel, & Lanier, 2003), such as sharing their experiences and hope, acting as a role model, and mentoring others. As a result, they come to have a sense of agency, prosocial identity, self-efficacy, and a sense of meaning and purpose in life, which all contribute to their own reform. Lebel et al.'s (2015) study of 258 FIPs showed that 29 of them working as staff members were less likely to perceive personal stigma, societal rejection for not paying their debt to society, and injustice of legal system but more likely to report satisfaction with their life as a whole, employment situation, and relationships with close relatives compared with the remaining 229 FIPs receiving prisoner reintegration services as clients.

In their study of 104 formerly incarcerated women, Heidemann, Cederbaum, Martinez, and LeBel (2016) found the "helper/wounded healer orientation"—which refers to "desire and commitment to 'reach back' and help other similarly stigmatized people make it in the world" (LeBel, 2007, p. 5)—was significantly related to self-esteem ($p < .05$) and marginally to perceived social support ($p < .068$) in the positive direction and consistent with the helper principle. Their qualitative data also revealed that engaging in the helper/wounded healer orientation was motivated by good feelings (feeling useful, productive, and good about themselves), a sense of meaning in life, and the positive, caregiving identity it was anticipated to give.

Einat's (2017) interviews of mentor prisoners who helped physically and mentally challenged inmates reported similar motivations for helping others, whereas some of them admitted egoistic and utilitarian motives (e.g., improved chances of receiving an early parole) as well. The peer mentors also said they had benefits from mentoring other inmates, including self-healing and the reinforcement of their self-efficacy and self-image, although serving inmates suffering from severe and chronic mental disorders was both physically and mentally demanding, and thus resulted in a heavy emotional burden.

Based on "the concept of non-professionals providing social, emotional, and/or instrumental support to others with whom they share the same values, experiences, and lifestyle" (Einat, 2017, p. 205; see also Roberts & Rappaport, 1989), it makes sense that peer mentoring is also supposed to benefit mentees who learn from their mentors. For example, Buck's (2017) ethnographic study using 44 interviews showed that peer mentors can inspire mentees because mentees admire their mentors and thus imitate their mentors' desire for self-improvement. The imitation, however, should be accompanied by individual mentee's will to change (i.e., human agency), which is positively influenced by the presence of role models.

Peer mentors have a potential to contribute to "restorative rehabilitation" of current inmates by helping them cultivate moral awareness and the capacity to act virtuously, thereby making the prison a truly *correctional* institution, which Cullen, Sundt, and Wozniak (2001/2014) called "the virtuous prison." Proposing this new model for prisons as an alternative to traditional prisons that focus on legal justice for prisoners, incapacitation, or retribution, they made specific suggestions to create a virtuous environment in prison. One of them was to encourage inmates' contact with virtuous people, such as "mentor inmates" (p. 77) as well as respectable members of the community. They also suggested that not only rehabilitation programs but also activities with a restorative purpose (e.g., making wages to compensate victims with prisoners writing and sending the checks to victims or producing items for the needy, such as toys for poor children) be made available for inmates to participate in, which peer mentors are well positioned to encourage.

Although the rehabilitative effect of FIPs working as practitioners with other offenders, whether in or outside of prison, has been understudied (LeBel et al., 2015), research on the effect of currently incarcerated persons on other prisoners, especially, those formally trained to serve others is rare. This gap in research is due to the rarity of programs that train inmates to help others change in prison, which would address the concern that allowing some prisoners to have authority over other prisoners presents a risk to the safety, security, and control of the correctional institution. An exception, however, is the newly devised Field Ministry program within the Texas prison system.

Field Ministry in Texas

The concept of inmate Field Ministry adopted by the TDCJ originated in neighboring Louisiana with the Bible College at the Louisiana State Penitentiary, more popularly known as "Angola," and its Inmate Missionary program for graduates. The New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS) began offering courses in Christian theology and ministry at the prison in 1995.[2] The seminary quickly added general education courses to the curriculum and began offering fully accredited bachelor's degrees to inmates at no cost to students or the public, a first among American correctional institutions. Rather than paying tuition, students agree to serve as peer ministers among the prison population upon graduation. This internal orientation distinguishes the seminary from most other rehabilitative programs that tend to prioritize recidivism reduction (Duwe, Hallett, Hays, Jang, & Johnson, 2015).

Since 1995, more than 250 graduates have completed bachelor's degrees through NOBTS and served their fellow inmates in a variety of roles. Many Inmate Ministers pastor Angola's two dozen autonomous religious congregations, a unique feature of life at Angola, but many others serve in other capacities, including counseling, academic tutoring, delivery of bereavement notices, instruction in substance abuse, anger management, victim awareness courses, vocational skills training, mentoring of younger inmates, and visitation of inmates within Angola's most high-security disciplinary areas. Furthermore, a small fraction of graduates (approximately 30) have transferred to other Louisiana state facilities as "Inmate Missionaries" to replicate Angola's Inmate Ministry model in new environments (Hallett, Hays, Johnson, Jang, & Duwe, 2017).

The idea of Inmate Ministry has spread well beyond Louisiana, with at least 14 other states currently operating or implementing prison seminary programs modeled to some extent on Angola. Texas was the first such program to launch independently of NOBTS when sister-institution Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS) began sponsoring a seminary program at the Houston-area Darrington Unit in 2011. Inmates from throughout the TDCJ system may apply provided that they have a high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED), a G2 or G3 custody classification,[3] and a minimum of 19 years remaining on their sentence. This remaining sentence requirement ensures that admitted students can complete the 4-year degree with a decade remaining to render service before becoming eligible for parole 5 years before sentence expiration. Although operated by a Baptist seminary from its distinctive doctrinal position, the seminary does not require a profession of faith for enrollment or advancement through the program, and participation is completely voluntary.

Seminary staff and TDCJ personnel collaborate to select annual cohorts of 40 students, and prisoners admitted from other units transfer to Darrington for enrollment (Duwe et al., 2015). Inmate students selected through a rigorous process of admission to prison seminary are trained by seminary curriculum for 4 years. Graduation is not guaranteed, and inmates admitted to the seminary may be removed for academic or disciplinary reasons.

The Darrington seminary graduated its first cohort in 2015 and has graduated three others to date. In contrast to Louisiana, where less than 12% of Inmate Ministers deployed to other units as Inmate Missionaries, the expectation in Texas is that seminary graduates will transfer to other units as "Field Ministers." Darrington retains a fraction of its graduates to fill ministry roles and to provide academic assistance as tutors to subsequent cohorts, but most graduates deploy to other units as members of four- to five-man teams. With its fifth cohort in 2019, TDCJ has deployed Field Ministry teams to 33 (32%) of 103 (not including 3 parole confinement facilities) units in Texas, representing all six TDCJ administrative regions. To facilitate this endeavor, TDCJ employs a Field Ministry Coordinator who makes placement assignments and supervises the work of Field Ministers statewide.

Like Angola's Inmate Ministry, Field Ministry in Texas is not limited to expressly religious education programs. The TDCJ Field Ministry Handbook outlines four broad types of service that Field Ministers may perform under the supervision of their respective wardens and chaplains: (a) "Community Service Ministry" includes orientation of new arrivals to the unit, mentoring, "personal improvement," instruction in reentry/prerelease seminars, and academic tutoring; (b) "Crisis Ministry" includes conduct of funeral and memorial services, geriatric care, grief counseling, and medical and hospice visitation; (c) "Counseling Ministry" includes family reconciliation, offender forgiveness programs, and "tier-walking," the visitation of inmates within higher custody levels unable to attend ordinary programming or chapel services; and finally, (d) "Faith-Based Ministry" operates under the auspices of the unit chaplain to provide discipleship courses, inmate preaching, and planning and conduct of worship services.[4] In sum, Field Ministry in Texas consists of various types of peer interventions in prison settings, including peer education, peer support, and peer mentoring (South, Bagnall, & Woodall, 2017).

The Present Study

In this article, we examine whether exposure to the Field Ministry program is inversely related to antisocial characteristics and positively to prosocial ones. Given the paucity of prior research on programs that train inmates to help inmates change, we cast a wide conceptual net, analyzing data separately for the program's different types of services. Antisocial characteristics include risk factors for crime and deviance (e.g., legal cynicism and negative emotional state) and aggressiveness. For prosocial characteristics, we examine predictors of human agency (i.e., crystallization of discontent and a sense of meaning and purpose in life), which prior researchers studied as signs of offender reformation (Buck, 2017; Heidemann et al., 2016; LeBel et al., 2015). We also examine a concept rarely examined in criminology, virtue (e.g., humility and gratitude). Finally, an inmate's religiosity and spirituality are analyzed as well, given that one of the Field Ministry services is explicitly faith based. In this study, religiosity means religious involvement, and spirituality refers to "the capacity of individuals to stand outside of their immediate sense of time and place to view life from a larger, more objective perspective," which Piedmont (1999) calls "spiritual transcendence" (p. 988). Thus, spirituality is relevant to nonreligious as well as religious people, whereas religiosity applies only to those who practice religion.

Because the Field Ministry program was launched to help inmates change, exposure to the program is expected to be inversely related to risk factors for crime and deviance among inmates. As the program's Faith-Based Ministry intends to help inmates enhance religiosity and spirituality, we predict positive associations between exposure to the Ministry and these two variables. We also expect exposure to the Field Ministry to be positively associated with human agency, "the purposeful execution of choice and individual will" (Sampson & Laub, 2005, p. 37), and virtues, which the program is presumed to help foster and promote.

We focus on two factors that contribute to human agency in offender reformation: crystallization of discontent and a sense of meaning and purpose in life. According to Paternoster and Bushway (2009), an offender's human agency "is expressed through [an] act of intentional self-change" for desistance from crime (p. 1105). They posit that crystallization of discontent (Baumeister, 1994), a cognitive process where "failures or dissatisfactions across many aspects of [an offender's] life are *linked together* and attributed to the criminal identity itself" (p. 1123), provides the offender with the initial motivation to break from crime and engage in a deliberate act of intentional self-change, beginning with a new, prosocial identity.

Another contributing factor for human agency is sense of meaning and purpose in life. According to Frankl (1946/1984), all humans have innate "will to meaning" (p. 121), and, if that desire is not satisfied, it results in "existential frustration" (p. 123), which may lead to deviance and crime. As human beings, offenders have the same innate desire, but if they believe there is no meaning and purpose in life, they may not even attempt change, because such an effort may be perceived as futile or irrelevant (Jang & Johnson, 2017). If, however, they discover meaning and purpose in their lives, whether found in religion (e.g., God's plan for their lives) or elsewhere (e.g., helping people in need), the offenders are motivated to engage in self-change and live life in a manner that is consistent with their newly discovered meaning and purpose.

Finally, the preventive effect of personal virtue on crime is anticipated given the very nature of crime (Jang, Johnson, Hays, Hallett, & Duwe, 2018). For example, gratitude that involves empathic emotions (Emmons & McCullough, 2003) and forgiveness, which restores broken relationships (Krause, 2018), are the opposite to crime, which "results in *pain or discomfort for the victim*" (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990, p. 89) and is driven by vengeance in many instances (Agnew, 2006). Although virtues have rarely been discussed in criminology, Cullen et al. (2001/2014) argued that a central mission of prison should be fostering virtue in inmates. Similarly, Maruna et al. (2003) advocated "strengths-based" corrections that sponsor altruistic behavior by offering inmates voluntary opportunities for generative activities, such as public service work. Thus, it is worth examining whether the Field Ministry program tends to promote virtues among inmates, cultivating their moral awareness and the capacity to act virtuously.

In summary, we test the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Inmate's exposure to the Field Ministry program is inversely related to criminological risk factors and aggressiveness.

Hypothesis 2: Inmate's exposure to the Field Ministry program is positively related to virtues and predictors of human agency as well as religiosity and spirituality.

Method

Sample

Data to test our hypotheses came from a self-administered survey conducted at three Texas maximum-security all-male prisons in February 2017.[5] Our research was reviewed and approved by the TDCJ as well as Baylor University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Several days before the survey was conducted, at our request, the TDCJ provided a 5% random sample of the three prisons' population ($n = 244$)[6] along with their background information including sociodemographic characteristics and criminal history. Two thirds of them (163, 66.8%) agreed to participate in the study.[7] The t tests revealed that inmates who participated were, in general, not significantly different from those who did not, with a few exceptions. Specifically, they were not different in race and ethnicity; intelligence (IQ score); participation in academic, vocational, and cognitive intervention programs; number of confinements in jail; number of offenses (including violent, property, drug, and other offenses) the inmate had committed; and minor and major infractions between 2007 and 2016. However, participants tended to be younger, have higher educational achievement (EA) score (which is the inmate's grade level achieved based on an assessment by the prison's school district), and report higher levels of participation in academic programs than nonparticipants.[8] Thus, we controlled for these three variables in subsequent analysis.

Measurement

Inmates' exposure to the Field Ministry program was measured in terms of frequency and duration using items asking inmates how often and how long they had interacted with Field Minister(s) through each of nine listed services: three items of Community Service Ministry and two items of Crisis Ministry, Counseling Ministry, and Faith-Based Ministry each (see Appendix A for the wording and response options of items as well as their factor loadings and interitem reliability). Based on the results from exploratory factor analysis and interitem reliability analysis, we combined the items of Crisis Ministry and Counseling Ministry into a single composite measure by averaging them, *Crisis and Counseling Ministry*, whereas the mean of *Community Service Ministry* and *Faith-Based Ministry* items were calculated for separate measures.

To measure inmates' negative attitudes toward the law, we employed four items of Sampson and Bartusch's (1998) "legal cynicism." They were all loaded on a single factor with moderate-to-high loadings, ranging from .415 to .717, and had acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .674$). Based on these findings, the four items were averaged for a *legal cynicism* scale. To measure inmates' strain relevant to the condition of imprisonment (Agnew, 2006), we constructed a scale of *dissatisfaction with correctional staff*, using four modified items of Sampson and Bartusch's (1998) "satisfaction with the police scale." The items were clustered on a single factor with moderate-to-high loadings (from .446 to .946) and had acceptable reliability (α = .675) and thus averaged.

Two additional variables of Agnew's (2006) general strain theory were created. One was an eight-item scale of *state depression*, for which we used seven items of Center for Epidemiologic Studies–Depression (CES-D) Scale (Radloff, 1977) and an item about feeling suicidal during the last week prior to the survey. Because the items had moderate-to-high factor loadings (from .482-.899) and high reliability (α = .870), they were averaged. The other was *state anxiety*, measured by Spitzer et al.'s (2006) seven-item scale of General Anxiety Disorder–7 (GAD-7). Items had high factor loadings (from .675 to .840) and excellent interitem reliability (α = .909), so they were averaged. The observation period of state anxiety was the past 2 weeks before the survey.

An inmate's aggressiveness was measured in terms of behavioral intention, *intended aggression*, using the vignette method. Inmates were given a hypothetical situation (see below) and asked how likely they would act in the same manner as the character in the scenario based on a 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = *not likely at all* [0%], 2 = *very unlikely*, 3 = *unlikely*, 4 = *likely*, 5 = *very likely*, 6 = *certainly* [100%]).

> It's Sunday afternoon. Mike is watching on NFL football game in the prison dayroom with other inmates. During a halftime break, Mike goes to the restroom. To reserve his seat, he asks a friend to "hold it down" for him. When Mike comes back, Joe is in his seat. Mike asks Joe to leave because it is his seat. Joe says he can sit anywhere he wants. Mikes asks Joe to leave one more time. This time Joe ignores Mike. Meanwhile, everyone is watching what's going on. Feeling not only dissed but also that he is right, Mike gets into an argument with Joe.

To measure *crystallization of discontent*, we used four items asking about inmates' fear of facing a miserable future without change, perception of the costs of offending, and decision for self-change (Hallett et al., 2017). The items were loaded on a single factor with moderate-to-high loadings and had high reliability coefficients (α = .737), so we averaged them for scale construction. Inmate's sense of *meaning and purpose in life* was measured using four items drawn from Steger et al.'s (2006) Search and Presence of Meaning scale. The items were all clustered on a factor with high loadings (from .682 to .812) and a high interitem reliability (α = .830), and thus were averaged.

We constructed two composite measures of virtue using items of existing scales: two-item scale of *humility* (Krause, Pargament, Hill, & Ironson, 2016) and three-item scale of *gratitude* (McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002), which had acceptable and good reliability, respectively (αs = .644 and .785). Also created were scales of existential belief that God has a purpose and a specific plan for life, *God's Purpose* in life, and virtues tied to relationship with God: *God's Forgiveness* and *Gratitude to God* (Krause et al., 2016). The items of all three scales had high factor loadings and acceptable-to-excellent reliability (αs = .907, .795, and .737).

Inmates' *religiosity* was measured by summing standardized scores of five items: perceived closeness to God, religious salience (i.e., perceived importance of religion), religious service attendance, praying outside of religious services, and reading a sacred text in private. The items had high factor loadings, ranging from .548 to .856, and high internal reliability ($\alpha = .806$). However, to be inclusive of inmates who might claim to be "spiritual but not religious" (Jang & Franzen, 2013), we constructed a scale using five items of Piedmont's (1999) Spiritual Transcendence Scale. The items were loaded on a single factor with loadings ranging from .496 to .712 and good internal reliability ($\alpha = .721$) and thus averaged for a scale of *spiritual transcendence*.

Finally, we constructed control variables of inmates' sociodemographic and criminal backgrounds: *age* (in years), race (the dummy variables of *Black* and *Hispanic* with White being the reference category), *educational achievement score, total offense* (total number of offenses inmate had committed), *length of sentence* (in years), and participation in *academic, vocational*, and *cognitive intervention programming* in prison (0 = no participation, 1 = enrolled in program, 2 = completed program).

Analytic Strategy

We applied a manifest-variable structural equation modeling approach to estimate multiple structural models simultaneously, which enabled us to control for relationships among dependent variables. Specifically, we analyzed the models of 14 dependent variables in six groups, separately for (a) four risk factors, (b) intended aggression, (c) two predictors of human agency, (d) religiosity and spirituality, (e) two personal virtues, and (f) three scales of existential belief and virtues related to God.

For model estimation, we employed Mplus 8 (L. K. Muthén & Muthén, 2017) that incorporates B. O. Muthen's (1983) "general structural equation model" and full information maximum likelihood (FIML) estimation, which allows dichotomous and ordered polytomous as well as continuous variables to be included in analysis. Because variables were measured by ordered categorical (e.g., religious service attendance) and continuous variables (e.g., age), we used the Mplus estimation option of MLR: "maximum likelihood parameter estimates with standard errors . . . that are robust to non-normality and non-independence of observations" (L. K. Muthén & Muthén, 2017, p. 668).

To treat missing data, we employed FIML, which tends to produce unbiased estimates and is one of two "state of the art" methods for missing data treatment along with multiple imputation (Schafer & Graham, 2002, p. 147). The full information approach utilizes all available information by including partially complete cases to provide a maximum likelihood estimation. That is, probable values for missing data points are implied by observed variables, and the inclusion of the partially complete cases increases the precision and accuracy of parameter estimates (Enders & Bandalos, 2001).

All our models were saturated with zero degrees of freedom (i.e., perfect fit), and thus model fit index is not relevant to this study. For statistical significance, we used two alpha levels, .10 as well as .05, given the relatively small sample size.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Variables Included in Analysis ($n = 163$).

Variable	*n*	*M*%	*SD*	Minimum	Maximum
Age	163	42.847	12.449	21	79
Race					
White	41	25.2%			
Black	79	48.5%			
Hispanic	43	26.4%			
Total	163	100.0%			
Educational achievement score	157	8.771	3.017	1.400	12.900
Total offense	163	3.301	2.236	1	11
Sentence length (in years)	163	29.097	20.971	2	60
Academic programming	163	.448	.802	0	2
Vocational programming	163	.429	.793	0	2
Cognitive intervention programming	163	.570	.896	0	2
Legal cynicism	163	1.840	.631	1	4
a. Okay to do anything you want as long as you do not hurt	160	1.819	.831	1	4
b. To make money, there are no right and wrong ways	160	1.663	.800	1	4
c. Fighting with someone in my family is nobody's business	154	2.344	1.012	1	4
d. Laws are made to be broken	160	1.500	.777	1	4
Dissatisfaction with correctional staff	163	2.888	.678	1	4
a. Not doing a good job in preventing serious violations in the prison	161	2.820	.993	1	4
b. Responsive to complaints from inmates[a]	159	3.057	.909	1	4
c. Doing a good job in dealing with problems that really concern[a]	161	1.863	.870	1	4
d. Responding to people in the prison after they have been abused[a]	159	2.560	1.035	1	4
State depression (CES-D)	161	2.568	.839	1	5
a. Could not shake off the blues, even with the help of others	160	2.750	1.264	1	5
b. Felt depressed	160	2.619	1.149	1	5
c. Felt sad	160	2.738	1.090	1	5
d. Not felt like eating and poor appetite	159	2.245	1.256	1	5
e. Felt that everything I did was an effort	159	3.277	1.237	1	5
f. My sleep was restless	157	3.025	1.240	1	5
g. Could not get going	158	2.525	1.160	1	5
h. Felt suicidal	160	1.306	.809	1	5
State anxiety (GAD-7)	161	2.654	1.014	1	5
a. Feeling nervous, anxious	159	2.849	1.279	1	5
b. Not being able to stop or control worrying	159	2.541	1.210	1	5
c. Trouble relaxing	159	2.642	1.239	1	5
d. Being so restless that it is hard to sit still	158	2.342	1.261	1	5
e. Worrying too much about different things	160	2.831	1.270	1	5
f. Becoming easily annoyed or irritable	159	2.723	1.232	1	5
g. Feeling afraid as if something awful might happen	159	2.541	1.226	1	5
Intended aggression	156	3.532	1.758	1	6
Crystallization of discontent	161	3.491	.592	1	4
a. I am afraid that I would face a miserable future unless I change.	162	3.185	.979	1	4
b. The costs of offending are higher than the benefits.	158	3.354	.822	1	4
c. If I continue to live a life of offending, it will cost me.	161	3.435	.740	1	4
d. I have made a conscious decision to improve myself.	160	3.681	.587	1	4

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Variable	*n*	*M*%	*SD*	Minimum	Maximum
Meaning and purpose in life	162	3.491	.592	1	4
a. I understand my life's meaning.	160	5.294	1.616	1	7
b. My life has a clear sense of meaning.	162	5.358	1.514	1	7
c. A good sense of what makes my life meaningful.	162	5.679	1.322	1	7
d. I have discovered a satisfying life purpose.	162	5.247	1.676	1	7
Religiosity	153	.008	.746	−2.221	.904
a. Perceived closeness to God	151	3.848	1.100	1	5
b. Frequency of religious service attendance	153	5.425	2.541	1	8
c. Frequency of prayer outside of religious service	152	4.836	1.524	1	6
d. Perceived importance of religion	151	3.980	1.246	1	5
e. Frequency of reading the Bible or other sacred book	153	5.856	2.519	1	8
Spiritual transcendence	161	2.940	.661	1	4
a. I meditate/pray so I can reach a higher level of thoughts.	159	3.264	.830	1	4
b. I have been able to step outside of my successes and failures, pain and joy, to experience a deep sense of fulfillment.	160	2.938	.852	1	4
c. I believe that death is a doorway to another level of existence.	156	2.987	.970	1	4
d. Meditation/prayer enables me to become unmindful of the events.	156	2.571	.965	1	4
e. There is an order to the universe that exceeds human thinking.	159	3.283	.820	1	4
Humility	161	3.463	.526	1	4
a. I know that I can learn from other people.	161	3.671	.534	1	4
b. I am equally excited about a friend's accomplishments as I am about my own.	160	3.256	.684	1	4
Gratitude	161	5.872	1.347	1	7
a. To list everything that I felt grateful for, it would be a very long list.	160	5.594	1.857	1	7
b. I am grateful to a wide variety of people.	159	5.780	1.570	1	7
c. As I get older, I find myself more able to appreciate the people.	161	6.280	1.256	1	7
God's purpose	151	3.583	.675	1	4
a. God put me in this life for a purpose.	151	3.550	.781	1	4
b. God has a specific plan for my life.	150	3.660	.664	1	4
c. God has reason for everything that happens to me.	151	3.543	.764	1	4
God's forgiveness.	152	3.311	.675	1	4
a. I know that God forgives me.	152	3.618	.680	1	4
b. I can explain how I have been forgiven by God for my past.	151	3.305	.848	1	4
Gratitude to God	153	4.556	.713	1	5
a. Grateful to God for all He has done for me	153	4.575	.809	1	5
b. Grateful for all He has done for my family/friends	153	4.536	.795	1	5
Frequency of exposure to the Field Ministry					
Community Service Ministry	143	1.749	1.270	1	7
a. Intake/orientation or reentry/prerelease program	141	1.461	1.204	1	7
b. Tutoring (GED or college entrance)	142	1.718	1.727	1	7
c. Mentoring, personal improvement, life skills program	138	2.014	1.864	1	7
Crisis and Counseling Ministry	141	1.417	.918	1	7
a. Grief counseling, funeral/memorial service	139	1.281	.956	1	7
b. Family program (e.g., day with dad, marriage seminar)	140	1.464	1.294	1	7
c. Hospice, geriatric, or hospital care	140	1.250	.945	1	7

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Variable	*n*	*M*%	*SD*	Minimum	Maximum
d. Tier walking, counseling	138	1.630	1.445	1	7
Faith-Based Ministry	144	2.816	2.060	1	7
a. Bible study group, discipleship class, prayer group	143	2.685	2.202	1	7
b. Religious service, evangelism, outreach program	143	2.944	2.162	1	7
Duration of exposure to the Field Ministry					
Community Service Ministry	152	1.996	1.309	1	6
a. Intake/orientation or reentry/prerelease program	148	1.831	1.571	1	6
b. Tutoring (GED or college entrance)	149	1.859	1.689	1	6
c. Mentoring, personal improvement, life skills program	149	2.288	1.925	1	6
Crisis and Counseling Ministry	149	1.594	1.191	1	6
a. Grief counseling, funeral/memorial service	147	1.531	1.391	1	6
b. Family program (e.g., day with dad, marriage seminar)	149	1.530	1.378	1	6
c. Hospice, geriatric, or hospital care	147	1.476	1.326	1	6
d. Tier walking, counseling	149	1.711	1.552	1	6
Faith-Based Ministry	152	2.710	2.054	1	6
a. Bible study group, discipleship class, prayer group	151	2.755	2.107	1	6
b. Religious service, evangelism, outreach program	148	2.669	2.139	1	6

Note. n = number of observations, M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, CES-D = Center for Epidemiological Studies–Depression, GAD-7 = General Anxiety Disorder–7; GED = General Educational Development.
[a]Reverse-coded items.

Results

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage distributions of nominal-level variables and the descriptive statistics of others, along with the number of observations for each variable. The survey respondents were, on average, approximately 43 years old, with the youngest and oldest being 21 and 79, respectively, and with 25.2% White, 48.5% Black, and 26.4% Hispanic. The average grade level completed was less than the ninth grade, whereas they had committed an average of three offenses in total and were serving a sentence, on average, of 29 years at the time of the survey.[9]

In terms of both frequency and duration of exposure to the Field Ministry, inmates were more likely to have interacted with Field Minister(s) through Faith-Based (2.816 and 2.710) than Crisis and Counseling Ministry (1.417 and 1.594), with Community Service Ministry (1.749 and 1.996) falling in-between. This finding is not surprising not only because the Inmate Ministers were religious and prison seminary graduates but also because the services of Faith-Based Ministry tended to be provided more often through regularly scheduled meetings (e.g., Bible study group, prayer group, and religious service) compared with those of Crisis and Counseling Ministry that tended to be need-based (e.g., grief counseling or funeral/memorial services). The frequency and duration of exposure to Faith-Based Ministry, however, varied among inmates, ranging from no exposure (i.e., “does not apply”) to the maximum of each aspect (i.e., “daily” and “longer than 9 months”), whereas typical interactions with Field Minister(s) had occurred almost once a month (2.816) and had lasted for almost a month (2.710).

Table 2 presents results from estimating the models of 14 dependent variables, analyzed in six groups as explained above (see Appendix B for the coefficients of

Table 2. The Effects of Frequency and Duration of Field Ministry Services on Risk and Protective Factors of Offending, Existential Belief, and Virtues ($n = 163$).

	Legal cynicism		Dissatisfaction with correctional staff		State depression (CES-D)		State anxiety (GAD-7)		Intended aggression		Crystallization of discontent		Meaning and purpose in life	
Exposure to the Field Ministry	*B*	*(SE)*	*B*	*(SE)*	*B*	*(SE)*	*B*	*(SE)*	*B*	*(SE)*	*B*	*(SE)*	*B*	*(SE)*
Community service: Frequency	.013	(.037)	−.097**	(.042)	−.010	(.060)	.017	(.054)	−.006	(.118)	−.027	(.050)	.136*	(.073)
Crisis/Counseling: Frequency	−.004	(.061)	−.108*	(.058)	.008	(.073)	.062	(.080)	.082	(.153)	−.060	(.081)	.191	(.125)
Faith-based: Frequency	−.040	(.024)	−.027	(.030)	−.033	(.034)	.008	(.041)	−.094	(.075)	.047**	(.022)	.138**	(.050)
Community service: Duration	.013	(.037)	−.096**	(.042)	−.008	(.060)	.018	(.055)	−.036	(.119)	−.010	(.041)	.203**	(.061)
Crisis/Counseling: Duration	−.013	(.036)	−.093**	(.041)	.019	(.069)	.023	(.059)	−.072	(.124)	−.053	(.047)	.191**	(.069)
Faith-based: Duration	−.047**	(.023)	−.056**	(.026)	−.060*	(.033)	−.043	(.038)	−.121*	(.071)	.015	(.024)	.136**	(.048)

	Religiosity		Spiritual transcendence		Humility		Gratitude		God's purpose		God's forgiveness		Gratitude to God	
Exposure to the Field Ministry	*B*	*(SE)*	*B*	*(SE)*	*B*	*(SE)*	*B*	*(SE)*	*B*	*(SE)*	*B*	*(SE)*	*B*	*(SE)*
Community service: Frequency	.130**	(.039)	−.007	(.041)	−.044	(.036)	.022	(.081)	−.039	(.055)	−.014	(.054)	.018	(.034)
Crisis/Counseling: Frequency	.185**	(.055)	−.039	(.054)	−.082	(.062)	.113	(.106)	.005	(.067)	.061	(.061)	.050	(.048)
Faith-based: Frequency	.199**	(.020)	.090**	(.026)	.035**	(.017)	.122**	(.055)	.060**	(.022)	.097**	(.022)	.044*	(.022)
Community service: Duration	.148**	(.041)	−.017	(.042)	−.022	(.039)	.077	(.077)	−.037	(.054)	−.003	(.055)	.027	(.032)
Crisis/Counseling: Duration	.175**	(.039)	.031	(.048)	−.046	(.047)	.009	(.102)	.011	(.051)	.062	(.049)	.054	(.039)
Faith-based: Duration	.190**	(.022)	.100**	(.026)	.040**	(.019)	.058	(.058)	.075**	(.023)	.089**	(.024)	.043*	(.024)

Note. Unstandardized coefficients (*B*) and their standard error (*SE*) are presented. Sociodemographic and criminal background variables were controlled for, although not presented in the table (see Appendix B for their coefficients). CES-D = Center for Epidemiological Studies–Depression, GAD-7 = General Anxiety Disorder–7.

$^{*}p < .10$. $^{**}p < .05$.

control variables).[10] The top panel shows estimated models of risk factors, intended aggression, and predictors of human agency, whereas the bottom panel presents those of religiosity and spirituality, personal virtues, and existential belief and virtues tied to relationship with God.

Of the four risk factors, an inmate's dissatisfaction with correctional staff was found to be related inversely to both frequency and duration of exposure to all types of Field Ministry services with one exception. Inmates who had interacted with Field Minister(s) through the Community Service, Crisis and Counseling, and Faith-Based ministries more often (–.097 and –.108) and for a longer period (–.096, –.093, and –.056) tended to report lower levels of dissatisfaction with correctional staff (including wardens and correctional officers) than those who had not. The exception was the frequency of exposure to the Faith-Based Ministry, which was not related to an inmate's dissatisfaction with correctional staff. However, only the duration of exposure to Faith-Based Ministry was inversely associated with legal cynicism (–.047) and state depression (–.060), whereas none of the exposure measures was related to state anxiety. Intended aggression was also related only to the duration of exposure to Faith-Based Ministry (–.121): That is, inmates who had interacted with Field Minister(s) for a longer period of time were less likely to say that they would get into an argument with another inmate in a situation such as what was described in the survey than those who had interacted for a shorter period of time or not at all.

Between the two predictors of human agency, it was an inmate's sense of meaning and purpose in life that was more consistently related to exposure to the Field Ministry. Specifically, the existential belief was inversely associated with all but one measure of exposure (the frequency of Crisis and Counseling Ministry): That is, inmates who had interacted with Field Minister(s) tended to report a greater sense of meaning and purpose in life than those who had not. Those who had frequent interactions with their peer ministers through Faith-Based Ministry were also more likely to attribute failures and dissatisfactions of their lives to criminal identity they had in the past (i.e., crystallization of discontent; .047). These findings indicate that inmates exposed to the Field Ministry might have been more likely to be motivated for intentional self-change compared with those not exposed.

As anticipated, inmates who had interacted with Field Minister(s) more frequently or for a longer period tended to report higher levels of religiosity than those who had not, whether it was through Community Service (.130 and .148), Crisis and Counseling (.185 and .175), or Faith-Based Ministry (.199 and .190). The relationship tended to be a bit stronger for exposure through Faith-Based Ministry than the other two. However, only frequent and longer interactions through Faith-Based Ministry were related positively to spiritual transcendence (.090 and .100). That is, inmates exposed to the Field Ministry through faith-based programs were more likely to be able to transcend their immediate sense of time and place to view their lives from a larger, more objective perspective, which is "a source of intrinsic motivation that drives, directs, and selects behaviors" (Piedmont, 1999, p. 988) for positive self-change.

Similarly, only the exposure to the Faith-Based Ministry was related positively to personal virtues and virtues tied to relationship with God. First, inmates who had more frequently interacted with Field Minister(s) through faith-based programs tended to be humble (.035) and grateful (.122) compared with those who had less frequently or not at all. Second, inmates who had interactions of longer duration were more likely to show characteristics of humility than those who had interactions of shorter duration or no interaction at all (.040), although they were not different in terms of gratitude (.058, $p > .10$). Third, the frequency and duration of exposure to the Field Ministry were both related positively to all three God-related virtues. That is, inmates who had interacted with Field Ministers through faith-based programs more frequently and over a longer period of time tended to say that they were grateful to God (.044 and .043) as well as believing God has a special purpose for their lives (.060 and .075) and that God forgave them (.097 and .089).

In sum, of the six measures of exposure to the Field Ministry, the duration of interactions with Field Minister(s) through Faith-Based Ministry was the most likely to be related to our dependent variables, specifically, 11 of 14 (78.6%), followed by the frequency of exposure to Faith-Based Ministry, nine of 14 (64.3%). However, the other two duration measures (exposure to Community Service and Crisis and Counseling ministries) and the frequency of exposure to Community Service Ministry were associated with the same three dependent variables (21.4%)—dissatisfaction with correctional staff, meaning and purpose in life, and religiosity, two of which were also related to the frequency of exposure to the Crisis and Counseling Ministry (14.3% of 14 dependent variables), with the exception being meaning and purpose in life. In addition, we found an inmate's exposure to the Field Ministry was more likely to be related to the positive—42.6%, 23 of 54 (= six exposure measures × nine prosocial factors) relationships—than negative outcomes—26.7%, eight of 30 (= six exposure measures × five antisocial factors) relationships. Although the significance of relationship varied across dependent variables, our hypothesis received partial support: That is, an inmate's exposure to the Field Ministry program was inversely related to criminological risk factors and aggressiveness (Hypothesis 1) and, to a greater extent, positively to virtues and predictors of human agency as well as religiosity and spirituality (Hypothesis 2).

Discussion

Prisons have often been called "schools of crime" because imprisonment easily aggravates criminality and enhances the learning of "tricks of the trade" from other prisoners (Duwe & Clark, 2017). To the extent that the principle of differential association applies (Sutherland, 1924), however, offenders may become less criminal as a result of contacts with anticriminal patterns and isolation from criminal patterns, though such arrangement is not necessarily easy in many prisons. Based on that principle, Cressey (1955) argued that prisoners should be exposed to anticriminal associations and kept from criminal associations for reformation. As a specific suggestion, he proposed that ex-prisoners who became anticriminal be deployed to increase the chance of reforming offenders in prison, capitalizing on their shared experiences (Cressey, 1965). Even better is having reformed peer prisoners help other prisoners change as they are available to offer prosocial contacts 24/7 unlike ex-prisoners who can provide anticriminal contacts only through limited windows of opportunity or professional staff who are often perceived as power figures and not trustworthy among prisoners (Woodall et al., 2015).

Programs in which inmates help inmates are the exception rather than the rule in American prisons. This circumstance is largely because of correctional authorities' concern that inmate "helpers" may only be helping themselves by abusing the opportunity of influencing other inmates and instead controlling or manipulating them (Woodall et al., 2015). For example, the abuses associated with the inmate trusty system are well documented (Oshinsky, 1996; Taylor, 1999). Although this concern is legitimate, it can also be counterproductive by not allowing legitimate inmate helpers to serve other prisoners, particularly, if helpers are formally trained and closely supervised. A rare example where trained inmates are encouraged to help and serve others is the Field Ministry program developed by the TDCJ. Inmate helpers of the program are those who completed a 4-year seminary curriculum in prison, being equipped with practical capacities for counseling and tutoring. Most of seminary graduates are transferred to other maximum-security units in groups of four to five Field Ministers, so they can work as a team. Working as a team as well as under the supervision of a unit chaplain is likely to decrease a chance of their abusing the helper role as they are held accountable by one another and work under the supervision of a unit chaplain.

This study is the first to have examined whether currently incarcerated offenders formally trained to be inmate helpers can lead others in prison to change for the better based on survey data from a representative sample of inmates at three maximum-security prisons in Texas, where the Field Ministry program operated. To measure the program's reformative effect on inmates, we used 14 variables of characteristics hypothesized to be affected by inmate's exposure to the Field Ministry, operationalized by the frequency and duration of inmate's interactions with Field Minister(s). The potential outcome variables included five antisocial and nine prosocial characteristics. We analyzed the data separately for three types of Field Ministry service: Community Service, Crisis and Counseling, and Faith-Based ministries.

We found some evidence of the Field Ministry's potential contribution to offender reformation, although the degree of support for our hypotheses varied across the outcome measures. Inmates who had interacted with Field Minister(s) via all three types of service more frequently and over a longer period tended to report lower levels of dissatisfaction with correctional staff. This finding implies that the Field Ministry might enhance prison security by reducing inmates' strain that is likely to lead to prison misconduct, disobeying orders, or even assault on correctional officers (Agnew, 2006; Blevins, Listwan, Cullen, & Jonson, 2010), thereby improving the prison environment, culture, and ethos (Woodall et al., 2015). In addition, the duration of an inmate's exposure to the Field Ministry via Faith-Based Ministry was inversely related to the risk factors of legal cynicism, state depression, and aggressiveness among inmates. This finding implies the longer an inmate had interactions with Field Ministers via their services, the less likely the inmate was to have cynical attitudes toward the law, feel depressed, and engage in aggressive behavior against another inmate.

Association with Field Minister(s) was also positively related to an inmate's sense of meaning and purpose and, to a lesser extent, attributing past failures or dissatisfactions across many aspects of their lives to their criminal identity. This finding also has a practical implication that the Field Ministry potentially contributes to offender reformation by fostering a sense of meaning and purpose in life and crystallization of discontent among inmates, which, in turn, motivates them to engage in a deliberate act of intentional self-change seeking a new, prosocial identity (human agency) that is consistent with the existential belief and cognitive assessment.

Although we expected to see inmates' exposure to the Field Ministry positively related to religiosity given that Field Ministers were seminary graduates, we were intrigued by the finding that exposure to the Faith-Based Ministry was positively related to other concepts understudied in criminology: spiritual transcendence and virtues. Inmates who had interacted with Field Minister(s) through faith-based programs tended to report higher levels of capacity to step outside of immediate time and space than those who had not. This ability of self-transcendence enables inmates to see, for example, a positive future or possible self beyond their seemingly hopeless present condition, which would motivate them to be intentional about self-change or identity transformation (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009). Self-transcendence also leads them to discover a meaning and purpose for their lives, which tends to be found in something bigger than self (Jang, 2016) and thus is likely to contribute to offender reformation.

The positive relationships between inmates' exposure to the Faith-Based Ministry and virtues are encouraging evidence that prison can function as a truly "correctional" institution, where virtues such as humility and gratitude are fostered, as Cullen et al. (2001/2014) proposed in their concept of a "virtuous prison." This finding also indicates that religion tends to promote virtues among prison inmates (Jang et al., 2018; see also Smith, 2003), consistent with Cullen et al.'s illustration of the virtuous prison using an example of a faith-based prison program in Texas. For religious inmates, a sense of meaning and purpose in life and virtues tied to their relationship with God are also relevant because inmates who believe God's special plan for their lives and forgiveness of their "sins" are likely grateful to God and thereby motivated to change. Whether related to God or not, fostering virtues is likely to contribute to offender rehabilitation, and we found some evidence that the Field Ministry is one way to build virtuous prisons.

Besides promoting virtues, Field Ministers can help other inmates reform by encouraging them to participate in the activities of "*generativity*" (Maruna, 2001, p. 99) with "the desire to be productive and give something back to society, particularly the next generation" (p. 88) as Cullen et al. (2001/2014) suggested for the virtuous prison (i.e., producing items for the needy, such as toys for poor children). Generativity is one of three components of a "redemption script" (Maruna, 2001, p. 87), which enables inmates to engage in "making good" from their criminal past. Field Ministers can also help inmates with the other two components by leading them to establish a "true self" and have a strong sense of personal control over their destiny. This helper–leadership role Field Ministers play as peer mentors may continue after release from prison if they assist ex-convicts with prisoner reentry and reintegration with the community. For example, Flores's (2018) study illustrates how ex-prisoner community leaders helped the formerly incarcerated make good from their past through faith-based community organizing, which enabled them to give back to their community and have a sense of belonging (i.e., reintegration) as well as personal dignity.

We discussed the Field Ministry's potential contribution to offender reformation under the assumption that inmates' exposure to the program via interactions with Field Minister(s) decreased risk factors for crime and deviance and increased prosocial characteristics, not the other way around. Although causal interpretation of results from cross-sectional analysis, like ours, requires caution, the time sequence between the key independent and dependent variables was to some extent established based on the way they were measured. That is, we measured exposure to the Field Ministry by asking inmates about their interactions with Field Minister(s) in the past (i.e., previous measure), whereas the outcome variables mostly measured inmates' beliefs, attitudes, and emotional states at the time of survey (i.e., current measure) and behavioral intention (future measure).[11] So, although we call for a longitudinal study of the Field Ministry in the future, our causal inference based on the present findings, though tentative, is not ungrounded.

We recognize a potential problem of internal invalidity due to selection bias. That is, inmates who had interacted with Field Minister(s) might have reported lower levels of negative characteristics and higher levels of positive ones than those who had not interacted because they already had such characteristics before they interacted with the peer helpers, not necessarily because of the reformative influence of the Field Ministry. Inmates who had interacted with Field Minister(s), for example, might have already been religious before any interaction and thus naturally drawn to faith-based programs, such as Bible study or prayer group, where they interacted with Field Minister(s), which might explain why we found inmates exposed to Faith-Based Ministry to be more religious than those not exposed. This alternative explanation of the positive association between exposure to the Field Ministry and religiosity is plausible.

However, it is worth noting that inmate exposure to the non-faith-based components of the program was also related to some outcome variables in the expected direction as the selection bias is less relevant because they are provided based on an inmate's need or without much choice on the part of inmate. For example, Community Service Ministry includes orientation of new arrivals to the unit, instruction in reentry/prerelease seminars, and academic tutoring; and Crisis and Counseling Ministry involves conduct of funeral and memorial services, geriatric care, grief counseling, medical and hospice visitation, and family reconciliation. Through these occasions, inmates come to encounter Field Minister(s). After learning who they are, if those inmates choose to have interactions with the peer helpers, it allows them to get exposed to an increase in prosocial associations, perhaps while trying to avoid antisocial contacts. This change in differential association is a key to offender reformation.

Our cross-sectional and nonexperimental research does not allow us to determine the extent to which our observed relationships between interactions with Field Minister(s) and the dependent variables are attributable to the reformative influence of the Field Ministry. Thus, the present study is exploratory in nature. But our study highlights the importance of investigating inmate-helping-inmate programs. Moreover, this neglected area of study may hold promise for a possible paradigm shift in American corrections that capitalizes upon the generative effects of inmate service and other mindedness (Maruna, 2001; Maruna et al., 2003). Thus, we call for a longitudinal study of the Field Ministry using a larger sample than ours and over an extended period long enough to observe the program participants not only in prison but also after release. Another key limitation of the present study is that it was based only on quantitative data. Future research should also conduct in-depth interviews with inmates exposed to the Field Ministry to understand whether they primarily select themselves into interactions with Field Minister(s) or change for the better because of the influence of the program and peer helpers.

In conclusion, despite methodological limitations acknowledged, our study contributes to the criminological literature by examining a prison program where inmates who were formally trained help inmates change, which hardly exists elsewhere in the American correctional system. In addition, we examined concepts rarely considered in criminological theory and research, a sense of meaning and purpose in life and virtues, which we propose help explain both crime causation and desistance from crime. Finally, the present findings tend to show that some offenders in prison are potential assets waiting to be developed to help other offenders reform.

Appendix A. Variables Used in Analysis.

Variable	Items and response categories	Loading (α)
Frequency of exposure to Field Ministry	Please indicate *how often* you have interacted with Field Minister(s) through each of the following. (1 = *does not apply*, 2 = *less than once a month*, 3 = *once a month*, 4 = *2-3 times a month*, 5 = *about weekly*, 6 = *several times a week*, 7 = *daily*)	
Community Service Ministry	a. Intake/orientation or reentry/prerelease program	.851 (.637)
	b. Tutoring (GED or college entrance)	.544
	c. Mentoring, personal improvement, life skills program	.531
Crisis and Counseling Ministry	a. Grief counseling, funeral/memorial service	.993 (.774)
	b. Family program (e.g., day with dad, marriage seminar)	.673
	c. Hospice, geriatric, or hospital care	.891
	d. Tier walking, counseling	.402
Faith-Based Ministry	a. Bible study group, discipleship class, prayer group	(.877)
	b. Religious service, evangelism, outreach program	
Duration of exposure to Field Ministry	Please indicate *how long* you have interacted with Field Minister(s) through each of the following. (1 = *does not apply*, 2 = *less than 1 month*, 3 = *1-3 months*, 4 = *4-6 months*, 5 = *7-9 months*, 6 = *longer than 9 months*)	
Community Service Ministry	a. Intake/orientation or reentry/prerelease program	.606 (.634)
	b. Tutoring (GED or college entrance)	.663
	c. Mentoring, personal improvement, life skills program	.561
Crisis and Counseling Ministry	a. Grief counseling, funeral/memorial service	.750 (.788)
	b. Family program (e.g., day with dad, marriage seminar)	.793
	c. Hospice, geriatric, or hospital care	.644
	d. Tier walking, counseling	.610
Faith-Based Ministry	a. Bible study group, discipleship class, prayer group	(.936)
	b. Religious service, evangelism, outreach program	

(continued)

Appendix A. (continued)

Variable	Items and response categories	Loading (α)
Legal cynicism	How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *agree*, 4 = *strongly agree*)	
	a. It is okay to do anything you want as long as you do not hurt anyone.	.607 (.674)
	b. To make money, there are no right and wrong ways anymore, only easy ways and hard ways.	.717
	c. Fighting with someone in your family is nobody else's business.	.415
	d. Laws are made to be broken.	.675
Dissatisfaction with correctional staff	How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about correctional staff, in general, here at this unit, including wardens, correctional officers, and others? (1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *agree*, 4 = *strongly agree*)	
	a. They are not doing a good job in preventing serious violations in the prison.	.446 (.675)
	b. They are responsive to complaints from inmates.[a]	.564
	c. They are doing a good job in dealing with problems that really concern inmates.[a]	.946
	d. They do a good job in responding to inmates after they have been abused or mistreated.[a]	.455
State depression (CES-D)	During the past week, how often have you felt or experienced the following? (1 = *never*, 2 = *rarely*, 3 = *sometimes*, 4 = *often*, 5 = *very often*)	
	a. I felt I could not shake off the blues, even with the help of others.	.611 (.870)
	b. I felt depressed.	.899
	c. I felt sad.	.802
	d. I did not feel like eating, and my appetite was poor.	.580
	e. I felt that everything I did was an effort.	.507
	f. My sleep was restless.	.740
	g. I could not get going.	.799
	h. I felt suicidal.	.482
State anxiety (GAD-7)	Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems? (1 = *never*, 2 = *rarely*, 3 = *sometimes*, 4 = *often*, 5 = *very often*)	
	a. Feeling nervous, anxious	.675 (.909)
	b. Not being able to stop or control worrying	.801
	c. Trouble relaxing	.840
	d. Being so restless that it is hard to sit still	.779
	e. Worrying too much about different things	.839
	f. Becoming easily annoyed or irritable	.713
	g. Feeling afraid as if something awful might happen	.724

(continued)

Appendix A. (continued)

Variable	Items and response categories	Loading (α)
Crystallization of discontent	How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *agree*, 4 = *strongly agree*)	
	a. I am afraid that I would face a miserable future unless I change.	.542 (.737)
	b. The costs of offending are higher than the benefits.	.822
	c. If I continue to live a life of offending, it will cost me social relationships.	.780
	d. I have made a conscious decision to improve myself.	.497
Religiosity	How close do you feel to God most of time? (1 = *not close at all*, 2 = *not very close*, 3 = *somewhat close*, 4 = *pretty close*, 5 = *extremely close*)	.548 (.806)
	How often do you *currently* attend religious services at a place of worship? (1 = *never*, 2 = *less than once a year*, 3 = *once or twice a year*, 4 = *several times a year*, 5 = *once a month*, 6 = *2-3 times a month*, 7 = *about weekly*, 8 = *several times a week*)	.613
	About how often do you *currently* pray outside of religious services? (1 = *never*, 2 = *only on certain occasions*, 3 = *once a week or less*, 4 = *a few times a week*, 5 = *once a day*, 6 = *several times a day*)	.710
	In general, how important is religion to you? (1 = *not at all*, 2 = *somewhat*, 3 = *fairly*, 4 = *very*, 5 = *extremely*)	.658
	Outside of attending religious services, about how often do you *currently* spend private time reading the Bible, Koran, Torah, or other sacred book? (1 = *never*, 2 = *less than once a year*, 3 = *once to several times a year*, 4 = *once a month*, 5 = *2-3 times a month*, 6 = *about weekly*, 7 = *several times a week*, 8 = *everyday*)	.856
Spiritual transcendence	How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *agree*, 4 = *strongly agree*)	
	a. I meditate/pray so I can reach a higher level of thoughts.	.712 (.721)
	b. I have been able to step outside of my successes and failures, pain and joy, to experience a deep sense of fulfillment.	.579
	c. I believe that death is a doorway to another level of existence.	.515
	d. Meditation/prayer enables me to become unmindful of the events of this world.	.637
	e. There is an order to the universe that exceeds human thinking.	.496

(continued)

Appendix A. (continued)

Variable	Items and response categories	Loading (α)
Meaning and purpose in life	We would like you to take a moment to think about what makes your life feel important to you. Please respond to the following statements as truthfully and accurately as you can. (1 = *absolutely untrue*, 2 = *mostly untrue*, 3 = *somewhat untrue*, 4 = *cannot say true or untrue*, 5 = *somewhat true*, 6 = *mostly true*, 7 = *absolutely true*)	
	a. I understand my life's meaning.	.682 (.830)
	b. My life has a clear sense of purpose.	.701
	c. I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful.	.812
	d. I have discovered a satisfying life purpose.	.792
Humility	How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *agree*, 4 = *strongly agree*)	
	a. I know that I can learn from other people.	(.644)
	b. I am equally excited about a friend's accomplishments as I am about my own.	
Gratitude	Please indicate how much you agree with each of the statements, using the scale below. (1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *slightly disagree*, 4 = *neutral*, 5 = *slightly agree*, 6 = *agree*, 7 = *strongly agree*)	
	a. If had to list everything that I felt grateful for, it would be a very long list.	.647 (.785)
	b. I am grateful to a wide variety of people.	.999
	c. As I get older, I find myself more able to appreciate the people, events, and situations that have been part of my life history.	.659
God's purpose	How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *agree*, 4 = *strongly agree*)	
	a. God put me in this life for a purpose.	.864 (.907)
	b. God has a specific plan for my life.	.893
	c. God has reason for everything that happens to me.	.874
God's forgiveness	How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *agree*, 4 = *strongly agree*)	
	a. I know that God forgives me.	(.795)
	b. I can explain how I have been forgiven by God for my past.	
Gratitude to God	Please indicate how much you agree with each of the statements, using the scale below. (1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *neutral*, 4 = *agree*, 5 = *strongly agree*)	
	a. I am grateful to God for all He has done for me.	(.737)
	b. I am grateful to God for all He has done for my family members and close friends.	

Note. GAD-7 = General Anxiety Disorder–7; CES-D = Center for Epidemiological Studies–Depression; GED = General Educational Development.

[a] Reverse-coded items.

Appendix B. The Effects of Control Variables on Risk and Protective Factors of Offending, Existential Belief, and Virtues ($n = 163$).

	Legal cynicism		Dissatisfaction with correctional staff		State depression (CES-D)		State anxiety (GAD-7)		Intended aggression		Crystallization of discontent		Meaning and purpose in life	
	B	*(SE)*	*B*	*(SE)*	*B*	*(SE)*	*B*	*(SE)*	*B*	*(SE)*	*B*	*(SE)*	*B*	*(SE)*
Age	−.012**	(.004)	−.006	(.004)	−.002	(.006)	−.019**	(.007)	−.032**	(.012)	.006	(.004)	.020**	(.009)
Black	.173	(.104)	.064	(.127)	−.222	(.172)	−.292	(.175)	.140	(.332)	−.068	(.092)	.297	(.247)
Hispanic	.162	(.122)	−.054	(.140)	−.046	(.196)	−.413	(.210)	.215	(.362)	−.075	(.111)	.277	(.277)
EA score	−.037**	(.018)	.024	(.018)	−.067**	(.027)	−.053	(.032)	.016	(.051)	.066**	(.019)	−.048	(.035)
Total offense	−.009	(.019)	−.009	(.025)	−.021	(.032)	.017	(.041)	.007	(.061)	−.004	(.020)	−.021	(.037)
Sentence length	−.002	(.002)	−.005	(.003)	−.001	(.004)	−.002	(.004)	−.006	(.008)	.002	(.002)	−.007	(.005)
Academic programming	−.042	(.059)	−.068	(.073)	−.093	(.073)	−.142	(.100)	−.087	(.176)	.059	(.044)	−.031	(.116)
Vocational programming	−.016	(.056)	−.005	(.070)	.010	(.079)	.015	(.098)	.037	(.174)	−.020	(.046)	.194	(.126)
CI programming	−.028	(.053)	.102	(.066)	.028	(.064)	.109	(.085)	.069	(.164)	.040	(.046)	.004	(.110)

	Religiosity		Spiritual transcendence		Humility		Gratitude		God's purpose		God's forgiveness		Gratitude to God	
	B	*(SE)*	*B*	*(SE)*	*B*	*(SE)*	*B*	*(SE)*	*B*	*(SE)*	*B*	*(SE)*	*B*	*(SE)*
Age	.001	(.004)	−.007	(.005)	−.002	(.003)	.012	(.008)	.000	(.004)	.007	(.004)	.007	(.004)
Black	−.027	(.117)	.134	(.119)	.334**	(.100)	.595**	(.247)	.308**	(.130)	.239	(.124)	.220	(.136)
Hispanic	−.170	(.150)	−.058	(.147)	.053	(.126)	.214	(.302)	.001	(.163)	.020	(.153)	.027	(.181)
EA score	−.019	(.018)	−.043**	(.018)	.007	(.014)	.041	(.034)	−.005	(.020)	−.011	(.018)	.003	(.016)
Total offense	−.018	(.024)	.013	(.024)	.019	(.018)	.085**	(.037)	−.017	(.028)	−.036	(.028)	−.004	(.020)
Sentence length	.002	(.003)	.003	(.003)	.004	(.002)	−.002	(.006)	−.002	(.003)	−.001	(.003)	−.001	(.003)
Academic programming	.021	(.072)	.100	(.065)	−.031	(.047)	.021	(.112)	.080	(.062)	.099	(.060)	.006	(.070)
Vocational programming	−.059	(.067)	−.028	(.059)	.011	(.046)	.042	(.147)	.042	(.058)	−.010	(.068)	−.005	(.080)
CI programming	−.032	(.062)	−.071	(.068)	−.029	(.051)	.005	(.114)	−.014	(.068)	.002	(.061)	.080	(.061)

Note. Unstandardized coefficients (*B*) and their standard error (*SE*) are presented. CES-D = Center for Epidemiological Studies–Depression, GAD-7 = General Anxiety Disorder–7; EA = educational achievement; CI = cognitive intervention.
*$p < .10$. **$p < .05$.

Authors' Note

The contents of this document reflect the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

Acknowledgments

The authors are grateful to the associate editor and anonymous reviewers for helpful comments on an earlier draft of the paper. They are also greatly indebted not only to the Executive Services of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) but also to the wardens and staff of three prisons for their invaluable support and timely cooperation for this study. The research contained in this article was coordinated, in part, by the TDCJ (#661-AR12).

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: The authors gratefully acknowledge that this research project stems from a larger study funded by Premier FOTO, LLC.

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Notes

1. Stressing the unique value of shared stigma, situational empathy, and common purpose, the "wounded healer" has also frequently been applied to citizens serving those in recovery from addiction (Capps, 2015).
2. Although the seminary is Baptist in name, the seminary experience is quite ecumenical (Hays, Hallett, Johnson, Jang, & Duwe, 2018).
3. Custody levels within Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) range from G1, requiring the least amount of supervision, to G5, which requires the highest level of supervision.
4. Texas does not allow autonomous inmate congregations like Angola encourages; inmates may plan and conduct worship under the chaplain's supervision, but they cannot form distinct congregations with membership rolls, defined polity, or formalized leadership structure.
5. It was a convenience sample in that they were selected from six prisons that received Field Ministers from the first graduating cohort in 2015 because they were all located in proximity. We studied all-male prisons because Field Ministers are all male as the Darrington seminary is not a co-educational program.
6. The sample (n = 244) consisted of 82 inmates randomly selected from all eligible inmates of Prison 1 (n = 1,648), 91 from those of Prison 2 (n = 1,821), and 71 from those of Prison 3 (n = 1,426).
7. The final sample (n = 163) included 66 inmates from Prison 1, 44 from Prison 2, and 53 from Prison 3 with the response rate being 80.5%, 48.4%, and 74.6%, respectively.
8. Specifically, on average, study participants were about four and a half years younger (42.85 vs. 47.43) and about one grade higher (8.77 vs. 7.64) and had participated more in academic programming (.45 vs. .21) than nonparticipants.

9. It is worth noting that although respondents typically said there was roughly a 50% chance (i.e., the mean of intended aggression, 3.532, being about the midpoint between “unlikely” [= 3] and “likely” [= 4]) of getting into an argument in such a situation as described in the scenario, their reported probabilities were distributed across all six levels of likelihood: 19.9% “not likely at all (0%),” 12.2% “very unlikely,” 13.5% “unlikely,” 22.4% “likely,” 13.5% “very likely,” and 18.6% “certainly (100%)” (not shown in Table 1). This finding might suggest that there was minimal reactivity due to social desirability on the part of inmates.
10. Appendix B presents results from estimating the 14 models of duration of exposure to Faith-Based Ministry which we found was most likely to be associated with the dependent variables as reported below. The control variables’ coefficients were generally not significant with some exceptions. For example, an inmate’s age was inversely related to legal cynicism, state anxiety, and intended aggression, but positively to sense of meaning and purpose in life.
11. A few exceptions were previous measures of religiosity: the frequency of religious practice, service attendance, prayer, and reading the sacred text.

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