

## Dealing With The Whole Person

By

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June 2000

[this is basically what was published in the American Jail Association journal, *American Jails*, in its September-October 2000 issue]

Effective programs in jails are important. About a third of the 1.9 million people currently incarcerated in the US are held in jails,<sup>1</sup> and most jail inmates have been incarcerated more than once.<sup>2</sup> Only about 12% of jail inmates go to prison;<sup>3</sup> the majority return directly to the community. Programs helping those released from jail live wholesome lives are of great value.

Things are very different now than they were three decades ago when I first became involved in jail programs. Then most jails had religious services (although more than a third of the nation's jails reported no religious programs<sup>4</sup>), but few had other significant treatment or rehabilitation programs. At that time, whether jails could have effective programs was a matter of debate.<sup>5</sup> Since then, a lot of attention has been given to programs for jails, "detention centers" as many jails are now called. Many jails now not only have medical programs, but also have significant education, substance abuse, and mental health programs as well as extensive religious activities.

Widespread recognition is now given to the important role that the "overlooked, neglected or forgotten 'faith factor'" plays in inmate and former offender lives.<sup>6</sup> Not only does the faith factor have positive impacts on inmate behavior,<sup>7</sup> but it also has a positive role in crime prevention<sup>8</sup> and in development of strong families and communities,<sup>9</sup> an important consideration since almost half of jail inmates report that others in their families have been incarcerated.<sup>10</sup> Strong families break the crime cycle.

This article uses Christian Jail Ministry (CJM) at the Howard County Detention Center (HCDC) in Jessup, Maryland, to illustrate capabilities of jail religious programs and issues associated with them. CJM and HCDC provide a good example of high quality jail religious programs. CJM has a two decades long track record of effective programs at HCDC, initially described in the early 1980s.<sup>11</sup> HCDC is large enough (2-300 in daily count, nearly 3600 inmates pass through the institution in a year) for a full spectrum of programs, yet small enough so that functional aspects of religious programs at HCDC can be examined in detail without getting lost in the bureaucratic maze of a giant institution.

We begin with a brief description of HCDC. We present CJM's philosophy of ministry, describing CJM's current programs and addressing issues related to jail religious programs. We close with a few suggestions for those who want effective religious programs in their jails. Full description of CJM's programs, organization, history, and activities may be found at the CJM website: <http://www.christianjailministry.org>.

**The Institution – HCDC in a Nutshell<sup>12</sup>**

The Howard County Detention Center (HCDC) is located halfway between Washington (DC) and Baltimore; it houses both men and women – any one charged as an adult with a crime in Howard County and those serving sentences less than 18 months. About half of HCDC inmates were Howard County residents prior to incarceration; about a third are from Baltimore (City and County), and most of the rest from other adjacent jurisdictions. HCDC also houses prisoners for the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

HCDC maintains high standards of professionalism, consistently achieving 100% compliance in audits by the Maryland Commission on Correctional Standards. The Director of Howard County's Department of Corrections, Melanie C. Pereira, reports directly to the County Executive. She oversees the 120 members of the HCDC staff (99 uniformed security people and 21 administrative and program workers). HCDC also operates three community based detention programs: a County Labor Detail (often a stepping stone to the Work Release Program), the Work Release Program which averages 30 inmates in it at any given time, and monitoring those sentenced for Home Detention.

HCDC has a large number of education, treatment, and rehabilitation programs. Howard Community College, in collaboration with the Howard County Department of Corrections, provides adult basic education as well as pre-GED and GED education for inmates seeking to prepare for the high school equivalency exam. The Howard County Library provides a resource center with a professional librarian and book collection for inmate use at HCDC (circulates about 10,000 items a year to nearly 3500 inmates). A six-week long Lifeskills Education Employment Program (Project Leep) seeks to help inmates understand and develop attributes that will enhance their employability and their capability to stay employed. LEEP is provided by a partnership between the Howard County Department of Corrections, the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Program, Howard Community College, and the Howard County Health Department and Library. Programs for substance abusers include initial drug urinalysis screening for all inmates incarcerated longer than 48 hours and weekly testing for all involved in community based programs and outside labor details. In addition to substance abuse counselors from the Mental Health Department, regular Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) sessions are part of HCDC programs. In conjunction with the Health Department, the Howard County Corrections Department and Juvenile Justice Department, HCDC also operates a juvenile impact program and young adult diversion program designed to educate and defer juveniles and young adults from crimes that would lead to their incarceration. Altogether, during the course of a year, these HCDC programs involve about 100-150 volunteers from the community and 15 professionals from other parts of the Howard County government as well as members of the HCDC staff.

HCDC has an extensive array of religious programs. Christian Jail Ministry (CJM) provides chaplains for HCDC and an extensive set of religious programs, involving about 250-300 community volunteers a year. Other groups also provide religious services for HCDC (about 50 volunteers a year are involved in these).

### **CJM's Philosophy**

We begin with CJM's vision and then look at what motivates people to minister to prisoners. Next we discuss theological foundations for ministry to prisoners and their implications. Last we discuss various operational factors.

**Vision.** CJM's mission is to meet spiritual, personal, and social needs of inmates, former inmates, their families, correctional staff, and those ministering to prisoners. This vision defines the scope of CJM's ministry, which addresses the whole person (body-soul-spirit) and does so within the total context affecting the person. CJM takes a systems approach for synergism among its activities, making them more effective.

CJM's mission is focused. It does not address all criminal justice religious programs. It does not include chaplaincy services for law enforcement personnel nor specifically minister to victims of crime. CJM does not clamor for correctional reform, for more *justice* in the criminal justice system. Others are concerned about these things. CJM focuses on jail ministry, although CJM also encourages prison ministry and occasionally CJM chaplains and volunteers minister in prisons. CJM restricts its scope so that what it does can be done well.

**Motivation.** What interests CJM chaplains and its volunteers in prisoners? Why are they willing to expend their time and energies? Most are motivated at spiritual, social, and personal levels. At the spiritual level, CJM chaplains and volunteers believe ministry to prisoners pleases God and believe that God has called them to this ministry. It makes them obedient to Scriptural imperatives such as Hebrews 13:3 ("Remember those in prison as if you were a prisoner"). The eternal consequences of dying apart from Christ are also important. They do not want anyone to go to hell -- not even the worst of people. They want all to understand that Jesus Christ can save anyone, even prisoners; and they want to help those who are saved grow into mature Christians. Motivation at the spiritual level strongly influences religious programs in jails.

Not all have this spiritual motivation. Obviously non-Christians will not emphasize salvation through Christ. Even some Christian groups do not emphasize eternal factors. However, all involved in jail religious programs believe that it pleases God, always an important consideration in recruiting volunteers for jail religious programs.

At a social level, CJM chaplains and volunteers help the community. Every inmate, former inmate, or inmate family member who turns toward wholesome living and makes progress in that direction is less of a threat to community well-being. The community benefits even if the movement toward wholesome living is temporary. If a former inmate avoids substance abuse and crime for only a year or two, the community has been spared problems.

Some are motivated at the personal level. They enjoy interaction with inmates, former inmates, and their families -- the challenge to relate to those from different backgrounds and opportunity to learn about people who are different from themselves. It is exciting to see dramatic life changes that can occur when people encounter Christ. The three-fold motivation of CJM chaplains and volunteers makes it easy to understand why many of them are involved in jail ministry for the long haul: 10, 20, and more years. One CJM volunteer has been helping with worship services at HCDC for half-a-century!

**Theology.** CJM's mission has strong theological underpinning. Concern for prisoners is not optional if the Church is to obey its Lord. The parable in Matthew 25:31-46 suggests that visitation of prisoners helps Christ separate His sheep from the goats. The New Testament clearly teaches that no one is beyond the power of Christ to redeem. If any one be in Christ, he becomes a new person (II Corinthians 5:17). The offer of salvation (forgiveness from the eternal consequences of evil and power for daily living from the indwelling presence of the living Christ) can be made to the worst person behind bars as well as to the nicest person in society. Many can point to redeemed individuals guilty of murder, rape, arson, theft, etc. However, the message of hope for all, regardless of background, makes it clear that Christ does not work in a person's life unless the person wants it to happen. Sadly, many behind bars (just like many in free society) choose not to allow Christ into their lives.

**Operational Factors.** People behind bars often have a host of problems. Many have a history of substance abuse (with physical and psychological after effects), various physical and mental illnesses (some resulting from physical or sexual abuse), limited education, little or no money, a poor work record, and friends and family who will be bad influences. There cannot be too many programs or people helping those with complex problems. Ministry to prisoners is like intensive care unit (ICU) medical treatment. Patients need special equipment and attention or they die. Most inmates need help or they will not be able to transform their lives. *The limited help given is one of the reasons that recidivism rates are so high.* Military forces and the police understand this principle of critical mass: overwhelming force is their preferred way of dealing with difficult situations.

Transformation to wholesome living requires three essential ingredients. The first is motivation. Until a person really wants to transform his or her life, it is not going to happen. Many in AA talk about the need for a person to "hit bottom" before one will apply AA's twelve steps. CJM approaches motivation differently. We look to the Spirit of God to work in lives to give motivation for wholesome living as part of regeneration: the new birth, commitment to faith in Jesus Christ. Desire for a wholesome life is a side benefit to the eternal consequences of spiritual salvation. Life skills are the second ingredient. They equip one to live effectively: enough self-control that one is not driven to evil by inner compulsions, enough self-understanding and appreciation for others that one can function as a responsible member of normal society, and insights for coping with the ups and downs of daily life. CJM uses Bible study and spiritual disciplines to help converted inmates and others develop these skills. Education, counseling, and other forms of treatment also help. Connection with positive elements of the community is the third essential ingredient for transformation to wholesome living. No one makes it through life very well without a number of friends. CJM has an important role during former inmate transition from confinement to establishment in the community. Volunteers involved with an inmate can continue the relationship when that person returns to the community. Church involvement allows former inmates and inmate families to establish positive community connections. The hard truth is that a person is unlikely to develop a wholesome life without all three ingredients: motivation, life skills, and positive community connections.

Effective jail ministry needs a cooperative and supportive relationship with the jail. Since CJM began twenty years ago, key HCDC leaders (Director, Program Supervisor, and Security Supervisor) have been *ex officio* members of the CJM Board. This ensures that they fully understand CJM plans about programs and personnel as well as ensuring that their concerns and needs are fully exposed to CJM leadership. CJM chaplains are viewed as quasi-staff by HCDC.

An enduring jail ministry has to be an accepted part of the community. CJM believes that its oversight should come from the community it serves. Therefore, the CJM Board is composed mainly of pastors from area churches and volunteers in the ministry to prisoners (and the correctional officials mentioned earlier). This ensures a responsive and responsible ministry.

### **CJM Current Programs**

CJM provides an extensive set of religious programs. These programs have three primary functions: evangelism (helping people connect with God through Christ), discipleship (helping Christians develop spiritual maturity and Christian lives), and fellowship (helping people establish continuing positive relationships within the community). These address the basic prerequisites for wholesome living.

**Inside HCDC.** Programs include worship services, Bible classes and religious education, pastoral and group counseling, Christian 12-step programs for substance abusers, discipleship training, Christian videos, Bible correspondence courses, and distribution of Scriptures and Christian literature. CJM also provides social assistance such as toiletries for indigent inmates, Christmas presents (toys, clothes, school supplies) for inmate children, transportation home for those released without funds, etc. and helps former inmates and inmate families connect with social service agencies in the community. CJM volunteers receive both formal training for ministry to prisoners and informal on-the-job (OJT) training in which new volunteers are paired with chaplains and/or experienced volunteers until new volunteers master their assignments.

**Outside HCDC.** CJM's After Care Program addresses needs of inmate families and former inmates. Its focus is to connect them with churches and social service agencies so that long term success is possible. Mentors are used in a variety of roles – as encouraging friends, as spiritual helpers, as trainers for various life skills, as providers of “technical” assistance (transportation to important meetings, guidance on financial management – such as how to balance a check book, etc.). CJM is developing transition housing resources in Howard County for former inmates who are serious about developing wholesome lives. Former inmates without a supportive family or other acceptable lodging possibilities must live outside Howard County because of limited transition housing opportunities within Howard County. CJM defined a program that involves 5-10 mentors for each participant so that there will be adequate help to enable the former offender to develop new habits and make enough connections with positive elements within the community to have a high likelihood of success. CJM is taking two paths for developing needed housing resources. In one path, CJM is responsible for the housing facility (such as a rented apartment). A \$7,000 grant from the Columbia Foundation in mid-2000 allowed the program to get started while additional funding from other sources is being sought. The other path is the “Adopt One” program in which individual congregations adopt a former offender and provide

housing for that person for a year. CJM assists the congregation with mentors as needed and program materials.

Jail ministry can have a major impact on those involved in it. Volunteer in ministry with prisoners not only deepen their understanding of people, but sometimes this is a significant factor in God's leading that person into the ministry. In the early 1980s, Guy Nichols, an accountant and financial officer for an insurance brokerage, was a CJM volunteer -- teaching Bible classes and involved in one-on-one discipleship programs when he felt God calling him to become a minister. Over the next decade, he acquired the requisite theological training and became an ordained clergyman. He's had associate pastor responsibilities in a local church and is now CJM's Lead Chaplain.

## Issues

We discuss four basic issues: resources, the distinctive approach of a faith-based organization, results (program effectiveness), and church-state relationships. Many jail religious programs encounter one or more of these issues.

**Resources.** Where do the funds come from to make the extensive religious programs needed behind bars possible? Although most prison systems provide funds for chaplains, relatively few jails do so. The Broome County (NY) program, described recently in *American Jails*, with chaplains funded by the County is more the exception rather than the rule.<sup>13</sup> Most jail religious programs must be funded from private sources. CJM is funded primarily by contributions from individuals (40-45%), churches (35-40%), and a few businesses and civic groups (e.g., Rotarians). Its support from other sources (grants, fund raising events such as a golf tournament, etc.) thus far has been limited. This approach has helped CJM to stay responsive to its community, but this approach has also limited the programs that CJM could provide because the resources needed to do more were not available. CJM is seeking grants for its transition housing program for former inmates because substantial funding for facilities is required for this program.

What does it cost to have a really effective jail ministry? The answer usually is, More than the community is willing to support. There are four major cost elements for providing religious programs in jails. The first cost is leadership (chaplains). A substantial program requires professional leadership. The recommended level of correctional chaplains is one for every 300-500 inmates in prisons, but one for every 100-150 inmates (daily count) in jails because of the large number of inmates that pass through jails.<sup>14</sup> Few institutions have the recommended level of chaplaincy services; consequently, there is substantial room for improvement in most jail and prison religious programs. CJM ties its chaplain compensation to that of pastors and associate pastors in its area. A survey of local clergy compensation is taken every two-three years for calibration of CJM chaplain compensation. Ministry expendables (Scriptures, Bible course lessons, videos used in religious education, etc.) comprise the second cost element in jail religious programs. Although some supplies are provided for ministry to prisoners at reduced prices (or even free), this cost element is not trivial. The third cost element is social help for inmate families and former inmates: clothing or rent assistance for a newly released prisoner or inmate family, transportation home for one released without funds, etc. Even when a jail

religious program is very effective in helping inmate families and former inmates connect with the established social service agencies of the community, there will still be needs that otherwise would not be met with expenditure of funds from the jail ministry program. The final cost element is the jail ministry's facilities: where it receives mail, keeps its records, meets with volunteers for training, conducts programs that are outside the correctional institution, etc. CJM is able to spend little in this area because it uses facilities provided without charge by several churches and businesses.

**The Distinctive Approach by a Faith-based Organization.** Contemporary attitudes in American society sometimes distort proper respect for a person's right to choose his or her own religious views into an attitude that makes all views equally valid and denies people the right to make their distinctive views known. CJM's programs are based upon a belief in the power of Jesus Christ to redeem and transform anyone through the Word of God, the work of the Holy Spirit in a person, spiritual disciplines, and Christian fellowship. This message is presented with respect for those who do not accept it as well as with appreciation and rejoicing for those who respond to it. CJM respects the right of an individual to choose to believe what he or she will, and CJM has a responsibility to ensure that every one understands the potential consequences of his or her choice (if the individual is willing to listen to CJM's views).

CJM's social assistance is offered equally to all without regard for their acceptance or rejection of the Christian message – whether it be toiletries for indigent inmates, Christmas toys and clothes for inmate children, bus fare home for one released without funds, or whatever. Likewise, CJM does not offer material inducements for those who accept its message. CJM does not get involved in a person's legal situation. CJM does not provide character references to the court for its inmate converts – if a person has been changed by Christian conversion, the evidence of a person's attitude and behavior should manifest itself in the normal reports by the correctional institution about the person. This approach works, with its definite ideology presented clearly but with respect for the beliefs of others and its non-discriminating social help.

**Results (Program Effectiveness).** CJM has not had the resources to collect and analyze data which would allow scientifically valid conclusions to be drawn about the impact of its programs on inmate lives while in HCDC and elsewhere. There are numerous anecdotes indicating religious program effectiveness -- stories about individuals whose lives have changed in a positive way, and who attribute spiritual conversion, personal spiritual growth, and Christian fellowship as the primary factors causing such change. Each of the three Directors of Corrections in CJM's twenty years at HCDC has stated publicly that CJM programs contribute positively to the institution – helping inmates improve their self-control, relieving tensions, increasing constructive attitudes, etc. This has helped HCDC to be a safer place, to experience less wanton destructive behavior, etc.

The impact of inmate religious experience on recidivism is difficult to establish<sup>15</sup> and information about this subject is murky, but scientifically credible evidence is beginning to appear about religious experiences' potential to reduce the likelihood of future criminal behavior.<sup>16</sup> This occurs mainly when a person is extensively involved in religious activities. CJM's comprehensive approach to religious programs provide opportunity for extensive

involvement. Most HCDC inmates have 3-5 (or more) participation opportunities each week (worship services, Bible classes, counseling sessions, discipleship training, etc.) as well as opportunities for personal, private spiritual activities (Bible reading, prayer, Bible correspondence courses, etc.). The quality of an on-going religious program in jail is a function of the time that chaplains have to plan and administer programs as well as be with individual inmates in counseling and discipleship training, the number and dedication of volunteers involved, and cooperation between the institution and the religious program. Lack of resources usually limits chaplain time, and may prevent religious programs from having the “critical mass” needed for long-term effectiveness.

### **Church-State Relations**

The church and the state have overlapping areas of interest and responsibility, but each has limitations that must be recognized. The state is not allowed to establish a religion (or give preferential treatment to a particular religion). As a result, most treatment programs provided by the state can not deal with the whole person: they only address a person’s physical and psychological aspects. These programs can not address the spiritual, which has great potential to motivate for good and which provides additional inner resources for dealing with life’s problems. On the other hand, the church can address the whole person (body-soul-spirit), but can only be effective spiritually for those who respond to its beliefs – and there will be some (often a majority) who do not accept its beliefs. The full spectrum of church-state relations has been experienced behind bars: from religion forced upon inmates in the 1816-1843 experiment at the Millbank prison in England<sup>17</sup> to denial of religious opportunities for inmates (at least for particular kinds of religious activities) as happened in this country with Seventh Day Adventist inmates in the 1940s and Black Muslim inmates in the 1960s and 1970s<sup>18</sup>.

CJM and HCDC have a relationship that allows both church and state to properly fulfill their respective responsibilities. HCDC respects individual religious preferences and allows maximum opportunities for religious programs consistent with the institution’s security and administrative responsibilities. CJM has broad involvement of the Christian community, actively recruiting men and women to be part of programs at HCDC, and welcomes those from all elements of the Christian community to its Board and as volunteers in its programs. CJM also coordinates activities of the other religious programs at HCDC and provides training so that all religious volunteers can comply fully with HCDC security and administrative guidelines. The cooperative relationship between CJM and HCDC enables more comprehensive and effective religious programs, which have stability and long term continuity, than be possible otherwise. Acceptable partnership between government and faith-based organizations is possible and benefits us all.

### **Conclusions and Suggestions**

Because so many inmates return directly to the community from jail, effective religious programs in jail can help the community to be a safer place. Jail religious programs have great potential to help people develop wholesome lives when they address the whole person, provide a “critical mass” of opportunities for spiritual development, and facilitate establishment of connections with

positive elements of the community. Effective programs have cooperative relationships with both the correctional institution and the community.

Every jail needs a full and effective religious program. Jail leadership should encourage such, but the religious community has to provide religious program leadership and people. Both jail leadership and the religious community can work on developing the resources needed for the programs to be effective. Those providing jail religious programs should take full advantage of the training and materials that are now available so that their programs will be most effective.<sup>19</sup>

## About the Author

Dale K. Pace founded Christian Jail Ministry, served as a chaplain and President of its Board, currently is CJM's President Emeritus, and chairs CJM's Transition Housing Task Force. Previous he oversaw two halfway houses for ex-offenders and led religious programs in two dozen jails, prisons, and juvenile institutions in Virginia. He was certified as a supervisor chaplain by the Association of Evangelical Institutional Chaplains and is a Research Associate of Taylor University's Center for Justice and Urban Leadership. Dr. Pace is also a member of the Principal Professional Staff of the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory and taught in the graduate technical management program of Hopkins' Whiting School of Engineering.

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<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics Corrections Statistics for mid-1999 (<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/correct.htm>).

<sup>2</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report NCJ 164620, *Profile of Jail Inmates 1996*, April 1998 (revised June 4, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *The Nation's Jails*, LEAA: NCJI&SS, 1975.

<sup>5</sup> Dale K. Pace, "Programs Are Possible," *National Jail Association Newsletter*, May 1975, pp. 1-4.

<sup>6</sup> Byron R. Johnson and David B. Larson, "The Faith Factor," *Corrections Today*, June 1998, pp. 106-110.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Edmund McGarrell, Greg Brinker, and Diana Etindi, "The Role of Faith-Based Organizations in Crime Prevention and Justice," a report from the Hudson Foundation's Crime Control Policy Center and Welfare Police Center prepared for the Wisconsin State Legislative Study Committee on Faith-Based Approaches to Crime Prevention and Justice, April 1999 (available from [http://www.welfare-reformer.org/articles/Faith\\_Crime.html](http://www.welfare-reformer.org/articles/Faith_Crime.html)).

<sup>9</sup> Patrick F. Fagan and Joseph Loconte, "Religion: Building Strong Families and Communities," *Issues 2000*, Heritage Foundation Report (available from <http://www.heritage.org/issues/chap10.html>).

<sup>10</sup> *Op. cit.*, *Profile of Jail Inmates*.

<sup>11</sup> Dale K. Pace, "Religious Programs in Jails," *Corrections Today*, Vol 44, No. 2, April 1982, pp. 22-27.

<sup>12</sup> HCDC information taken from the Howard County Department of Corrections *1998 & 1999 Annual Reports*.

<sup>13</sup> Philip Singer and Larry S. Fischer, "Matching Interest: Teaming Up for Religious Services in County Jails," *American Jails*, November-December 1999, pp. 49-52.

<sup>14</sup> Dale K. Pace, *A Christian's Guide to Effective Jail & Prison Ministries*, Fleming H. Revell Company, Old Tappan, NJ: 1974. Recommended number of chaplains came from the American Correctional Association (ACA) *Manual of Correctional Standards* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition) and the Association of Evangelical Institutional Chaplains.

<sup>15</sup> Dale K. Pace, "Religion and Offender Rehabilitation," *Holistic Approaches to Offender Rehabilitation*, L. J. Hippchen (ed.), Charles C. Thomas Publishers, 1982, pp. 387-412; and Dale K. Pace, "The Potential of Christianity to Rehabilitate Criminals," *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation*, June 1986, Vol. 37, No. 2, pp. 93-96.

<sup>16</sup> McGarrell *et al.*, *op. cit.*

<sup>17</sup> J. Arthur Hoyle, *Religion In Prison*, London: Epworth Press, 1955.

<sup>18</sup> John W. Palmer, *Constitutional Rights of Prisoners*, W. H. Anderson, 1974.

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<sup>19</sup> W. Thomas Beckner and Jeff Park (eds.), *Effective Jail & Prison Ministry for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Charlotte, NC: COPE, 1998.