

Chapter 1

“We, Who Would Otherwise Not Meet”

The People of the Ministries

Candy told me she has been off drugs for four years. She said, “I’ve been clean for four years going on 40.” Her first husband died in the first week of their marriage from a stroke. She said she went to college and got a degree, and then got to the streets and drugs overtook her life. She used to smoke crack on the street and in the alley, 15 feet from the FACTS Ministries’ back door. . . . She is an EMT, and her second husband works to get drug dealers off the street. Four years ago she was coming around to get these meals. Now she appreciates volunteering. She said, “I didn’t think anything would be able to get me away from drugs. . . . I am so grateful that I got away and can now give back here.”

—Field notes, September 2015

The phrase “people, places, and things” is among the most frequently used expressions in substance use recovery. In the cautionary phrase, people, places, and things must be carefully weighed when supporting, rather than undermining, a person’s recovery and health. Together, they are factors that can make or break one’s recovery, depending on *which* people, *which* places, and *which* things one is exposed to and chooses to associate with. In a document intended for those newly sober, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA 2014, 4) warns about each with caution: “Before you walk out of detox, plan how to stay away from anyone, any place, and anything that will cause you to relapse. . . . Find good company and ask your friends or family [*people*] to help you stay sober. . . . Map out different routes to avoid dealers and bars

[places]. . . . Put away your cash, ATM, or credit cards if having money is one of your triggers [things].” While this document and others mention supportive people as “good company,” the phrase “people, places, and things” typically emphasizes what is to be avoided to sustain an environment of support, cultivate a social ecology of resilience (Ungar, Ghazinour, and Richter 2013; Walsh 2003), and undertake healthy decisions and actions. Whether among women returning citizens (i.e., former felons) negotiating their neighborhoods (Leverentz 2010) or among the newly sober assessing spiritual growth after substance use treatment (e.g., Brown and Peterson 1991; Dackis and O’Brien 2001), the phrase is a mantra. As Brown and Peterson (1991, 39) stated, “Perhaps the first finding we took note of was the remarkable consistency in our subjects’ reported use of a broad range and large number of the ‘spiritual practices’ [to] avoid ‘people, places, and things’ not conducive to their ongoing recovery.”

Recovery, that is, sustained abstinence from any addictive substance, is associated with better health and a potentially longer life (Galanter et al. 2013; McKay 2017). People led to affiliate with the FACTS Ministries valued recovery enough to see the Ministries as a safe haven where they could strengthen their resolve to heal and improve their own health or that of a loved one. Who are the people who share this motive? As Dunlap, Golub, and Johnson (2006, 115) suggested, improving the life chances of a group of people “means [seeking out] insight into the prevailing circumstances, the complex array of associated problems, and the resources and capacities available to them [in] creating (or helping them to create) a positive next chapter in their experience.” Sober or resilience-affirming people, places, and things are vital in a new self-understanding that supports sustained recovery. Helgeson and Lopez (2010, 325–26) noted, “Both theory and empirical data suggest that the social environment may play a significant role in growth following adversity. . . . To examine growth, researchers should examine characteristics of the support providers [and] aspects of the social environment” (see also Freeman 2001).

The pro-social, health-affirming people of the FACTS Ministries came to it for various reasons. This chapter explores the people at the FACTS Ministries, most of whom live their own recovery as they provide support to others who seek recovery from addiction. Who are they? How do they sustain their affiliation? How do their motives for affiliating differ? Data are drawn from thirty in-depth interviews with approximately one-fifth of the FACTS Ministries’ most consistent affiliates and forty additional affiliates from the focus groups of the project, as well as hundreds of field

observation hours during the more than fourteen years of the research project. Taken together, over half of the Ministries’ most consistent affiliates participated in this research, along with many other less frequent affiliates. This chapter profiles a purposive, yet largely representative sample consistent with overall Ministries affiliation across its six domains: Sunday services and Wednesday Bible study, 12-Step recovery meetings, sober homes residents, free community lunch patrons and volunteers, Men’s Prayer Breakfast attendees, and Friday Youth Nights participants during the summer months. It also includes data from fellowship in the many rich, informal moments that occur before and after these more formal activities, all of which occur in and through a sometimes uncertain yet resilient living dialogue between their faith and their health.

People of the FACTS Ministries

A social ecology of resilience has resilient people in it. FACTS Ministries affiliates interact in many ways to achieve this resilience. In doing so, they embody beneficial resources of mutual healing and wellness. Many of them are living in a neighborhood of concentrated poverty (see chapter 2), in the “liminal urban spaces [that] are essentialized in negative terms. The assumption is that these neighbourhoods [and people in them] are *only* unhealthy” (Moore, Freeman, and Krawczyk 2011, 167; italics in original), with nothing redeeming about them. It is in such a neighborhood, North Lawson, that the FACTS Ministries functions as a space of health and hope for those struggling between bottomed-out substance use and the desire for sobriety. It sustains itself as a health resource balancing many elements—both constructive and destructive—to be useful to the health and recovery of affiliates who seek its support.

During the time the current research was conducted, people affiliated with each Ministries domain have tended to participate only in that domain with others who did the same. Church and Bible study participants interacted with similar others each Sunday and Wednesday evenings. Those who came to the Ministries to attend the twice-weekly Either-Or Cocaine Anonymous meetings rarely came to weekly Sunday services or to the monthly Men’s Prayer Breakfasts. Those attending the community lunches tended not to come to Sunday services or to anything other than the next Tuesday or Thursday lunch. A few persons who had been coming to the Ministries for a few years viewed themselves as “longtime

affiliates” and participated in multiple domains at the same time. Generally, this domain-specific participation or “affiliation with an identity such as ‘recovery’ or similar may offer group members the chance to be with a positively valenced group [i.e., having intrinsic goodness] and also the opportunity to create psychological distance from previous social connections and associated behaviors” (Buckingham, Frings, and Albery 2013, 1133; see also Haslam et al. 2009). Affiliates’ domain-specific identification succeeded yet seemed to lead to a service-specific utilitarianism that might not have occurred otherwise.

Among the FACTS Ministries domains, Sunday evening services had the most equitable attendance of gender, race and ethnicity, and generation. Though varying from week to week, approximately 60 percent of those attending Sunday service were African American, with a comparable percentage of males, about one-fourth of whom were in their early thirties or younger. Community lunches on Tuesdays and Thursdays were typically three-quarters African American males. In the latter half of each month, this changed and became gender balanced, with more women and families, as end-of-month food budgets slimmed. Like Terra (church and Bible study affiliate), and Kevin (Either-Or CA meetings affiliate), whose Ministries introductions are presented in the prologue, most Ministries people were affiliated with one of three domains: (1) church and Bible study, (2) the sober homes program, or (3) the Either-Or CA meetings hosted at the Ministries. Below are profiles of a contrasting pair of affiliates from each of these domains.

PEOPLE OF THE CHURCH AND BIBLE STUDY DOMAIN

Perhaps the most vital at the FACTS Ministries are the people of its church and Bible study domain. These affiliates directly engage how the paradox of substances and sanctuary come together to benefit those who value living the bridge between them. They are often the most frequent attendees. With marked fluctuations, at the peak of the Ministries’ mission (2008–12; see chapter 6), between fifty and sixty persons consistently attended the Sunday evening services in the eighty-five-seat-capacity storefront chapel, where nearly one hundred would sometimes squeeze in uncomfortably.

Faith affiliations have become increasingly about a sense of shared mission being prioritized over a diocese, community church, or other aspect of denominational geography. Most who attended the FACTS Ministries came from outside of the immediate North Lawson neighbor-

hood. No records were kept of the names and phone numbers of affiliates attending the Sunday service or the amount of the most recent offering. The Ministries’ success followed the more contemporary *commuter* rather than a *community* church model (see Taylor, Chatters, and Levin 2004; Warner 1993).

Two among the most regular attendees at Sunday service were Brother Darryl Hasten and Brother Warren Pomely. Unlike most affiliates, Darryl was born and raised in the North Lawson neighborhood. African American and in his fifties, he could recall how the neighborhood transformed from a stable, mixed-class African American neighborhood into one of the most socioeconomically marginalized areas in the city. His many experiences of addiction as a “family disease” (e.g., Roth 2010, 1) resonate in his comments here:

I grew up in the Lawson area. So I’ve been around a lot of things for a lot of years. I’m not in recovery myself. But I’ve been affected [by addiction]. Siblings. Baby momma. And things through the years. I was a single parent for years [due to the addiction of his then spouse], and I feel I have learned a lot about addiction, recovery, Al-Anon.

For Darryl, sustained investment in the FACTS Ministries is anchored in an abiding appreciation for the well-being of his childhood neighborhood. Walsh (2003, 53) has noted that one finding stands out in the resilience literature: “the importance of strong relationships [as] resilient individuals turned to and recruited helpful others.” Even amid complicated emotions, to establish and maintain healing, resilience must be relationally grounded. Darryl added:

I had a lot of anger, at first, for not understanding. And for thinking, you know, I did so much. Thinking that I could make a change in loved ones. And they gon’ be a’ight now. For some years I was angry at siblings. Lost many cars [from their addiction mishaps]. Went through that. My home church is [Beriah] Presbyterian Church. And I’ve known [Pastor] Marshall, and Doran, and others here [at the Ministries] for a lot of years.

Prior research shows how an “organization’s mission uses rage as a resource for growth beyond resilience” (Price-Spratlen and Goldsby 2012, xvii,

3; see also Holmes 2017; Ungar, Ghazinour, and Richter 2013). Darryl's emotional honesty is a vital resource, even though none of his family members are affiliated with the Ministries. Like many, though his home church is elsewhere, he and his wife Andrea regularly attend the Sunday service at the Ministries as their second Sunday service. As he shared during his interview,

The last few years I came, I've joined the Ministries to reach out and help people. I appreciate what [Pastor] Marshall is doing. What God has allowed him to do: To be a living testimony. I just wanted to be connected with a group of people helping others. When it's your family, [addiction] hits close to home. How has it affected me? It changes everything. You go through the same things they go through. And I'm just glad that I didn't give up. My siblings are no longer using. [They are] making progress forward. I'm still trying to find out what I need to do. . . . I'd like to help young people to learn to use their hands to make a way of life, and to bring an understanding of what addiction is. I'm glad to be a part of the FACTS Ministries.

Darryl values the Ministries as a means of intergenerational mentoring through a faith craft of pro-social fellowship. There is a strong "association between family processes and resilience . . . [and] it is the engagement and motivation of the family that makes it more likely [that] the individual with the addiction participates in treatment" (Ungar, Ghazinour, and Richter 2013, 353). Through proactive affiliations, Darryl engages in actions that allowed him to handle his rage regarding loved ones constructively. His Ministries affiliation allows him to contribute to the "living testimony" of Pastor Marshall and others with his many actions of empathy and craft.

Another affiliate, Warren Pomely, is a seventy-four-year-old, White, deeply religious man who has been married for nearly fifty years. His affiliation with the Ministries began in late 2007 when a close Alcoholics Anonymous friend of his mentioned to him "a minister who seems to be on the right track, in terms of valuing recovery as a Christian mission." This friend went to one of the "anchor" churches that assisted in the purchase of the Ministries building at Twenty-Eighth Street and Akron Avenue. The person his friend spoke of was Pastor Ellwyn Marshall of the FACTS Ministries. Warren attended Sunday service at the Ministries two weeks later and has been a regular attendee since. He also regularly

attends the Men’s Prayer Breakfast on the third Saturday of each month. When asked to introduce himself, he said,

I’m an old drunken sinner, saved by the grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Five years ago, I was given the opportunity to become a member of the Willing Faith Recovery Group, and it’s been a real blessing. We’re celebrating five years since we began. Two years ago we expanded our ministry over to the Parker United Methodist Church. We have a breakfast group there every Saturday morning.

Warren’s identity is grounded in multiple organizational affiliations, each of which strengthens both his faith and his recovery. He was among a devoted core group of men who came to the Ministries’ Sunday services and Men’s Prayer Breakfasts. Warren continued:

Two weeks after celebrating our recovery group anniversary last year [2013], I got news that my youngest son was killed. He’d been fighting a lot of emotional things. And I thought I was ready for anything, but I wasn’t ready for that. [Long pause.] I didn’t really know what to do. And I did something that I think a lot of Christians do. . . . I kept being tormented. . . . I’d been in recovery, and God was using me to help a few others. Though others were willing, I got out of a very, very important habit of asking for help. . . . I was getting back to my old ways, saying I was fine. But I wasn’t fine.

Despite having valued affiliations, Warren was not willing to reach out to others during the uncertainties of his grief. His son’s death tested his resolve.

My son was killed by a drunk driver. What’s really heavy on my heart is that *he* was the drunk driver. . . . How does that affect someone in recovery? Is that discouraging? Well, ya. I’m not mad at my son, *at all*. I believe my son was saved, and just made a bad choice. [Then just] weeks after my son was killed, I did something no one expected. I went out and I got drunk. It didn’t last very long. Immediately God jumped in. . . . I didn’t go back to that because I missed drinking. It’s a little bit embarrassing to share this. But, I wanted to die. . . . When I

went back to Jesus and poured out my heart to him, He didn't say, "Well, you did a pretty good job [staying sober] for 17 years. We'll just let go of that." He didn't excuse me. He *forgave* me! And I'm very grateful for that.

Warren took pride in the fact that, for seventeen years, from his son's mid-twenties until the car accident at forty-two, his son "never saw his Dad take another drink. He seen me walkin' with the Lord, and *trying* to do better."

Relapse can be understood as compromised resilience. Warren's testimony acknowledges that, like many other settings, an environment of support for faith-health reciprocity has its limits. His environments of support were not enough when the drunk driver was no stranger. As he said, he was reaching for death when "God jumped in" in the form of his daughter, who confronted him about his relapse. His daughter was saddened and annoyed to realize that Warren appeared to love his son more than he loved her. Her words shocked him out of his relapse and solidified his resilient return to his sobriety.

My question was, "Why did any of this happen?" I don't understand it. Jesus said, "I have many things yet to say unto you. But you can't bear them now. A little while and ye shall not see me. Ye shall see me, because I go to the Father" (John 16:12, 17 KJV). That's all he needs to say to me. I'm not ready to know why. I don't need to worry about why. And He's telling me that there is going to be a transformation of my sorrow [which is] still there. I'm able to have some gratitude. And I'm able to thank Jesus.

Warren contributes to the resilience of the Ministries by continuing to participate in FACTS Ministries Sunday services and Men's Prayer Breakfasts. Still, he remains "burdened about people in recovery, and people that's lost." As he said, "I'm really wanting to spend every day, if I have an opportunity to be a living invitation to come to Christ. We'll work together and be victorious." His long prior sobriety, brief relapse, and return to a religiously grounded recovery are his living testimony that, even beyond a child's substance-informed, accidental death, his own sober healing and health are sustainable.

PEOPLE LIVING IN THE SOBER HOMES

During the years of research for this book, approximately fifty men have lived in one or more of the Ministries’ three sober homes for at least one month. Ten men have lived in one or more of the sober homes for five or more years. Diversity among the residents is reflected in the profiles of Albert, who is African American and a sober homes resident of more than ten years, and Douglas, who is White and had recently moved in, living at the Ministries for just over one month at the time of his 2014 interview. Albert came to the Ministries in 2002:

I was released [from prison] in January 2002. Within two weeks, I had visited the Ministries once or twice and I met the pastor. I felt kinship with him right away. I don’t know whether it was him [also] being short. Or his humility or makeup. Something about him made me aware. I was going to other [12-Step] meetings. I had another gentleman as my sponsor. . . . But as I came to the Ministries, something attracted me to the pastor. His delivery of his [own] recovery. He had a wife and children, and had [gotten] through the pitfalls of the disease. Here they were, on the other side [of active addiction], starting a church. Amazing. From that point on, this is where I wanted to be.

As Albert quickly went from newcomer to an essential volunteer, he recognized how his success and the success of the Ministries were intertwined. Looking back on his thirteen years of affiliation at the time of his interview, he regarded the Ministries as a manifestation of practical Grace.

Almost like a moment of clarity, God was practical in his application in my life. Once I visited here, the church invited me in. It’s been amazing here. In less than four or five months of playing the guitar [for the Ministries’ Praise and Worship Team], I got a key to the building door. I started chairing a [CA] meeting here. From vacuuming, to cleaning up after others. Then God blessed me with a job [as a county service provider]. I started buying [music] equipment. The Ministries *helped me go back to college!*

Each of the examples Albert gave about his increasing involvement at the Ministries reflected how the practical presence of God's Grace bolstered his resilience. Being trusted with a key to the building strengthened his ties to all other domains of the Ministries, including hosting first one then two meetings of Cocaine Anonymous each week. He shared how, once he realized he could not drink and drug successfully, he started to find himself by

becoming involved in the meetings. They call it being a trusted servant. You can chair the meeting, or become the secretary. They call it "being in the middle of the boat"[;] the chances of you going back out and using are much less. Constantly interacting with newcomers [and] hearing the dialogue of recovery. Hearing the horror stories of "PMS": pain, misery, and suffering. All that keeps you in touch with your pain. That's what steered me. I asked God to take my will. It's the Third Step. Turn my will and my life over to the care of God, as I understand God. And the steps became those building blocks to how to live again.

The Second Tradition of 12-Step recovery fellowships states, "Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern" (Cocaine Anonymous 2018, 7; see also Greenleaf 2002; Alcoholics Anonymous 1952). Albert valued the variety of leadership and service roles he assumed. The symbolism of a rescue boat reinforced the meaning of those vital, everyday decisions and actions. The Ministries and CA served as reciprocal protocols of resilience, together enriching Albert's biblically grounded program of action. The valued reminders and reciprocity of service are essential to Albert's and many other affiliates' recovery. With no significant demographic differences along gender, ethnicity, intake severity, and so forth, research shows that "helping others is related to positive outcomes in substance use patterns, improved psychosocial functioning, and psychological well-being" (Pagano et al. 2004, 770; see also White, Kelly, and Roth 2014). Albert's sober homes experiences moved him from merely attending to participating to assuming leadership at the Ministries, in CA meetings, at his workplace, and in the North Lawson neighborhood.

Unlike Albert, Douglas had been a sober homes resident for just a few weeks at the time of his interview. Coming from a rural, White, working-class background in another state, he made an investment in

the Ministries as a necessary part of his fragile program of recovery. He was battling with frequent relapses and illegal actions, and he approached women with what some affiliates and Ministries leadership viewed as “unprincipled ethics.” The sober homes were strengthened by differences among the residents in character, background, and behavior, even as Ministries leaders themselves struggled in earnest to understand and make the most of these differences. This struggle was consistent with Audre Lorde’s (1984, 111) invitation that “difference must be not merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which creativity can spark like a dialectic.” Douglas said he aimed to reduce and hopefully quit his illegal and other compromising behaviors that were inconsistent with his avowed commitment to recovery from addiction. He knew that being part of a place like the FACTS Ministries, which held out a possibility and support, was key.

I like the involvement with everything. I like going to church. That’s something I always struggled with doing. I like how the pastor, and nobody, acts like they’re better than anybody. ’Cause I have met people in recovery that act like they’re better than anybody. Here everybody seems to be real and open. [They] welcomed me with open arms.

For Douglas’s early sober homes inclusion, resources presented with equity were essential. Making the most of opportunities in a new understanding of himself, this recovery setting demanded a self-discipline of new choices, both large and small, like going to church in an environment where status differences are not expressed in ways that alienated Douglas. An equity of drug culture familiarity and its related cross-class, cross-context similarities allowed Douglas to experience a sense of home and shared humility.

Just being around here, and inside the house, a sober environment. Even though you sit on the porch and look *right* across the street [an active dope spot], and the things going on there. It just feels like I’m actually in a super clean environment. Same way with the 12 Steps. They don’t necessarily push the so-called God on you, [but] finding that Higher Power helps me a lot. . . . I just find it real. It’s building my strength by doing that.

The irony of carrying out his 12-Step “program of action” in a clean recovery environment of support, while having the immediate temptation of the drug marketplace less than a hundred feet away at all times was not lost on Douglas. His valuing a Higher Power resulted from “‘developing faith’ [which] initially operates on an institutional level (developing faith in AA and the program), and [then] the inter-personal level (developing faith and trust in others)” (Morjaria and Orford 2002, 238). When asked if he had spoken with anyone about the dope spot across the street being a concern for him, Douglas said, laughing, that he had talked with “a few of the roommates in the Sober House who just told [him] to stay away from there after dark.” Humor is a vital resource for health and resilience (e.g., Sumners 1988), as are simple directives, like how time of day might inform relapse risk. So too is acknowledging one’s vulnerability to someone else who likely has felt the same way. Douglas was investing in his growing sobriety while valuing Akron Avenue as a “demilitarized zone.” The sober home as an environment of support included listening to, internalizing, and acting on simple rules for the supportive space of the Ministries that separated sobriety from addiction. That space provided the necessary structure for Douglas and his roommates to become stable and remain sober.

COCAINE ANONYMOUS (CA) MEETING AFFILIATES

Cocaine Anonymous meetings began soon after the initial gatherings that became the FACTS Ministries itself (see chapter 4). For Pastor Marshall and many others, humility is central to the behavioral and spiritual resilience vital to the process of recovery. Therapeutically, “surrender to the humility of a group process actually seems to give energy for [one’s] own development” (Naifeh 1995, 157; see also Wilson 1984). Named Either-Or as a reminder of the sober choice people in recovery make one day at a time, these Ministries CA meetings offered the opportunity to achieve and share the resilience of sustained abstinence with others. The first Either-Or affiliate, now more than twenty-five years sober in CA, Carla recalled the early days:

I was involved in CA service work, and I went to the district meetings. I was at the district meeting when Pastor Marshall came and asked that his meeting at the FACTS Ministries be

put on our schedule. People would come to the CA office [in the Central Office Building, largely financed by Alcoholics Anonymous and shared by AA, CA, and NA, Narcotics Anonymous] when cocaine, especially crack cocaine, was a part of their drug use history.

Carla got sober in 1990 and has the longest sustained sobriety of any Ministries affiliate. Her affiliation, while anchored in her membership in CA, also includes Ministries church services. She and her boyfriend, Jonathan, a former Ministries sober homes resident with a more uneven sober history, participate in both religious and recovery aspects of the Ministries. They are among the six most visible couples who come to the Ministries. Like (sober homes resident) Albert, Carla continues to deeply value her service work in CA. She said,

I do a lot of service work for Cocaine Anonymous, and I've been doing it ever since I got sober in 1990. I wanted to because I wanted to be a part of something. CA is the youngest fellowship there is [among AA, NA, and CA]. AA had like maybe 100 meetings a week in [the city]. We might've had three meetings a week when [I got sober]. And the most sobriety in CA back then was maybe two to four years. So, everybody got an AA sponsor because there wasn't enough sobriety in CA.

My most significant [tool in recovery] was service work. In the fellowship we say, “You gotta give it away to keep it.” I was going to this AA meeting and they said, “If you want to get involved, you need to chair or do something.” So, you go up to the chair and you ask them what can you do to help out. [At that point,] I probably had only about 45 days sober. I went up and I asked the chair and they said, “Well, you can bring the donuts.” Well, I couldn't drink that week because *they had to have sober donuts. Them donuts couldn't be drunk* [laughs]. So that kept me sober. Then we were having a convention. I was chair of entertainment, so I couldn't get high until after that convention. Then after that convention, I would have ten months sober. That was the first CA convention in [the city]. People came from all over the state to show us how to do it right.

For Carla, resilience was having—and using—a most important recovery tool: service to others in need. By serving in CA and at the FACTS Ministries, she moved from presence, to visibility, to involvement, to expectation, to leadership. She valued the risk and vulnerability of asking questions and then acted on the healthy suggestions provided. Her resilience was informed by her appreciation for having been at the CA district meeting when Pastor Marshall asked to list the first meeting hosted at the Ministries in the local CA meetings brochure, valuing that history for having contributed to it. Her humor and symbolism (“sober donuts”) enriched her gratitude for being sober while sharing her sobriety with others. In addition, Carla participated in planning the first CA convention hosted in the city, which also contributed to her reciprocity of resilience with the FACTS Ministries.

As Ostrom and Janssen (2004, 251) noted, “Development may be enhanced by multi-level governance involving the capacity to initiate or veto action at multiple scales.” In CA, the multiple scales ranged from chairing a single meeting to representing that meeting at the city level to representing the city at the state level for support in planning a regional convention in the Midwest. At the simplest level of holding a meeting, members benefited from the value one gains from simply knowing one is not alone. Carla shared during her interview that the Ministries played a role at each level, beginning with guiding her in choosing a sponsor and in changing her degree of trust toward women. She confided,

When I first came here, I didn’t trust women. I thought they would stab you in the back any moment they could. They’s always after your boyfriend. You couldn’t trust ’em. Whatever you told ’em in confidence would be spread all over town the next day. And what you didn’t tell ’em, they’d make up. So, I hated women.

When I was told I had to get a sponsor, I was looking at the men. I said, “Well, he’s pretty cute. He’s gonna be my sponsor.” And my treatment counselor group leader said, “No, Carla. It’s [gotta be] someone other than your sexual preference.” And I said, “Well, you expect people to get sober, but why would you make it so hard for a person? A woman?!” So, I eventually picked somebody in the same zip code as me, from a sheet with women’s names and numbers. And that happened to work out.

For Carla, levels of service began with her initial self-sabotage of the expected sponsor-sponsee structure. To remove the risk of the profoundly dangerous “13th Step,” the sexual or romantic pursuit of newcomers or vulnerable others, a person in recovery (the sponsee) is required to be guided in her sobriety by a sponsor of the same gender, assuming heteronormativity to be “the standard.” This requirement, intended to reduce the likelihood of fractured trust, dates back to the origin of AA in the 1930s. In one of the few systematic analyses of this phenomenon, researchers found that “at least 50% of the participants experienced 7 of the 13 13th-stepping behaviors [and] 77% [of the female participants] reported that men had flirted with them at least occasionally” (Bogart and Pearce 2003, 45). Carla’s willingness to raise her concern in her treatment aftercare group allowed her to address it professionally. She criticized the same-sex sponsor protocol yet adhered to it anyway. She acted against her preference to choose a male sponsor, which she felt would have been “easier.” Being asked to allow women in as allies led her to gradually revise her uncertain trust. As Carla continued to return to the CA meetings, she found out that, in fact, women in the fellowship were not violating her trust regarding information she shared in confidence. As she noted, perhaps she had overgeneralized from her prior experiences. Carla’s choices can be understood as means through which a program tension could inform the resilience of recovery.

Like Carla, Conrad was another Either-Or CA member. He had more than six years of sobriety at the time of his interview. His affiliation was also informed by the reciprocity between the spiritual foundation of the CA program and the faith foundation of the Ministries.

I’m the vice-chair of the [CA] district, and also Chair of the unity [committee]. Where I’m at right now in my sobriety, I am in dire need of enlarging my spiritual condition. I have a real strong faith in God and Jesus Christ as my savior. [But] I have trouble with churches. So, I’m looking for the guidance of the FACTS Ministries, because they’re different. Their particular meetings [are] a more spiritual atmosphere, a stronger God sense atmosphere. . . . My primary [recovery] group is Cocaine Anonymous. I like CA because it [specifically] mentions in Step 1, “cocaine and all other mind-altering substances.” I’ve been in and out of the rooms of recovery for over thirty years. But in CA we focus more on the spiritual program of recovery

than the other fellowships do. And I'm a firm believer that it's all about God. All about His power that relieves me of my addiction. I believe that the people I come in contact with at CA have the same understanding. That it's spiritual.

Conrad recognized the importance of identifying a primary recovery group through comparative experiences. These comparisons took decades for him to refine the right "fit" to reinforce his recovery through the spiritual content of CA at the FACTS Ministries. For him, affiliating with the Ministries was consistent with the Big Book's foreboding caution that "if an [addict] failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, he could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead" (Alcoholics Anonymous 2001, 14–15). As Conrad acknowledged, many who have "trouble with churches" experience a spiritual dissonance with structured worship.

In Conrad's case, he was led to the Ministries "because they're different," and he valued resources from the affiliation between CA and the Ministries. For him, CA's local history being two decades longer than that of the Ministries was one of those beneficial differences. He fully realized that the longevity of an organization would not necessarily be positively associated with resource increases. At the FACTS Ministries as in the social sciences, organizational "commitment may be defined as the process through which individual interests become attached to the carrying out of socially organized patterns of behavior which fulfill those interests" (Kanter 1968, 500; see also De Leon 2000; Krentzman 2013). Conrad's affiliation with and commitment to both CA and the Ministries extended from the value he placed on these beneficial differences between them.

Cocaine Anonymous is 30 years old in the city this year, and I'm Unity chairperson. [The Unity committee helps to] unify our group and our fellowship. I started this last month. I'm going to all meetings, and I'm going to stress unity. Diversity, with our personalities. It's not a weakness with us. It's a bigger issue than anybody knows. God uses each one of us for our specific personalities. Just like pieces of a puzzle they always told us about. We fit. God knows where He wants everybody to fit . . . 'cause we need to be united together in this. Go forth. That's what our 12-Step [program] talks about.

For Conrad and many other affiliates, diversity is among the most valued resources that sustains bonds in both CA and the Ministries. For him, longevity nurtures unity and his expectations regarding what thirty years of unity “should” be associated with. The Ministries in affiliation with CA and the 12-Step program as a whole were parts of his stated recognition of the “need to be united in this.” As Conrad stated, “This is my passion, my mission. First, get you sober. Then we can give you some concepts and basic instructions about living [your] life. Spiritual principles. Then, live them. That’s CA’s mission. That’s [also] the FACTS Ministries’ mission.”

Other Affiliates of the Ministries

In addition to the church/Bible study, sober homes, and Either-Or CA meetings, Ministries affiliates in other domains also contribute to the resilience of the organization, including those from the free community lunches hosted each Tuesday and Thursday, those who come to the monthly Men’s Prayer Breakfasts each third Saturday morning, and young people who attend Friday Youth Nights during the summers.

Larry, an African American in his late sixties, has been volunteering at the Ministries for over six years at the Tuesday community lunches. He is a retired civil servant and longtime resident of North Lawson. He drove a cab for many years and was part of the “alert squad,” as he described it: a group of cabbies willing to get folks to health-care services more promptly than might otherwise be possible, given the neighborhood’s reputation and allegedly slow emergency responsiveness during those years. Larry discovered the Ministries through his church and through a relative he was supporting, who struggled with an addiction to crack cocaine.

I’ve been in this neighborhood for a really long time. I now come to the Ministries for lots of things. I came to this building years ago. Way back in the day, it was the Wind Star Tavern. The bar was set up in this area [motions to specify the floor layout]. Now, in that same building, in that same room, through my church, I’m serving meals to the community, and helpin’ others to lay down the drugs, and come to the Lord as they will.

Larry has a strong and diverse sense of fellowship and faith, and he is unique in the longevity of his affiliation with the location. Chance, another lunch volunteer, is a small-framed, freckle-faced, Jewish man in his twenties. He shared his first impression of Larry: “In just my second volunteer visit, the individual who was treating me like family was Larry.” Sober for many years at the time of his interview, Larry had never spent much time in the rooms of recovery; his sobriety was about spiritual deliverance. The depth of his religious devotion dating back to his childhood, coupled with the active addiction of many adults during his childhood, led him to his scripture-driven affiliation with the Ministries. During his Sunday sermons, when Pastor Marshall would begin a phrase from a given scripture and pause, the vast majority of the time either Larry or (sober homes resident) Albert would recite its remaining words. Larry’s resilience is reflected in his serving as a good Samaritan through his cab-driving vocation and in warmly welcoming other volunteers to share in and enrich the Ministries’ resilience mission.

While most lunch volunteers and patrons appreciated the community lunches made available on Tuesdays and Thursdays, experiences and feedback of a few lunch patrons were more negative. In his late forties, Copter had been coming regularly for several years to lunches offered on both days. With an inconsistent work history, magnified further by a lengthy prison sentence in his thirties, he was among the growing pool of marginalized African American men without a consistent income (Western 2018; Western and Pettit 2010). Given the many collateral consequences extending from his prior incarceration (Leverentz 2010; Western 2018), like many other returning citizens, Copter’s difficulties finding and sustaining employment continued, now six years after his release from prison. He heard about the Ministries during his most recent time in prison when Pastor Marshall came to speak there. He said,

The Ministries is a bunch of freaks up in there, for real. On the regular, those lunch women—and some of the volunteer men, too, now—they up in there tryin’ to get with Black men in the lunch lines. All the time. Two of those folks [mentions specific names]; they be white-on-rice on a mothafucka. I tried to keep away. For real. Told pastor about ‘em. All five times it happened. Got to where he accusin’ me of bein’ a womanizer. Demanded that I stay away. They was up in *my* grill! And I gotta go?!

A proud man of limited means, Copter felt that he was blamed for the burden of exploitation that was not of his own making. The decision to silence him by asking him to leave was one of several organizational tensions at the Ministries (see chapter 5) that made the process of recovery even more challenging for Copter and others. Copter was one of the many patrons who moved among the group of churches throughout the city that serve free meals to ensure the stability of their weekly meals. He felt that the lack of transparency in the decision-making that informed his being barred indefinitely from the Ministries' lunches was galling. Multiple residents of the sober homes who also volunteered during the community lunches mentioned that they found Copter's banishment from the church problematic. While complete, secondary corroboration was not possible, other African American male lunch patrons mentioned to multiple longtime sober homes residents that they too had experienced or witnessed this occurring due to the inappropriate behavior of more than one lunch volunteer. In each apparent instance, the Black male lunch patron in question was asked not to return for some period of time.

Among female lunch patrons, Carol is an African American grandmother in her forties who frequently comes to one or both lunches. She extends her food budget with the twice-weekly meals at the Ministries in the latter two weeks of each month, as many North Lawson women do. At the time of her interview, she had been coming to the Ministries for just over three years and shared this reflection during a Saturday morning Either-Or CA meeting:

This is a place where Grace can grow, you know? I've never been able to stick with this thing [being sober] for all that long. It's just too rough sometimes, what with the streets bein' like they are, with the drugs and all. A "bottom." Whatnot . . . I 'on't know. I'm glad Fridays [Youth Nights] happen here. Good to have family videos, and coloring books, and popcorn to bring up my grandkids with the Lord.

Carol began bringing a couple of her grandchildren and her youngest child to the Friday Youth Nights during the summer of 2011. She soon began coming to the Saturday morning CA meetings and took great pride in the increments of her sober time, celebrated with colorful key tags in the first year of one's sobriety. For her, the Friday nights were an opportunity to be without her children and without day-care responsibilities for a few hours

during a summer evening. When Friday Youth Nights were abruptly ended in 2013 without explanation, many neighborhood women like Carol and their families suffered the consequences. After that, any affiliations that the neighbors had with the Ministries became unpredictable (see chapter 5).

Among the regulars at the Men's Prayer Breakfasts, unlike any of the persons profiled above, Andrew was a member of Millwood Fellowship, the predominantly White, suburban, "parent" church that led the church collaboration that funded the FACTS Ministries. White and stocky, he came to the breakfasts wearing clean, old, blue overalls over his thick build. He had by far the longest beard of any Ministries affiliate. Another patron who frequented the monthly breakfasts was Lawrence, a slight-built, African American man in his early seventies with thinning gray hair, a face full of freckles, and a calm manner. Andrew and Lawrence came to the Men's Prayer Breakfasts almost every month. Andrew was a close friend of Warren Pomely's and would warmly greet him and share hellos with everyone else. Lawrence kept to himself and never shared a greeting or spoke to anyone. Yet he was there on time, every third Saturday morning, always with multiple coats on, regardless of the weather or season of the year.

The Men's Prayer Breakfasts were small gatherings because of their 8:00 a.m. start time Saturday mornings. For those who came, who were mostly neighborhood men across a wide range of ages, the breakfasts were a place to get a good meal for the day, share in the Word of God, and be less lonely for a couple of hours on a weekend morning. In each domain, diverse groups of resilient people came together. The FACTS Ministries, in personal characteristics, motives for affiliation, and experiences of the organization over time, reflects the rich diversity of those who valued one or more domains of its mission.

Conclusions

This chapter has explored the four main groups of people in the Ministries' ecology of health and resilience: affiliates of the church and Bible study, residents of the sober homes, those who came to Either-Or CA meetings, and others including volunteers and community lunch attendees. Affiliates from each group were central to the ethnogenic thread of the Ministries (see introduction)—i.e., ways that each group contributed to a process of refining a communal social structure and collective ethos