

**Connections Between Faith Communities and Their Non-profits  
Findings from the Faith and Organizations Project Pilot Study  
on the Role of Religious Culture and Theology on Social and Health Services**

## Introduction

Renewed interest in faith community provision of social welfare and health services in the Clinton and Bush administrations has led to widespread discussion about the meaning and role of faith based service in the United States. Many U.S. social service, health care and community projects started under religious auspices, and some maintain ties to faith communities today. In some faith based organizations, links between faith and action have fostered unique programs that use the philosophy and resources of the faith community to provide service. In other cases, faith related organizations maintain few ties to founding religious communities, resembling secular non-profits. Policy makers, researchers, faith communities, and non-profits founded under religious auspices alike express confusion regarding what is considered a “faith based” organization, whether services should be provided by congregations or formal non-profits, differences between faith based and secular service provision, as well as issues related to the separation of church and state. These concerns have become even more important as Bush administration policies highlight service provision by congregations.

The Faith and Organization project evolved out of this policy milieu as a joint effort by faith communities, leaders of religious based non-profit organizations, and researchers to understand the dynamic relationship between faith communities and the organizations they create, as well as differences in the nature of services provided by organizations founded by different religions. Recognizing that little attention has been paid to the fundamental relationship between faith communities, the organizations they create, or the people they serve, the project seeks to explore these issues. Rather than subscribe to one universal typology that identifies an organization as faith based, the project expects that various religions would organize social welfare provision differently. We also speculate that the relationship between formal non-profits and congregations may vary among religions. In addition, participants recognize that race, immigrant status, and region of the county might also impact on the form of service provision and connections between faith communities and their non-profits. Finally, we anticipate that faith would be expressed differently as well, varying by religion, race, and region. Generally focusing on *how faith is made manifest through non-profit activity*, the project plans a four and a half year research/practice program aimed at two goals:

- **Helping policy makers and researchers clarify the meaning of faith based service as well as its role in social service and health provision in the United States.**
- Assisting faith communities and non-profits founded under religious auspices to:
  - **Understand the unique differences among organizations founded by different religions;**
  - **Clarify the appropriate relationship between non-profits and their founding communities for that religion and culture;**
  - **Understand ways that religious beliefs and practices are reflected in the organization and determine ways to share founding values with staff and board members who do not come from the founding religion, culture, or both;**
  - **Determine ways to best safeguard the civil rights of all program participants, regardless of religion and other characteristics;**
  - **Clarifying the meaning of separation of church and state within organizations founded by faith communities.**

Always conceived as an interdenominational effort, the Faith and Organizations project started as an initiative of Friends Board Training and Support Project, a program associated with the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). The project team and advisory committee quickly expanded to include scholars and practitioners from Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant backgrounds. Non-profit scholars and practitioners associated with this organization convened a series of meetings regarding formulating a research agenda on this issue starting in November 2001. Participants envisioned a program that would compare the experience of organizations from several religions, as well as agencies founded by different racial and ethnic communities. The current project

includes an interdisciplinary team of scholars and practitioners from across the United States associated with several faiths working on similar issues (see project advisory committee and staffing structure, appendix B). The project focuses on four aspects of the relationship between organizations and communities:

- **The relationship between founding communities and organizations.** This research concentrates on the connection between non-profit organization mission and its faith community or secular culture, dynamic ownership of the organization by its founding community, the ways that faith influences the nature of non-profit activity, and the ways the non-profit activity affects the founding community. As such, the project examines both the impact of founding community civic engagement, spiritual, cultural, and social capital on the non-profit and the ways that service provided by the organization helps build civic engagement, social capital and cultural or religious values for its founding community. Social capital refers to networks based on reinforceable trust that enable people or institutions to access resources they need to meet their goals.
- **The relationship between the non-profit organization and the people that use their services.** Questions on this topic compare services provided to people from the same community versus people from another religion, racial, ethnic, immigrant group or class background. As such, research looks carefully at church/state questions raised by the Bush Administration's Faith Based Initiative. Research also potentially provides new insights for debates among social service academics and practitioners regarding the importance of providing services through organizations from within a particular subset of a locality like ethnic, racial, immigrant founded organizations versus service provision by larger, city-wide social service institutions.
- **The impact of founding community culture and social capital systems on non-profit mission, organizational structure, staffing, and program design.**
- **The impact of the larger socio-economic and policy systems, as well as the common strategies among non-profits providing a particular type of service, on non-profit goals and strategies.**

The project hopes to spend three years working in United States communities in an action research project that combines qualitative and quantitative methods to understand these dynamics and develop concrete educational materials and tools that policy makers, faith communities, and non-profits can use. The project also anticipates contributing to academic understandings of this issue. The national research project would compare organizations created by several religions: Catholics, Mainline Protestants, Jews, Peace Churches (Quakers, Mennonite, Brethren), Evangelical Christians, and possibly Muslims. It would also contrast ministries founded by African American, Latino, Asian and white communities. Given questions regarding organizations in marginalized communities, a secular component would compare faith based and secular organizations founded to serve particular marginalized ethnic, racial or immigrant groups. As a first step, the project engaged in a year and a half of pilot research and planning.<sup>i</sup> The project compares organizations providing services in three sectors with different funding mechanisms and systems: social services; health and senior services; and community based and developed services evolving from faith community organizing efforts. This report outlines results from the pilot study and suggests areas for further research. Where appropriate, sections provide specific suggestions to policy makers or practitioners.

### **Faith Community Service Provision: What We Know and Research Questions**

Social welfare service provision in the United States has always involved civil society institutions like faith communities, with religious non-profits and congregations providing the bulk of services until recently (Cnaan, Wineberg and Boddie 1999, Hall 1990 and 2005).

- **All religions and most congregations provide some form of social welfare support to their members and others.** Cnaan (2002) reports 93 percent of congregations in one study provided some form of social service, while his Philadelphia study reported 88 percent of congregations providing services (Cnaan and Boddie 2001). Chaves (2001) reports a significantly lower proportion of congregations providing some form of social service-- 57 percent, but still shows that the majority of congregations participate in some form of social welfare activity. The literature also consistently shows

that most congregations focus on providing emergency services (food, shelter, clothing), programs for children and youth, and the elderly (Cnaan 2002, Grettenberger 2001, Chaves 2000).

- **Most congregations prefer to provide more comprehensive social services with a formally incorporated non-profit organization than take on complex social service programs themselves.** Both Cnaan(2002) and Chaves (1999, 2000) show that congregations generally contribute to the efforts of non-profits through volunteering and other forms of contributions, with a small minority choosing to provide more sophisticated services like training, welfare supports and health themselves. Given the historic role of African American congregations in social supports for their communities, African American churches appear more likely to develop formalized programs - often incorporated as separate 501c3 non-profit organizations-- than most other groups(Lincoln and Mamiya 1990).
- **Most organized religions have fostered social service and health agencies at some point in their history.** Historical research on social welfare and health shows that most faiths created organizations to provide for the health and welfare of their members and others by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Trattner 1994, Cnaan, Wineburg and Boddie 1999). Organizations like Catholic Charities/Catholic Social Services, Lutheran Children and Family Service, and the various Jewish and mainline Protestant organizations continue to dominate social service provision in many U.S. communities today.

Given the policy focus on congregational service provision, less attention has been paid to the nature of services offered by non-profits founded by religious bodies. Only a few scholars have looked carefully at the content of religious based service (Jeavons 1994, Bane Coffin and Higgins 2005). The Faith and Organizations project focuses on this topic in order to clarify how faith based organizations relate to their founding communities today and understand unique ways that theology, religious culture and race/ethnicity play out in organizations founded by Catholics, mainline Protestants, Jews, Muslims, Peace Churches, Evangelicals, African Americans, and Latinos.

### **Key Questions:**

Through a year and a half long planning process, the advisory committee and core team developed four key questions that form the basis for research and analysis. These key questions built on a series of subquestions developed by the planning team and participating organizations prior to the pilot research and planning process:

*1. How do the dynamics between organization and founding community impact on the beliefs, behaviors, and resources of both organization and community? Do relationships between organization and founding community foster the ongoing development of social capital, cultural capital and civic engagement within the founding community?*

- a. What is the relationship between the religious denomination or founding secular community and the non-profit organizations founded by that community? (governance, financial, control, volunteer participation, staffing, program content, mission). How do bridging, bonding and linking social capital ties impact on organization behavior?
- b. How do congregations and their members relate to faith-based organizations that function under their name, and vice versa? For secular organizations, is there a constituent group that serves the same role as the faith community?
- c. How do faith communities ensure that the faith-based organizations have a future as faith-based institutions? That their founding values and perspectives are maintained?
- d. What is the impact of the organizations' work on the faith community? On its understandings of the issues the organizations address? On its understandings of those the organizations serve? On its understandings of their faith? On its sense of identity?
- e. Under what conditions do faith-based organizations move beyond the ethos and control of the denomination and what connection, if any, does the religious body have with an organization when this occurs?

2. What is the relationship between non-profit organizations and the people that use their services? How do these relationships differ when the people served either come from the same community as the organization or from a different background?
  - a. What is the relationship between the organization, the faith community, and those served who are not part of the same religion? Does the work of the organization lead new people to the faith community? Under what terms? How does the organization ensure that the beliefs and rights of program participants from different faith traditions or who adhere to no religion are respected? How is the relationship between those served and the founding community different for secular organizations, particularly in organizations founded by a particular ethnic or racial group now serving others different from themselves?
3. What is the impact of founding community culture and social capital systems on non-profit mission, organizational structure, staffing, and program design?
  - a. How does the personal religious faith of key staff reflect that of the sponsoring community and influence organizational behavior? Do the leaders of secular organizations also adhere to a set of values that reflect their founding communities, and does that influence organization behavior in similar ways? How is this similar and different between faith based and secular organizations?
4. What is the impact of the larger socio-economic and policy system, as well as the service sector of that organization (social services, health and senior services, community development) on non-profit organizations form, function and resources?
  - a. For marginalized populations such as immigrant, ethnic, and racial groups, are there fundamental differences between faith based and secular organizations in regards to their relationships with the wider community and the way that organization mission plays out in agency programs, staffing, and other decisions?

## **Research Methods**

As a pilot project for a national study, the Faith and Organizations project used the general methodology of comparative multi-methods ethnography envisioned for the larger study. Multi-methods ethnography combines a series of qualitative methods (participant observation, interviews, focus groups, content analysis of secondary source material) with analysis of administrative data bases, appropriate regional statistics, and survey research. Participant observation is the regular observation of events in a setting over time, with the observer playing a role in the setting that allows him or her to develop rapport with others in the organization.

The pilot study compared eleven organizations founded by Mainline Protestants, Jews, Catholics, Evangelical Christians, Muslims and African American churches through ethnographic research for between 3 and 6 months per site in Philadelphia and the Washington DC metropolitan area. In Washington DC, research included a Jewish adult day care center; two anti-poverty and adult literacy programs in a large Catholic social service agency; a Chinese Protestant organization providing an array of services; a Mennonite agency serving developmentally disabled adults; an evangelical Christian organization developed by Asian Americans to serve low income African American youth; a Lutheran housing organization; and a Muslim women's social service organization. In Philadelphia, ethnographic research was conducted in a Lutheran social service agency; two African American congregations which had programs for youth and senior citizens; a Jewish immigration agency; and a Quaker retirement and continuing care facility. Pilot research also developed a survey instrument that was tested in organizations in both cities.

## **Suggestions for Future Research**

This pilot study drew together two teams of researchers who conducted quasi-independent projects connected through locality specific team project meetings and occasional events that allowed opportunities for staff from the two projects to communicate with each other. Communications across sites was handled primarily through

the two PIs visiting the other team. Consistency across projects came from shared training materials and ongoing conversations. While the general framework for study methods worked for the pilot project, additional types of fieldwork were necessary in order to adequately respond to all study questions. Specific additional strategies include:

- **Conduct equal amount of research in both organizations and founding faith community venues.**
- **Focus both on congregations and higher level adjudicatory bodies.**
- **Follow organizations to venues with secular counterparts in order to understand the role of these agencies in the sector.**
- **Perform comparative research with secular organizations in marginalized racial and immigrant communities in order to disentangle the role of race, immigrant status, and faith in these organizations.**
- **Institute uniform training, reporting and communication systems across sites.**

### Major Themes

Several major crosscutting findings came out of the pilot study. These themes provide important hints to the ways that faith communities organize social welfare and health provision through their non-profit organizations and congregations; the relationship between faith communities, congregations and their non-profits; and the ways that theology, religious culture and religious identity are expressed in organizations founded by different religions. This next section focuses on four key dynamics that influenced faith based service provision:

- 1) **Institutional vs congregational approaches to service provision.** Various religions organize social welfare provision for their members and others in different ways. We found two different forms of service systems: *Institutional* systems (Catholics, Jews, perhaps Muslims) focus on service provision through centralized entities like an archdiocese or Jewish Federation while *Congregational* systems (Mainline Protestant, African American Christians, Evangelicals, Peace Churches) see congregations as central for fostering and maintaining religious based non-profits.

The differences between institutional and congregational approaches to social welfare service provision stemmed from religious culture. The various Protestant religions, Evangelicals, the Protestant African American congregations, and Peace Churches all see the congregation as the fundamental unit in that religion. While each of these denominations has larger adjudicatory bodies that sometimes provide support to non-profits under religious auspices, social welfare activities are generally founded either by particular congregations, or several congregations working together.

In contrast, non-profits in institutional systems responded primarily to the centralized entities in their region, and cultivated only tangential relationships with individual congregations. Fundraising and volunteering in institutionalized systems also flows through these central structures. While all organizations relied on some outside funding through government or private sources, their support from the founding faith community came from community wide systems.

### *Implications for Policy and Practice*

- **Policy focus on congregations as the appropriate venue for faith based service may be misplaced. Instead, initiatives to promote faith community involvement in social welfare should support both congregational and institutional forms.**
- **Non-profits in institutionalized systems may find it appropriate to strengthen relationships to the faith community through their wider community systems rather than work to mimic outreach to individual congregations as in the congregational systems.**

### *Implications for Future Research*

- **Future research should focus on comparing these two systems to further test findings from the pilot and understand differences between congregational and institutional systems better.**
  - **Research on relationships among non-profits and faith communities in institutionalized systems should pay particular attention to the role of community wide entities like the archdiocese or Federation rather than focusing on congregation/non-profit relations or the interactions between individual members of that faith and the organization.**
- 2) **The role of theology and religious culture in service provision.** Each religion had its unique understanding of the theological basis for service provision and religious culture that significantly structured that nature of service provision in organizations founded by that faith. This section provides a brief overview of the theology for social justice and social supports for Peace Churches, Catholics, Protestants, Evangelicals, African American Christians, Jews, and Muslims, the history of social justice and social welfare work for that religion in the United States, and discussion of that faith community's system for organizing worship and social welfare activities.
  - 3) **The importance of social capital to faith based non-profits:** Social capital refers to *the social relationships and patterns of reciprocal, enforceable trust that enable people and institutions to gain access to resources like volunteers, funding, or government contracts*. Social capital played a significant role for all organizations. The types of social capital among the founding faith community, the sector, and individual congregations varied among organizations. Likewise, some organizations had stronger ties to faith community institutions (congregations and higher adjudicatory bodies), government and other institutions in their sector than others. Given current stress on congregations' role in service provision stemming from the Faith Based Initiative, some non-profits coming out of institutionalized systems reached out to congregations for the first time, only to find limited social capital connections to these congregations.

All of the institutions in this study relied on social capital to secure funding, program participants, volunteers, and other resources. In general, agencies relied on social capital through the following sources:

- **Individual networks through the religious community.**
- **Organizational networks through the faith community.** In institutionalized systems, Federation and archdiocese served as major referral sources. In congregational systems, organizations were more likely to seek supports from congregations in their social capital network.
- **Staff individual and institutional connections.**
- **Sector affiliations.** All agencies except the smaller, evangelical organizations belonged to coalitions and umbrella groups of organizations providing similar services. These sector wide affiliations fostered social capital among like institutions.
- **Program participants.** Many of the organization drew additional program participants, volunteers and other resources from among the people they served, regardless of whether or not they belonged to the founding faith community.

Developing the reciprocal, enforceable trust characteristic of social capital requires ability to display the right cultural cues for that network or community. Functional social capital has two ingredients: 1) trust-based relationships with people or organizations that have access to resources, and 2) knowledge of cultural capital cues, which indicate that an individual or organization is a member of a group and should be given access to those relationships. This definition links social capital to community culture. Organizations that have the right kinds of context-specific relationships and know the cultural-specific cues required to access resources achieve their goals.

*Missing or Attenuated Social Capital:* Several of these organizations had limited links to their religious community or congregations associated with their faith. In these instances, missing or attenuated social capital stemmed from the relationship between social capital and cultural capital. This took two forms. In institutional systems, congregational involvement with social service agencies went against the cultural norm of that religion.

In other cases, relationships between founding communities and organizations attenuated due to disagreements within the community about culturally coded aspects of faith based service.

#### *Implications for Policy and Practice*

- **Social capital links come from several sources: religious affiliations, sector affiliations, individual networks through staff and program participants and program participant communities.** Strong organizations maintain all these forms of social capital.
- **Social capital systems are organized differently in institutionalized systems and congregational systems.** Both policymakers and agency administrators should pay attention to the appropriate targets for resources in expanding social capital links.
- **Given links between social capital and cultural capital, agency administrators should pay attention to cultural cues in efforts to expand or develop new social capital.**

#### *Suggestions for Future Research*

This pilot study suggests that the next phase of research include particular attention to the following issues:

- **Understanding differences in social capital systems between organizations sponsored by institutional vs. congregational systems.**
  - **Disentangling the connections and differences between race, immigrant status and religion for organizations founded by African American or immigrant faith communities.** Research in the pilot showed significant overlap between racial, ethnic or immigrant community networks and those of religious communities. Future research would explore this relationship through comparing organizations in these communities founded under secular vs faith based auspices.
- 4) **Forms of religious expression.** *Explicit* or *expressive* faiths ( Evangelicals, African Americans) actively use god-language or references to their religion in service provision while other faiths (Jews, Peace Churches, sometimes Catholics) practiced *embedded religion* where theology and religious culture played a profound role in faith based service yet very few symbols of religion or references to faith appeared in service provision. Mainline Protestant service provision mostly appeared as embedded faith to program participants, but activities among some staff and outreach activities to congregations sometimes used expressive modes.

#### *Implications for Policy and Practice*

These differences in ways that religion is expressed impacts on interpretation of faith based service by policy makers and practitioners. The following policy and practice implications emerge from this pilot study:

- **Policy makers should be careful to avoid expectations that faith based organizations are identified by expressive language. Instead, the ways that an organization expresses its faith stem from the theology and culture of each religion. Recognizing these differences and supporting various forms would also go far to avoid church/state issues that currently dominate the debate over government sponsored service by religiously based organizations.**
- **Practitioners should carefully identify the ways that faith is appropriately expressed in their religions, shaping programming to fit appropriate beliefs and practices.**
- **Practitioners and denominational leaders in traditions more inclined to the “embedded” approach to religion should carefully consider how they can assure that religious values and motivations will be maintained over the long term in the service organization.**

#### **Findings from the Pilot Study**

The pilot study for the Faith and Organizations project provided preliminary insights into the ways that various religions organize and carry out social welfare and health services in the United States. The pilot study also raised a series of additional questions and areas for research. This section outlines key findings on project research questions. Each section provides some preliminary suggestions for policy makers and practitioners, as well as questions for future research.

### ***Dynamics Between Founding Faith Community and Non-profit Organizations***

In general, we found that most founding religious communities took steps to ensure a continuing relationship between the faith community and the organization through a series of formal mechanisms like board appointments, mission statements, and sometimes volunteering relationships and funding. However, in some cases, as organizations evolved, these measures proved insufficient to maintain strong ties between organization and faith community. However, this pilot research suggests that social and cultural capital connections between organization and community are more important than formal measures in maintaining relationships between community and organization; further research to explore this key question is needed.

We also found that institutional and congregational systems envisioned the relationship between faith community and non-profits differently, particularly in respect to direct connections to congregations and volunteering systems. In addition, the role of religiously based non-profits as an expression of the faith communities work or witness to the world on social justice and social welfare differed dramatically between these two systems. In both cases, differences tracked back to the religious culture and theology of the founding religion. Embedded and expressive religions also construed this relationship differently.

Most of the faith communities in this pilot study institutionalized their relationship to the non-profits they created through various formal mechanisms like mission statements, governance structures and other mechanisms. These strategies reflected the social and cultural capital connections between faith community and the non-profits they created. Newer non-profits and those founded by mainline Protestants and Evangelicals were less likely to formalize these relationships through board appointments and mission statements than the other faiths. This section discusses the ways these relationships were carried out in terms of governance, financial control, mission, and - to a limited extent - staffing.

*Governance:* Founding communities influence governance by the ways that they structure the boards of organizations and the formal and informal ties between faith community and organization. Institutionalized systems organized these relationships differently than in congregational systems.

- **In institutionalized systems, relationships stemmed from connections to the wider community structures.**
- **Organizations founded by congregational systems relied on connections to the founding congregation or congregations in order to maintain these relationships.** These relationships appeared more organic and less formalized than in the institutionalized systems.
- **Board appointments.** All of the organizations in this study maintained connections to their founding faith communities through this mechanism.
- **Choice of the executive director.** Since the executive director sets the tone for the agency, selecting someone who shares agency core values will influence the future direction for the organization. Boards usually choose executive directors, and with one exception, all of the executive directors in these organizations were members of the founding religion. These decisions were not explicit, but it appeared that organizations chose administrative leadership that reflected their beliefs and values.

*Finances, Fundraising, and In-Kind Supports:* For many of these organizations, sources for funding reflected their sector rather than ties to the faith community. However, these small percentages mask the individual donations that some organizations received through requests to their faith communities. Smaller, congregationally based organizations and Muslim organizations received the bulk of these individual donations. Even though financial contributions from faith communities were small, they remained large, symbolic elements in agency budgets, signifying social capital links between organization and community. As in research on

congregational social service (Cnaan 2002), faith communities also provide important in-kind supports (space, food, clothing and other in-kind goods donations) to the organizations under their care.

*Volunteers:* All of these organizations relied on some form of volunteering, often drawing volunteers both through the faith community and wider locality wide systems. Organizations in institutionalized systems were much less likely to rely heavily on volunteers and drew them through different mechanisms. In general, institutionalized systems recruited volunteers either through community wide systems, sister institutions, or through individual connections among staff, board and program participants. These organizations very rarely sought volunteers through congregations themselves. Organizations in congregational systems sought volunteers through constituent congregations. This was true even for larger, established organizations.

*Staff:* Two factors influenced connections between the faith community and the non-profit regarding staffing - 1) age and complexity of the organization and 2) firm congregational system connections to the faith community. In general, we found that the more professionalized, stable organizations relied on paid staff drawn from a number of sources. The Mennonite, Catholic, Lutheran and Jewish organizations fit this model. Organizations coming out of congregationally based systems that had strong ties to particular congregations drew most of their staff from networks associated with their founding congregations or their constituent racial or immigrant community. African American, immigrant and Evangelical based organizations were most likely to hire through faith community networks.

*Mission:* The agencies in this pilot study tended to refer to their religious origins in their mission statements. All of these organizations' mission and vision statements reflected the theology of social welfare or social justice from the founding faith. Mission statements for large, established social service organizations active during the many years when government refused to fund organizations considered religious had secular mission statements, but added vision or "core value" statements that explained the faith background for their work. Depending on their current orientation, agencies chose to foreground or background their religious identity through mission and value statements on their websites and in their literature.

*Faith Based Coalitions and Umbrella Organizations:* In addition to connections to the faith community through congregations or higher level community planning and administrative structures, many of these organizations belonged to local, regional and/or national umbrella organizations or coalitions of organizations from their faith. Umbrella groups provided a forum to discuss common issues and often became the venue to develop strategies to maintain connections to the faith community.

*Relationships to Congregations:* This study found profound differences in the ways that institutionalized systems and congregational systems related to congregations associated with that religion. While organizations in institutionalized systems may develop informal relationships with particular congregations, generally parishes, synagogue, Temples and individual mosques had limited relationships with the formal non-profits associated with the faith community. Congregationally based system organizations, on the other hand, eagerly sought connections to congregations. Organizations with close ties to their founding congregations had strong, organic relationships with founding congregations. The larger, established social service agencies founded by congregationally based religions also sought connections to congregations. Organizations with ties to race or immigrant based groups also reached out to their constituent communities through racial or immigrant wide networks.

*Impact of the Organizations Work on the Faith Community:* Given that the pilot study focused primarily on non-profits with limited research in the constituent faith communities, responses to this question are necessarily preliminary. In general, we found that faith communities viewed their organizations as their representatives in the wider community, reflecting theological beliefs and religious culture. These organizations also became a lightning rod for disagreements within the faith community regarding interpretation of social justice teachings.

#### *Implications for Policy and Practice*

- **Connections between faith communities and organizations under their care work differ for institutional vs. congregational systems, leading to different strategies for governance, fundraising, and other mechanisms that rely on faith community social capital.** Organization leaders would do well to rely on their culturally based strategies to seek support from their faith

community. Policy makers need to recognize that supports from the faith community are equally strong in both systems, but are organized differently.

- **Organizations and faith communities should seek ways to support both social capital and cultural ties between organization and founding community.**
- **Given that organizations sometimes become symbols for disagreements within faith communities over appropriate forms of faith based witness, organization and faith community leaders need to work closely together to understand these dynamics and prevent adverse impacts on the organization or attenuation of relationships with the founding community.**

#### *Suggestions for Future Research*

- **Develop research strategies that provide ample opportunities to explore relationships between faith communities and organizations through focus on this connection and research in venues that allow understanding of both dynamics.**
- **Include comparisons to secular organizations for marginalized racial and ethnic groups as well as new immigrant communities.**
- **Include both organizations with strong ties to the faith community and those that have limited connections to that community or no longer reflect its core values in order to understand the dynamics between organizations and communities when they move apart, as in subquestion e.**

#### ***Relationships between Organizations and Program Participants***

The pilot study found a variety of dynamics between program participants and the agencies that served them. In general, organizations targeted particular populations based on their mission, which sometimes stipulated a connection to the faith, racial or immigrant community. African American agencies and Chinese Immigrant Services were most likely to serve people from their racial and ethnic groups, regardless of religion. Many of these programs encouraged program participants to volunteer with the agencies, give back to the religious community, and sometimes hired program participants.

Only the African American and Evangelical organizations actively used religious language and prayer in their activities, thus creating an environment where religious expression was expected. The majority of the program participants expressed comfort, even preference, for this religious environment. Only the Evangelical organizations openly proselytized or actively invited program participants to join the church family.

#### *Implications for Policy and Practice*

- **Fears of proselytizing or forcing religious practice on program participants largely appeared unfounded.** Most agencies either self-selected program participants or have created mechanisms to background religious practice or make it optional. While civil rights need to be guaranteed for participants in faith based programs, this is far less of issue than is envisioned in some policy circles. The charitable choice provision stipulates that there has to be a secular alternative to the agency readily available so that clients have a choice. This was the case with most of the agencies in the study.

#### *Suggestions for Future Research*

- **Given that established faith based and faith related organizations have developed successful strategies to both protect the religious identity and practice for those from other faiths and maintain their traditions, exploring further these strategies to identify best practices would be an important component of future research.**
- **The pilot study involved informal conversations with program participants and observations. Collection of participant thoughts on the role of faith in organizations could be further explored through adding depth interview and focus group components.**

## ***Impact of Founding Community Culture on Organization Systems and Practice***

All of the organizations in this pilot study were suffused by the religious culture and values of their founding faith. However, we found two alternative approaches to the role of faith in programming. On the one hand, African American and Evangelical organizations actively used expressive faith in their programming, and faith was clearly evident in staff practices. On the other hand, Jewish, Catholic, mainline Protestant and Peace Churches stressed tolerance for other religions in their programming and staff practices. For many staff in these agencies, faith motivated staff and the emphasis on tolerance appeared as a religious value. In these organizations, religious culture influenced all aspects of organization structure, but was embedded in programming. Finally, we had difficulty disentangling religious culture from racial or immigrant culture in the African American and Chinese organizations, leading to questions about the role of religion vs. race, ethnicity or nationality in these organizations.

*Agency Structure:* Religious culture profoundly affects the structure of these organizations. The organizations structure, decision making processes, and administrative systems strongly reflected both the theology and culture of that religion. Often, these aspects of religious culture were embedded in the background of the organization.

*Staff:* While leadership staff in all organizations came from the founding religion and most appeared active in their faith, we found two divergent patterns among other staff. African American, Evangelical and newer congregational organizations were most likely to hire staff from the same faith and often through congregation based social capital. Muslim organizations also hired exclusively Muslims, due to a combination of social capital networks for hiring and practice of traditional Islamic culture for women in these organizations. Jewish, Peace Church, mainline Protestant and Catholic organizations hired people from many faiths. Most of these organizations tried to find people that shared the general values of the organization, even if they belonged to different religions.

*Programming:* The contrast between embedded vs. expressive faith was most evident in programming. In the Muslim, Evangelical and African American organizations faith was everywhere in their programming. The other agencies showed the opposite tendencies. Tolerance was the rule here. It influenced the type of programming and interaction with people from other faiths. As a result, faith messages were not evident in programming, instead focusing on providing services to those in need. Nevertheless, faith influenced the shape and choice of programming.

### *Implications for Policy and Practice*

- **Religious based organizations should evaluate their core beliefs and the way that they are expressed in their organizations as a mechanism to clarify the role of religion in organization practices.**
- **Policy makers and practitioners should understand that faith based organizations are not determined solely by the level of religious expression in programming and staff practice nor by tendencies to hire from within the faith community.** Policies and practices need to understand the diversity of experience.

### *Suggestions for Future Research*

- **Observations of orientation programs and other mechanisms to share founding religious faith with organization staff suggest some important strategies to enable organizations to maintain their religious ethos in their organizations. Further research on more organizations will allow opportunities to understand these mechanisms and develop best practices or tools to share with other organizations.**
- **Comparisons among faith based and secular organizations serving marginalized racial and immigrant groups will provide greater insight into the roles and differences between faith based and secular organizations for these communities.**

### ***Impact of the Sector***

This pilot study revealed that faith based non-profits both responded to the ethos of their founding religious communities and reflected the exigencies of the type of service provided. In most cases, this was a careful balancing act between these two important constituencies. Sector impact was most evident in funding structures.

Both the social service agencies and health and senior services agencies in our pilot study often were leaders in their field. This was particularly true for the larger, more established entities. The active participation of these faith based institutions in secular coalitions and professional associations suggests two things. First, social capital connections to agencies providing similar services is equally important to these organization as participating in faith based networks. Rather than make a choice between providing faith based or secular services, these agencies draw from both pools of social capital and cultural capital, developing collaborations with agencies in both faith based and secular networks and using these formal and informal umbrella networks to determine best practices and appropriate standards of care. As such any dichotomy between faith based and secular organizations appears largely specious as organizations draw from both sources of support.

Second, given these strong connections between faith based and secular organizations through coalitions of similar agencies, arguments that participation in secular service provision systems dilutes the original missions of faith based organizations (Smith and Sosin 2001), may be incorrect. Instead, some of these institutions play a major role in setting standards for service provision in their field and actively lobby for government regulations that reflect the values of their founding faith communities.

#### *Implications for Policy and Practice*

- **Presumptions of fundamental differences between faith based and secular organizations may be misplaced. Instead, it may be more important for policy makers and practitioner to clarify ways that concerns related to the sector and founding community ethos interact with each other in service provision.**

#### *Suggestions for Future Research*

- **Further study of the relationship of organizations to sector based coalitions would help in understanding this dynamic.** Pilot research allowed limited opportunity to attend sector wide coalitions, another aspect of research that would enhance a larger and longer study
- **Comparisons between faith based and secular organizations for marginalized populations would allow opportunities to understand the role of race, nationality, immigrant status and religion in these institutions' activities.**

#### **Conclusion**

Our pilot study offers some important preliminary insights into the ways that religion impacts on the activities of faith based organizations. To our knowledge, this is one of few studies that uses qualitative research to understand how faith is made manifest through non-profit activity. As such, we are able to understand the important role of culture in social capital connections between faith communities and the non-profits they create. Multi-methods ethnography shows the various aspects of relationships between faith communities and their organizations, highlighting different forms previously ignored in both the academic and practical literature on this topic.

Our preliminary findings on the impact of type of service on faith based organizations shows an intertwining for faith based and secular networks, culture, and concerns. Most of these organizations participate equally in social capital systems for their faith communities and with other secular organizations providing similar services. Likewise, both the culture of the founding religion and the standards for service provision of the secular coalitions impact on ways that organizations do business. Funding structures and government regulations also significantly influence organization form and practices. However, given that some of these faith based

organizations are leaders in their fields, faith based values may in fact influence standards for secular coalitions and government.

Given the limited research time and small number of organizations participating in this pilot study, our findings are necessarily preliminary. A number of findings need further testing through research in a larger set of organizations. Future research would also look more carefully at dynamics in the larger faith communities, tracing connections between congregations, larger adjudicatory structures, and non-profits. We hope to expand this pilot study into a national project that would involve four to eight sites across the county. Finally, while our preliminary results provide some usable insights to faith based organizations, faith communities and policy makers, our proposed larger initiative would devote particular energy to creating products useful to practitioners and policy makers.

The project team welcomes interest from other researchers, faith communities and organizations. For more information, contact Jo Anne Schneider at [jschneid@gwu.edu](mailto:jschneid@gwu.edu). Additional copies of this report and documents related to this study will be available at <http://home.gwu.edu/~jschneid/>.

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