Research Topic White Paper #6
Institute for Research on
Unlimited Love
Altruism, Compassion, Service

THE SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF FAITH-BASED COMMUNITIES AND THEIR ACTIVITIES IN RELATION TO THE SPIRITUAL IDEAL OF ULIMITED LOVE

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I. Introduction

Some would argue that the ills of contemporary life are largely traceable to a deficiency of altruistic behavior. Stated differently, the greed and self-seeking nature of consumer culture are seen to be factors responsible for the deterioration of social bonds that once kept life more humane. At the turn of the century and again in recent years, Americans from across the ideological spectrum have argued for the significance of civil society as an overlooked yet integral part of a functioning, healthy republic. Civil society has been aptly described elsewhere as that place in society "where people make their home, sustain their marriages, raise their families, hang out with their friends, meet their neighbors, educate their children and worship their god."[1] As concerns about the level of civility and social capital in this country have grown, scholars have become increasingly interested not only in the importance of this topic, but in unraveling the very ingredients that define and produce civility, and social capital.

Many with an interest in civil society have been particularly interested by the question of what role faith-based organizations (FBOs) may play in countering the effects of greed and narcissistic behavior and thus contributing to a more civil society where altruistic behavior and other directed love are more commonplace.

In fields ranging from medicine to the social and behavioral sciences, scholars have studied the influence of religion and religious practices upon a wide range of health and social outcomes. The net effect of these scientific pursuits has been to yield an impressive body of empirical evidence. But there remains an important dimension of religion that has been relatively neglected by researchers, especially quantitative researchers. This overlooked dimension of religion is what we will refer to here as "intentional religion."[2] Intentional religion is the exposure to religion one receives at a particular time in life for a particular purpose. Here are some examples: A child from a rundown neighborhood is actively matched with a volunteer mentor from a religious organization. A drug addict enrolls in a spiritually-based drug rehabilitation program after several unsuccessful attempts in secular treatment programs. A prisoner participates voluntarily in a faith-based prison program largely directed by religious volunteers that emphasizes prayer, bible study and spiritual transformation over merely serving time. In these examples, in an intentional way, "Good Samaritans" or religiously motivated individuals and groups reach out in many selfless ways in order to meet a particular need at a particular time in a person's life.

Studies of the effect of intentional religion on participants' lives, however, are quite uncommon. This is unfortunate since the country is in the midst of an extraordinary debate about the role of intentional religion and its public policy implications. On January 29, 2001 President George W. Bush signed an executive order creating the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. He has proposed several legislative measures to increase both awareness of public and private support for the

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[1] Senator Bill Bradley, Community Works, Brookings Institution, 1998, pg. 108.

[2] Byron R. Johnson (2002). "Assessing the Role of Faith-Based Organizations: A Systematic Review of the Literature." Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society: University of Pennsylvania and the Center for Civil Innovation, Manhattan Institute: Manhattan, New York.

efforts of faith-based organizations in combating social ills and pathologies as well as egotistical behavior that endanger civil society.

These political efforts operate under a basic premise, that faith-based organizations enjoy a unique effectiveness in providing social services. Interestingly, this assumption is widely shared by individuals on both sides of the traditional political divide. In a speech to volunteers from the Salvation Army, former Vice-President Al Gore said that he supported charitable choice and its further extension because the "better way (faith-based social services) is working spectacularly. From San Antonio to San Francisco, from Goodwill in Orlando to the Boys and Girls Club in Des Moines – I have seen the difference faith-based organizations make."[3] In a speech at the Front Porch Alliance in Indianapolis, Indiana, then presidential candidate George W. Bush said that he supported further government funding of faith-based organizations, "first and foremost, because private and religious groups are effective. Because they have clear advantages over government."[4]

The IRUL is not only intrigued with these questions, but seeks through this solicitation to encourage ground-breaking research examining these and related issues. Multidisciplinary projects are strongly encouraged since many methodological and theoretical cross-cutting issues are relevant to this understudied topic. Interested scholars from sociology, political science, public administration, economics, and other relevant social science disciplines should consider applying. Research completed as a result of funding made possible through the IRUL should help move forward empirical research on the complex role of faith-based organizations, and thus begin to eliminate the following current criticisms about the current state of evaluative research on FBOs: (1) the research is woefully underdeveloped; (2) research has tended to rely too heavily upon research utilizing qualitative approaches such as case studies and too little upon quantitative methodologies that emphasize rigorous and outcome-based research designs; and (3) published research often reflects a general naiveté with regard to the complexity of studying religious or spiritual aspects of these faith-based programs. We need rigorous research and evaluations of faith-based organizations, their volunteers, and those they serve.

II. Key Research Questions

Question 1

Are faith-based organizations more effective than their secular counterparts in addressing various social problems?

Opponents of President Bush's faith-based initiative have yet to argue that faith-based organizations are ineffective. But what, in fact, is the evidence for the widely held assumption that FBOs are efficacious? Are faith-based organizations as effective as proponents and even opponents seem to think? Champions of FBOs regularly cite near

[3] Al Gore, from "The Role of Faith-Based Organizations," a speech given May 24, 1999.
[4] George Bush, from "The Duty of Hope" a speech given in Indianapolis, Indiana, July 22, 1999.

perfect success rates of programs for drug addicts, prisoners, at-risk youth, and other populations. But closer examination of these accounts of extremely high success rates tends to reveal mere simple summary statistics based on dubious in-house data often compiled by the religious organizations and ministries themselves.

We need a great deal of research on the efficacy of faith-based organizations in providing social services. Without such clarity, further debate about the public policy implications of faith-based organizations (e.g. charitable choice, tax code adjustments, enhanced private giving, etc.) will be needlessly shortsighted.

Faith-based organizations such as the Salvation Army, Catholic Charities, Lutheran Social Services, Habitat for Humanity, Prison Fellowship, and Teen Challenge provide many diverse social services such as counseling for depression, offender rehabilitation programs for youths and adults, drug treatment, shelter, housing rehab, child-care centers, after school programs, literacy, mentoring to at-risk youth, and welfare-to-work. A recent examination of faith-based child-care providers, for example, reveals that approximately one of every six child-care centers is housed in a religious facility.[5] Many of these social services are provided to the most needy in society.

And yet questions remain about the efficacy of these faith-based organizations abound. In the area of drug treatment, for example, there are programs like Teen Challenge, whose approach is biblically-based and Christ-centered, and whose success centers around spiritual *transformation* rather than *rehabilitation*. The Salvation Army's Rehabilitation Centers (ARCs), represent a range of faith-based drug treatment programs; some are clearly faith-based, others are quite secular. Research is necessary comparing and contrasting the differing levels of exposure to religious or spiritual programs, in order to isolate the impact, if any, of faith or spirituality.

Question 2

Preliminary research seems to indicate that faith-based organizations are more effective in providing social services than secular or governmental counterparts. What it is that makes these initiatives more effective?

Research is needed that identifies and documents the role of religion and spirituality as a programmatic factor influencing specific outcomes. Is it religion or spirituality or some other non-religious factor that makes the difference in program outcomes? For example, could it be that religiously motivated volunteers makeup social support networks that are found to be more influential than faith or spirituality in impacting outcomes?

In addition to more standard quantitative and survey research, qualitative research methodologies (e.g. enthnography, case study) are also encouraged since they are particularly suited to capture rich insights into the processes and relationships that comprise these programs. Research is needed that helps to isolate and understand the different elements operating within these interventions and how they influence each other as well as program outcomes.

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[5] "Unlevel Playing Field." Report prepared by the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, August 2001.

Question 3

What are the most important variables influencing a person's decision to become a volunteer - and why?

What factors motivate volunteers? Are other directed virtues learned? Can we determine through research the factors that predispose people and groups to altruistic behavior? Perhaps more importantly, what factors strengthen (or diminish) individual and group commitments to volunteerism over time? What are the experiences of those who commonly provide self-sacrificial acts and what makes it possible to sustain such altruistic behavior? For example, is one's inclination or tendency toward altruistic behavior a function of maturation in a developmental sense during the life course?

Research is needed that sheds light on the motivation toward gratitude, selfless, and empathic tendencies. What percentage of Sorokin's "good neighbors" and George W. Bush's "armies of compassion" are religious or secularly motivated altruists?

Question 4

How have faith-based organizations been so successful in mobilizing and sustaining so many volunteers?

Faith-based organizations have been part of public life for decades, but it has only been in recent years that they have been featured in public dialogue at the highest levels of government. By some conservative estimates, FBOs provide $20 billion of privately contributed funds to social service delivery for over 70 million needy Americans annually.

It has been argued that houses of worship represent one of the most volunteer rich organizations in society. Some would further argue that without the altruistic love of religiously motivated volunteers, it is not possible to have a demonstrable impact on reducing current social problems at any significant scale.

Greeley contends that volunteersim over the last 15 years has increased significantly in America. He further points out that volunteering in America is higher than any other country in the world and that this phenomenon is specifically related to the high levels of religious devotion that survey data consistently report for Americans. Is religious practice a source of social capital? Greeley certainly thinks so. Are volunteers more likely to report being religious or secular? Is there reason to believe that houses of worship can intentionally mobilize volunteers and other directed virtues at unprecedented levels in the future?

Question 5

What are the political, administrative, and legal conditions under which organizational cultures of principled agents exist and persist?

Rational choice theorists have written extensively on how bureaucracies are environments comprised of self-serving individuals who who shirk, subvert, and steal on the job. According DiIulio, however, rational choice theorists have little to say about bureaucrats "who strive (work hard and go "by the book"), support (put public and organizational goals ahead of private goals), and sacrifice (go "above and beyond the call of duty") on the job." Utilizing principal-agent models, researchers have been more interested in focusing on the negative rather than the positive aspect of workers within bureaucracies. On the whole, they have not attempted to explain why many bureaucrats and other workers are "principled-agents" who (1) try to protect the public's money, (2) cooperate willingly with other co-workers, (3) routinely expose themselves to psychological stress and even physical dangers for the sake of doing their job right.[6]

Jane Mansbridge has suggested that rational choice theory ends where human behavior based on "duty, love, …'we feeling,' and readiness to cooperate when cooperation does not serve self-interest begins."[7] James Q. Wilson supports this position by arguing that rational choice theories tend understate the power of motives, such as duty or fairness, which seem at odds with any conception of immediate self-interest.[8]

While rational choice theorists may be able to offer compelling evidence to support the fact that many public servants follow narrow definitions of self-interest. Research is needed that examines the rest of the story – what about public servants like fire fighters, police officers, public health workers, and others who exemplify altruistic and other-serving behavior without pecuniary or other incentives traditionally thought necessary to motivate such selfless acts?

Question 6

What are the most important determinates of civic engagement and participation?

In his highly regarded book, Bowling Alone, Robert Putnam argues that civic engagement, volunteering, and thus social capital, are in decline in America. Americans, he argues, have become much more isolated, and are less likely to be involved in group activities.

Andrew Greeley, is but one scholar that does not necessarily agree with Putnam's thesis or assessment that altruistic acts like volunteering are much less likely to take place today than in previous generations. Indeed, Greeley and others point to signs that

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[6] John J. DiIulio, Jr. 1994. "Principled Agents: The Cultural Bases of Behavior in a Federal Government Bureaucracy," Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory 3:277-318.
[7] Jane Mansbridge ed. 1990. Beyond Self-Interest. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
[8] James Q. Wilson, 1990. "Interest and Deliberation in the American Republic, Or, Why James Madison Would Never Have Received the James Madison Award." Political Science and Politics 23: 560.

Americans are still engaged in helping each other and that the sense of community Putnam seeks to restore, has never left.

At the core of this debate is the concept of social capital, which has been defined, for example, as trustworthiness in reciprocal relationships. How much of social capital is actually spiritual capital? What are the linkages between social and spiritual capital and civic engagement and altruistic behavior?

Question 7

How can religion or religiously motivated workers and organizations combat anti-social and egotistical behavior?

Over the last several decades a notable body of empirical evidence has emerged examining the relationship between religion or religious practices and a host of outcomes. In a recent and important publication, Duke University researcher, Harold Koenig and colleagues Michael McCullough, and David Larson, have systematically reviewed much of this work.[9] This lengthy review focuses on research appearing in refereed journals, and demonstrates that the majority of published research is consistent with the notion that religious practices are related to beneficial outcomes in mental and physical health. These outcome categories include for example -- depression,[10] alcohol and drug use[11], and suicide.[12] Reviews of additional social science research also confirm that religious commitment and involvement in religious practices are significantly linked to reductions in delinquent behavior,[13] including both minor and serious forms of criminal behavior,[14]

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[9] Harold G. Koenig, M. McCullough, and D. Larson (2001). Handbook of Religion and Health, Oxford University Press.

[10] See H. G. Koenig, F. Shelp, V. Goli, H. J. Cohen, and D. G. Blazer (1989), "Survival and health care utilization in elderly medical in patients with major depression." Journal of the American Geriatrics Society 37: 599-606 and K. E. Covinsky, E. Kahana, M. H. Chin, R. Palmer, R. H. Fortinsky, and C. S. Landefield (1999), "Depressive symptons and three-year mortality in older hospitalized medical patients." Annals of Internal Medicine 130:563-569.

[11] See for example, E. Adlaf and R. Smart (1985), "Drug use and religious affiliation, feelings, and behavior." British Journal of Addiction 80:163-171; K. Hadaway, K. Elifson, and D. Peterson (1984), "Religious involvement and drug use among urban adolescents." Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 23:109-128; B. Lorch and R. Hughes (1988), "Religion and youth substance use." Journal of Religion and Health 24: 197-208; and H. Koenig et al. (1994). "The relationship between religion and alcoholism in a sample of community-dwelling adults." Hospital and Community Psychiatry 45: 225-231.

[12] See for example, K. Breault and K Barkey, (1982), "A comparative analysis of Durkheim's theory of egoistic suicide," Sociological Quarterly 23: 321-331; P. Hasselback, et al., (1991), "The relationship of suicide rates to sociodemographic factors in Canadian census divisions." Canadian Journal of Psychiatry 36: 655-659; F. Trovato (1992), "A Durkheimian analysis of youth suicide." Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior 22: 413-427; C. Krull and F. Trovato (1994), "The quite revolution and the sex differential in Quebec's suicide rates." Social Forces 72: 1121-1147; and S. Stack (1983), "A comparative analysis of suicide and religiosity." Journal of Social Psychology 119: 285-286.

[13] For systematic reviews of this literature see Byron R. Johnson, Spencer D. Li, David B. Larson, and Michael McCullough (2000), "Religion and Delinquency: A Systematic Review of the Literature," Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice, 16: 32-52; see also Colin J. Baier and Bradley E. Wright (2001), "If You Love Me, Keep My Commandments: A Meta-Analysis of the Effect of Religion on Crime," Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency 38:3-21.

even among high-risk urban youths from the most disadvantaged communities.[15] There is also evidence that religious involvement has a cumulative effect throughout adolescence and thus may significantly lessen the risk of later adult criminality.[16] Once individuals become involved in deviant behavior, it is possible that participation in specific kinds of religious activity can help steer them back to a course of less deviant behavior and, more important, away from potential career criminal paths.

Research on adult samples is less common, but tends to represent the same general pattern, that religion reduces the likelihood of criminal activity among adults. An important study by T. David Evans and colleagues found that the frequency of religious activities reduced the likelihood of adult criminality. The relationship persisted even after secular controls were added to the model. Further, the finding did not depend on social or religious contexts.[17] Additionally, a small but growing literature focuses on the links between religion and family violence. Several recent studies report that regular religious attendance or participation is inversely related to levels of reported abuse among both men and women.[18]

Question 8

How can religion or religiously motivated workers and organizations promote pro-social behavior?

Religious involvement may help adolescents learn "prosocial behavior" that emphasizes concern for others' welfare. Such prosocial skills may give adolescents a greater sense of empathy toward others and teach youth to behave in less self-serving ways.

Well-being has been referred to as the positive side of mental health. Many studies have examined the relationship between religion and well-being by examining

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[14] See David Evans, Francis Cullen, Velmer Burton, R. Gregory Dunaway Gary Payne, and Sesha Kethineni (1996), "Religion, Social Bonds, and Delinquency," Deviant Behavior 17:43-70.

[15] See for example, Byron R. Johnson, David B. Larson, Spencer D. Li, and Sung J. Jang (2000), "Escaping from the Crime of Inner Cities: Church Attendance and Religious Salience among Disadvantaged Youth," Justice Quarterly 17:377-391; Byron R. Johnson, David B. Larson, Sung J. Jang, and Spencer D. Li (2000) "The 'Invisible Institution' and Black Youth Crime: The Church as an Agency of Local Social Control," Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 29:479-498; Byron R. Johnson, Sung J. Jang, David B. Larson, and S. D. Li (2001) "Does Adolescent Religious Commitment Matter?: A Reexamination of the Effects of Religiosity on Delinquency," Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency, 38: 22-44.

[16] See Sung J. Jang and Byron R. Johnson, (2001) "Neighborhood Disorder, Individual Religiosity, and Adolescent Use of Illicit Drugs: A Test of Multilevel Hypotheses," Criminology 39:109-144.

[17] See T. David Evans, Francis T. Cullen, R. Gregory Dunaway, and Velmer S. Burton, Jr. (1995) "Religion and Crime Reexamined: The Impact of Religion, Secular Controls, and Social Ecology on Adult Criminality," Criminology 33:195-224; see also Byron R. Johnson, David B. Larson, and Timothy G. Pitts, (1997) "Religious Programming, Institutional Adjustment and Recidivism Among Former Inmates in Prison Fellowship Programs," Justice Quarterly, 14 (1):145-166.

[18] See for example, Christopher G. Ellison and Kristin L. Anderson (2000) "Religious Involvement and Domestic Violence Among U.S. Couples," Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion; Christopher G. Ellison, John P. Bartkowski, and Kristin L. Anderson (1999) "Are There Religious Variations in Domestic Violence?" Journal of Family Issues, 20 (1): 87-113.

happiness, joy, satisfaction, fulfillment, contentment, and other indicators of a life that is full and complete.[19] Most of these studies tend to be cross-sectional, but a significant number of important prospective cohort studies[20] and several are intervention studies.[21] A majority of these studies report some positive association between religious involvement and greater happiness, life satisfaction, morale, positive affect or some other measure of well-being.

Many religious traditions and beliefs have long promoted positive thinking and an optimistic outlook on life. Not surprisingly, researchers have examined the role religion may or may not play in instilling hope and meaning, or a sense of purpose in life for adherents. Researchers have found, on the whole, a positive relationship between measures of religiosity and hope[22] in a varied clinical and nonclinical settings.[23] Similarly, studies show that increasing religiousness is also associated with optimism[24] as well as larger support networks, more social contacts, and greater satisfaction with support.[25]

Research is needed that systematically operationalizes and measures the key variables and program components associated with faith-based organizations and community based organizations and the religiously or secularly motivated people who operate them. What factors are most important or essential to the development of pro-social behavior in program recipients? Determining the relative importance and weight of these key variables as well as their indirect and direct effects among other variables in multivariate analyses are of particular interest.

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[19] Harold G. Koenig, M. McCullough, and D. Larson, Handbook of Religion and Health, 2001, Oxford University Press, p. 97.

[20] See for example, F. K. Willits and D. M. Crider (1988). "Religion and well-being: Men and women in the middle years." Review of Religious Research 29: 281-294; A. P. Tix and P. A. Frazier (1997). "The use of religious coping during stressful life events: Main effects, moderation, and medication." Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology 66:411-422; M. J. Graney (1975). "Happiness and social participation in aging." Journal of Gerontology 30: 701-706; D. G. Blazer and E. Palmore (1976). "Religion and aging in a longitudinal panel." Gerontologist 16: 82-85; K. S. Markides (1983). "Aging, religiosity, and adjustment: A longitudinal analysis." Journal of Gerontology 38:621-625; and M. A. Musick (1996). "Religion and subjective health among black and white elders." Journal of Health and Social Behavior 37: 221-237.

[21] See J. J. Beutler, J. T. Attevelt, S. A. Schouten, J. A. Faber, M.J. Mees, G. G. Giejskes (1988), "Paranormal healing and hyptension." British Medical Journal 296: 1491-1494; S. O'Laoire, (1997), "An experimental study of of the effects of distant, intercessory prayer on self-esteem, anxiety, and depression." Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine 3:38-53; and D. A. Matthews, S. M. Marlowe, and S. F. MacNutt (1999). "Effects of intercessory prayer ministry on patients with rheumatoid arthritis." Journal of General Internal Medicine 13 (4, supplement 1): 17.

[22] See S. Sethi and M. Seligman (1993). "The hope of fundamentalists." Psychological Science 5:58.

[23] See for example, K. Herth (1989). "The relationship between level of hope and level of coping response and other variables in patients with cancer." Oncology Nursing Forum 16: 67-72; Raleigh (1992); Ringdal (1996).

[24] See S. Sethi and M. Seligman (1993). "The hope of fundamentalists." Psychological Science 5:58.

[25] See for example, Chris C. G. Ellison and L. K. George (1994). "Religious involvement, social ties, and social support in a southeastern community." Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 33: 46-61; D. E. Bradley (1995). "Religious involvement and social resources: Evidence from the data set "Americans' Changing Lives." Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 34:259-267; and H. G. Koenig, J. C. Hays, D. B. Larson, et al. (1999), "Does religious attendance prolong survival?: A six year follow-up study of 3,968 older adults." Journal of Gerontology 54A:M370-377

Question 9

What is the extent of other-directed love dispensed by faith based organizations?

Several studies have been undertaken to survey the capacity of a local/regional network of faith-based organizations to provide social services. For example, in one of the most extensive surveys to date, John Orr examined the social service provision capability of around 1,100 faith-based organizations throughout California.[26] Similarly, Ram Cnaan's[27] review of social services provided by Philadelphia congregations, and Robert Wineburg's[28] assessment of social services provided by Greensboro congregations, focus on the capacity of faith-based organizations to provide services in a much more defined locale. While these surveys and others like them,[29] do an excellent job of providing basis estimates of how many faith-based organizations are providing specific types of services, from food shelters to after-school child care, within a given region, they do not necessarily generate findings that can be generalized to the entire population. Survey research that examines in representative and national samples, the capacity of congregations and other FBOs to provide social services is critical. Such data may make it possible to more accurately gauge the degree to which these other-regarding organizations are able to have a significant influence for societal good.

Question 10

Can faith-based organizations and government work together to combat social ills?

Many of society's most pressing social problems have defied governmental interventions for decades. More than ever before, there seems to be a realization that government programs alone cannot reduce, for example, unacceptably high levels of poverty, teen pregnancy, or illiteracy, to mention but a few. Although there has been a recognition that faith-based organizations may offer approaches that have had at least some very preliminary success in reducing poverty, teen pregnancy, and illiteracy, there is a growing sentiment among many that in order to combat social ills with altruistic type interventions, a series of unusual partnerships between sacred and secular, pubic and

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[26] Orr, John (2000). *Faith Based Communities and Welfare Reform: California Religious Community Capacity Study*. University of Southern California, Center for Religion and Civic Culture.
[27] Cnaan, Ram (2000). *Keeping Faith in the City: How 401 Urban Religious Congregations Serve Their Neediest Neighbors*. University of Pennsylvania, Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society.
[28] Wineburg, Robert J. (1990). "A Community Study of the Ways Religious Congregations Support Individuals and the Local Human Services Network." The Journal of Applied Social Sciences, 15: 1.
[29] See for example, Virginia Kodgkinson, Murray Weitzman, Arthur Kirsch, Stephen Norga, and Heather Gorski (1993) "From Belief to Commitment: The Activities and Finances of Religious Congregations in the United States." Independent Sector, Washington, D.C.; Robert Wineburg (1997) "Local Human Service Organizations and the Local Religious Community During an Era of Change." Journal of Applied Social Sciences 21:93-98.

private, must take place.[30] Research is needed to determine the conditions, if any, under which these private religious entities can develop partnerships and work in tandem with government and non-governmental entities to meet civic purposes.

Question 11

Does the potential for altruism or unlimited love exist in all people?

According to some scholars, altruistic behavior can only raise suspicions of self-interest and self-righteousness. Others have argued that altruism is paradoxical to the point of being impossible to achieve and can offer plenty of empirical evidence that would seem to confirm that people are hopelessly selfish. In this way, altruism can be viewed as a detraction from our most positive possibilities and thus really reflects a domineering and condescending attitude on the part of the altruist. Is altruism fundamentally unnatural, an aberration that runs directly counter to the natural flow of life? Or conversely, can sincere other directed love and empathy be developed or taught through a process of socialization? Are certain groups of people (e.g. men v. women or urban v rural dwellers) more likely to exhibit self-sacrificial acts intended to benefit others regardless of material or social outcomes for the actor? Research is needed that attempts to answer these and related questions by comparing and contrasting different groups of people in diverse settings.

[30] See for example, Stephen Monsma (1996). When Sacred & Secular Mix: Religious Nonprofit Organizations & Public Money. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc: Lanham, Maryland.

Methodological Considerations

It is apparent that the limited evaluations of FBOs to date, tend to be plagued with methodological shortcomings often associated with new and under funded areas of scientific inquiry. These studies, on the whole, have not used random assignment, have not used multiple indicators to control measurement errors, and did not subject measures to reliability testing. In addition, these studies have not been based on longitudinal data and serve as a reminder that research methodology can have an important effect on research findings. For example, Johnson (2000) states that the religiosity-delinquency literature not only documents that religious commitment is generally linked to reductions in crime and delinquency, but this finding was found to be particularly true among those studies with the most rigorous research methodology.[31] Religion is a large part of many people's lives, but it is not a large part of the research on the altruistic social service delivery to the needy by faith-based organizations.

The paucity of research on faith-based organizations reveals two very basic facts. First, what know empirically about their effectiveness is positive and encouraging. FBOs appear to have considerable advantages over comparable secular institutions in helping individuals overcome difficult circumstances (e.g., imprisonment and drug abuse). The most rigorously studied faith-based entity to date – faith-based prison programs like Prison Fellowship – still require much more long-term research. Second, although this literature is positive, it is also extremely limited. A host of other services that FBOs provide such as housing, welfare-to-work, alcohol and drug treatment, education, after-school programs, and any number of outreach programs to disadvantaged populations have been absent of serious evaluation research.

By any measure, this area of social science research is surprisingly underdeveloped. But for several reasons, the prospects for future research are impressive. First, FBOs are now receiving long overdue attention for the services they provide. This attention has resulted in new academic interest in the study of religion, and hopefully in the rigorous investigation of FBOs. Second, and possibly even more important, is the fact that the scientific study of religion has grown in impressive ways over the past several decades. Researchers are now in a position to cite hundreds of solid studies in peer-reviewed journals that indicate a striking correspondence between religiosity and general health and well being. But if such a correspondence can be established for religion in general, can it also be established for the case of intentional religion and the work of faith-based organizations? If religion tends to reduce one's likelihood for anxiety disorders, depression, suicide and alcoholism, is it reasonable to assume religion-based counseling programs that treat anxiety disorders, depression, suicide or alcoholism might also be effective?

Research methodologies of all types are encouraged under this announcement. Experimental and quasi-experimental designs are particularly encouraged. Heirarchical linear modeling and other multivariate approaches of studying existing data bases, both cross-sectional and longitudinal are also appropriate. Research in this area has too often utilized poor measures of religious belief or private practice, thus further research, especially prospective studies that assess multiple dimensions of religion or being religiously committed is needed to sort out these complex relationships. The results of

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[31] B. R. Johnson, S. D. Li, D. B. Larson, M. E. McCullough (2000). "Religiosity and Delinquency: A Systematic Review of the Literature." Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice

such research, for example, may facilitate the design of future intervention strategies for depression screening, crime prevention, and treatment in religious as well as non-religious settings.

Suggested Readings of FBO Evaluations

Three descriptive studies and one multivariate study, all of which have not been published, are worth reading. Two of the studies examined the effectiveness of Teen Challenge's drug treatment programs, while the other two focused upon faith-based programs to prisoners and former prisoners. The first study compared a sample of Teen Challenge drug treatment graduates, (i.e. those who successfully completed the program) with induction center dropouts (i.e. those who dropped out at the beginning of the program), and training center dropouts (i.e. those who were unwilling or unable to complete the program) between 1968 and 1975.[32] All total, 366 individuals were identified, but only 54 percent of those completed surveys. Individuals who graduated from the Teen Challenge training center showed significant and positive behavioral change when compared with the two dropout groups over the seven-year period.

The second descriptive study surveyed former Teen Challenge participants who had successfully completed the four to six month induction program based in Chattanooga, Tennessee.[33] Alumni from a 15-year period (1979-1991) were identified (n=213) and a random sample of 50 was subsequently surveyed, from which 50 percent responded (n=25). Interestingly, based on responses from only 25 former participants who had successfully completed phase 1 of the program and without the benefit of any comparison group, the author concludes that a change in attitude, behavior, and lifestyle is apparent, significant, and long-lasting.

The third study compares the reentry to society of former inmates who had participated in Prison Fellowship's church-based aftercare program (n=60), with a matched sample of former prisoners (n=60) who did not participate in the church-based program.[34] Former prisoners in the church-based program were less likely than the comparison group to be returned to prison (25% vs. 34%).

The last of the descriptive studies examines prisoners (n=59) who had participated in Kairos Horizons, a faith-based program designed to improve behavior and literacy. Inmates participating in the Kairos program tended to have a more severe primary offense and significantly longer prison sentences than the general population to which they were compared (n=741). The Florida Department of Corrections reports that Kairos participants were less likely to than a sample from the general population to have disciplinary problems and more likely to attain higher literacy levels.[35]

The results from four multivariate analyses provide at least preliminary positive evidence that participation in social service programs administered by faith-based organizations generate effective outcomes. In all four multivariate studies, the faith-based program was found to produce effective and statistically significant results. Three

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[32] Catherine B. Hess (1976). "An Evaluation of the Teen Challenge Treatment Program." Services Research Report, National Institute on Drug Abuse, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Public Health Service.

[33] Roger D. Thompson (1994). "Teen Challenge of Chattanooga, Tennessee: Survey of Alumni." Teen Challenge National: Springfield, Missouri.

[34] Thomas O'Connor (2001). "From Prison to the Free World: An Evaluation of an Aftercare Program in Detroit, Michigan." Center for Social Research: Maryland.

[35] Florida Department of Corrections (2000). "Comparing Tomoka Correctional Institution's Faith-Based Dorm (Kairos Horizons) with Non-Participants." Bureau of Research and Data Analysis: Tallahassee, Florida.

of the four multivariate studies evaluated the effectiveness of distinct programs affiliated Prison Fellowship Ministries (PFM), a volunteer organization which prisoners and former prisoners. In the first study, Mark Young and his co-authors investigated long-term recidivism among a group of federal inmates trained as volunteer prison ministers. Inmates were furloughed to Washington, D.C., for a two-week seminar designed to support their religious faith and develop their potential for religious leadership with fellow inmates in a program operated by PFM, and supported by the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Recidivism data for seminar participants were compared to data drawn from a matched control group over an eight to fourteen year follow-up period. Chi-square analysis as well as survival analysis revealed that the seminar group had a significantly lower rate of recidivism than the matched group.[36]

In the second study, Byron Johnson and colleagues examined the impact of religious programs on institutional adjustment and recidivism rates in two matched groups of inmates from four adult male prisons in New York State.[37] One group had participated in programs sponsored by PFM; the other had no involvement with PFM. PFM and non-PFM inmates were similar on measures of institutional adjustment, as measured by both general and serious infractions, and recidivism, as measured by arrests during a one-year follow-up period. However, after controlling for level of involvement in Prison Fellowship sponsored programs, inmates who were most active in Bible studies were significantly less likely to be rearrested during the one-year follow-up period. In both studies of Prison Fellowship samples, there was a statistically significant parallel between increases in bible study participation or program participation and reductions in the level of recidivism among former inmates.

In the third study, Byron Johnson conducted an exploratory analysis comparing the recidivism rates for two Brazilian prisons widely considered to be exemplars in a country facing an array of correctional crises.[38] One of the prisons was primarily based on vocational training and the use of prison industry to better prepare inmates for release and to reduce the cost of operating the facility (Braganca). The second prison was a faith-based facility run by local church volunteers who use religious programs to "kill the criminal and save the person" (Humaita). The study compared recidivism rates for prisoners released from these two facilities during a three-year post-release window from 1996 to 1999. The findings revealed that the recidivism rate (i.e., new arrest and re-incarceration) for former Humaita prisoners was significantly lower during a three-year follow-up period than that found for Braganca prisoners, and this finding held for high-risk as well as low risk prisoners.

The fourth study is a comparative evaluation of the Christian drug treatment program Teen Challenge. The study describes the history and procedure of Teen Challenge and its moral understanding of addiction is contrasted with the disease model of addiction found in other programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). In order to

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[36] Mark C. Young, John Gartner, Thomas O'Connor, David B. Larson, and Kevin Wright (1995) "Long-Term Recidivism Among Federal Inmates Trained as Volunteer Prison Ministers," Journal of Offender Rehabilitation, 22:97-118.

[37] Byron R. Johnson, David B. Larson, and Timothy G. Pitts, (1997) "Religious Programming, Institutional Adjustment and Recidivism Among Former Inmates in Prison Fellowship Programs," Justice Quarterly, 14:145-166.

[38] Byron R. Johnson (forthcoming publication 2001) "Assessing the Impact of Religious Programs and Prison Industry on Recidivism: An Exploratory Study."

assess the effectiveness of Teen Challenge according to several outcome measures, a nonequivalent control group pretest-posttest design was employed using self-report telephone interview data. Outcomes considered were freedom from addictive substances, return to treatment, employment, and precipitants of drug use such as depression and cravings. The comparison group was composed of clients in short-term inpatient (STI) programs funded by Medicare or Medicaid. Aaron Bicknese's study of the Teen Challenge Drug Treatment Program demonstrated that offenders participating in the faith-based drug treatment program were more likely to remain sober and maintain employment than those that did not.[39] Far more Teen Challenge graduates were employed full time and far fewer Teen Challenge graduates returned to treatment than those in either comparison group.

[39] Bicknese, Aaron. (1999). "The Teen Challenge Drug Treatment Program in Comparative Perspective," Ph. D. dissertation, Northwestern University.