

Not by Faith Alone:  
A preliminary outcomes evaluation of a faith-based welfare to work program

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## ABSTRACT

KEVIN F. MODESTO: Not by Faith Alone: A preliminary outcomes evaluation of a  
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(Under the Direction of Dennis K. Orthner, Dean Duncan, Iris Carlton-LaNey,  
Christian Smith, and Bob Wineburg)

The role of faith-based organizations in the provision of social services has gained increasing attention since Charitable Choice passed as a provision of the Personal Responsibility Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act of 1996. Under George W. Bush, faith-based social services took center stage in the domestic policy debates. One element of the rhetoric surrounding public support of faith-based interventions has been the talk of their effectiveness. Unfortunately, few studies have ever attempted to assess the outcomes of faith-based social interventions, and the studies that have been conducted report mixed findings. The notion of the effectiveness of faith-based interventions has largely been taken on faith.

This study used longitudinal administrative data matched with earnings histories to assess the impact a faith-based intervention had on earnings, poverty status, and employment stability in three North Carolina counties. There was no significant difference between the outcomes of a faith-based and a similar secular intervention when earnings, poverty status, and employment stability were assessed. These findings are consistent with other major studies of welfare to work programs, suggesting the need to assess the structure of low-wage work in the United States.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Becky, Elizabeth, Micah, Zoë, and Luke for their compassion and consistent partnership to bring about a more just and caring world.

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Partnerships are the key to strengthening individuals, families, and communities. This is particularly evident in the design of the faith-based intervention in this study. Without the partnership of key agencies and individuals specifically—The North Carolina Department of Social Services, Employment Security Commission, Community College System, Vance-Granville Community College, Wake Technical Community College, Jobs Partnership, and the Jordan Institute of the UNC-CH School of Social Work—this project would have been impossible. Individual support was also vital. To Skip Long and David Spikard of Jobs Partnership, Barbara Boyce of the Community College System, Mary Brady and Darlene Bullock of Wake Tech, Dorothy Williams and Vanessa Jones of VGCC, Cyrette Cotton-Fleming and Kim Flair of the Jordan Institute, Robert Buck, and my committee members who technically made this study possible, I am grateful. I am particularly indebted to the people in the congregations and organizations I worked with over the years who put names and faces to poverty in the United States and often made me see the real poverty in consumer capitalism and to my family who put up with my stress, I am eternally grateful!

## PREFACE

My interest in the evaluation of faith-based social interventions emerged long before there was real interest in the topic. I began to wonder about measuring the contributions of religious interventions during a class on Christian Faith and Public Policy taught by Ron Sider when I was a seminarian more than a decade ago. At the time, Sider seemed convinced there was a way to prove the effects of religious social interventions, but seminary did not provide the necessary tools for assessing the impact of sacred or secular social service programs.

Over the next decade, I spent my life directing, crafting, and consulting congregational projects aimed at improving the lives of others, particularly the homeless, low-income families, and youth in the urban core. I argued with consultants moving toward quantitative outcomes approaches of program evaluation, suggesting they simply were not sensitive enough to address the complex issues the people I lived and worked with faced. These questions, these arguments, and the desire to simply “do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God” drove me to additional graduate study focused on assessing program outcomes. While I am still skeptical of the ability of quantitative approaches alone to adequately detect the nuances of any intervention sacred or secular, I am convinced of the need to be constantly evaluating and striving to find the appropriate approaches to create a more just and caring society.

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## Chapter 1: Problem Definition

The United States is deemed to be a very religious nation. According to a June 2004 Gallup survey, 60% of the public report religion as being very important to them, and 64% report having membership in a religious congregation. The majority of people polled (61%) believe religion can solve most of America's problems (Carroll, 2004). A survey conducted by Public Agenda in 2000 found slightly more support for the ability of religion to address social problems. The majority felt more religion would result in increased volunteering (87%), improved parenting (85%), and reduced crime (79%). People even believed greed and materialism would decrease (69%) (Farkas, Johnson, Foleno, Duffett, & Foley, 2000). The United States is a religious nation, and the public believes religion is, at minimum, a part of the solution to our social problems.

The Personal Responsibility Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act of 1996 changed the nature of welfare and codified the nation's growing belief in the power of religion to address social problems into law. The language and ideology of welfare shifted from family support to personal responsibility, providing a new way of looking at governmental responsibility for social service provision. It represented a return to individual, family, and community responsibility for the poor, reducing the federal government's role. PRWORA defined poverty in moral terms, indicating the solutions to poverty are personal, moral solutions. Under the new definitions, receiving public welfare communicates a lack of personal responsibility on the part of the recipient. Viewing public assistance recipients as irresponsible individuals provided the ideological foundation for the shift from the Family

Support Act of 1988 to the Personal Responsibility Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act of 1996, changing the nature of the social welfare system in the U.S.

Defining poverty as the personal responsibility of the recipient allowed PRWORA to institute several key changes in public assistance from previous social welfare policies. It eliminated government guaranteed cash assistance to families in need. The Policy limited cash assistance to a total of 5 years. It also required all participants to work, emphasizing employment over education for government assistance. Social workers could sanction clients if they failed to reach their goals. PROWORA gave state and local governments more responsibility and flexibility in the provision of public welfare. PRWORA also emphasized paternity and paternal responsibility for children and eliminated benefits to illegal immigrants.

These changes in PRWORA limited the federal government's responsibility for the poor; however, they did not provide solutions to remedy the "personal moral failures," primarily unemployment and the breakdown of the two-parent family, now defined as the root causes of poverty. PRWORA needed a provision aimed at addressing the moral causes of poverty, through the transformation of the poor. Transformation, for many of the architects of PRWORA, was analogous to an evangelical Christian understanding of religious conversion laid out in Marvin Olasky's (1992) *The Tragedy of American Compassion*.

Charitable Choice, Section 104 of the Personal Responsibility Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act, offered a means to address the "moral causes of poverty" for the members of the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress. Charitable Choice permitted federal, state, and local funding of religious social service programs, while allowing them to maintain their distinctive religious character. According to the provision, government funds were limited to non-

sectarian elements of social services, requiring separate accounting for religious and non-religious aspects of the program. Consumers of services were to be given the option of religious or secular services and were not required to participate in the sectarian activities of the program. Religious charities could continue to display religious symbols in their offices and make hiring decisions based on theological beliefs, allowing them to maintain their religious character. While Charitable Choice appeared to some to be a revolution, to many, government funding of religious social service agencies was a common practice, existing for decades prior to 1996 with few actual restrictions on social service providers (Chaves, 2001; Monsma, 1996; Monsma & Mounts, 2002). Charitable Choice clearly codified a public relationship between federal, state, and local governments and institutional religion, triggering public debate around the governmental support for religious social services.

Charitable Choice sparked the debate of public funding for religious social services, but the establishment of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives by George W. Bush thrust the public support of religious social services to the center of social policy discussion. For Bush, religion provides the primary answer to social problems (Carney, 2003; Loconte, 2004; Mooney, 2003; Shapiro, 2003; Stanley, 2004). Bush sees religion contributing more than typical relief services such as food, clothing, and financial assistance. He believes in the miraculous healing power of faith. In a recent speech to the participants of the National Conference on Faith-Based Social Services, Bush proclaimed,

I will tell you – I will tell you, the cornerstone of any good recovery program is the understanding there is a Higher Being to which – to whom you can turn your life, and therefore save your life. It is the crux of many, many a successful addiction program. It -- and our government ought to understand that (Bush, 2004a).

Bush employs the “miracle motif” the belief if all people have a relationship with God, evil will disappear and social problems will cease to exist, placing religion at the center of social policy (Emerson & Smith, 2000; Stark, 1971). The public can no longer avoid the delicate topics of politics and religion; they have been thrust to the center of current social policy debate.

### *Objectives of the Research*

Religion and its relationship to social services and social welfare policy have emerged as legitimate topics for mainstream academic discourse. There is a growing literature focusing on the intersection of religion and social services, yet little is actually known. The primary purpose of this dissertation is to:

(1) Describe the nature of the historical relationship between religion and social service provision in the United States, particularly as it relates to welfare to work programs.

(2) Provide an operational definition of a faith-based organization. Currently, there is no single agreed-upon definition of a faith-based organization, hindering attempts to identify faith-based organizations for the purposes of evaluation (Government Accountability Office, 2006).

(3) Offer a Protestant, faith-based theory of change to labor force attachment. Testable hypotheses will emerge from the proposed theory. Theoretical explanations of the role of religion in the helping professions are in short supply. Scholars interested in advancing the discussion of religion’s contributions to social intervention must offer credible theories of change explaining why or how faith-based interventions intend to achieve program outcomes.

(4) Report the findings of one outcome evaluation of a faith-based welfare to work program. Proponents of faith-based social interventions commonly assert FBOs are “America’s most effective service providers” (Bush, 2004b); however, there is little empirical evidence to support such an assertion.

## Chapter 2: History

Religious faith historically influenced the development of social welfare in the United States. Theda Skocpol states, “Religious people, religious ideals, and religious ties figure prominently in American social movements and in the making and implementation of the nation’s social welfare policies” (Skocpol, 2000, p.21). Social Work has historically partnered with religious institutions for the provision of social services and the development of social policy (National Association of Social Workers, 2001). Congregations cared for the poor, sick, and marginalized. They inspired the development of personal relationships leading to the awareness of inequality and injustice (Ammerman, 2001; Bartkowski & Regis, 2003; Cnaan, 1999b; Cnaan, Wineburg, & Boddie, 1999; Hall, 2001; Spain, 2001; Wineburg, 2001). Religion has provided the moral foundation for action and at times motivated people to change policy (Thiemann, Herring, & Perabo, 2000). In general, organized religion has made significant contributions to social welfare in the U.S.

Government partnerships with religious institutions characterized social welfare in the United States since its inception. Social welfare historian Walter Trattner points out that “social theory and theology gave meaning to poverty in America (1989, p.17).” Theoretical and theological ideals shaped colonial social welfare policy. Many colonies adopted the Elizabethan Poor Laws, the English social welfare system, while others developed more ecclesial approaches to poverty in the colonies (Trattner, 1989). The parish was the smallest form of government, making it the logical unit for organizing social service provision. Since colonial social policy placed sinfulness at the root of poverty and social need, the parish



provided a system of accountability, reducing fraud and the duplication of services (Olasky, 1992). Institutional religion has been a valuable partner for the provision of social services in the United States from shortly after the first settlers arrived in the new world to our current time (Cnaan et al., 1999; Hall, 2001; Katz, 1989, 1996, 2002; Skocpol, 2000; Trattner, 1989; Wineburg, 2001).

The Second Great Awakening of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century profoundly influenced the nature of social work and social welfare in the United States. The revivals inspired religious zeal, encouraging new converts to spread their newfound faith with others in their communities. The newly “awakened” Christians went door-to-door attempting to spread the Gospel; however, their attempts to spread the faith resulted in an awakening of a different kind. Many of these fervent evangelists came in contact with poverty for the first time as they visited their neighbors. The confrontation with poverty and inequality led many Sunday School unions, tract and Bible societies, and missionary organizations to start systematic efforts to care for the physical and social needs of their neighbors. These early religious interventions provided the foundation for professional charity work in the United States and inspired social movements aimed at addressing the root causes of poverty (Cnaan et al., 1999; Garland, 1994; Greenberg, 2000b; Hall, 2001; Jimenez, 1997; Katz, 1989, 1996; Marty, 1980; Skocpol, 2000; T. L. Smith, 1957; Trattner, 1989; Wineburg, 2001).

Evangelical Christians played a vital role in forming many 19<sup>th</sup> century social movements. Motivated by their encounters with the poor, evangelicals aimed their work at the transformation of society. In his seminal book *Revivalism and Social Reform*, Timothy Smith wrote, “... the soul winning impulse drove Christians into systematic efforts to relieve the miseries of the urban poor (1957, p.176).” These efforts eventually moved many 19<sup>th</sup>

century Christians to address the root causes of poverty through social movements. The abolitionist movement, public health initiatives, the temperance movement, the Children's Aid Society, and the Charities Organization Societies all have roots in the religious and missionary work of this period. Martin Marty states, "... yet, despite Timothy Smith's pioneering work, the evangelical roots of social service often go neglected" (1980, p.469). Although neglected, revivalism provided the moral and theological impetus for the development of social welfare in the United States. According to Timothy Smith, "the rapid growth of concern with purely social issues such as poverty, workingmen's rights, the liquor traffic, slum housing, and racial bitterness is the chief feature distinguishing American religion after 1865 from that of the first half of the nineteenth century" (1957, p.148).

The social nature of Christianity in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century led to the preponderance of religious charities. Religious groups sponsored orphanages, cared for the destitute, and engaged in social reform. Unfortunately, many of these efforts were uncoordinated, inefficient, and sectarian in nature. The lack of coordination and the sectarian emphasis of many social services had negative consequences (Cnaan et al., 1999; Garland, 1994; Gran, 2003; Greenberg, 2000b; Hall, 2001; Jimenez, 1997; Katz, 1989, 1996; Marty, 1980; Skocpol, 2000; T. L. Smith, 1957; Trattner, 1989; Wineburg, 2001). First, uncoordinated programs created gaps in services, leaving some children and families with no aid from any organization. Second, the lack of coordination made helpers susceptible to fraud and exploitation; simply, people took advantage of the charity workers. Third, sectarian services often would proselytize or, worse, deny services to consumers from different religious backgrounds, which resulted in the proliferation of sectarian social service agencies. In fact, Catholic Charities was founded with the purpose of ending Protestant

discrimination towards Catholic clients (Degeneffe, 2003). The inefficient nature of religious services needed to be curbed.

The problems of religious charities highlighted the need for a more systematic approach to social services. The Charity Organization Society (COS) was founded with the aim of coordinating services and providing a scientific approach to charity, systematically and methodically addressing the social and moral causes of poverty. The COS coordinated efforts to improve efficiency and, ultimately, eliminate competition between churches and sectarian agencies (Katz, 1996; Trattner, 1989). Although strongly motivated by religion, the scientific nature and nonsectarian focus of the COS began the secularization of social services.

The social emphasis of religion also influenced the development of the settlement house movement. Early American settlement houses were modeled on the religious charity work being conducted among London's urban underclass by Samuel Barnett, an Anglican priest, and his wife Henrietta at Toynbee Hall (Katz, 1996; Lundblad, 1995; Schwartz, 1999; Trattner, 1989). Settlements encouraged young, college-educated adults to live in poor urban neighborhoods. The cadre of talented residents allowed settlement houses to provide a wide array of programs for their less privileged neighbors. Settlement workers often viewed their life with the poor as a way to actively live out their religious teachings. While influenced by religion, many settlement houses maintained a nonsectarian culture, abolishing most or all sectarian rituals. Hull House eliminated Bible studies from its premises because of the diverse religious beliefs of its members (Addams, 1990). Settlements were not interested in duplicating the work of local congregations. They were vehicles for practical expressions of faith in which deed superseded ritual as the center of religion. Activism and policy efforts

were a means to establish a more just and caring society and had profound religious implications, facilitating the shift from sacred to secular services (Addams, 1912).

The apparent shift from sacred to secular social services was the result of an array of complex societal and professional factors. Competition for funding and acclaim, the religious need to focus on the spiritual, secularization of society, the drive of social work for a professional identity, views of the client, and empiricism were at the root of the rift between social work and organized religion (Cnaan et al., 1999; Marty, 1980; Ortiz & Smith, 1999). Protestants had the most to lose in the competition for funding. Protestant churches and their agencies were often the primary source of aid in a community; competition from other providers would challenge their monopoly. Competition and the need to focus on the spiritual work of the church caused many Protestants, particularly evangelicals, to abandon social services for soul winning (Hall, 2001; Marty, 1980). Peter Dobkin Hall writes, “The field of social work had begun as a form of social ministry, became increasingly secular in emphasis as the new disciplines of sociology and social psychology displaced social ethics and ‘practical philanthropy’ as intellectual foundations” (2001, p.108). By the late 1920s the shift from sacred to secular social services had apparently occurred.

The Great Depression and the ensuing social legislation appeared to seal the fate of sectarian agencies. Professional social services had unseated voluntary religious service providers as the nation’s primary safety net. However, religion had not abandoned social services, and professional social work did not entirely dismiss its historical partnership with religion. Both were intimately connected. Sectarian social service agencies continued to care for children, youth, and their families. Churches offered comfort to the afflicted, and people entered the profession of social work to live out their religious call to service. In

1980, Martin Marty wrote, “Were leaders in a new generation to engage in such an exploration, there might be reason to break the rules of current terminological games long enough to pronounce such efforts not godless social services nonsense but godly social service sense” (p.479). Nonetheless, the illusion of a deep divide between government sponsored social services and voluntary sectarian compassion has prevailed for almost 60 years.

The illusion of a divide between religion and social service is ironic considering the role of the Black church in shaping and transforming social policy during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In no place is the partnership between religious conviction and social policy more intimately connected than the African-American community. Sociologist Andrew Billingsley (1999, p. 350) writes, “Indeed no successful movement for improving the conditions of life for the African-American people has been mounted without the support of the church.” The church has long been a central vehicle for service provision, leadership development, and economic development in the community. According to most scholars, the church is second only to family in the African-American community. During reconstruction and at the turn of the century, the church helped educate freedmen, developed anti-lynching efforts, and became a source for economic and community development as well as the center of social and communal life. By the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was the voice and vehicle of the civil rights movement. The African-American church was the center of both social and economic power, raising an estimated two billion dollars a year and owning more than 69% of their church properties outright (Billingsley, 1992; Schiele, 1998). Sacred and secular are woven together as a source of empowerment and progress in the African-American social work tradition (Billingsley, 1992, 1999; Burwell, 1995; Carlton-LaNey, 1995, 1997, 1999; S. K.

Chandler, 1995; Frazier & Lincoln, 1974; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Modesto, 2004; O'Donnell, 1995; Schiele, 1997, 1998, 1999; Simon, 1994; Townes, 1993).

Empowerment became a key theme in American social welfare during the 1960s. The government declared war on poverty, seeking to root out the systemic causes of poverty. For a brief moment in history, social welfare policy shifted its focus from the personal moral causes of poverty to the structural factors keeping people impoverished. Congregations and religious charities were the government's allies in the war on poverty. Many faith groups formalized their empowerment endeavors during the 1960s and 1970s, founding community development corporations, building houses, constructing shopping centers, and increasing their efforts in capital formation (Anglin & Montezemolo, 2004; Briggs, 2004; Frenchak, 2004; McNeely, 2004; Wright, 2004). Religious charities proved to be valuable allies in the war on poverty, quietly and consistently expressing their faith through service, empowering individuals and communities to address the structural factors at the root of poverty.

By 1980, personal moral failure once again supplanted structural factors as the root cause of poverty, regaining control of the social welfare policy debate. Ronald Reagan declared, "We fought a war on poverty, and poverty won." Reagan based his opinion on George Gilder's *Wealth and Poverty* and Charles Murray's *Losing Ground*. Both painted the picture that the economic and moral woes of the late 1970s and early 1980s were the result of government sponsored public welfare programs, shifting the welfare debate from the systemic causes of poverty to the personal moral issues of the poor, particularly unemployment and the breakdown of the family (Ellwood, 1988; Gilder, 1981; Katz, 1989; Murray, 1984).

Gilder (1981) argued government sponsored social insurance programs creates “moral hazards.” The moral hazard of unemployment insurance is high rates of unemployment, and AFDC results in an increase in the number of single parent families. Government programs facilitated moral failures and needed to change to address poverty in America (Gilder, 1981; Murray, 1984). Churches, families, and communities provided the necessary accountability to ensure against the “moral hazards” of government sponsored social programs and offered a solution to pressing social needs (Gilder, 1981). Poverty had once again been defined in terms of personal moral failure, and federal programs aimed at eliminating the problem only exacerbated the situation, according to Reagan era ideology.

Ronald Reagan’s social welfare policy tilled the soil for the current policy debate surrounding the public support for religious social services. First, it created a culture hostile to large government programs. Reagan demonized government programs for the poor and deified individual instances of caring and compassion. Second, the administration instituted significant budget cuts to the human services, resulting in religious groups shouldering greater responsibility for service provision (Cnaan et al., 1999; Wineburg, 1996, 2001). Third, Reagan employed religious rhetoric to inspire and motivate the nation. Again building off Gilder’s work, faith provided the solution to poverty in America. While Gilder does appeal to respected theologians, Gilder’s faith, and ultimately Reagan’s faith, was based on the capitalist economic system, not orthodox religious teaching (Gilder, 1981). Finally, Reagan was indebted to conservative Christians for his election; therefore, he needed to find a way to reward them for their support. Increased interest in state and local solutions to social problems, decreased funding for services, religious rhetoric, and an emphasis on the

personal and moral behavior of the poor cultivated a culture ripe for welfare reform (Rom, 1999).

Devolution had set the stage for reform rooted in local solutions, emphasizing personal moral responsibility, work, and family, time honored values central to the prevailing national narrative. David Ellwood, Harvard professor and key Clinton policy advisor, pointed out, “The basis of poverty, then, is inevitably tied to our values and to our expectations of our society and its citizens” (1988, p.9). Ellwood (1988) argued the United States has four central values: first, individual autonomy, personal freedom; second, the family; third, work; and fourth, community. Values needed to be considered in any efforts to reform the welfare system. As Katz writes, “... poverty is to some degree a matter of personal responsibility, and its alleviation requires personal transformation, such as the acquisition of skills, commitment to the work ethic or the practice of chastity” (1989, p.7). Religion could serve as an important resource for personal responsibility, strengthening families, and implementing local solutions; additionally, religious conservatives were now a powerful political voice. In 1992, Bill Clinton was elected president and had to make good on his promise to “reform welfare, as we know it.” The path to reform was laid.

An important stop along the path to reform became Marvin Olasky’s (1992) book *The Tragedy of American Compassion*. Olasky, a University of Texas journalism professor, argued America’s social problems were most effectively met during the colonial period when American social welfare policy largely relied on individual and institutional compassion at the local level. Individuals, families, and congregations provided the most effective vehicles for service provision because they best understood the situation and could distinguish between the deserving and undeserving poor. Poverty was the product of sinful tendencies in



people and could only be cured by piety, frugality, and industry. According to Olasky, the ultimate downfall of American social policy was founded in a theological shift from viewing “God as both holy and loving” (1992, p.220) to focusing only on God’s loving character during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This theological shift set the stage for professionally led interventions aimed at structural changes, ignoring the need for personal transformation and ultimately damning the poor and the nation. Olasky’s work advanced the ideological work begun by Reagan, Murray, and Gilder, calling for a welfare policy addressing personal moral causes of poverty.

The real tragedy in the welfare reform debate was the failure of conservative ideologues to acknowledge the significant battles the structural interventions of the Great Society and War on Poverty actually won. There is virtually no debate that Social Security essentially ended poverty among the elderly and programs such as Head Start provide significant benefits to children and families, increasing their opportunity to break the cycle of poverty (Ellwood, 1988; Katz, 1989, 1996, 2002; Trattner, 1989). David Hammack (1996, p.259), professor of history at Case Western Reserve University, directly challenges Olasky’s work on this very point, suggesting he disregards the impact of federal programs and romanticizes colonial American social welfare. Hammack argues Olasky’s work is a “political tract that ignores other historians – it essentially picks facts to make a convincing preconceived argument.” The book was written while Olasky was a fellow at the conservative Heritage Foundation, lending credence to Hammack’s critique (Hammack, 1996). Despite the various intellectual assessments, *The Tragedy of American Compassion* came highly recommended by then Speaker of the House of Representatives Newt Gingrich, providing significant direction to the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress’s welfare reform efforts (Olasky, 1992).

Equipped with Olasky's nostalgic notions of service provision and indebted to conservative Christians for their election, institutional religion offered a likely partner to provide solutions to the moral causes of poverty for members of the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress. The debate around welfare reform would emphasize personal responsibility, work, and local solutions to the personal and moral causes of poverty. The Charitable Choice provision, sponsored by then Senator John Ashcroft, offered a means to address moral issues at a local level and potentially rewarded the conservative religious community for their faithful support of the party. Charitable Choice Section 104 of PRWORA allowed religious organizations to contract with the government without infringing on the organization's religious identity. Some people lauded Charitable Choice as a way to level the playing field between faith-based and secular service providers (Cnaan, 1999b; Cnaan & Boddie, 2001, 2002; DiIulio, 1997, 1999; Sherman, 1996, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 2001a, 2001b; Sider & Unruh, 1999a, 1999b). Others viewed Charitable Choice as an attempt to circumvent the Constitution, encouraging sectarian agencies who would not normally be eligible for government support to begin a partnership, while beginning to shift increasing levels of responsibility for social welfare from the federal government to private charitable organizations (Chaves, 1999b, 2001, 2002; Kennedy, 2003a, 2003b; Kennedy & Bielefeld, 2002; Wineburg, 2001; Wineburg & Cleveland, 2002), while still others saw it providing no real changes to social welfare policy since federal, state, and local governments had long partnered with religious non-profit organizations to provide social services (Coffin, 2000; Formicola & Segers, 2002; Gran, 2003; Greenberg, 2000a, 2000b; Hall, 2001; Monsma, 1998; Monsma & Mounts, 2002; Monsma & Soper, 2003). Charitable Choice sparked the

long avoided discussion about the relationship between religion and social welfare policy in America.

The election of George W. Bush to the presidency in 2000 and his establishment of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives in January 2001, accelerated the debate of government support of religious social services to an inferno. Support for faith-based social services had been a plank in both the democratic and republican platforms, but for Bush, the faith-based initiative was the centerpiece of his domestic policy. Bush's unwavering commitment to faith-based social interventions is, to a large extent, an outgrowth of his own personal struggle with alcohol and his ensuing religious awakening (McClay, 2005; Suskind, 2004). Bush credits his newfound faith as the key to helping him overcome his addiction and saving his marriage. His personal story made religion an indispensable ingredient to solving personal and social problems. With little or no systematic empirical evidence to support the President's convictions, his belief was embedded in social welfare policy through a series of executive orders. Religion was no longer the closeted partner of service provision; it became the salvation for people trapped in poverty and addiction. The new attention given to religion provided the fuel for a raging debate focused on government support of faith-based social programs (Bush, 2002, 2004a, 2004b; J. Chandler, 1999; Formicola & Segers, 2002; Mooney, 2003; Stanley, 2004; Wineburg & Cleveland, 2002).

A brief review of the history of religious social service provision provides several key insights that will help to illuminate the current policy discussion. First, the partnership between sacred and secular is not new to social welfare policy or service provision. Religious institutions have consistently served as key providers of social services since the

first colonists arrived on the shores of this new land. At no point in history did the faith community cease to be active in service provision in the United States. There is a clear partnership, but as Bob Wineburg (2001) has consistently argued, it is a limited partnership. The religious community will help serve its neighbors, but it does not have the capacity to be the sole or primary service provider.

Second, religious faith motivates people to serve. Ram Cnaan has found service is normative for religious individuals and institutions. Faith provided the motive for many social work pioneers. However, faith is not monolithic and is practically lived out in a variety of manners. This is the third lesson from history. Early social workers used their faith to support punitive notions of the deserving versus the undeserving poor, while others were motivated by their religious convictions to challenge and transform the social systems that kept people trapped in poverty.

Fourth, the earliest COS workers had close ties to evangelical Christianity and opted to address the personal moral causes of poverty. Christian socialism and humanism largely shaped settlement houses – they fought for structural changes. The theological and ideological premises of each movement profoundly influenced their approach to poverty.

Fifth, different approaches to intervention have diverse outcomes for clients of services. Sectarian social services are not universally better than secular services. In fact, there is no way to validate the historical quality of services – sacred or secular. History does support the fact that some sectarian services proselytized clients or even denied access to services to clients with different religious backgrounds, while others were extremely sensitive to providing the best professional services regardless of religious tradition. It is very likely the quality of services varied from agency to agency.

Finally, it is important in discussions of religion and social welfare policy to develop a proper balance between the sacred and secular. There is a clear historical partnership between religious groups and the provision of social services in the United States. Avoiding the discussion allows the distortion of history and policy. Religious people fall on all sides of the ideological spectrum. It is important they be at the table as policy is crafted. The discussion must also take place at every level of intervention from the grassroots to the halls of power. Sound policy development requires comprehensive planning, including representatives from the grassroots. People in the community often have the most insight to actualities of policy implementation; unfortunately, their voice is rarely heard (Wineburg, 1996, 2001; Wineburg & Cleveland, 2002).

### Chapter 3: Literature Review

Scholarly literature in social work largely ignored religion prior to 1996. In their systematic review of social work literature between 1977 and 1997 Cnaan, Wineburg, and Boddie (1999) found only 38 of 35,000 (.001%) articles published in social work journals addressed religious issues. Religion was relegated to the margins of the scholarly debate in social work despite the persistent efforts of Dianna Garland, Ellen Netting, and Bob Wineburg who consistently pointed to the faith community as an active partner in the delivery of social services. The passage of PRWORA in 1996 slowly reawakened interest in the scholarly study of religion and social intervention; however, active scholarship did not begin until 2001 when George W. Bush made religion the center of social policy.

The establishment of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives and satellite centers at the cabinet level infused federal funding into research, increasing interest in religion among scholars who traditionally studied social welfare policy with little or no regard to religion (Wuthnow, 2004). The current scholarly debates focus on defining faith-based organizations, untangling the legal implications of the policy, assessing service provision, surveying the implementation of Charitable Choice, and describing the impact of faith-based service provision. To date, few studies assess the employment outcomes of faith-based welfare to work programs, suggesting a need for research in this field.

### *Defining the Terms*

Defining a faith-based organization may be the primary task of scholars interested in evaluating the impact of Charitable Choice (Government Accountability Office, 2006).

There is no single, agreed-upon definition of what constitutes a faith-based organization (Carlson-Thies, 2004; Carney, 2003; Chambre, 2001; Kennedy & Bielefeld, 2002; Kramer, Nightingale, Trutko, Spaulding, & Barnow, 2002; Sider & Unruh, 1999a, 1999b, 2004; S. R. Smith & Sosin, 2001; Twombly, 2002). Faith influences organizations in a variety of ways and changes over time (Chambre, 2001; Netting, 1984). Religion may have played a role in the initial establishment of an organization, but as time passes, as seen with the YMCA for example, few traces of religion may remain. Religion may also have been the primary or only element in the treatment, such as with Teen Challenge. Faith-based organizations vary greatly in size and organizational capacity, ranging from Catholic Charities with 1,400 offices and 283,000 staff, to a food pantry run with volunteers in the sanctuary of a local congregation (Degeneffe, 2003; Modesto, Trulear, & Boddie, 2004). Accounting for the diversity of faith-based organizations has made the definitional work both necessary and complex.

Prior to Charitable Choice and the ensuing interest in religion, defining religious social services was not as complex a task. Ellen Netting, professor of social work at Virginia Commonwealth University, argued church related organizations were any agencies that “publicly acknowledge a relationship to a religious group” (1984, p. 404). Netting (1984) expands her definition suggesting the public connection to faith provided access to resources and governance affiliated with religious groups. Diana Garland took a similar approach defining a church agency as, “agencies related to churches, denominations, ecumenical

organizations, or other Christian religious groups and orders to any extent and in anyway” (Garland, 1994, p. 4). However, definitions of religious services continued to grow increasingly complex as the need to more accurately describe the nature of religious social services grew. Ultimately, several typologies have emerged as the primary resource for defining faith-based organizations.

The foundation for most of the typologies of religious social services is Thomas Jeavons’ work as General Secretary of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends in identifying the dimensions of religious social service organizations. Jeavons identifies seven elements contributing to the religious nature of an organization: self-identity, participant’s religiosity, resource dependency, religious elements of the program, decision making processes, distribution of power, and the nature of partnerships (Jeavons, 1998). These elements are critical to assessing the relationship of an organization to a faith community but are cumbersome to apply. Wide variations are possible in each of Jeavons’ dimensions, making it difficult to specifically define the faith relatedness of an organization.

Other scholars offered working definitions of religious social services similar to Jeavons. Stephen Monsma, political science professor at Calvin College, offered an early functional definition of a faith-based organization. He emphasized the religiosity of employees, behavioral standards of clients and employees, and the integration of religious aspects with the program’s treatments (Monsma, 1998). Cnaan, Wineburg, and Boddie (1999) proposed a third early typology. They defined religious services by size and geographical scope, ranging from local congregations to religious international relief agencies. These various definitions and typologies indicate the complex and diverse nature of religious organizations.



While the early typologies provided insight into the nature of religious organizations, they were conceptual models largely founded in the experience and theoretical understandings of the scholars. Stephen Smith, University of Washington, and Michael Sosin, University of Chicago, (2001) made the first significant strides to empirically uncover the nature of faith in their study of 44 faith-related non-profit organizations in Seattle and Chicago. Building on the work of Netting (1984) and Jeavons (1998), they hypothesized religious influence on an organization could be seen in three dimensions: resources, authority, and culture. The more dependent, or “coupled,” an organization was on a religious body for any one or combination of the dimensions, the greater the faith-relatedness. They found religion does have influences, but it is not as some policymakers originally speculated. First, none of the organizations they studied retreated from engagement with the secular world; second, few agencies tried to encourage clients to convert to their religious beliefs; third, faith provided access to resources; finally, faith-based organizations may have changed how services are delivered by providing “extra-services and second chances” whenever possible (S. R. Smith & Sosin, 2001). Even with S. R. Smith and Sosin’s pioneering work, empirically defining the unique attributes of faith-based charities proved difficult, resulting in the development of additional typologies.

John C. Green, professor of political science at the University of Akron, and Amy Sherman (2002), scholar at the Hudson Institute, assessed the influence of faith in their study of (389) agencies and congregations contracting with the government in 15 states. Each state defined faith-based organizations differently. They found some of the agencies identified by the states as faith-based did not consider themselves to be faith-based, highlighting the definitional problems. Their typology consisted of categories ranging from non-expressive to

fully expressive and was developed from analyzing two subscales focused on measuring the role of faith in religious programs and the organization's religious expression. Most of the non-profit agencies in their survey (30%) fell into the non-expressive category; while, the bulk of congregations (47%) fell into the fully expressive category (Green & Sherman, 2002).

Additional typologies continued to be proposed. In their study of 509 welfare to work programs, Monsma and Mounts (2002) sought to distinguish between what they called faith-based segmented and faith-based integrated programs from secular non-profits, for-profit, and government agencies. They studied the degree to which religious symbols and practices were used with volunteers, staff, and clients. In their study of 30 agencies in three Indiana Counties, Wolfgang Bielefeld, Laura Littlepage, and Rachel Thelin (2003) of the Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis Center for Urban Policy and the Environment, developed a three-category typology based on an eight-dimension scale. The scale's categories were: strongly faith influenced, moderately faith influenced, and not faith influenced. In general, all of the studies found the organizations with the strongest religious attributes were smaller, employing fewer people, offering fewer services, and receiving less government financial support (Bielefeld, Littlepage, & Thelin, 2003; Green & Sherman, 2002; Monsma & Mounts, 2002).

Two final studies tackled the definitional problem. Ebaugh, Pipes, Chafetz, and Daniels (2003), in their study of 89 homeless services agencies in Houston, asked the simple question, "Where is the religion?" (Ebaugh, Pipes, Chafetz, & Daniels, 2003). Using a factor analysis on four scales measuring religious influences on organizational decision-making, resource bases, culture, and interventions, they concluded religion is pervasive in faith-based

organizations, and the lack of faith is more readily evident in secular organizations (Ebaugh et al., 2003). Sider and Unruh (2004) propose the most recent typology. Their work is based on the extensive study of congregational services in Philadelphia. They suggest six types of programs: faith-permeated, faith-centered, faith-affiliated, faith-background, faith-secular partnership, and secular. The typology assesses “tangibly expressive religion” in the organizational and programmatic dimensions of each agency. While lacking the empirical tests of some of the other studies, the typology is rooted in the most recent scholarship, providing a foundation for research seeking to uncover the complex nature of faith in social intervention.

Definitional discourse is fundamental for advancing understanding the role of faith in social services, yet the complexity limits even the most sophisticated typologies. First, what is the nature of faith in an organization or intervention? ‘Faith’ is an ambiguous term. People can have faith in a supreme being or a bridge they cross. William Safire (1999) argued the term ‘faith’ is meant to obscure the religious nature of faith-based social services. The word ‘faith’ is much more palatable than the alternative word ‘religion,’ therefore increasing the political viability of the initiative (Safire, 1999; Vidal, 2001). Deriving an agreeable meaning to the term ‘faith’ may be an impossible task, let alone gaining clear insight to its influence on social intervention.

Faith is pervasive in the United States, making it almost impossible to control for potentially confounding effects even in the most rigorous study designs. The pervasive influence of religion in the U.S. leads to the second critique of typologies. There are no “truly secular agencies” in the United States. Religious influences cannot be avoided. Many human service professionals see their work as an extension of their religious call or vocation

(Garland, 1994; Vidal, 2001; Wineburg, 2001). Practitioners in secular and government agencies pray for clients when it is the only thing they know to do. Secular agencies reserve seats on their boards for clergy and solicit resources from the faith community, meeting some of the criteria of faith-based organizations in many of the typologies. Just as secular culture influences religious agencies, as S. R. Smith and Sosin (2001) wisely point out, religion influences secular agencies.

Determining the difference between faith-based and secular agencies poses a definitional problem; distinguishing between the divergent varieties of religious organizations may be an even greater dilemma. This is the third obstacle to defining faith-based organizations. Avis Vidal (2001) suggests there are three distinct types of faith-based organizations: congregations, national networks, and freestanding 501(c) (3) non-profit corporations. What is not clear is the term 'faith-based organization' and whether it is meant to serve as an umbrella term encompassing each variety of religious organization or be a more specific term. Congregations, non-profit corporations, and national networks all contribute, at varying degrees, to social services, but each is organized with different missions, further complicating the definitional task.

Any adequate definition of a faith-based organization should be sophisticated enough to deal with the complexity of faith-based organizations yet simple enough to be applied by funders, policy makers, and scholars. Three elements seem essential to defining a faith-based organization: faith, mission, and organizational structure. First, Modesto, Trulear, and Boddie (2004) argue a faith-based organization has its roots in religious faith, being founded by a religious individual, congregation, or organization. Second, its primary mission is service. Congregations are formed for worship; faith-based organizations differ by the fact

their primary mission is service, which may or may not be an expression of worship. Finally, faith-based organizations have an organizational structure separate from the traditional role of worship and religious education. This separate organizational structure may be a sophisticated non-profit corporation such as Catholic Charities or it may simply be a service-oriented program of a congregation, such as a food pantry. No matter the organization's sophistication, it is specifically organized for service, apart from religious education and worship.

### *The Scope and Scale of Religious Service Provision in the United States*

Religious social service provision is historically woven into the fabric of social welfare policy in the U.S. While religion is a valuable partner in social welfare, it is important to note, there are also valuable secular reasons for service provision; nonetheless, there is no denying the scope and scale of congregational service provision are vast (Cnaan, 1999b; Cnaan, Boddie, Handy, Yancey, & Schneider, 2002; Cnaan et al., 1999; Dudley & Roozen, 2001, 2003; Lupu & Tuttle, 2002; Wineburg, 2001).

In recent years, scholars have begun to explore the actual contribution of the religious community to social services. The studies in the field address five major questions. Does the faith community contribute to social services? What do they actually contribute? What are the motivations for their contributions? What is their relationship to the federal, state, and local government? Are they effective?

### *Programs, People, Principal, and Places*

Congregations and faith-based organizations make significant contributions to the current social welfare system. At minimum, congregations contribute services, volunteers, space, money, and motivation to social services in the United States (Cnaan, 1999b; Cnaan &

Boddie, 2001; Cnaan et al., 1999; Wineburg, 1996). The social service activity of the religious community has facilitated American social welfare policy, characterized by limited government intervention. By standing in the gap, the faith community has been a valuable partner in the trend of devolution of responsibility for social welfare in our nation from the federal government to state and local governments, as well as voluntary agencies. Bob Wineburg wrote, “The cuts in the system were healed in many ways by the religious community” (2001, p. 71).

### *Programs and Services*

Congregations and faith-based organizations provided healing to the cuts in social services in a variety of means. Two primary ways this has been done are through formal and informal programs and services. A national study of congregations (n=14,301) found more than 80% of congregations sponsor at least one community service activity, 90% of congregations provide periodic cash aid to people in need, and approximately 88% of congregations offer food assistance (Dudley & Roozen, 2001, 2003). Urban congregations housed in historic buildings (n=113) appear to be slightly more active in that 91% offered at least one service (Cnaan et al., 1999). In Philadelphia, 88% (n=1,376) of responding congregations report offering at least one social program (Cnaan & Boddie, 2001). A study of congregations (n=251) in nine communities found 98% of the congregations provided at least one social program (Cnaan et al., 2002). Michael Leo Owens, assistant professor of political science at Emory University, and R. Drew Smith, director of the Leadership Center at Morehouse University, in their national study of congregations (n=122) located near public housing complexes, found a majority (72%) of congregations provide at least one social service to people in their community (Owens & Smith, In Press). Finally, one study

challenges the pervasiveness of congregational social services (Chaves, 1999a, 1999b, 2001, 2004). Chaves' (1999a, 1999b, 2001, 2004) study of congregations (n=1,236) found only 57% offered social services. He asserts, "Congregations typically engage in social services in only a minor and peripheral way" (2004, p. 46). Feeding programs (32%) were the most common program sponsored by local congregations (Chaves, 2004). However, a survey of (400) congregations in Indiana using Chaves' instrument found a greater proportion (79%) of congregations involved in social service provision than in his national study (57%) (Thelin, 2003). The differences might be attributed to regional variation or the social and economic conditions when the survey was conducted; nonetheless, the data seems to suggest that, even if only 57% of congregations offer services, feeding the hungry, providing clothing, and caring for the sick are common practices in the faith-community.

Caring and compassion take a variety of organizational forms in the faith community. Chaves' (1998, 2004) studies focused on congregations; however, others have found religious service provision is more likely to occur as collaborative efforts between congregations in the community. A study of faith-based social service coalitions (n=14) in Houston, Texas found most congregations preferred to provide services through collaborative efforts with other congregations (Pipes, 2001). The coalitions in the study were supported by contributions from approximately 279 Houston congregations. In rural Boley, Oklahoma, African-American congregations (n=17) found collaboration to be a key for caring for the social needs of community residents (Boddie, 2002). According to Kramer et al. (2002), religious organizations have been providing employment training through government contracts for years. Needless to say, the contributions of the faith-community to social services are significant and take on various organizational forms, extending well beyond the

formal to the informal activity of the people of faith caring for their neighbors (Bartkowski & Regis, 1999, 2003; Boddie, 2002; Garland, 1994; Kramer et al., 2002; Pipes, 2001).

### *People – Volunteers*

People of faith often express their religious commitment to care for others through volunteer service in their congregation and in secular organizations. Studies have consistently documented people of faith are more likely to volunteer than any other group in America (Greeley, 1997a; Mattis et al., 1999; Park & Smith, 2000; Toppe, Kirsch, Michel, Wiener, & Jalandoni, 2002). Andrew Greeley (1997a) argues religion makes notable contributions to civic life in America in the form of volunteerism. Using data from a 1995 Independent Sector survey (n= 5,398), Greeley asserts religion motivates 50% of international, 35% of educational, and 29% of human services volunteers to serve (Greeley, 1997a). A 1999 study of African-American men (n = 171) found men who were regularly involved in church activities were significantly more likely to volunteer than men who were not involved in a faith community ( $\beta = .56, p < .001$ ) (Mattis et al., 1999). Park and Smith (2000), in their study of Protestants who regularly attend church (n=1,738), found people actively involved in their congregations were more likely to volunteer in church ( $e^{\beta} = 1.580, p < .001$ ) and non-church ( $e^{\beta} = 1.211, p < .001$ ) community service programs (2000). Similarly, a survey of New York residents (n = 1,006) found church attendance ( $\beta = .2863, p < .05$ ) and the importance of religion ( $\beta = .2863, p < .05$ ) to be significant predictors of volunteering (P. E. Becker & Dhingra, 2001). In fact, periodically providing small groups of volunteers to accomplish well-defined tasks may be the primary way congregations contribute to social services (Chaves, 2004).



Positive volunteer experiences in community service activities appear to be the portal to increased engagement in social services for individuals and congregations. Volunteering in social service programs often exposes individuals to poverty and inequality for the first time. Once exposed to a particular social issue, volunteers are prompted to increase their involvement in social service activities, serving at times as a springboard into social justice activities (Bartkowski & Regis, 1999, 2003; Sherman, 1998a). Bartkowski and Regis (1999, 2003) had similar findings in their study of congregations (n= 30) in Mississippi which showed positive volunteer experiences increased the likelihood of continued involvement in social service activity. Meaningful volunteering in social services appears to be the primary path of engagement for people of faith and congregations, resulting in increased social and community service.

The contribution of faith-based volunteering cannot be limited solely to voluntary activity in social services. Volunteering in congregational programs becomes a valuable resource for human capital development among the congregants. The local congregation provides many people with their initial opportunity to teach, serve on a committee, write reports, and lead groups (Cnaan et al., 2002). Participation in the life of the congregation also leads to opportunities for civic engagement and political activism (Brown & Brown, 2003). As Brown and Brown (2003) found in their study of (n=1,206) African Americans, church participation increased the likelihood for political action ( $\beta = .618, p < .01$ ). Active participation in a local faith-community often results in increased levels of human and social capital among the participants. Improving levels of human and social capital is a valuable congregational contribution to American civic life.

### *Principal – Money and Capital Resources*

The faith-community produces more than human and social capital for social service; it is a major contributor of financial capital. Congregations and people of faith are a direct source of income for many social welfare agencies. According to Cnaan and Boddie (2001) an average congregation in Philadelphia contributes approximately \$9,821.06 per month in cash and in-kind assistance to social and community services per month. They argue it would cost the taxpayers of Philadelphia an additional \$246,901,440 to replace the annual contributions of congregations to community service. In many instances, congregations, with government contracts to supply social services, subsidize the cost of services (Queen, 2003). In fact, one study found 82% of the time government contracts did not cover the costs of the contracted program (Green & Sherman, 2002). Using data from the National Congregations Study, Robert Wuthnow (2004) calculated the average congregation gives \$7,540 or approximately 5.6% of its budget to social service activities annually, calling into question Cnaan and Boddie's figures (Chaves, 1998; Wuthnow, 2004). Based on these calculations and a study of Presbyterian churches in the U.S., Wuthnow asserts the average congregation gives about 5% of its total budget to social services (2004, p. 48). These differences are reasonable considering the fact Cnaan and Boddie's figures account for in-kind donations including space and staff time. Despite the discrepancies, congregations and religious organizations appear to be important financial partners in the social safety net.

Giving to social services is not limited to congregations and religious organizations, religious individuals also prove to be generous supporters of social services. A survey of Americans (n=2,591) found that liberal Protestants were approximately 30% more likely ( $e^{\beta} = .694, p < .01$ ) than their secular counterparts to give to an organization whose focus was

helping the poor (Regnerus, Smith, & Sikkink, 1998). In 2002, a study commissioned by the Independent Sector found the vast majority of all charitable giving in the United States (87.7%) came from households that contributed to religious issues; the majority (85.8%) of religious givers also contribute to secular organizations; on average, religious givers gave more annually to secular organizations (\$958) than households contributing solely to secular agencies (\$623); and finally, religious volunteers tended to give more annually than any other group (\$2,704) (Toppe et al., 2002). In fact, weekly church attendance was the primary predictor of charitable giving to secular causes (Nemeth & Luidens, 2003). Charitable giving by people of faith is the backbone of the voluntary sector in America.

#### *Places/Presence*

Religious institutions often support the voluntary sector by donating physical space. Congregations host community meetings, provide offices, house local scout troupes, and use their facilities as sites for service delivery, ranging from weekly food distributions and annual blood drives to periodic artistic performances by community groups. Congregations and religiously related organizations are able to host the range of activities because they are located where people live. A study by the Center for Religion and Civic Culture at the University of Southern California found an average of 35 religious congregations and 12.5 religiously affiliated non-profits per square mile in the city of Los Angeles. The average number of religiously affiliated institutions in any particular community of Los Angeles was greater than the average number of gas stations, liquor stores, and supermarkets combined (Orr, 1998). Donations of physical space to social and community services are a significant factor calculated into total economic value of religious institutions' contributions to social

services (Cnaan & Boddie, 2001; Cnaan et al., 2002). However, the contribution of the faith community to family and community well-being should not be limited to economic factors.

The physical presence of religious institutions in the nation's communities carries significant symbolic value (DiIulio, 2002; Spain, 2001; Staral, 2000). Houses of worship often serve as visible reminders of hope and a caring presence in the community. DiIulio (2002) terms this "ecological religion" where community residents with no connections to organized religion benefit from the presence of the houses of worship in the neighborhood. Cnaan writes, "Today, the local religious congregation is the most visible, stable, and trusted community institution" (2003, p.274). In her case study of congregational service provision in Milwaukee, Janice Staral (2000), assistant professor of sociology at Marquette University, found houses of worship to be valuable cultivators of trust and social capital when they work collaboratively with community residents. Through their faithful presence in inner cities, suburban neighborhoods, and rural communities across the nation, congregations and religious charities often serve as vital local institutions, as well as, being symbols of caring, compassion, and hope in the community.

### *Moral Principles*

Presence is not the sole facet of the faith community's symbolic value. Theological and moral principles motivating and mandating people of faith to offer compassion and service to the most vulnerable members of society are often at the root of the symbolic value of congregations and faith-based organizations and their contributions to communities. When applied, these theological mandates or principles often result in the creation of programs and organizations aimed at caring for society and engaging injustice, making them a logical resource for people seeking help (Bartkowski & Regis, 2003; Pipes, 2001). They

also offer a valuable resource for challenging injustice, inequality, and motivating people of faith to action within congregations as Omar McRoberts, assistant professor of sociology at the University of Chicago, found in his study of churches in Boston (n = 41) (McRoberts, 1999, 2003). Religious principles also proved to be a valuable asset outside the walls of the congregation.

Congregations and clergy appear to engender a degree of respect and authority in many communities. In Boston, Christian churches and clergy were found to have significant and legitimate authority among the police and local youth alike. Their authority was rooted in the stable presence in the neighborhood and religious principles (Berrien, McRoberts, & Winship, 2000). This authority allowed clergy to function much like social workers but with moral authority focused on engaging the “whole person,” by imposing moral boundaries and holding people accountable (Berrien et al., 2000; McRoberts, 1999, 2003). Respect for religious teachings results in religious organizations and principles serving as resources for people seeking help.

Houses of worship and faith-based organizations are often one of the initial stops for people seeking help (Edin & Lein, 1997). A study of low-income residents in northeastern Pennsylvania (n=1,030) found congregations and faith-based organizations to be stops for people seeking aid, but on average, people were less likely to seek help from congregations and faith-based organizations than they were to seek help from nonsectarian and public welfare agencies. People who sought help from congregations reported higher effectiveness scores ( $\beta = .270$ ,  $p < .01$ ) than people who sought help from other organizations. However, people seeking spiritual aid also recorded the highest levels of effectiveness ( $\beta = .173$ ,  $p < .05$ ), supporting the previous finding. The fact that congregations can effectively address

spiritual needs sheds little real insight into their ability to provide social services (Wuthnow, Hackett, & HSU, 2004). Still, the finding may suggest congregations are more holistic in providing spiritual support while they are meeting physical and emotional needs.

The ability of the faith community to address spiritual as well as temporal needs has been one of the primary arguments used to gain support for the public funding of religious social services. However, it has also been one of the primary points of contention for opponents of the current social policy. Fears of proselytization, forced conversion, and unwilling participation in strictly sectarian activity have been a primary critique of government support of faith-based social service (Texas Freedom Network Education Fund, 2002). While the fear of religious coercion is legitimate, studies seem to suggest the concerns are largely unfounded. In fact, faith-based organizations do not appear likely to impose religious beliefs on program participants, suggesting religious social services are more like their secular counterparts than supporters of the faith-based initiative would like to admit (Chaves, 1999a, 2001, 2004; Monsma, 1996; Monsma & Mounts, 2002; Monsma & Soper, 2003; S. R. Smith & Sosin, 2001). Despite this fact, the nature of religious social service provision varies widely, and the faith community can rely on religious and spiritual resources during the course of intervention.

### *Spiritual and Religious Resources for Intervention*

Spirituality and religious faith appear to be valuable resources for well-being, coping, and overall life satisfaction. Studies in medicine have found people of faith to live longer, have reduced risks for hypertension, and enjoy improved quality of lives (Johnson, Tompkins, & Webb, 2002; Matthews & Clark, 1998). A systematic review of the literature on religion and spirituality (n=669) by Byron Johnson and his then colleagues at the

University of Pennsylvania, uncovered similar findings in several disciplines (Johnson et al., 2002). In general, the authors found religion and spirituality have valuable protective factors: engendering hope (Littrell & Beck, 1999), helping people cope in times of need (McMillen, 1998), reducing risks of delinquent behavior among adolescents (Johnson, 2000), decreasing recidivism rates of formerly incarcerated inmates (Johnson, Larson, & Pitts, 1997), increasing the odds of educational achievement (Regnerus, 2002; Sikkink & Hernandez, 2003), and providing social supports. Karen Seccombe, sociologist at Portland State University, found prayer and faith in God to be a resource for women coping with everyday pressures of poverty in her ethnographic study of welfare recipients (n= 47) in Florida (Seccombe, 1999). A similar study of rural welfare recipients in Illinois (n=92) found religion helped in stressful situations (Wiley, Warren, & Montanelli, 2002). Faith appears to be a valuable resource for people in times of need.

The ability of the faith community to address the whole spectrum of human needs has been one of the primary arguments used to support the faith-based initiative. However, this assumption may be misleading. While people use prayer and spiritual practices to cope with the struggles of their daily existence, they are not always willing to seek assistance from congregations and other forms of institutional religion due to fears of judgment and exclusion. A study of women struggling with AIDS (n=34) found them very likely to rely on spirituality as a source of strength but very reluctant to confide in or seek help from their congregations (Dunbar, Mueller, Medina, & Walf, 1998). Similar studies of HIV positive women found their faith in God to be a primary coping resource but found fear or skepticism when it came to seeking help from formal religious institutions (Gillman & Newman, 1996; Marcenko & Samost, 1999; Poindexter & Linsk, 1998). While it appears faith and

spirituality are regularly relied on in times of need, religious organizations may be viewed with some fear and skepticism, potentially challenging popular conceptions of the holistic nature of religious social services.

The religious nature of faith-based organizations has been a primary concern of the detractors of Charitable Choice and the faith-based initiative from their inception. Many people worried government funded religious service providers would deny services, proselytize, or impose religious beliefs on clients from different religious traditions, ultimately violating the constitutional separation of church and state. While the fears are not without historical precedent, recent studies seem to suggest they are unfounded. The majority of faith-based social services are open to the general public (Cnaan & Boddie, 2001; Cnaan et al., 2002; Loconte & Fantuzzo, 2003; Monsma & Mounts, 2002). Religious service providers appear to be reluctant to share their religious beliefs with clients (Sherman, 1998a). The reluctance to impose religious beliefs on others appears to be characteristic of evangelical Christians who highly value personal relationships and individual choice in making religious decisions, thus restraining overt proselytization in favor of less intrusive relational approaches (C. Smith, 1998). These data may temper the fears of faith-based social services serving as missionary agencies for their respective religious perspectives. In fact, contrary to the White House's *Unlevel Playing Field* report (2001), religious agencies have long operated productive partnerships with relative freedom from overt evangelism and intrusive government regulation of the faith community (Green & Sherman, 2002; Monsma, 1996, 1998; Twombly, 2002).

The long history of service provision is supported by a study of human service agencies (n=2000) conducted by Eric Twombly of the Urban Institute (2002). Faith-related



social service agencies were generally older than their secular counter parts. The majority (75.4%) had been operating for more than 20 years, longer than secular non-profit agencies for the same period of time (59.4%). The study also found the faith-related groups to be larger and sounder financially than the secular groups, with faith-related organizations exhibiting a more diverse funding stream. However, the faith-related groups spent a slightly larger proportion of their income (13.24%) on administrative expenses compared to secular service providers (10.76%). The difference in administrative costs may be the result of the types of services the organizations provided; however, the difference suggests faith-related organizations are not universally more efficient than secular agencies. Nonetheless, the study supports the notion that the faith community has long been a partner in service provision.

#### *Faith/Government Partnerships*

Despite the long-term partnership between government and the faith-community for service provision in the United States, little is known about the effectiveness of these providers. The lack of knowledge surrounding program outcomes and concern over the government support for religious charity has generated numerous calls for increased accountability and evaluation of faith-based service providers. There is a growing body of literature in response to these calls. The growing group of studies takes on two basic forms. The first is the exploration by scholars on the outcomes or potential outcomes of Charitable Choice and the faith-based initiative with the increasing number of government grants and contracts with faith-based service providers. The second area of study, where research is beginning to bear fruit, is the research of program outcomes of faith-based organizations. It must be noted, scholarship in both of these areas is relatively young, and the culture of evaluation has yet to take hold in the non-profit world as a whole, let alone the often less

social scientifically sophisticated faith-based sector (DiIulio, 1997; Fischer, 2004). Yet, the calls to assess the role and impact of the faith community have been strong and consistent since religion gained a visible position in social welfare policy debate in the mid-1990s.

The notion of increased public support of religious charities was meant to “level the playing field” between religious and secular service providers (DiIulio, 2001). Cynics viewed the so-called leveling as means to repay conservative Christians for their support of the Republican Congress and the eventual Republican presidency. These particular questions led Mark Chaves (1999b) to assess which congregations would access federal funding. In his study of congregations (n=1,193), Chaves found size, religious tradition, and race to be the most significant factors in terms of seeking funds from the federal government. Large congregations, those reporting more than 901 regularly attending adults, were more likely than their smaller counterparts to seek funding ( $e^{\beta} = 1.64, p < .05$ ). Roman Catholics ( $e^{\beta} = 2.24, p < .01$ ) and liberal/moderate Protestant congregations ( $e^{\beta} = 1.55, p < .05$ ) were more likely to seek federal funds than conservative and evangelical Protestants. Finally, black congregations ( $e^{\beta} = 5.13, p < .01$ ) were approximately five times more likely than white congregations to seek government support for their social service activities.

Chaves’ study has encountered serious critiques. The National Congregations Study used only a single question to determine congregational involvement in social service activity. A single question simply cannot account for the complex nature of service delivery in the U.S. (Cnaan & Boddie, 2001; Cnaan et al., 2002; Wuthnow, 2004). Additionally, Owens and Smith (In Press) argue that Chaves sampling method systematically excludes minority congregations that may be most likely to engage in social service activity. Despite the critiques, it provides a glimpse into which congregations would most likely access federal

funding; however, it provides little real evidence if the playing field was leveled through Charitable Choice.

According to Amy Sherman, senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, Charitable Choice made government partnerships with the faith-community plausible (Sherman, 2000). She found 125 new partnerships between government and faith-based organizations in 9 states, suggesting Charitable Choice was in fact beginning to level the playing field between faith-based and secular social services. In 2002, Amy Sherman, in collaboration with John C. Green, director of the Bliss Institute at the University of Akron, expanded the study to 389 organizations in 15 states. The majority of the contracts (56%) between faith-based service providers and the government were granted after the enactment of Charitable Choice in 1996. In fact, several organizations (20%) entered into their first government contract since 1996 (Green & Sherman, 2002). Contrary to Chaves' (1999), Green and Sherman (2002) found more evangelical Protestant congregations (39%) obtained government contracts than mainline Protestant (32%) or Catholic (2%) congregations. Smaller organizations appeared to gain more government contracts than their larger counterparts, and white congregations (46%) had more contracts than black congregations (36%). Similar trends were reported among the non-profit corporations in their study (Green & Sherman, 2002). These findings suggest either the self-reports in Chaves' study were inaccurate, or as some detractors of the faith-based initiative would suggest, a faith-based form of affirmative action favoring small conservative Protestant organizations may be at work in government funding decisions (Texas Freedom Network Education Fund, 2002). While Charitable Choice appears to have influenced the number of government contracts, it remains unclear how it has shaped the social service landscape.

The complexity of assessing the actual impact of Charitable Choice is a central theme in a three state evaluation conducted by researchers at the School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University—Purdue University, Indianapolis. They found a significant decrease in the number of faith-based organizations with government welfare to work contracts between 2001 (13%) and 2003 (6%) (Thelin, 2003). In North Carolina, as well as other county administered states, the flow of government money is decentralized, and decisions are often made at the county level making Charitable Choice difficult to assess. Increasing the complexity of assessing the impact of Charitable Choice in North Carolina was the fact that many of the state funded programs were not aimed solely at TANF recipients (Queen, 2003). Competing definitions and understanding of the states' responsibility significantly hindered the assessment of Charitable Choice in Massachusetts (Jensen, 2003). According to Jensen, the state officials in Massachusetts believe themselves to be in compliance with Charitable Choice despite their failing grade on a report card issued by the Center for Public Justice (Sherman, 2000). Ultimately, Massachusetts's officials argue they focus on organizational outcomes in determining what agencies to partner with for service provision. Increasing the numbers of faith-based organizations may be an important indicator of the effectiveness of the implementation of Charitable Choice; however, it does not guarantee the ability of faith-based organizations to achieve important individual and social outcomes.

### *Employment Outcomes*

The ability of the faith community to achieve significant results on behalf of their clients and participants has been a central premise for increasing the role of faith-based organizations in social service provision. Unfortunately, the rhetoric has little grounding in

systematic social scientific research. To date, few studies have been conducted to determine the actual effectiveness of faith-based social interventions, and at some level, the definition of effectiveness varies. However, in terms of employment, the potential outcomes are relatively clear with key indicators being employment, job stability, and wages.

Mississippi, Virginia, and Maryland were the first states to be studied for employment related outcomes (Sherman, 1998a, 1998c). These states made early attempts at engaging the faith community to help families move from welfare to work. In Mississippi, Sherman found the Faith Families program to make a small but real impact in the lives of the participants. At the time of the study 142 of the 900 families, approximately 15.78%, had found employment, while many were waiting to be matched to a church (Sherman, 1998c). A Maryland program showed better statistical outcomes for the 14 of 21 people who completed their program between 1994 and 1998 and who remained employed (Sherman, 1998a). In Hampton County, Virginia participants who completed the program found employment (46%), enrolled in school (16%), or entered another training program (30%) (Sherman, 1998a). While these initial attempts offer some insight into early faith-government partnerships, they clearly do not provide convincing data in terms of the outcomes generated by faith-based social interventions, especially without adequate comparison samples of persons accessing non faith-based or public services.

The complexity of evaluating the impact of faith-based social interventions is made evident by a study of welfare to work programs (n= 196) and their clients in Los Angeles (Monsma & Soper, 2003). Monsma and Soper (2003) assessed both organizational attributes and client outcomes over the course of a year of government, for-profit, secular nonprofit, faith-based segmented, and faith-based integrated programs. Surveys measuring clients'

wages, employment status, change in wages, and attitudinal changes were conducted at three points: baseline (n=436), 6 months (n=327), and at 12 months (n =265). At baseline, government, secular non-profit, and faith-based segmented programs served the clients with the most skill barriers to employment, while faith-based integrated programs appeared to serve clients with greater life situation and attitude barriers than the other programs in the sample. In terms of employment outcomes, there were mixed results with faith-based integrated programs faring worse in terms of finding people work: 75% of the people who were unemployed at baseline remained unemployed at the 12 month follow up, and no participants had seen their wages increase from the six and 12 month follow-up, while 14.3% saw their wages decrease. For-profit organizations had the best outcomes with only 24.4% of their unemployed clients still out of work at twelve months and 45% reporting wage increases at 12 months. However, faith-based integrated programs fared the best with helping their clients who were employed at baseline to maintain their employment at twelve months. Monsma and Soper (2003) paint a complex, and likely accurate, picture of the impact of faith-based social service interventions, with faith-based programs excelling in some areas while struggling in others.

Employment outcomes of faith-based service delivery were also measured in a study of former welfare recipients (n=2,397) in two Indiana counties (Deb & Jones, 2003). The data was drawn from a variety of administrative sources and used probit regression to assess job placement rates, wages, hours, and health insurance. Contrary to Monsma and Soper (2003), Deb and Jones (2003) found no significant difference in job placement and wage rates between faith-based and secular service providers. However, participants of faith-based programs worked significantly fewer hours and were much less likely to find employment

with health insurance than those who completed secular programs. While Deb and Jones' study is the most sophisticated to date, it is difficult to draw many conclusions from it as it is limited to essentially a single point in time in two Indiana counties. The Indiana study again demonstrates mixed results, suggesting faith-based service providers are neither superior nor inferior to secular service providers.

The complexity of adequately assessing the employment outcomes of faith-based welfare to work programs is a consistent theme also found in a study of 14 faith-based programs in California (Campbell, 2004). A preliminary assessment of the job placement rates (40.9%) among faith-based service providers compared to the participants in the Work Force Investment Act (WIA) one-stop centers (79.2%) in California would suggest the faith-based providers were woefully inadequate. However, a more careful analysis paints a more complex picture. First, faith-based programs worked with much higher proportions of homeless, substance abusers, ex-offenders, and public assistance recipients than the WIA programs. Second, outcomes for faith-based programs differed. Faith-based programs employing multidimensional interventions had much higher job placement rates (64.3%) than faith-based programs that only provided remedial assistance (18.0%). Finally, faith-based organizations often referred clients to WIA one-stop centers, serving as a bridge between hard to serve clients and WIA employment services. These findings, combined with reports of significant gains in self-confidence (88%), communication skills (73%), and improved family relations (61%) among participants of California faith-based organizations, suggest faith-based service providers are vital partners in moving people from welfare to work (Campbell, 2004).

The literature suggests the faith community has long been a partner in the delivery of social services in the United States. Charitable Choice and the faith-based initiative appears to have increased public interest and scrutiny of religious charities, thus increasing the level of scholarly attention given to the role of religion in public. Despite the increased interest, little is still known about religious social services. The growing literature is helping to shape a definition furthering the dialogue and discourse. Still, there is space for increased exploration into the contributions of the faith community. Furthering our understanding of the historic and valuable partnership will require improved theories, definitions, data sources, and methods.



## Chapter 4: Theory: A Protestant Theory of Labor Force Attachment

Charitable Choice and the faith-based initiative promised to capitalize on the religious values of caring and compassion by facilitating the compassionate activities of religious groups and helping recipients of public assistance in their transition from welfare to work. Unfortunately, there has been little attention given to the articulation of a theory of change, explicating the specific and unique contributions of faith-based organizations to social service in general and labor force attachment more specifically. There is a growing body of literature analyzing the faith community's contributions to the development of human and social capital, theories traditionally associated with employment, job stability, economic progress, and social mobility (Bartkowski & Regis, 2003; Brown & Brown, 2003; Cnaan et al., 2002; Cnaan, Boddie, & Yancey, 2003; Lockhart, 2005; Putnam, Felstein, & Cohen, 2003; Wuthnow, 2004; Wuthnow et al., 2004). However, contributing to increased human and social capital alone can hardly be considered a unique contribution to the field of labor force attachment. Policy makers seem to believe the unique component of faith-based social interventions is their ability to "change hearts," fundamentally transforming people's character and identities while providing traditional services, resulting in improved outcomes for program participants (Bush, 2001). Three theoretical concepts emerge in the previous discussion of religious social services: first, personal transformation and capacity-building as a unique faith-based contribution to labor force attachment; second, religious institutions' potentially influential role in the development of human capital; third, the relationship between social capital and religion and its potential impact on labor force attachment. This

paper will explore these three theories, culminating with a proposed faith-based theory of labor force attachment.

### *Transformation as Re-Narration*

The capacity of religion to facilitate personal transformation is a consistent concept articulated by supporters of faith-based social interventions (Cnaan & Boddie, 2002; Coffin, 2000; Greenberg, 2000b; Wallace, Myers, & Holley, 2004). In his remarks prior to signing the executive order establishing the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, President Bush stated, “They provide more than practical help to people in need. They touch and change hearts” (Bush, 2001). Engaging the spiritual dimensions of human need while providing physical, social, and emotional elements common in other interventions, in theory, is a unique contribution of faith-based social interventions to the public good. However, it is precisely the talk of transformation that has raised concerns among supporters and critics of the current policy. Many believe transformation is simply a code for Christian conversion, particularly the Evangelical Christian idea of conversion. Whether Christian conversion or some other change, a notion of transformation is at bedrock in the current policy; thus, a theory of transformation needs further articulation.

There are no simple theories of transformation or conversion (Snow & Machalek, 1984). Theologians and social scientists have spent millennium trying to articulate the process of transformation, making little progress. Still, stories of transformation and epiphanies are relatively common experiences across faith traditions. In their book, *Religion and the Individual*, social psychologists Batson, Schoednrade, and Ventis argue personal transformation is a process beginning with a personal crisis and ending with a new way of life, a “resurrected” life, providing meaning where meaning was not previously evident,

improving personal and social functioning (Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993). This explanation provides a reasonable theoretical starting point for describing a process of transformation for people experiencing the “crisis” of unemployment or welfare receipt, but key questions remain: Who creates or defines a crisis? How is meaning created or made? And how is the “new life” sustained? Narrative theory provides one possible explanation for these lingering questions.

Narrative theory has gained increasing attention in the social sciences over the last two decades (Orbuch, 1997; C. Smith, 2003a; Somers, 1992; Swartz, 2004; Yamane, 2000). While narrative has often been considered from an epistemological or methodical view, it provides a resource for theoretically describing personal change and transformation. Snow and Machalek, in their analysis of sociological theories of conversion, suggest one common theme in the literature is that conversion is a process of “radical personal change” (1984, p.169). However, there are few boundaries or consistent definitions of how radical a change is required for it to be termed “conversion.” When the various indicators of change are assessed, what appears to emerge is a narrative process, complete with a “biographical reconstruction,” suggesting conversion is, at least at one level, a re-narration (Snow & Machalek, 1984). This re-narration may provide individuals with a sense of agency and the social networks necessary for personal change, such as moving from welfare to work.

Narrative theory provides, at one theoretical level, valuable resources for describing the process of transformation occurring for people moving from welfare to work. This paper will use Yamane’s definition of narrative, “... a primary linguistic vehicle through which people grasp the meaning of lived experience by configuring and reconfiguring past experiences in ongoing stories which have certain plots or directions and which guide the

interpretation of those experiences” (2000, p.183). According to this definition, narrative is, universal in that we all have stories. It is a resource for identity formation for both individuals and groups; it has tools for creating meaning from disparate and often conflicting experiences; it is contextual, bound by time and space; it is fluid and can be modified; it is social and relational, emerging in, from, and in relationship to others; it is communal bridging and bonding, creating a shared sense of meaning and providing a foundation for action (Orbuch, 1997; Ricœur, 1984; C. Smith, 2003a; Somers, 1992; C. Taylor, 1989; Yamane, 2000). These characteristics make narrative a viable source for a theory of personal transformation, necessary and implicit in the current social welfare policy.

The interplay between three narrative concepts is particularly important to a theory of personal transformation. First, *public narratives*, those narratives that give shape and form to the social structures, must be considered (Somers, 1992). Public narratives are often broad meta-narratives that inform and shape worldviews. Philosopher Charles Taylor (2004) terms this pre-theoretical thinking, which allows for the creation of common practices and the sense of legitimacy, a social imaginary. He suggests people can only become what they can imagine or what their social imaginary allows them to imagine (C. Taylor, 2004).

*Ontological narratives*, the second narrative category to be explored, are personal narratives associated with the process of identity formation. They are the core stories and experiences agents form and reform in light of the public narrative to create a sense of meaning and personal identity (Ricœur, 1984; Somers, 1992). As Courtney Bender has written, “we live through stories” (2003, p.152). A final consideration is stories which motivate people to act. These action oriented stories have been called *mobilization narratives* (Hart, 1992). The sharing of stories has been found to be a key component in linking people together for social

action, building social capital (Putnam et al., 2003). A theory of personal transformation can be found in the interplay between the three concepts of public, ontological, and mobilization narratives.

Work is central to the American public narrative. According to Weber, Puritan religion provided the fertile soil for the development of capitalism in the United States by linking the Christian concept of calling or vocation to one's employment (Weber, Parsons, & Giddens, 1992). One's calling of God is expressed through one's work; therefore, work is a moral activity. A potentially latent but natural consequence of this line of thought is unemployment as a sign of moral failure (Simon, 1994). Self-reliance and independence through work characterize the predominant public narrative in the United States; people's social and moral identities are intricately intertwined with their employment. Unfortunately, the consequence of these narrative structures is that the social system blames the unemployed or the poor for their social standing with little or no critical assessment of the broader issues or narratives influencing their situation (C. Taylor, 2004). The prevailing American narrative creates a picture, an identity, of the poor and unemployed as being immoral, lazy, and lecherous, in direct contrast with the independent idealized self. The poor and the unemployed are forced to make sense of their identity, forming experiences in light of the broader public narrative, which may not fit their personal experience.

Identity formation is a narrative process (Ezzy, 2001). Robert Bellah and his colleagues wrote, "Finding oneself means among other things, finding the story or narrative in terms of which one's life makes sense" (1996, p. 81). The prevailing American narrative lauds self-reliance and individualism. It suggests people have made it on their own, independent of any outside help or resources, despite the fact that to a large extent, people are

born into a particular social situation which significantly influences actual understanding and opportunities. As Somers points out, “We become who we are in social narratives and networks of relations that are rarely of our own making” (1992, p.600). Still, we imagine our identity as a self-creation with limited social connections (Bellah, 1996). Therefore, in the west in general and the United States more specifically, identity is imagined to be formed primarily by what Somers (1992) terms, *ontological narratives* – stories where social actors define who they are. While there is no doubt identity formation is an individual process, it is also a social process. Our stories do not operate in a vacuum. They emerge and are created in interaction with others; thus, identity formation is a social process (C. Smith, 2003a).

Identity is formed where personal experience and public story intersect, a process similar to Cooley’s notion of the “looking glass self,” where self identity is the byproduct of our interpretation of social interaction and the feelings those interaction create (Cooley, 1902). But the feelings and interpretation are influenced and shaped by culture. As Clifford Geertz wrote, “Becoming human is becoming individual, and we become individual under the guidance of cultural patterns, historically created systems of meaning in terms of which we give form, order, point, and direction to our lives” (1973, p.52). Identity formation is therefore a narrative process through which people create meaning by actively reflecting, interpreting, and telling their stories in light of and in relationship to the broader public narratives (Geertz, 1973; Yamane, 2000). Unfortunately for the poor in the United States, personal experience and public narrative often collide.

People living in poverty and receiving public assistance in the United States must come to terms with competing identities and experiences. The image of the welfare mother sitting on her couch watching the television, or driving a Cadillac as Karen Seccombe (1999)

suggested, were pervasive in the 1990s. The public narrative has crafted a story of the welfare mom being a lazy, often sexually promiscuous woman, taking advantage of the system, a stark contrast to the hard working, self-made image popularized in the public narrative. Rarely if ever, is the more likely story of a mother struggling to get her children to school, across town on public transportation, while trying to make appointments with any number of caseworkers depicted in public narratives. Similarly, poor men in the United States are portrayed as predators looking to father children without bearing any of the responsibility for raising them. Little attention is given to the lack of economic opportunity or social programs available for low-income men trying to do their best to contribute to their children's well-being. At one level, the poor are being told they are lazy while their experience speaks differently—of hectic schedules just to survive, working hard at catching buses, getting to appointments, and trying to find work. Their personal ontological narrative collides with the public narrative of the nation, often creating a sense of frustration, hopelessness, and lovelessness which Cornel West calls the nihilistic threat for African Americans (West, 1993). Overcoming the sense of hopelessness so prevalent in the poverty-stricken communities of the United States requires a rewriting, re-ordering, or transformation of the competing narratives of the “American Dream” and the lived experience of those in poverty.

Narratives are not fixed and can be changed. Christian Smith (2003a) argues narratives are “transposable” and can be modified. In his study of 33 unemployed Australians, Ezzy writes, “Identities are neither unchangeable substances, nor are they linguistic illusions” (2001, p.31), suggesting identities are both flexible and real. He found

understanding the cultural and personal meaning of work is critical to assessing the narrative identity of the unemployed (Ezzy, 2001).

In the United States, our identity is often closely tied to work. What we do is often who we are, making unemployment and job loss a relatively traumatic experience (Bellah, 1996). While all people do not experience or make sense of their unemployment or job loss in a uniform manner, it generally causes an individual to question one's identity and can result in fatalism or depression. Re-narration can offer a vehicle for coping with these traumatic life stressors (Orbuch, 1997). Lockhart (2001) has suggested one of the goals of the current welfare policy is the transformation of the identities of the poor from being "deadbeat dads or welfare moms" to being good employees living the "American Dream." A transposed narrative is clearly implicit in this notion.

The President views religion as a primary resource in facilitating the transformation from dependence on public assistance to living the "American Dream." In a speech to faith-based social service providers, the President said,

There are men and women in our country who doubt, who have serious doubts about what we call the American Dream. And that—as the President of a country who has heralded the American Dream, that's troubling to realize that some citizens simply cannot connect with that notion of dreaming about the future. There are—there is loneliness, and you know what I'm talking about. There are people who are addicted to alcohol and drugs, that their vision is clouded, that they can't see a more hopeful tomorrow. These are the types of problems we face (2004a).

Helping people on the fringe to be woven into the fabric of the "American Dream" requires, at one level, a re-interpretation of their story.

President Bush appears to have personally experienced a very real re-interpretation of his own narrative. In his well documented walk with Billy Graham, George W. Bush was "transformed" from a young man with an alcohol problem and a failing marriage to a person



with a vision, passion, and calling to serve. His personal experience, his re-narration, appears to have resulted in a deep-seated conviction that personal transformation is necessary for effective social interventions. This belief is what sociologist Rodney Stark has termed the “miracle motif” (Stark, 1971). The “miracle motif” asserts public issues can be solved through personal religious belief or conversion. This experience of personal transformation seems to have significantly influenced the religious dimensions of the current social welfare policy.

The faith community in general and congregations specifically are narrative communities in which stories are a natural resource for facilitating change (Ammerman, 2001; Batson et al., 1993; Cnaan & Boddie, 2002; Thiemann et al., 2000; Wilson, 1999). Stories, narratives of radical personal and social transformation are central to many faith communities. People who have been raised in religious communities are familiar with their community’s narratives. Redemption from slavery, resurrection from the dead, and personal encounters which radically alter people’s lives are common themes in religious narrative. While many of the stories shape and are embedded in religious rituals and traditions, they are not limited to mythical or historical ideas lifted from dusty books. In fact, in many religious communities’ transformation stories are real living reminders of the faith itself. The stories are conveyed through hymns, testimonies, and prayers, reminding the co-religionists of the transforming power of God (Pattillo-McCoy, 1998). The narrative nature of faith communities provides a natural resource for interventions aimed at changing or transforming identities.

Religious narratives often provide the resources to facilitate personal change. James Q. Wilson suggested, “Religion causes people to doubt to the point that it ultimately provides

people with an opportunity for personal transformation” (1999, p.38). While religious narratives, such as equating work and prosperity to the calling of God, have been used to construct the notion that essentially equates poverty as a sign of moral and religious failure, religious narratives can also be used to transform the narrative. Religious concepts around the value of human life and justice provide a resource for people to question the validity of the social structure, policies, and the messages they send thus facilitating a process of change where people’s identities are re-narrated from being a welfare mom or deadbeat dad to a child of the Creator or a human being with unique skills, gifts, and talents. Such a re-narration process is not entirely unique to religious social service providers. Social workers and psychologists commonly use narrative therapy, the strengths perspective, and tools like the miracle question to facilitate change and increase a person’s fit with the environment; however, religious narratives do provide a particularly rich resource to facilitate the change. As stated before, religious communities are no strangers to stories of life transformation. People of faith believe faith changes people. The change is part of their personal experience and embedded in the narratives and practices of the community.

Religious naming practices are one reminder of the power of re-narration in the faith community. Scriptural accounts are full of stories where re-naming signifies important life change. In Judaism, Abram became Abraham and Isaac became Israel. A historical Christian example was Jesus’ practice of renaming his disciples—Simon, the impetuous follower, became Peter, the rock. Re-naming practices continue to be part of religious rites and ritual today. When one converts to Islam, an Islamic name is given to form their new Muslim identity—Cassius Clay became Mohamed Ali. In the Roman Catholic community it is common for children to take on new names at confirmation and their first Holy

Communion, thus crafting new identities. In some respects, these naming practices are a re-narration or a re-employment; employment is the notion of re-ordering or constructing the narratives (Ricœur, 1984). A new name signifies a new life, a new beginning, and a new story. It also represents membership and commitment to a new community, suggesting the communal nature of religious identity.

Religious communities facilitate social connections through shared stories. Two particular activities are at work in the sharing of stories. First, shared stories create moral order, establishing boundaries by defining what is right, good, and true (C. Smith, 2003a, 2003c; C. Taylor, 1989). Christian Smith writes, “Behind, beneath, in, and through all of the institutions involved in these human practices are moral orders rooted in historical narratives, traditions, and worldviews that orient human actors to the good, right, the true” (2003a, p. 23). While religious narratives, for example, may influence the current moral order in the United States by equating work and prosperity to the calling of God thereby deeming poverty a sign of moral and religious failure, religious narratives can also be transposed, setting a new standard of the right, good, and true (C. Smith, 2003a). Community organizers have found transposing public narratives is often best done by sharing personal stories (Putnam et al., 2003; Wood, 2002, 2003). Putnam, Felstein, and Cohen write, “Stories help people construct and reconstruct their interests” (2003, p. 20). This reconstruction of narratives provides a foundation for personal and public action. At the personal level, moral orders impose a form of social control, setting behavioral standards and holding people accountable for meeting those standards. These personal stories can also have a potent public impact by allowing people of faith to come in personal contact with the structural impediments that keep people in poverty. When people of faith can put a personal face or identity to a public

issue they are much more likely to act (Dudley & Johnson, 1993). Bartkowski and Regis (1999) found positive helping experiences served as a primary motivator for continued or increased congregational involvement in service delivery, indicating the shared stories not only build support for individual level interventions but also hold the potential to mobilize the faith community for broader structural or social change.

People of faith seem to be motivated to action by personal and relational interaction. The social nature of religious institutions often creates nurturing communities. Nancy Ammerman wrote, “Congregations are places to call home, places to be with those who value the same customs and stories, indeed places in which those stories and customs are developed and sustained” (2001, p.14). Sharing stories builds relationships. Evangelical Christians are particularly prone to the relational strategy of intervention (C. Smith, 1998). Communal connections provide people with both a network of support and accountability, helping in the transition from welfare to work, as well as opportunities for participation in the life of the community, building social and human capital, allowing for the reformation of personal identity, what Brent Coffin has called “transformative integration” (Coffin, 2000). Sharing personal stories becomes the foundation of the development of social capital. Putnam, Felstein, and Cohen write, “Personal narratives are a uniquely powerful medium for expressing needs and building bonds” (2003, p. 20). Linking personal stories to broader social themes is a key for faith-based social action by reconstructing and reinterpreting the public narrative in light of the personal stories (Marquez, 2000; Putnam et al., 2003).

Narrative theory provides a valuable resource for faith-based labor force attachment programs. First, it provides a resource to critically assess the themes embedded in the broad public narratives while identifying the forces that have helped shape the story. Second,

narrative helps people who have experienced more of an “American nightmare than dream” through unemployment and poverty, create meaning and craft an alternative story, transposing the narrative, strengthening self-esteem, and improving a sense of personal identity. Third, narratives can facilitate social connections by building networks of support and accountability. Fourth, connecting social issues to personal stories may serve as a catalyst in motivating religious helpers to critical reflection and engagement aimed at the transformation of the social structures that keep people impoverished. Narrative helps connect people, which serves as a building block for the development of social and human capital.

### *Social Capital Theory*

The faith community is considered a leading source for the development of social capital in the United States (Cnaan et al., 2002; J. A. Coleman, 2003; Greeley, 1997a, 1997b; C. Smith, 2003c). Even J. S. Coleman’s (1988) seminal study of high school students in Boston found high levels of social capital present in religiously affiliated schools, resulting in improved outcomes, reduced dropout rates, for their students. Religious communities facilitate the development of shared values, human relationships across the lifespan, trust, and communication networks, all important elements for the existence of social capital (J. S. Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000). This fact, combined with the importance of social capital for finding and gaining employment, makes it a central theoretical element to studies examining the contributions of faith-based social interventions. While there is little doubt religious communities facilitate nurturing networks of individuals, social capital theory’s foundation in rational choice theory may not always be compatible with religious teachings, ideals, and identity (Bartkowski & Regis, 2003; Greenberg, 2000a, 2000b). Understanding how

religious congregations and organizations contribute to social capital formation remains an important area for theoretical and empirical exploration (Chaves, 2002).

Social capital can be characterized by purposive action by the actors, trust among the actors, obligations and expectations between actors, and closure in social networks (J. S. Coleman, 1988, 1990; Paxton, 1999; Putnam, 1993, 1996; Woolcock, 1998). John S. Coleman (1988) suggests social capital allows an actor with particular assets to accomplish goals beyond their own ability but not beyond the network as a whole. It is the social relations that provide what is necessary to achieve a purposive action. The most common indicators of social capital are the existence of formal and informal associations, social structures, and networks. Congregations and faith-based organizations are commonly cited as places where norms, trust, and reciprocity can be developed to the benefit of individuals and communities (Ammerman, 2001; Bane, 1999, 2000; Bartkowski & Regis, 1999, 2003; Cnaan, 1999b; Cnaan & Boddie, 2001, 2002; Cnaan et al., 2002; Cnaan et al., 1999; Greeley, 1997a, 1997b; Putnam, 2000; Putnam et al., 2003; Wineburg, 1996, 2001; Wineburg & Cleveland, 2002).

Common norms and values have been consistently identified as an essential component of social capital. Curry writes, “Social capital is...embedded in, and arises out of shared societal values” (2003, p.141). A primary role of the faith community has been to establish moral orders, ideas of what is good, bad, right, wrong, and true, shaping the values of society (Bane, 1999; C. Smith, 2003a, 2003c; C. Taylor, 1989). As suggested in the previous section, moral orders are shaped by a community’s narratives. While membership is usually open, it often requires committing or submitting to the norms of the community. Complying with norms and participating in the life of the community provides opportunities

to share stories and build bonds. Putnam (2000) suggested congregations were particularly effective at building bonding capital. Bonding is a means of building trust.

Trust may be the most valuable ingredient of social capital. Trust holds communities together and can motivate action. Religious communities promote social interaction, which ultimately builds trust (Cnaan et al., 2002). J. S. Coleman's (1988) example of the trust present among Hasidic diamond brokers in New York highlights this point. Sharing expensive diamonds with no collateral was a vital element to successfully conducting business; thus, high levels of trust were necessary among the dealers. One factor contributing to the levels of trust was network closure among the diamond brokers. All were Hasidic Jews. If they broke the trust, not only was their business doomed, they would likely be expelled from their tight knit community, socially isolating them. Network closure appears to be an important element to increase bonding capital and trust; however, network closure can also limit the bridging power of social capital. Excessive bonding could breed a sort of social isolation, limiting access to valuable external resources. Few religious communities, however, are as tightly woven as the Hasidic community, suggesting the door to many religious networks is ajar rather than closed. While bonding capital is important for social support and vital for people transitioning from welfare to work, it may impede the development of bridging capital, the ability to connect individuals with institutions beyond the immediate network (Putnam, 2000).

Bridging capital has long been seen as a key element for finding employment (Granovetter, 1973). Putnam (2000) initially argued religious organizations were not particularly able to bridge people to broader network opportunities, but more recent studies have suggested religious institutions and organizations are effective at bridging people in

multiple directions. First, the faith community bridges people across social class (Skocpol, 2000). They are one of the only places where a janitor and a corporate CEO may jointly serve in leadership positions, such as on a church board. Second, religious communities, particularly congregations, are multi-generational. Their memberships include people across the lifespan (C. Smith, 2003c). Religious rites and rituals are important elements marking both the start and end of life. Third, people of faith span boundaries and cross sectors. The vast majority of congregation members work in the secular world and live in religiously diverse communities. These connections, whether weak or strong, are not left at the doorstep of the congregation and are potentially powerful sources of bridging capital (Curry, 2003; Warren, 2003). Fourth, religious institutions often work collaboratively—congregations partner with other congregations, parachurch, and civic organizations to meet mutual goals (Campbell, 2002; J. A. Coleman, 2003; Wood, 2003; Wuthnow, 2003). Collaborative work links one organization to many, significantly enhancing network ties and opportunities. In fact, most studies suggest the majority of religious service delivery occurs through partnerships (Chaves, 2004; Greenberg, 2000b; Wineburg, 2001). Finally, common religious identities often act to simultaneously bond and bridge diverse people. When people identify as a “Christian,” a “Jew,” or “Muslim” to people of the same faith tradition, more often than not there is an immediate bond of trust bridging all other divides. This trust is often founded on shared expectations and beliefs. These factors make religious organizations powerful sources of bridging capital.

Bridging capital is often rooted in shared obligations and mutual expectations. In his study of community organizing in Texas, Marquez (2000) found common theological commitments to the ideals of justice and compassion served as the only motivator strong



enough to bring people together across the barriers of race and social class for political action. Common core religious commitments unite people for action. The actions often take many forms, including direct service provision, volunteerism, financial contribution, community organization, or distribution of information, all of which are essential in the development of social capital. Nonetheless, moral directives and personal relationships serve to facilitate the development of shared obligations and mutual expectations in religious communities (Putnam et al., 2003).

While there is little doubt about the existence of shared obligations and mutual expectations in religious organizations, there is significant cause to question these as elements emerging from a central position of personal benefit embedded in rational choice theory (Harris, 2003). In fact, religious charity is often given simply as a free gift or as an act of religious devotion, not as means to receive something in return. Some may argue giving is motivated by the positive feelings it evokes or the potential reward in the afterlife, but neither is inherently or particularly economically rational. As Bartkowski and Regis write, “Social capital theory lacks a language for analyzing moral motivations for social action” (2003, p. 170). Religious groups care for people because it is their moral obligation with no regard for return on investment. The parable of the Good Samaritan may illustrate this best. Caring for the injured man at the side of the road came at great risk and cost for the “Good Samaritan.” There is no evident reward for his action; it was the deed that mattered most. The language of faith obscures the importance of deed, particularly for Jews and Muslims and even for many Christians for whom the deed of caring itself is a religious act. Bob Wineburg (2001) has consistently articulated this point. The practice of helping in religious networks, while certainly valuable, stems from moral beliefs not economic gain or other benefits. This moral

foundation may call into question social capital language of shared obligations and mutual expectations; obligations and expectations are shared among the faithful with a call to show justice, compassion, and grace to the widow, orphan, and alien.

A similar point must be made in reference to network closure in religious organizations. Most religious organizations are not entirely closed networks. They are, at the very least, permeable. Many people transitioning from welfare to work are not a regular part of a religious body; however, some faith-based interventions provide a path to congregational participation. Participation in the life of a local congregation may offer significant opportunities to enhance social capital but rarely would it result in network closure for adults whose social networks often extend well beyond the direct connections available in a local congregation. This stands in contrast to Smith's findings about the importance of closed social networks in the protection of religious youth from risky behavior (C. Smith, 2003b). Religious organizations, again particularly congregations, provide opportunities to join a new group. While networks may increase, it is very unlikely adults would benefit from network closure; they would, however, benefit from the accountability, social support, and social capital inherently a part of religious organizations, all of which are critical for moving people from welfare to work (Cheng, 2005a; Hershey & Pavetti, 1997; Molina & Howard, 2003). People transitioning from welfare to work may benefit more from the open nature of congregations than from network closure.

The accessibility of congregations and religious organizations is an additional contribution they make to social capital development. As John A. Coleman (2003) points out, religious organizations tend to be community based and locally focused, invested for the long-term, and often struggle with the tension between efficacy and their religious witness.

These characteristics often result in unusually high levels of trust between the organizations and members of the community, offering existing networks and legitimate authority in the community (Warren, 2003). As Cnaan (2002) and his colleagues have suggested, the local congregation is often the most viable and trusted institution located in impoverished communities. By location alone, religious organizations become an important partner for connecting people to resources.

The connecting activities of religious organizations may help to develop the “weak ties” necessary for generating employment among the members and participants in the organization. Social capital, specifically social networks, appears to be a key factor in finding employment. Economist Glenn Loury writes, “Opportunity travels along the synapses of social networks” (1998, p.119). A study of three cities found companies using referrals for hiring are likely to maintain the firm’s current racial configuration, suggesting social networks matter in gaining employment (Mouw, 2002). A more recent study of 1,434 urban workers calls into question the causal relationship between social capital, employment, and increased wage levels (Mouw, 2003). While the exact relationship between social capital and employment may be murky, conventional wisdom, as well as significant research, suggests there is a link between social capital and employment (Lin, 2000). The diverse networks and high levels of trust present in religious institutions may position them as a leading resource for connecting people to employment (Loury, 1998).

The bonding and bridging nature of religious institutions situate them in a unique position for the development of social capital. Curry writes, “High levels of bridging alone, in the absence of bonding are not enough to lead to healthy communities with sustainable local institutions” (2003, p.151). Religious institutions, particularly congregations, promote

frequent personal interaction, building trust among the members. Trust results in access to the diverse networks present in the organization and in the community. It also builds a sense of commitment, offering the opportunity for people to participate in leadership positions in the organization. Participation in the religious life of the organization makes congregations excellent training grounds for citizen participation and facilitates the development of human capital among the members (Brown & Brown, 2003; Wineburg, 2001). The bonding nature of religious organizations, combined with their long-term community presence, enhances their ability to help low-income individuals develop both social and human capital.

#### *Human Capital Theory*

Religious institutions have long been a primary developer of human capital through the provision of education and leadership opportunities for their members and their communities. Religious institutions regularly provide religious education and instruction, use volunteers in leadership positions, and provide opportunities to use skills not regularly cultivated in people's daily employment. It is common in religious communities for blue-color workers to be given the opportunity to lead (Ammerman, 2001). The development of human capital in religious organizations is largely due to members' participation in the life of the community. This is particularly true in religious congregations that are largely volunteer dependent. However, human capital development is not only a function of opportunities to participate in formal organizational roles, religious groups have lead the way in establishing institutions of higher education historically aimed at training clergy, parochial schools, and in many communities, non-profit corporations with very specific human capital development programs.

The modern notion of human capital is focused on assessing individuals' investments in education to increase their long-term earning potential. According to Gary Becker ([1964] 1975), people make investments in a variety of outlets including: on the job training, formal education, which he terms schooling, and other knowledge—what would likely be defined as life skills, cultural capital, and productive wage increases—specifically investments in emotional and physical health (G. S. Becker, 1975). Gary Becker insists the goal of economics should be the alleviation of poverty. Investing either time or money in each of these areas should reduce a person's chances of living in poverty (G. S. Becker, 1998). In *The Invisible Caring Hand*, Cnaan et. al. take a slightly broader approach writing, "Human capital comprises the skills, knowledge, experiences, and developed talents that individuals apply to solve problems and enhance their quality of life" (2002, p. 256). Both Gary Becker's ([1964] 1975) and Cnaan's (2002) definitions will serve as a guide for an exploration into religious institutions' roles in developing human capital.

Congregations and other faith-based organizations are often incubators for human capital. Religious institutions rely heavily on volunteers. Volunteer opportunities are one way to gain on-the-job training, critical to enhancing human capital. According to Coffin (2000), membership in a congregation asks people to contribute their skills, gifts, and talents; in theory, these contributions result in a transformative interaction for the members. This is particularly true for the unemployed or lower-income, lesser skilled workers who are often placed in positions of responsibility and leadership, sometimes alongside professionals in the field. Leaders learn the expected behavior and roles in the context of organizational meetings, gain skills necessary to speak in public, and learn to organize and lead events, skills that can be transferred beyond the walls of the congregation or organization. John A.

Coleman (2003) argues congregations may be better training grounds for civic participation than labor unions for blue-collar workers. Ammerman writes, “Congregational participants of all social statuses, however, get opportunities to lead” (2001, p. 15). A study of Christian prisoner re-entry programs found programs replicated themselves through graduates starting similar or new facilities in different communities, suggesting these programs are actively cultivating non-traditional leaders to serve the community (Cnaan & Sinha, 2003).

Congregations and faith-based organizations offer ample opportunities for leadership and service, making them important facilitators of empowerment and leadership development.

Religious institutions also provide a variety of formal educational opportunities to develop leaders and sustain the faith. The most common form of formal education present in congregations is religious education offered through Sunday Schools or formal catechisms. These programs are structured to develop future religious leaders to maintain and grow the faith. They also engage young people in critical thinking and communication exercises. A case study of an African-American congregation in Salt Lake City found congregational education programs to be valuable for identity formation of the young people in the community (Haight, 1998). However, formal training is not limited to religious education. Many colleges and universities were founded to train clergy and other leaders, some still actively retaining their religious character. The faith community also played an active role in founding many formal employment training programs well before Charitable Choice or the faith-based initiative were ever considered (Kramer et al., 2002). Religious institutions actively build human capital through a variety of avenues of schooling and formal education.

Increases in human capital are not limited to on-the job training and formal education (G. S. Becker, 1975). According to Gary Becker (1975), other knowledge is also crucial for

enhancing a person's earnings potential. Other knowledge includes information about investments and economics as well as political, social, and cultural information. Religious institutions also help people to gain knowledge in many of these areas as well.

Denominations and other religious organizations often provide education on investments, wills, and annuities. While these activities serve to potentially benefit the organization in the form of a charitable remainder trust or other life gifts, they also provide much needed economic information. Religious institutions have sponsored community development credit unions and other alternative financial institutions. Faith communities also help to develop cultural capital, a tool kit of skills that can be transferred to the work place (C. Smith, 1998; Swidler, 1986). Church, synagogue, mosque, or temple is often the first place a child learns the appropriate way to dress and how to shake hands and greet others. Religious institutions serve as cultivators of cultural skills and other knowledge, increasing human capital.

The final element of Gary Becker's (1975) human capital theory is what he terms productive wage increases. These are investments to improve physical and emotional health. Once again, the contribution of religious institutions to these areas of life is well documented (Johnson et al., 2002). Whether through religious worship, formal parish nursing and health programs, or the social control exerted by the religious community, religious institutions appear to improve people's overall well being and therefore, may be one of the best investments for productive wage increases and overall human capital development.

Religious institutions appear to be key cultivators of human capital. First, their voluntary nature creates opportunities to lead and gain on-the-job training for members from every strata of society. Second, they provide and encourage a broad array of formal schooling and educational activities. Third, other knowledge is developed through speakers

and interaction, increasing cultural capital as well. Finally, participation in the life of a religious community is positively associated with improved mental and physical health, suggesting it is a good investment for the development of human capital. One of the great ironies is that the very volunteer nature of religious institutions in itself creates opportunity to develop human capital; in fact, human capital development in religious institutions may be more a function of institutional survival than intentional programmatic interest in developing people's skills and abilities.

### *Summarizing a Protestant Theory of Change*

Thus, religious institutions are key contributors to the development of human and social identities, social capital, and human capital in the United States. Their consistent, yet quiet presence and contributions to the well-being of individuals, families, and communities make them a natural and historic partner for service delivery. Still, there are few formally articulated theories about how they contribute to change. Christian Smith's (2003b) theory of network closure among adolescents may be the best to date; however, while there are similarities in how religious communities operate, people moving from welfare to work are often very different than adolescents whose life and networks are deeply embedded in the life of the faith community. Still, Christian Smith's work provides a starting point for a proposed narrating, connecting, and developing theory of faith-based labor force attachment.

First, religious institutions and organizations emerge from narratives and shape narratives. While some religious narratives have been used to create a dichotomy between worthy and unworthy poor, other religious narratives have historically motivated people to create change, establishing a more just and caring society. It is precisely the belief of the value of each human being, rooted in a sense of divine nature, common to all religious



traditions that spurs interest in the well-being of humanity (Cnaan, 1999a). This belief in the divine inherent in every individual is at the core of the re-narration of individual experience. A key aspect of religious interventions is they seek to help people re-narrate their experience from the position of their inestimable value rooted in their divine nature rather than in their worthlessness based on their lack of consumer and material goods. Having a new story and potentially a better self-understanding will help provide the necessary footing for dealing with the challenges of employment, including criticism, without significantly damaging their personal identity.

This re-narration may be explicitly an element of the intervention, what some evaluators would term as the little black box, or it may be a latent factor shaping the nature of the service and the interaction. As S. R. Smith and Sosin (2001) found, “faith-related” organizations were more likely to give people second chances and less likely to give up on their clients compared to other organizations. The consistent caring presence of the religious community tells a story, challenging the prevailing messages. Re-narration can also be understood as a religious experience; similar to those in Christian Smith’s (2003b) theory, it can be the transformation so readily talked about in the rhetoric. But as Somers (1992) suggests, narratives are relational; they connect people.

Second, religious interventions are connecting interventions. Many are structured around the use of mentors and volunteers, helping people build new and alternative networks and increasing their chances for employment. These connections are the bedrock of social capital formation. Religious institutions, particularly congregations, build both bonding and bridging relationships, providing increased social support and access to information at the outskirts of the networks.

Finally, religious interventions help develop the potential of their clients. The focus on developing the skills and abilities of the program participants may simply be a function of the organization's dependence on volunteers, but it is also a belief shaped by the narrative that every person has gifts, skills, and abilities they are able to contribute. These skills are learned competencies and can be used to enhance a person's position in the labor force (C. Smith, 2003c).

While social scientists value linearity, these processes are not necessarily linear in nature. They often evolve concurrently and serve to reinforce each other. In fact, they are often layered. Re-narration occurs when a client is asked to serve on a committee or as mentor to someone else in the program, generating a sense of value and belief. Human and social capital are built by serving on the committee.

It is also important to note as Bartkowski and Regis (2003) keenly point out, the language of capital can be misleading. There is little doubt of the potential economic value generated by investments of the religious community in the lives of people on the margins, but those investments are rarely, if ever, made with a direct eye on personal return. They are made because the acts of caring and of serving are profoundly religious acts in and of themselves. Religious social intervention cannot be reduced to an economic exchange relationship. However, the ability of religious institutions to re-narrate, connect, and develop make them a potentially valuable partner for preparing people to move from welfare to work.

## Chapter 5: Methodological Issues and the Evaluation of Faith-based Social Services

Evaluating the impact of faith-based social interventions remains one of the most difficult tasks of Charitable Choice (Kennedy & Bielefeld, 2002). First, churches, faith-based organizations, as well as small secular non-profits rarely have the luxury or the expertise to design and conduct evaluations (Fischer, 2004). Second, these agencies often serve relatively small numbers of clients, limiting research designs. Third, good data is rarely collected or tracked, resulting in a dearth of data sets on the topic. Finally, there is no single definition, conceptual framework, or theory of change articulating how faith-based organizations achieve their intended results. Despite the scarcity of information on the effectiveness of faith-based social interventions, they are being given increased responsibility for public welfare in the United States. The public largely believes faith, religion, and spirituality are keys to addressing many of the country's social needs (Farkas et al., 2000). Belief in the effectiveness of faith-based organizations has also been taken on faith.

The outcomes of faith-based organizations can be empirically assessed using traditional methods of evaluation. This paper will: (1) Develop a theory of change for a faith-based welfare to work program; and (2) empirically assess the impact of a particular faith-based program on earnings, job stability, and poverty in three North Carolina counties.

### *Summary of Current Research*

The evaluation of faith-based welfare to work programs has been largely ignored. To date only three studies have attempted to assess the impact of faith-based social interventions on employment (Campbell, 2004; Deb & Jones, 2003; Monsma & Soper, 2003). Each of the

studies employed different methodologies but had similar mixed and inconclusive findings. They represent some of the many challenges inherent in assessing faith-based social interventions, including the difficulty in defining a “faith-based” intervention, identifying good data sources, and identifying adequate samples. They also provide a foundation for advancing the scholarly exploration of the impact of faith-based social interventions.

Income and job stability are two ways to assess the impact of welfare to work programs (Blank, 2001). Monsma and Soper’s (2003) study of welfare to work programs (n=196) in Los Angeles used client surveys to determine the impact of government, for-profit, and faith-based programs. They found for-profit programs to be the most effective in terms of helping the unemployed find work at 6 and 12 months with faith-based integrated programs faring the worst. However, in terms of job stability the faith-based integrated programs had the best results. Monsma and Soper (2003) also assessed income levels and TANF usage; in both categories, for-profit programs appeared to produce the best results with faith-based integrated programs faring the worst. One challenge is determining the best results when measured by a change in status going from unemployment to employment or having the greatest wage increase. The faith-based integrated programs in this study served people who were already employed and were effective at helping them maintain their employment at the highest wage rates, making it difficult to say who is really more effective. Monsma and Soper’s (2003) work improved on other survey attempts by measuring clients at multiple points in time—baseline, six months, and 12 months; however, the reports are still susceptible to social desirability bias and limited to a one-year time frame, indicating the challenges of designing meaningful outcomes evaluations.

Deb and Jones's (2003) study of welfare to work programs in two Indiana counties used data drawn from various state and county reports to identify and assess client outcomes (n = 2,397) after participating in faith-based and secular employment services. To date, this study provides the most sophisticated use of statistical techniques to control for potential selection bias and to determine client outcomes (Deb & Jones, 2003). In general, Deb and Jones found few significant differences between faith-based and secular service providers; however, participants in faith-based groups generally worked fewer hours and were less likely to be offered health insurance. Deb and Jones may be the most significant outcome study to date. However, it is worth noting a few limitations: first, the data captured a snapshot of the program participants' outcomes at a single point in time. The study is not longitudinal and therefore cannot account for changes over time. Second, their classification of a faith-based program is subject to criticism. Programs scoring positively on a single dimension of Bielefeld, Littlepage, & Thelin's eight dimension scale were classified as faith-based (Bielefeld et al., 2003). In general, a single dimension would seem to be an inadequate measure of faith affiliation considering the complex nature of faith-based organizations. This is particularly pertinent as studies have found organizations with religious name in their titles do not necessarily self identify as faith-based (Green & Sherman, 2002). Still Deb and Jones' work provides a critical foundation for additional explorations into the impact of Charitable Choice.

Finally, Dave Campbell's (2004) study of Charitable Choice in California employed a mixed methods approach to evaluation. The evaluation used state administrative data to assess job placement and retention rates at program exit and interviewed program managers and participants. Generally, the government sponsored one-stop centers appeared to have the

best outcomes employed at program exit (79.2%), compared to (40.9%) for the faith-based programs (Campbell, 2004). Taken alone, the administrative data could be misleading; the faith-based programs tended to serve significantly larger numbers of hard to serve populations, including the homeless, substance abusers, and formerly incarcerated clients. Campbell's mixed methods approach provides better overall insight into the actual program outcomes and illuminates the complexity of evaluating faith-based organizations.

One of the complicating factors of assessing outcomes is time. Initial rates of employment and wages may not be the best measures of the overall impact of an intervention. In fact the old cliché “only time will tell” may be sage advice for assessing the effects of faith-based interventions. Longitudinal methods account for the probability a particular event will occur at a particular point in time. Thus, they are well suited to assessing job stability and earnings at multiple times in the life of public welfare recipients. The research in this dissertation provides a longitudinal evaluation of a faith-based welfare program in three North Carolina Counties.

### *Theory of Change*

#### *Jobs Partnership: Narrating, Connecting, Developing Theory Applied*

The Jobs Partnership is a national faith-based employment program serving unemployed and underemployed neighbors in approximately 20 communities around the nation. The program helps people re-narrate their personal stories; connects them to congregations, mentors, and business partners; and develops basic skills necessary for obtaining and continuing in employment. The program began in Raleigh, North Carolina when a prominent business leader and pastor had a chance encounter in the church's parking lot. The business leader, a vice-president of a major company, mentioned several of his

trucks were idle because he could not find good employees, and the pastor said several of his parishioners were also idle as they could not find good jobs. They devised a plan, building on their respective strengths, resulting in a national non-profit organization that has been cited as a promising practice among labor force attachment programs (U.S. Department of Labor, 2005).

Figure 1 depicts the programmatic flow of the Partnership's intervention model. Unemployed and underemployed people are referred to the twelve-week program from a variety of sources: local congregations, the Department of Social Services, non-profits, and people in the community. Once a person has entered the program, they are asked to complete an application. The information in the application is used as a foundation for their resume and to connect people to a mentor. Mentors are members of local congregations committed to helping people over the course of the program. The mentor relationship is the first step in developing social capital designed into the intervention. While few people in or around Jobs Partnership would call this a theory, a distinct theory of change exists at the core of the intervention (Sherman, 2001b).

The first element of the Partnership's theory of change is the process of re-narration. Re-narration occurs in their curriculum, "Keys to Personal and Professional Success," taught by local pastors. After an initial introductory class, the content of curriculum focuses on helping the program participants, or as they more commonly refer to them "neighbors," start to see themselves as someone created in the image of God with unique value and worth. This message is vital for the neighbors' re-narration, or transformation, from a "deadbeat dad" or "welfare mom" to a unique creation of God (Lockhart, 2001). A key principal articulated in the curriculum is the fundamental difference between who you are and how you perform.

The Keys curriculum is aimed at helping people understand they are a child of God with particular gifts, abilities, and responsibilities. Building from a position of strength also allows the Partnership to communicate the importance of personal responsibility in the home and the workplace. Operating from a position of strength rather than weakness makes it easier to admit failure or take direction without it being a reflection on an individual's value and worth. Building a positive self identity through Biblical and theological reflection provides the foundation for a renewed understanding and interpretation of one's story and experience, laying the groundwork for the transition from welfare to work.

Narratives are relational, bridging and bonding diverse individuals and creating social capital (Putnam et al., 2003; Somers, 1992). Personal and social relationships are the second element of the Jobs Partnership's intervention. The Partnership seeks to build social and personal relationships between neighbors and God, neighbors and mentors, neighbors and congregations, and neighbors and businesses. Relationships are hard work, but once again the Keys training emphasizes the importance of personal relationships from a theological position while making practical applications to real life situations. Christian Smith (1998) found personal relational strategies are a fundamental element of American evangelicals' cultural tool kits. It may be precisely this characteristic that positions Christian evangelicals to be effective social interveners—since they engage individuals in the classic social work concept of “person-environment fit.” The relationship between the neighbor, mentor, and sponsoring church becomes the primary source of social support and accountability. The mentor and sponsoring congregation commit to helping the neighbor overcome the various barriers they have to employment, including transportation, clothing, and childcare. This commitment clearly increases the neighbor's social capital. The Partnership also uses its



reputation and network to enhance program participants' opportunities by building bridges to local employers who have gained confidence in the organization's ability to train and support people in their transition from welfare to work. The Partnership increases social capital through its relational approach to intervention.

The final component of the Partnership's theory of change is human capital development. Much of the formal human capital skills are provided through the local community college's human resources development program or are taught by local business people, in the Steps to Personal and Professional Success. The Steps curriculum covers a range of soft skills. A recent study of employers indicated soft skills training to be vital to success in the work place and a key consideration in hiring low-income job seekers (J. C. Taylor & Rubin, 2005). Formal training is not the means by which soft skills are transferred to neighbors in the Jobs Partnership program. Opportunities to speak and present in Partnership sponsored classes upon graduation, as well as the many different cultural skills gained in and through participating in local congregations, provide significant opportunities for the development of human capital through the Partnership program. The narrating, connecting, developing elements embedded in the Jobs Partnership program would seem to suggest great potential for producing positive employment outcomes.

North Carolina provides a unique context to assess the added value of the faith dimension in an intervention since the human capital components of the Jobs Partnership program were taught by the human resources development (HRD) programs at local community colleges. The HRD program is aimed at unemployed and low-income workers. It emphasizes "soft skills" training, including resume writing, interviewing, teamwork, work ethic, problem solving, and basic computer literacy. Community college faculty teach the

HRD curriculum at the local colleges and to the participants of faith-based intervention; however, it is important to note the faith-based program receives an abbreviated version of the curriculum. While the community college's HRD curriculum is reduced, the faith-based intervention also adds the re-narrating faith dimension as well as connects program participants to social capital. Public welfare recipients who participated in the community college's HRD program provide a reasonable control group to assess the unique contributions of the re-narrating and social capital components of the faith-based intervention on employment outcomes.

### *Hypotheses*

H<sub>1</sub>: Over time, participants in the Jobs Partnership program will have greater earnings than participants who only take part in the community college's human resources development curriculum.

H<sub>2</sub>: Jobs Partnership participants have a greater likelihood of having earnings above the poverty line than public welfare recipients who did not participate in the intervention.

H<sub>3</sub>: Jobs Partnership participants will be more likely to maintain a steady stream of income from outside employment than other public welfare participants.

## Chapter 6: Research Design

This study will build on previous evaluations of welfare to work programs by employing a quasi-experiment design using longitudinal administrative data maintained by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Employment Security Commission, and Community College System (Orthner et al., 1995).

Administrative data is a rich source of information for evaluating the effects of welfare reform (Coulton & Hollister, 1998; Griffith & Usher, 1986; Moffitt, 1996; Moffitt & Ver Ploeg, 1999, 2001). Yet, while the data is rich, it is limited by its administrative nature. Information on social characteristics is rarely gathered; therefore, variables on family size, intellectual ability, and parental education are not included in the data set and cannot be considered in the study (Moffitt & Ver Ploeg, 1999). Administrative records are designed for departmental record keeping and provide challenges for research, including improperly identifying subjects (Abowd & Vilhuber, 2005). Assessing the degree of religiosity inherent in an intervention or organization is impossible to deduce from administrative records alone (Ragan, 2004). However, the data are plentiful, economical, and contain a wealth of information including income, exposure to welfare, and a variety of variables gathered longitudinally, providing a good source for exploring the impact of welfare reform. The potential of administrative data has made them a common data source for evaluating welfare reform; therefore, administrative data provide a potentially valuable source of information to assess outcomes of Charitable Choice and faith-based social interventions.

### *Data Collection*

North Carolina provides a unique context for the evaluation of faith-based welfare to work programs. First, it was an early supporter of faith-based interventions and became the home to several nationally recognized models of intervention. Second, the state's Employment Security Commission and Department of Health and Human Services promoted efforts to develop and maintain a comprehensive database of administrative data to track the progress of public assistance recipients over time, providing a unique data source for the evaluation of faith-based social interventions (Queen, 2003). Finally, several of the faith-based interventions partnered with existing programs provided by the state's community college system, allowing for the possibility of linking administrative files to assess the income outcomes of the intervention.

### *Sample*

The sample was drawn from administrative records maintained by the North Carolina Department of Social Services, Employment Security Commission, and the state Community College System. Participants in the faith-based intervention were also enrolled in the Human Resources Development (HRD) program at two local community colleges. The community colleges taught specific sections for the faith-based intervention and collected unique identifiers for both the sections and the individuals enrolling in their classes between 1997 and the first quarter of 2002. The course section number allowed the type of intervention to be identified along with the participants who were enrolled in a particular section of the course. The subjects were drawn from the population of the HRD classes conducted at two community colleges and coded as faith-based or traditional sections. A total of 281 students participated in the Human Resources Development curriculum during the study period. Data

matches were created by using key identifiers located through the community colleges to those of TANF and Food Stamp participants' database maintained by Department of Social Services and the UNC-CH Jordan Institute for Families. Once the data matches were complete, 190 of the 281 people who had participated in the Community College's Human Resources Development program identified by the community college system had participated in either Work First or Food Stamps between 1995 and 2005. Ten people were dropped from the sample as key demographic characteristics were omitted from the administrative records, reducing the sample size to 180; 102 participated in both the faith-based intervention and the HRD program, and 78 participated in the community college's Human Resource Development program alone.

### *Variables*

#### *Time*

Time provides a critical dimension for assessing the impact of a program. A strength of the administrative data is the dimension of time. For the purposes of this study, time will be constrained to the calendar years of 2003, 2004, and 2005. Numerous attempts to identify the time period for each cohort of the intervention failed. What was known was each person signed up for the intervention between 1997 and 2002 and therefore would have completed the intervention no later than the first quarter of 2002. The calendar year 2003 is the first full year after all of the participants would have completed the intervention, making the logical choice for starting time (Singer & Willett, 2002). Additionally, the small sample size made it extremely difficult to compare the program participants to their public assistance entry and exit cohorts as is commonly done in welfare evaluation. In many cases, the comparison would be made of a single individual against the entire cohort, limiting its

comparison value; therefore, the calendar years 2003, 2004, and 2005 appear to provide the most viable metric for time.

### *Dependent Variables*

*Earnings* are comprised of the annual earnings for each person in the sample for the years 2003, 2004, and 2005. The annual earnings are a sum of each participant's quarterly earnings reported to the North Carolina Employment Security Commission (ESC). Any earnings from self-employment or from work in other states would not be included in this measure.

*Change in earnings* was calculated by subtracting the self-reported earnings at baseline, the year before an individual entered the community college's human resources development, from earnings for 2003, 2004, and 2005 reported in the Employment Security Commission data. The self-reported earnings data was collected by the community college system.

*Poverty status* is a dichotomous variable calculated by comparing the annual earnings to the U.S. Census Bureau's poverty guideline for the given year. People with earnings above the poverty level were coded as 1. Those below the poverty level were coded 0. The poverty guideline is slightly higher than the annual poverty threshold; however, the poverty threshold for 2005 was not calculated at the time of this writing, leaving the guideline as the most consistent poverty measure for the given years.

*Employment* is a categorical variable constructed by calculating the number of quarters in a given year with reported earnings. No earnings or unemployed were coded as 0, and fully employed or having reported earnings in all four quarters was coded as 4, with each

of the additional codes corresponding to the respective number of quarters with reported earnings.

*Independent variables*

*County* – The county variable is a dichotomous variable used to identify between the urban and the rural contexts of the intervention. The rural population participants in the Vance Granville Community College portion of the intervention were coded 1, and participants in the Wake County sites were coded 2. The programs took place in Granville, Vance, and Wake Counties. Granville and Vance Counties are rural, located in the North Central region of the state. Wake County is the home of Raleigh, the state capitol and has had a diversified and vibrant economy over the last decade. The poverty rates also vary widely from county to county according to the 2000 census. The poverty rate in Vance County was 20.5%, 11.7% in Granville County, and 7.8% in Wake County. The wide disparity between the counties makes county variation an essential element to assess in this study.

*Age* – This is a time varying variable created by calculating the participants on December 31 of the given year. A person’s age in 2003 would be how old they were on December 31, 2003.

*Sex* – This is a dichotomous variable coded 0 for female, 1 for male.

*Race* – This is a categorical variable coded 0 for Black, 1 for White and 2 for other.

*Public Assistance* – The type of public assistance was coded 0 for an unknown group, 1 for Food Stamps alone, and 2 for TANF cash assistance. The unknown group was left in the study. Closer examination of the entry dates in the data cohorts reflect participation in either Work First or Food Stamps in the quarter the data collection began.

*Intervention* – The type of intervention was coded 1 for the faith-based intervention and 2 for the secular intervention.

### *Methods*

Earnings and change in earnings, hypothesis one, will be assessed by using a random effects model. The random effects model is essentially the same as ordinary least squares; however, it adds one important element in that the constant term varies for individuals' overtime. The model:

$$Y_{it} = \alpha_i + X_{it} \beta + \varepsilon_{it}$$

Allowing variation in the constant ( $\alpha$ ) for the individual ( $i$ ) provides the ability to assess the source of variation, whether the variation is simply between individuals or across individuals, specifically, if the differences in earnings are a function of individual difference or are they associated with the effects of the particular intervention they experienced. Employing a random effects model will provide insight into the overall impact of the added programmatic components of a faith-based social intervention when compared to a similar secular intervention.

Discrete time model survival analysis will be used to explore the likelihood of maintaining employment and having earnings greater than the poverty level at any time during the study period. The discrete time model allows failures that occur at the same point in time to be analyzed (Allison, 1995). Since employment will be measured quarterly and poverty rates are determined on an annual basis, the failure time would be at the close of the quarter and the year respectively, necessitating the use of discrete time models. Allison (1995) suggests that the discrete time model is equivalent to the logistic regression equation:

$$\log(P_{it}/ P_{it} - 1) = \alpha_t + \beta_1 X_{it1} + \dots + \beta_k X_{itk}$$



where  $P_{it}$  is the conditional probability that person  $i$  has an event at time  $t$  when  $t = 1, 2, 3, 4$ .

The data were converted to a person year data set and analyzed using Stata.

Despite the challenges of evaluating the impact of faith-based social interventions, attempts to understand what actually works are necessary. This study will add to our knowledge of the impact of faith-based welfare to work programs by providing an example of a longitudinal study using administrative data to evaluate differences in earnings, employment stability, and poverty levels between faith-based and similar secular interventions. It is in the best interest of all of the stakeholders to have empirical evidence on the contributions of faith-based and secular services in order to effectively address the issues of poverty and inequality in our society.

## Chapter 7: Research Findings

This chapter will outline the findings of a longitudinal study of public assistant recipients exposed to a faith-based and secular welfare to work intervention. The central aim of this study is to assess the impact participating in the faith-based Jobs Partnership program has on key outcome variables, specifically earnings, poverty, and employment stability.

### *Descriptive Statistics*

Table 1 depicts the overall breakdown of the sample. A slight majority of the sample participated in the faith-based intervention (56.67%). The number of rural participants was slightly greater with 103 enrolled in programs in Vance and Granville counties compared to 77 in urban Wake County. The median age for program participants in 2005 was 38.81 for the faith-based intervention and 39.81 for the comparison group. Women (67.78%) and African Americans (87.78%) were most likely to enroll in the two anti-poverty programs studied. Participants in the faith-based intervention appear to have slightly lower rates of educational achievement compared to the comparison group, but it is important to note education has limited value as only 54 of the 180 participants had any educational data available. The majority of the sample was TANF recipients. A significant portion (37/180 or 20.56%) of the sample did not appear to have participated in either Work First or Food Stamps during the study period (1995-2005 for Work First and 1996-2005 for Food Stamps). Each of the 37 participants in this group had an earnings history, but they could not be directly categorized as a Work First or Food Stamps participant. However, dates used to track when they entered the data indicated the members of this group had likely participated

in and/or exited from Work First or Food Stamps the quarter immediately prior to data collection for program participation. Thus, they were left in the sample and coded as unknown.

Employment and earnings data were also included in table 1. Median self-reported income at baseline, one year prior to program participation, was approximately \$1300 greater for the participants of the faith-based intervention than the secular intervention. Secular program participants' median income was greater in both 2003 and 2004. The mean change in income between baseline and 2003, 2004, and 2005 showed secular program participants outpacing their faith-based counterparts; however, it is critical to note the median change in income for 2004 and 2005 was zero for both groups with half of the participants earning less than in previous years. Finally, few people ever earned more than the poverty guideline in each of the years under examination, and the majority of the sample experienced at least one quarter with no earnings. The numbers experiencing a spell of unemployment, at least one quarter with no reported earnings, is of particular concern for 2005, as 96% of the sample had no reported earnings in at least one quarter. This may indicate considerable employment instability and turnover among the participants of both programs in the sample.

#### *Preliminary Analysis*

Table 2 lists the correlations for the outcome variables for income and change in income for the years 2003, 2004, and 2005. Income and change in income appear to be highly correlated over time, suggesting the random effects model provides a reasonable means for assessing differences between individuals and groups. Bivariate ordinary least squares models were run to assess the relationships between key predictor variables on earnings and change in earnings for the study period. The results are listed in table 3. Two

variables appear to be important predictors of income: first, urban versus rural, and second, the type of public assistance. People living in Wake County appear to have significantly larger incomes than those living in Vance and Granville Counties ( $\beta = 3158.36$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The group that did not appear to receive either Food Stamps or TANF and those receiving Food Stamps alone earn more than people participating in Work First ( $\beta = -.0743$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This is not surprising as official qualifications for Food Stamp recipients allow persons to have more assets and higher earnings than Work First recipients. Females appear to have experienced the largest change in earnings, earning approximately \$1953.59, ( $\beta = 1953.59$ ,  $p < .05$ ) more than their male counterparts. Similarly, Food Stamp recipients and people who were categorized as unknown fared better than Work First recipients.

Life tables were constructed to assess the impact of key independent variables on poverty and unemployment. Table 4 provides hazard rates for each of the variables for the study period. A hazard rate is the conditional probability individual  $i$  will experience an event in time period  $j$  as long as they have not experienced the event in a previous period. The chance of having earnings above the poverty level was greatest in 2003. Urban dwellers ( $h = .4063$ ) were more likely than rural residents ( $h = .2637$ ) to have earnings above the poverty level in 2003. Blacks ( $h = .3407$ ) had a greater chance to move out of poverty than whites ( $h = .2222$ ). Participants in the faith-based intervention ( $h = .3314$ ) were slightly more likely than secular program participants ( $h = .3111$ ) to have their earnings exceed the poverty line during 2003, the first full year after they may have completed the program. This trend may indicate the faith-based intervention initially does a good job of linking its participants to jobs paying more than the community college, validating the social capital function of the program; however, it is impossible to make this assertion on this data alone.

Finally, the type of public assistance a person received impacted the odds of them having earnings exceeding poverty line for the given year. The group that appeared to exit welfare during the fourth quarter of 1994 and exited Food Stamps in the first quarter of 1996 had the greatest overall chance of earning more than the poverty line ( $h = .4667$ ) than any other group. After 2003, no group had better than a nine percent chance of having earnings exceeding the poverty level.

Employment instability appeared to be a common experience for the sample. The greatest risk of experiencing a spell of unemployment came in 2003 and 2005. Rural residents had a 90.14% chance of experiencing at least one quarter without earnings in 2003. Living in Wake County did not protect subjects from spells of unemployment. Wake County residents had a 72.57% chance of being unemployed in 2003. Females ( $h = .7416$ ) were less likely to experience unemployment than males, and people from the other racial category ran the lowest risk of experiencing a bout of unemployment than any other group in 2003. In every year, participants in the faith-based intervention had a greater risk of being unemployed than the people from the secular intervention. Instability in employment appeared to be a major issue for the participants in the study. By the close of 2005, only 3 of 180 people in the sample never experienced a spell of unemployment.

The results of the life tables suggest few people in the sample ever have earnings that exceed the poverty line and that spells of unemployment are a common experience for participants from backgrounds in poverty, irrespective of their enrollment in a faith-based or secular intervention.

## *Models*

### *Income*

Random effects models were created to test hypothesis one, that participants in the faith-based welfare to work program would earn more than their counterparts in secular interventions. Table 5 depicts the results of the models for income. Only the county ( $\beta = 3158.36$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and type of public assistance ( $\beta = 2479.71$ ,  $p < .01$ ) were statistically significant. Wake county participants earned approximately \$3,000 per year more than Vance and Granville County program participants. The increased earnings for Wake County participants might be attributed to the fact that employers pay more as the competition for employees is more intense in this urban environment. Similarly, Food Stamp recipients and people who exited their public assistance programs between the fourth quarter of 1994 and the first quarter of 1996 earned approximately \$2,500 more than Work First recipients. This finding is not surprising as Food Stamps are essentially an income supplement allowing recipients to have more assets while participating in the program. No other variables were significant, suggesting the majority of the variation was due to individuals rather than group differences with  $\rho$  hovering at .8000 in each of the models. In terms of the intervention, people in the secular intervention appeared to earn approximately \$517.00 more ( $\beta = 517.01$ ) than their faith-based counterparts, but the variable was not statistically significant and offered little explanatory power to the overall model. In fact, the most parsimonious model tested was model one, which found that county alone is the key variable influencing income. Table 6 outlines the overall change in income analysis. No variables and no models were significant in this analysis, and  $\rho$  consistently hovered at .8000, suggesting individual differences are largely responsible for variation in change in income. The random effects

model failed to confirm the hypothesis. In fact, it appeared the faith-based participants earned slightly less than those enrolled in the secular employment program.

### *Poverty and Unemployment*

Hypothesis two proposed that faith-based program participants have a greater likelihood of having earnings above the poverty line than public welfare recipients who did not participate in the intervention. This was tested by using discrete hazard models. The results of discrete hazard models describe an individual's chance of having earnings exceeding the poverty level for 2003, 2004, and 2005. These results are depicted in table 7. In this analysis, only the variable of time contributes to the level of earnings. Model 5 accounts for time ( $e^{\beta} = .0143$ ,  $P \leq .000$ ). After 2003, the chances of having earnings exceeding the poverty level decrease by approximately 98%. Model 4 provides the best assessment of the faith-based versus secular interventions ( $e^{\beta} = 1.307$ ) suggesting that participants of the secular intervention had slightly better odds of having their earnings exceed the poverty guidelines for each additional year of the study. This increases when controlling for time ( $e^{\beta} = 3.695$ ); however, this is likely due to the fact that only 11 people earned more than the poverty guidelines in 2004 and 2005, significantly limiting any real conclusions from the variable. However, hypothesis two is rejected. Participants in faith-based welfare to work programs did not fare better than those in the secular program.

Unemployment also posed significant risks for the people in the study between 2003-2005. Hypothesis three proposed that faith-based program participants would be more likely to maintain a steady stream of income from outside employment than former public welfare participants who did not participate in the program. Table 8 depicts the results of key variables on the likelihood of experiencing at least one spell of unemployment during the

study period. Age was a consistent risk factor across time. There was approximately a 3.5% increased risk of experiencing a spell of unemployment for each year a person aged. Each year of participation in the study significantly influenced the risk of experiencing at least one spell of unemployment ( $e^{\beta} = 13.565$ ,  $P \leq .000$ ). Again this can be assessed by the sheer numbers of people experiencing a spell with no earnings in the study; only 3 of 180 people in the study remained stably employed between 2003 and 2005. The data also clearly indicate that there is a great deal of employment instability for low-income participants in both faith-based and secular interventions. Thus, hypothesis three is rejected.

Few variables in this study appear to have an impact on earnings, poverty, and employment stability. In fact, place and time appear to be the key factors influencing earnings and employment stability among the public assistance recipients in the sample. Apparently, faith-based program involvement had little effect on the overall outcomes assessed in this study, resulting in the rejection of all three hypotheses in the study. However, it is important to note this is a single study, and the findings cannot be generalized beyond this sample. The implications of the findings will be explored in the final chapter.



## Chapter 8: Conclusion

It has been a decade since Charitable Choice was enacted into law, but the debates around religion and public policy remain active. A recent report by the Pew Research Center suggests religion is a core issue for the democrats even among moderate non-evangelical voters (G. A. Smith, 2006). Senator Barrack Obama's keynote address at the recent conference with Call to Renewal, a progressive evangelical policy organization, was aimed at solving this so called "God Problem" (Obama, 2006). Yet, the public rhetoric still does not help answer some of the most basic questions associated with Charitable Choice. A central question in the debate centers on the effectiveness of faith-based interventions. This study attempted to provide a brief history of the role of religion in social service provision, provide an operational definition of a faith-based organization, propose a Protestant theory of change, and measure the impact of a faith-based welfare to work intervention on income, employment, and poverty in three North Carolina counties using administrative data. All three of the hypotheses were rejected, suggesting that the intervention, as implemented, did not appear to have significant impact on the outcomes measured. However, the failure to confirm any of the hypotheses raises additional questions about the contributions and evaluations of faith-based organizations. This chapter will focus on the interpretation of the findings, assess the strengths and weaknesses of the study, discuss the implications for theory and practice, and propose directions for future research, contributing to the direction of the debate.

### *Interpretation and Discussion*

Supporters of faith-based social interventions have consistently argued the prospects for superior outcomes make them a wise partner for federal funding. This study looked at employment outcomes, specifically income, poverty status, and employment stability. Unfortunately, participation in the faith-based program, Jobs Partnership, had no significant impact on earnings, poverty, or employment stability when compared to the secular program that combined North Carolina Work First and community college assistance. However, the lack of significant findings for either intervention raises a series of questions about the nature of the outcomes, the quality of the data, and ultimately about the structure of low wage work in the United States.

Since welfare programs are designed to help people move from public assistance to “self-sufficiency,” increased earnings seems to be a likely and effective indicator of the success of welfare to work programs. A systematic review of welfare studies conducted by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) found earnings are not always the best measure of success as most people enter part-time low wage work and only programs with income supplements significantly increased participants’ earnings (Bloom & Michalopoulos, 2001). Additionally, the MDRC study found participants in Riverside, California’s GAIN program had the highest change in earnings, approximately \$1400 in 1997 dollars. The mean change in income for both the faith-based and secular programs in this study exceeded \$1400 in 2003 and 2004 and was approximately \$1300 for both groups in 2005; while the years of these two investigations differ, the dollar has remained relatively stable over this period, and the minimum wage has been unchanged at \$5.15 an hour, suggesting the income gains for the participants in the North Carolina programs (faith-based

and secular) may be more noteworthy than the statistical models implied. Still, income may not be the best measure of a program's effectiveness as Dave Campbell (2004) found in his study of faith-based programs in California.

In terms of earnings, Work Force Investment (WIA) one stop centers' clients consistently earned more than faith-based program participants, but the faith-based programs were five times more likely to serve people who had been incarcerated, homeless, and addicted to substances than the WIA centers (Campbell, 2004). In fact, the faith-based programs actually appeared to build bridges to other services for their clients, suggesting faith-based interventions produce important results other than increases in income alone. Unfortunately, the data in this study limit the ability to determine client characteristics prior to program entry. However, the community college's sample (61%) had a larger proportion of Work First participants than the faith-based program (36%), but this might be due to the fact that the faith-based program (44%) served a larger proportion of men than the secular program (17%). Men are much less likely to be TANF recipients but may be more likely to have been incarcerated or homeless; the data does not allow us to explore any of these possibilities.

Income is only a single dimension of "self-sufficiency." Income and earnings are complex variables, influenced by a variety of individual, contextual, and macro economic factors out of the control of individuals and interventions. As Campbell (2004) found, faith-based interventions do serve an important role in social interventions, including increasing the self-esteem levels of the clients they served. The data limited the exploration of the other dimensions that the faith-based intervention may have influenced, which can enhance the long-term likelihood of success in our economic system. This suggests the need for more

multidimensional studies of the qualitative impact of faith-based interventions. As Campbell's (2004) mixed method approach found, faith-based programs in California were much more likely to serve people with significant barriers to employment. Additionally, religion may help people cope with the difficulties of low-wage work (Sullivan, 2006). It also suggests the need to explore the impact of faith-based interventions in areas such as substance abuse, family formation, and juvenile delinquency, areas where change is more likely to result from a person's internal motivation and social support, unlike income, which is more likely to be influenced by larger macro economic factors.

The inability to explore multidimensional outcomes was limited by the data at hand. While data limitations will be explored in another section of this paper, limited data availability needs to be addressed as a finding of the study as well. First, the local faith-based agencies collected little data on the program participants, making direct data matches to the welfare and Food Stamps databases impossible. It also limited vital exposure data. At the state and county levels, data were often stored and managed by different codes and in different systems. The different codes made it difficult to conduct matches and gain other vital information. The data were often only kept for limited time periods as well, making retrospective work impossible. A recent Government Accountability Office report urged continued attempts to assess the impact of the faith-based organizations (Government Accountability Office, 2006). Good evaluations will require good data. Strong partnerships between local faith-based groups, county, state, and federal agencies, and universities to develop meaningful data sources to uncover the nuanced contributions of faith-based as well as other community-based interventions will be key to developing better understanding of the actual contributions of faith-based service providers (Usher, 1995).

The context of the intervention received appears to have had a clear impact on a person's earnings. Program participants in rural counties made approximately \$3000 a year less than their counterparts in the wealthier urban county. Vance and Granville Counties have relatively high poverty and unemployment rates and limited economic infrastructure, similar to many rural counties around the country. The lack of viable living wage jobs located in rural areas, the racial composition, limited transportation, and limited educational opportunities appear to make rural residents particularly vulnerable to poverty and inequality (Meckstroth et al., 2006; Parisi, McLaughlin, Grice, Taquino, & Gill, 2003). These conditions embed rural poverty into the structure of our society. The simple fact that Vance County had a poverty rate of 20.5% in 2000 does not make this finding surprising. It does call attention to the need for interventions aimed at addressing the structural inequalities found in rural communities and developing interventions that specifically address the needs of rural program participants.

Structural factors were not limited to the residents of the rural counties. In fact, the study seems to point to the structural problems inherent in low wage work. Low wages and employment instability are common problems for people transitioning from welfare to work (Fraker, Levy, Olsen, & Stanpulonis, 2004; Meckstroth et al., 2006; Scrivener, Azurdia, & Page, 2005). Few programs demonstrate any real success in helping people achieve "self-sufficiency." Only 61 participants in the present study ever had earnings exceeding the poverty line for a family of three. Every person in the study experienced great risks of unemployment; only 3 of 180 survived the three-year study period without experiencing a spell of unemployment. Median annual earnings ranged from a low of \$1854.91 to a high of \$5619.71, levels well below the official poverty line. Median change in earnings of zero

between the baseline and 2005, suggest significant problems with the structure of low wage work, not only in the rural counties of the state but in the state as a whole.

A latent structural problem rests in the potential for institutional racism. It is possible the lack of clear employment outcomes could be used against the mostly African-American population in this study (Wineburg & Cleveland, 2002). As Wineburg and Cleveland (2002) point out, the policy structure sets congregations and non-profits up for failure by providing inadequate resources to accomplish the contracted task. Layer this fact on top of the 20.5% poverty rate, a minimum wage that will not take a full-time worker out of poverty, limited transportation, seasonal work, and the myriad of confounding factors keeping people in poverty, and it is a recipe for failure. Faithful people obeying the call to help the “least of these” often help without full knowledge of the economic, social, and political costs associated with interventions. Their helping may unwittingly put them in the place to be blamed for problems they have only worked to alleviate, supporting the structures of institutional racism in the nation.

#### *Implications for Theory and Practice*

Theoretically, the models failed to support the premise that the narrating, connecting, developing theory of Protestant, evangelical, faith-based interventions would increase earnings and employment stability for program participants. However, the fact that few welfare to work programs appear to have any significant impact on earnings, poverty, and employment suggests the theory may have merit in other dimensions. First, re-narration, whether it is through a faith narrative or cognitive behavioral therapy, has the potential to help improve the quality of a person’s life. Second, social capital, both bonding and bridging, remain important elements for improved quality of life in general and employment

opportunities specifically (J. S. Coleman, 1988; Parisi et al., 2003; Putnam, 2000; Putnam et al., 2003). Finally, investments and improvements in human capital continue to make important contributions to well-being. However, improving overall well-being may not result in increased earnings. It may simply improve self-efficacy, levels of contentment, self-esteem, or a variety of other outcomes not assessed in this study. Validating the theory will require additional research aimed at other dimensions of faith-based interventions.

Successfully evaluating theory and practice of faith-based social intervention will require the development of cooperative evaluation structures building on the unique strengths of the various stakeholders (Orthner & Bowen, 2004; Usher, 1995). Outcome focused self-evaluations can enhance program results, strengthening families and communities. With the right evaluation tools, local programs can help gather key qualitative and quantitative data to assess and discuss their short term results to ensure they are on the path to making a long term impact. Evaluators and scholars can help devise data collection systems which honor the time of program staffers. While many small organizations care deeply about the quality of their interventions, few have the resources to devote to extensive record keeping and evaluation (Fischer, 2004). Results oriented self-evaluations will also require the cooperation of governmental agencies commissioned with the task of tracking and evaluating policy impacts. Social work scholars and administrators have the unique opportunity to partner to achieve better evaluations of faith and other community based interventions. A cooperative evaluation structure rooted in the work of Usher (1995) and Orthner and Bowen (2004) will increase the likelihood of strong evaluations aimed at improving outcomes for all program participants.

Social workers have the unique opportunity to train clergy and people of faith in the skills necessary for effective intervention. Knowledge of poverty, mental health, program administration, and the community could provide compassionate volunteers with the tools for sound intervention. To paraphrase Mary Richmond, religion provides the motive, and social work provides the method to help people in need (Richmond, 1930). This is not to suggest nonreligious people are not motivated to help others; it is to suggest that social workers can partner with religious organizations by providing their unique knowledge and skills in trainings, seminars, seminaries, and colleges to ensure better outcomes for all involved (Cnaan et al., 2002; Cnaan et al., 1999; Wineburg, 2001).

Social workers and the faith community have a unique opportunity to collaborate to establish a more just and caring society. The fact that participants in faith-based and secular programs had no real employment differences is of great concern as the faith-based intervention partnered with employers to find jobs for the program graduates. While the economy strongly influences wages, it seems vital for faith-based interveners to encourage their partners to establish a living wage structure for their employees. This may be particularly difficult for evangelical programs since, according to Christian Smith (1998), the “tool kit” of evangelical Christian culture inhibits their ability to address structural change. Evangelicals tend to be primarily concerned with personal relationships, making mentoring an appealing intervention approach, but when it comes to creating systemic or structural change, evangelicals simply do not have the methodology. However, a re-narrating intervention does have the biblical, historical, and literary tools to help create a new evangelical narrative focused on establishing a more just and caring society (C. Smith, 1998). A re-narrating approach attached to the struggles of a person in poverty often is the initial



step towards creating structural change. Social workers engaged in community practice may find a valuable resource for change in local congregations.

### *Strengths and Weaknesses of the Study*

Data have been cited as a major challenge with the evaluation of faith-based social interventions (Chaves, 2002; Government Accountability Office, 2006). Data proved to be a major limitation in this study. Information on exposure to the intervention is limited. Multiple attempts were made to access exposure data from all of the agencies that collaborated with the clients in the study; all were unfruitful. The failed attempts to access the number of classes attended, entrance versus graduation rates, and time periods the classes were conducted limited the ability to test for the dosage effects of the interventions. The data also do not provide any information on the participants' or workers' religiosity, creating the possibility for confounding and spurious results. There is no way to test if the participants in the secular intervention relied on their religious faith or the social network of their congregation to help find work. It is also possible the HRD instructor could have suggested people seek the assistance of local congregations during the employment search, or they may have even prayed for their students. There is no way to control for the possibility of these confounding effects. Only 54 of the 80 subjects in the study had education information in the administrative database. Agencies did not keep accurate records of program exposure by participants or only kept them for a limited time. Additionally, the small sample size limits the ability to make any generalizations of the findings beyond this specific sample.

Paradoxically, the earnings data are very strong. They are longitudinal and are strongly correlated with self-reported income variables, indicating the earnings data are reasonably reliable. The quasi experimental design has been cited as one of the most

efficient means of evaluating welfare reform efforts (Moffitt, 1996; Moffitt & Ver Ploeg, 1999). The longitudinal nature of the data allowed the use of several robust statistical methods; however, the lack of any major findings suggests the need to explore other methodological options that may uncover more information on faith-based social interventions. Findings of low wages and unstable employment are largely consistent with other outcomes evaluations of welfare to work programs, suggesting the need for further research.

#### *Directions for Further Research*

Qualitative studies of program participants would likely be able to provide a greater depth of insight into the contributions of the faith-based welfare to work programs. Specifically, a narrative approach, as Yamane has argued, is possibly the best method for studying religious experience (Yamane, 2000). Narrative approaches to client and worker perceptions would provide a deep insight into the contributions of faith-based interventions that have yet to be exposed.

Longitudinal studies linking administrative data with several waves of follow-up surveys or interviews would provide the strongest overall data to assess the impact of the intervention. Additionally, linking administrative to interview or questionnaire data would maximize the quality of the information. It would require an evaluation partnership between small non-profit organizations, universities, scholars, and the state and local agencies holding the data. Still, mixing the methods and the data provides an exciting opportunity to track the long term effects of faith-based social interventions.

Testing the Protestant faith-based theory of change proposed in this study may allow for various creative approaches to research, including pre-post scales, surveys, and interviews

to assess the changes in personal narratives, self-identity, and other dimensions associated with the intervention. A social network analysis would provide insight into the intervention's capacity to enhance an individual's social capital while helping to identify the key players or central nodes in the intervention. Increased interest in faith-based interventions impact on social networks has been cited as a key area for future research (Schom-Moffatt & Boddie, 2005).

Finally, studying social workers' religiosity would provide interesting insight into the influences of religiosity in apparently "secular interventions." It is entirely possible the HRD instructors employed by the community colleges are motivated by their faith to help low-wage workers increase their employability. In many discussions, people from a variety of public agencies have told me prayer seemed to be the only viable option to help their client, so they prayed for them. It is possible religious concepts, ideals, and practices may have infiltrated "secular" interventions. A study of workers' religious commitments would offer interesting and possibly confounding insights. The degree to which an intervention is "secular" or "sacred" is a central question for people studying the impact of faith-based social interventions.

The opportunities for future research into the impact of Charitable Choice and faith-based interventions are far reaching. Little is really known about the contributions religion makes to social intervention, and policy makers are continuing to call for accountability (Government Accountability Office, 2006). There continues to be a need to develop good sources of data and maybe, at a more basic level, a common definition of faith-based intervention. Charitable Choice and the founding of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives have spurred some interest in the topic. The challenge for

scholars is to cultivate the field of knowledge without creating unrealistic expectations of accountability specifically aimed at faith-based interventions alone (Fischer, 2004; Monsma, 2006).

Ten years after Congress passed Charitable Choice as part of the Personal Responsibility Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, few of the debates surrounding faith-based social interventions have been resolved. This study set out to contribute to the debate by examining the historical linkages between religious institutions and social service provision in the United States, providing a working definition of a faith-based organization, proposing a Protestant theory of change, and assessing administrative data on income and employment stability. First, religious institutions have long been partners for service delivery in the United States. They produced mixed results but are deeply embedded in the fabric of the social safety net of our nation. Government partnerships with faith-based social service providers have been woven into the fabric of social policy for centuries.

Second, we proposed a working definition of a faith-based organization. The term faith-based remains a hotly contested topic. The GAO suggests the lack of a common definition of a faith-based organization is one of the largest barriers to developing good evaluation of religious social services. The complexity of this definitional debate cannot be underestimated. The central question is where is the faith? Is it in the organization's name, the board, staff, culture, or intervention? S. R. Smith and Sosin (2001) have argued the term faith-related might be more appropriate as it accounts for the complex nature of the organization. However, the term faith-related does not capture the full complexity of the issues surrounding religious interventions; in fact, the word faith alone may be a problem as

some religious groups do not endorse or espouse any faith but are deed and action oriented. Religiously-related might be a more accurate term.

Nonetheless, three dimensions seem essential to a reasonable working definition of a religiously related organization—connection to a religious individual or community, a mission of service, and an organizational structure to facilitate the mission. This definition provides a level of complexity while remaining somewhat parsimonious.

Third, this dissertation suggested a Protestant theory of change. Faith-based theory development remains in its infancy. The theory of change in this dissertation was aimed at transforming individuals by helping them re-narrate their story, linking them to broader social networks through congregations, and providing a level of human capital development. The individual nature of this theory does not address structural issues surrounding low wage work in the United States. While the intervention did develop partnerships with employers, nothing was aimed at addressing the minimum wage or developing employment opportunities in rural communities. Earnings are largely the function of a combination of complex factors, including a person's human capital and the macro economic factors in a particular community at any given time. Theoretically, the intervention should help with wages and job stability over time, but the complex reality of wage structures may make earnings and job stability inappropriate measures of an intervention aimed at individuals.

Finally, the contributions of faith-based welfare to work appear to be no different than any other program aimed at individuals moving from public assistance to low-wage work. In general, people leaving public assistance experience low wages and unstable employment, characterized by spells with no earnings. Religion appeared to enter the debate when many conservative thinkers had deep concerns about the moral hazards of poverty and saw

religious interventions as one key means for addressing individuals' moral failures (Gilder, 1981; Olasky, 1992). While the findings of this study cannot address the moral character of the sample, the subjects of this study experienced what appears to be a different hazard, unemployment and low wage work. Belief in the effectiveness of faith-based interventions, or any intervention, appears to be largely taken on faith. Studies assessing interventions aimed at individuals consistently find unstable employment, low wages, and a need for supplements to help improve individuals' economic status, suggesting the need to consider interventions aimed at the structure of low-wage work in the United States (Cheng, 2005b; Nam, 2005; Noonan & Heflin, 2005; Ozawa & Yoon, 2005). In an era of religious fervor, it might be wise to develop a new faith-based initiative, one aimed at mobilizing the faith community to address what could be the real moral hazard, the structure of low-wage work in the United States.

Table 1:  
Background Characteristics by Intervention Type (N= 180)

Variable	Number (%)	
	Faith-Based (N=102)	Secular (N=78)
County		
Vance/Granville	52 (50.98)	51 (65.38)
Wake	50 (49.02)	27 (34.62)
Demographic		
Median Age 2005	38.81	39.81
Gender		
Male	45 (44.12)	13 (16.67)
Female	57 (55.88)	65 (83.33)
Race		
White	13 (12.75)	7 (8.97)
African American	89 (87.25)	69 (88.46)
Other	0 (0)	2 (2.56)
Public Assistance		
Unknown	19	18
Food Stamps Only	46	12
TANF	37	48
Earnings		
Median Self-Reported Prior Income	4492.50	3102
Median Annual Reported Earnings		
2003	1854.91	3656.95
2004	2742.83	5619.71
2005	3227.03	2036.04
Mean Change in Income		
2003	2486.70	3994.32
(median)	(0)	(0)
2004	2912.81	4640.05
(median)	(0)	(1284.40)
2005	1273.72	1284.42
(median)	(0)	(0)

Number with earnings > poverty		
2003	29 (28.43)	21 (26.92)
2004	24 (23.53)	22 (28.21)
2005	19 (18.63)	10 (12.82)
Number experiencing at least one spell of unemployment		
2003	63 (61.76)	42 (53.85)
2004	67 (65.69)	48 (47.06)
2005	98 (96.08)	75 (96.15)

Table 2:  
Correlations of Income and Change in Income by Year

Year	Income			Change in Income		
	2003	2004	2005	2003	2004	2005
2003	1.00	.8881	.7571	1.000	.8889	.7691
2004	.8881	1.00	.8069	.8889	1.00	.8071
2005	.7571	.8069	1.00	.7691	.8071	1.00



Table 3:  
Bi-variate OLS Regression Coefficients on Income  
and Change in Income (N=180)

	Income	Change in Income
	$\beta$ (SE)	$\beta$ (SE)
Age	-6.34 (45.31)	-43.60 (46.13)
Sex	-219.38 (975.82)	-1953.59* (990.90)
Race	1671.50 (1359.45)	1932.08 (1384.81)
Level of Education	502.96 (284.02)	98.29 (291.05)
Urban/Rural	3158.36** (911.65)	-708.35 (938.84)
Intervention	-87.71 (920.31)	1081.57 (936.70)
Public Assistance	-.0743** (.0231)	-615.34 (886.37)

\*p<.05

\*\*p< .001

Table 4:  
Hazard Rates for Key Independent Variables on Poverty and Employment (N=180)

Year	Poverty			Employment		
	2003	2004	2005	2003	2004	2005
	<i>h</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>h</i>
	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)
County						
Urban	.4063 (.0780)	.0198 (.0198)	.0408 (.0289)	.7257 (.1056)	.2500 (.0877)	1.7333 (.1696)
Rural	.2637 (.0534)	.0927 (.0350)	.0140 (.0140)	.9014 (.1006)	.4375 (.1141)	1.8462 (.1449)
Demographic						
Sex						
Female	.3238 (.0548)	.0828 (.0313)	.0124 (.0124)	.7416 (.0848)	.3830 (.0886)	1.7073 (.1503)
Male	.3200 (.0790)	.0241 (.0241)	.0500 (.0353)	1.0130 (.1399)	.2353 (.1168)	2.0000 (.0000)
Race						
Black	.3407 (.0495)	.0741 (.0262)	.0293 (.0169)	.8571 (.2236)	.4615 (.2593)	1.3333 0.4969
White	.2222 (.1104)	–	.0000	.8214 (.0781)	.3158 (.0735)	1.8400 (.1063)
Other	–	–		.6667 (.6285)	2.0000 (.0000)	–
Intervention						
Jobs	.3314 (.0607)	.0420 (.0242)	.0144 (.0144)	.8936 (.1007)	.3438 (.0722)	1.7419 (.1647)
Other	.3111 (.0671)	.0917 (.0410)	.0392 (.0277)	.7368 (.1057)	.1131 (.1783)	.1504 (1.545)
Public Assistance						
Other	.4667 (.1213)	.0444 (.0444)	–	.7407 (.1539)	.1935 (.1112)	1.7333 (.2398)
Food Stamps	.2745 (.0727)	0.0706 (.0407)	.0500 (.0353)	1.0526 (.1415)	.1818 (.1045)	2.0000 (.0000)
Work 1st	.2973 (.0627)	0.0656 (.0328)	.0171 (.0171)	.7200 (.1001)	.5000 (.1210)	1.6923 (.1923)

Table 5:  
Random Effects Models of Key Predictor Variables on Income (N=180)

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
	$\beta$ (SE)	$\beta$ (SE)	$\beta$ (std. err)	$\beta$ (std. err)	$\beta$ (std. err)
Ruralality		3158.36* (1471.87)	3421.05* (1508.42)	2916.34* (1504.15)	2994.51* (1526.54)
Demographic					
Age			-87.38 (71.08)	-120.36 (71.69)	-121.53 (71.91)
Sex			186.43 (1598.82)	-1078.28 (1662.30)	-924.28 (1731.34)
Race			2022.33 (2232.92)	1468.68 (2217.29)	1427.87 (1022.22)
Public Assistance Intervention				-2479.71** (1018.69)	-2493.79** (1022.13)
Constant	8284.234 (735.51)	3774.80	4944.82	11005.14* (4824.46)	10203.23 (5437.38)
$\rho$	.7991	.7956	.8039	.8000	.8009
$R^2$	.000	.0218	.0229	.0691	.0692
Wald $\chi^2$		4.60*	6.82	12.85*	12.91*

$P \leq .05$

$P \leq .01$

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
	$\beta$ (SE)	$\beta$ (SE)	$\beta$ (SE)	$\beta$ (SE)	$\beta$ (SE)
Ruralality		-708.35 (1522.65)	-517.22 (1554.21)	-520.17 (1558.77)	-446.60 (1585.59)
Demographic					
Age			-107.69 (73.05)	-107.46 (73.38)	-108.67 (73.62)
Sex			-1751.38 (1647.37)	-1714.99 (1673.55)	-1587.18 (1731.34)
Race			1511.65 (2300.74)	1496.31 (2309.91)	1469.29 (2318.29)
Public Assistance Intervention				-145.85 (1086.32)	-84.00 (1112.27)
Constant	2693.21 (751.69)	3704.57 (2300.83)	6856.86 (4289.93)	7017.23 (4436.74)	6216.10 (5355.57)
$\rho$	.8065	.8073	.8141	.8149	.8159
$R^2$	.000	.0011	.0096	.0097	.01
Wald $\chi^2$		.22	4.32	4.34	4.40

Table 7:  
Results of Discrete Hazard Models of Time from Participating in a Faith-Based Intervention to Earnings > Poverty 2003-2005 (N=180, Obs = 432)

Variable	Model 1 (null)		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
	$\beta$ (SE)	$e^\beta$	$\beta$ (SE)	$e^\beta$	$\beta$ (SE)	$e^\beta$	$\beta$ (SE)	$e^\beta$	$\beta$ (SE)	$e^\beta$
Demographic										
County			.3377 (.2802)	1.402	.2933 (.2833)	1.341	.3129 (.2857)	1.368	1.414 (1.308)	4.111
Age			-.0122 (.0139)	.9878	-.0164 (.0142)	.9837	-.0166 (.0143)	.9835	.0622 (.0652)	1.064
Sex			-.0387 (.3005)	.9621	-.1671 (.3179)	.8461	-.0975 (.3376)	.9071	1.171 (1.225)	3.227
Race			-.8800 (.5174)	.4148	-.8618 (.5137)	.4224	-.8712 (.5128)	.4185	-2.439 (2.313)	.7835
Public Assistance										
TANF					-.2391 (.1930)	.7873	-.2391 (.1921)	.7873	-.2284 (.8094)	.7958
Intervention										
Faith-based							.1858 (.3007)	1.204	1.307 (1.302)	3.695
Year									4.122*** (.8832)	.0143***
Intercept	-1.805*** (.1382)		-1.711** (.6727)		-1.147 (.8052)		-1.456 (.95330)		2.972 (3.018)	
Log Likelihood	-175.886		-172.884				-172.135		-20.017	

\*\*P ≤ .01

\*\*\*P ≤ .000

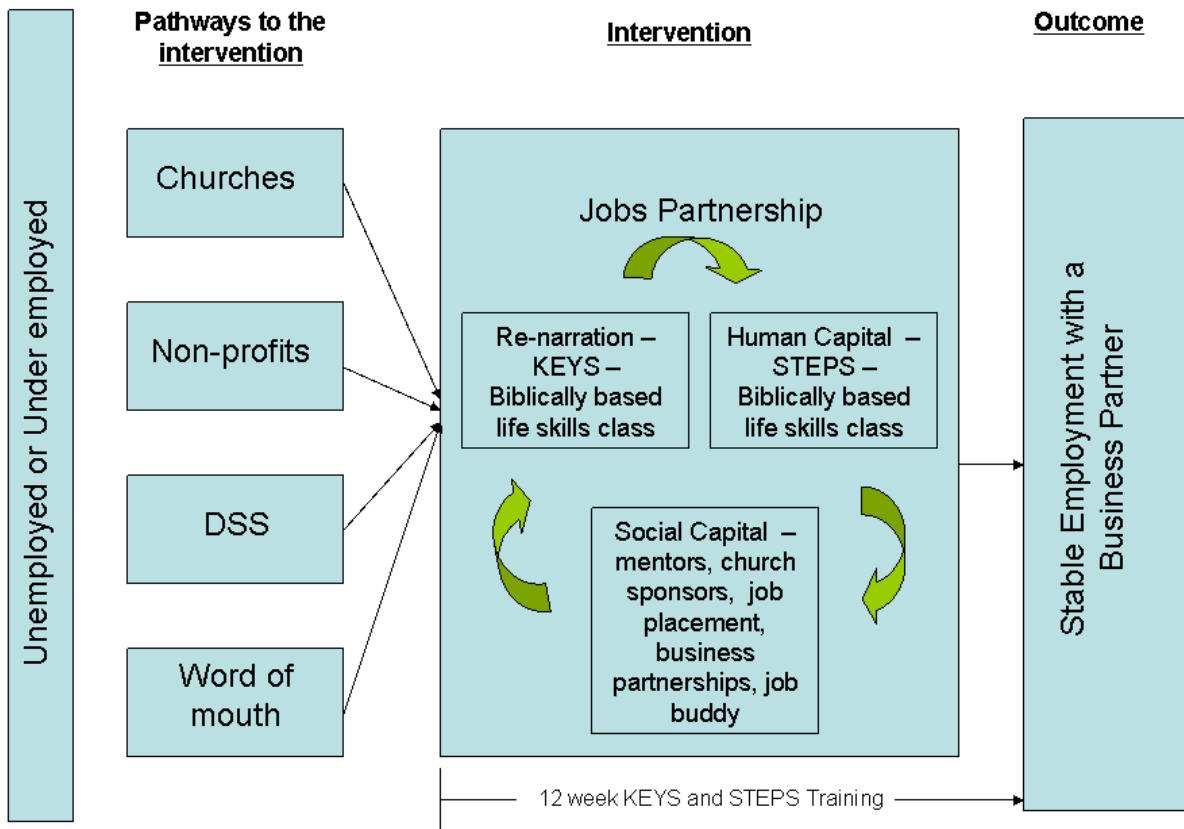
Table 8:

Results of Discrete Hazard Models of Time from Participating in a Faith-Based Intervention to Experiencing a Spell of Unemployment 2003-2005 (N=180, Obs. = 308)

Variable	Model 1 (null)		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
	$\beta$ (SE)	$e^\beta$	$\beta$ (SE)	$e^\beta$	$\beta$ (SE)	$e^\beta$	$\beta$ (SE)	$e^\beta$	$\beta$ (SE)	$e^\beta$
Demographic										
County			.4917 (.2854)	1.635	.4540 (.2888)	1.575	.4421 (.2998)	1.556	.2499 (.3951)	1.284
Age			-.0342* (.0140)	.9664*	-.0366** (.0144)	.9640	-.0368** (.0145)	.9639*	-.0679* (.0209)	.9344*
Sex			.0263 (.3022)	1.027	.1037 (.3171)	1.109	.1127 (.3229)	1.119	-.2407 (.4421)	.7860
Race			-.2895 (.3552)	.7486	-.2782 (.3574)	.7571	-.2782 (.3574)	.7572	-.2662 (.4945)	.7662
Public Assistance										
TANF					-.1599 (.1951)	.8522	-.1591 (.1948)	.8529	-.3318 (.2770)	.7176
Faith-Based Intervention										
Faith-based							-.0441 (.2973)	.9569	-.1909 (.4108)	.7176
Year									2.608** (.3523)	13.565**
Intercept	1.242** (.1366)		1.886* (.8659)		2.109* (.9155)		2.179* (1.032)			.3364 (1.234)
Log Likelihood	-163.843		-158.922				-158.911			-87.616

\*P  $\leq$  .01\*\*P  $\leq$  .000

Figure 1: Jobs Partnership Program Model



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