

# Congregations in Low-Income Neighborhoods and the Implications for Social Welfare Policy Research

Michael Leo Owens  
*Emory University*

R. Drew Smith  
*The Leadership Center at Morehouse College*

*Social scientists have an abundance of information about congregations to inform religion and social welfare policy discussions in the United States. But their data tend to come from congregations located outside low-income neighborhoods, not congregations inside them. This may limit their ability to make definitive claims, especially to policy makers, about social welfare practices and the potential of congregations located in low-income neighborhoods to aid in poverty reduction initiatives. Are the literature's findings about social service provisions by congregations applicable to congregations located in poor places? Using a data set of congregations located in the vicinity of public housing complexes in four cities, the authors explore this question. In the process, they discern factors that influence social service provisions by congregations located in low-income neighborhoods, identifying congregation income, clergy education, and congregation residency as the most significant predictors of social service activity. The authors conclude by identifying future research directions.*

**Keywords:** *faith-based organizations; congregations; social welfare; poverty; public housing*

The ability of the poor to improve their socioeconomic status and the conditions of their neighborhoods is limited. Poor people and the places where they live are often wanting in the social and economic assets necessary for upward

---

*Note:* The Faith Communities and Urban Families Project, located at Morehouse College's Leadership Center, was supported by a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. An earlier version of this article was presented at the Independent Sector Spring Research Forum, Bethesda, Maryland (March 2003). The authors thank Walter Earl Fluker, Alexis Simmons, Robert A. Brown, Keisha Haywood, Kelly Christine Hill, Bethany Blackstone, Steven Rathgeb Smith, and three anonymous reviewers for their assistance, comments, and counsel.

Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, vol. 34, no. 3, September 2005 316-339  
DOI: 10.1177/0899764005275207  
© 2005 Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action

mobility and community development. In particular, they tend to lack access to well-paying, low-skill employment as well as connections to middle-class families and their social resources and political influence (Anderson, 1999; Wilson, 1987, 1996). This limits the ability of the poor to resolve community problems, maintain safety, and provide a positive environment for youth (Sampson, 1999). Religious congregations, however, are potentially useful in helping the poor improve their socioeconomic status and the conditions of their neighborhoods.<sup>1</sup>

Scholars, along with policy makers, seek to discern whether, which, and how congregations, along with other institutions from the faith sector, may assist in reforming the conditions of low-income neighborhoods, especially those experiencing extreme poverty (Bane, Coffin, & Thiemann, 2000; Bane & Mead, 2003; Dionne & Chen, 2001; Wineburg, 2001). Social scientists have an abundance of information about congregations to inform religion and social welfare policy discussions. Yet their ability to make definitive claims about the practices and potential of a particular set of congregations to assist in the reform of poor people and places may be limited. In particular, social scientists know little about congregations in low-income neighborhoods. This is consequential to religion and social welfare discussions for such congregations could most matter to people-based and place-based initiatives of the public and philanthropic sectors to foster self-sufficiency (Cnaan, 2002, pp. 6-7; Foley, McCarthy, & Chaves, 2001, p. 215).

The suggestion that social scientists are constrained in drawing empirical conclusions about the social welfare role of congregations in low-income neighborhoods may sound odd. Since the 1980s, scholars have conducted important national and local surveys of religious congregations, seeking to detect whether congregations provide social services; how many social services congregations offer; the factors that influence congregations to provide services, either independently or in collaboration with others; and whether congregations would seek government funding to provide social services or increase their scale of social welfare provision (Ammerman, 2002; Billingsley, 1999; Chaves, 1999, 2004; Chaves & Tsitsos, 2001; Cnaan, 1999, 2002; Cnaan & Boddie, 2001; De Vita & Palmer, 2003; Dudley & Roozen, 2001; Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1993; Tsitsos, 2003).

Social scientists have learned much from their surveys about congregations and social welfare. Perhaps most important, we know that congregations, whether alone or with other institutions of the nonprofit and public sectors, extend an invisible caring hand to those who do and do not attend their worship services; they feed the hungry, give alms to the poor, heal the sick, and guide the talents of youth (Chaves, 2004; Cnaan, 2002). Collectively, their social services range from substance abuse counseling to job training to affordable housing development (Chaves & Tsitsos, 2001; Vidal, 2001). They also supplement the services of faith-related agencies and secular nonprofits as well as the government and market (Cnaan, 2002; Wuthnow, 2004, pp. 201-216).<sup>2</sup>

Although scholars seek to understand well the role of congregations in the lives of the poor, survey-based research rarely focuses on congregations located in the geographic areas of greatest need.<sup>3</sup> The overwhelming majority of the data come from congregations concerned with or attentive to the disadvantaged but not invested physically in poor communities. Scholars tend to acquire survey data about congregations and their social services from congregations located outside low-income neighborhoods, not congregations inside them.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, they neglect the differences that poverty and place may make for understanding the social welfare behaviors of congregations. Moreover, scholarly inquiries about the social welfare programs of congregations that ignore location devalue the influence of geography, even though we know that place affects social action. De-emphasizing geography also biases any understanding of the potential of congregations to assist in the alleviation of the negative social conditions the poor face in their neighborhoods.

The dearth of data from congregations in low-income neighborhoods raises the following question: Are the literature's core findings about social service provisions by congregations applicable to congregations located in poor places? Perhaps they are not. Congregations in high-poverty neighborhoods may not be as interested in and capable of providing social services as congregations in low-poverty neighborhoods are. The predictors that influence congregations in low-poverty neighborhoods, especially those in suburban areas, to provide social services may not be the ones that influence social service provisions by congregations in the high-poverty neighborhoods of cities. The scale of social service provisions by congregations in low-income neighborhoods may not match that of congregations outside them. Barriers to service access (e.g., transportation, cultural distance, or limited congregational perspectives about community outreach) may produce differences between congregations in low-income neighborhoods and other neighborhoods concerning consumption of their social services (i.e., who consumes them may vary).

Our intent in this article is to understand congregations in low-income neighborhoods as social welfare providers. In particular, we are interested in determining whether the predictors of social service activity the literature identifies for congregations generally hold for congregations in impoverished neighborhoods. Accordingly, we ask the following:

1. What proportion of congregations provides social services?
2. What program areas do their social services cover?
3. What factors determine the number of program areas their services address?

We begin to answer the questions with a multivariate analysis of data from a multicity survey of clergy that lead congregations in low-income neighborhoods. Subsequently, we employ our findings to evaluate the literature's general claims about congregations as social welfare providers in relation to

congregations in low-income neighborhoods. We also examine the potential of congregations in low-income neighborhoods to play expanded roles as social service providers, independent of and in collaboration with public agencies. In addition, we identify future directions for research into the social welfare role of congregations in low-income neighborhoods.

#### WHY LOOK TO CONGREGATIONS IN LOW-INCOME NEIGHBORHOODS?

Many policy makers assume that congregations are useful to public initiatives that focus on reforming low-income individuals and families (Bush, 2001; Cisneros, 1996; Goldsmith, 2000). Consequently, they have enacted federal and state laws and regulations—collectively known as Charitable Choice—that encourage government agencies to contract with congregations and faith-related social welfare agencies to develop and deliver social welfare programs that seek to improve the personal situations and environmental conditions of the poor (Donaldson & Carlson-Thies, 2003). Although Charitable Choice speaks to the potential of all congregations and faith-related agencies to partner with public agencies to deliver services to the needy, much of the political rhetoric and media attention assumes that congregations in poor neighborhoods have the most to offer public initiatives (Ashcroft, 2003; Bush, 2003; Cisneros, 1996).

Religious congregations are omnipresent in low-income neighborhoods (McRoberts, 2003; Wuthnow, 1998). Nationally, 13% of congregations are located in neighborhoods with poverty rates equal to or greater than 30% (Chaves, 1998). Among urban congregations (i.e., those located in cities), 19% hold their worship services in such neighborhoods. They often have remained in them long after “decades of public and private disinvestments” and departures by other social institutions from their neighborhoods (DiIulio, 2002, p. 59). As Cisneros (1996, p. 72) noted when he was U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, congregations “are still there” in the neighborhoods of need.

Being located in low-income neighborhoods may increase the desire of congregations, as well as position them, to do more to assist the poor in reforming their lives and the social conditions that they experience. In addition, presence amid poverty may give congregations a deeper, perhaps clearer, understanding than secular community-based organizations and government agencies of the solutions to removing the obstacles to self-sufficiency that the poor confront. Moreover, congregations located in impoverished communities may discern better the problems of the poor as well as how to resolve them. Possibly, as Cisneros (1996, p. 72; Wallis, 2000, p. 149) once suggested, congregations in low-income neighborhoods may have a “unique potential” to redeem poor places as stable, decent, and safe residential areas. If so, it is appropriate

to look to them to become central to public poverty-reduction initiatives as advisors or administrators.

#### DETERMINANTS OF SOCIAL SERVICE ACTIVITY

A central concern of the literature on congregations as social welfare providers is identifying the predictors of social service activity (Chaves, 2004; Chaves, Giesel, & Tsitsos, 2002; Cnaan, 2002; Tsitsos, 2003; Wuthnow, 2004). Holding other factors constant, scholars consistently observe that congregation membership size and income, along with congregation social class, determine the provision of social services by congregations as well as the number of services they provide and their programmatic coverage (Chaves, 2004; Chaves & Tsitsos, 2001; Cnaan, 2002). There are other factors that may explain the provision of social services by congregations in low-income neighborhoods; although, they either fail to achieve statistical significance, at least consistently, in models of general congregational behavior or the literature overlooks them.

Congregations with large memberships are more likely to provide social services than congregations with small memberships (Chaves & Tsitsos, 2001; Cnaan, 2002). The number of members may influence social service activity because congregations with large memberships possess latent resources (e.g., volunteers, money, and space) for social welfare programming and delivery. Ethnographies, however, reveal that congregations with small memberships, especially small enough to worship in storefronts, are common in low-income neighborhoods (Laudarji & Livezey, 2000; McRoberts, 2003). Thus, few congregations in low-income neighborhoods may be able to engage in social service activities. Still, the suggestion may be exaggerated, for large congregations and even megacongregations (i.e., congregations with  $\geq 2,000$  attendants weekly) exist in low-income neighborhoods (Laudarji & Livezey, 2000; Thumma, 1996; Toussaint, 1999).

The amount of income congregations earn from tithes, offerings, and other sources also predicts social service activity (Chaves & Tsitsos, 2001; Cnaan, 2002). Congregations with higher annual incomes are more likely than those with lower annual incomes to offer social services as part of their ministry. It is possible, however, for congregations with small memberships to earn incomes that permit them to operate social service programs. For example, small congregations with large proportions of affluent worshippers who routinely tithe may equal or even surpass the financial resources of large congregations of low-income earners. Still, given the socioeconomic status of their residents, along with the likelihood of smaller memberships, it is probable that congregations in low-income neighborhoods do not have large annual incomes to provide social services.<sup>5</sup>

Beyond congregation memberships and income, leadership influences social service activity. Congregations often align their community interests

and actions with those of their pastors (Cnaan, 2002, pp. 247-249). Consequently, clergy play a significant role in determining social service activity by congregations. The social class characteristics of pastors, too, in addition to the predominant class status of their congregations (i.e., middle class), predict social service activity by congregations (Chaves, 2004; Chaves & Tsitsos, 2001). Specifically, high educational attainment by pastors (and their followers) increases the likelihood of social service activity. Postsecondary education may provide pastors leading congregations in low-income neighborhoods with informed insights into the causes of poverty, and it may deepen their understanding of how to design solutions to neighborhood problems. It may also influence pastors to encourage their congregations to be less parochial with their resources and activities, resulting in a broader definition of community outreach and subsequent engagement with low-income neighborhoods.

Congregation residency may also matter. It is plausible that congregations with high proportions of local residents among their members are most likely to be active in social service delivery. Because they are needy or know those who are, local residents may have a clearer sense of the scale and scope of social service deprivation in low-income neighborhoods. Local congregations, in contrast to commuter congregations, may also have a lucid understanding of the neighborhood assets that could be leveraged to promote self-sufficiency among residents. Large numbers of local residents may give congregations a better understanding of the needs of their neighborhoods. Predominantly commuter congregations in low-income neighborhoods may possess less indigenous knowledge, resulting in lower rates of social service provision. Existing research suggests, however, that the proportion of commuters may not have a significant effect on the social service activity of congregations (Chaves & Tsitsos, 2001; Cnaan, 2002).<sup>6</sup>

Just as a high proportion of local residents may give a congregation a deeper understanding of the causes, consequences, and corrections to neighborhood problems, a congregation that has been in the same location, or at least in the same neighborhood, for a long period of time may have a more acute and accurate sense of the changing scale, dynamics, and scope of the needs and assets in a low-income neighborhood. Low-income neighborhoods, especially because of their vacant commercial spaces and low rents, are hot spots for the perpetual emergence of new congregations (McRoberts, 2003). "New congregations are," as Cnaan (2002) observes, "more likely to spend more of their resources and energy in establishing their religious community, which limits their capacity to provide services to others" (p. 109). Accordingly, congregations with long-term investment and commitment to maintaining themselves where they are located may be the congregations most likely to provide social services (Wuthnow, 1998). The literature, which tests for age of congregations, does not consider the effect of congregation tenure on social service activity.

Another potential predictor is the racial composition of congregations. Rigorous quantitative analyses, however, do not identify it as a significant determinant of social service provisions by congregations, even if African American congregations are more likely to engage in certain types of social services than other congregations (Chaves & Tsitsos, 2001; Tsitsos, 2003; Wuthnow, 2004).<sup>7</sup> Religious tradition, especially liberal Christian tradition (i.e., mainline Protestant congregations adhering to liberal theology), also may determine social service activity (Chaves & Tsitsos, 2001; Tsitsos, 2003; Chaves et al., 2002). Studies do not consistently show that it influences social service activity (Cnaan, 2002; Wuthnow, 2004).

#### DATA AND METHOD

Our data come from the Faith Communities and Urban Families Project (FCUFP).<sup>8</sup> Between 1996 and 2001, the FCUFP gathered quantitative and qualitative data about congregations located in seven public housing neighborhoods. Public housing neighborhoods are residential areas where apartments under the control of public housing authorities are present, where public housing units account for the majority of residential units, and where poverty is concentrated or high. The select neighborhoods are in four medium-sized cities: Camden, New Jersey; Denver, Colorado; Indianapolis, Indiana; and Hartford, Connecticut. The cities vary by region, degrees of residential segregation, and proportions of impoverished minority groups. Two of them have majority White populations, and the other two cities have majority minority (i.e., Black and Hispanic) populations. In all but one of the cities, the public housing neighborhoods are located in different sections of each city. Three of the neighborhoods have two public housing complexes each, and the other three have one complex each. The nine public housing complexes across the seven neighborhoods are the largest (in terms of housing units and physical presence) in the four cities.

We focus on public housing neighborhoods because their residents, particularly those residing in public housing complexes, known in the vernacular as "the projects," are perhaps the urban poor most in need of social services, especially neighborhood-based services. For them, "coping with crime and socioeconomic hardship, battling local government agencies over adequate service provision, and searching for external resources to meet local needs is commonplace" (Venkatesh, 2000, p. 4; Popkin, Gwiasda, Olson, Rosenbaum, & Buron, 2000). Although low-income people who do not live in public housing neighborhoods experience many of the same conditions as those who live in them, the "projects . . . magnify" problems; they exacerbate the negative effects of concentrated poverty areas (Wilson, 1987, p. 26; Reingold, 1997).

Nationally, public housing neighborhoods are "comparatively poor and racially isolated" in relation to neighborhoods without public housing (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1994, p. i). Aggregate data

from the 2000 U.S. Census of Population and Housing show that the seven public housing neighborhoods fit much of the image of inner-city poverty areas.<sup>9</sup> Their residents are predominantly minorities; Blacks and Latinos compose 32% and 29%, respectively, of their residents, compared to 12% for each group nationally. Educational achievement is relatively low, with 32% of adults lacking high school diplomas. This contrasts with national data that report that one in four adults does not possess a diploma. Furthermore, large proportions of families in the public housing neighborhoods lack other assets that may permit them upward mobility. For instance, 35% of families in the neighborhoods do not own motor vehicles, a factor that significantly reduces economic self-sufficiency by public housing residents (Van Ryzin, Ronda, & Muzzio, 2001). Concerning poverty, the 20% threshold that social scientists use to determine a poverty area was equal to the mean neighborhood poverty rate across the nine public housing neighborhoods (Jargowsky, 1997; Wilson, 1987).

#### SAMPLING FRAME AND CHARACTERISTICS

Drives through the neighborhoods, reviews of church and city directories, and informal conversations with clergy in each city yielded a sampling frame of 255 Christian congregations that hold worship services within a one-mile radius of the public housing complexes.<sup>10</sup> We drew a simple random sample of 200 congregations and surveyed by telephone a single informant from each congregation. The response rate was 68%. The analyses that follow include only those cases where the informant was the pastor of the congregation ( $N = 122$ ). Table 1 identifies the characteristics of the congregations and their pastors. It also compares the congregations in the public housing neighborhoods to national statistics on Christian congregations in the United States.

The majority of congregations in the public housing neighborhoods are long-serving Black congregations led by college-educated male pastors. Approximately two thirds (68%) of the congregations claim less than 500 active members. Eight out of 10 congregations across the seven public housing neighborhoods claim more than 100 members, with the majority (50%) of congregations reporting between 100 and 499 members.<sup>11</sup> A minority of the congregations attract worshippers who are residents of the seven neighborhoods, especially the public housing complexes (R. D. Smith, 2001). Ninety percent of the congregations are commuter congregations (i.e., congregations where  $\leq 50\%$  of their active members reside less than one mile away from the church).<sup>12</sup>

#### MODEL AND VARIABLES

We employed ordinary least squares regression to test whether dimensions of congregation size, congregation social class, and congregation residency influence the provision of social services by congregations in the seven public



**Table 1. Characteristics of Christian Congregations in Public Housing Neighborhoods**

	<i>Faith Communities and Urban Families Project (% of Sample, N = 122)</i>	<i>National Congregations Study (% of Weighted Sample, Christian Congregations Only, N = 1,191)</i>
Congregations		
Black (more than 50% of members are of African descent)	78	19
Moderate size (less than 500 members)	68	84
Commuter filled (less than or equal to 50% of members live within one mile of the place of worship) <sup>a</sup>	90	93
Low income (annual income of less than \$50,000)	63	43
Long serving (physical presence of more than 20 years)	60	68
Pastors		
Male	88	90
Black	75	20
College educated	74	89
Long serving (pastoral tenures of more than 10 years)	57	23
Positive attitude toward public funding of congregations <sup>b</sup>	35	38

Source: Chaves, 1998.

a. The most comparable comparison with the National Congregations Study (NCS) is the proportion of adults living within a 10-minute walk of the place of worship.

b. We rely on an indirect attitudinal measure: "Is it helpful that the government is now encouraging congregations to apply for and use government funds to provide social services?" The NCS employs a direct measure: "Do you think your congregation would apply for government money to support your human services programs if it was available?"

housing neighborhoods. This allowed us to consider variations in the total number of programs congregations provide. The variables in our model include the following:

*Number of social welfare ministry areas.* Our interest is in the number of social service areas congregations are involved in and operate on their own, which may equal the total number of social service programs they offer.<sup>13</sup> We initially asked informants "Does the congregation provide at least one social welfare ministry?"<sup>14</sup> Subsequently, respondents whose congregations provided social welfare ministries were asked whether their ministries fit within 1 of 15 program areas. Our dependent variable is the total number of program areas.

*Congregation membership size.* To discern the influence of congregation membership size on the number of social service areas in which congregations are involved, we asked informants "What is the active membership size of the

congregation?" We used standard closed-ended categories of membership size (i.e., less than 100, 100 to 499, 500 to 999, and more than 1,000).

*Annual congregation income.* Because income may influence social service provisions by congregations, we asked of respondents "What is your congregation's annual income?" Informants estimated their total income from all sources for the year prior to the survey.

*College-educated pastor.* We created the dichotomous variable *college-educated pastor* (1 = yes, 0 = no) to measure whether high educational attainment by clergy influences social service activity. We derived it by recoding a categorical variable that asked informants to identify their highest levels of educational attainment, ranging from grammar school to college.

*Residence of congregation members.* To distinguish commuter congregations from noncommuter congregations, we asked informants "What percentage of your congregational members live within one mile of your place of worship?" We identify congregations where less than 50% of their attendants live within one mile of the place of worship as commuter congregations.

*Length of congregation presence in neighborhood.* To test the influence of tenure on social service activity, we asked "How long (in years) has your congregation been at its present location?"

## RESULTS

The majority (72%) of congregations provide at least one social service in a single program area (Table 2). Across the four cities, the proportions of congregations providing a service in at least one program area range from 63% in Denver, Colorado, to a high of 84% in Indianapolis, Indiana, with 67% and 70% of congregations in the public housing neighborhoods of Camden, New Jersey, and Hartford, Connecticut, respectively, reporting that they provide social services. The proportion of congregations engaged in social services in the public housing neighborhoods falls between the 57% Chaves (2004) reports nationally and the 92% Cnaan (2002; Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1993) reports from his multicity study.

Across the seven public housing neighborhoods, the congregations provide at least 358 social services, assuming a program area is the equivalent of at least 1 service. We observe, however, that most congregations (64%) operate social services in fewer than five program areas. Just 6% of congregations offer services across 10 to 15 areas. Three is the median number of program areas where the congregations provide services, but previous research would have suggested a median no greater than two programs (Chaves & Tsitsos, 2001; Cnaan, 2002).

**Table 2. Provision, Areas, and Funding of Social Services by Churches in Public Housing Neighborhoods**

	<i>Percentage of Churches</i>
Provides at least one social service	72
Service area	
Youth recreation (e.g., midnight basketball teams)	66
Prison ministry	38
After school (e.g., Boy Scouts)	33
Food (e.g., soup kitchen)	30
Family services (e.g., domestic violence counseling)	29
Day care or preschool	20
Senior citizens' services (e.g., housing assistance)	19
Addiction recovery services	16
Children and youth services (e.g., adoption)	12
Employment services (e.g., job training)	7
Emergency shelter (e.g., battered families)	7
Adolescent mental health services (e.g., anger management)	7
Adult mental health services (e.g., depression)	5
Elementary or secondary school	5
Gang reduction	2
Funding source (external)	
Government	9
Foundation	7

Consistent with other studies of the types of social services congregations offer (Chaves & Tsitsos, 2001; Cnaan, 2002; Wuthnow, 2004), we found that the congregations favor the provision of services that require consistent commitment (e.g., ministering to inmates, fixing meals, and being available to youth on a regular basis) but that do not require a great deal of planning, concern about financial sustainability, and reliance on many volunteers. Their most common types of services involve recreation (e.g., youth activities), relief (e.g., food for the hungry), and redemption (i.e., ministering to the incarcerated).

The mean number of clients that congregations directly serve through their social services is 349; 250 is their median client size, higher than other studies would have predicted (Cnaan, 2002). Sixty-nine percent of congregations make their social services available mainly to the broader community rather than their congregation members (i.e., more than 50% of their consumers are not congregants). Moreover, more than three quarters of the consumers of their social services are not attendants of the worship and religious education services of the congregations.<sup>15</sup> Both results were unforeseen given that recent case studies of low-income neighborhoods conclude that congregations in them "principally serve their own members" (Livezey, 2000, p. 20; Laudarji & Livezey, 2000; McRoberts, 2003).

In terms of the finances of the congregations in relation to social welfare, there are three points to note. One, they have modest incomes for social service activity. The median annual income of congregations in the United States is

**Table 3. Regression of Number of Social Service Areas (N = 122 congregations)**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>
Congregation membership size (number of active members)	-0.138	0.443	-.043
Annual congregation income	1.216	0.364	.453**
College-educated pastor (attended college)	1.846	0.778	.261*
Residence of congregation members (percentage living in neighborhood)	0.101	0.544	.021
Length of congregation presence in neighborhood (years)	0.026	0.013	.219*
Constant	-0.889	1.425	
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.394		
<i>F</i> statistic	.153		

\**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01.

\$60,000 (Chaves, 2004). In the public housing neighborhoods, however, 63% of congregations claim an annual income of less than \$50,000, and approximately one third report an income of less than \$20,000. Moreover, commuter congregations do not necessarily equal financially rich congregations: 78% of commuter congregations report annual revenues of less than \$100,000, with 56% reporting annual incomes of less than \$50,000.

Two, few (9%) of the congregations receive financial support from the government for their services; although, the proportion is slightly greater than double what other research forecasts (Chaves, 2004, p. 231). The bulk of resources for social services comes from the congregations. Although the proportion of congregations' funds devoted to social services is undetermined, we assume that it is smaller than the amount they devote toward religious worship and education (Chaves, 2004; Cnaan, 2002; Wuthnow, 2004). Three, a majority of clergy from the congregations in the public housing neighborhoods are not encouraged by the new public policy environment that permits public funding of congregations: 65% of pastors disagree that it is helpful that policy makers are encouraging congregations to apply for and use public funds to provide social services.<sup>16</sup>

Table 3 shows the results of our regression model.<sup>17</sup> Overall, the model explains approximately 39% of the variation in the total number of program areas. The estimated coefficients for each independent variable, except congregation membership size, have the predicted directions. Of the five independent variables, annual congregation income, college-educated pastor, and length of congregation presence in the neighborhood are statistically significant. That is, controlling for other variables related to dimensions of congregation size, congregation social class, and congregation residency, congregations with higher incomes, college-educated clergy, and longer tenures in their neighborhoods provide services in more program areas than congregations with lower incomes, clergy with only elementary and secondary educations, and shorter neighborhood tenures.

Returning to our earlier question regarding the applicability of the literature's findings, we find that the predictors that influence congregations in

low-poverty neighborhoods, especially those in suburban areas, to provide social services are not always the ones that influence social service provisions by congregations in the high-poverty neighborhoods of cities. In fact, the results of our model challenge as much as they confirm the applicability of other studies' findings to congregations in low-income neighborhoods.

We failed to confirm that congregation membership size significantly influences social service activity, which is inconsistent with the most rigorous research (Chaves & Tsitsos, 2001; Tsitsos, 2003; Wuthnow, 2004). Also, similar to Cnaan (2002), we found a negative but insignificant relationship between membership size and social service activity. Furthermore, our regression results show that congregation tenure (i.e., number of years in the neighborhood), a dimension of congregation residency overlooked in all previous research, significantly bears on the decision by congregations to engage in social service delivery. As for where congregation members live, the other dimension of congregation residency, the result points in the expected direction. This suggests that commuter congregations are less likely than indigenous congregations to be active in social service delivery. The factor failed, however, to achieve statistical significance. Nonetheless, consistent with Chaves and Tsitsos (2001) as well as Tsitsos (2003) and Cnaan (2002), we found that annual congregation income is a significant predictor of social service activity by congregations in the public housing neighborhoods. Also, the results identify a dimension of congregation social class (i.e., clergy educational attainment) as a supplemental predictor of social service activity, which coheres with previous findings (Chaves & Tsitsos, 2001; Tsitsos, 2003).

## IMPLICATIONS

Social scientists, particularly in light of Charitable Choice, are striving to better understand the role of congregations in the lives of the poor, particularly as social welfare providers. Little of the existing data, however, speak to the scope and scale of social services by congregations located in poor neighborhoods. We contend that the lack of data on congregations in low-income neighborhoods limits the ability of scholars to make strong claims about the social welfare role of congregations in relation to the poor. In an attempt to increase the ability of scholars to speak authoritatively about congregations and social welfare in poor places, we focused solely on congregations located in low-income neighborhoods. The particular objective was to identify whether the determinants of social service activity by congregations in impoverished neighborhoods patterned those that the literature identifies for congregations generally.

Our findings show that congregations in low-income neighborhoods benefit residents in terms of social welfare. The majority of congregations in the low-income neighborhoods we studied provide social services. Although commuters are their primary members, congregations located in low-income

neighborhoods generally do not limit the consumption of their social services to those who attend their worship services. Instead, the majority of those who consume the social services of the congregations are not members of the congregations.

Our findings also suggest that scholars cannot assume that the literature's general findings about the determinants of social service activity by congregations necessarily hold for congregations in low-income neighborhoods. We found that the key determinants of congregations providing social welfare in the low-income neighborhoods are annual congregation income and clergy education, consistent with the extant research. However, we show that membership size, which most studies of congregations identify as a predictor of social service activity, has no significant effect on social welfare provision by the congregations in the low-income neighborhoods we studied. Moreover, our findings suggest that the existing literature overlooks other determinants of social welfare provision by congregations. In particular, we demonstrate that congregation tenure significantly influences social service activity and that congregation residency may also be influential.

Last, our findings suggest that future research should focus on the capacity of congregations to provide a greater scope and scale of social welfare, especially of the type that assist residents to overcome key challenges to economic self-sufficiency. That is, scholars should examine the ability of congregations in low-income neighborhoods to engage more broadly (i.e., across a greater number of program areas and target populations) and deeply (e.g., increasing financial commitments, staff, and volunteers) in social service delivery.<sup>18</sup> Building financial and programmatic capacity to expand social welfare should be a central focus of subsequent studies of congregations in low-income neighborhoods.

#### FINANCIAL CAPACITY

Ultimately, the ability of community-based organizations to achieve goals and objectives related to the development of people living in poor neighborhoods is linked to their ability to acquire and expend financial support as well as their ability to leverage their financial resources to greater effect (Glickman & Servon, 1998). As our data show, annual congregation income is the most significant determinant of social service engagement by the congregations in low-income neighborhoods. The number of congregation-provided social services available to those who need them increases as congregation revenue increases. Increased income also expands the range of program areas in which congregations provide services, offering the needy a diversity of social services. Nevertheless, the congregations in low-income neighborhoods, including the majority of their commuter congregations, have meager incomes.

On the whole, the financial capacity of the congregations in low-income neighborhoods to provide or expand social services is limited. Logically, an expansion in the number of congregations engaged broadly in social service

delivery depends on expanded access to money by congregations. Accordingly, scholars need to identify and assess potential sources of increased funding for social services by congregations in low-income neighborhoods (e.g., congregation members, other congregations, and government).

Worshippers may be a potential source of increased funding for congregations to engage in social service activity. If, however, the incomes of congregations in low-income neighborhoods are already modest, how could congregations extract more than they already do from their worshippers? Could congregations increase their income by appealing to attendants to increase their financial commitment to their congregations for the purpose of delivering more social services? Both are important questions given that other research finds that many attendants of congregations in low-income neighborhoods are themselves in need of or receive social welfare assistance (Laudarji & Livezey, 2000; McRoberts, 2003).

Partnerships with other congregations may also be a potential source of increased funding, as well as volunteers and other resources, for social service provisions by congregations in low-income neighborhoods. Chaves (2004; Chaves & Tsitsos, 2001) shows that collaboration is the method that most congregations in the United States that engage in social services employ to assist the needy. Other scholars demonstrate that collaborations, especially between low-income and affluent congregations, represent strategic opportunities for resource diversification and growth, along with social solidarity among congregations (Baggett, 2001; Hays, 2002). Yet how conceivable is it that congregations in low-income neighborhoods could collaborate financially with other congregations in and beyond their neighborhoods to provide social services? If they can, to what degree would their financial collaborations occur on a large scale, a routine basis, and with an emphasis on serving the poor in ways beyond emergency relief? More fundamentally, how theologically and socially receptive are congregations in more affluent communities to collaboration with congregations in low-income neighborhoods? What are the determinants of high receptivity?

The government, because of Charitable Choice, may be another potential source of increased income for congregations in low-income neighborhoods. However, our survey of pastors leading congregations in the public housing neighborhoods raises a caveat to public funding being a catalyst for increasing the financial capacity of congregations in low-income neighborhoods: Congregations in low-income neighborhoods may not favor financial collaborations with government agencies. What factors determine whether congregations in low-income neighborhoods will take advantage of Charitable Choice? There is room for far more studies of this issue not only for congregations in low-income neighborhoods but also for congregations generally. The extant research looks at the attributes of congregations (e.g., racial composition, denominational affiliation, and "region") as predictors of their likelihood to pursue government funding (Chaves, 1999). It does not control for the range

of theological, social, and political attitudes clergy and their congregants maintain toward public funding.

#### PROGRAMMATIC CAPACITY

Congregations in low-income neighborhoods that engage in social service activity practice programmatic religion; they express the traditions and theologies of their faith by providing services that support needy individuals and families (DiIulio, 2002). In the public housing neighborhoods, general recreational activities, after-school activities, emergency food assistance, and prison ministry are the forms of programmatic religion congregations commonly display. They are important areas of social support. They may also accord with the needs of neighborhood residents. Wuthnow (2004, pp. 203, 205) shows, for instance, that emergency relief (e.g., money and food) is one of the most pressing types of assistance people living in poor communities seek from congregations and faith-related agencies. However, the provision of recreation, relief, and redemption belie the reality of broader problems in low-income neighborhoods, especially limited educational attainment, unemployment, violence, and drug addiction (Wilson, 1987, 1996).

Congregations in low-income neighborhoods, as we observed in the public housing neighborhoods, do not provide social services in areas that directly increase self-sufficiency among the residents of impoverished places. Borrowing from social capital theorist Briggs (1998, p. 178), the social services of congregations in low-income neighborhoods may not help people “get ahead”, even if they help them “get by”. Furthermore, the data from the public housing neighborhoods suggest that congregations in low-income neighborhoods do not deliver a comprehensive set of programs to the needy. Specifically, although 7 out of 10 congregations provide at least one service, 6 out of 10 congregations provide social services in four program areas or less. In sum, most congregations do not offer an array of social services to address the range of problems poor people confront.

Additionally, our data from the public housing neighborhoods suggest that low proportions of congregations in low-income neighborhoods engage in program areas that require high levels of expertise, administration, and funding, such as elementary and secondary education, workforce development, and affordable housing production. Instead, the majority of their programs involve uncomplicated services, such as arranging sports activities for youth and preparing food for the hungry.

A modest number of program areas and the emphasis on delivering simple services imply that congregations in low-income neighborhoods are unable to approach the more fundamental problems of their neighborhoods with a high degree of complexity and comprehensiveness. In other words, congregations in low-income neighborhoods have low programmatic capacity, the ability and interest to design, implement, and, more importantly, integrate services across a spectrum of areas to increase the overall effect of meeting organiza-



tional goals and constituent objectives (Glickman & Servon, 1998). At a minimum, research should determine whether low programmatic capacity is by intent (i.e., congregations are disinterested in broader engagement) or default (i.e., congregations lack the financial capacity).

Congregations may lack an interest in expanding their ability to comprehensively address the problems of their neighborhoods. Accordingly, scholars, along with policy makers, need to take seriously Jeavons's (2003) point regarding the general lack of social service engagement by congregations: Congregations are primarily religious institutions, not social service institutions. Empirically, however, we do not know if the scale of social service congregations in low-income neighborhoods provide and the programmatic areas they cover are driven by their theological bents and practical limitations as institutions of religious worship and education. Furthermore, we do not know whether congregations in low-income neighborhoods prefer to keep their number of services and programmatic coverage small to permit them to target scarce resources, to provide short-term emergency services without worrying about sustainability, to allow for intense but brief volunteer experiences with those perceived as neediest (i.e., children and the destitute), or to prevent duplication of services in their neighborhoods. These are apt subjects for future scholarship on religion and social welfare.

Furthermore, scholars should attempt to determine whether the programmatic capacity of congregations in low-income neighborhoods is a function of a need for and limited access to technical assistance. Perhaps the congregations do what they do because it is all they know how to do. If congregations in low-income neighborhoods would like to do more, what are the specific skill sets they need to increase their programmatic capacity? Who would best provide them with the training to develop their abilities to program more and better services in their neighborhoods? If access to technical assistance is a barrier to increased programmatic capacity, does intermediation necessarily broaden and deepen social service activity by congregations? What types of intermediation best assist congregations to develop their competencies to design and program, and extend and evaluate, their social services? These questions fit well within, but are overlooked to date by, the emerging research on capacity building for faith-based community development (Frenchak, 2004; Owens, 2004; Sherman, 2002, 2004).

## CONCLUSION

Congregations in low-income neighborhoods are social welfare providers. Congregation income is the strongest predictor of congregations providing social services, especially across a range of program areas. When congregations provide social services, the services tend to be community oriented rather than congregation oriented; they are primarily available to and consumed by members of the broader geographic communities in which they are

located, not congregation attendants. Our findings, especially that increasing income increases social service programming by congregations, may sound like good news to policy makers, as well as some scholars and clergy, who favor an expanded and public-funded role for congregations in social welfare. They may aver that our findings show that congregations in low-income neighborhoods are positioned and prepared to take on greater roles or expand their services in the social welfare arena either in collaboration with or independent of government agencies. We advise caution, however, in interpreting our research to support calls for greater reliance on the government by congregations in low-income neighborhoods to facilitate economic self-sufficiency among their residents.

Demonstrating that congregations offer the residents of low-income neighborhoods social support does not mean that congregations are the most pivotal institutions for providing social welfare in low-income neighborhoods or that they are the institutions most interested in delivering social welfare. As McCarthy and Castelli (1998) observed in the 1990s, congregations may be less central to social welfare in low-income neighborhoods than faith-related agencies, such as Catholic Charities or the Salvation Army. Furthermore, showing that congregations offer the residents of low-income neighborhoods social support does not confirm that congregations in low-income neighborhoods are potentially significant or attracted to governmental initiatives, especially as paid collaborators, to increase economic self-sufficiency among the poor. In the end, congregations in low-income neighborhoods may be far less able to address well the problems of the poor, either in collaboration with or independent of government, than some policy makers believe and claim.

Nonetheless, policy makers will probably continue to place great faith in the works of congregations to reform the poor. Unfortunately, it may be misplaced. As we observed across the four cities, congregations in low-income neighborhoods do not offer a great range of social services to transition the residents of low-income neighborhoods from poverty to prosperity, perhaps because of limited financial and programmatic capacity to provide a larger set of integrated services that address the different causes of poverty and barriers to social mobility. The literature on congregations as social welfare providers may eventually, however, produce usable knowledge to inform congregations' practice and policy makers' ability to design policies to reform poor people and resurrect their neighborhoods.

## Notes

1. There is no standard and systematic definition of *congregation* (Cnaan, 2002). Used here, congregations refer to "the relatively small-scale, local activities and organizations through which people routinely engage in religious activity: churches, synagogues, mosques, temples" (Chaves, 2002, p. 1523).

2. Faith-related agencies are distinct from congregations. The former, such as Catholic Charities, are groups with

a formal funding or administrative arrangement with a religious authority or authorities; a historical tie of this kind; a specific commitment to act within the dictates of a particular established faith; or a commitment to work together that stems from a common religion. (S. R. Smith & Sossin, 2001, p. 652)

3. We do not claim that surveys are the only or best method scholars use to acquire data about congregations, nor do we claim that there is no research on congregations in low-income neighborhoods. There are insightful ethnographies and case studies that provide thick descriptions of the social position, civic functions, and challenges of congregations in low-income neighborhoods (Ammerman, 2002; Carle & DeCaro, 1999; Laudarji & Livezey, 2000; McRoberts, 2003; Wood, 2002). As is the nature of ethnography and case studies, however, they focus on a limited set of congregations, which limits generalization. Furthermore, there is often little variation in their samples; congregations with small memberships and limited resources for social service provisions are the norm.

4. A notable exception is the National Congregations Study (NCS) data, which include data for approximately 160 congregations located in census tracts where 30% or more of residents earn incomes below the federal poverty level (Chaves, 1998). Although research relying on the data found that congregations in poor neighborhoods provide more services than congregations in nonpoor neighborhoods, it did not inquire about the determinants of social service provisions by congregations in the poor neighborhoods (Chaves, 2004; Chaves & Tsitsos, 2001).

5. Still, congregations comprising the working poor may dramatically increase their giving and leverage their resources for purposes of expanding social services in low-income neighborhoods (Walker, 1991). But similar to other congregations, most may "feel financially pressured" to merely maintain themselves as institutions of religious worship and education (Chaves, 2004, p. 38; McRoberts, 2003).

6. Commuter congregations may be more, or at least equally, likely to provide social services. Commuters to congregations in low-income neighborhoods may be mainly former residents of the neighborhoods who did not relinquish their memberships despite their migration. Therefore, commuter congregations too may possess high levels of indigenous knowledge that guide their social service provisions. Commuter congregations in low-income neighborhoods may also consist mainly of middle-class persons seeking to give back resources (money, time, and service) to needy neighborhoods, even if they were never residents of the neighborhoods. Commuters may add value to their worship and devotion by transferring external assistance to the neighborhoods via their congregations. Accordingly, commuter congregations, if they have a strong commitment to serve and provide resources, may engage more extensively in social services than locally attended congregations.

7. Racial composition as a predictor of social service provisions by congregations in low-income neighborhoods may be less salient given that residential segregation in the United States has produced and maintained low-income neighborhoods that are racially homogenous (Jargowsky, 1997; Massey & Denton, 1993).

8. The Annie E. Casey Foundation funded the applied research project to discern lessons for strengthening the ties between the residents and religious institutions in and around its Making Connection sites (R. D. Smith, 2003). Making Connections is a 10-year comprehensive community initiative. It seeks to improve socioeconomic outcomes for families and children in a select number of low-income neighborhoods in 10 cities: Denver, Colorado; Des Moines, Iowa; Hartford, Connecticut; Indianapolis, Indiana; Louisville, Kentucky; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Oakland, California; Providence, Rhode Island; San Antonio, Texas; and Seattle, Washington. The initiative invests in community-driven projects that create opportunities for adults to earn a decent living and build assets; connect and strengthen ties between families, neighbors, religious institutions, and civic associations; and design and implement neighborhood-based social service systems. The second author of this article was the FCUFP principal investigator, and the lead author was a FCUFP research consultant.

9. The data are for the broader neighborhoods where the public housing complexes are located, not the public housing complexes themselves. Demographic data on the specific complexes are unavailable because of confidentiality concerns. Government agencies do not release data on the residents of individual public housing complexes. Instead, the data are available at the level of public housing authorities.

10. The FCUFP found no evidence of Muslim or Jewish congregations existing in the neighborhoods. It did observe that multiple Christian faith-related agencies existed in the neighborhoods. They were not, however, the subject of interest for the project.

11. In fact, the proportion of large congregations (more than or equal to 500 members) is almost twice as great as the proportion of small congregations (less than 100 members). This is unexpected, for congregations in the United States tend to have less than 100 members, with the median being 75 members (Chaves, 2004). Moreover, data from the NCS reveal that of the congregations located in urban neighborhoods with poverty rates of more than 30%, 68% report no more than 100 regular attendants (Chaves, 1998; McRoberts, 2003, p. 53).

12. It was anticipated that a majority of the congregations would be commuter filled given ethnographies about congregations in poor neighborhoods (Laudarji & Livezey, 2000). Although most attendants reside outside of the public housing neighborhoods, they do not necessarily differ socially and economically from the residents of public housing neighborhoods. Laudarji and Livezey (2000) describe well how congregations within walking distance of the Henry Horner Homes in Chicago, for instance, comprise "mainly people of modest means, both working poor and welfare-recipients, who come not from the immediate neighborhood but from many parts of the city" (p. 87).

13. The number of social service areas may undercut the total number of social services (Cnaan, 2002, pp. 58-59) while also hinting at the degree of a congregation's social service comprehensiveness (i.e., how broadly a congregation addresses the diversity of problems in its community).

14. *Social welfare ministry* was the most appropriate term. Preliminary conversations with clergy in or familiar with the public housing neighborhoods in the four cities suggested to us that clergy were more likely to describe and understand the provision of social services by their congregations as ministries, not services and programs. Also, as Cnaan (2002) notes, the term *social ministries*, although perhaps interchangeable with social services and social programs, "is more Christian in nature" (p. 12). Given these perspectives, as well the nature of our sample, which is entirely Christian, we decided to use social welfare ministry.

15. It is interesting that a bivariate analysis (not shown) reveals that the proportion of social service consumers who are not congregation members decreases as the proportion of local residents in a congregation increases ( $r = -.355$ ). This inverse relationship may exist because needy residents seek anonymity as clients, which services provided by strangers is likely to ensure. Or there exists a social distance and a lack of trust between the church and unchurched residents of the neighborhoods. Also, some congregations may have a reputation, earned or unearned, for catering mainly to their followers.

16. Pastors hold their opinion in the face of strong appeals by the government, especially the local government, in their cities for congregations to collaborate with the public sector to address collective problems (Farnsley, 2003; Goldsmith, 2000). This finding lends further support to Chaves's (1999) argument that a majority of congregations in the United States probably would not seek funding from the public sector. It also buttresses research that shows that congregations engage in social service delivery for reasons well beyond invitations from government agents to serve the poor (Cnaan, 2002). Nevertheless, the disfavor with Charitable Choice among the pastors in the public housing neighborhoods is surprising. Data from national surveys suggest that clergy and congregants associated with historically disadvantaged groups, such as Blacks, who compose the majority of the congregations in the public housing neighborhoods we studied as well as account for a large proportion of congregations in low-income neighborhoods, would overwhelmingly apply for public funding (Chaves, 1999; Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2001).

17. We conducted a logistical regression (not shown) to determine the correlates of whether a congregation does provide at least one social service. The results revealed the extent to which our dimensions of congregation size, social class, and residency affect whether churches in public housing neighborhoods provide at least one social service. Except for annual income ( $p = .024$ ), the variables have no statistically significant effect on social service provision by churches in the public housing neighborhoods, running counter to our expectations.

18. Future research on the role of congregations in low-income neighborhoods should also draw data from a larger sample of congregations across a range of impoverished neighborhoods and examine the consumption of social services by noncongregants. In particular, it should explore why neighborhood residents look to congregations and what the behavioral effects of congregation-based services are on their consumers (e.g., increased employment, reduced recidivism, family reunification and stability, and congregation attendance).

## References

- Ammerman, N. (2002). Connecting mainline Protestant churches with public life. In R. Wuthnow & J. H. Evans (Eds.), *The quiet hand of God: Faith-based activism and the public role of mainline Protestantism* (pp. 129-158). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Anderson, E. (1999). *Code of the street: Decency, violence, and the moral life of the inner city*. New York: Norton.
- Ashcroft, J. (2003, December 5). *Prepared remarks of Attorney General John Ashcroft delivered at the White House faith-based conference, Tampa, Florida*. Transcript in authors' possession.
- Baggett, J. P. (2001). *Habitat for Humanity: Building private homes, building public religion*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Bane, M. J., Coffin, B., & Thiemann, R. (2000). *Who will provide? The changing role of religion in American social welfare*. Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Bane, M. J., & Mead, L. (2003). *Lifting up the poor: A dialogue on religion, poverty, and welfare reform*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- Billingsley, A. (1999). *Mighty like a river: The Black church and social reform*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Briggs, X. (1998). Brown kids in white suburbs: Housing mobility and the many faces of social capital. *Housing Policy Debate*, 9, 177-221.
- Bush, G. W. (2001). *Rallying the armies of compassion*. Washington, DC: White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.
- Bush, G. W. (2003, February). *President Bush discusses faith-based initiative in Tennessee*. Prepared remarks delivered at the National Religious Broadcasters' Convention, Nashville, Tennessee.
- Carle, R. D., & DeCaro, L. A., Jr. (1999). *Signs of hope in the city: Ministries of community renewal*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson.
- Chaves, M. (1998). *National congregations study: Data file and codebook*. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona, Department of Sociology. Retrieved December 1, 2003, from <http://www.thearda.com/arda.asp?Show=Home>
- Chaves, M. (1999). Religious congregations and welfare reform: Who will take advantage of charitable choice? *American Sociological Review*, 64, 836-846.
- Chaves, M. (2002). Religious organizations: Data resources and research opportunities. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 45, 1523-1549.
- Chaves, M. (2004). *Congregations in America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Chaves, M., Giesel, H. M., & Tsitsos, W. (2002). Religious variations in public presence: Evidence from the national congregations study. In R. Wuthnow & J. H. Evans (Eds.), *The quiet hand of God: Faith-based activism and the public role of mainline Protestantism* (pp. 108-128). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Chaves, M., & Tsitsos, W. (2001). Congregations and social services: What they do, how they do it, and with whom? *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 30, 660-683.

- Cisneros, H. (1996). *Higher ground: Faith communities and community building*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- Cnaan, R. A. (1999). *The newer deal: Social work and religion in partnership*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Cnaan, R. A. (2002). *The invisible caring hand: American congregations and the provision of welfare*. New York: New York University Press.
- Cnaan, R. A., & Boddie, S. C. (2001). Philadelphia census of congregations and their involvement in social service delivery. *Social Service Review*, 75, 559-580.
- De Vita, C. J., & Palmer, P. (2003). *Church-state partnerships: Some reflections from Washington, D.C.* Washington, DC: Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy, the Urban Institute.
- DiIulio, J. J., Jr. (2002). The three faith factors. *The Public Interest*, 149, 50-64.
- Dionne, E. J., & Chen, M. H. (2001). *Sacred paces, civic purposes: Should government help faith-based charity?* Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- Donaldson, D., & Carlson-Thies, S. (2003). *A revolution in compassion: Faith-based groups as full partners in fighting America's social problems*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
- Dudley, C. S., & Roozen, D. A. (2001). *Faith communities today: A report on religion in the United States today*. Hartford, CT: Hartford Institute for Religion Research, Hartford Seminary.
- Farnsley, A. E. (2003). *Rising expectations: Urban congregations, welfare reform, and civic life*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Foley, M. W., McCarthy, J., & Chaves, M. (2001). Social capital, religious institutions, and poor communities. In S. Saegert, J. P. Thompson, & M. R. Warren (Eds.), *Social capital in poor communities* (pp. 215-245). New York: Russell Sage.
- Frenchak, D. (2004). The history and future training and capacity-building programs of faith-based organizations. In R. V. Anglin (Ed.), *Building the organizations that build communities: Strengthening the capacity of faith- and community-based development organizations* (pp. 235-247). Washington, DC: Office of Policy Development and Research, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- Glickman, N., & Servon, L. (1998). More than bricks and sticks: Five components of community development corporation capacity. *Housing Policy Debate*, 9, 497-539.
- Goldsmith, S. (2000). Having faith in our neighborhoods: The front porch alliance. In E. J. Dionne, Jr., & J. J. DiIulio, Jr. (Eds.), *What's God got to do with the American experiment?* (pp. 72-78). Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- Hays, R. A. (2002). Habitat for Humanity: Building social capital through faith-based service. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 24, 247-269.
- Hodgkinson, V., & Weitzman, M. (1993). *From belief to commitment: The community service activities and finances of religious congregations in the United States*. Washington, DC: Independent Sector.
- Jargowsky, P. (1997). *Poverty and place: Ghettos, barrios, and the American city*. New York: Russell Sage.
- Jeavons, T. H. (2003). The vitality and independence of religious organizations. *Society*, 40, 27-36.
- Laudarji, I. B., & Livezey, L. W. (2000). The churches and the poor in a "ghetto underclass" neighborhood. In L. W. Livezey (Ed.), *Public religion and urban transformation* (pp. 83-105). New York: New York University Press.
- Livezey, L. (Ed.). (2000). *Faith in the city: Public religion and urban transformation*. New York: New York University Press.
- Massey, D., & Denton, N. (1993). *American apartheid: Segregation and the making of the underclass*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- McCarthy, J., & Castelli, J. (1998). *Religion-sponsored social service providers: The not-so-independent sector*. Washington, DC: Nonprofit Sector Research Fund, Aspen Institute.
- McRoberts, O. (2003). *Streets of glory: Church and community in a black urban neighborhood*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Owens, M. L. (2004). Capacity building: The case of faith-based organizations. In R. V. Anglin (Ed.), *Building the organizations that build communities: Strengthening the capacity of faith- and community-based development organizations* (pp. 127-163). Washington, DC: Office of Policy Development and Research, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

- Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. (2001). *Faith-based funding backed, but church-state doubts abound*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Popkin, S. J., Gwiasda, V. E., Olson, L. M., Rosenbaum, D. P., & Buron, L. (2000). *The hidden war: Crime and the tragedy of public housing in Chicago*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Reingold, D. (1997). Does inner city public housing exacerbate the employment problems of its tenants? *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 19, 469-486.
- Sampson, R. (1999). What "community" supplies. In R. F. Ferguson & W. T. Dickens (Eds.), *Urban problems and community development* (pp. 241-292). Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- Sherman, A. (2002). *Empowering compassion: The strategic role of intermediary organizations in building capacity among and enhancing the impact of community transformers*. Charlottesville, VA: Hudson Institute.
- Sherman, A. (2004). Strengthening the street saints: Intermediaries providing capacity-building assistance to faith-based organizations. In R. V. Anglin (Ed.), *Building the organizations that build communities: Strengthening the capacity of faith- and community-based development organizations* (pp. 73-88). Washington, DC: Office of Policy Development and Research, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- Smith, R. D. (2001). Churches and the urban poor: Interaction and social distance. *Sociology of Religion*, 62, 301-313.
- Smith, R. D. (2003). *Beyond the boundaries: Low-income residents, faith-based organizations, and neighborhood coalition building*. Baltimore: Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- Smith, S. R., & Sossin, M. R. (2001). The varieties of faith-related agencies. *Public Administration Review*, 61, 651-670.
- Thumma, S. L. (1996). *The kingdom, the power, and the glory: Megachurches in modern American society*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Emory University, Atlanta, GA.
- Toussaint, P. A. (1999). Concord Baptist Church: Taking care of business in Bed-Stuy. In R. D. Carle & L. A. DeCaro, Jr. (Eds.), *Signs of hope in the city: Ministries of community renewal* (pp. 63-79). Valley Forge, PA: Judson.
- Tsitsos, W. (2003). Race differences in congregational social service activity. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 42, 205-215.
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (1994). *The location and racial composition of public housing in the United States*. Washington, DC: Office of Policy Development and Research, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- Van Ryzin, G., Ronda, M., & Muzzio, D. (2001). Factors related to self-sufficiency in a distressed public housing community. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 23, 57-69.
- Venkatesh, S. (2000). *American project: The rise and fall of a modern ghetto*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Vidal, A. (2001). *Faith-based organizations in community development*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- Walker, W. T. (1991). *Common thieves! A tithing manual for black Christians and others*. New York: Martin Luther King Fellows Press.
- Wallis, J. (2000). What's an FBO? In E. J. Dionne, Jr., & J. J. DiIulio, Jr. (Eds.), *What's God got to do with the American experiment* (pp. 146-152). Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- Wilson, W. J. (1987). *The truly disadvantaged: The inner city, the underclass, and public policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wilson, W. J. (1996). *When work disappears: The world of the new urban poor*. New York: Knopf.
- Wineburg, R. (2001). *A limited partnership: The politics of religion, welfare, and social service*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Wood, R. (2002). *Faith in action: Religion, race, and democratic organizing in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wuthnow, R. (1998). *Loose connections: Joining together in America's fragmented communities*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wuthnow, R. (2004). *Saving America? Faith-based services and the future of civil society*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

*Michael Leo Owens is an assistant professor of political science and a university-community partnerships faculty fellow at Emory University. His research and teaching bridge urban politics, community development, social welfare policy, and religion. He is completing a book manuscript on the contemporary politics of urban African American churches in the United States.*

*R. Drew Smith is a scholar in residence at the Leadership Center at Morehouse College. He directed the Faith Communities and Urban Families Project and Public Influences of African-American Churches Project. Editor of three books on African American churches and public life, he has written numerous articles and book chapters on American religion and politics.*