
CAPACITY BUILDING: THE CASE OF FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

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The issue of capacity is as important to faith-based community development specifically (Vidal 2001) as it is to community development generally (Glickman and Servon 1999; Chaskin 2001; Chaskin et al. 2001; Nye and Glickman 2000). In the current policy context, federal laws and a growing number of state laws invite partnerships between the public and faith sector—both taxpayer-supported and voluntary—for community development, inclusive of social welfare services provision. The laws (for example, Charitable Choice) seek to improve the ability of present and future initiatives to rely on faith-based organizations to help residents of disadvantaged communities overcome afflictions and addictions that prevent them from achieving economic self-sufficiency and their neighborhoods from becoming decent and stable places, particularly for youth.¹ They intend to sponsor and help expand programs that reform the personal situations and environmental conditions of the poor.

The laws promoting public-faith sector partnerships contain an implicit policy assumption about the capacity of faith-based organizations for community development, one many policymakers and practitioners hold: faith-based organizations have the ability to foster physical and social change. This assumption rests on the belief that faith-based organizations have considerable resources—large memberships, sizable annual incomes, and a store of expert volunteers—that give them the ability to design, deliver, and sustain community development services. In short, convention holds that congregations possess the “bricks, bodies, and bucks” for rebuilding neighborhoods and strengthening families (Hacala 2001). The effects of faith-based organizations’ activities in disadvantaged communities, however, may be negligible, despite their value to community renewal. Faith-based organizations may yield few outputs and achieve small outcomes because their capacity cannot accommodate the needs of community renewal. This may be so, despite a policy attitude that faith-based organizations, above all other organizations, have the capacity for community development.

The efforts of faith-based organizations range from affordable-housing production and economic development to social services and community organizing (Cnaan 1999). Whether faith-based organizations have the capacity for community development, measured by increased assets owned by the individuals and families of disadvantaged

neighborhoods, is an empirical question that remains unanswered. Nevertheless, observers note that faith-based organizations have “created some of the most persistent and innovative community development programs in cities, they have organized significant resources for the benefit of the poor, and they have contributed to the national dialogue about faith-based development” (Thomas and Blake 1996).

Many observers see faith-based organizations as “rising stars” in the universe of community development, with vast distances to cover before reaching their apex in terms of services and effects (Thomas 1997). The most observed organizations among the ascending stars are faith-based community development corporations (CDCs), especially those associated with African-American churches, which receive the bulk of scholarly attention (for example, Frederick 2001; Hinesmon-Matthews 2003; Owens 2001, 2003).² This paper, however, attends to another type of faith-based organization responsible for creating most faith-based CDCs in the United States—the congregation. It addresses capacity, a topic in need of empirical investigation.

Although development projects of congregations have been well documented (for example, Clemetson and Coates 1992), the capacity of congregations for improving poor neighborhoods remains largely unstudied and questionable (Foley, McCarthy, and Chaves 2001; Vidal 2001). Political scientist James Q. Wilson observes: “We have no systematic evidence as to whether [their] programs are working in any large sense—that is, for lots of people—but ample testimony that they do work in a small sense—that is, by changing the lives of identifiable individuals” (2000). Still, as John DiIulio, Jr., the former director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, notes, “it remains to be seen how, if at all, the local faith-based efforts can be taken to scale in ways that predictably, reliably, and cost-effectively cut crime, reduce poverty, or yield other desirable social consequences” (2000).

If it is true that congregations have the capacity for effective community development, we may expect the faith sector generally to do more to help the poor reform their lives and the conditions they endure in their neighborhoods. We may also then believe that congregations have the capacity to resolve collective problems in poor neighborhoods, such as affordable-housing shortages and limited employment opportunities. If the answer to the question is false, however, we may need to look to other organizations in the faith sector, even other sectors of society, to improve the assets of disadvantaged communities and their residents. We may also need to see congregations specifically and faith-based organizations generally as tangential, not central, to community renewal in the United States.

After defining “faith-based community development” and providing an overview of congregational involvement in the United States, this paper considers recent scholarship on community development capacity. The paper’s purpose is to identify factors that influence the ability and effectiveness of neighborhood-based organizations for neighborhood change. From there, the paper moves to an empirical examination of congregational capacity for faith-based community development. It relies on data from a survey of congregations in the metropolitan area of Atlanta, Georgia. Subsequently, the paper identifies key issues for those concerned specifically with helping congregations build capacity to expand their services, become more effective, and achieve sustainability for the purpose of fostering community transformation and social change. These issues also are appropriate for those interested in setting a public-private agenda for strengthening the abilities of organizations of all types to revitalize communities in the United States.

FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

In an essay on faith-based community development, urban planning scholars June Manning Thomas and Reynard Blake declared: “Individuals involved in neighborhood development in distressed central-city neighborhoods in the United States must confront, sooner or later, faith-based community development” (1996). Their declaration, however, came without definition. Since then, the term “faith-based community development” has become more common, but also more vague for practitioners, scholars, and policymakers engaged in community development discourse. Consequently, they conceive of faith-based community development in numerous ways.

Some conceive of faith-based community development as a distinct type of community development, but others find such an idea unintelligible. Others believe that the term explicitly incorporates religious activities (for example, prayer and proselytism), while some contend that it does not. Some see only certain types of faith-based organizations (such as Christian churches) when they peruse the community development landscape, whereas others are less myopic and more panoramic.

Others aver that community development via “faith-based initiative has an even higher standard to follow” than secular initiative (College of Biblical Studies 2001). Many caution against the claim. Jay Hein of the Hudson Institute, for example, commented a few years ago during a symposium on Charitable Choice, “we need to be very careful not to set the bar too high. We shouldn’t set the bar higher for faith-based organizations... We do need to look at the unique characteristics of faith-based

organizations, but we somehow shouldn't test them above what we expect in our regular and secular training programs" (2000).

At a minimum, faith-based community development fits within the set of metaphorical frames that makes local development understandable (Mier and Bingham 1993). When faith-based community development builds assets for the poor and bridges to new social opportunity structures, it is development as the liberation of human potential. When it defines problems, identifies policy alternatives, and designs programs, especially in collaboration with other stakeholders, faith-based community development is development as problem solving and the exertion of leadership. If it seeks sustainable development and growth without dramatic displacement of incumbents, faith-based community development is development as preservation.

As it revitalizes neighborhood economies and begins to transform poverty areas into middle-class neighborhoods through gentrification, it is development as a growth machine. As it advocates on behalf of the poor and seeks their inclusion in public decisionmaking, it is development as the pursuit of justice and empowerment. If it creates more subsidiaries for congregations and clerics to steward collective resources, it is development as managing an enterprise.

Based on my own review of the community development literature and interviews with key actors in and supportive of the faith sector, I define *faith-based community development* as the practice by organizations from the faith sector to produce services that increase the assets of poor neighborhoods and expand the socioeconomic opportunities for their residents. Ostensibly rooted in religious traditions and tenets, faith-based community development is a process composed of four elements—crisis relief, services and counseling, economic and social advocacy, and market intervention—that take the faith sector “beyond helping—to the initiation, sustenance and management of long-term growth, improvement, and change” (Pickman et al. 1987). Elements of faith-based community development include emergency assistance (for example, sheltering victims of domestic abuse), ministry (such as assisting youth to make moral decisions), physical improvements (for example, housing production), commercial enterprise (such as owning retail properties), and community organizing (for example, fostering neighborhood associations and lobbying for policy changes).

The ability of the faith sector to move past emergency relief requires that it collaborate with other sectors of society. The faith sector by itself cannot develop communities. It needs to couple its human, physical, economic, social, and political capital to that possessed by the public, philanthropic, and market sectors to improve the physical,

economic, and social conditions of disadvantaged communities. Policymakers acknowledge this fact. Consequently, in 2000, federal agencies permitted faith-based organizations to share with secular community organizations in approximately \$1 billion in federal assistance; it awarded approximately 500 grants to faith-based organizations to deliver homeless and HIV/AIDS services, and it distributed approximately two-fifths of its Section 202 elderly housing production funds and technical assistance grants to faith-based organizations (Hacala 2001).

When the coupling of capital among the sectors endures, faith-based community development increases its capacity for strengthening families and transforming neighborhoods. It becomes, borrowing from community building scholar and former U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) official Xavier de Souza Briggs (1998), a conduit for the poor to “get by” and “get ahead.”

CONGREGATIONS AND FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: A NATIONAL OVERVIEW

At its best, “faith-based community development is comprehensive, asset based, and driven from the bottom up” (Ramsay 1998). Congregations do not necessarily control it. Most congregations do not practice community development, and congregations typically do not engage in community development through congregation-affiliated subsidiaries, such as separate nonprofit or commercial organizations (Clerkin and Gronberg 2003; De Vita and Palmer 2003a; Owens and Smith 2003). Nationally, a minority of congregations engages in activities typical of community development organizations (Chaves 1999). Table 1 confirms this fact, relying on data from the National Congregations Study (Chaves 1998), a random survey of 1,236 congregations in the United States. It shows the community development involvement of congregations nationwide, those in cities and those in urban poverty neighborhoods, for a select set of activities. It also identifies the involvement of suburban congregations for comparison purposes.

Table 1. Select Community Development Activities of Congregations, 1998

Congregations				
Activity	National Sample (%)	Urban Areas (%)	Urban Low-Poverty Areas (%)	Urban High-Poverty Areas (%)
Housing	18	21	23	12
Habitat for Humanity	13	7	8	4
Homeless Assistance	8	14	15	9
Employment Assistance	1	2	2	2
Job Training	0	0	0	1
Health	4	5	5	2
Education	6	8	8	8
Any Social Welfare Service	57	60	62	55
Activity		Suburban Areas (%)	Suburban Low-Poverty Areas (%)	Suburban High-Poverty Areas (%)
Housing		19	19	11
Habitat for Humanity		9	8	5
Homeless Assistance		7	8	7
Employment Assistance		1	1	1
Job Training		0	0	1
Health		6	4	2
Education		3	6	6
Any Social Welfare Service		55	59	46

Note: “High-Poverty Areas” are census tracts with poverty rates exceeding 30 percent as of 1990 that are located in cities. Census tracts with less than 30 percent poverty are “Low-Poverty Areas.”

Source: Author’s independent analysis of the National Congregations Study dataset (Chaves 1998)

Most congregations participate in or support some social welfare service, such as services apart from sacramental activities, annually. Their service, however, involves mainly emergency relief for individuals and families, youth-focused outreach, or services for senior citizens. As the Reverend Dr. Fred Lucas, former pastor of Bridge Street A.W.M.E. Church in Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, and founder and president of the Faith Center for Community Development, a technical assistance provider in New York City, observes, “the preponderance of [congregations] have not yet found the proper equation for significant community impact. Although many run soup kitchens or youth programs successfully, expanding into building housing or economic development is a huge leap that most churches do not have the capacity to accomplish” (cited in Walker 2001).

A minority of congregations, even in urban and suburban high-poverty areas, does not participate directly in key areas of community development. Few congregations, for instance, engage in housing or workforce development (for example, job training and employment assistance), the two pivotal “product sectors” of community development in the United States (Ferguson and Dickens 1999; NCCED 1999). The national data suggest that the effects of the community development work of congregations, compared to the scale of community problems and needs, particularly in high-poverty areas, is extremely limited, especially in urban areas of high poverty.

Sociologists Mark Chaves and William Tsitsos (2001) conclude from the National Congregations Study data that the social welfare services that congregations participate in or support tend to have short durations and address the problems of a relatively small population of clients. As for financing them, approximately \$1,200 is the median dollar amount spent by congregations directly in support of social welfare services. The median for congregations in urban high-poverty areas is approximately \$6,000 compared to a median of \$3,000 for congregations located in urban low-poverty areas.³

The lack of overt action in the community development arena by congregations does not mean they necessarily keep themselves out of it. Avis Vidal, based on her review of the literature about faith-based organizations in community development, explains: “Congregations have two preferred approaches to service: they donate small amounts of cash or in-kind goods to other service delivery groups, or they provide small groups of volunteers to conduct relatively well-defined, periodic [activities]. By contrast, community development activities require regular and sustained involvement in a range of complex processes and tasks” (2001). Therefore, congregations may not see the necessity for practicing community development themselves. Alternatively, they may perceive a need but lack the ability to address it. If so, the capacity of congregations may structure the preferences of congregations for community development and approaches to it.

Nationally, of those congregations involved in their communities through partnerships with other organizations to provide neighborhood services, 10 percent identify their activities as aiding or supporting community development (Ammerman 2001). The remainder participates in partnerships that provide direct service to the immediate needs of the poor (such as food, cash assistance, clothing). It provides resources that help people survive, but not necessarily get beyond their conditions, through linkages to other community institutions. As one study of congregations in a

Chicago urban poverty neighborhood concludes, “the bridging is meager” (Laudarji and Livezey 2000).

The meager bridging to prosperity that congregations provide the poor is rooted in a set of factors (Chaves and Tsitsos 2001). Among the factors that explain congregational involvement in social welfare services specifically and community development generally, congregation size determines much of the type and scale of outreach by congregations. In particular, congregations with large memberships are more likely to practice community development than those with small memberships. Theology matters, too, as congregations from liberal Christian traditions are more likely to engage in community development than those that are not. Yet capacity may explain much of the limited involvement of congregations in community development. It may also account for why scholars find that many urban congregations are disengaged from reforming conditions in the geographic communities where they are located (McRoberts 2003; Smith 2001).

CAPACITY: IDENTIFYING ITS COMPONENTS

Capacity concerns ability.⁴ It is the ability to accomplish what an individual or institution needs or wants to accomplish. As such, capacity refers to the ability of organizations to translate their missions into achievable goals and accomplish them (McPhee and Bare 2001). It provides organizations with an ability to perform in ways that permit them to realize values and objectives for themselves, their partners, or their clients. In the community development domain, and at the organizational level, capacity “is reflected in the ability of...groups to carry out their functions responsively, effectively, and efficiently, connecting to larger systems, both within and beyond the community, as appropriate” (Chaskin et al. 2001).

All organizations have some degree of capacity or ability, and they are “always in the process of becoming more capable” (Boris 2001). Consequently, as Ginger Elliot suggests, “there is no point at which an organization does or does not have capacity; instead, the variations in capacity indicate the relative ease with which goals can be achieved” (2002). As others observe, however, “the existing literature provides no easy formula for building...capacity or achieving favorable outcomes” (De Vita, Fleming, and Twombly 2001). We know that, in terms of its composition, capacity is the byproduct of human, social, financial, and physical capital brought to bear by organizations on collective problems. It results from possessing and combining a set of interdependent factors produced by the interplay of organizational resources and assets.

Because we can debate the distinct set of resources and assets that matter to community development capacity, many alternative frameworks exist for considering capacity. In defining community development, Ronald Ferguson and William Dickens identify social, physical, intellectual, financial, and political capital as the elements of capacity vital to community development as process, practice, and product (1999). In contrast, Carol J. De Vita, Cory Fleming, and Eric Twombly devise a framework that highlights vision and mission, leadership, resources, outreach, and products and services as the critical components of capacity (2001). Avis Vidal, relying on earlier work by Christopher Walker and Mark Weinheimer (1998), contends that the abilities of community development organizations to plan effectively, secure resources, develop strong internal management and governance, deliver programs, and network matter most in terms of capacity (2001). Small differences exist among these three frameworks and others; but they share a broad overlap among their sets. Their disagreements revolve around the specific components of the critical abilities.

Overall, the alternative frameworks applicable to comprehending community development capacity seem to agree on a set of capabilities that defines and measures the capacity of organizations, as well as determines the effects of it for families and neighborhoods. While one may quibble over the specific labels or question the elements of the capabilities, the conceptualization of capacity by Norman J. Glickman and Lisa Servon (1999), along with extensions and refinements of it by Elliot (2002), identifies a conventional set of capabilities as essential to effective community development organizations. Glickman and Servon's set includes five categories of capabilities—organizational capacity, resource capacity, programmatic capacity, network capacity, and political capacity. The five interdependent capabilities determine and measure the overall capacity of community development organizations to foster physical and social change in disadvantaged neighborhoods (Glickman and Servon 2003; Nye and Glickman 2000).

Organizational capacity pertains to the ability of organizations to develop their internal human resources to operate in a professional manner. It identifies the importance of recruiting, training, and retaining skilled principal and programmatic staff to manage community development organizations for effectiveness and sustainability.

Resource capacity relates to the ability of organizations to obtain and manage material resources, inclusive of money (for example, loans, contracts, and grants) and real property (such as land and buildings). It points to the obvious: community development organizations mortgage their ability to achieve goals and objectives to their ability to acquire financial support or leverage other resources to expand their finances.

Programmatic capacity refers to the ability of organizations to design and implement activities that cohere with their missions, as expressed through mission-appropriate goals and objectives. This capacity corresponds to the ability of an organization to plan and execute one activity or a multiplicity of activities. The skills and expertise associated with organizational capacity influence programmatic capacity. In terms of practice, programmatic capacity could include the ability of a community development organization to offer mortgage counseling, deliver addiction services, manage a charter school, operate a for-profit subsidiary such as a Christian bookstore, or engage in all of these activities. It does not correspond, however, to the quantity and types of services an organization provides for its clients. To assess programmatic capacity in such a manner is to take a census of the activities of an organization and to confuse the ability of organizations for community development with their performance as community developers.

Network capacity corresponds to the ability of organizations to build relationships through formal and informal partnerships with other stakeholders for effective collective action. The building of relationships permits the manifestation of missions by organizations. It speaks to the competence of organizations to identify interested parties, reach out to them, and then build and maintain collaborative relationships with them to effect community change. It also speaks to the reality of governing collective problems: managing a community problem such as a shortage of affordable housing or gang violence cannot be accomplished without collaborations among organizations with complementary resources and assets.

Political capacity corresponds to the ability of organizations to identify, mobilize, and maintain support for their missions, goals, objectives, and strategies from diverse stakeholders. Conversely, it corresponds to the ability of groups to acquire political support to effectively oppose the agendas of other groups, especially competitors or ideological opponents. It requires grassroots and local, state, or national elite support to seek greater governmental, commercial, and philanthropic responsiveness to the issues of an organization and its clients. Such a broad understanding of “politics” acknowledges that governmental authority alone cannot resolve most collective problems.

DATA

In considering the “relative ease” of congregations for community development, this paper reports findings based on data from a random sample of clergy in the metropolitan area of Atlanta, Georgia, surveyed by telephone in April 2002.⁵ The

sponsor of the survey intended it to establish a baseline for measuring the civic involvement of metropolitan Atlanta congregations over time. The survey data, however, provide a baseline for measuring the capacity of congregations, using the five dimensions of capacity devised and tested by Glickman and Servon (1999, 2003).⁶ Specifically, the data are useful to this study of capacity building and faith-based organizations because they contain variables that measure aspects of the capacity of congregations for community development.

The Atlanta survey included questions that inquire about the attitude (for example, inclination and motivation) of congregations to involve themselves in community development, as well as behavioral questions that provide information about their preparation and involvement in community development. In addressing the subject of this paper, the analysis relies almost exclusively on the behavioral variables. While it recognizes the importance of congregational interest in community development, the paper speaks less to the motivation of congregations to practice it than to their ability to participate in community development.

The survey sampled 400 congregations, with a response rate of 81 percent. Table 2 provides a brief profile of the sample. It shows that small, mainline Christian, predominantly White, and suburban congregations providing social welfare services and led by college-educated pastors made up a majority of the sample.⁷

Table 2. Profile of the Metropolitan Atlanta Sample

Congregations			
Variable	Metropolitan Atlanta Area (%)	Urban Atlanta Area (%)	Suburban Atlanta Area (%)
Size			
< 100 members	21	26	19
100-499 members	51	42	54
500-999 members	14	18	13
≥ 1,000 members	14	14	14
Denomination			
Mainline Christian	66		
Non-mainline Christian	32	62	70
Other	3		
Membership			
Majority White	61	33	71
Majority Black	23	52	13
Majority Integrated	14	12	14
Other	2	3	2
Location			
Urban	26	--	--
Inner-Ring Suburban	51	--	--
Outer-Ring Suburban	23	--	--
Pastor			
No College Degree	11	12	11
College Degree	89	88	89
Social Services			
Operates a Social Welfare Ministry	54	59	53
Doesn't Operate a Social Welfare Ministry	46	41	48
<i>N=325</i>			

Note: Proportions may not equal 100 due to rounding.

THE ABILITIES OF CONGREGATIONS FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: FINDINGS FROM METROPOLITAN ATLANTA

Many perceive faith-based organizations to have a comparative advantage over other sectors of society when it comes to community development.⁸ They believe

that this advantage comes from the presence, diversity, and resources of the faith sector. Former U.S. Housing and Urban Development Secretary Henry Cisneros observes, “faith communities are still there” in the neighborhoods of need (1996). The statement implies that presence gives faith-based organizations a clearer understanding than other nonprofit organizations and government agencies of the barriers that face the disadvantaged and the solutions to removing them. Presence may correspond to indigenous knowledge of the cause, scope, and scale of problems in poor places.

The diversity of the faith sector also may provide recipients of its services with more alternative types of programs, perhaps ones better suited to their needs, particularly their spiritual ones; The multiplicity of faith traditions potentially can speak to almost every type of individual in need, whereas the services of government agencies and many secular nonprofits cannot. Furthermore, the faith sector has moral and spiritual resources government and secular nonprofit agencies lack. Depending on the situation, those resources may be more appropriate to resolving the problems of individuals and families. For example, spirit-filled volunteers who devote time and energy to making the Word flesh may prove pivotal to moving families and individuals from poverty to prosperity.

Across a range of service areas, most clergy in the Atlanta sample say that faith-based organizations, not secular nonprofit organizations or government agencies, would best provide services to the needy. A majority (80 percent) believes that the public and nonprofit sectors, especially the nonprofit sector, would provide the best workforce development programs. Yet clergy assume that faith-based organizations are more capable than the public agencies and secular service providers at addressing homelessness and hunger (58 percent), facilitating the community reentry of ex-prisoners (58 percent), treating substance abusers (55 percent), and providing child care (50 percent).⁹ These perceptions imply that many clergy believe that faith-based organizations generally have the capacity to accomplish a diversity of social welfare goals falling under the rubric of community development. The perceptions, however, may bear no relation to reality.

Conjecture aside, congregations may lack the capacity for community development, as measured by the five dimensions of capacity that seem to determine the effect of community development. The Atlanta data suggest that organizational capacity may be the weakest ability congregations possess for community development. The programmatic, resource, and political capacities of congregations may be mixed. Congregations may be strongest in terms of network capacity.

WEAK CONGREGATIONAL ABILITY: ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The competence of principal and frontline staff to perform duties and fulfill responsibilities critical to the operation of their organizations is an important ability for community development organizations to possess. This ability greatly influences all other sets of abilities of organizations, which, in turn, influence organizational capacity. Organizational capacity, for instance, influences resource capacity. Unless the leaders and staff of an organization possess the ability to position their organizations to seek funds, they will fail to obtain them, unless a patron is available. Conversely, unless an organization can obtain resources, it becomes difficult for the organization to recruit, train, and retain staff.

To assess critical elements of the organizational abilities of congregations, the survey asked Atlanta clergy who indicated that their congregations would apply for government money a series of questions that pertained to their ability to submit an application. It makes sense to focus on the ability of congregations to seek funding because of the skills required to accomplish the task. As Thomas Brock of MDRC notes, “The unglamorous side of social services is there’s a tremendous amount of internal capacity that’s needed just to be able to compete for a grant, to be able to comply with the reporting, both financial and programmatic that’s required” (2000).

Initially, the survey asked clergy if their congregations would need assistance in applying for public funds. Approximately 7 of 10 pastors (69 percent) maintained that their congregations lacked the ability to complete a request for qualifications or proposals by themselves. As one may expect, size affects assistance needs. In particular, pastors of small congregations (88 percent) were more likely to acknowledge a congregational need for assistance than those of large congregations (53 percent). Following the initial inquiry, the survey posed to the respondents a battery of questions that identified specific forms of organizational assistance their congregations might need to apply for public funding or administer it as part of a community development initiative of the congregation. Each item on the survey identified an ability one would associate with “inner capacity” of community development organizations that have high organizational capacity.

Table 3 shows how the Atlanta clergy participating in the sample perceive the organizational needs of their congregations along five dimensions related to the pursuit and expenditure of public funding: grant or proposal writing, program administration and management, legal counsel, staff development, and computer and information systems management. Three-quarters of clergy reported that their congregations would need assistance in three or more of the organizational areas

to apply for public funding to operate social service programs. More than one-half (58 percent) of all congregations would need assistance in at least four of the five areas. Clergy leading small and large congregations reported needs equally across the five dimensions of assistance, with 52 percent in each size category acknowledging the need of assistance in four or more areas.

For congregations, tithes and offerings account for most of their annual revenue. Depending on the scale and scope of their community development initiatives, congregations may require resources beyond what these internal sources permit. Accordingly, they may seek external support in the forms of grants or contracts. Regardless of the type of external support requested, the pursuit requires an ability to write a funding proposal. This ability may be most critical to a congregation obtaining material funding from external sources for its community development initiatives. As Arthur Farnsley concludes, based on his analysis of faith-based organizations seeking municipal grants in Indianapolis, “even in this friendly environment for faith-based groups, strong grant mechanics and quality content [are] the keys to successful applications [for example, winning grants]” (2001).

Table 3. Technical Assistance Needs of Congregations

Type of Assistance Needed	Congregations		
	Metropolitan Atlanta Area (%)	Urban Atlanta Area (%)	Suburban Atlanta Area (%)
Grant or Proposal Writing			
Yes	91	96	88
No	11	4	12
Program Administration & Management			
Yes	74	78	71
No	26	22	29
Legal Counsel			
Yes	71	67	73
No	29	33	27
Staff Development			
Yes	67	74	65
No	33	26	35
Computer & Information Systems Management			
Yes	53	56	52
No	47	44	48

Note: Proportions may not equal 100 due to rounding.
 Source: Faith and the City Survey of Atlanta Clergy, 2000

Congregations improve their chances of acquiring external support by writing persuasive proposals. The Atlanta data suggest strongly, however, that most congregations lack the ability to write funding proposals on their own. The preponderance (91 percent) of clergy acknowledges the need for assistance in writing a funding proposal. Both urban and suburban congregations need such assistance. Moreover, the size of congregations does not appear to matter: 91 percent and 95 percent of small and large congregations, respectively, would need assistance in writing proposals requesting public funding to operate congregation-based social welfare programs.

The preparation of a proposal for a public grant or contract can be complicated. It involves more than writing well about the goals, design, and outcomes of an organization and its programs. Furthermore, organizations seeking to improve their chances of funding may need to acquire formal nonprofit status from federal and state regulators. Also, because community development initiatives involve potential legal and financial risks for organizations, the public request-for-qualifications process encourages organizations considering whether to bid to provide services to seek legal counsel during and following the submission of its proposal.

The clergy data indicate that congregations generally would be unable to submit a proposal unless they received legal assistance; 71 percent of clergy leading congregations that would seek public funding for their outreach programs identify legal counsel as a congregational need. Approximately three-quarters (76 percent) of small congregations would need legal counsel in applying for public funds to provide a social services program. Perhaps because they have in-house legal counsel, a smaller majority (57 percent) of clergy from large congregations believe their congregations would need assistance in considering and addressing the legal aspects of applying for public funding. As for differences among congregations by location, 73 percent of suburban congregations indicate they would need legal assistance compared to 67 percent of urban congregations.

The operation of effective and sustainable community development initiatives and particular programs within them requires organizations to extend their human resources. Staff size may affect the ability of organizations to be effective and expand their programs to a scale comparable to the needs of its clients. Few congregations have large professional staff devoted to their social service programs. For instance, the National Congregations Study data show that 6 percent of congregations have paid employees that devote one-quarter or more of their work to the administration of congregation-based social welfare programs. This could limit the ability of congregations to design and manage new or extant social services programs. Overcoming the limitation requires more than the recruitment or retention

of skilled principal and programmatic staff. It also involves improving the abilities of existing staff through education and training.

Most clergy in metropolitan Atlanta admit they need staff development skills. Such skills remain a low priority, however, compared to most other needs related to increasing resource capacity. Slightly more than two-thirds (68 percent) of clergy report their congregations would need staff development assistance to prepare a proposal. The same proportion exists for small and large congregations. A higher proportion of urban congregations claims to need such assistance compared to suburban congregations, with the proportions for urban and suburban congregations being 74 percent and 65 percent, respectively. An equal proportion (67 percent) of large and small congregations needs staff-development assistance.

Effective program administration and management are by-products of staff development, as well as strong recruitment and retention of skilled staff. Not only are effective program administration and management important to the ability of an organization to demonstrate its qualifications to receive external support for its work, they are fundamental to the outputs and outcomes of the organization. While a majority of large congregations need assistance in this area, large congregations (67 percent) are less likely to need it than are small congregations (76 percent). Moreover, although most urban congregations need assistance in this area, urban congregations (78 percent) are less likely to need it than are suburban congregations (71 percent).

Lastly, some funding agencies may require electronic submissions of proposals, along with evidence that an organization can show measures and evaluations of the outcomes of their current programs. They may also inquire about the ability of an organization to track and document future programmatic changes, as well as submit electronic reports over the duration and at the conclusion of a funding period. The ability to meet these requirements necessitates that organizations invest time and resources in computer technology. Almost one-half (47 percent) of the Atlanta sample believe it is not a need of their congregations. Still, most urban and suburban congregations identify it as a need, with urban congregations (57 percent) slightly more likely to identify it than suburban ones (52 percent). Large congregations overwhelmingly do not see it as a need, with 38 percent reporting they need assistance. Even the majority (52 percent) of small congregations tends to disbelieve that they need assistance regarding computer technology. The data signify that computer and information systems management assistance is the lowest priority for congregations that currently lack the ability to compete for public funding for their social welfare programs.

MIXED CONGREGATIONAL ABILITIES: RESOURCES, PROGRAMS, AND POLITICS

RESOURCE CAPACITY

A fundamental dimension of the resource capacity of congregations is membership size. Prior studies suggest that the size of a congregation determines its access to material resources, especially money, be it given as tithes and offerings by attendants at worship services or provided by government agencies and philanthropies as contracts and grants (Chaves and Tsitsos 2001; Owens and Smith 2003). Specifically, the greater the number of members a congregation reports, the higher it reports its annual income.

The Atlanta survey asked clergy to report the approximate size of their congregations. The majority (72 percent) claim congregations of fewer than 500 members. Unfortunately, the data do not provide information regarding the income and funding sources of the congregations, which prevents a consideration of how the size of a congregation may directly influence access to funding faith-based community development. Nevertheless, the congregation sizes for most of the sample are larger than the national median of 75 regular members. Nationally, most congregations devote the overwhelming bulk of their revenues to religious worship and education, leaving modest amounts for benevolence (Hodgkinson and Weitzman 1993). Presumably, the greater memberships of the Atlanta clergy yield greater total congregational revenue for worship *and* social welfare expenditures. Again, the data do not permit strong conclusions about the import of membership size to the resource capacity of congregations in the sample.

Beyond congregation size, knowledge of potential external funding sources is a component of resource capacity. A congregation cannot obtain funds for community development unless it can identify sources for it. This is true whether one is interested in denominational, philanthropic, or public support for faith-based community development. The federal government draws the most debate as a potential source of external funding for faith-based community development by congregations. That is not to suggest that other important external sources do not exist. Federal funding, however, whether it takes the form of direct grants from federal agencies or indirect funding administered by states and localities as grants or contracts, provides a pivotal source of material resources. The receipt of federal financial assistance, for example, may legitimize the community development work of congregations. Such legitimacy, in turn, may enable organizations to leverage greater private funding for their programs.

Clergy awareness of federal funding measures the preparation of congregations to begin to develop or expand their resource capacity. Atlanta clergy reported whether they were aware of federal legislation that would enable congregations to apply for public money to fund congregation-based social welfare programs. Specifically, 80 percent of clergy claimed an awareness of federal “Charitable Choice” legislation related to public funding of congregations. Urban clergy have a greater awareness than do suburban clergy. Large congregations have a greater awareness than do small congregations.

The receipt of external funding by an organization for its programs is another variable that gauges resource capacity. Although elements of political capacity, as well as the local political environment, may influence the receipt of governmental funding by congregations and other faith-based organizations (Owens 2001), the acquisition of government financial support by a congregation suggests that it has the ability to obtain resources to manifest its mission. To assess this dimension of resource capacity, the Atlanta survey inquired of clergy whose congregations operate social services if government agencies fund their programs. As other surveys of congregations have found (Chaves 1998; De Vita and Palmer 2003b; Owens and Smith 2003), the preponderance (86 percent) of sample congregations operating social welfare programs in Atlanta does not receive any form of government funding. Of those congregations that do not receive government funding for their social services, more than one-half (60 percent) of clergy aver that they would not apply for public money if it became an option for them. That is, they would choke off a potential source of funding, perhaps limiting their overall resource capacity as congregations.

PROGRAMMATIC CAPACITY

We might expect that organizations have the ability to design and implement activities that accomplish their goals and objectives. Common sense suggests that staff development, along with program administration and management, influences the ability of organizations to plan and execute their community development activities. The Atlanta data do not permit an extensive consideration of the programmatic capacity of congregations. Nonetheless, they allow a consideration of an important aspect of the ability of congregations to design and implement activities that accord with the goal of producing services that increase the assets of poor neighborhoods and expand the socioeconomic opportunities for their residents—the provision of social welfare services. Atlanta congregations are almost on par with congregations nationally in terms of their operation of social welfare programs generally. More than one-half (54 percent) of clergy report that their congregations operate programs to aid poor single-parent families, poor children, or unemployed

fathers. The data suggest that many congregations have a programmatic foundation on which to build and expand their efforts in the community development arena.

The data also speak to the responsiveness of congregations to policy changes, another element of programmatic capacity. That is, we can consider the ability of congregations that provide social welfare services to design and implement new programs in response to external needs and pressure. Since the 1996 changes to the federal welfare laws, national and subnational public agencies have engaged in an array of activities to encourage congregations to take on more responsibility for meeting the needs of the disadvantaged (Owens 2000). Moreover, some studies find that welfare reform has increased the number of congregations collaborating with public agencies to achieve it (Sherman 2000). Therefore, some congregations have the capacity to respond to new opportunities for service and funding.

The survey of Atlanta clergy asked respondents from congregations that provide services whether any of their programs were a direct response to welfare reform. One in ten clergy answered affirmatively, which raises a concern about the flexibility of congregations to expand their programmatic ability in light of critical policy and funding changes. The clergy's response also raises the question of whether congregations prefer to create programs in response to local needs rather than national and state policies. Either way, the Atlanta data suggest that urban congregations are more likely to claim they operate programs that stem from changes in public policies regarding welfare than are suburban congregations. In terms of the size of congregations, small and large congregations are equally likely to report that welfare reform influenced them to operate some of their programs.

POLITICAL CAPACITY

Politics can affect community development, even faith-based community development (Owens 2001). Community development organizations that garner internal and external support for their missions, goals, and activities may be better able to navigate the politics of community development. As was the case with network capacity, the Atlanta clergy responded to attitudinal and behavioral questions that identified aspects of the political capacity of congregations for community development. The first question asked whether clergy *should* encourage their congregants to affect the decisions of policymakers through political action: 93 percent agreed. A subsequent question asked whether clergy *did* encourage their congregants to take political action, with 84 percent of respondents claiming to behave in that manner, and 79 percent claiming to have done so in the last 5 years.

In pursuing the political capacity issue further, the survey posed to clergy a question concerning their “prophetic voice.” Clergy were asked whether they spoke on behalf of specific policy issues in a public forum, as well as whether they lobbied legislators for a specific piece of legislation. Most clergy either do not have a prophetic voice or they do not use their prophetic voice. Most clergy claimed to be neither outspoken on public issues (56 percent) nor advocates on behalf of or opponents of legislation (63 percent). Finally, the survey asked clergy to gauge the involvement of their congregations in local public policy issues as part of its congregational mission. Most clergy (61 percent) responded that their congregations were “somewhat” or “very” involved in the public policy issues of their communities.

STRONG CONGREGATIONAL ABILITY: NETWORK CAPACITY

Two measures of network capacity are the attitude of organizations toward collaboration and their actual collaboration with other organizations. Congregations led by pastors who support the idea of collaboration, for example, would imply that congregations are inclined to reach out to others. Building network capacity begins with this initial step. Likewise, the presence of congregations led by pastors who actively build relationships to address collective problems suggests that such congregations will be involved in larger networks and therefore have more network capacity than those led by pastors whose congregations act independently of others.

On the first measure, which assesses attitudes about collaboration, Atlanta clergy were asked a normative question about collaboration: Clergy *should* partner their congregations with secular organizations to improve neighborhood conditions. A large majority of clergy (83 percent) responded affirmatively to the statement. On the second measure, which assesses behavior, clergy were asked to agree or disagree with an alternative statement of action regarding collaboration: As a member of the clergy, I partner my place of worship with secular organizations to improve neighborhood conditions. Again, a large majority of clergy (72 percent) agreed with the statement, although noticeably dropping off from the normative question to the behavioral question.

Another measure of network capacity is the ability of organizational leaders to interact purposively with other groups to achieve mutual goals and objectives. This ability can be measured by whether organizational leaders attend meetings with other organizations and serve in a voluntary capacity with other groups that deal with community problems and issues. Most Atlanta clergy (82 percent) report they

attend issue meetings sponsored by other community organizations. Of the clergy that attend community meetings, 67 percent volunteer their time with community organizations other than their own congregation.

Leaders who interact with other groups on community issues demonstrate a modest form of networking. Developing and maintaining partnerships for community problem-solving through collaboration make for a stronger form of networking. Therefore, the survey asked clergy of congregations operating social services programs in the Atlanta metropolitan community whether their congregations operate most of their programs alone or in collaboration with others. Approximately one-half of the respondents (49 percent) claim they collaboratively deliver social services. A slightly higher proportion of urban congregations (52 percent) collaborate with other groups to operate their programs than do suburban congregations (48 percent). Regardless of locale, small congregations are more likely to participate in partnerships with other organizations to provide social welfare services than are large congregations.

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Over the past 20 years, as Stacey Davis, president and chief executive officer of the Fannie Mae Foundation, concludes, “[faith-based organizations] have had a powerfully positive impact on affordable housing and community development in the United States” (Stanfield n.d.). Currently, faith-based community development is perhaps the fastest-growing segment of the community development system in the United States. The National Congress for Community Economic Development reports that faith-based organizations constitute the largest bloc of its newest members (Winstead and Cobb n.d.).¹⁰ Even so, the capacity of faith-based organizations, generally, and congregations, specifically, will determine the community development effects of the faith sector in the future. Accordingly, capacity building is vital to the expansion and effectiveness of faith-based community development. That is, it is necessary to have activities that permit congregations, as well as other faith-based organizations, to do what they do better and do more of what they do.

Three general forms of capacity building are *assessment*, *intervention*, and *expenditure* (Backer 2001; Letts, Ryan, and Grossman 1999). *Assessment* involves activities that discern the assets and deficits of an organization, inclusive of its ability to respond constructively to the recommendations of evaluators. *Intervention* refers to activities by external agents to transform the deficits of organizations into assets and leverage assets to increase the ability of an organization to meet its goals.

Expenditure concerns activities that transfer money from external agents to an organization for the purpose of purchasing necessary changes (for example, staff development or technology) or leveraging assets for organizational growth. Each type of capacity building is relevant to congregations and perhaps other faith-based organizations, as well as to secular community development organizations. The final remarks of this paper, however, focus on intervention.¹¹ Specifically, it raises two issues that those interested in increasing the ability of congregations to engage in community development should consider concerning intervention—knowledge and collaboration. These issues will influence the capacity of congregations to pursue their missions and achieve their goals as community developers over the next few years.

KNOWLEDGE

The Partnership for Community Action in DeKalb County, Georgia, hosted a resource symposium for the faith community in the spring of 2003. It introduced representatives of the faith community to key administrative personnel from federal and local agencies that help expand the ability of community organizations to transform neighborhoods and strengthen families. The administrators disseminated information to representatives of the faith sector about the work of their agencies and funding opportunities outlined in the Super Notices of Funding Availability for federal agencies. They gave PowerPoint® presentations, passed out brochures, exchanged business cards, and fielded questions. The sense among many participants, however, was that the sessions were too generic; they made too many broad references to agency responsibilities, program names, and invitations of proposals for funding but offered no practical training in how to do the things that make for a strong proposal, improve program management, or increase the effectiveness of initiatives. They recognized knowledge dissemination posing as knowledge development.

Nationally, the most clergy, and perhaps their congregants, are aware of public policies that seek to enable congregations and other faith-based organizations to apply for public money to fund faith-based community development. Accordingly, clergy may not need much more information-oriented intervention about general policy changes. They need the ability, however, to use the information in ways that take them past awareness and their congregations toward action. In short, they need knowledge. But, borrowing from Chaskin et al. (2001), attaining knowledge requires that those who intervene “must understand the difference between providing expert knowledge and building an organization’s capacity to apply new knowledge

effectively, between performing a particular service or activity ('doing it') and helping an organization learn how to provide that service or activity itself ('teaching the client to do it')."

Unfortunately, intermediaries may not have the capacity for intervention at the scale congregations and other organizations need to develop knowledge to expand their abilities. Consequently, federal funding of intermediaries to increase the capacity of faith-based organizations to design, implement, and evaluate community change initiatives across the country, along with the work of other intermediaries assisting the faith sector to build capacity for community development, may be less effective than we expect if they merely disseminate rather than develop knowledge. Some evidence shows that this is true. Thomas Backer (2001) notes that a study of twelve national intermediaries concludes that they "spend most of their energy on documentation, analysis, and knowledge dissemination to provide information that community-building organizations can use. Intermediaries also provide direct technical assistance, but this service receives much less of the intermediaries' attention." Looking at national and local intermediaries that assist faith-based organizations, in particular, however, Amy Sherman found that most claim to provide their clients with training and technical assistance, as well as assistance with program design (2002). The study did not assess the veracity of the claim by surveying the clients.

Nevertheless, considering the proportion of Atlanta clergy in need of organizational and programmatic capacity building, clergy and the laity engaged in or inclined toward community development need instruction that develops their abilities for change and sustainability. The required instruction will range from mapping and mobilizing the assets of faith communities to developing interested spirit-filled volunteers to assume professional positions to evaluating their "ministries" to discern socioeconomic effects. Such instruction requires that agencies, public and private, move beyond identifying their programs and funding requirements at public events to instructing audiences in vital capacity areas, such as managing organizations, acquiring resources, and administering programs. Although conferences and workshops are important tools for knowledge dissemination, they prove insufficient for knowledge development.

A way of developing knowledge among the faith sector to increase any of the five capacities, but especially organizational and programmatic capacity, is to use the Internet and Webcasts of events. The U.S. Department of Education, for example, maintains a Webcast on its Internet site that provides a grantwriting tutorial for those interested in obtaining funds to design, implement, grow, or improve physical

education programs for youth in kindergarten through twelfth grade. An opportunity also exists for greater productive use of electronic chat rooms to discuss the practical aspects of increasing the ability of congregations and other faith-based organizations to engage in community development.

Beyond the use of technology to provide various degrees of distance learning to clergy and laity, congregations need to receive direct assistance from professionals of highly effective congregations, as well as from secular organizations. Talent banks and fellowships would make a difference to congregations and other faith-based organizations starting out in the community development field or seeking to broaden their services. Borrowing from the model at the Community Development Resource Center at the University of Delaware, local, regional, and national organizations could recruit and pool professionals to give intensive, practical education on organizational growth and sustainability to congregations on a reduced-cost basis. Conversely, neophytes of new or less-effective organizations need to spend time with exemplary organizations learning for their current and future positions while on the job.

COLLABORATION

Most congregations in the United States are small in membership and revenue. Many will find it difficult as individual congregations to design and implement effective programs to serve disadvantaged groups, recruit volunteers from among their attendants, or obtain and manage funding for community development. Small congregations that seek to become community developers or expand the scale of their extant programs will need to collaborate among themselves or partner with larger congregations, perhaps even larger secular organizations. Within some congregations, it may be necessary to encourage greater collaboration among their internal programs, or even their consolidation into a single comprehensive initiative to expand their organizational, programmatic, and resource capacities. Moreover, some congregations providing social welfare services may even want or need to merge their programs rather than collaborate to maximize their effect in target communities, increase organizational efficiency, reduce duplication of services, and/or recruit professional, full-time personnel.

According to the Atlanta data, collaboration is an idea that most clergy support and their congregations practice. Nonetheless, many congregations do not collaborate with other organizations to design and deliver services to the disadvantaged in their communities or surrounding communities. As noted, of the sample of Atlanta

congregations that participate in social welfare activities, one-half of them operate programs independently of other groups. Certain barriers, however, prevent them from becoming partners with other organizations. Conflicts over theology and turf, contests among personalities and their visions, competition for attendants and tithes, as well as the strength needed to maintain commitments, build respect and engender trust, and share resources, impede collaboration by congregations. Also, procedural impediments—a lack of incentives and an absence of facilitation—limit collaboration by congregations.

To address the process issues that hinder collaboration, public agencies, as well as philanthropies and intermediaries, should induce partnerships within the faith sector, as well as between the faith sector and other sectors of society. Increasing collaboration for community renewal can be achieved by encouraging, and even requiring, congregations to partner with other organizations to receive and administer funding. Still, such an inducement will prove weak for broad-based collaboration, for most congregations do not want external support, especially from the public. Nevertheless, collaboration, either for or around the receipt of money or to achieve some other end, is key to the faith sector's increasing its ability to fulfill the duties and achieve the objectives of faith-based community development. It will, however, necessitate attention to and investment in facilitation for collaboration. In particular, congregations will likely need the assistance of professionals who understand the traditions, languages, ideologies, and behaviors of the faith sector. They must be able to address the cost and benefits of collective action for community renewal, and to guide conversations and foster consensus among congregations to move them toward partnerships. Sites for investment include seminaries and schools of theology, especially those that are opening their curricula to courses in community development and social enterprise, as well as denominations and paradenominations.

CONCLUSION

The faith sector is valuable to community renewal in the United States. Its value comes from the store of social capital the sector produces, maintains, and transfers. This capital refers to the set of norms, trust, and collective understandings that facilitate the development of relationships that assist members of a community in improving the socioeconomic standing of individuals and groups. Congregations, specifically, and faith-based organizations, generally, may expend social capital on behalf of disadvantaged people and places in at least three ways (Foley, McCarthy, and Chaves 2001). First, faith-based organizations may provide resources to poor individuals and poor community institutions from their own stock or through linkages

with governmental and nongovernmental resources. Second, they may proselytize in poor communities in an effort to absorb poor individuals and families into religious groups already endowed with social capital. Third, they may attempt to empower poor communities by employing their own social capital in ways that benefit not only their own members but also individuals and families who are not members. Although social capital may enable the faith sector to make positive differences for disadvantaged places and people, it alone is inadequate for community change.

Do congregations, along with other faith-based organizations, have the capacity for community development? The answer depends on the aspects of capacity one assesses, as well as the measures applied. If the Atlanta findings indicate the abilities of congregations nationally, the capacity of congregations for community development is mixed. Generally, congregations have many of the requisite abilities to practice community development. For instance, they have networks that keep them aware of community issues, clergy who interact with those outside their congregations, and congregations predisposed to collaboration, all of which may yield greater social capital for community change. Congregations, however, possess varying levels of the five abilities necessary for optimal capacity for community development.

Regardless, some claim that faith-based organizations can address all problems. Those who make these claims mortgage capacity to hope for things unseen. Unfortunately, “faith-based” answers to the question of the capacity of the faith sector for transforming neighborhoods and strengthening communities are insufficient. This paper begins filling the empirical gap between what we believe and what we know about the abilities of faith-based organizations to produce services that increase the assets of poor neighborhoods and expand the socioeconomic opportunities for their residents.

NOTES

¹ I use “faith-based organizations” to refer to those organizations and institutions that situate themselves theologically and socially in a particular faith community or that the public associates in its mind with a particular faith community. This assemblage, inclusive of what Steven Rathgeb Smith and Michael Sosin (2001, 652) term “faith-related agencies,” includes those 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.” It also includes congregations and agencies built on particular faith traditions and acting

on behalf of certain religious tenets. It encompasses a complex set of religious, faith-motivated, religious-inspired, and faith-associated organizations, inclusive of coalitions of faith-associated service nonprofits, denominations, and paradenominational organizations. Used here, “faith-based organizations” cover congregations, congregation-operated social welfare ministries, and religious-associated service organizations independent of congregations and/or denominations.

Recognizing the inarguable centrality of faith to faith-based organizations, I leave open the question of whether “faith-based organizations” applies only to those organizations that incorporate religious doctrines and practices in their organizational behavior, especially their management, as well as the design and implementation of services they deliver. For more on the terminology for the organizations in question, see Smith and Sosin 2001 and Wallis 2000. For research about the function of “faith” in faith-based organizations, see Chambré 2001; Jeavons 1994; Unruh and Sider 2001.

² Faith-based CDCs have been on the agendas of policymakers before the current policy context (Cisneros 1996). New Community Corporation in Newark, New Jersey, Bethel New Life in Chicago, Renaissance Corporation in Los Angeles, and a host of other faith-based CDCs were key organizations that policymakers identified as exemplars in transforming the environments of the urban poor. They demonstrated to policymakers that the faith sector, or at least parts of it, could produce affordable housing, deliver social services, and create jobs.

³ I derived these figures from my independent analysis of the National Congregations Study dataset (Chaves 1998).

⁴ Some in the community development domain equate capacity with production. This notion is misguided. Production is possible because of capacity. Accordingly, while the production of services such as affordable housing units may be a goal, capacity does not equal production (Elliot 2002, 7). Furthermore, capacity is more than money. Money may build capacity. Unless organizations manage and spend it appropriately (that is, efficiently), however, money may not increase the ability of organizations to accomplish their goals. In short, while it matters a great deal to capacity, “money is not everything.”

⁵ As is the case with any geography, the boundaries of the Atlanta metropolitan community are arbitrary. One could speak only of the city and its limits when mapping “Atlanta.” One could also identify the boundaries that accord with the

jurisdiction of the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), the metropolitan planning organization responsible for the 10 counties that ring the City of Atlanta. Because of the growth among a set of counties just beyond the purview of the ARC, and their economic interdependence with the City of Atlanta and its inner-ring suburbs, the metropolitan community also could correspond to the 20 counties ringing the city of Atlanta. The latter definition is the one that matches the geography of the data.

⁶This paper does not replicate the work of Glickman and Servon. Its unit of analysis is the congregation, whereas their units were community development corporations and community development partnerships. Furthermore, the survey instruments of Glickman and Servon measured the five community development capacities with variables different from those used in the Atlanta research. The analysis presented here offers alternative measures of the fundamental abilities expected of effective organizations involved in community development.

⁷Two factors reduced the proportion of urban, minority, and/or non-mainline Christian congregations, as well as non-degreed clergy, covered by the survey. First, urban and non-mainline Christian congregations are less likely to have full-time clergy and/or staff available to respond to survey questionnaires. Second, the sampling frame, which the sponsor of the research provided, had a large proportion of clergy who graduated from or at least attended mainline Christian seminaries, rather than clergy possessing certificates from Bible colleges or those lacking university-provided theological training. As a result, 81 percent of respondents had attended seminaries. Together, these points reveal that the research design privileged the responses of clergy from “resource-rich” congregations.

Ideally, the sample would have included greater numbers of responses from urban, minority, and/or non-mainline Christian congregations, as well as non-degreed clergy. Value exists, however, in having low numbers of responses from such congregations and clergy. By asking the opinions of clergy whose congregations theoretically possess the greatest resources for community development, one may understand better the scale of capacity for community development by congregations generally. This is plausible if one accepts that urban minority and non-mainline Christian congregations, while perhaps more likely to practice community outreach, are less likely to match the resources of their suburban, white, mainline Christian peers for it. A finding that resource-rich congregations have low capacity would suggest that “resource-poor” congregations have lower capacity. Accordingly, the data enable one to consider the capacity of congregations generally to engage in community development activities, which is the focus of this paper.

While the sample skews toward suburban congregations, most of the suburban respondents are from inner-ring suburbs. In the metropolitan Atlanta context, that means that many of the suburban congregations are located in inner-ring suburban municipalities that possess many of the social problems, albeit at a smaller scale, as those faced by congregations in the urban core of Atlanta, particularly within the limits of the central city. Lastly, the suburban-heavy sample enables one to consider the interest and practice of suburban congregations collaborating with other congregations, as well as their own capacity for community development, which we too often assume to be high. This is even more relevant in light of the call by President George W. Bush at the National Religious Broadcasters Convention and Exposition (2003) for partnerships among congregations, especially interracial and metropolitan partnerships, to address the problems of the addicted and the afflicted.

⁸ A dearth of empirical investigations exists regarding the advantages of faith-based organizations for community development, despite calls for investigation and evaluation (Vidal 2001, 23). Emerging scholars, however, are beginning to fill the gap (for example, Hinesmon-Matthews 2003).

⁹ Surveys suggest that the public shares some of the opinions of the clergy. A 2001 poll by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press found that a majority of respondents believed that faith-based organizations would do a better job than secular nonprofits or government agencies at addressing homelessness and hunger (40 percent) and rehabilitating prisoners (40 percent). The public seems to doubt, however, or at least question, the ability of faith-based organizations to treat substance abusers (27 percent), care for children (29 percent), and prepare people for work (5 percent).

¹⁰ The number of faith-based organizations in the community development arena should continue to grow. At least four catalysts—beyond the interest, mission, and “success stories” of faith-based organizations—are responsible for the expected increase. First, faith-based community development networks, especially those practicing the asset-based community development model, are expanding across the nation. Second, financial institutions such as Fannie Mae, JPMorganChase, and Fleet Bank, among others, are creating lending and grant programs specifically for faith-based organizations, particularly congregations, to use for community development projects. Third, the number of community development courses has increased at Harvard University, Michigan State University, New Hampshire College, Union Theological Seminary, the University of Delaware, and other institutions; these courses target clergy and the laity. Fourth, entire websites (for example, www.faithandcommunityatwork.com) are devoted to faith-based community devel-

opment. The trends suggest that the faith sector eventually may assume a predominant position in the field of community development in the United States.

¹¹ Assessment is a starting point for building capacity. It is useful in the absence of information. This paper, however, starts from a base of information concerning the extant of abilities of some congregations for community development. In addition, expenditure is fundamental to building the capacity of organizations, and it is necessary for assessment and intervention to occur. Nevertheless, an emphasis on expenditures seems premature at this time, based on the data at hand, previous findings that most congregations will not seek external financial support for their activities, and the contentious nature of the policy debate regarding direct public funding of faith-based organizations.

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