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The role of religion in social welfare provision and policy: congregations in a U.S. city

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THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN SOCIAL WELFARE PROVISION AND POLICY:

CONGREGATIONS IN A U.S. CITY

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THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN SOCIAL WELFARE PROVISION AND POLICY:
CONGREGATIONS IN A U.S. CITY

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ABSTRACT

A complex mix of community and government activities and policies address social welfare needs, and the balance of roles varies from country to country and sometimes community to community. Economic changes and other factors have led to the development of comprehensive welfare states in many countries, making national/federal governments significant players in social welfare planning and provision. Even with these structural changes, communities are still active in assessing and providing for their own members’ needs, though in widely variable forms. Religious organizations are key players in providing for community social welfare needs, both congregations and faith-based organizations, as well as contributing to the national level policy discourse. To understand the role of congregations in social welfare provision, this project presents a case study of congregations in a small U.S. city (using qualitative interviews and other contextual data), a review of federal faith-based social welfare policy (from three administrations), and a discussion of the U.S. case in comparison to similarly constructed European case studies. The federal policy documents reflect an emphasis on communities as best placed to serve their own needs. The community
interview data yielded themes focused on collaboration and structural ways congregations contributed to social welfare. Respondents generally voiced a similar position that community organizations have intimate knowledge of the community’s needs and how to meet these. However, respondents (with a few exceptions) saw the work of community organizations as only possible within a larger government structure of regulation and funding. The constraints of program and funding guidelines that created a need for congregations to fill gaps, discussed by respondents, refers to the complex system of benefits designed to identify the deserving portion of those in need. The results of this project fit in a larger, international comparative analysis of social welfare and religion in western liberal democracies. Examining religion’s participation in social welfare provision contributes to the understanding of religion’s role in the public sphere as possible moral commentator, contributor to the common good, and identity legitimation.
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Introduction

A complex mix of community and government activities and policies address social welfare needs, and the balance of roles varies from country to country and sometimes community to community. In the last two hundred years, economic changes and other factors have led to the development of comprehensive welfare states in many countries, making national/federal governments significant players in social welfare planning and provision. Even with these structural changes, communities are still active in assessing and providing for their own members’ needs, though in widely variable forms. Religious organizations are key players in providing for community social welfare needs, whether congregations or faith-based organizations, as well as contributing to the national level policy discourse.

Social welfare policy research provides detailed analysis and discussion of cross-national differences in policy development and service provision utilizing a range of explanatory variables (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Huber & Stephens, 2001; Lipset, 1996; Pampel & Williamson, 1989). The literature emphasizes the role of industrialization, workers’ movements and progressive politics, and state structure as the primary variables with factors such as religion playing supplementary parts. As recent research shows (Bäckström et al., 2010; Bane, Coffin, & Thiemann, 2000; Edgardh-Beckman, 2004; Morgan, 2006; van Kersbergen & Manow, 2009), the relationship between religion and social welfare provision is multifaceted and complex. Social values that shape social welfare policy are intricately tied to religious history and activity (Coffin, 2000; Lipset, 1996). Religious institutions historically played significant roles in the formation of
states and state policy (Axtmann, 2004). Over time, the state has taken on roles previously served by religious groups—such as the provision of social welfare—in various forms depending on the national context. Religion continues to be a significant voice in the public sphere, regarding social welfare provision and other national policy topics, as well as a service provider in local communities.

This project investigates the role of religion in social welfare provision at the local community level in the U.S. national context. By using the research model constructed in Welfare and Religion in a European Perspective: A Comparative Study of the Role of Churches as Agents of Welfare within the Social Economy (WREP) (Bäckström et al., 2010), the results of this project fit into a larger, international comparative analysis of social welfare and religion in western liberal democracies. Examining religion’s participation in social welfare provision contributes to the understanding of religion’s role in the public sphere as possible moral commentator, contributor to the common good, and identity legitimation.
Chapter 1: Literature Review

In this chapter I discuss the literature in three areas to provide a background for the research project and theoretical framework. Questions of religion’s role in social welfare in the U.S. require reflecting on the larger role of religion in society. I include an examination of the development of social welfare structures and then discuss the research on faith-based initiatives and organizations. First, I focus on the functionalist theories of religion in modern society and the tensions between an arguably secular public sphere and a religiously active public. Next, I present the major discussions of welfare state structures and the typologies of development with cross-national comparisons. I include in this discussion a summary of the findings of the Welfare and Religion in European Perspective (WREP) project case studies. Finally, I review the literature discussing faith-based organizations and initiatives in the U.S. in recent political history.

Religion in the Public Sphere

Participating in social welfare structures is one way that religion is active in the public sphere. To place this participation in context, the following discusses theoretical developments of the relationship of religion and society generally. As a beginning, functionalist theories of modernization and religion are presented to understand how religion is differentiated from other social structures. Theorists disagree on how differentiation changes the role of religion in society (Bellah, 1970; Durkheim, 1995; Parsons, 1961). Some secularization theories equate religion’s differentiation with religion being excluded from the public sphere and becoming a concern purely of personal faith (Bellah, 1970; Berger, 1969). As a society modernizes, religion is
expected to play a less significant role (if at all) in political discourse and other aspects of the public sphere. This expectation, however, has continually been challenged by the reality of international politics and new iterations of modernity. I first provide a brief discussion of secularization theories before moving on to the theoretical framework for this research.

In contrast to the evolutionary views of Berger (1969) and Parsons (1964), Smith (2003) characterizes the increased secularity in the U.S. as a “revolution” because of transformative processes he identifies: “American public life was secularized by groups of rising scientific, academic, and literary intellectuals whose upward mobility—made possible by expanding industrial capitalism and an enlarging state—was obstructed by the Protestant establishment” (p. 37). He locates the changing role of religion in the power dynamic between the established church and elite groups instead of in implicit social evolutions. Smith is rooting secularization to political and economic changes that Parsons argues are also linked to the Reformation and the rational individualism that Parsons argues Protestantism enables. This begins to incorporate institutional change and differentiation into the discussion of religion’s relationship with society. Smith (2003) breaks the revolutionary process down into four steps: 1. the established Protestant regime provoked grievances; 2. the aggrieved mobilized against the establishment; 3. they successfully overthrew and transformed the institutions; and 4. they effected a cultural revolution (p. 2). In contrast to Parsons’ evolutionary argument, Smith presents an intentional maneuvering of institutions within society that shapes the shared culture.
This institutional change happens within a context of pluralism that Martin (1978) argues is a “resultant pattern” within the secularization process, especially in the U.S. (p. 5). (Martin, however, writes that secularization is “largely related to ethos rather than to institutions and beliefs” (Martin, 1978, p. 5).) Martin and Parsons both argue that secularization is tied to Christianity’s history of increasing pluralism constituted in multiple denominations out of the Reformation. Parsons links pluralism with toleration, both values required by modern society, but he also describes the denominationalism coming out of the Reformation as the root of the empirical reality of pluralism in modern society. Understanding pluralism then becomes another variable in defining and assessing secularization.

These presentations of secularization and the changing relationship between religion and society emphasize the differentiation of religion from other sectors of society and, as a consequence, the declining significance of religion in the public sphere. However, this model of modern society and privatized religion has been challenged by other examinations of religion in secular society. The work of Casanova (1994; 2009) and Warner (1993; 2005) are particularly useful to understand possible modern roles for religion in society.

The first two roles for religion in society (specifically social welfare) used for this research are that of moral commentator and contributor to the common good. Casanova (1994) examines the transformation of religion into a strong public player in four countries: Brazil, Poland, Spain, and the U.S. (including both evangelicalism and Catholicism in the U.S.). He argues primarily that differentiation among spheres of
society is an inevitable element of modernity, but religion having a differentiated sphere from the public one does not mean religion must remain in the private sphere. Differentiation requires religion to relinquish its dominance of the public sphere and also to shape and define its own sphere. Casanova (1994) describes this as the “transformation of the church from a state-oriented to a society-oriented institution”:

As churches transfer the defense of the particularistic privilege to the human person and accept the principle of religion freedom as a universal human right, they are for the first time in a position to enter the public sphere anew, this time to defend the institutionalization of modern universal rights, the creation of a modern public sphere, and the establishment of democratic regimes (p. 220). With this, religion is then able to reenter the public sphere in a new role.

While he argues that democracies have “built in pressure toward the privatization” (p. 222), Casanova (1994) writes that religious institutions and groups resist being excluded to the private sphere. The deprivatization argument locates religion’s public role primarily as a critique of norms and values. His three forms of deprivatization outline a role for religion in the public sphere and in civil society: (1) protection and debate of traditional values and norms, (2) holding states and markets morally accountable (moral commentator), and (3) contributing to a common good.

Maintaining a common good emphasizes that religion is not only an external commentator on society but also an active contributor. Casanova (1994) writes about the common good as “normative structures” (p. 230) and religion as an actor in reinforcing those mechanisms in society. Religious ideas and communities attempt to balance
individual interest against the common good by arguing for the benefit of things such as social welfare policy and services. For this research project, Casanova’s work suggests that understanding the role of religion in the area of social welfare means paying attention to actions that provide moral commentary and attempt to contribute to the common good.

In the U.S. this role for religion in the public sphere is unique because of the lack of a previous history of an established, state-oriented church. The third role of religion used for this research is that of identity legitimation. Warner (1993, 2005) emphasizes the disestablishment of churches as central to understanding religion in the U.S. He argues that in the U.S., religion’s civic role includes being a voluntary organization in which people can express legitimate cultural differences: “social space for cultural pluralism” (Warner, 1993, p. 2015). Religion provides a group membership with a socially legitimate identity and shared values that then provides access to the public sphere: “Religion itself is recognized in American society . . . as a fundamental category of identity and association, and it is thereby capable of grounding both solidarities and identities” (Warner, 1993, p. 1059). Warner gives historical examples of this from the American history of prevalent religious subcultures, dating from the founding of the nation (Puritans seeking religious freedom, for example), and describes this reality in the ongoing prevalence of religious participation and belief in the U.S. (unusual compared to other Western countries) (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). This access to the public sphere is an entry point to the public dialogue that Casanova emphasizes as well.

The “institutional vitality” of religion in the U.S. is a result of this role of empowerment. Warner (1993) argues: “Insofar as a subordinated group requires for its
emancipation access to financial and social resources, churches in the U.S. are a convenient and legitimate means of organization . . .” (p. 1069). It is empowering in its voluntary social organization and its “mediation of cultural difference.” This suggests that understanding the role of religion in social welfare must include attention to the way religious organizations embody and enable the participation of diverse cultural groups. This research project incorporates Warner’s concept of identity legitimation by examining the congregation as a nexus for subcommunities, both as a place to bring cultural groups together and to link these groups with the larger community. From this theoretical discussion, the project uses three categories to organize the design and findings: moral commentator, contributor to the common good, and subcommunity nexus.

As disestablishment of religion is indeed significant to the provision of social welfare in the U.S., comparison to European cases in the WREP project will be especially revealing. In the U.S. context, disestablishment both refers to the lack of an official religious tradition from the beginning of the nation-state formation as well as the congregational structure of religious organizations. For example, Le Mon (2009), writing on the Church of England, utilizes Troeltsch’s definition of “church” as opposed to “sect” (p. 37). She points out that a U.S. case study would necessarily examine sects, or religious organizations formed by voluntary association, instead of the established, state-supported religious organization such as the Church of England. This difference has implications for the relationship between religion and welfare provision and will be
discussed when placing this case study of the U.S. in the cross-national context of the WREP case studies.

Using the work of Casanova and Warner, three key questions arise that inform this research project: To what extent is religion serving as a moral commentator? To what extent is religion actively contributing to the common good? And to what extent is religion a means of expressing legitimate cultural differences in the larger community? While many possibilities exist, these three questions will focus this project’s exploration of how religion participates in the public sphere, and specifically, how religion participates in social welfare.

Social Welfare Structures

The participation of religion in any social welfare system is, of course, shaped by the particular history of welfare structure and policy in a given national context. Much literature and research exists around the variation of welfare policy development in liberal democracies. The complexity of welfare policy development in the national and international context defies straightforward causal explanations. As demonstrated in Lipset’s (1996) argument, the particular welfare state in the U.S. can be attributed to a multitude of factors. While all welfare policy theorists include economic, political, and social elements in their analysis, explanations of welfare policy variation usually emphasize one set of factors as dominant in influencing the variation. This section reviews three of the most significant theoretical categories regarding welfare policy development variation.
Variation can be approached using theoretical frameworks of how a country manages industrialism, the shape and history of the state, and the struggle of classes for political power (Huber & Stephens, 2001). These three foci provide a framework for understanding how theorists emphasize the role of economic, social, and political factors in welfare policy development. The logic of industrialism framework for understanding cross national welfare policy development variation focuses on the economic transition to a more industrial society. Theorists argue that welfare policy has been a direct consequence of industrialization (Ebbinghaus & Manow, 2001; Hall & Soskice, 2001; Polanyi, 2002; Wilensky, 1975). The shape welfare policy takes is determined by the structure and experience of economic changes within a nation-state. Policies are “by-products of economic development and its demographic and social organizational consequences” (Huber & Stephens, 2001, p. 15). Most theorists recognize industrialization as a key feature of welfare state development, but some theorists emphasize this as the prime factor (Pampel & Williamson, 1989; Wilensky, 1975).

Welfare policy origins do link directly to the timeline of industrialization in Western liberal democracies. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the United States and Europe experienced significant changes in the economic and social landscapes (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Huber & Stephens, 2001). Increased mechanization of industry led to the accumulation of wealth by the owners. The success of this system of industry relied on increased numbers of workers as well as stability in the rule of law to guarantee contractual obligations. With industrialization came migration from rural areas to urban areas and increasingly institutionalized government structures in nation-state form.
Community and family structures changed as well because of mobility and employment market changes (Morgan, 2006). As individuals and families migrated from rural areas to larger cities for employment opportunities, the support of extended family networks was disrupted. With this came an increasing need to address the negative consequences such as social dislocation and income disparity (Piven & Cloward, 1993).

Discussion of welfare state variation often focuses on how industrialization happened differently in various countries. The combination of increased economic resources (the accumulation of wealth by some) and increased social dislocation was managed by nation-states in a variety of ways. Some proponents of the logic of industrialism theory link the birth of the welfare state directly to economic growth (Cameron, 1978; Wilensky, 1975). While empirically this parallel growth can be disputed (Skocpol, 1991), the welfare policy that states developed (and continue to develop) is a key part of how they managed this economic growth. Tax structures for wealth redistribution, the services provided by the tax funds, and the populations who benefit from the services vary from country to country. In the United States, for example, the early 1900s saw the development of policy targeting the aging population: “performing something of a regulatory function by instituting programs to provide for those necessarily (and appropriately) forced from the productive economy” (Hudson, 2008, p. 533). In contrast, welfare policy in countries such as the Netherlands originated with family-oriented policies intended to protect family structures from economic changes (Morgan, 2006).
Theorists also discuss other elements of economic change during industrialization that shaped welfare policy. Ebbinghaus and Manow (2001) write that intersections between social welfare policy and political economy (industrial relations, the production system and employment regime, and the financial and corporate finance system) help explain how states addressed these needs in varying ways. Orloff (1993) discusses the expansion of welfare policy in countries, such as Sweden, in which policy is shaped by women entering the workforce. Economic growth due to industrialization put nation-states in a position to address the rising social welfare needs (Huber, et al., 1993; Wilensky, 1975). However, other factors within countries also contributed to how social welfare needs were understood and how these economic resources were used to address the needs.

State-centered explanations for welfare policy variation among countries look at factors beyond economic changes and stability. State structures and past policy shape how current and future policy decisions are made regarding social welfare needs (Evans, et al., 1985; Heclo, 1976; Hicks & Swank, 1992; Lowi, 1964). Examining these factors beyond the economic context begins to incorporate other political and social elements that shape policy as well.

Skocpol (1985) emphasizes the influence of “autonomous state action” on political culture and social policy, as well as the centralization (or lack of) state power. Features such as federalism and government autonomy (Huber, et al., 1993; Immergut, 1992) influence the way the state can create and implement welfare policy, as well as the how the need for policy is determined. Robertson’s (1993) discussion of the “new
institutionalism” emphasizes two intersecting elements, political capacity and political coherence. By outlining what he calls “limiting conditions” for public policy creation by the state, Robertson explains how characteristics of the state structure shape policy. He defines political capacity in this way: “first, the formal boundaries of legitimate government intervention . . .; second, government's fiscal ability . . .; and third, the professionalism and expertise of legislators and public administrators” (Robertson, 1993, p. 24).

Also, Hudson (2008) points out the unique structure between the civil service and the government in the United States in which the lack of autonomy interferes in the ability to create administrative bureaucracy (Orloff & Skocpol, 1984; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). In his comparative analysis of Sweden and the United Kingdom, Heclo (1976) identifies bureaucracy and the administrators in it as a significant variable because of the decision-making position: “Policy-making is a form of collective puzzlement on society’s behalf; it entails both deciding and knowing” (p. 304).

Robertson’s (1993) political coherence is then just that: how centralized the state is and how autonomous are its various parts. For example, the structure of the U.S. federal government with its checks and balances requires continual compromise and incorporation of varying interests regarding policy decision making. Similarly, Huber and Stephens (2001) argue that state structure is a political variable as defined by “the concentration or dispersion of political power resulting from constitutional provisions” (p. 4) or veto points (see also Immergut, 1992). The United States has more veto points than countries such as Sweden with more expansive welfare states. Huber and Stephens
(2001) argue that these points at which policy can be thwarted in the decision making process slow the development of comprehensive policy. These theories highlight the significance of structure in government’s ability to appropriate an issue as a public policy concern, as well as its ability to address that issue. The differences in state autonomy, capacity, coherence, and dispersion of power all contribute to the variation in welfare policy cross nationally.

A recent development in this area of welfare policy theory is the emphasis on the structural relationship between church and state (Manow, 2004; Morgan, 2006; van Kersbergen & Manow, 2009). While incorporating some of the elements discussed above, these theorists focus on the transition of social welfare provision to the state from the church as a significant structural factor in policy development. This transition depends strongly on the particular power dynamic between church and state in a national context. In discussing the origins of family policy specific to mothers, Morgan (2006) writes: “Patterns of church-state relations and religious conflict had an enduring impact on early family and educational policies, as well as the way religion would be incorporated into politics” (p. 3). The variation in ways that nation-states developed in relationship to the established church shaped the balance of who provides welfare services. In Sweden, Morgan (2006) writes that “[t]his pattern of church-state fusion, weak religious cleavage, and advanced secularization facilitated the expansion of state responsibility for children and families” (p. 46). The U.S., in contrast, has a unique separation of church and state that has shaped the “decentralization of matters of family
morality and children’s education to states, local communities, and the voluntary sector” (Morgan, 2006, p. 53).

The work of van Kersbergen and Manow (2009) takes the theoretical explanations of welfare state variation a further step back to examine a state’s ability to assume responsibility for social welfare:

This cleavage [of church and state] has been the result of state-church conflicts in the wake of the national revolution when state-building elites challenged the position of the church in domains perceived crucial for the creation of modern nation-states, particularly education but also social protection (p. 10).

Using the United States as an example, the particular constitutional structure of church and state stems from the religious diversity of the population and has contributed to the exponential growth of pluralism (Morgan, 2002; Morgan, 2006). This constitutional structure and the religious diversity slowed the state’s assumption of social welfare provision in the United States. In contrast, the religious homogeneity in Sweden, for example, meant that the primary religious organizations could be subsumed under the national government structure, and the government could easily assume responsibility for social welfare provision that had previously been the purview of the church (Morgan, 2006; van Kersbergen & Manow, 2009).

The effects of past policy, or path dependency, demonstrate another entry point for policy’s influence on state structures (Heclo, 1976; Huber, et al., 1993). Welfare policy arguably creates certain constituencies (whether beneficiaries, proponents, or adversaries) who contribute to shaping state and policy structures in new and
consequential ways: “As each policy is put into place it transforms the distribution of preferences; as the regime increasingly entrenches itself, it transforms the universe of actors” (Huber & Stephens, 2001, p. 32). The participation of citizens and the form that participation takes (whether interest group based, identity based, etc.) is affected by welfare policy specifically, as Mettler (2007) argues, but also then reflects back on to shaping future policy. Schneider and Ingram (1993) write about the ways in which policy motivates individuals to participate in the political process or actually distances them from the political system. For example, Mettler (2007) discusses how the GI Bill in the U.S. created a constituency of politically engaged citizens because beneficiaries saw the government as working in their favor. Hudson (2008) and Campbell (2003) also discuss this phenomenon regarding older adults and Social Security’s inception and continual strength:

Thus, at ‘time 1,’ public policy may have been critical in the creation and institutionalization of the organized aging, but at ‘time 2,’ the groups become critical in efforts to expand—or more recently—to defend the policies against outside encroachment (Hudson, 2008, p. 548-49).

This fits with Esping-Andersen’s (1990) argument that welfare state policies are “an active force in the ordering of social relations” (p. 23)—for example, creating interest groups (in Hudson’s case, older adults) that may have access to policy advocacy power or implicitly identifying categories of deserving and undeserving target populations (Schneider & Ingram, 1993).
In cross national comparisons of welfare states, the role of left wing politics and the mobilization of workers also play a significant differentiating role. This explanatory factor fits well with the major variation between the United States and other Western democracies. The U.S. lacks both an expansive welfare state and a history of left wing/working class political organizing (Kimeldorf & Stepan-Norris, 1992). Esping-Andersen (1990) writes “the history of political class coalitions is the most decisive cause of welfare-state variation” (p.1). His arguments and other theories in this category of political class struggle are much more sophisticated, however, than a simple link between organized labor power and welfare policy.

Esping-Andersen’s (1990) major project is to categorize welfare state variation into a comprehensive typology based on how a country “de-commodifies” labor, or removes an individual’s dependence on the market for survival. The explanatory factors he emphasizes in his analysis of the variation among typologies include class-political coalition structures, the history of welfare policy institutionalization, and, most of all, class mobilization. Esping Andersen argues that the political power of workers’ organizations stemming from class mobilization enabled these organizations to have more power in political coalitions and more voice in policy development.

Similarly, Huber and Stephens (2001) discuss power resources theory as an explanation for welfare policy variation: “The struggle over welfare states is a struggle over distribution, and thus the organizational power of those standing to benefit from redistribution, the working and lower middle classes, is crucial” (p. 17). Again, looking back at the process of industrialization and the associated economic and social changes,
significant variation exists among countries regarding the mobilization of new
stratifications of workers. This refers to labor union organizing, working class/Leftist
political party activity, and the “decommodification of labor” (Ebbinghaus & Manow,
2001; Esping-Andersen, 1990; Korpi, 1983): “We can understand 19th century
developments in social legislation in terms of the creation of a self-regulating market, the
social dislocation this caused, and the counteraction in the form of social protection this
provoked” (van Kersbergen & Manow, 2009, p. 9). With working class mobilization,
political power could be accessed by those who would benefit from social welfare
legislation and who challenged reliance on the free market. Again, the United States
stands out as a country with limited working class mobilization as well as less
comprehensive welfare policy as compared to countries such as Sweden and Germany
(Esping-Andersen, 1990), with the conflicted history between labor and industry certainly
contributing to the mixed public/private welfare system that exists today (Klein, 2006).

This “distribution of organizational power” between labor/left and center/right
can be examined over time as well as in different national contexts to explain the
occurrence of specific welfare policies as well as the expansiveness of a country’s
“consistent and strong effects of political incumbency of social democratic and Christian
democratic parties” regarding the expansiveness of the welfare state (p. 39). While they
include a range of variables, including the international economy, the logic of
industrialism, and women’s labor force participation, their study affirms the main
hypothesis that social democratic party power directly leads to progressive welfare
policy. Esping-Andersen’s (1990) contribution is the link between working class mobilization and this social democratic political power.

For the purpose of this research, Esping-Andersen’s (1990) welfare regime typology is used as a base to compare welfare policy cross-nationally. As referenced, his research incorporates how histories of class mobilization shape welfare state development. In addition to comparisons of welfare state development, he also provides important language in categorizing existing welfare policies, primarily based on the decommodification of workers. First is the liberal welfare state regime, defined by a reliance on employment-oriented and market-based social welfare benefits. Countries in this category mostly use means-tested programs with some social insurance programs to meet the needs of citizens, and recipients of means-tested benefits are often stigmatized. The U.S. is a prototypical liberal welfare regime.

Second is the conservative, corporatist category, including countries such as France and Germany. This category is defined partly by subsidiarity, or an emphasis on communities and families addressing social welfare needs. There is still a reliance on government to address social welfare gaps, as opposed to a heavier reliance on the market in liberal regimes. Third, the social democratic category of countries focuses on policies that are more universal, with the government providing benefits to any individual citizen in need and using social welfare policy to try to achieve full employment. Social welfare policies play a role in protecting individuals from the vagaries of the market. While not purely social democratic welfare states, countries such as Sweden and Norway weigh heavily in this category with extensive social welfare benefits for citizens.
Welfare & Religion in European Perspective (WREP)

Cross-national comparisons of welfare policy (primarily between the U.S. and European countries) have been limited by the absence of religion as a factor in European studies. Because of the significant role religion plays in the welfare structure in the U.S., it is useful to have comparative research that includes religion in European cases as well. One example of research that has brought these two areas of religion and social welfare together is the Welfare and Religion in European Perspective (WREP) project (Bäckström, Davie, Edgardh, & Pettersson, 2010). The WREP research focused on asking questions about welfare state categorizations and the participation of a majority church in eight European countries (Sweden, Norway, Finland, Germany, England, France, Italy, and Greece). The findings from the case studies reflect Esping-Andersen’s welfare state typology in foundational ways but also nuance the differences between regions within Europe by including religious participation, theological differences, and gender factors. The opinions of respondents often reflected their country’s expected position on responsibility for social welfare, but the data collected about service provision demonstrates more blurred typological realities.

Overall, the WREP research identified a general agreement that the state has some responsibility for social welfare but that major gaps existed. Variation existed among respondents from different national cases regarding who should fill these gaps, formally and informally. The research showed that there was an “increasing rather than decreasing role of the majority churches in the voluntary sector, both as providers of welfare and as a ‘critical voice’ able to point out the less as well as more obvious deficiencies of the
In particular, gaps were identified in services for marginalized populations who for various reasons were outside the formal social systems of the particular national context. Religious organizations were identified as specifically necessary in serving these groups: “Not only are the churches aware of their existence, they also have sufficient flexibility to circumvent the red tape that inevitably surrounds these necessarily marginal cases” (Bäckström, et al., 2010, p. 190).

The theoretical implications of the WREP research contribute to the guiding framework for this dissertation. First secularization and the development of the welfare state in individual countries are not analogous historical progressions (Bäckström, et al., 2010). Second, the key factors the researchers identify as shaping the interaction between secularization and the development of the welfare state are considered for the U.S. case (with a focus on parallel concepts identified in the literature above): constitutional structure, history of political power, established church/theological tradition, relationship between state and civil society (nonprofit sector specifically), and the current economic dynamics. Finally, the various theories discussed above that shape the processes of secularization and welfare state development continue to be relevant to the “de-differentiation” identified in this research: “the process of de-differentiation—the renewed co-operation between the churches and the secular sphere—is as culturally specific as its predecessor” (Bäckström, et al., 2010, p. 194).

**Faith-based Initiatives in the U.S.**

Congregations and other religious groups play a significant role in the history of social welfare in the U.S. As discussed above, the historical evolution of social welfare
policy entailed a transition of responsibility for social welfare from private, often religious, groups to government agencies. Of course this shift has not happened in a clear, linear fashion. Major intersections of religion and policy in the U.S. include this changing distribution of responsibilities, subsuming religion under public policy (fitting religious activity into a constitutional structure), and religious actors as contributors to policy as an interest group (Collins, Cooney, & Garlington, 2012).

The current era of devolution (transferring responsibility from the federal to the local level) arguably has shifted the onus for social welfare to communities, religious groups, and congregations. The shift of responsibility to state and local governments is separate from the increased emphasis on community organizations addressing community needs, but the two are enmeshed both in process and in language used to reinforce each other. Federal policy uses the rhetoric of communities better understanding their own needs to explain the importance of shifting responsibility to state and local authorities. Since the welfare reform initiatives under the Clinton administration and the major faith-based services discussions of George W. Bush’s administration, a subset of research in the U.S. has focused on the role and viability of faith-based organizations in social welfare provision. A full discussion of the content of faith-based social welfare policy initiatives is part of the discussion of research findings.

As mentioned, religious organizations have always been involved in social welfare provision (Daly, 2009; Wineburg, 2001). The profession of social work grew out of congregations taking on an urban mission to address social problems subsequent to rural-urban and international migration. Even with the shift of social welfare to the
purview of government policy, religious organizations have continued to provide services informally and through formal government contracts, and to participate in the political process as policy advocates (Bane, et al., 2000; Cnaan, et al., 1999; Formicola, et al., 2003). Large social service organizations such as the Salvation Army and Catholic Charities have historically provided formal extensive programs across the country supported by federal and community funds, serving millions of individuals while also managing a delicate balance of religious character and secular programming.

Congregations have also historically provided support for members in crisis and organized member resources to contribute to the local community. While the current debate around FBO involvement in social welfare sometimes is framed as whether or not they should be involved, this ignores the long history of social welfare activity. When this history is taken as a given, the debate then centers on who should take responsibility for meeting social welfare needs, how we want religion to be active in the public sphere (regarding social welfare), and the suitability of faith-based programming to receive federal funds to address social welfare problems.

Since the 1970s, political discourse has shifted to focus more on individual responsibility for social problems instead of structural causes, and, as a result, devolution has shifted social welfare responsibility more and more to the community level (Wineburg, 2001). As discussed above, the U.S. in particular has a value on individualism and a resistance to government intervention into individual lives. The emphasis on policy solutions to structural problems has waxed and waned, with a significant wane in the form of welfare reform under President Clinton (Sager, 2010;
Wineburg, 2001). While Clinton’s welfare reform policy package did entail the creation of extensive federal structures to implement such programs as “workfare”, the stated intention behind the structures was to decrease the utilization of federal benefits over time (Quaid, 2002). One tool that Clinton specified as more useful to addressing communities’ social needs than government intervention was religious charity. The picture painted by devolution includes a significant role for congregations and other religious organizations in the community as more able to meet social welfare needs because of their unique moral mission and access to the community (Cnaan, et al., 1999): “It is assumed that poverty results from immoral behavior . . . [and] that personal renewal is necessary in order to end poverty and welfare dependency . . . [F]aith-based groups are more effective than secular programs because religion changes lives” (Formicola, et al., 2003, p. 174). Also the shift of responsibility away from federal government structures forces communities to maximize any contributions (formal or informal) available, including those of FBOs (Daly, 2009; Sager, 2010). Partly the shift towards emphasizing community organizations’ (and specifically FBO’s) social welfare provision is also predicated on the idea that government hinders a community’s ability to care for itself (Bane, et al., 2000) or weakens civil society (Glenn, 2000).

Some of this thinking about religious organizations’ unique access to the community is based on geographic proximity to populations in need (though research has problematized this assumption (Ammerman, 1997b; Chaves, 2004; McRoberts, 2008)). Increasing research at the intersection of geography and social welfare demonstrates the significance of the geographic location of services to effectively meeting social welfare
needs (Allard, 2009; Bennett & Cherlin, 2011; Coulton, 2005; Graefe, et al., 2006; Mowbray, et al., 2007; Murphy & Wallace, 2010; Queralt & Witte, 1998). Congregations and faith-based organizations are assumed to be “more embedded” in needy communities (Allard, 2009, p. 42). This geographic relationship is part of the view of congregations and other religious organizations as more able to serve community needs, with physical access to provide services but also proximity leading to stronger relationships of trust (Allard, 2009; Bane, et al., 2000; Cnaan, et al., 1999). Research shows that congregation members are not necessarily members of the congregation’s geographic community, so this relationship of service provision and trust based on physical proximity is more nuanced than might be assumed (Ammerman, 1997b; Chaves, 2004).

With population shifts and decreasing resources, concentrations of individuals and families in need of services are finding these services geographically inaccessible. Extensive social service networks are less likely to be within geographic proximity of the population they intend to serve, limiting “spatial access” (Allard, 2009, p. 14; Hasenfeld, Chen, Garrow, & Parent, 2013). While Peck (2008) argues that nonprofits do locate intentionally in concentrated areas of poverty (though not necessarily with success), certainly conflicts over scarce resources mean that the most disenfranchised communities (with the most need) are not necessarily receiving enough attention unless spatial access is consciously addressed:

While greater resources would improve access to the safety net, simply spending more will not alter structural flaws within the safety net that lead it to be out of place with respect to need . . . Nor are transportation solutions alone likely to
address the instability and underprovision of services in high poverty neighborhoods. (Allard, 2007, p. 31)

The nuances of this disparity go beyond density, the number of service providers located in a geographic area. For example, research has shown that nonprofits in neighborhoods of concentrated need are smaller, less established, and more focused on basic needs than those in wealthier areas (Hasenfeld, et al., 2013; Peck, 2008). Using geography to assess resource distribution helps demonstrate inequalities and gaps for the purpose of creating more effective collaborations between government and community organizations (Joassart-Marcelli & Wolch, 2003): “The geography of the safety net . . . is closely intertwined with issues of race, poverty, joblessness, and social isolation in our communities . . . [and] has direct consequences for how we structure social programs and the likelihood that those programs will succeed” (Allard, 2009, p. 6). In discussions of the unique relationship of FBOs with the community, this spatial element is often subsumed under arguments that the moral lens and cultural cohesion of religious groups make them particularly able to address a community’s specific social welfare needs.

With the devolution of social welfare responsibility to states and communities, including faith-based initiatives, more questions have been asked about the appropriate role of religion in the public sphere, in social welfare activities and beyond:

[W]hile concerns are evident about the appropriate uses of religious belief and practice in the public life of the nation, most leaders are reluctant to argue that religion should be less publicly involved that it is; indeed, evidence of weakening
in institutional religion is more likely to be regarded as an indication of possible
decline in the strength of civil society itself (Wuthnow & Evans, 2002, p. 2).

The particular separation of church and state in the U.S. means that religion’s role in the public sphere has been an ongoing negotiation from its founding, as seen in the functionalist discussion above. Religious organizations that utilize government funds to provide services must negotiate the placement of religious icons in public meeting places, the language in organizational missions and titles, and other aspects of the religious character of an organization that faith-based initiatives strive to protect. Beyond these regulatory questions, faith-based initiatives have also raised questions about government’s role in promoting religion in the public sphere (Sager, 2010) or participating in religious organizations’ missions: “But to recognize the role that religious groups have played in building civil society is not to say that the government should become involved in their missions, which are both material and spiritual” (Formicola, et al., 2003, p. 162). Constitutional questions have also framed faith-based initiatives as overstepping the separation of church and state (both in terms of the establishment clause and the free exercise clause) (Davis & Hankins, 1999; Formicola, et al., 2003; Sager, 2010; Sullivan, 2009; Wineburg, 2007).

Research literature points out that evidence is needed to document the efficacy of faith-based services or demonstrate greater success than secular programs, and research shows that congregations and other small community religious organizations have limited capacity for service provision on their own. Part of the argument made by George W. Bush in advocating for increasing faith-based programming was the positive element of
personal transformation leading to lifestyle changes that only a faith-based program can achieve (Bane, et al., 2000; Formicola, et al., 2003). This type of assumption is problematic because the legislative argument for including faith-based organizations in government contract competitions specifies that government funds cannot be used for religious activities, and services being provided with government funds cannot require participants to engage in religious activities. Even without specific religious content, the argument that FBOs’ “holistic” methods (Armour, et al., 2008; Solomon, 2003) provide more effective programming has been countered by research evaluating faith-based employment programs (Kennedy & Bielefeld, 2006). While more research is needed to understand the outcomes of faith-based service provision, it is important to frame research questions to highlight what makes faith-based organizations’ programs different from other programs, aside from issues of efficacy, especially if religious content cannot be a part of government-funded programs.

Also key to understanding the involvement of FBOs in social welfare provision is examining what role they already play. Certainly, religious organizations play a dominant role in garnering and distributing charitable resources (Cnaan, et al., 1999) and are seen as having unique access to communities in need (Allard, 2009; Baker, et al., 2006; Day, 2014; Dionne & Chen, 2001; Farnsley, et al., 2004), though other research has countered this argument (Kennedy & Bielefeld, 2006). Research shows that congregations are primarily involved in providing programming related to food, clothing, and shared resources for other organizations like volunteers and physical space in the local community (Allard, 2009; Ammerman, 2005; Bartkowski & Regis, 2003; Chaves, 2004;

Finally, the literature discussing faith-based initiatives in the U.S. highlights the possible detrimental effects of these policies on religious groups themselves. The regulations required to participate in government contracts can require major bureaucratic resources that many small religious groups do not have (Daly, 1999). Receiving program funding creates expectations to meet evaluation requirements, including data collection and tracking, auditing, and measurable objectives. These expectations can overburden small organizations with limited resources (Farnsley, et al., 2004; Wineburg, 2001). Seeking federal funds and focusing on social welfare service provision can also interfere with an organization’s larger spiritual mission and religious identity (Bane et al., 2000; Cnaan et al., 1999; Dionne & Chen, 2001; Formicola et al., 2003; Solomon, 2003; Rogers, 1999; Wallis, 1999). Even the focus on social welfare activities for some congregations is straying from the primary path of “spiritual transformation.” Some Conservative Protestant churches worry “that concentrating on material needs would divert important energy from the more critical task of evangelism” (Ammerman, 2005, p. 116). Also the assumption that social welfare needs can be met through community collaboration (with a heavy emphasis on FBOs) instead of government intervention can
“burden religious communities with more than they can bear” (Bane, et al., 2000, p. 4) (Cnaan, et al., 1999; Wineburg, 2001).

State-specific implementation of federal faith-based initiatives certainly shapes the provision of social welfare at the community level. While this research project focuses on federal policy, a brief discussion of the state policy context in Massachusetts contributes to the overall picture and helps frame future questions. In 1995, Massachusetts undertook its own massive reform of the then Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) that included many of the key elements that would define welfare reform at the federal level under the Clinton administration (Kennedy, et al., 2003). The ideological focus on privatization and self-sufficiency was reflected in program changes such as requirements for work and time limits and in changes to the contracting system to promote access to a range of types of organizations (Jensen, 2003; Kennedy, et al., 2003). The state also has a long history of contracting with faith-based organizations to provide social welfare programming (Jensen, 2003). With the passage of new federal legislation and promotion of faith-based initiatives under the Clinton and Bush administrations, Massachusetts assessed its related state policy as in compliance with the requirements to have the contracting process open and accessible to faith-based organizations, based on its long history of contracting with faith-based organizations (Jensen, 2003).

Multiple reports assessing state implementation of Charitable Choice policy, however, have countered this by arguing that Massachusetts does not have a specific policy promoting the engagement of faith-based organizations as it does with minority or
female-headed organizations (Jensen, 2003; Jacobson, Marsh, & Winston, 2005; Kramer, et al., 2005; Green & Sherman, 2002; Sherman, 2000). Jensen (2003) argues, however, that Massachusetts policy is based on a reading of the federal policy that focuses on the need for contracting with faith-based organizations. No policy changes are needed because the state already contracts with faith-based organizations and in fact has a long history of doing so. This adheres to the policy language but ignores the additional ideological preference for small, less formalized faith-based organizations:

The commonwealth’s critics are right to sense that Massachusetts social service contracting demonstrates a degree of bias, but it is the classic institutional bias toward retaining existing organizational arrangements. In procurement, this manifests itself as caution toward contracting with organizations that cannot document their ability to perform specified functions. (Kennedy, et al., 2003, p. 17)

The past and ongoing contract relationships with faith-based organizations in Massachusetts are with primarily large, established organizations like Catholic Charities or the Salvation Army (Jensen, 2003).

In discussions of state-specific implementation of federal faith-based initiatives, Massachusetts is categorized with other states that have not created an office specifically to address the needs of faith-based organizations participating in social welfare provision, arguably because policy reforms had already been made and faith-based organizations are well represented in social welfare contracting (Kennedy, et al., 2003). Certainly the variation in state implementation of federal faith based policy significantly shapes the
experience of federal policy at the community level. More discussion is needed about the variation and the consequent implications.

The literature on the topics of faith-based initiatives and social welfare programming in the U.S. addresses five main areas of discussion: the history of religious involvement in social welfare, the politics of devolution and the emphasis on personal responsibility, the appropriate participation of religion in the public sphere and civil society, the suitability of faith-based programming to address social welfare problems, and the negative consequences of faith-based initiatives for religious groups. Most of the research and writing about faith-based initiatives takes an initial or resulting position of supporting or opposing the initiatives. This research project is informed by questions of devolution and responsibility for social welfare and the appropriate participation of religion in the public sphere (specific to social welfare), examined through community respondents and federal policy.

**Conclusion**

As discussed in the literature above, many questions exist about the relationship between religion and social welfare. Using the research conducted thus far, this study is structured by three research questions to further develop the understanding of this topic. This project poses questions about what the relationship between religion and welfare providers looks like at the local level and what these local relationships demonstrate about U.S. society at large. The study research questions are the following: First, what role does religion have in social welfare provision at the community level? To what extent do the three concepts of moral comment, common good, and identity legitimation
influence the role of religion in social welfare at the community level? Second, what is the national context of the role of religion in social welfare? To what extent do the three concepts of policy, state structure, and culture influence the role of religion in social welfare at the national level? Third, how does the intersection of religion and social welfare in the U.S. compare to other liberal democratic welfare states?

To address these questions, the study begins with a theoretical framework based on the literature discussed above. First the local case study presents the social welfare activities of the community, including activities of congregations, voluntary organizations (religious and non), and state agencies, and the views of the stakeholders in these organizations. Three themes are used to organize the types of activities and the views of stakeholders: (1) moral comment, (2) common good, and (3) identity legitimation. The first two themes (moral comment and common good) are based on the work of Casanova (1994) and his discussions of deprivatization. The third theme (identity legitimation) is developed from the work of Warner (1993; 2005) about the particularities of congregations in the U.S.

Second, Charitable Choice legislation is reviewed to understand how U.S. social welfare policy intersects with religion. The national context is understood in terms of (1) (policy) policy as market-oriented and non-universal, (2) (state structure) the disestablishment of church and state and the devolution of responsibility from federal to state level, and (3) (culture) the deprivatization of religion and social values such as individualism and lack of trust of the federal government. These three themes are developed through the literature that examines welfare state typologies and where the
U.S. fits in comparison to other welfare states, relying heavily on the Lipset’s (1996) discussion of the U.S. welfare state development. 

These two sets of concepts organize the local case study and policy review in order to understand the possible uniqueness of the role of religion in social welfare in the U.S. The third question then uses the findings from the WREP research to put the U.S. study in a larger international comparative context. Results from the U.S. study are examined through the theoretical implications of the WREP research, asking how the U.S. case is culturally specific using the factors identified in the comparison of WREP case studies. The study design then follows from this theoretical framework with three sets of concepts/themes structured to answer the three research questions, with the larger goal of contributing to the development of theory regarding the role of religion in social welfare provision.

In the next chapter, I detail the methods used to answer these research questions. After presenting the methods, I discuss the particular context of Lowell and then the community case findings. The federal policy review is linked with the community findings, leading up to the final discussion of the international comparison.
Chapter 2: Methods

This chapter presents the methods used to collect and analyze the data from the community case and the federal policy review, as well as the concluding discussion of the international comparison. I discuss the study design and then the various steps of collection and analysis for each stage of the research. First I provide a brief description of the WREP study to explain the rationale for the U.S. case design.

In order to bring the U.S. into larger cross national discussions of welfare and religion, the study was modeled on the work of a larger comparative project in the E.U. WREP examined eight small cities in different European countries to provide theoretical development and insight into “the place of majority churches in the delivery of welfare” (Bäckström, et al., 2010, p.16). WREP focused on three major themes: a sociological perspective on the welfare provision in Europe, a theological perspective on the role of the church in social welfare provision, and a gender perspective on the dominance of women in both welfare and religious arenas. Using qualitative methods, researchers focused on a mid-sized city in eight different nation-states, based on the research team’s knowledge of the area and stakeholders.

Multiple types of data were collected in each case to present a comprehensive picture of welfare activities and local church involvement within the specific national context: cooperative activities of local authorities and the local organizations of the national church, opinions about the role of the church in social welfare, the theological position of the church, and the significance of gender. These data were collected using a range of documentation, interviews with local stakeholders, and focus groups with a
sample of the local population. Although researchers in each case adapted methods in accordance with the local and national context, all research interviews across cases used the same seven open-ended questions in the interview guide, in addition to context-specific questions (see Appendix A).

Data were then organized into a detailed description of the local welfare system (including providers and recipients), the connections and cooperation between religious and secular providers, and the views expressed by the stakeholders and the public sample. The case narrative for each town was then analyzed in comparison with the other cases by the original research team, looking for similarities and differences in the systems of welfare and religious interaction, advantages and disadvantages, attainment of stated goals of the systems, and expectations for the future of collaboration and welfare policies. While there are limits to these data, the comparative analysis provides useful content for theoretical development.

The research model constructed in WREP has guided research for this U.S. case study and allows the results of this U.S. project to contribute to a larger, international comparative analysis of social welfare and religion in western liberal democracies. This model guided basic research questions, the size of city chosen, and conceptual and theoretical frameworks. However, because there is no established majority church in the U.S., it is more difficult to examine the effects of theological positions. In addition, this dissertation will not include the focus on gender.
Current U.S. Study Design

This research uses a single case study design to explore the role of religion in social welfare. As an exploratory case study, this research asks questions to set up further theoretical and research inquiries into different areas of religion and social welfare. The case study method enables the inclusion of “contextual conditions” in the analysis of the data and to facilitate the triangulation of data from “prior development of theoretical propositions” (Yin, 1994, p. 13). Four components provide this context in this study: mapping, telephone survey, qualitative interviews, and policy content analysis. Using theory developed through the WREP research studies and multiple data collection methods, this case study is designed to compare data in the process of “analytic generalization” (Yin, 1994, p. 36) towards building more complex theories about the role of religion in social welfare. The following will describe the methods used for the community case, the policy review, and the international comparison.

Community case study.

The local study explores the social welfare and religion relationships in one small U.S. city. Parameters for the choice of city were based on the WREP case study model. Lowell, Massachusetts was selected based on the population size (~104,000), the local history of industry and economic changes, and the local (ongoing) history of immigration resettlement. Three primary methods constitute the community case: community mapping, telephone surveys, and qualitative interviews. The sampling, instruments, data collection, and data analysis for each are described below.
**Mapping.** To provide a visual and data demographic context for the case study of Lowell, GIS maps were constructed using primarily U.S. Census data. Map layers were constructed for neighborhood boundaries in Lowell, and demographic layers were constructed for relevant factors including sex, median age, race/ethnicity, citizenship, nativity, household type, poverty, and federal income support. Finally, a map layer presents the locations of all relevant organizations for the case study—congregations, social welfare nonprofits, and social welfare state agencies.

To prepare a foundation ArcGIS map to be useful for demographic data, I used the MassGIS website to download the city boundary data (including U.S. Census tract boundaries) for the state and clipped Lowell specifically to create a shapefile from which to work as a base. From there, I created a map layer of Lowell neighborhood boundaries in Arc, drawing polygon and line boundaries by hand. This was necessary because no Arc neighborhood map could be located. Digitizing a map of neighborhood boundaries entailed georeferencing three control points (using TIGER2010 road data and the 10.0 US Streets Geocode Service in ArcGIS) spread over an even area for each neighborhood to create a polygon. Building the neighborhood boundaries into the Lowell city limit shapefile resulted in the foundation map to be used to examine demographic data for the community.

Next, information was gathered for organizations compiled for the telephone survey and interviews to be imported into ArcGIS and geocoded. Organizational type was included as an attribute in the data so that map layers could be created showing relationships between neighborhoods, demographic factors, and different types of
organizations. For the mapping, organizational type was limited to congregation, nonprofit, or state agency. Additional categorizations of organizations (such as religious tradition and nonprofit size) are discussed but not included in mapping data.

American Community Survey (ACS) data (2007-2010 and 2009-2010 sets) were used to map demographic factors as discussed above. These data are available on the U.S. Census website. ACS data are available at the census tract and block group levels. Census tract-level data were used as the most frequent unit of analysis in GIS literature (Clemmer, 2010). ACS data are downloadable in multiple tables; these tables must then be merged by sequence number to make the data readable in Excel format and translatable to ArcGIS. I filtered out ACS data according to chosen demographic factors, and then merged data tables in Excel based on sequence number and ACS table template, matching identification numbers to put appropriate data with matching census tract. In this process, data was delimited by Lowell census tracts in preparation for importing data into ArcGIS. The Logical Record Number (logrecno) column was also renamed in order to be recognized in Arc—logrecno being the common variable that allows data to be matched with geographic data in Arc. ACS data also required transformation from text data to integer data.

To bring ACS data into ArcGIS, each Excel file was joined with the polygon (shapefile) after variable columns were filtered and transformed. This added the data/variables to the shapefile’s attribute table. These attributes were then available to create map layers that visually present relationships between variables, including demographic factors, neighborhoods, and organization locations. To create map layers
useful to the questions in this research, various symbology was tested for presenting variables in a visually significant manner. ACS data are provided in total count form, and so normalization was used to compare data from census tract to census tract.

Normalization entailed presenting data in relation to the total population. For example, for each census tract the total count of people living below the poverty line was divided by the total count of people so that a percentage resulted that was more meaningful to compare to the percentage of people living below the poverty line in other tracts. Each map layer (shown in the discussion) presents a different meaningful relationship between chosen variables.

The analysis of this case study data presents a series of community maps as a way to understand the context of the organizations and individuals studied. The map layers provide a visual representation of community demographic information in relation to the social welfare organizations in the community. The analytic process for these data is primarily descriptive: a visual presentation of variables in relation to one another. As described above, organizational locations are presented in relation to demographic variables (median age, sex, race/ethnicity, citizenship, nativity, household type, education, poverty, median income, and federal income support) using census tracts as the comparative unit. Additional mapped data can be found in Appendix B.

*Telephone survey.* As a means to understanding the religious organizational landscape in Lowell, a telephone survey was conducted before beginning the interviews. The list of congregations to be contacted for this survey was compiled through internet searches, the telephone book, interviewee information, and local contacts. A total of 88
congregations were contacted to be surveyed—25 had incorrect contact information or were not in existence any longer. Of those with seemingly correct contact information, 14 were successfully surveyed regarding their participation in social welfare activities in the local community (either through the telephone contact or during the subsequent stakeholder interview). This low response rate is explained by a combination of disconnected phone numbers, phone numbers with no way to leave a message, and unreturned messages. If I was unable to leave a message, I tried the number again, for a total of at least three tries. If I was able to leave a message with a person or voicemail but my call was not returned, I called again, for a total of at least three tries.

The total list of congregations covered at least 20 religious traditions, with at least 8 congregations not clearly identifiable by the name. The largest groups were Evangelical (22), Catholic (14), and Baptist (7). The 14 congregations successfully surveyed represent 8 different religious traditions, 3 having specific race/ethnicity affiliation identified by the contact and/or the congregation name (Burmese, Kenyan, Hispanic). The local picture was further developed by research using publicly available information about congregations providing services and information gleaned from the qualitative interviews.

The telephone survey was limited to basic information about whether the congregation provides social welfare-related services and what those services are. Survey participants were also asked if they were willing to be contacted again for a more in-depth interview. (The survey instrument used can be found in Appendix C.) The survey questions were as follows:
• Does your congregation (organization-specific term) provide any social service programs directly? This might include a food pantry, counseling, emergency shelter, but doesn’t include seasonal activities. If so, what are the programs?

• What are the key funding sources for your congregation? (for example, member donations, grants, contracts)

• Does your congregation collaborate with other organizations to provide services? What types of collaboration?

• Can you provide me with general demographic information about your members? What is the majority race/ethnicity, majority primary language, majority income level?

• I also will be conducting interviews with leaders in both the religious and social welfare communities. Would you be willing to meet with me for a longer interview?

Congregations were surveyed to collect data regarding their organizational social welfare activities. Each congregation on the compiled list was mailed an introductory letter describing the research project and survey. I then called each number, introduced myself and the study to the person who answered the phone, and asked to speak with someone who might be able to answer the survey questions. (See survey instrument, Appendix C.) The survey was completed during that initial call, unless another person was identified to complete the survey.

The analysis of the telephone survey data was a basic content review—first organizing the respondents’ answers to the survey questions and then reviewing the
response content for themes. The response rate was not large enough to allow analysis of the content in relation to the religious affiliation of the congregation. To supplement the low response rate of the survey, publicly available information for congregations was reviewed to compile information regarding social welfare activities. From the initial call list created, an online search was then conducted to garner available information about congregation activities. Information from congregation websites was added to the telephone survey results and qualitative interview content to formulate a summary of types of activities.

First, I put together information gathered from the telephone survey and from publically available organizational materials, listing all of the social welfare related activities mentioned by a congregation (respondent or materials). I then grouped similar activities and categorized them using a modified schema from Ammerman, 2005.\footnote{The roots of Ammerman’s (2005) categorization of service groups are in Hodgkinson, Gorski, Noga, and Knauft (1995).} She originally discussed five types of congregational partners in social welfare activities: “human services,” “policy advocacy,” “community benefit,” “health, education, culture, and youth,” and “self-help and growth” (Ammerman, 2005, p. 165). I used these categories to think about the activities congregations identified, and I focused on 1) human services as direct material contributions, 2) policy advocacy as activity focused on political topics, 3) community benefit as contributing resources to the surrounding community, and 4) health, education, youth, and self-help as a combined category of activities focused on these topics both for members and the larger community.
Qualitative interviews. The choice of stakeholders to be interviewed was based on theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) in order to investigate the positions of representatives of different types of organizations and religious traditions. For example, although only a small percentage of the population attends the local mosque and it was located just outside the Lowell city limits, members from this organization were included in the stakeholder sample. Determining the representation of religious traditions in the sample was shaped by the overall local picture put together based on initial research about Lowell. Stakeholders were contacted based on information gathered about the religious and social welfare landscapes of the city, using a snowball sampling method. I contacted stakeholders for interviews based on recommendations from interviewees and based on local organizations mentioned in interviews. A small number of interviews resulted from the telephone survey.

Thirty-seven stakeholders were interviewed from a proportional spread of organizational types: congregations (13), non-profits (19), and state agencies (5). Table 1 summarizes the organizations represented in the stakeholder group. Six of the non-profit organizations represented by stakeholders have an organizationally-identified religious affiliation. Congregational stakeholders come from 10 different types of religious affiliations (self-identified): Presbyterian, Assembly of God (Spanish-speaking), Jewish, Muslim, Primitive Methodist, Presbyterian (Kenyan), Methodist, United Church of Christ, Baptist (Cambodian), and Community Christian Fellowship ("international charismatic"). The two major congregational affiliations missing in the stakeholder sample for Lowell are Buddhist and Greek Orthodox. Repeated attempts to contact
individuals from these congregational communities were made over a period of five months, but phone calls and emails were not returned. The Catholic tradition is represented in the sample of non-profit stakeholders through the participation of a Catholic Church-affiliated organization and self-identified Catholic respondents affiliated with other organizations.

Table 1 Stakeholder Sample

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<tr>
<th>Stakeholder sample</th>
<th>N=37</th>
<th>Types of organizations included</th>
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<td>Congregations</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Presbyterian, Assembly of God (Spanish-speaking), Jewish, Muslim, Primitive Methodist, Presbyterian (Kenyan), Methodist, United Church of Christ, Baptist (Cambodian), Community Christian Fellowship (&quot;international charismatic&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-profit organizations</td>
<td>19 (religiously affiliated: 6)</td>
<td>community advocacy orgs, social service providers, teen pregnancy, housing, immigrant &amp; ESL education/advocacy, afterschool activities/mentoring, emergency food, networking, sexual assault, medical services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State agencies</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Dept of MH, Lowell Housing Authority, Lowell Police Dept, Lowell City Planning Dept, Lowell Public Schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The non-profit organizations included groups that ranged from clearly religious in orientation to clearly secular (using a simplified version of Jeavons’ (1998) schema for assessing the religiosity of an organization). An in-depth assessment of organizational religiosity is beyond the scope of this particular study. However, I used three criteria: self-identity, material resources, and goals/products/services—based on publicly
available organizational material. Of the 18 non-profit organizations included in the sample, 6 are religiously-affiliated based on these criteria. One additional factor I included in assessing an organization’s religious affiliation was whether religious values influenced funding related decisions. For example, one non-profit stakeholder from an organization with a religious name was kept in the “religious” category even though the person claimed that religion played no role in the organization’s service provision. However, she went on later to discuss an organizational decision to cut a program because the legal requirements to serve LGBTQ families conflicted with their religious values.

I also categorized the non-profit organizations included in the interview sample by size (based on revenue) and by type according to the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) Classification System using Guidestar data (Guidestar, 2015). While the interview sample covered a spectrum of types of nonprofit organizations, it was not representative in the sense of including all types of nonprofit organizations in Lowell or organizations of all sizes. Of the eighteen organizations included in the interview sample, four did not have information listed on Guidestar because they were coalitions or working groups, not formal tax exempt organizations. The fourteen nonprofit organizations with official tax exempt status covered eleven types of services from the NTEE categories, with eight of the organizations falling into more than one classification (See Table 2).

---

2 Nineteen interviews with nonprofit stakeholders were conducted, and two of these interviews were with stakeholders from the same organization. So eighteen organizations are represented.
Table 2 NTEE Organization Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health (E)</th>
<th>Mental health, crisis intervention (F)</th>
<th>Employment (J)</th>
<th>Food (K)</th>
<th>Housing (L)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recreation (N)</th>
<th>Youth (O)</th>
<th>Human services (P)</th>
<th>Civil rights, social action, advocacy (R)</th>
<th>Community improvement, capacity building (S)</th>
<th>Public, society benefit (W)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sizes of the organizations (defined by revenue) varied widely. The four organizations that were not formally tax exempt can be assumed to have zero revenue (or very little, limited to small scale fundraising for events or activities). The largest organization by far had revenue of more than 82 million dollars in 2012 (Guidestar, 2015). Using data from 2012, one organization had revenue between 50 and 100 thousand dollars, five organizations between 200 and 600 thousand, four organizations between 1 and 2 million, one organization around 2.5 million, one organization between 4 and 5 million, and one organization almost 30 million (Guidestar, 2015).

An interview guideline was created with open-ended questions designed to facilitate in-depth answers. The interview guide and questions from the WREP case studies were used as an initial model for considering what types of questions to include. In addition to this background, the literature review of religion’s role in society informed the choice of conceptual domains for the interview questions. The interview guide consists of open-ended questions in the three conceptual domains: religion as moral
commentator, religion as contributor to the common good, and religion as identity legitimation. Questions were then written in each domain using straightforward, accessible language.

The interview guide begins with a brief explanation of the use of the terms “congregation” and “social welfare” to clarify the language used in the questions while leaving the definition of each open to the interviewee’s own interpretation. The initial questions then ask about community and organizational activities, personal views of the community, and the organization’s contributions to the community:

- Can you tell me about the collaborations your organization has with state agencies? Voluntary organizations/non-profits? Congregations?
- What do these collaborations bring or add to your organization?
- People have very different views on the role of government, non-profits, and congregations in social welfare. Can you tell me what you think the role of each of these should be in social welfare?
- Can you tell me about what you think the role of congregations is in social welfare, generally?
- Can you tell me what you think is the most important contribution your organization makes to the Lowell community?
- Where does the funding for your organization’s social welfare activities come from?

These introductory questions were designed to encourage the interviewee to discuss organizational and community activities between religious and non-religious
organizations. The questions were not in a particular order, and often the answer to one question would lead to the discussion and answer of another question. Each question included prompts if necessary for the interviewee to give examples of the individual answer.

The questions in the specific conceptual domains were designed to elicit open-ended responses about the topic area. For the domain of moral commentator, the question asked, “Some people think that the role of religion in society is to provide moral guidance or comment. To what extent do you think this is true? How do you see this playing out in Lowell specifically?” The question for the common good domain asked, “Some people think that the role of religion is to contribute to the common good by providing direct social welfare services. To what extent do you think this is true? How do you see this playing out in Lowell specifically?” And for the identity legitimation domain was “Some people think that one of the purposes of religion is to provide a sense of belonging for an individual and a sense of cohesion for the community. To what extent do you think this is true? How do you see this playing out in Lowell specifically?” Each of these questions also included prompts if the interviewee seemed unclear about how to answer or provided a brief answer.

The interview guide wraps up with questions designed to give the interviewee an opportunity to discuss related topics that have not been addressed by the interview questions, including a question about how the individual’s personal spirituality impacts their own social welfare activities (see Appendix A).
I conducted the stakeholder interviews. Interviewees were contacted by phone or email, and an introductory letter was mailed out prior to the scheduled interview. Interviews were conducted in a location chosen by the interviewee, mostly in the individual’s office or home, and ranged from 30 to 90 minutes in length. I recorded the interview as well as made notes in the interview guide (see Appendix A). I changed respondents’ names to maintain confidentiality and created an identification coding system with the month the person was interviewed, first letter of the first name, and type of organization (C=congregation, A=state agency, O=non-profit, X=other). For example, if I interviewed myself in March as a stakeholder from a congregation, my identifier would be 03SC.

The analysis of the stakeholder interview data was structured by themes drawn from the literature (used to construct the interview guide) and then the emerging themes from the data content. Using inductive/emic analytic principles, I organized the data, using the interview guide as a descriptive analytic framework of sensitizing concepts, into both theory-based and respondent-based themes (Patton, 2002). This content analysis allowed for distillation of these data themes into concepts that could then inform the development of theory regarding the role of religion in social welfare.

Once the interviews were transcribed and verified, I conducted an initial review of all the transcripts to identify themes in the interview content. With this completed, a comprehensive list of themes was then created from the data. I conducted a second review of the interview data, using this comprehensive list to code the occurrence of
these in each interview. With this analysis complete, I organized the codes into twelve themes.

First, the theory-based themes that informed the development of the interview guide were drawn from the literature about the role of religion in social welfare and society in general. Three key theories were the focus for describing this relationship—the role of religion as moral commentator, contributor to the common good, and identity legitimation (subcommunity nexus). In addition to these three themes, researcher-identified themes were included that arose during the analysis of the interview data—values and responsibility for social welfare.

Second, the respondent-based themes consisted of repeated concepts brought up by interviewees without prompting from interview questions. Table 2 summarizes the themes. The respondent-based themes are trust, collaboration, leadership, community shapes congregations, changes over time, information conduit, and bureaucratic flexibility.

**Table 3 Stakeholder Interview Themes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory-based themes</th>
<th>Respondent-based themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moral commentator</td>
<td>Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributor to the common good</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subcommunity nexus</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Community shapes congregations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility for social welfare</td>
<td>Changes over time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information conduit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bureaucratic flexibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The themes represent facets of the religion/society relationship seen through the lens of congregational participation in social welfare activities. For example, moral
commentator, contributor to the common good, and subcommunity nexus are roles religion may play, as discussed in the literature. Collaboration is also a role for religion. Other themes identify aspects and activities of congregations as organizations that facilitate particular roles (bureaucratic flexibility, information conduit, brokering trust, leadership). A few themes are less directly related to a role for religion or congregations but were included because they speak to a relationship between congregations and the community (changes over time, community shapes congregations) or because they group content relevant to intersecting questions (values, responsibility for social welfare).

The final step of data analysis consisted of an in-depth discussion of the interview content in each theme, pulling together how the coded concepts that constitute each theme intersect and have meaning for questions of the role of religion in social welfare. Collaboration is the primary role emphasized for congregations in social welfare provision in the community by respondents, and the findings present how the assorted themes support and explain this further.

**Federal policy review.**

The federal policy review presents the background of the national context in the U.S. The policy documents chosen for this study begin with the 1996 Charitable Choice legislation and examine the three program areas for which this legislation has been activated since. The three areas of implementation of Charitable Choice legislation are Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), and Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant (including the Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness program). The sample includes
documents in each of these areas of implementation from the three presidential administrations relevant (William Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama). Table 3 identifies the types of documents used for each administration.

Table 4 Federal Policy Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>President</th>
<th>Type of document</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Johnson (1963-1969)</td>
<td>Executive order (1)³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton (1993-2001)</td>
<td>Legislation (3)⁴, GAO report (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama (2009-2012)⁵</td>
<td>Executive order (2), Program (7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Types of documents in the sample include Executive Orders, legislative text, General Accounting Office (GAO) reports, and program documents from federal agencies.

Data collected for the policy review primarily consisted of identifying relevant legislation, searching for the legislative text in the Thomas.gov database, and following up on relevant program and federal documents. Presidential administration documents (including Executive Orders) were searched using the terms “religion” and “faith”, and then these documents were filtered according to their relevance to the discussion of religion and social welfare. Documents, such as General Accounting Office reports, were added if referred to in program and federal documents.

³ Executive Order 11246 issued by President Johnson in 1965 regarding non-discrimination in government employment was included because of its relevance to federal policy discussions of regulating faith-based organizations.
⁴ The Charitable Choice Expansion Act of 1999, while not passed into law, is included because of the divisive attention the legislation attracted.
⁵ Only documents from Obama’s first term were included.
The analysis of the data regarding national context of social welfare and religion consisted of examining the Charitable Choice legislation and presidential action in the three conceptual themes of national variation: administrative rules, state structure, and ideological positions and goals. A content analysis of the legislation text and key political documents was conducted. Coding began by identifying major themes in the text, in addition to coding indicators for each of the three concepts being examined to be created based on the extensive literature review. Coding for the administrative rules theme focused on textual references or discussion of rules regarding government and faith-based organization relationships. For the state structure theme, coding identified discussions of who is responsible for what aspects of society. The ideological positions and goals theme broadly covers topics of ideas or values about priorities for society in general, religion, or the government.

Finally these data themes were discussed within each administration, analyzing the variation in dominant themes per administration.

**International Comparison**

The final analysis of these data primarily consisted of placing the two components—national context and local case study—into a descriptive narrative. The data were used to construct the case study narrative and were integrated based on the theoretical schema discussed. The integrative narrative used data to address questions linking the national and local data. The case study narrative was examined in relation to the WREP case studies for analytic generalization, or common contributions to theories regarding religion and society and religion’s participation in welfare activities. The major
theoretical discussion stemming from the WREP research focuses on the culturally specific intersection of secularization and the development of the welfare state. With the purpose of analytic generalization, the final stage of this study examined the results through the frame of the factors identified in the WREP research.

**Reliability and Validity**

In accordance with Yin’s (1994) case study methodology, three primary tests were employed to establish the quality of this study: construct validity, external validity, and reliability. For this study, several methods affirmed the construct validity—use of the literature to define concepts, use of previous research to design the study, and collection of data from multiple sources (qualitative and quantitative). As in the WREP case studies, external validity of this study was based, not on generalizability to other samples (to other cities or to the nation as a whole), but “analytic generalization” (Yin, 1994, p. 36). This single case study examines a specific context of religion and welfare activity in order to contribute to theories about the role of religion in society. Using the WREP case studies in the study design locates this research in a larger theoretical conversation but does not imply that this case can be generalized to the U.S. as a whole or to other cities. In the interest of reliability and controlling bias, a detailed case study protocol was developed to operationalize and document each step of the research, and a case study database contains the collected data organized in accordance with the protocol.
Chapter 3: Lowell

The following chapter provides background information on the city of Lowell as the chosen case for the study. As discussed, Lowell was chosen because it met similar criteria to the WREP case cities—a city of about 100,000 residents with a history of significant changes because of industrialization and immigration, and this chapter fills in these details.

Almost one hundred years before the town of Lowell was incorporated in 1826 (city incorporated in 1836), a textile mill was built on the Merrimack River on land that would eventually be part of the city. This would foreshadow the story and history of Lowell where even now, after the mills have been closed for many years, the historical preservation of the mills serves as an attraction to the city and a national model of preservation. Mill workers were new immigrants, beginning a long history of population shifts based on international migration. The following brief history of Lowell will give some background to the case study of congregations and social welfare. Throughout its history, Lowell can be seen to struggle and thrive, with a strong focus on community collaboration. Even when economic vibrancy seems to rest in the hands of a few local leaders, the language used is all about collaboration. As discussed in subsequent chapters, collaboration is one of the dominant themes that arose from the interviews about congregations and social welfare provision in Lowell.

Economic History

Lowell was the first “planned industrial city” in the U.S. (Mulvey, 2002). By 1850, Lowell was the largest industrial complex in the country with forty textile mills and
ten thousand millworkers. By 1900, forty-three percent of the population in Lowell were individuals born outside the U.S. Forrant (2001) writes that Lowell “was to be a well-planned, well-supervised, Puritan American alternative to the Dickensian ‘dark Satanic mills’ in England” (p. 616). Women were recruited to work in the mills and formed strong, organized communities, to become known as “mill girls” (Dublin, 1975). These women formed the first women’s labor union in the U.S., the Lowell Female Labor Reform Association in 1845, publishing a weekly newspaper and organizing for a ten hour workday and other labor rights (Dublin, 1975). The significance of these workers in the industrialization of the U.S. and the changing social roles for women helped fuel the eventual historical preservation of the mills and city of Lowell itself.

With the migration of companies to the southern U.S. where labor costs were cheaper and states provided tax subsidies, the textile industry in Lowell declined in the 1920s (Forrant, 2001). The shift of industrial centers from the northeast to the southern U.S. left Lowell in a period of economic decline that lasted until the 1970s.

In 1975, Lowell native, Paul Tsongas, was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives and proceeded to leverage his political capital for the benefit of Lowell, lifting the city out of the economic depression. Wang Laboratories located its headquarters in Lowell in 1979 as part of an economic revitalization planned by Congressman Tsongas, including a federal loan for five million dollars (Weible, 2011). Wang Labs, along with companies receiving defense manufacturing subcontracts, attracted other industry and brought a new wave of employment and growth to Lowell: “Between 1975 and 1980 over 100,000 high-tech jobs were created in Massachusetts,
with Lowell witnessing a spectacular 400% growth in jobs” (Forrant, 2001, p. 616). In this era, the Lowell National Historic Park was also developed and large groups of refugees from Southeast Asian were resettled in Lowell, as discussed below.

Unfortunately, again this concentration of industry (computer and defense) proved problematic for Lowell as other areas around the country provided innovative hubs for newer technologies and companies (Best & Forrant, 2000). By 1992, Wang Labs had filed for bankruptcy, and Lowell moved into another economic decline. Economic hardship brought local conflicts over new immigrant groups and increased xenophobic public discourse and policies (Mulvey, 2002).

From this point, the University of Massachusetts, Lowell served as a locus for developing and nurturing “a regional, environmentally sustainable industrial economy” to bring in research and support public-private partnerships with more than twenty-five research centers (Best & Forrant, 2000, p. 212). Lowell was part of the federal Enterprise Zone initiative in the mid-1990s and received funds for low-income neighborhood development, helping to improve overall economic prospects (Mulvey, 2002). In addition, a community policing program and public-private partnerships with the university contributed to positive economic development into the present (Mulvey, 2002).

Lowell has continued to experience positive economic growth. Currently, the major employers are in areas of education (including UMass Lowell), healthcare (including two large hospitals), service (for example, Market Basket grocery store offices), and technology (for example, Motorola) (“Sustainable Lowell 2025”, 2013). Unemployment rates are lower than those of surrounding, comparable cities, and there is
a growing emphasis on the “creative economy” with the development of downtown and university-related artist workspaces and businesses (“Sustainable Lowell 2025”, 2013, p. xxii). As discussed further below, the immigration history of the city has contributed to significant ethnic diversity in Lowell, and the ethnic diversity of the city only continues to increase, people of color making up 48% of the population in 2010 (U.S. Census, 2010). The cultural festivals and ongoing interest in the national park continue to draw visitors to Lowell, with a multi-million dollar impact on the local economy (“Sustainable Lowell 2025”, 2013).

**Lowell National Historical Park**

As mentioned above, in 1978 a national park was established designating various sites in Lowell as “an urban historic district” (Goldstein, 2000, p. 130). The development of the Lowell National Historical Park was meant to contribute to the economic viability of the city. It served as a draw for federal funds and attention. As an innovator in the “culture-led revitalization” movement in the 1960-70s, Lowell (through the work of school superintendent Patrick Mogan) managed to leverage its history towards revitalization through an innovative interpretation of the national park model: “Presenting technological artifacts and the built environment in economic, social, and cultural context represents one of Lowell National Historical Park's major achievements . . .” (Goldstein, 2000, p. 131). Prominent community members saw Lowell’s position as “the birthplace of American industrialization” as a tool for building community cohesion and developing new economic resources: “valorizing and reusing the past could be a way to help equip
the city for the changing demands of the region’s new economy and to attract attention, investment, and even visitors” (Stanton, 2007, p. 85).

Funds for urban renewal came from the Model City program in President Johnson’s Great Society initiatives and from the National Park Service in an attempt to expand concepts of history to include urban and poor communities (Stanton, 2007; Weible, 2011). Beyond the development of the park itself (preservation of buildings and creation of educational programs), the initiative facilitated ongoing public-private partnerships for the purpose of the revitalization of downtown Lowell. The federal funds for the park and subsequent development came from the efforts of Congressman Tsongas, and he also was the primary driver behind the local partnerships: “In 1975, a consortium of local banks, encouraged by newly elected Congressman Tsongas, formed the Lowell Development and Financial Corporation to make low-interest loans available to property owners who agreed to work toward park-related ends” (Weible, 2011, p. 75).

The Lowell Historical National Park now receives over 700,000 visitors annually (“Lowell”, 2008). It incorporates a range of educational centers, city tours, and cultural festivals. This project that was initiated to facilitate economic revitalization through historic preservation and education now also serves as a platform for integrating new immigrant groups into city life.

**Paul Tsongas**

Congressman Paul Tsongas was the driving force behind coalescing the necessary support and resources for the national park, both at the community and national levels. Through his efforts, these resources built a public-private partnership network that
persists in its ability to facilitate Lowell’s development, “still known locally as the ‘Lowell delivery system’” (Stanton, 2007, p. 85). While this collaborative work has been credited with positive change in Lowell, certainly it was the work of Tsongas bringing them together and pushing for continued partnership that served as the foundation for revitalization: “As long as he was in position to influence events, Paul Tsongas would keep shifty, self-absorbed politicians; entitled, obstructive bureaucrats; and rapacious, self-interested businessmen all focused on that vision” (Weible, 2011, p. 71).

Tsongas, in his role as Congressman, brought federal dollars to Lowell through various agency grants and appropriations, and he used these funds to bring in partners and build the cooperative endeavors needed to produce change (including support for the Wang Laboratories mentioned above) (Weible, 2011). He helped to create the Lowell Plan in 1979 to organize private funds for use in development efforts. His role in bringing money to Lowell revitalization projects and his public position gave him the power to bring together public-private collaboration while at the same time maintaining some control over how funds were spent, which projects were prioritized, and how growth in Lowell was defined: “Public-private partnerships; partnerships among local, state, and federal governments; and ‘cooperation, cooperation, cooperation’ would become the orders of the day. And Senator Tsongas would be the one who most often dictated the terms of that ‘cooperation’” (Weible, 2011, p. 77).

Certainly collaboration and public-private partnerships have been characteristic of change efforts in Lowell, as discussed by interviewees. Interestingly, this expectation of working together seems to have come from the efforts of one strong leader, Paul Tsongas.
A few interviewees in this study mentioned Tsongas when reflecting on why Lowell’s trajectory has been different than surrounding towns with similar industrial and economic histories.

**Immigration**

In addition to having the second largest Cambodian community in the U.S., Lowell’s population also includes immigrants from a range of other countries, with as much as 25% of the total population having been born outside the U.S. (Sl´adkov´a, Mangado, & Quinteros, 2012). While more than half of this immigrant population is from Asian countries, significant numbers are from Latin America, and growing numbers are from African countries.

In interviews and in reviewing Lowell’s history, conflicting perspectives were presented about the community’s relationship with resettled refugees and new immigrant groups. One goal of Lowell’s revitalization efforts in the last few decades was to focus on the ethnic diversity of the city and create cultural events in celebration of this: “At the same time [early 1990s], grants promoted cultural expression by Lowell’s traditional ethnic groups (Greeks, French Canadians, and other ‘white ethnics’), but true to the original vision, they also supported newly arrived peoples, particularly Southeast Asians attracted by an economy that grew consistently through the mid-1980s” (Weible, 2011, p. 88). However, during past economic hard times, new immigrant groups have been the target of scapegoating, such as attributing crime and drug-use to Southeast Asian communities in the 1980s (Mulvey, 2002). Even in the current positive climate, the more recent immigrant groups are not fully integrated into the decision-making local
partnerships. “The newer immigrants are still much more often to be found playing the role of colorful ethnic others on the city’s various stages rather than as professional culture brokers or decision makers around the meeting tables where the real business of the city’s revitalization is hammered out.” (Stanton, 2007, p. 94)

As seen in the community stakeholder interviews, support of immigrant groups in the community is facilitated both by culturally specific programming and separate culturally-affiliated organizations. Some groups, like the International Institute, are oriented around newcomers generally, shaping their programs around shifting needs as refugees and other immigrants come from new regions. Others, like the Massachusetts Alliance of Portuguese Speakers (MAPS), serve specific cultural populations or geographic neighborhoods (like the Coalition for a Better Acre). Congregations certainly are representative of cultural groups and, as discussed in this study, serve as conduits between new immigrant groups and the larger community.

In comparison to the U.S. as a whole, Lowell’s demographic profile reflects its immigration history from the past forty years. Lowell has a larger percentage of individuals born outside the U.S., more Asian Americans, more individuals who identify as “other race,” fewer English-speaking only households, and more Asian/Pacific Islander language and Indo-European language speaking households (See Table 5).
Table 5 Lowell & U.S. Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>105,860</td>
<td>309.2 million (ACS 2009-2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median household income</td>
<td>$51,471</td>
<td>$51,484 (ACS 2009-2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age</td>
<td>33.1 years</td>
<td>37.2 years (ACS 2009-2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate or</td>
<td>78.30%</td>
<td>85.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>higher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born outside the U.S.</td>
<td>24.30%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below poverty level</td>
<td>17.60%</td>
<td>15% (ACS 2009-2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>6.10%</td>
<td>12.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska</td>
<td>0.20%</td>
<td>0.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>19.60%</td>
<td>4.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.10%</td>
<td>0.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>60.20%</td>
<td>74.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other race</td>
<td>10.90%</td>
<td>5.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>16.10%</td>
<td>16.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.9%M</td>
<td></td>
<td>49.2%M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52.1%F</td>
<td></td>
<td>50.8%F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households w/kids</td>
<td>35.2% (of all households)</td>
<td>33.6% (of all households)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female head w/kids</td>
<td>13.9% (of all households)</td>
<td>7.2% (of all households)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English only</td>
<td>57.70%</td>
<td>79.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>13.10%</td>
<td>12.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Indo-European</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3.70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1 shows the spread of individuals born outside the U.S. in Lowell, with almost fifty percent of the population born outside the U.S. in some Highlands neighborhood census tracts. Figure 2 shows the race/ethnicity breakdown of census tracts beyond nativity. Neighborhoods such as The Acre, Highlands, Back Central, and South Lowell have larger concentrations of Asian Americans. This map also demonstrates areas with

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asian/Pacific Islander</th>
<th>16%</th>
<th>3.20%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>2.20%</td>
<td>0.80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
concentrations of individuals who identify as “other race” in census data, particularly The Acre, Lower Belvedere, and Back Central.

**Figure 2 Map: Lowell Race/Ethnicity**

While the Asian American population in Lowell is disproportionately large compared to the U.S. as a whole, the nation of origin and cultural make up of this local population is incredibly diverse. Figure 3 and Table 5 give some idea of the range of groups that fall into the Asian census category.

**Table 6 Percentage of Asian Population (Census Categories), Lowell Neighborhoods**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pawtuck -etville</th>
<th>Central-ville</th>
<th>The Acre</th>
<th>Down-town</th>
<th>Lower Belvidere</th>
<th>Belvidere</th>
<th>South Lowell</th>
<th>Back Central</th>
<th>High -land</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>total_oth</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>total_asia</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
As mentioned above, Lowell has the second largest community of individuals with Cambodian origins in the U.S., and this can be seen in the concentration of Cambodians compared with other Asian American groups in Lowell neighborhoods.
Figure 3 Map: Lowell Asian American Population

Demographic Context

As the research questions for this study focus on the role of religion in social welfare provision, Figure 4 presents social welfare organizations in Lowell (state agencies and non-profits) along with the congregations. The congregations included were compiled based on internet searches and information from interview respondents, and the nonprofits and state agencies mapped are those included in the qualitative interviews. As the map indicates, there is a concentration of social welfare organizations in The Acre and Downtown neighborhoods, where there is also higher population density.
State agencies and nonprofits are concentrated in four central neighborhoods: The Acre, Downtown, Lower Belvidere, and Back Central. These neighborhoods have been historically associated with different populations. For example, The Acre was traditionally where new immigrants first lived in Lowell, beginning with Irish immigrants in the 1800s. Most public housing is in The Acre and Downtown. Based on information from the interviews with organizational representatives, a significant number of social welfare organizations have been located intentionally in The Acre and Downtown to serve the concentrated populations in those areas, new immigrants in particular. This fits
with Peck’s (2008) research showing that nonprofits locate in areas of need though not necessarily with success. (The success of nonprofit social welfare efforts in Lowell is beyond the scope of this study.)

As discussed above, the expectation is that The Acre holds the concentration of new immigrants to Lowell. Figure 5 shows the high percentage of non-native individuals in the Highlands and demonstrates a shift that is not reflected in organizational locations (concentrated in The Acre and Downtown). This map demonstrates the concentration of non-native individuals in relation to social welfare organizations and congregations.

Figure 5 Map: Lowell Nativity & Organizations
Beyond the discussion of immigrant groups, Lowell has comparable poverty rates to the rest of the nation. As mentioned, social welfare organizations have historically been concentrated in neighborhoods with higher needs, whether related to immigration status or income. Figure 6 presents the percentage of the population living below the poverty line in each census tract. As would be expected, social welfare organizations are concentrated in areas with the greatest percentage of households living below the poverty line. There are some areas, such as the census tract in Centralville, where there are a high percentage of households living below the poverty line, and congregations are the only immediate organizations. This does not mean that these congregations are necessarily providing services or that these residents have problems accessing services in other neighborhoods.

Also important to consider is the nature of the organizations concentrated in the geographical areas of need. As discussed in the Methods chapter, the range of nonprofit organization size (defined by revenue) is quite wide, varying from less than one hundred thousand dollars to more than eighty two million dollars. The two largest organizations by far (~$82 million, ~$29 million) are located Downtown, one of which is close to the boundary of the Back Central neighborhood. Also important, the nonprofit organization in Pawtucketville, furthest away from the concentrated areas of poverty, does not provide services from its office, so geographic location is less relevant than for the organizations with programming or resources at their physical location. Similarly to other research regarding spatial access to services in Lowell (Queralt & Witte, 1998), the concentration of services (both in number of organizations and organizational revenue) overlaps with
neighborhoods of concentrated poverty, with the exception of the southwestern area of Centralville.

Beyond the density of service organizations, spatial access literature identifies that quality and type of nonprofit organizations (defined in a variety of ways) are significant when assessing resource disparities between geographical areas. Without comparing Lowell to a similar community, it’s difficult to discuss the spatial access problems that might exist beyond the basic understanding of locations of service organizations in high poverty neighborhoods. With data from this study, there seems to be a positive match between high poverty neighborhoods, locations of organizations generally, and locations of the largest (defined by revenue) organizations. Because of the small size of Lowell and the concentration of social welfare organizations in the neighborhoods with highest need, we can also assume that accessibility by type of organization (as discussed in the Methods chapter) does not vary significantly. (As mentioned, this is with the exception of a portion of Centralville.)
Figure 7 shows the concentration of female-headed households in the central part of Lowell. Understanding the prevalence of female-headed households is important to the federal policy discussion later in the dissertation, as one of the value themes in faith-based social welfare policy rhetoric is fatherhood. While a female-headed household does not necessarily mean that a father is not active in the family or that a second female parent is not involved, advocates for greater attention to fatherhood-centered programming do use statistics such as these to support their arguments. Figure 8 similarly
shows the percentage of married households, as marriage is also an ideological theme in faith-based policy rhetoric.

**Figure 7 Map: Lowell Household Type: Female-head**
These maps contribute to the overall context of the following discussions of social welfare and religion in Lowell. Neighborhoods in Lowell have historically been centers for new immigrants and “ethnic enclaves” (Norkunas, 1991). Residential areas closer to the center of town (and closer to the mills) have historically been poorer, with residents migrating outwards as their financial lives improve. The Acre was home to Irish and Greek immigrants in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who worked in the mills, and it has continued to have concentrations of low income residents (Forrant & Strobel, 2011). The Highlands was the center of one of the major Jewish communities,
and from the early 1990s drew new immigrants from Cambodia and India. Jewish immigrants from Poland settled in Centralville after World War II, and more recently African immigrants have located here. Portuguese and Brazilian immigrants settled in Back Central, though (like other groups) have spread to other neighborhoods over time (Forrant & Strobel, 2011). As shown above in Figure 6, The Acre, Back Central, and Lower Belvidere are the neighborhoods with concentrations of low income households (along with parts of Centralville).

It is striking that congregations are relatively evenly distributed across Lowell’s neighborhoods, but that does not mean that they are necessarily serving the people who live closest to them. In the interviews discussed below, respondents often noted that congregation members were not representative of the geographic location of the congregation. Congregations were, however, identified as sometimes contributors of physical space for social welfare activities, and a few congregations located in central neighborhoods were utilized for soup kitchens and food pantries. One Protestant congregation, for example, is right on the border of Back Central and Highlands and serves as a home for a regular soup kitchen supported by many congregations and groups.

Research has shown that congregational members are not necessarily representative of the surrounding neighborhood, meaning that relationships between the congregation and its geographic community cannot be assumed to facilitate social welfare activities (Ammerman, 1997b; Chaves, 2004). Owens and Smith (2005) do show that congregations in low income areas provide social welfare services to the local community even if the members live in other geographic areas. Certainly the importance
of services’ physical proximity for increased spatial access makes congregations key resources to the neighborhoods that house them (Allard, 2009). As discussed in the case study, this research does support the literature’s discussion of types of congregational services (Ammerman, 2005), but more data are needed to understand exactly how the services provided by Lowell congregations impact the spatial accessibility of social welfare services in this particular city’s neighborhoods.

Lowell is a community that has experienced significant changes in its economy, its industrial and employment base, and a population constantly reshaped by immigration. The growth of the city around the mill industry meant a severe decline in economic resources when automation and cheap labor created larger economic and industrial shifts. The placement of incoming refugee groups in Lowell has also contributed to major demographic shifts. Lowell has managed to regain economic vitality in marked contrast to some of the neighboring communities with similar industrial histories that remain economically depressed.

Study respondents identified a range of factors that contribute to Lowell’s ongoing community strengths. First, Lowell has a history of a few very prominent, involved local leaders (especially Paul Tsongas) who were identified as key players in facilitating the growth and collaboration of community organizations and projects like the designation of the old mills as historic sites. These leaders also were discussed as part of another positive feature of Lowell—the responsiveness of city government to community-identified needs. Respondents also asserted that Lowell sees itself as a city of immigrants, beginning with Italian and Irish immigrants in the 19th century, and it has
welcomed the relocation of refugee groups. While respondents were clear that the community has had mixed reactions (not always positive) to new immigrant groups, community groups have attempted to adapt to the needs of these groups and incorporate leaders into decision making. One respondent attributed this to the fact that every generation in Lowell has had a new wave of immigrants, so there has never been a gap to forget what this integration feels like. Finally, Lowell has a vital network of collaborative community organizations that seem oriented to ongoing needs assessments and avoiding duplicating activities. Respondents described Lowell’s organizational network as responding well to community problems together, one person using the relationship between the police department and one of the community nonprofits oriented towards immigrants as an example. One respondent also identified a unique relationship between Lowell and surrounding, wealthier communities (such as Concord) in which residents of wealthier communities directed their volunteer efforts and other contributions to Lowell.
Chapter 4: Community Case Findings

The following discusses the context of Lowell through the lens of the stakeholders interviewed for the study, supplemented by the information from the telephone surveys, publically available information about congregational activities, and the background information about the city of Lowell. As presented in the Methods chapter, the theoretical framework is used to organize and understand the findings, beginning with congregational activities and moving on to stakeholder views.

From the community data (both about congregational activities and stakeholder perspectives), collaboration dominates the conversation about what role congregations play in social welfare provision. Reflecting on the original theoretical framework of moral commentator, contributor to the common good, and identity legitimation, collaboration certainly reflects aspects of these while also connecting them. The following discussion of the research findings focuses on collaboration as the primary relationship between congregations and the social welfare community, linking this to congregations as contributors to the common good through their bureaucratic flexibility and access to subcommunities as brokers of trust and information conduits.

Congregation Activities

The limited results from the telephone survey, supplementary publicly available information, and content from the interviews all contribute to a picture of congregations participating in social welfare activities in Lowell. None of the congregations surveyed had large scale formal social service programs, though the contribution of their informal services was certainly significant. When asked about services provided to the community,
most respondents included activities like providing or contributing to a food pantry, collecting and donating used clothing, hosting classes focused on job skills or language acquisition, or seasonal activities (primarily around the winter holidays).

Some congregations focused more on providing social welfare-type support to their own members. This seemed to be true for congregations with higher concentrations of members from marginalized groups (often new immigrants). Two examples of this are a Hispanic Pentecostal church in the Lower Highlands neighborhood, and a Kenyan community Presbyterian church in the Highlands. In interviews, members of both congregations discussed the role of the church as provider for those members in need.

Cesar (03CC), from the Pentecostal church, talked about his desire for the members to be more involved in the larger community, saying he himself was a board member of several community organizations. He said that the congregation had limited material resources, making it difficult for members to participate in social welfare activities, though he was hoping to develop more volunteer groups within the church. Cesar did emphasize that members often provided for each other when in crisis. He also talked about social welfare organizations trying to reach Hispanic community members using the church as an access point to distribute program materials and host educational activities. Cesar welcomed this and expressed his desire to develop this further by encouraging congregation members to be active in community organizations beyond their subcommunity.

Karl (05KC), from the Kenyan Protestant church, described extensive mutual support relationships within the congregation and financial contributions to sister
communities in Kenya. While congregation members were very active in social welfare support of each other, relationships with other community organizations were conflicted. As discussed further below, Karl described organizations trying to access the Kenyan community through the church with limited success because of misunderstandings and flawed programs. While he described some networking with other organizations on his part, Karl also said that he felt that these external relationships threatened his congregational relationships because some saw it as a conflict of interest. The church served as a key social welfare provider for its members but had limited involvement in other community social welfare activities.

All of the congregations identified member donations as the primary source of funding for social welfare activities. When asked about collaboration, most respondents referred back to the activities listed for the first question (“Does your congregation provide any social service programs directly? This might include a food pantry, counseling, emergency shelter, but doesn’t include seasonal activities. If so, what are the programs?”). Food and clothing donations, classes and AA meetings, and other volunteer opportunities were provided primarily through relationships with other community organizations. Some congregations rented space to community groups who provided programs like after school activities or classes. About a third of the congregations had multiple worship services for different language/ethnic groups, whether hosted by the congregation or through sharing/renting out the sanctuary.
Table 7 Congregation Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human services</th>
<th>Policy Advocacy</th>
<th>Community Benefit</th>
<th>Health, Education, Youth, &amp; Self-help</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donate or serve food: 26</td>
<td>Advocate for political issues(^6): 1</td>
<td>Provide physical space for community use (non-specific): 7</td>
<td>Conduct health promotion activities: 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborate with a formal program(^7): 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Participate in holiday-oriented events: 9</td>
<td>Host group meetings (ex., AA, scouts): 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit home/facility-bound members: 7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Provide volunteers to other community organizations: 11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in prison outreach: 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Contribute money (non-specific): 16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donate material goods (ex., clothing, books): 10</td>
<td>Participate in interfaith events: 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From further research using publicly available information about congregations and content from the interviews, clearly congregations played a significant role in the social welfare web of relationships and services in Lowell. The major areas of contribution are shown as human services (food-related, material goods) and community benefit (volunteers and money) (see Table 7) (Ammerman, 2005). This aligns with the discussion below; respondents from the major social welfare organizations identified congregations as key players in social welfare provision through contributions such as

\(^6\) One congregation’s website included pro-life advocacy work in the discussion of community outreach activities.

\(^7\) These congregations described a direct relationship with a formal social welfare program.
collaborative food pantries, seasonal activities, and provision of volunteers (ongoing or for specific projects).

A key example of the intersection of congregation contributions was one Presbyterian church, located in the Back Central neighborhood. As the traditional members (white, middle class) moved to the suburbs over time, more families from new immigrant groups joined from the surrounding neighborhoods. Members wanted to be intentional about the changing attendance and needs. This meant that the ruling body (Session) would include representation of “a third, a third, and a third”: “Anglos,” Brazilians, and Cambodians (Carolyn, 02CC). The church included both integrated services and separate language services, recognizing the need for cultural groups to have shared time. This example is unique in that the congregation intentionally wanted to bridge the gap between serving the geographic community and making that community constitutive of the congregation.

This church also rented space to a soup kitchen when the original host (a United Methodist church) closed down. The soup kitchen continued to provide a hot meal Monday through Friday, staffed by volunteers from area congregations who also provided the food. Area congregations (and a few non-religious groups) committed to serving the meal at least one day a month, sometimes more frequently. Congregation volunteers also provided activities for individuals attending the meal (for example, crafts for kids and Bible study).

This Presbyterian church’s members also facilitated other volunteer opportunities in the community open to anyone, such as an interfaith Thanksgiving meal, and
contributed weekly donations of food to a local food pantry. Members served meals on the weekends at a local men’s facility, and they also organized service projects in other countries such as Cambodia and Ghana. While the church did not have a comprehensive social welfare program in a formal sense, members were very active in social welfare activities.

An example of a congregation with many community benefit activities was a local United Church of Christ congregation that turned its historical building into a community space resource. Alcoholics Anonymous and related groups used the space for weekly meetings. The church hosted volunteer groups from local youth volunteer programs (youth sleeping in the fellowship hall) and provided regular performance space for the Lowell Philharmonic Orchestra. A thrift store open on Saturdays was located in the basement and accepted donations from any community member (though primarily supplied through congregation member donations).

Founded as a collaboration of churches in 1981, one of the local food pantries aimed to address a need to assist food insecure individuals who might not qualify for other food programs. While not a faith-based organization (as made clear by two members interviewed separately), the food pantry continued to be supported primarily by contributions of money, food, and volunteers from local congregations. Many of the members of the Board of Directors represented area congregations as well.

Congregations were identified as informal networks that helped organizations access target populations for their programs. One of the major community organizations started out as an advocacy group for better housing and other resources in the Acre
neighborhood. This organization grew to own and manage many public housing units citywide (400+) and facilitate a range of different services. A local Catholic church continued to have a reserved seat on the Board of Directors because a past priest was a founding member of the nonprofit.

A local faith-based residential program was supported primarily by congregation donations of funds and goods. This residential parenting program for young women (ages 13 to 21 years) and their children provided a structured program focused on life skills development. Residents contributed a percentage of any income they received, but these funds were a minimal part of the operating budget. While the organization was not affiliated with or administered by one specific congregation, it did represent active participation of congregations in social welfare activities as a program primarily funded by congregational support.

In the discussion of the interview content below, the network of social welfare providers clearly relied on the collaboration of a range of community organizations, including congregations, as identified in this overview of congregational social welfare activity. One area not covered by this research was education, that is, schools run by congregations or religious organizations. Lowell has multiple primary and secondary schools affiliated with the Catholic church, one school affiliated with the Greek Orthodox church, and one school affiliated with an “international charismatic” congregation.8

8 The qualitative interview sample does include a member of this international charismatic (self-identified) congregation, but the interview did not include discussion of the school.
While arguably part of the social welfare structure (Garfinkel, et al., 2010), education is beyond the scope of this research.

As discussed in the literature review, congregations and other FBOs are often argued as uniquely placed to serve social welfare needs in the community because of their geographic proximity to needy populations. In Lowell, certainly some congregations provided their building space as a community resource, and the location of the building was valuable as an access point for limited services (food pantries and meals, used clothing, etc.). Some respondents discussed changes in congregation demographics they had experienced or heard about in the community, mostly references to congregations in closing down due to decreased membership. Demographic shifts meant that sometimes a significant number of the members of the congregation had moved away from the neighborhood and had limited relationship with the geographic area other than worship service attendance. Or, as members moved to different areas, they left the congregation and were replaced by members representing the neighborhood. These shifts in membership reflect similar findings in congregational research, specifically Ammerman’s (1997b) categories of “decline”, “relocation”, “niche identity”, and “new constituents and/or structures” (p. 322).

The Presbyterian church discussed above demonstrated an unusual consciousness of these shifts and relationship to the neighborhood, and intentionally worked towards including long time members living elsewhere along with new members from the neighborhood (often representing marginalized groups). This church also was an example of congregational social welfare activities being directly related to geographic location—
providing a location for the soup kitchen because of the proximity to the city center and neighborhoods of concentrated poverty.

In examining Figure 6 in the previous chapter, census tracts with higher percentages of individuals living below the poverty line were concentrated in Lowell’s center, overlapping with the general concentration of non-profit organizations (in an area roughly three square miles). Centralville and Lower Belvedere had pockets of higher poverty where congregations outnumbered any other social welfare organization. These congregations were not more extensively involved in social welfare activities.

Many non-profit organizations were originally located specifically to address the needs of particular neighborhoods and provide spatial access to services. These organizations have outgrown the neighborhood focus to serve the city as a whole, though have not changed location. Figure 5 does show that the concentration of non-native individuals has shifted from the original neighborhoods where related organizations are still located. These organizations are still within relative close proximity to target populations.

**Stakeholder Perspectives: Collaboration**

Almost all respondents emphasized the need for collaboration among all types of organizations in order to insure the social welfare needs of the community were met. The interview guide was structured to begin with questions about the relationships that the respondent’s organization had with other community organizations. The emphasis in the data on the relationships among organizations necessary for meeting the social welfare
needs goes beyond the initial information questions in the interview guide and telephone survey (asking about collaboration).

Collaboration is mentioned in many different forms (as discussed above): volunteering, contributing resources to another organization’s program, organizational leaders sitting on boards of multiple organizations, providing physical space for programming, etc. Rebecca (04RO), from one of the major non-profit players in Lowell, explains,

[W]e all play a role in working together; it would be difficult for me to say off the top of my head a particular role that one group should play over the other, I think.

You know, when we look at community and building strong communities, it’s everybody working together.

Respondents made reference to organizational collaborators as key to meeting service needs they cannot meet alone, to getting access to different target groups, to applying for funding that requires organizational networking, to increasing visibility, and to avoiding duplication of services. Derrick (04DO), from a local non-profit serving homeless individuals, used the language of “synergy” needed to pursue their mission. As discussed below, gaps in service provision exist for a variety of reasons. Respondents identified collaboration as one of the strategies to address these gaps and needs.

Collaboration was both a strategy to fill service gaps but also an important community value. Katherine (05KO) linked collaboration to expectations of government and community alike:
Well, I mean, I think at the end of the day the kind of government I want is one that is responsive and feels that we should take care of all of our community. You know, having said that, I think there’s roles for every one of those places because I think one entity can’t ever do it all.

Networking was useful both for bringing a variety of resources in for service recipients but also for providing information and referrals for outside resources. Collaboration allows for formal and informal distribution of information so that multiple constituencies can be reached. Aside from pooling resources, collaboration also helps prevent the duplication of services.

Congregations are a necessary part of the collaborative network in providing for social welfare needs because of the resources they bring to the table but also because of the nature of congregations: “because the congregations have at heart sort of, you know, the notion that we should all help each other” (Katherine, 05KO). Strategies for meeting social welfare needs (as in filling gaps discussed above) also use the strengths of a variety of organizations to provide better services, including the unique position of congregations in the community as a place to reach a variety of community members.

Respondents also identified collaboration as necessary to obtain funding for programs. Collaboration was seen as required by funders to demonstrate community relationships, but respondents also discussed ways that joining forces to apply for funding expanded the range of possibilities and distributed the responsibility for applying for funds and implementing programs.

**Contributions to the common good.**
As Casanova (1994) argues, one of the legitimate entries for religion into the public sphere is through contributing to the common good. Interpreting one aspect of this as concrete contributions, I collected data directly through questions to stakeholders and indirectly in analyzing the topics they chose to discuss. In asking stakeholders about whether they thought religion should contribute to the common good, frequently they responded by saying that any person or group should contribute who has the inclination and the resources. Responses varied regarding whether this should be one of religion’s primary activities. Some respondents saw contributing to the common good as peripheral to the congregation’s purpose for the individual. Michelle (05MO), a staff person for a local food bank affiliated with multiple congregations, stated:

I think for me, I would see the primary reason or primary action of the faith-based community or organization is to really provide faith and, like, stimulation to the followers. Within that community I would love for them to look beyond their own direct community, and if that does mean volunteering or providing direct services, that is great, but I do not think that that is an expectation.

Others emphasized concrete contributions to the community as core to congregational activity, such as feeding the poor, addressing physical needs, and, as Robert (06RC) from a local evangelical congregation put it, “spiritually, physically, socially, mentally, and intellectually” providing care. Kasey (05KCO), a leader of a religious non-profit, linked addressing poverty with self-sufficiency:

You know, I mean, when Jesus talked, you know, He talked more about money than He did about sin. He talked about taking care of the poor. He talked about
taking care of people that can’t take care of themselves. And He talked about teaching a man to fish rather than giving him a fish, you know; it’s religion, but it’s very social.

The discussion of religion contributing to the common good in concrete forms often centered on the ideas that congregations have limited resources and different organizational goals. Many respondents (representing all organizational types) specifically stated that congregations should not be held responsible for community activities beyond their resources. Other respondents also noted that pushing congregations to provide services beyond their organizational resources was detrimental to the primary responsibility to their members. Cesar (03CC), a pastor at a local Pentecostal congregation with many new immigrant members, framed it in terms of balance:

I think the problem with that is that there has to be a balance, you can’t just convert the gospel into a social gospel . . . I think there’s a role for the gospel in social justice, in social welfare if you want to call that. But it really has to be balanced; otherwise you kind of lose the sense of other issues that the church should be dealing with.

As individual organizations, congregations are shaped by the membership’s needs and skillsets. While some respondents identified participation in social welfare as part of religious education or worship, others emphasized the importance of prioritizing congregational members’ spiritual care as the primary role.
As discussed above, the information about congregations shows two major areas of social welfare activity—human service and community benefit. Three major areas of material contribution by congregations to social welfare provision dominant the interview findings—food, physical space, and volunteers. This reflects findings in the literature as well (Ammerman, 2005; Cnaan, et al., 1999; Day, 2014). While direct contributions of money were referenced by respondents, this was not a major resource for service providers or focus of discussion for congregation stakeholders. These three areas of contribution were identified both by congregational members (as providers) as well as nonprofit organizations and state agencies (as recipients).

Using the theoretical frame of contributing to the common good was useful for drawing out specific social welfare activities respondents saw for congregations. The primary contribution respondents identified was collaboration. Beyond material contributions to collaborations, congregations were identified as having specific characteristics that made them uniquely valuable: bureaucratic flexibility and access to subcommunities.

**Bureaucratic flexibility.** Respondents from all three types of organizations (congregations, non-profits, and state agencies) identified a vital role for congregations in the bureaucratic flexibility they have regarding use of funds and programming. Some gaps in services provided by non-profits and state agencies were attributed by respondents to funding or programmatic guidelines. Social welfare organizations’ services were discussed as having parameters defined by program and funding guidelines. These guidelines are designed to distribute limited resources in equitable and targeted
ways, creating purposeful restrictions that can unintentionally generate service gaps. Respondents identified ways in which congregations’ freedom from such structural guidelines allow them sometimes to meet individual needs in these gaps, such as providing gas cards or food boxes as needed. This flexibility was mostly identified related to funding differences.

Congregational funds for social welfare activities came from member donations, which rarely has spending restrictions attached, whereas funding for state agencies and non-profits almost always is for specific programming with clear spending guidelines. This difference allowed congregations to be much more “reactive and direct” (Sheila (04SO) from a local non-profit organization oriented towards networking).

Most respondents were quick to add that congregations were rarely in positions to provide assistance in a systematic way. Congregations were recognized as a resource for informal contributions that could not be formalized even though these contributions were necessary to meeting social welfare needs. There was a clear expectation on the part of state agency and non-profit organization respondents that these resources would be available. Katherine (05KO), a staff person from the largest non-profit represented in the sample, discussed the necessity of having congregations to reach out to for informal resources for individual clients, even though her organization represented the major provider (and recipient of state contract funds) of affordable housing and related services in the area.

The flexibility offered by congregations as opposed to social welfare organizations was discussed both as an aspect uniquely available to congregations and as
a problematic flaw in social welfare organizations. Respondents identified the rationale for and necessity of programmatic guidelines in social service organizations, so the goal was not necessarily to change bureaucratic structures. Respondents also noted that, depending on funding and program involvement, non-profit organizations as well as congregations can be more flexible than state agencies.

This flexibility was utilized not only by individuals in need but by organizations looking for resources to address needs outside their own parameters. Kasey (05KCO) represented a group home with clear religious affiliations, though he emphasized that no resident was required to participate in religious activities. He stated, however, that the organization chose not to pursue government funding because of the assumed guidelines regarding the population served and program content that would be required. As a group home, they were able to serve individuals who fell outside the parameters of the local state-contracted group homes. Kasey stated that the organization received many referrals from state agencies because it filled this target population gap.

Rita (05RC), representing a local Protestant congregation, took the emphasis to the next step in arguing that the “faith-based programs have a much higher percentage of successful outcomes, and that is because they are treating the whole person.” This was part of her larger argument for the efficacy of faith-based programming, but one aspect Rita addressed was the flexibility of the faith-based organization to meet any type of need without being specific to a program.

Subcommunity nexus. In asking questions about congregations’ general role in the community and also about identity legitimation, many respondents spoke of
congregations as a point of access to target populations for service agencies, as well as a source of information about different groups in the community, serving as a subcommunity nexus. Information was seen as flowing to groups in need of service and from these groups to service providers. Service providers utilized congregations as gatherings of specific target populations to spread information and provide education about social welfare topics and services. This ranged from information about health clinics to domestic violence to community gardens. Service providers also utilized congregational members and leaders to educate themselves about cultural groups and needs in order to better design programs and services. Congregations were referenced as key organizations to identify and utilize in community needs assessment projects.

Warner (1993) writes that religion plays a unique role in the U.S. as a legitimate cultural difference. Immigrants who come to the U.S. are expected to integrate into society and adopt American values, with religious identity as an acceptable tie to the traditions of the past. The construction of identity is beyond the scope of this discussion. However, the role of religious group affiliation in providing identity legitimation through a sense of belonging, group cohesion, and access to the larger community can be examined as significant to understanding the role of religion. As such, the interview guide included a specific question about the role of religion in identity legitimation:

Some people think that one of the purposes of religion is to provide a sense of belonging for an individual and a sense of cohesion for the community. To what extent do you think this is true? How do you see this playing out in Lowell specifically? Prompt: For example, should congregation provide activities for any
particular groups? Members? Those with shared cultural or language backgrounds? (see Appendix A)

This question had particular relevance for Lowell because of its history as an immigrant settlement area, and most respondents identified this immediately as a significant factor.

Respondents did also identify congregations as a source of community for everyone, not just immigrant groups. While some respondents saw community as a goal of religion, they also recognized that this was not always achieved. Cesar (03CC), a pastor in a local Pentecostal church with many immigrant members, in particular spoke of a conflict between the congregation’s goal of “individual salvation” and the need for a “faith community.”

Only a very few respondents identified that congregations provide a sense of community as a means to connecting individuals to a specific religious belief or tradition. Rita (05RC), a member of a local Protestant church, linked building a feeling of communality with a spiritual goal:

And that is why people cry. If you are going to the Olympics and you hear the National Anthem from the Americans, oh, my gosh, what a loud, rude, crude, lewd group we got because we are like, ‘Yeah!’ We are part of something, a huge something. And I think that is what the church should do. You rally these people together; you get them not into a religion, you get them into a relationship with God, and that causes a huge cohesiveness and unity in the spirit and bond of peace.
Language was identified as a significant element of how congregations provide resources for belonging and cohesion. This was discussed by service providers in organizations that focus on specific populations with English language barriers as well as in organizations serving the community as a whole. Congregation leaders also identified language as a key component of religious participation. Carolyn (02CC), representing a centrally located Protestant church, talked extensively about the different language groups using the same building for services. She emphasized the importance of finding ways to connect all the groups while also respecting the need for individuals to congregate with others who shared their chosen language. Congregations were serving an identity function related to cultural factors such as language more than a shared religious belief or history.

Respondents identified both the act of gathering as a group as well as the content of the group activity within a religious context as meaningful in building community and relationship. Similarly, respondents identified that the relationships formed in a congregational setting were significant because of the religious nature of the gathering and because of the support and community that the relationships provided. Congregational groups were compared to families in terms of the support and bonding involved for individuals.

In speaking with Karl (05KC), I asked if newcomers to the Lowell area who attended his congregation initially because of language or ethnic associations attend activities less often once they became more acclimated to the area and integrated into the larger community. His response was unambiguous:
The moment they get used to the church environment, they don’t. They don’t; they keep coming because church becomes part of your family. You are oriented to a communal environment, which is not found anywhere else except in the church, so they don’t come to the church less.

Other respondents also noted that congregations were accessed as a resource by individuals who previously were not religiously affiliated but who were seeking family-type relationships to assuage feelings of isolation (new immigrants and others as well).

Katherine (05KO), from one of Lowell’s largest non-profit providers, specifically linked the participation in a congregation centered on shared ethnicity or national background to a pathway to greater relationship with the larger “majority community.” She discussed the congregation as a safe place from which to then be able to move into the larger community and be accepted as part of this larger whole.

Respondents from the dominant community organizations identified congregations as a way to access marginalized populations, especially immigrant groups from Cambodia and African countries. While these respondents clearly saw congregations as a resource, they did not necessarily know how to go about forming relationships with congregational leaders. Often this was identified as a desirable goal that needed more attention. Sometimes the connection to a congregation was made through a staff member of the organization.

Three congregation leaders in particular spoke about seeking out opportunities to be involved in the greater Lowell community, both for the benefit of their congregation members and the community as a whole. Two of these leaders (Cesar (03CC) from a
Pentecostal Hispanic church and Shane (03SC) from a local Muslim group) spoke positively of their activities with non-profit social welfare organizations and stated that the organizational network in Lowell made efforts to include their congregations in needs assessments and planning. Both respondents also articulated a need for more communication with marginalized group leaders and were hopeful about increased opportunities for their congregations to be integrated into the larger community. The third congregation leader was from an African Presbyterian church, and Karl’s (05KC) experience negotiating a relationship between his congregation and the larger social welfare community was negative. He discussed his attempts at representing his congregation in other organizational activities as unproductive, both in drawing attention to the members’ needs and in his relationship with his congregation.

As discussed, respondents identified the significance of congregations to building community and a sense of belonging for individuals. However, they placed different emphasis on the need for this community and belonging, ranging from seeing a sense of community through faith as unnecessary to seeing it as part of what it means to be human. Robert (06RC), a leader of a local evangelical congregation, framed it clearly: “There is the basic need of the human nature is to belong, to be accepted, you know, and it is getting deeper and bigger today than ever, so yes, we [this congregation] are here for that purpose.”

Respondents also brought up the benefits of diversity and multiculturalism, not surprising considering the high visibility of Lowell’s immigration communities. Cesar (03CC) specifically talked about hate as a sin when trying to explain how socio-political
issues intersect with religious beliefs: “I mean, if abortion is sin, if homosexuality is sin and I totally agree with that, I mean, that's my Biblical stance on it, right, but to completely have this almost hate towards undocumented people then that's also a sin.”

Jason (05JC), a member of a local Protestant church, expressed a value of welcoming that was discussed by other congregation respondents as well: “we’re open and affirming, so we don’t discriminate on the basis of anything. And it’s not just a matter of not discriminating; you actually need to make an effort to welcome. You need to welcome people.” Congregation member respondents from several Protestant churches emphasized this value on welcoming in terms of equal rights and acceptance of marginalized groups, including the LGBTQ community.

People sought help from congregations both because of the convenience of the physical location and because the congregation and its leaders are seen as trustworthy brokers of information. Respondents from all three types of organizations especially identified immigrant congregational leaders as important for transmitting information because of the particular trust relationship they have with their members (a particular subcommunity). A few respondents also noted that this meant that congregational leaders had a responsibility to be informed about resources in the community so that they could provide this information to their members.

This use of a congregational leader as an information conduit was not without conflict. Karl (05KC) described the housing foreclosure crisis as a missed opportunity to use community resources to help his congregational members who lost their homes. He went on to describe community agencies that came to him for help in accessing the
congregational members for assistance programs after the crisis had already been weathered (though many members lost their homes). Community agencies were frustrated that members were not participating in their programs, and members were angry that assistance opportunities had not been offered when they would have been useful. Another example provided by Mary (03MO), from a non-profit organization oriented towards health, described cultural barriers to understanding mental illness and how congregational leaders hindered the education process instead of facilitating a greater understanding for congregational members. She relayed a situation where a congregational leader defined mental illness in terms of sin, which clearly (to her) prevented congregational members from accessing needed mental health services.

The idea of trust was implicit in many of the interview questions and data, though the term “trust” was not used in the interview guide. Collaboration and information sharing, however, require elements of trust even when this is not stated explicitly. Many respondents specifically identified trust in their responses as a factor in the relationships among community organizations and between these organizations and congregations, for immigrants and all community members: “Most people trust their faith leaders. They might not come to us, before even -- when people settle down, when they show up in this country or move from one place to another most people tend to congregate with people that look like them” (Mary, 03MO).

Trust was a key element in establishing the legitimacy of an organization in relationship to its target population. This legitimacy was defined by Karl (05KC), a pastor of a congregation primarily consisting of new immigrants, as trust that a social
welfare organization was giving individuals correct information. Respondents from non-profits and state agencies identified the significance of establishing trust with the community in general and target populations specifically in order to achieve this legitimacy, and establishing this trust by pursuing relationships with specific congregations. Trust played a significant role in social welfare provision generally and then more specifically with congregations as potential brokers of trust.

**Moral commentator.**

Casanova (1994) argued that religion and congregations have a role in holding other social institutions to a moral standard, through participating in public discourse with a moral voice. The interview guide asked a specific question about whether the respondent agreed with this idea of religion as a moral commentator, using as an example a religious leader speaking out about policy issues. A frequent response was that all individuals have an equal right to speak out, regardless of affiliation, but religious leaders or figures do not have a particular responsibility to participate in political discourse. A few respondents expressed concern about a dominant conservative Christian political voice, but they were careful to be clear that everyone has a right to speak their political mind.

In answering the specific moral commentator interview question, most respondents turned more to the topic of religion as a moral compass for individuals, “to guide individuals in their moral consciousness” (Diane, 02DX). This individual focus is different from the concept Casanova discussed, but the emphasis on moral direction for individuals in the interview content is interesting in itself. Respondents seemed less able
or willing to focus on a larger macro role for religion than on roles at the individual level. This could be due to the interview guide structure but certainly is an area for further research.

A few responses were exceptions to this individual focus, placing the significance of religion at the macro level in their language. These respondents talked about supporting references to God on U.S. currency and in the Pledge of Allegiance, and a few individuals made reference to the Christian beliefs of the founding fathers. Susan (04SC), a member of a local synagogue, spoke at length about the Ten Commandments as the basis for modern government, what she called the “moral rules of society.”

Respondents did identify a role for religion and congregations in the moral lives of the community and individuals, with various definitions of “moral”, mostly focused on vague concepts of “doing the right thing” (Laurie, 03LC, from a local synagogue) and treating others well. In this role, religion defines the “right thing” and provides a guiding framework (“fences” (Jason, 05JC, from a local Protestant church) or “rules and structure” (Sheila, 04SO, from a local non-profit oriented towards networking) for doing the right thing. Sam (03SO), a member of a local interfaith group, specifically discussed a link between a more secular society and an increase in negative values:

We’ve become so secular that there is very little, and if you wanted to put it in a negative way, capacity to shame people, that the positive behavior, that the unrestrained level of greed . . ., that there’s no core in our culture that really is strong enough to restrain these impulses.
Both productive (providing a framework) and punitive (shaming) roles in the moral life of individuals are seen to be provided by religion and congregations. Respondents articulated these roles both in the formal sense of religion but also in more informal ways, such as spirituality and beliefs, similar to the “Golden Rule Christianity” discussed by Ammerman (1997a).

Respondents also talked about the values needed to work in the area of social welfare, specifically a belief in acting in moral or ethical ways. Some respondents identified spiritual or religious aspects to these values that shaped their social welfare activities, while others separated the moral aspect of the work from any sort of religiosity. Mary (03MO), a staff person at a local non-profit oriented towards health, identifies herself as religious in her own way but states: “I should really be able to guide myself morally with or without religion.”

The final interview question asked participants about the role of their religious life or personal spirituality in their social welfare activities. The responses to this question often included specific values that stemmed from a religious or spiritual background/practice and led the respondent into social welfare activities. Respondents linked helping others in their work and a value on human rights to a sense of spiritual responsibility and practice. Others mentioned values such as compassion, giving back to the community, and providing for material needs as rooted in their religious upbringing, whether or not they had any current religious practice.

A few respondents were careful to clarify that they believed religion or religious beliefs were not necessary for moral behavior. Jessica (07JC), a member of a local
Protestant church, identified religion as a mechanism for morality but separated religion as only one possible layer of understanding human relations and the “moral grounding” needed to help us “be good.”

As discussed briefly above in other themes, some respondents also were wary of any focus of a congregation other that spiritual care. For some respondents, however, the spiritual development focus of congregations very much included a moral education component. Shane (03SC), a member of a local Muslim group, prioritized moral education this way: “I would rather have somebody morally aware than somebody who provides, like, canned food . . . Because the impact would be much larger, and that is a lot of what I believe the role of religion should be.”

The content of the interviews often included discussions of particular values as well as the transmission of values. The idea of the transmission of values came through in conversations about congregations’ roles in providing continuity for families and smaller communities and in talking about acculturation of new immigrants.

Respondents discussed their values regarding the public voice of religious actors, and most emphasized everyone’s right to speak out regardless of affiliation or role. Religion was identified as a valuable component of necessary public dialogue, an element of “diverse conversation” (Trudy, 07JC) that encourages people to speak up.

Values about organizational responsibilities also were identified. Respondents included congregations when discussing how social welfare organizations need to be advocates and activists for meeting social welfare needs. In discussing these needs, Rita (05RC), a member of a local Protestant church, spoke of the importance of the
“wholeness to treating the whole person, the whole situation” that required social welfare organizations partnering with congregations to address individuals’ spiritual needs.

Jessica (07JC), a member of another local Protestant church, spoke of her congregation’s view of social responsibility in managing investment funds, taking money out of investments in specific corporations because of value conflicts.

The transmission of values was mentioned in two ways—how congregations provide continuity of values and how they negotiate values with new immigrant groups. The continuity of values is tied in with previous discussions of community cohesiveness and identity legitimation. Louise (04LO), a staff person at a local non-profit oriented towards women in crisis, used the example of people who maintained their affiliation with the Catholic Church even through the series of public sexual abuse scandals, saying: “You know, the common values were so important that they could hold onto that when it went through a crisis.” Robert (06RC), an evangelical pastor, linked “moral decency” specifically with spiritual and religion education. Other respondents talked specifically about the continuity of history as the thread of shared values in Lowell, from the Revolutionary War to the shifting communities of new immigrants. Congregations were viewed as playing a role in maintaining this history and facilitating new immigrants’ integration into the community values.

Respondents also identified religion as a potentially divisive factor. Trudy (07TC), a member of a local Muslim group, said that “organized religion” divided people, but the shared belief in the golden rule (Ammerman, 1997a) and shared desire to
go to a “good place” after death brought people together under the auspices of a congregation.

**Organization Types**

The responses can also be examined through the lens of the types of organizations represented in the sample. First, individuals interviewed because of their congregational affiliation mostly discussed the role of religion and congregations in social welfare in terms of material contributions to the common good, collaboration with other organizations, and as a subcommunity nexus. The other themes made up a little less than 30% of the coded content for congregation respondents. Contributions to the common good and collaboration are both concrete ways congregation members saw their organizations participating in social welfare provision. Congregation members talked about identity legitimation as a larger, less tangible feature of what congregational life offers members. However, the primary way respondents discussed identity legitimation was through the congregation as subcommunity nexus. While this has some abstract conceptual elements, the role of the congregation as a nexus for subcommunities is structural, increasing opportunities for contact between service providers and community members.

Respondents from social welfare non-profit organizations emphasized collaboration, bureaucratic flexibility, and contributions to the common good in discussing the role of religion and congregations. Again, these three themes were almost two-thirds of the coded content: collaboration (32.3%), bureaucratic flexibility (22.2%), and contributions to the common good (14.4%). With the exception of Kasey (05KCO),
representing a religiously-based nonprofit, respondents from non-profit organizations (religious and secular) primarily discussed concrete/structural contributions congregations could and did make to social welfare provision. (Kasey focused more on the importance of religious content in social welfare programming needed for success.) These respondents were primarily interested in collaborative partnerships with any type of organization willing and able to participate. Congregations were discussed as uniquely able to fill service gaps because of their bureaucratic flexibility, but this also meant that formal, ongoing partnerships were limited. As discussed above, the contributions to the common good were talked about mostly in the form of food, space, and volunteers.

Katherine (05KO), a staff person at one of the largest non-profit providers in Lowell, gave an example of a congregation paying for a client’s bus pass for a month while the client was in transition. She was careful to be clear that she did not expect congregations to make such contributions on a regular basis, but she was grateful to have contacts in various congregations so that she could make requests when needed.

Social welfare state agency respondents focused on collaboration, bureaucratic flexibility, and identity legitimation. Similarly to non-profit respondents, state agency representatives were primarily interested in partnering with any willing and able community organization, including congregations. They also saw congregations as unique partners in their flexibility. Half of the coded content of these respondents fell into these two themes (collaboration 30%, bureaucratic flexibility 21%). Congregations as a subcommunity nexus was the third largest at 18%.
Collaboration is the one shared theme among all three organizational types’ three top dominant themes. The other dominant themes are all represented more than once in the organizational types (common good, subcommunity nexus, and bureaucratic flexibility). This is reflected in the findings discussion above—collaboration is the primary relationship of congregations to the social welfare community, as way to contribute to the common good through bridging communities and bureaucratic flexibility. The overall emphasis on concrete/structural themes is significant when discussed in conjunction with themes in related federal policy below.

Collaboration in meeting social welfare needs was identified as a strength in Lowell’s social welfare community. Respondents from non-profit organizations and state agencies alike gave examples of how they collaborated with each other in order to avoid duplication of services, fill service gaps, and apply for external funding.
Chapter 5: Federal Policy Context

The following discusses the content of federal policy documents relevant to the discussion of faith-based organizations receiving federal contracts for programming. As discussed, three themes (administrative rules, state structure, ideological positions and goals) were used to structure the content analysis of federal policy documents from the three administrations. First I discuss the policy context by detailing the documents included for each administration. Then the content and themes are presented, with a final discussion of the Lowell case in this larger federal policy context.

Policy Context

This particular policy debate about states utilizing religious organizations to administer federal programs began with the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) during the Clinton administration. The successful passage of this legislation represented a significant shift in how the federal government addressed the needs of low income families and individuals in a range of ways. The inclusion of the Charitable Choice provision was only one small feature, but certainly an enduringly controversial one. Charitable Choice allowed for states to contract directly with religious organizations or provide vouchers to be redeemed for services at religious organizations (Segal, 1999). As discussed in the literature review, the federal government has long partnered with religiously-affiliated organizations to provide social welfare services, but these partnerships have been within clear parameters designed to maintain the constitutional separation of church and state. The Charitable Choice provision in welfare reform policy (specific to TANF and SSI
originally and later to other federal programs) aimed to create opportunities for partnerships with religious organizations “without impairing the [organization’s] religious character” (Personal Responsibility & Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, 1996).

While the Charitable Choice provision was clear about government funds not being used for religious worship or education, policy language did blur the previous guidelines around religious organizations administering government-funded programs. One aspect of this change was allowing organizations to hire state-funded program staff based on religious beliefs, previously understood to be unconstitutional employment discrimination (Segal, 1999).

The protection of the religious character of an organization meant that services could legally be provided in an “overtly sectarian” space, as the policy change prevents organizations from being required to remove religious symbols from program space (Segal, 1999, p. 14). While Charitable Choice was purported to enable religious organizations to receive government funding to support services without having to change the character of the organization, the federal policy still required religious organizations to be held accountable for funds equal to non-religious organizations. Also, Segal (1999) points out that setting up access to services through vouchers meant that religious organizations could circumvent the restrictions preventing use of contract funds for religious programming.

Charitable Choice was introduced by Senator John Ashcroft and challenged by conservative and liberal groups alike (Daly, 2009). It was added to the massive welfare
reform undertaken during the Clinton administration and passed into law in 1996. President Clinton added revisions to address some of the constitutional questions, but the inclusion of Charitable Choice in this major policy sparked court challenges, debates about the value of faith-based programming, and calls for research examining the impact of the policy. The documents included in this analysis represent the major contributions to the debate by each administration affected by the policy change, beginning with Clinton. The Bush administration paid the most explicit attention to the issue and is represented by the most documents.

For the Clinton administration, the documents reviewed included the Charitable Choice-related parts of the welfare reform bill (PWRORA 1996), the Charitable Choice Expansion Act of 1999 (not passed), the religious non-discrimination clause of the Children’s Health Act of 2000, and General Accounting Office (GAO) Report 97-115 “Child Protective Services: Complex Challenges Require New Strategies.” These represent the original Charitable Choice provision, subsequent policy inclusions, and a program report that references communities working with religious organizations to address gaps in the flawed Child Protective Services system. From this, the debate about constitutional concerns and ambiguity in the law begins and then is taken up with more vigor by the Bush administration.

The Bush administration took on the advocacy of local faith-based organizations as ideal service providers and wanted to be sure that federal contracting bodies were enabling their participation. The emphasis is reflected in the administrative twenty-seven documents found to be relevant to this study. Six of these are Executive Orders,
establishing the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (OFBCI) and Centers for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives at various federal agencies (Departments of Justice, Education, Labor, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Agriculture, Commerce, Veteran Affairs, and Homeland Security, the Agency for International Development and the Small Business Administration), directing them to facilitate the involvement of faith-based and community organizations in their programs. One of the Executive Orders clarifies the exemption of faith-based organizations from federal employment non-discrimination policy. Also included is the text of three federal code revisions, adding (or revising) Charitable Choice provisions to the Community Services Block Grant, Substance Abuse and Treatment Block Grant, Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness Grant programs, and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families.

Seven GAO reports are reviewed and coded because of their direct mention of Charitable Choice provisions or related policy. These reports present research findings about policy implementation and federal oversight of state contracting and charities. In addition to these GAO reports, eleven reports regarding faith-based organizations are included. These have various purposes and audiences, ranging from annual and special reports from the OFBCI to federal agency contracting guides to a presidential “agenda to enlist, equip, enable, empower and expand the heroic works of faith-based and community groups across America” (The White House, 2001, p. 2). The overall goal of these administrative documents is to facilitate the involvement of faith-based and
community organizations (with an emphasis on the faith-based) and to demonstrate the success of these organizations in addressing community needs.

Nine policy documents from the Obama administration’s first term represent a smaller emphasis compared to the Bush administration, though the range of documents does cover similar topics of federal agency regulations and implementation. Two Executive Orders are included that create a President’s Advisory Council for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships and amend Bush’s original Executive Orders that created the OFBCI to include additional language emphasizing accountability and constitutional protection (and changing the OFBCI to the Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships). Obama administration documents also include an OFBNP report and four federal agency guides to partnering with community organizations. Two unique types of documents from this administration are a statement of values from the President on the White House website and a research literature review commissioned by the Department of Homeland Security (Joshi, 2010). As seen in the administrative documents, the Obama administration does not take up the facilitation of faith-based organizations with the same energy as the Bush administration, but neither does the administration make any significant revisions (including no revisions of the employment discrimination issue).

Administrative Rules

Content in the administrative theme makes or identifies rules about government programs and faith-based organizations (FBOs). The establishment of new federal government agencies or offices, changes in administrative rules regarding treatment of faith-based organizations and federal funding, and guidelines about managing religious
The findings regarding administrative rules focus on how changes should facilitate FBO involvement, how constitutional issues should be addressed regulation-wise, how policy defines relevant activities and concepts, and then finally details of how new administrative bodies should be set up.

The first topic, facilitation of FBO involvement, focuses on content specifically identifying ways FBOs can or should be more involved in social welfare provision and the hindrances to that involvement: “faith-based and community-based organizations face the highest barriers in the Federal grants process” (The White House Office of . . ., 2001, p. 13). To promote increased participation of FBOs, policy content presents statements about the need for using administrative language that actively affirms FBOs as a unique community resource to be sought out by government programs. Policies call for increased opportunities for FBOs to participate in social welfare programming and state contracts by treating FBOs as equal to other non-profit organizations; administrative rules should create a “level playing field.” Specifically, FBOs should not be discriminated against because of the religious affiliation of the organization. Federal organizations should identify barriers to FBO involvement and address them, including providing technical assistance to FBOs in accessing federal program funds. One of the barriers named is the possible threat partnerships with government agencies may be to the religious character of an FBO, so administrative rules should be changed to specifically protect the religious character of organizations.

The Clinton administration’s documents have a strong emphasis on providing technical assistance to FBOs in order for them to access federal funding for social welfare
programming. Taking this further, the Bush administration focuses on identifying and addressing a range of barriers to FBO involvement (including technical assistance). Part of this is the Bush emphasis on protecting the religious nature of organizations, assuming that FBOs are hesitant to engage with the government at the risk of compromising their religious character: “[Address] [U]nwillingness on the part of some FBOs to partner with government due to general mistrust of government, fear of erosion of their mission, or fear of oversight” (GAO 02-337, 2002, p. 14). Bush documents also define activities and concepts (such as proselytization) in the interest of promoting FBO involvement in social welfare activities by trying to eliminate ambiguity regarding allowable organizational activities.

The topic of beneficiary rights includes content that breaks down the specific rules and concepts that are important to maintaining an individual’s religious freedom in this context of promoting FBO involvement. Policy content specifies that an alternative provider must be available (provided by the states) to service recipients who do not want to receive services from an FBO. FBOs providing services cannot make religious affiliation or participation a condition of receiving services. FBOs cannot discriminate against service recipients based on religious affiliation. While these rules are included in documents from all three administrations, the Obama administration specifically emphasizes how access to an alternative provider is necessary to insure beneficiary rights:

Federal financial assistance shall establish policies and procedures designed to ensure that (1) appropriate and timely referrals are made to an alternative
provider; (2) all referrals are made in a manner consistent with all applicable privacy laws and regulations; (3) the organization subject to subsection (h)(i) notifies the agency of any referral; (4) such organization has established a process for determining whether the beneficiary has contacted the alternative provider; and (5) each beneficiary of a social service program receives written notice of the protections set forth in this subsection prior to enrolling in or receiving services from such program (Exec. Order No. 13559, 2010, p. 3).

The rules about what programming government funds can be spent on is also a prevalent administrative topic. Specifically, federal funds cannot be used for any worship or proselytization activities. FBOs that receive federal funds must have separate budgets and management of funds for contracted programming and for religious activities. Administrative regulations attempt to outline definitions for greater clarity in the regulatory relationship between FBOs and state and federal governments. This includes terms like “pervasively sectarian”, “inherently religious”, and “proselytization” to describe FBOs and organizational activities that may not be eligible for federal contracts. Religious art or icons, religious terms in organizational titles, and religious language in mission statements do not need to be removed in order to receive federal funds. Again, these definitions were provided in documents from all three administrations but emphasized in different ways. The Bush documents used clarification of definitions to promote FBO involvement, while the Obama documents aimed more to reassure critics that federal funds were specifically for social welfare activities not religious ones. Bush documents also emphasize the need for positive inclusion in this area:
when restrictions on religious activities are listed without an equally strong affirmation of eligibility and equally emphatic positive guidance about how faith-based providers can legitimately collaborate to deliver assistance, correct information about restricted practices may have the effect of chilling participation by religious service groups (White House, 2001, p. 8-9).

Each administration also included new federal offices and programs created for the purpose of managing or facilitating the involvement of FBOs in social welfare provision, primarily the creation of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (under Bush) and the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships (under Obama).

These policy documents also contained discussions related to constitutional issues. For example, regulations for FBO activities with constitutional weight include separating religious activities from federally funded program activities (in terms of time/scheduling and space/location) and exempting FBOs from federal regulations regarding employment discrimination. Certainly, many of the topics such as defining appropriate activities and protecting both FBO and beneficiary rights intersect with this constitutionality discussion as well.

Finally, both Clinton and Obama administrations emphasize the need for evaluation of FBOs. This is part of discussions about the management of relationships between FBOs and the government and accountability regarding federal funding for programs generally. Accountability is discussed further in the culture theme below, but it is important to note the inclusion of evaluation and outcomes research in federal
regulations and the lack of emphasis in this area in the Bush documents (though not completely absent).

**State Structure**

The state structure theme addresses which parts of society are responsible for addressing which problems. This includes topics such as preventing excessive entanglement of the government in religious affairs, protecting constitutional rights of beneficiaries, and responsibility for the social safety net. From the content analysis four major topics arise: (1) constitutional issues, (2) government/FBO relationship, (3) government/community organization relationship, and (4) state or federal responsibility.

Interpretation of constitutional principles in these policy documents outlines government’s responsibility towards religious organizations and towards individuals regarding religious freedom. Federal policies emphasize the need to avoid “excessive entanglement” between government and religion. This means trying to regulate the relationship between government and FBOs in order to avoid government dictating to religious organizations or religion permeating federal programs: “greater clarity in the church-state guidance given to social service providers so that tax funds are used appropriately and providers are not confused or sued” (President’s Advisory, 2010, p. viii). Other constitutional issues are the free exercise of religion (both by FBOs and individuals seeking services), protection of religious freedom (of service recipients), and the establishment clause (generally preference of one religion over another by the government). Most of the constitutional discussions in the policy content agree on the significance of these concerns and the government’s responsibility to maintain
constitutional boundaries. The conflict comes when interpreting the boundaries and providing legal definitions.

The Bush documents spend the most time on constitutional issues regarding state structure, primarily refuting arguments that federal funding given to religious organizations violates church-state separation: “But given the general wariness about the constitutional propriety of funding faith-based organizations, and the heightened suspicion about collaboration with ‘pervasively sectarian’ or obviously religious groups, Federal grant programs can be inappropriately restrictive” (The White House Office of . . ., 2001, p. 9-10). Obama documents also spend time giving assurances that any federal contracting with community organizations generally would be within constitutional bounds of the separation of church and state.

Content discussing the government/FBO relationship is similar to the constitutional topic but goes beyond discussions of specific constitutional principles (though could be argued to fall under constitutional purview). This includes arguments that FBOs should have no religious influence in federally funded programs and that government should not impair the ability of FBOs to provide social welfare services or impinge on the religious character of the organizations. Also included are policy conversations about the long history of relationships between community organizations (including FBOs) and government agencies, arguing that based on this history, government should actively partner with FBOs.

Clinton and Bush documents both discuss the government/FBO structural relationship in the larger context of shifting government responsibilities for social welfare
to communities. Both administrations discuss the structure of contractual relationships. Bush documents also emphasize the responsibility of the federal government to protect the religious nature of FBOs.

There is occasional content regarding the relationship between government and community organizations, separate from FBOs. More often, however, there is overlap, with community organizations rarely being discussed independently of FBOs. The mingling and sometimes interchange of references to FBOs and community organizations necessitates further research into this blurry aspect of the discussion. Obama documents do make a significant shift in language to emphasize community organizations generally more than FBOs.

There is also policy content that specifically identifies areas of activity for primary government responsibility (state or federal), including the manner in which federal and state governments structure their participation in the social safety net. For example, Clinton documents shift social welfare funds to states in the form of block grants, and then states are encouraged to contract with community organization (FBOs included). This reflects a limitation on government responsibility for the direct provision of services. In addition, though infrequent, there are discussions of the reliability of government funding as well as government irresponsibility (inconsistent funding), necessitating non-governmental involvement to fill the gaps.

**Ideological Positions & Goals**

The theme of ideological positions and goals refers to the content from the documents that discusses values and ideas that should be prioritized in policy and
programmatic decisions. Specific values such as abstinence, diversity, and efficiency are mentioned explicitly, while other ideas such as valuing small groups over large programs arise from explanations of policy decisions or recommendations. I have organized this into topics of (1) pro FBO/community organization, (2) specific values, and (3) critique of FBOs.

Pro FBO/community organization content discusses FBOs and community organizations in favorable terms. An important component of these policy documents is content advocating for these FBOs and community organizations as preferable to other types providing social welfare services. For example, policy content from all three administrations (though emphasized more in the Bush documents) presents the argument that community organizations (sometimes FBOs specifically) are more familiar with community needs and so are in the best position to provide services: “few institutions are closer to the people than our faith-based and other neighborhood organizations” (Exec. Order No. 13498, 2009, p. 1). Bush documents state that small community organizations are a more efficient use of funding because their programs accomplish more with less money (emphasizing the value of efficiency): “Contracting out social services can potentially result in several benefits, such as more efficient and effective delivery of services” (GAO 02-245, 2002, p. 4).

Many policies, especially from the Clinton and Bush administrations, identify community organizations (sometimes FBOs specifically) as a neglected resource that needs to be supported and utilized by federal and state agencies. Bush documents specifically state that a bias against FBOs exists at the federal and state government
levels and hinders the ability of FBOs to provide services: “The policies and practices of Federal grants programs too often make it difficult or impossible for faith-based and grassroots groups to gain support, even though they may have superior results in lifting lives and healing distressed neighborhoods” (“White House”, 2001, p. 5). Another angle in support of FBOs presents a case in which FBOs are already providing extensive services in the community, and government attempts to address social problems overlap or interfere with this work already in existence. Pro-FBO/community organization discussions in these documents often assume that these are small, less-bureaucratically structured organizations.

Some policy content specifically identifies the religious nature of FBOs as the key desirable or successful factor in social welfare provision. Such specific attributions of programmatic success are limited and mostly implied (though certainly these arguments are prevalent in other arenas). A few direct statements in documents from the Bush administration, however, create a problematic contradiction to the reassurances that federal funding is not used for programs with religious content: “these organizations [FBOs] are more in tune with the needs of their communities than other organizations and can better serve individuals that may need a range of social services” (GAO 06-616, 2006, p. 2).

The theme of values includes content that refers to any particular principle or standard, either articulated specifically or identified within a larger discussion. Values intersect frequently with other topics; this coding teases out the threads of values represented in non-values discussions (such as that of regulations or constitutional
structures). For the Clinton administration’s documents, the dominant specific value is nondiscrimination and the dominant ideological foci are fatherhood and urban population: “The absence of a father in the life of a child has a negative effect on school performance and peer adjustment” (Personal Responsibility & Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, 1996, p. 8). Clinton documents emphasize the need for government contracting agencies not to discriminate against potential service agencies because of religious affiliation.

The topic of fatherhood was dominant in policy documents as a key factor in successful families, success defined by not needing or participating in federal income support programs. As presented in the maps, female-headed households are identified as one of the larger populations in need of services, and programs facilitating increased involvement of fathers in these households were part of the Clinton administration’s rhetoric. Content speaking of urban populations is primarily identifying a group or community in need of social welfare attention. Urban is not defined but sometimes implies African American individuals or communities (or other communities of color) and sometimes implies areas of high population density: “In urban areas, both FBOs and CBOs are located near their clients . . .” (Joshi, 2010, p. 15). Without an articulated definition, urban remains a vague referential term that is used to delineate target areas of service: “To increase the development and capacity of faith-based or community-based organizations to respond to underserved victims in high-crime urban areas” (GAO 06-616, 2006, p. 27);
In urban areas, faith-integrated agencies are more accessible to residents of high-poverty neighborhoods than faith-segmented organizations. This suggests that places of worship and religious congregations located in high-poverty communities play an active role in providing assistance to the poor in local communities. Secular nonprofits are also quite accessible, but they are located further away (Joshi, 2010, p. 62).

For the Bush administration’s documents, the focus is on values of voluntarism, compassion, accountability and on urban populations. The emphasis on voluntarism was part of the discussion of FBOs as small community organizations that are better equipped and more knowledgeable about the needs of their own communities. Discussions of accountability reflected similar emphasis to entitlement (in the Clinton administration’s policies), an emphasis on individual rather than structural causes of poverty.

By accessing volunteer resources, these small organizations are more economically efficient and also build relationships with the larger community. Bush documents encouraged individuals to increase their volunteer work in the community as part of citizenship and compassionate action. The repeated use of compassion and other related language was part of a larger presentation of ideas called Compassionate Conservatism (Olasky, 2000). Voluntarism and compassion were linked as key community activities that, if encouraged, would preclude the need for government intervention into social problems.

The Obama administrative documents emphasize voluntarism and diversity as primary values and fatherhood and urban populations as ideological foci. Fatherhood and
voluntarism have been discussed with the other two administrations, but the use of this language in Obama’s administrative documents is slightly different. The Obama administration’s rhetoric is much less blaming and more focused on how government programs can facilitate change. For example, in 2009 Obama signed the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act into law, reauthorizing and expanding federal service programs such as AmeriCorp. He also reauthorized the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse first funded by Bush in 2005, continuing an emphasis on responsible fatherhood. Finally, the emphasis on diversity in policy documents of the Obama administration reflected generally more inclusive language regarding a range of populations but specifically religious groups. Diversity was presented as a positive value to be cultivated in communities, and all religious traditions should be included in efforts to facilitate community organization participation in social welfare activities.

To fully argue for greater partnership with FBOs, these policy documents also contain content that attempts to counter arguments about the lack of FBO effectiveness and the limited capacity of FBOs. This is not content that discusses outcomes or efficacy research that has been conducted regarding FBOs providing social services, but instead content that makes suppositions or is countering assumptions regarding efficacy or capacity. Very little content addresses outcomes research except to say that this should be made a priority in the future.

**Integration of Federal Policy & Lowell Case**

The federal policy review provides the national context for the community case. Lowell certainly seems to have the resources the federal policy discussion identifies—
strong community leaders in marginalized groups that come together to design organizations that work for everyone, community leaders with access to specific populations and who provide this information to organizations, organizations that collaborate to identify gaps and avoid overlapping services and utilize informal resources, and a strong community history due to a few strong leaders. The language in the faith-based initiatives’ policy documents also emphasizes FBOs participating in social welfare provision by competing for federal/state funding. This counters the response from Lowell that emphasized congregations as a resource because of their bureaucratic flexibility. Lowell’s social welfare landscape included only a few FBO service providers, and the topic of FBOs desiring federal or state funding to support their efforts was not raised by any of the respondents.

Based on these data, congregations play a collaborative role in community social welfare provision, viewed positively by service providers and federal policy rhetoric alike. However, community providers see congregations as supplementary to the structure of social welfare provision, while federal policy discussions promote institutionalizing the local collaborative relationships as preferable to state structures. Local discussions focus on who can collaborate and how, with congregations being seen as contributing to the common good (volunteers, food, physical space) when possible, as subcommunity nexus for specific target populations, and as able to fill gaps because of bureaucratic flexibility. Federal policy discussions focus on who should collaborate and on facilitating the provision of services by community organizations (sometimes specifically faith-based organizations).
With devolution, beginning under Reagan, the federal structure of social welfare has slowly shifted decision-making regarding social welfare programming to the state level, as well as decreased the funding available overall for such programs. The rhetoric seems to emphasize the role community organizations have in taking over responsibility for social welfare provision, with their solid volunteer and charitable contribution resources. At the federal policy level there is an ideological emphasis on devolution, using FBOs as the prototypical community organization with a moral impetus to provide for social welfare needs. In this particular case study, this is not reflected at the community level. The community organization landscape is not dominated by FBOs in Lowell, and congregations (as one possible FBO-type) are significant as collaborators not providers. The community level does reflect the federal discussion regarding the need for a collaborative structure, but community members still identify federal funds as necessary to any service provision.

The federal policy discussion supports religion (and religious organizations beyond just congregations) as a significant actor in the common good and takes it as a policy goal to facilitate the structural inclusion of community-based, religious organizations in social welfare provision. As discussed above, these community data do not support this view of religious organizations’ structural participation in social welfare provision. Further research to develop this question should include case studies in other parts of the U.S. where FBOs are active service providers (contributing to existing research), as well as looking at social welfare policies in various states to understand how federal social welfare policy related to religion is being interpreted and implemented. As
discussed briefly in the Literature Review chapter, Massachusetts is seen as adhering to the letter of the law but not the spirit by using its history of contracting with established FBOs as sufficient proof of compliance with federal policy. Massachusetts has not created a specific office to facilitate contracting with FBOs or implemented policy that actively promotes the involvement of small, community-based FBOs in social welfare provision. The conflicting reports on whether Massachusetts has complied with federal faith-based initiatives present an interesting window into the questions of what types of FBOs are the target of federal discussions. Comparing Massachusetts to other states with different implementation tactics would add depth to this research.

As this study focuses on congregations in the community, there are more questions to be asked about other types of religious organizations, especially in communities where these types of organizations play a larger role. This research shows that religion is clearly an active contributor to social welfare provision (as one concrete aspect of the common good), but community views of an informal role conflict with the federal policy discussion of a formal role.

The federal policy discussion also assumes that religion takes the form of small community FBOs that will be best able to understand and meet social welfare needs. The Bush administration’s documents especially emphasize the unique role FBOs have in the community because of the direct relationship with the target population. Research has shown that geographic proximity is more nuanced and cannot be assumed to add more value than financial resources could (Allard, 2009). While the language of identity legitimation is not used in the policy documents, certainly present is the assumption that
FBOs (including congregations) serve as a highly valued gathering place for community members. Policy language that supports and encourages the use of these religiously-affiliated gathering places as points of access and resources for social welfare provision is legitimizing religion as an identity factor and as access to the public sphere (in this case social welfare policy and provision).

Overall, the emphasis of all three administrations regarding the role of religion in social welfare provision is the facilitation of FBO participation in community social welfare activities. Administrative rules addressing FBO participation are structural by definition. Each administration has a different emphasis in this regulatory area, though broadly overall the focus is on facilitating FBO involvement in social welfare activities, defining activities and concepts, and protecting service beneficiary rights. These topics provide concrete guidelines for how federal and state agencies should remove barriers to FBO involvement and then how the FBO-government relationship should be negotiated while maintaining legal parameters of church and state. The structural discussion is rooted in a strong ideological position of the need for faith-based and community organizations to play a dominant role in social welfare provision.

Obama administration documents are primarily focused on more structural, constitutional issues, while policy documents from the Clinton and Bush administrations focus on government responsibility (federal and state) for social welfare. Government responsibility is discussed in terms of insuring access to service contracts is available to all. Document language is often used to frame this in terms of the government having a responsibility to stay out of the way of community organizations who can meet their own
local social welfare needs. Instead of seeing the facilitation of FBO involvement as a blurring of the structural line between church/religion and state as some argue, federal policy documents from the Clinton and especially Bush administrations present more of a case for this facilitation achieving a more clear boundary between government and community responsibility for social welfare. In terms of state structure, government’s role is to partner with community organizations when needed (specifically FBOs for the Bush administration) and to protect both the religious character of FBOs and the religious freedom of service beneficiaries. Also both Clinton and Bush administrations emphasize the historical and successful provision of social welfare by non-governmental, community organizations.

The policy language presents a clear ideological position regarding the responsibility of local communities for social welfare provision. In all three administrations’ documents, the federal government is framed as a resource for community organizations, specifically for technical assistance and service contracts (which is sometimes implicitly or explicitly defined as program funding). While federal social welfare structures have changed significantly under the three administrations (particularly under Clinton) to align with this view of communities as primary providers, actual federal funding for social welfare program has decreased during all three time periods.

The positions and goals identified in the administrative documents provide an ideological context to the regulatory and responsibility discussions. The shared topics among the administrations are urban population (all three), fatherhood (Clinton and
Obama), and voluntarism (Bush and Obama). Urban refers to an undefined target population social welfare policy should be addressing the needs of, and fatherhood refers to a prioritized social problem tied to poverty inequality.

The topic of voluntarism (Bush and Obama) represents the ideological cases the administrations are making for how social welfare needs should be met—who should be providing and who should be receiving. The Clinton administration’s efforts to define the social welfare problems to be addressed as crisis intervention (as evidenced by benefit time limits and narrower parameters of qualifications) helps promote the idea that community organizations can meet these needs without a larger federal government social welfare structure. The subsequent focus on voluntarism reinforces the position that social welfare needs can be met through a moral impetus felt by individuals instead of an institutionalized system of benefits. Bush especially emphasizes FBOs as the source of this voluntarism, both as the primary promoter of the needed moral values and the nexus of volunteers and beneficiaries.

So from the policy review, we see a macro level discussion of who should be providing services, from an ideological standpoint of communities being best able to serve their own social welfare needs through the work of community organizations such as FBOs and the support of federal and state governments. This is in contrast to the structural focus of the community level interviews that focus on who can be providing services, with no specific expectations of congregations beyond what they are able to contribute to the collaboration needed to meet social welfare needs. There is some overlap of themes at the federal and community levels. The primary means for service
provision for both is the collaboration of all stakeholders. Both see congregations and FBOs as resources for volunteers and bureaucratically flexible services available to fill gaps in more formal program structures. Both see congregations and FBOs as entry points for service providers to reach specific target populations because of the identity legitimation role religion plays.

However, community members identify problems with attempting to institutionalize these contributions, whereas the federal policy discussion is working towards just that. Community members argue that they need all stakeholders at the table but that community collaboration cannot take the place of government funding (federal or state) and structures. The Bush administration’s goal for FBOs seems more to move them into a place of primary service responsibility, which would negate the bureaucratic flexibility.

The contribution this study makes to the theoretical discussion is in the contrast between the community and federal emphases on religion’s role in social welfare provision. If collaboration is an agreed upon primary role for FBOs (including congregations), the disagreement is about the expectation of collaboration and the difference between can and should.

There is a structural theoretical category developing here from both community and federal policy discussions, though each emphasizes it differently. FBOs (including congregations) are seen as valuable to the collaborative process needed at the community level to meet social welfare needs because they fill service gaps with their bureaucratic flexibility, serve as gathering places for target populations/identity groups, and contribute
to the total pool such resources as volunteers, food, and space. At the community level it seems that congregations have value as community participants, with no added value because of the religious aspect of the organization; whereas at the federal policy level with Bush especially, FBOs have value to the community as participants with added value because of the religious nature of the organization.

Deprivatization arguments say religion can enter the public sphere after establishing a separate religious private sphere and then entering the public under certain terms, for example, certain roles—moral commentator, contributor to common good, identity legitimation. This research seems more to say that religion is part of the public sphere (social welfare policy/provision) in any role it chooses. So this theoretical language is useful to help discern how religion is participating in the public sphere, but the overall emphasis on collaboration seems to reflect an assumption that religion is not separable from the (social welfare) public sphere. If religion’s role is defined through organizational activities, then religion is part of the constitutional fabric of the public sphere, as are any collaborating community organizations. If religion is defined in less material terms, more of a moral voice, it could be uniquely identifiable in the public sphere, as the work of advocacy groups possibly. As a moral voice that has influence on individual values and actions in social welfare activities, religion again is one factor in the intersection of factors that influence individuals and difficult to parse out as a particular influence. More research is needed to understand these nuances.
Chapter 6: Cross-national Comparison

As discussed in the literature review, a range of historical factors contribute to the definition of a nation’s welfare state typology. A thorough discussion of the historical development of the welfare state in the U.S. is beyond the scope of this study, but what the findings reflect about the U.S. welfare state typology is significant.

In accordance with the language used in the WREP cases, the U.S. is traditionally categorized as a liberal welfare state (Esping-Andersen, 1990). This liberal welfare state categorization is based on the history of industrialization, the state structure, and the history of class dynamics in the U.S. The economic changes tied to industrialization, including the accumulation of wealth by some and increased social dislocation due to urban migration, were not seen to be within the purview of the federal government (with some exceptions). In contrast to nations that implemented policies to protect individuals and families from economic changes using increased tax revenue, the U.S. relied on a laissez faire market model to accommodate changing social needs. Ladd (1994) wrote: “Americans declare themselves prepared to countenance very substantial economic inequalities, while insisting on the importance of the ideal of equal opportunity” (p. 35).

The state structure in the U.S. is decentralized with a system of checks and balances that requires continual compromise and incorporation of varying interests regarding policy decision making, also a feature of the liberal welfare state typology. This dispersion of political power increases the veto points in the policy making process, slowing it down and making, for example, development of comprehensive welfare policy difficult. Part of the intention of this structural design is to limit the government’s ability
to regulate the lives of individuals. Also part of the particular state structure in the U.S. is the separation of church and state in a manner that decentralizes key social welfare concerns, placing responsibility at the state and local level.

The history of political class struggle in the U.S. is minimal compared to other welfare states, as demonstrated by the limited success of union movements and left wing political parties. This fits with the value orientation of individualism and the emphasis on self-determination in the U.S. (Garlington, 2013; Lipset, 1996). These historical factors are part of the complex narrative that has shaped the U.S. liberal welfare state, defined by the types of welfare policy implemented. In the U.S., welfare policy as a whole is means-tested instead of universal and market-oriented with services contracted out, lacking an expansive welfare state in the vein of social democracies.

Looking at the realities of this categorization through the lens of this study, the data support and nuance the view of the U.S. as a liberal welfare state. The federal policy review certainly reinforces the position that government intervention in communities and individuals’ lives should be limited. Bush administration rhetoric specifically calls for the federal government to get out of the way of FBOs and other community organizations so that these organizations can be free to meet social welfare needs more effectively than state agencies. Clinton and Bush administrations call for social welfare policy that facilitates the involvement of FBOs, facilitation in the form of removing barriers and providing limited technical assistance in accessing state contracts. The Clinton administration’s major welfare reform policies, including the faith-based initiative-related
documents examined in this study, involved a major decentralization of power by shifting program responsibility to the state level through federal funding block grants.

The theme of small community organizations being best placed to address social welfare needs is repeated in the policy documents for all three administrations. This reflects the value of decentralization as well, with this argument for community organizations as uniquely able being used to promote the devolution of responsibility for social welfare. The theme of voluntarism is dominant in both the Bush and Obama administrations’ documents, which also promotes the idea that community resources, rather than government, should be used to address social welfare needs. These shifts of decision making to the state and local levels (devolution) and of service provision to community organizations (privatization) are not necessarily bound together, but in the U.S. the conversation of social welfare responsibility has explained the need for devolution through the goal of privatization. State and local governments need more control over social welfare provision to enable them to identify and utilize community organizations for service provision.

As discussed above, the community interview data yielded themes focused on collaboration and structural ways congregations contributed to social welfare. This reflects the need at the community level to be addressing social welfare needs with all formal and informal resources because of a lack of comprehensive federal programming. Respondents generally voiced a similar position that community organizations (and in some instances, congregations) have intimate knowledge of the community’s needs and how to meet these. However, respondents (with a few exceptions) saw the work of
community organizations as only possible within a larger government structure of regulation and funding. Congregations specifically were seen as valuable for their bureaucratic flexibility in order to fill gaps in services, which speaks to the welfare state structure that does exist in the U.S. that is means-tested instead of universal. Respondents’ discussion of the constraints of program and funding guidelines that created a need for congregations to fill gaps refers to the complex system of benefits designed to identify the deserving portion of those in need.

As discussed, this study uses the case study model of the WREP project. Though significant aspects of the research design were adapted to fit the U.S. case, this study of the role of religion in the U.S. can be discussed in relation to the WREP cases (summarized in the first chapter). Overall, the WREP case studies showed increasingly active participation of the established churches in Europe in the provision of social welfare, mostly in informal ways to fill gaps in service provision. Churches were identified as resources for specific target populations, such as new immigrants, because the churches were often in a position to witness individuals outside the system. The research also identified the church as a “critical voice” in assessing the success of social welfare policies in addressing community needs (Bäckström, et al., 2010, p. 190). While these European case studies highlighted very active local leaders of the majority church, the findings also confirmed the ongoing expectation of the state holding primary responsibility for social welfare.

Adding the U.S. case study to this discussion, similar themes are present even with the significant variations in national context. As discussed, the U.S. does not have an
established or majority church, and it also does not have a state in the sense Europeans use the term: “Americans are wont to use a different word: they talk about government rather than state. In Europe, by contrast, there is quite clearly an entity called the state, together with its two off-shoots—one religious and one secular” (Bäckström, et al., 2010, p. 192). So the examination of religious social welfare activities at the community level in the U.S. is a focus on congregations (or “sects” as discussed by Le Mon (2009)) in a social welfare policy context.

Common themes between the U.S. and European cases include the role congregations play in filling service gaps in communities, the flexibility that allows congregations to address these gaps, and the importance of congregations in addressing the needs of marginalized populations. The major questions emerging from the WREP cases also are relevant to the U.S. case: does churches taking responsibility for social welfare release government from some level of responsibility, are formal professional providers or informal, more personal providers better, and is there homogenization of welfare typologies happening across European welfare states (Bäckström, et al., 2010).

In the case of the first question, it is clear from the federal policy review that the government is shifting responsibility for social welfare to community organizations, including FBOs. While the dynamic of responsibility traditionally weighs more toward the state in the European cases, it is significant that the participation of congregations and other religious organizations in meeting the community’s social welfare needs highlights this question of responsibility in all the cases. The U.S. case is the most obvious in the sense that federal policy language and the political rhetoric surrounding it specifically
identify the goal of transferring responsibility to the community. Also the decline in federal funding for social welfare activities (regardless of what type of organization receives the contract) points towards an assumption that social welfare needs can be met without this support, relieving the federal government of responsibility.

The second question articulates the rationale often presented in the federal policy rhetoric for transferring responsibility to smaller community organizations such as FBOs, that these organizations have a better knowledge of the community’s needs and more access to those in need. A dichotomy between formal and informal providers is not presented in the community interviews or the federal policy review, but certainly this is a concern in arguments that equity and equal access to services are sacrificed when FBOs receive federal service contracts. This is also part of the conflict over whether or not Massachusetts has appropriately addressed federal faith-based policy. Those who argue that Massachusetts is sufficiently supportive of FBOs contracting for service provision present a history of such contracts with established FBOs that provide evidence of programmatic success. The dichotomy identified in the WREP studies of formal or informal services can be also examined as established (more likely, large) or community-based (more likely, small). Researchers who counter that more attention is needed to bring in smaller, community-based FBOs in Massachusetts are making a case for community-based FBOs (or informal) as preferable to more established organizations (or formal). As Massachusetts policy is oriented towards evidence-based programming, this

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9 Large, established faith-based organizations can also be “community-based”, but here this language acts as a proxy for differentiating an established FBO that may have offices in multiple communities from a small, newly organized FBO that is specific to its community.
then leads to a discussion of the need for establishing the effectiveness of the two sides of the dichotomy (formal/informal, established/community-based).

Finally, the question of European welfare states becoming more alike has more relevance now that the U.S. has added comprehensive health insurance policy to its welfare state. Even with this significant addition to the welfare structure, major variation exists in the types of welfare policies and views of citizens regarding responsibility for social welfare. It is interesting to consider that European welfare states generally are moving more in the direction of the U.S. with more of an emphasis on contracting services and informal community resources related to changing economic resources.

The WREP cases also presented a picture of “de-differentiation”, a re-engagement of churches in the secular sphere. The researchers noted that one theoretical implication of their findings was that this de-differentiation was unique to each national setting, or “culturally specific” in the same way that differentiation has been (Bäckström, et al., 2010, p. 195). In the U.S. context, this idea of religion re-engaging with the public sphere is not as significant because there has not been the same assumed secularization in the U.S. as in European countries, reinforcing the WREP finding of cultural specificity. Certainly the controversy over federal faith-based initiatives in the U.S. demonstrates that there is some expectation of boundaries for religion in the public sphere. De-differentiation still does not quite seem to describe the U.S. situation, partly because some research argues that the social welfare landscape has not actually changed with the federal policy emphasis on FBOs. FBOs have historically been involved in social welfare provision and continue to be primarily in the same ways they always have been.
However, the federal policy changes have ignited new and ongoing conversations about the relationship between religion and the public sphere in the U.S.

The cultural specificity is also reflected in the WREP discussion of the parallel processes of welfare state development and secularization. The U.S. case of variable welfare state development and church-state structure aligns with the WREP finding that these parallel processes overlap at various points (particular to national context) but are not the same or even linear. Welfare state development and secularization are inextricable from historical economic and social changes but intersect with these changes differently. The factors that shape the relationship between welfare state development and secularization are identified from the WREP findings as constitutional structure, political history, established church’s theological tradition, civil society, and economic dynamics. The U.S. case emphasizes the significance of the particular federal level discourse valuing religious organizations in social welfare provision, the lack of an established church and the diversity of congregations, and the key role of volunteers as contributions to the common good. This study does not examine the specific economic context in detail, but certainly respondents mentioned funding challenges for programs and as motivation for collaboration.
Conclusion

This research has used the community of Lowell to examine the intersection of religion (congregations specifically) and social welfare at the community level in the context of federal faith-based policy in the U.S., then compared to the European cases from the WREP study. First, looking at the role of religion in social welfare provision at the community level, I began with the concepts of moral comment, common good, and identity legitimation from the literature. From the research, I found that collaboration was the primary role played by congregations in a range of forms, certainly contributing to the common good in material ways and as a subcommunity nexus. To place this community case in national context, I examined federal faith-based policy and found much stronger expectations for religious organizations’ active role in community social welfare provision and an emphasis on small, community-based organizations over established, formal organizations. Finally, comparing this U.S. case to the WREP cases emphasizes the particularities of the U.S. welfare state and history while also finding many similarities among countries, such as using congregations as a resource to fill service provision gaps.

Certainly, this study has limitations. The question of what role religion plays in social welfare provision needs to focus on more than congregations and go beyond to other types of faith-based organizations. Federal policy uses the language of faith-based organizations generally, but organizations involved in social welfare provision are more likely to be nonprofits separate from a congregation. Also, using another case study method as a model, I collected stakeholders’ perspective data as the primary means for
understanding congregations’ role at the community level. More comprehensive research is needed that collects data on the actual day to day social welfare activities of congregations and other faith-based organizations to gain a greater understanding of the complex web of relationships needed to meet social welfare needs. This type of data would also enable an added level of sophistication to the analysis in such areas as spatial access and program funding. This research does not address effectiveness of faith-based programs, which is direly needed to understand the role FBOs are playing in meeting social welfare needs and how federal policy should adapt.

There is also a role in this discussion for an organizational theory framework that would expand the understanding of how nonprofit organizations and congregations differ and relate to each other. Some interview respondents discussed that, by definition, the primary purpose of a congregation is spiritual leadership and guidance. This research project does not have a way to account for how this and other organizational differences factor into the social welfare relationship.

By focusing on congregations in the community and on federal policy, a large gap is left in connecting the two. I used the federal level discussion to put the community case in context, but more research is needed to understand how federal policy shapes community activities. To have a comprehensive understanding of the role religion is playing in social welfare, the community and federal levels need to be better integrated with additional data. While I was able to include a brief discussion of the Massachusetts context, implementation of federal faith-based policy varies state by state; this is an
additional level of data needed. With research on how policy changes have affected community level social welfare, policy recommendations could be made.

Finally, the use of spatial data needs to be expanded. As mentioned, spatial access analysis would certainly add a greater understanding of social welfare needs and activities. Also, for example, the use of congregational space for community activities was a major contribution identified in the community data. Providing a visual representation of this would be very useful.

Even with these limitations, hopefully this research can be a contribution to the ongoing discussion of religion and social welfare and can help shape future research. This research has demonstrated the importance of continuing to study religion and social welfare and presented opportunities for next steps.
Appendix A

Stakeholder Interview Guide

(First, obtain written consent.)

To begin, I would like to explain two terms I use in my research. The first is congregation. I use this to mean any formal organization created for the purpose of worship, for all traditions. I do not use congregation to imply only Christian groups. Is there another word you might prefer?

Second, I use the term “social welfare” when talking about both religion and the community. I’m interested to know how you understand what social welfare is? For example, it could mean welfare policy, services, different ways of helping people, specific types of helping . . .

Now that I’ve given you some basic background, let’s start with the questions.

Introduction

1. Can you tell me about the collaborations your organization has with
   a. State agencies?
   b. Voluntary organizations/non-profits?
   c. Congregations?

2. What do these collaborations bring or add to your organization?

Community context
3. People have very different views on the role of government, non-profits, and
congregations in social welfare. Can you tell me what you think the role of each of
these should be in social welfare?

Prompt:

a. Can you give me an example?

4. Can you tell me about what you think the role of congregations is in social welfare,
generally and for Lowell specifically?

Prompts:

a. What local authorities expect
b. What others in Lowell expect
c. Changes in the last twenty years

5. Can you tell me what you think is the most important contribution your organization
makes to the Lowell community?

6. Where does the funding for your organization’s social welfare activities come from?

Moral commentator

7. Some people think that the role of religion in society is to provide moral guidance or
comment. To what extent do you think this is true? How do you see this playing out
in Lowell specifically?

Prompt:

a. For example, what do you think of religious leaders speaking out on the moral
implications of policy?

Common good
8. Some people think that the role of religion is to contribute to the common good by providing direct social welfare services. To what extent do you think this is true? How do you see this playing out in Lowell specifically?

Prompt:

   a. For example, do you think congregations should provide direct services to fill a particular need? Food, shelter, etc.?

**Identity legitimation**

9. Some people think that one of the purposes of religion is to provide a sense of belonging for an individual and a sense of cohesion for the community. To what extent do you think this is true? How do you see this playing out in Lowell specifically?

Prompt:

   a. For example, should congregation provide activities for any particular groups? Members? Those with shared cultural or language backgrounds?

10. How does your own religious affiliation or spirituality relate to your welfare activities?

11. Can you think of anything you would like to add that I haven’t asked you about?
Appendix B

Additional Data Maps
Lowell U.S. Citizenship, Census Tracts, 2010

Legend
US Citizen (Percentages)
total_usci / total_pop
75% - 80%
65% - 70%
55% - 60%
40% - 50%
30% - 40%
0% - 30%
Appendix C

Telephone survey

Hello, my name is Sarah Garlington. I recently sent your organization a letter describing a study I am doing about religion and social welfare. I’m surveying religious groups in Lowell to find out more about who provides social services.

Is the head of your organization there or someone who knows about the services you provide?

Hello. I am conducting a survey about the social welfare services that congregations are directly involved in, in Lowell.

This study examines the role of religion in social welfare activities at the community level in a medium size city in the U.S. (Lowell, MA). A variety of data will be collected and compiled to present a multi-dimensional case study. This study is part of the dissertation work of a student, Sarah Garlington. Participation is completely voluntary, and you may stop the survey at any time. The survey should take about 10 to 15 minutes of your time. Your name and position are confidential and will only be known to me.

You can contact myself or my advisor with any questions. My phone number is 617-710-6580 and email sgarling@bu.edu, and my advisor is Mary Collins at 617-353-3748 and email mcollins@bu.edu. *You may obtain further information about your rights as a research subject by calling the BU CRC IRB Office at 617-358-6115.

Do you consent to be interviewed? What is your name? What is your position in the organization?

1. Does your congregation (organization-specific term) provide any social service programs directly? This might include a food pantry, counseling, emergency shelter, but
doesn’t include seasonal activities. Also groups that you serve might include older adults, substance abusers, children, or homeless individuals. If so, what are the programs?

3. What are the key funding sources? (for examples, member donations, grants, contracts)

4. Does your congregation collaborate with other organizations to provide services? What type of collaboration?

5. Can you provide me with demographic information about your members? What is the majority race/ethnicity, majority primary language, majority income level?

6. I also will be conducting interviews with various leaders in both the religious and social welfare communities. Is it okay if I contact you in the future to possibly schedule an interview?

    Thank you for your time. If you are interested, I can take your contact information and send you more information about my project, including the results of this survey and interviews I’ll do after the telephone survey.
References

5 C.F.R. §260.34 (When do the Charitable Choice provisions of TANF apply?).

42 C.F.R. §54 (Charitable Choice Regulations Applicable to States Receiving Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grants and/or Projects for Assistance in Transition From Homelessness Grants).

45 C.F.R. §1050.3 (Charitable Choice under the Community Services Block Grant Act Programs).


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The White House. (2011). *The President’s interfaith & community service campus challenge advancing interfaith cooperation & community service in higher education*. Retrieved from:

http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/InterfaithCampusProgramOverview_0.pdf


http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/faithbasedtoolkit.pdf


Sarah Bruff Garlington (b. 1976)

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EDUCATION

PhD, Interdisciplinary Social Work & Sociology, May 2015
School of Social Work, Boston University, Boston, MA
Title: “The role of religion in social welfare provision and policy: Congregations in a U.S. city”
Dissertation committee: Mary Collins (Boston University, School of Social Work), Nancy Ammerman (Boston University, Department of Sociology), Kate Cooney (Yale University, School of Management), Scott Geron (Boston University, School of Social Work), Robert Hudson (Boston University, School of Social Work)

MPhil, Ecumenics, September 2007
Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland
Title: “Religious fundamentalism & identity: What does religious fundamentalism teach us about the modern social imaginary?”

MSSW, May 2005
College of Social Work, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN
Concentration: Management & Community Practice

BA, Liberal Arts, May 1998
Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, NY
HONORS/AFFILIATIONS

- Appointee, CSWE Council on External Relations, 2014-current (3 year term)
- Doctoral Fellow, Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Associations (ARNOVA), 2011-2012, Toronto, Ontario
- Funded scholar, Swedish Women’s Education Association (SWEA), (Visiting Researcher, Religion & Society Research Centre), January-June 2011, Uppsala University, Sweden
- Funded participant, iGov Research Institute, Center for Technology in Government, July 2008, Manchester, England
- Selected participant, Annual Summer Seminar: “Religion and Democracy”, Institute on Culture, Religion, & World Affairs, June 2008, Boston, MA
- Funding recipient, James Haire Essay Prize in Ecumenics, 2007
- Funding recipient, Irish School of Ecumenics Student Scholarship, 2006-07
- Selected recipient, University of TN Chancellor’s Extraordinary Professional Promise Award, 2005

PEER REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS (Selected)


Development and Research (PD&R) of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.


**RESEARCH (Selected)**

**Research Assistant**, Professor Mary Collins, Boston University

(June 2009-present)

- Conduct literature review regarding compassion, federal policy areas, virtues
- Conduct review of specified federal policy areas regarding compassion
- Write and edit articles using compiled literature and collected policy data

**Project Manager**, Social Work Research Network (SWRnet), Boston University

(September 2009-September 2013)

- Research and compile information for weekly research resource newsletter, including utilization of Constant Contact programming
- Manage SWRnet website (Wordpress) and subscriber network

**Research Assistant**, Institute for Geriatric Social Work, Boston University
(September 2007-December 2009)

- Coordinate grant-funded training development project, including content development & evaluation planning
- Manage, analyze, & report evaluation data
- Write content for & organize online cultural competency course
- Edit online continuing education courses on topics pertaining to older adults
- Provide program support as needed

TEACHING (Selected)

Adjunct Faculty, College of Social Work, University of Tennessee, Knoxville
(August 2012-current)

- Introduction to Social Work Practice (MSSW)
- Advanced Policy Practice (MSSW)
- Social Work and Social Welfare Policies and Programs (MSSW)

Adjunct Faculty, School of Social Work, Boston University
(January 2010-current)

- Implications of Racism for Social Work Practice (online facilitation, MSW)
- Human Behavior in the Social Environment (online facilitation, MSW)
- Social Welfare Policy I & II (online facilitation, MSW)
- Social Welfare Policy II (MSW)
• Implications of Racism for Social Work Practice (MSW)

PRACTICE (Selected)

Volunteer Coordinator, Peace Brigades International-USA, Washington, DC/Knoxville, TN

(2014-current, part time)

• Re-engage National Lawyers’ Committee on Human Rights

• Facilitate volunteer application process, including develop orientation materials

• Contribute to development of mentor/mental health support program for prospective, current, and returning volunteers

Program Coordinator, TEAMUP TN, UT Extension Service, Knoxville, TN

(2005-2006)

• Promote national, state, & county level partnership to increase breast & cervical cancer screening among rarely/never screened older women

• Develop strategic planning logic models for each of the eleven pilot counties

• Compile & design information for program website resource

• Provide program resources & support to Extension Educators, including material & media design & grant writing

• Contribute to pilot program evaluation design & implementation