
Taking Faith Seriously

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than those found by Weisbrod. One reason for this is that the policy changes discussed earlier have forced all types of nursing homes to change. Indeed, new, high-quality models of care are emerging in for-profit and not-for-profit homes, and in religiously affiliated and secular homes.⁶⁷ Second, the distinctions between religious and secular, as well as between for-profit and not-for-profit, are not as clear as we might have imagined. In other words, the phenomenon we are trying to explain is no longer a dichotomous variable but rather a range of newly emerging institutional forms.

This suggests that what we really need are a series of detailed case studies, similar to those by Bane, McRoberts, Coffin, and Reynolds and Winship (Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 8), focusing on nursing home life as experienced by residents and employees as well as on organizational mission and management practices. Important questions to address range from exploring how the home's mission is embodied in its personnel practices to patterns of day-to-day interactions among staff, residents, and management. How the death of a resident is handled and addressed is another important question. Ultimately, any benefits from a more holistic or spiritual approach, if confirmed, should be of interest to all parties in long-term care, whether or not they are religious.

Faith, Practice, and Teens: Evaluating Faith-Based Programs

Amy Reynolds and Christopher Winship

THE ESTABLISHMENT of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives in 2002 and the subsequent increase in government grants to faith-based groups is only the most dramatic of many recent developments that have spurred debate about the role of such programs in addressing intransigent social problems. We know little, however, about the effectiveness of faith-based programs. More significant, we know even less about the different types of faith-based programs, how they are constructed, or the ways in which any religious faith inherent in the programs can affect outcomes. It is not well understood, for example, whether faith-based programs that seek to use religious values and motivations as a building block for personal change (and not all of them do this) succeed in connecting religious belief to more socially desirable behavior and thus achieve a successful outcome.

Other chapters in this book address issues surrounding faith-based programs in the public sphere. One challenge we see is the need to understand the religious identities of these organizations and the individuals they serve as a component of their effectiveness. Thus the main topics guiding our research are what role religion plays in these organizations, and how central it is in their operations.¹ Here we analyze one secular and three Christian faith-based programs developed for inner-city teenagers. Our purpose is to un-

derstand how these programs differ in the ways they serve youth, in particular whether the specifically Christian character of the three faith-based programs affects their outcomes.

In the debate over faith-based delivery of social services, it is often simply assumed that faith-based social programs have the potential to change the religious understanding or faith of clients, that this can alter how they view moral choices, personal identities, and life plans, and that this, in turn, can affect behavior. Our research explores whether these assumptions are valid and if so, how. In pursuing this question, we do not disagree with Ronald Thiemann's observation in Chapter 6 that the public value of faith-based services may be seen as existing independent of the providers' faith motivations. Thiemann proposes that all programs, faith-based and secular, should be evaluated according to their ability to serve clients, and he argues that many faith-based providers prefer such a focus for their own theological reasons.

That may be the case from the perspective of religious faith, but from the empirical standpoint of social scientific research, the specific religious character and religious motivations of faith-based programs constitute an important variable. Especially in programs that seek to foster personal change, it is also important to measure whether positive outcomes are achieved by tapping into the religious values and beliefs of clients. In Chapter 5, Nancy Ammerman makes a strong case for the pervasive influence of the religious narratives that people bring with them into the public sphere. We would add that these narratives belong not only to the service providers but to the clients as well.

Our approach requires methods to evaluate providers' delivery of services. The model we employ is represented in Figure 8.1. Here we draw on it to ask whether there are linkages between adolescents' religious understandings and faith commitments, on the one hand, and their moral values, personal identities, and life plans, on the other. The three faith-based programs differ in important respects.

In one, Summer of Hope, religion and faith were a key motivating force, and religion permeated the program's environment in im-

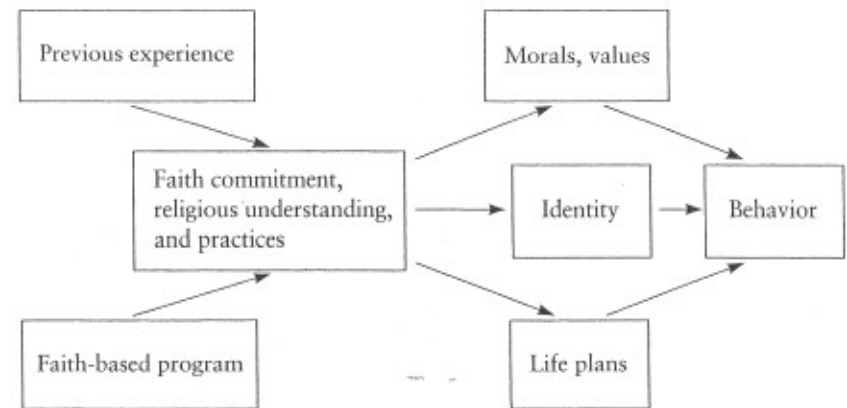


Figure 8.1 A model linking faith, morals, and behavior

portant ways. The program, however, only secondarily focused on changing adolescents' faith commitments, religious understanding, and practices. (The names of all four programs, and of the participants in them, have been changed.)

The goal of the second faith-based program, Discover Yourself, was specifically to help adolescent girls deepen their self-understanding. Among other components of the program were prayer and discussions of personal decisions and life choices.

Connecting Youth, meanwhile, was the most explicitly faith-based program we studied. It might appropriately be called fully faith-infused, in that religion and religious practice fully inform and direct both discussions and program activities. It is also the program that most explicitly is connected to a specific church and the faith practices and commitments of that church.

The fourth program, which serves as the control, was the Boston Project, an entirely secular program administered during both the summer and the academic term by the community service component of a local university. Like the other programs, it serves students from the Dorchester neighborhood of Boston.

On the basis of interviews with program participants as well as participant observation, in three of the four programs we find only

weak or moderate connections between individuals' religious understandings and faith commitments and their moral values and life plans. A moderate connection existed in Discover Yourself, where participants were encouraged to link their faith commitment and their behavior. A stronger connection was found in Connecting Youth, by far the most faith oriented of the four programs, where connections were encouraged, religious understanding was emphasized, and religious practices established.

Surprisingly, however, a lack of faith commitment or the need to develop belief was not the primary issue for girls in the four programs. Girls in all four programs report having multidimensional relationships with God. Although their understanding of religious doctrine and teaching was often not extensive, the girls universally believed in God. Most prayed on a daily basis, although few attended church regularly or had evidence of other religious practices. Most girls, however, seemed unable to make a connection between their faith, religious understanding, and practices and their moral values, personal identities, or life plans. These were simply separate, unconnected domains in their life.

Our findings reshape the debate on faith-based programs in contradictory ways. Our analyses suggest, on the one hand, that only the most faith-infused programs are likely to be successful in enhancing the potential of religion to alter individuals' lives. (This supports Ammerman's comment that understanding the role of religion is not just about simply plugging in variables, but about understanding how different aspects of religiosity, or the content of faith, are integrated with certain processes.) On the other hand, our research suggests that such programs need not focus on creating or instilling religious belief. For the girls in this study, a strong degree of faith is already present. Although we recognize that the fully faith-infused program was in large part successful because of the new learning it imparted to the students, the basic beliefs were not contrary to those that girls may have heard before; in addition, the girls were not encouraged to "switch" religions. The issue, then, is helping these girls connect their faith to their moral values and life plans. This finding supports Mary Jo Bane's arguments in Chapter

2 that Catholic institutions must do better at integrating the belief and behavior of Catholics in the public sphere.

Previous Research

A recent review of the efficacy of faith-based programs examines the effect that religion and religious elements have on a number of outcomes.² In this report, Byron Johnson and his coauthors at the University of Pennsylvania distinguish the effects of what they term organic religion from the effects of intentional religion, finding that most research has focused on the former. Research on organic religion seeks to determine how people living in religious systems and structures with regular practices are affected by presumably self-chosen religious practices. For example, much of the research on organic religion examines the effects of church attendance on various behaviors. Research on intentional religion has involved evaluating programs that explicitly aim to bring religion and faith into individuals' lives with the intent of changing them, much like the programs we are studying. Johnson's report suggests that organic religion generally has a statistically significant association in the expected directions with criminal behavior, teenage pregnancy, and achievement, while little is known about the possible effects of intentional religion. Within the literature, three research areas are most relevant for youth—teen pregnancy, crime, and drug use.

TEEN PREGNANCY

For teenage girls, early pregnancy and single motherhood are the topics of greatest concern. Youths cite morals and values as important in influencing sexual activity.³ Ann Meier shows that morals help to explain part of the personal religiosity effect, which is a more effective indicator of behavior than religion alone.⁴ She tries to capture the religiosity effect using scales of public and private religion. Public religiosity refers to church attendance and involvement in other group religious activities. Private religiosity refers to belief in God, prayer, and other more interior behavior. When attitudes are controlled for, the significance of private religiosity in de-

cisions about sexual behavior decreases. This suggests that there is a correlation between personal religiosity and variables in attitudes, as we might expect. Participation in religious worship and church programs is also found to influence attitudes.⁵ Attitudes alone appear to only weakly affect teens' sexual behavior.

There is little information on the efficacy of different faith programs for teens. Programs that affect the value systems of youth have been found to be more successful than those that do not.⁶ Barbara Defoe Whitehead and her colleagues find that faith leaders are able to have an impact on youth sexual behavior through teachings about morality, in activities that provide hope, and in using faith to help youth think about their sexuality.⁷

Recent research has examined the effect of sexual abstinence pledges on youth behavior—a popular program in some religious communities, where they are also known as “sexual purity” pledges.⁸ Although the impact of pledges is not uniform, those who pledge earlier in adolescence and who do so within small communities appear to have the highest rates of delayed first intercourse. This effect is found when controlling for religiosity, although youth who pledge often are more religious. For black females in the sample, the effects of pledging appear to be weaker and were less positive.

CRIME

Research finds faith programs do have positive impacts on teens in the areas of crime and violence, although the dynamics of the effect are uncertain. Youth living in neighborhoods of high disorder are the most at risk for criminal behavior. However, recent studies reveal that religious involvement can mediate the effect of the neighborhoods—so much so that religious involvement seems more important than the neighborhood effect.⁹ Johnson also finds that religion is most important for teens in at-risk neighborhoods. Many studies that examine the impact of faith on deviant behavior use different measures of religion or faith. Johnson finds through his meta-analysis of different juvenile delinquency studies that the link of religion to less deviant behavior practices increases with more

extensive measures of religion.¹⁰ This suggests that religion is a multifaceted variable, and that its different elements need to be measured in order to adequately understand its full effect.

DRUG USE

In a study by Columbia University's National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, researchers analyzed the importance of organic religion as a variable in drug use. Researchers found that both church attendance and religious attitudes were significantly associated with various behavior outcomes.¹¹ Teens who are not involved with drugs (alcohol, marijuana, and cigarettes) are two to three times more likely to say that religion is important in their lives. Teens who think that religion is important are also more likely to involve their parents in their decisions concerning drug behavior. The same evidence exists for religious practice. By a factor of two to three, depending on the drug, teens who attend services were less likely to participate in alcohol, marijuana, and cigarette use. This attendance factor also is connected to peer effects; teens with higher levels of personal and public religiosity are less likely to have friends engaging in drug use.

A 2001 study by Johnson found similar results.¹² Using data from the National Youth Study, he found that religion's restraining effect on drug use increases as youth get older, even when controlling for the effect of social networks, school factors, and neighborhoods. Studies show that religion is related to lower drug use due to a combination of direct and indirect effects. Attitudes about religion are a good predictor of drug use, although attendance may be more important.

Methodology and Program Descriptions

We employ a theory-based evaluation, which involves determining whether evidence can be found for the mechanisms that a theory posits to be important in a program.¹³ Specifically, we examine in the context of four programs whether an adolescent girl's faith commitment and religious understanding affect how she thinks

about moral issues, personal identity, and/or life plans. We do not assess whether religion affects behavior directly or indirectly, but research reviewed in the last section does support the claim that moral perspective and life plans do affect behavior, even if not perfectly.¹⁴

On its own, theory-based evaluation takes us only part of the way toward establishing the existence or importance of a particular mechanism, for two reasons. First, without quantitative data, determining the strength of an effect may be difficult. Second, without random assignment to the programs or other methods for controlling for selection into a program, determining whether observed attitudes or behavior are the result of the program or were present prior to the program may be problematic. However, if one can show that a hypothesized mechanism does not appear to be operating, this is potentially strong evidence against the program's efficacy. Likewise, if one can show that a mechanism does appear to be operating, this may be strong evidence of the program's impact.

Our approach is qualitative and ethnographic, based both on interviews and on participant observation. Youth, as well as youth workers, were interviewed from four different programs. The authors were also participant observers in three of the four programs, the exception being Discover Yourself. One of us (Reynolds) was involved in 1999–2002 with interviewing a number of teen girls. These were all youth that were contacted because they were involved with programs in which the researcher had been a participant or because the leaders connected youth with the researcher. Interviews ranged from thirty minutes to an hour. Some were conducted in person, while others were conducted over the telephone, although the length and information did not differ by method. In cases of participant observation, some of the comments come from settings other than interviews. For each program studied, we conducted in-depth interviews with four or five girls. For one of the programs (Summer of Hope), we relied mostly on previous research from interviewed teens. Karyn Lacy was a participant observer in

these programs and conducted interviews during our fieldwork, which was done in 2001 and 2002.¹⁵

BOSTON PROJECT

The Boston Project program consists of a term-time academic program and a full-time summer enrichment program. As noted, it is run out of a local university and is staffed by students. Participants come from local low-income housing areas. In the summer, the program is a type of summer school. The term-time program helps the girls with their schoolwork, and tries to provide them with a mentoring relationship. The program is totally secular. Although the girls are all generally familiar with the Bible, only one participant attended church during the period of our research. They have had opportunities to attend different religious programs, and all seem to have some familiarity with religious practices.

SUMMER OF HOPE

This faith-based program was launched in 1994 by the Ten Point Coalition, a collaboration of black churches in the Boston area, and ran for three summers. An initial goal of the program was to use religion as a mechanism for helping high school students understand their lives. Optional prayer times as well as periodic religious discussions occurred. Youth were often placed at church sites to do work, and the directors were religious leaders. There were also weekly spiritual sessions, though they appear to more typically have involved lectures rather than discussions.

DISCOVER YOURSELF

This faith-based program challenged youth to think about the role of faith in their lives. It involved girls who were at risk for pregnancy, violence, drug use, or court involvement. The program began with prayer. Nevertheless, according to both the director and the girls, it was not a "religious" program. The youth spent time writing and thinking about their lives, reading about the lives of others, having speakers from the community speak/meet with them,

and going on trips. The girls typically built strong relationships with the women leaders.

Two groups of teens were studied. One set consisted of girls currently in the program, the other of girls who had completed the program. Generally only a small number of girls were in the program at any one time.

CONNECTING YOUTH

Run through an evangelical nondenominational church in Washington, D.C., this faith-based program has been in existence for fifteen years. We describe the program as it existed at the time when the interviews and fieldwork were carried out. The program focused on many of the same goals as the other programs—community service, breaking of class barriers, and involving faith in personal decisions. The youth were from the area, and fewer than half were involved with the church initially.¹⁶ Of all four programs we studied, Connecting Youth put the most emphasis on faith and prayer. Teaching directly about sexual activity—and even having retreats planned around the theme—set a tone in which many of the youth participated in abstinence pledges. The program is connected with a local academic enrichment center. Although it is similar to the other programs, there are some interesting differences between Connecting Youth and the other three. Most of the youth in Connecting Youth were from low-income black families, but some were from middle-class families; several youth in the program were also white. The mentors, however, much like in the Boston Project, were from middle- and upper-class backgrounds, and only a small fraction of adult workers were not white.

DEMOGRAPHIC AND RELIGIOUS CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROGRAMS

The four programs allow us to understand the different contexts in which faith commitment, religious understanding, and religious practices might have an impact on an individual's moral values and life choices. Boston Project, the secular program, allows us to determine whether these connections are naturally present in the absence

Table 8.1 Program descriptions

Program	Data for participants			Data for adult staff			Statistics about program		
	Race	Gender	Grade	Race	Religion	Ongoing	In charge	Size	
Boston Project	All black	Mixed, at times separated	6th to 12th	Various races	Not relevant	Yes, summer and term	Local university	50 kids, small groups	
Summer of Hope	All black	Mixed	9th to 12th	Mostly black	Clergy among staff	Summer only	Group of black churches	40–70 kids, small groups	
Discover Yourself	All black	All girls	8th to 12th	Black	Church members	Yes, several years	AME church	4–8 girls	
Connecting Youth	Black and white	Mixed, at times separated	6th to 12th	Mostly white	All attend church	Yes, many years	Evangelical, multi-denominational church	50 kids, small groups	

Table 8.2 Program activities

Program	Prayer	Reflection	Bible	Teaching	Service	Community inside	Community outside	Pledges
Boston Project	No	Yes	No	No	No	Some	No	No
Summer of Hope	Some	Yes	No	No	Yes	Little	Little	No
Discover Yourself	Yes	Yes, central	Some	No	No	Some	Little	No
Connecting Youth	Yes, central	Yes	Yes, central	Yes	Some	Yes	Some	Yes

of a faith-based program. Summer of Hope allows us to determine whether these connections are likely to occur in an environment that is supportive of religious belief and practice, but not directly religious. Discover Yourself allows us to see whether these connections exist in a program that specifically encourages participants to think about the relationship between their faith commitments and religious understanding and their moral values and life planning, without any of its own religious pedagogy or practices. Finally, Connecting Youth allows us to test for these connections in an environment where connections are explicitly present in the program, both in discourse and in practice. Tables 8.1 and 8.2 summarize the characteristics of each of the programs.

The Religious Lives of Black Adolescent Girls

BASIC BELIEFS

Regardless of the programs in which they are involved, religion was present in the lives of all of the girls.¹⁷ In many ways, their views of God are more similar than they are different. All of them believe in God, openly profess this faith, and see God acting in their lives. There is little doubt that God exists for these girls, although they do have a lot of questions about God. They overwhelmingly view God as real, present in their lives, and accessible. Research by Robert Coles finds youth understand God in relation to their own needs; girls in our programs identify God as acting in a world of unknowns, equating God with a protector, a provider, and a judge.¹⁸

The girls in the Boston Project, as well as those in Summer of Hope, insist on the existence of God. Yet after declaring their belief, they would explain some of the questions they had about God. One girl in the Boston Project said she knew that God was there, in part, because "he is looking out for me." Another girl, Mary, captured similar sentiments when she said, "He makes sure I don't get in too much trouble (laugh)." Rashida further commented that "he's a lovable person. He helps us . . . he helps us with everything." Throughout the interviews, God is described as someone who is there for them. One of the staff with Summer of Hope said of the

youth, "people need to know there's something larger than themselves . . . our kids know this." Even in complaints that the youth from Summer of Hope often voice about religion, there is a supposition that God is real and there. In addition to believing that God exists, these girls also think that God sees their actions, and that there is a code they should follow. Kamiya talks about how God wants us to do right. Asia brings up the most vivid image of a judge when she describes that God affects her life because of "what I do. He sees what I do. If I do bad things, he knows. Good stuff he knows." Kamiya states that God punishes those who "make trouble."

The girls in Discover Yourself have the same assurance in the existence of God. They are certain of God's existence. "I believe in God 100 percent," asserted Fatima. Chanetta responded to questions about her belief in God by assuring that "God is out there." Fatima also commented that "to me there is only one God. To society, there are thirteen different religions that coincide together." God also protects them, although they see themselves as more responsible for their destiny. The idea of God as a judge is more concrete for them. Kaneisha relates a personal story of the time her child almost died. She said, "If it was not for God I would not have been there." Nikia relates that "he works miracles. He does things that a regular human being would not be able to do." She goes on to tell how God wakes her, feeds her, and has even "blessed me with a job." Nikia sees bad situations in her life as deserved, and thinks that God comes at us "as the devil" in those situations. Erica, in a light vein, commented that, because her family does not go to church, "we're all going to Hell." An important difference in the ways that these girls viewed God, as opposed to the other two groups, was that they saw God as a guide. According to Fatima, "I just look at him as my Father. When I go to the crossroads, meet him, he's still here with me only in Spirit."

The girls in Connecting Youth also have a strong belief in God. They have the same assurance of God, and also have questions about who that God is. Unlike the girls in the other programs, however, is the fact that their view of God is tied to a more traditional

view of religion. They attest that they want to follow God, and base their belief in God on the Bible. Shaunta, in response to a question about whether she considered herself a Christian, replied, "Yes, I believe in the Word of God." Sarah specifically clarified her belief in God with "I believe in Jesus." While they, like the other programs' participants, may credit God with "waking me up every morning," they discuss more specific ways that God has been active, and view God very personally. Shaunta made her theology personal, stating, "He died on the cross for me. He loves me." Earlier in the interview she also makes the comment that "there is no one above him that I love . . . He's an awesome person. He loves me." Olivia mentions the way that God has been there for her in the toughest moments. Tina first describes God as a friend, then almost as a perfect parent. In talking of God, she says, "He's just like a good being who is perfect and doesn't do any wrong." Sarah said, "I have a relationship with Jesus . . . I think of people—they need Jesus—when I see them doing bad things too."

RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

With respect to deeper beliefs, the girls have a hard time understanding or expressing what they believe, and in general have a weak understanding of Christian doctrine. The girls would often respond "I don't know" in the middle of trying to explain some piece of theology, recite commandments, or discuss the Bible. On the whole, the girls seem to want to know more; more than once in the interviews they would ask questions themselves.

Those in the Boston Project asked the most basic questions. Mary, in discussing a miracle of the Virgin Mary, asked how the Virgin Mary was connected to Jesus. Kamiya, presenting the story of Jesus, said, "They [the teen center] showed a commercial of God being killed on the cross. Because he wanted to do good things and they didn't want him to." These girls claim not to think about religious things that often—Shirley, who attends church every week, "doesn't have any views about it [religion]." And Rashida expresses that "umm, I don't know what color he is." These girls have a limited knowledge of the Bible and have mixed feelings about it.

They've been to Bible studies, and seem to think that it is a good thing to study and follow—in theory. When asked to define what was good, Rashida began with “Bible study.” Kamiya, in explaining that the Bible did actually have an impact on her life, replied that “it tells you about God and how to respect him and your family. Do what's right for your family and don't be a pain and God will love you for who you are.” Shirley, the girl most knowledgeable about the Bible, said, “Some of the stuff in it is true, some I don't understand. I hear about it in church, I read it on my own, but they read it in church.” Their religious knowledge comes from random sources—relationships with mothers and grandmothers, the teen center, or their occasional attendance at church. They are open to knowing more, although those who go to church only occasionally discussed wanting to learn more about God.

In some ways the knowledge of those in Summer of Hope seems similar to that of participants in Discover Yourself. Both expect their peers to know about the Bible. One girl who did not know about the Last Supper astonished her peers by asking them what it was. Some of the youth in this program are volunteers at church and know the theology, although they may not believe it all. Lacy, in her assessment of the Summer of Hope, argues that the teens knew the religious teachings quite well but did not understand as easily what they meant and how to apply them to their lives. She indicates that the girls can tell you the stories of Jesus and many would consider themselves Christians who believe in church teachings. Those in Discover Yourself are similar—they describe Jesus as a savior, as Erica says, who “does good and he died for us. Came back.” Kaneisha discussed the same savior theology, explaining that “the Lord is going to come back. I believe in that too.” They have questions, as some of them relate questions on the difference between different Christian groups.

Teens from both groups are, on the whole, well acquainted with material from the Bible, although there are some in both groups who have little knowledge of it. From Summer of Hope, they made comments such as “if you read the Bible by yourself, you don't need to hear it from someone else,” and another argued that “you can

read the Bible right.” Their base of knowledge is in the church, and this is where most of them have gained the knowledge that they have.

Discover Yourself participants differ in their nontraditional view of God, with a theology furthest away from that of the church. Nikia expresses that she “doesn't have a culture,” but instead is all cultures. They asked the most questions. Fatima says: “I wanna go to church and be able to listen and get into God and really have them tell me about God but how can they really tell me. They are just going by what they read. I just don't know what to believe really.”

Nikia has turned to investigating the texts of other religions for answers. Several program participants mention the contradictions that exist in the Bible. According to one girl, “the Bible itself has a lot of contradictions in it, if that's what people want to believe . . . but I can't pick out the contradictions exactly. I remember seeing it contradicted itself all over. I don't have a problem with believing it though.” At the same time, they still think of religion—even in the more traditional forms—as important. Kaneisha says, “I believe it is the word of God. He put the disciples on the earth to write it. People ask, ‘How can you believe it?’ All my life, I've been reading it.”

Unique to Connecting Youth is a strong tie to beliefs of the church and a more concrete understanding of God, although its participants come from less traditionally religious homes on average. Girls in the program still ask basic questions about theology, but they have a solid understanding of Christianity, probably because of the direct teaching they receive. They give longer, more thorough descriptions of God. Shaunta states, “He died for me and he sent his only son to help me not get punished for the sins I committed.” Olivia's understanding of the Bible, the basics of salvation, the reasons she still sins, and why Christians should not have sex is impressive. She explained to the junior high girls, on several retreats, why she has made the decisions she has, and has given mini-sermons at events for the youth. Shaunta discussed the appreciation she has for talking about everyday issues. “One Sunday morning

we were talking about hunger. Those are everyday issues. Put it into teaching." Like the other girls, they want to know more, and show this with their continued participation in classes and studies.¹⁹ Their questions are slightly different. One girl, Sarah, commented on God: "He created man and woman, the heavens and the earth. He created Adam and Eve. God is confusing. It's kinda weird, life is weird. He created us and Jesus. He was just here by himself all alone." Tina wrestles with the divine nature of God and states: "I don't know if he would be called a person 'cause he's not really a human being or anything, but more like a being or something."

PRAYER AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

The girls in all four programs are similar in that they all believe in their ability to communicate with God through prayer. They pray because they sense that God is there and is answering their prayers—or at the very least, is listening to them. Prayer is not equated with religious activity, but is seen as a normal aspect of life. With the exception of the Boston Project, the girls in all of the programs come from a mixture of religious backgrounds. And again with the exception of Boston Project, all of the programs stress building important relationships with a spiritual mentor.²⁰

Most of the girls pray daily. Their prayer lives range from more basic in Boston Project to more involved with Connecting Youth. Rashida, from Boston Project, says she prays regularly, although God "just says hi," talking in a whisper. Shirley prays "just to be able to take care of her son and see another day." Erica, who says she is praying more because of the program, says, "I pray every day before I go to bed . . . I pray for everybody. I pray for myself and my family first and then I pray for other people . . . I pray like to ask God for help, to help me." Nikia prays for "everything good and bad." The girls in Connecting Youth, while they pray more regularly and talk of seeking guidance, offer similar prayers. Tina says:

I pray at least once a day, sometimes twice a day. I know I always pray over meals, and sometimes I pray at night for the next day or for being able to sleep well. Sometimes I pray for events coming up or if

there is something wrong in my life or someone else's life. Depends on what big event is happening. I pray 'cause praying for them lets God know what I think about and my opinion on it and lets him know what I need help with and that's about it.

Sarah was a little shy in revealing that she prays less than she thinks she should.

The truth—I pray when something bad happens or when I want something. I don't pray like 'hi God.' How often—that's hard. Sometimes I pray in the night or in the morning. When I pray—things about my life . . . Just my family and sometimes the world.

Although most of the girls pray, especially those in Discover Yourself and Connecting Youth, this prayer life is not necessarily equated with a life of religious practices. All of those in the faith-based programs have had exposure to the church, as well as some of those within the Boston Project. Most of those who go to church go because their family does or out of a sense of obligation—this is particularly true for those in the Boston Project and Summer of Hope.²¹ Most of those in Discover Yourself rarely go to church. Although they say this, and say they are not religious, those who attend have a sense that this activity is important. Shirley says that she goes because "the rule is that everyone in the house goes to church on Sunday." She also commented, however, that once she was out of the house, she would continue to go occasionally.

A higher degree of involvement in prayer is evident among some of the older girls in Discover Yourself and Connecting Youth. Some of the prayers related to change and transformation came from these girls. Fatima says:

Basically I'm just praying that I am watched over and for him to guide me in the best place, and after death. Just praying for him to be there. Everyone who believes in God turns to him at the best and the worst. Thank him when things are going well, and ask him to be with me when going through hard things.

Olivia provided more specific examples of prayer. Although she too prays for people and situations, she recounts a story about "fasting" by not wearing makeup at school, and how in that time she turned to God through prayer and asked God to help her through that period.

The girls in Summer of Hope and Discover Yourself are the most cynical about organized religion. Those in Summer of Hope talk about the hypocrisy that exists in the church—that they have friends who go who then act differently in school. They also complain about the materialistic attitude that seems pervasive in the churches, and the problem of gossip. Those in Discover Yourself also share this cynicism—but perhaps to a lesser degree. They are not in the churches, because they seem to seek a religious understanding on their own. Farina says, "Home is my church and I pray to my God and for my household." She will go on the "Lord's days" (Christmas and Easter) out of respect. Even those in Connecting Youth spot hypocrisy in their church—Sarah complained that the adult leaders sometimes follow different rules than those that they set for the youth.

The religious involvement of those in Connecting Youth is very different from that of the girls in the other programs. These girls come to church frequently—and for many this might involve taking a bus or walking. Most attend events at church during the week or on weekends, and all of the girls belong to a Bible study. They participate in other events, such as sexual purity pledges, retreats, fasting, and mission projects. They come for a variety of reasons. At one study break, Sarah told her leader, "I'm really missing out on God's word, and on my Bible study friends. So if we can get in contact soon, that would be great." Shauna regularly attends, but does note that if she is coming for an evening meeting at the church, she may attend a different service in the morning.

Those in Connecting Youth believe it is the job of the pastor to make church relevant. Shauna appreciated the teaching on hunger, but dislikes her grandmother's church because there "the preacher doesn't want to make me listen to him." Nikia shares the same appreciation when the minister "speaks in a way that you under-

stand." Girls mention enjoying services when people are into the music, or when "certain people sing and I can just feel the song." Also important is the presence of community. Sarah mentions that "my people" are at the program. And Farina talks of bringing people into the program. Tina talks of how the program "gave me a community." Knowing people at services or activities makes a difference in their attendance. This is especially true for the girls in Connecting Youth—they come most often to activities when they know their friends will be attending.

Moral Values, Personal Identity, and Life Plans

MORAL VALUES

The girls also discussed their sense of right and wrong behavior in our interviews with them. For many of them, good and bad are self-evident. They believe people should be defined in moral terms by their actions rather than by their beliefs. There is variation, however, in how the girls think about their own personal morality.

The girls in the Boston Project had the hardest time defining values, although their ideas are similar to those expressed by girls in Summer of Hope.²² The girls describe right and wrong primarily in terms of relations with other people or in terms of criminal activity. Getting along with others is an important value. Rawhide gave one of her longer answers to the question of what is bad. "Don't hit, swear, don't hit people, don't fight them. That's all I think." Kamiah, when talking about bad people, says that they don't care about themselves, "parents who give kids up, do drugs, don't care about self, don't have a life." Those in Summer of Hope mention drug use and stealing as bad. They seem to accept the presence of liquor stores as a good thing in their community. One youth in Summer of Hope said that bad people were ones who "needed" to be in church. Youth in Summer of Hope also viewed hypocrisy as a bad thing.

The morality of the girls in both of these programs is only weakly influenced by the teachings and philosophy of the church. Many of them plan to have children without being married. This is especially

true for those in the Boston Project. During the interviews, most of the girls said they had boyfriends or admitted they wanted a boyfriend. For all of the girls, going to church seemed to be a "good thing." Those in Summer of Hope accept the teachings of their evangelical churches as mostly valid. Their problem is with people who do not follow church teachings. Interns working in the programs also commented that the youth accept the values of the church and that the youth, in turn, judge them in terms of these values, even if the interns are not personally committed to them.

Interestingly, the Boston Project girls showed the greatest desire to be viewed as doing the right thing. Rawhide, in the middle of an interview, began to yell at a younger brother for cursing because it was not appropriate in the presence of the interviewer. Mary, when having to explain that she was not pursuing college plans at the moment, apologized, since "I know it breaks your heart."

The girls in Discover Yourself, much like those in Summer of Hope and the Boston Project, are partially, but not strongly, influenced by religion in their thinking on morality. Their beliefs are shaped by religion to a greater degree than they are for others. The Bible calls for people to treat others well; Farina said, "It says that everyone should live equally as well as do right by work and to itself and others." She adds that "some of the things I do believe people should follow, like the Ten Commandments." In terms of sexual abstinence, the Discover Yourself participants do claim to want to defer childbearing until later, and most want to be married before having children. However, Mary, one of the older girls, thought it impossible to go a month without a boy. She was skeptical about the program because of its all-girl composition.

Yet the girls in Discover Yourself have developed a thoughtful understanding of their moral choices. Girls often arrive at their values through their own understanding. They believe that Christians are called to high moral standards, even if they do not primarily identify themselves as religious. The program appears to have affected their morality. Nikia believed she received better grades as a result of the program, and said that she got in trouble less for "talking back, being too loud, disrupting the class, not doing work."

Chamita no longer hangs out with the same people who she says were a bad influence, and Farina admits that she had a "filthy mouth" at the beginning of the program, and that she dressed differently and less professionally than she does now. They still struggle, as Kaneohe points out, with doing the things they should; for example, she states, "I need to go to church more. I don't know why I don't."

For girls in Connecting Youth, definitions of right and wrong deal more directly with their personal decisions, and are more closely connected with religious principles. They list the same issues as the girls in the other programs, although they are more likely to mention God as a source of their morality. They see their morality as their own, and their decisions as theirs. The things they believe are wrong are typical: stealing, murder, killing, lying, gossiping. Among good things, they include doing well in school, listening to parents, and helping others.

Specific religion-related morals come up in the area of sexuality. All of the girls made reference to this in discussing bad behavior. Sarah mentions it early on. Olivia has spoken in testimonies before other youth on this issue as well. In terms of proper behavior, Olivia considers dress and even whether or not to be dating boys. Another girl in the program, who was not interviewed, after admitting sexual involvement, decided to change her behavior and meets regularly with a youth worker. Religion for these girls also appears to be about motivation. For some it is a desire to love God—for others, it is because God is a judge and they must do right.

PERSONAL IDENTITY

The girls acknowledge that they are at risk in many ways—many have been referred to as ghetto children. Some even take such names on proudly as their own; others express frustration with such expressions. Most of the girls recognize that these programs exist to prevent them from getting in trouble. The idea that their identity is at risk is quite different for the girls in the church program. They conceive of their identity as more connected with their morality, which is important in understanding their hopes and life plans.

In the Boston Project, one girl had the phrase "Project Born" decorating many of her personal items, taking on the identity of being from the projects. Her and others' circumstances affect not only how they think of themselves, but also how they view their options. Many joined the program because they needed something to do—one girl commented that the best other option was to color at the teen center. Religious identities as such are nonexistent for these girls, and none considers herself religious. Shirley, the only one who attends church, nevertheless claims that she "never thinks about God." The girls in the Summer of Hope program do not identify themselves as religious either. They see their identity as tied with "people who live around here." Some mention the notion and the need for people to come back and give to their communities. Lacy suggests that the teens have a somewhat limited understanding of what it means to be African American, and allow this to place limits on them.²³ Indicative of this attitude was the comment of one student, who explained, "White culture is like, more rich, it has more roots in it."

Girls in the Discover Yourself program do not gravitate toward a typical religious identity. Most of the girls do not define themselves in relation to God and are reluctant to call themselves religious, although quite a few see themselves as spiritual. A few girls do consider themselves Christians. Farina explained that she was religious "100 percent." Erica, who hasn't been to church in years, still responded, "I'm Catholic." These girls think that their individual consciences and sense of morality play a part in shaping who they are. Although they may not see this inner reliance as being connected to spirituality, it seems they do have a religious identity, albeit a nontraditional one.

The girls in Connecting Youth have a religious identity that is based within a community. First, they are in a program that focuses on fostering identity through community. Their relation to God shapes their identity. Shauna has "God's Lil' Child" on her bags and books. Olivia, because of her faith, stopped using makeup during Lent one season to get a better sense of belonging to God. Sarah claims, "I'm a Christian . . . Jesus died for me." She says she "gave

my life to Christ" this summer, although she is not sure if she did it previously. Tina relates to the fact that she is a Christian, and explicitly sees herself as religious. At the same time, she claims that her values are her own, shaped by her family and herself, and not dictated by the church. This sentiment—that their values belong to them—was shared by most of the girls.

LIFE PLANS

For many, religion and faith do not appear to significantly affect their thinking about marriage, family, sexuality, and future career plans. Within all of the groups, older girls have more sophisticated visions regarding their futures.

The goals of girls in Boston Project are limited. When Asia described what she would do after graduation, she said, "Go to college. Just to go . . . to learn more and do more." She struggles to have short-term goals—school is going okay "for right now," but she explained that "in the middle of the school year, I might get in trouble." Kamiah commented that she would "go to college and find a job . . . be in a business that makes a lot of money. Need to go to college so you know more when you get the job. Make sure I finish." Shirley, who has begun her first year in college, is also not sure what she will do. Her most specific response is that she wants to "write music. Does matter." Mary, in an early setting, claimed that she was going to Harvard, although weeks later decided that she wanted to be a "construction worker like my grandmother because they make a lot of money."

Most all of the youth mention children as something they want, and most are not worried about having them too soon. Regina wants a nice house, kids, and a nice boyfriend. Another of the girls said that she did not plan on having kids before she graduated, but she didn't know what would happen. Kamiya specifically wants "to not get married, [have] one or two kids . . . nice boyfriend to talk to."

The youth in Summer of Hope think that changed behavior should be part of the life of those who are religious; they discuss actions that the church people do that are not Christian. Yet at the

same time, it is difficult for them to see how religion might change their own lives. One girl, in talking about how life choices could be different for younger blacks in their community (concerning food choices), commented, "No. No because it's too late for them. You have to start early teaching them that. The white people start early." Their identity and sense of self appear to be somewhat set, rather than malleable.

The interns in the programs complain about the ways that the youth spend their money, and don't save. One teen exhibited a sense of vision by saving \$500 to buy a coat, but even this was a short-term goal. Although one teen captured the broader vision of many by saying that "everyone has dreams about moving out of the projects," the girls seem to have little vision of how to do so. One staff member commented on the attitudes of the youth: "It's an acceptance . . . a lack of faith that anything is going to be changed unless like someone from the outside comes in . . . Just like accepting substandard housing and a lack of education . . . and that's just how it is."

One girl said, "Opportunities . . . come out of nowhere . . . you're going to go for it." Regarding their life plans, it seems that opportunities may come to them, but there is little that they can do to create them.²⁴

Within Discover Yourself, there is a direct emphasis on thinking about the future; girls in this program are overall more able to express a vision for their lives. The director of Discover Yourself stressed the following verse as it pertains to the nature of their program: "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18). Although many of the girls share similar goals to girls in the other groups in terms of being wealthy, they have more plans on how to accomplish this. Their short-term sense of vision is also clearer, as in the case of Chanetta, who talks about a desire to be a leader because of the program. Nikia's plans for the future are to be a medical biller, because of the money they make and because "I also like working with computers." She could explain in detail what they do, and also was aware of possible training she might need, and the fact that her goal of a \$65,000 yearly income may

take five years to reach. She wants to go to college for herself, and to a school to receive training for a medical career. Chanetta spoke of wanting to be an actress, and plans to study drama in college; Fatima wants to open up a hair salon, and is saving wages from her job to be able to go to beauty school. Erica was a little less specific, probably because of her younger age. She does not know what she wants to do, but she does know she wants to decide. "She [her mother] wants me to be a nurse. She doesn't want me to go to school—it doesn't take that long to be a nurse. I don't want to be a nurse."

These girls have other family goals as well. Fatima wants to have children, but as she says, "When I have children, I want to be financially, mentally, and environmentally stable." One of the youth workers mentioned that the girls do not have extremely high standards for the men with whom they are involved. Like the girls in the Boston Project, these girls seem to be hoping for a "nice" partner. But unlike them, they seem to prefer to be married and have children, which they hope happens after high school graduation and moving into employment or careers. Nikia adds the provision that she's "not planning on it [having kids before graduating], but I don't know." Kaneisha, who has a child, has goals for marriage and deferring further children, because "my priority is getting a career, and accomplishing the goals I have for me."

The participants in Connecting Youth have a slightly different idea of their future. Most of them are younger than those in Discover Yourself, but they resemble them in some of their career goals. Olivia was accepted into a number of universities around the country, and is now attending college on a scholarship. Part of her vision for her future involves continuing to invest in the other youth in the program. She frequently comes back to Connecting Youth to assume a counselor role. Other girls in the program, not interviewed, hoped to go to college or to do mission work for a year. Sarah, still in junior high school, selected the school she is attending now because of its entrepreneurial focus. She wants to "own several businesses" after college, and took it for granted that she would go to college. Tina is attending a school with an art focus

next year. Shaunta lacks similarly focused goals, though the program has spurred her to aim for better grades, and to improve a report card now laced with F's to one with A's, B's, and C's.

The goals of these girls with respect to families are most different from the goals of those of the other groups. As the Connecting Youth girls discuss family, all of them see themselves as having a husband as part of a family, and not as something that may or may not happen. In fact, most were surprised at being asked to describe their future family, since they assumed a husband would be there. The exception is Tina, who is not sure. She wants children, but is also considering the option of adoption. These girls plan to stay sexually abstinent as well. Shaunta talks about not going to parties or having sex outside of marriage, while Olivia and her friends in the program have purchased purity rings.²⁵ The girls have all signed pledges committing to this chaste lifestyle—not only in not having sex before they are married, but in considering what the pledge means with regard to their dress and behavior. Because of the program, and maybe not their own initiative, they have plans to follow through with some of the plans they have.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Tables 8.3 and 8.4 summarize the teens' religious characteristics and the connections between their faith and religious practice and their lives. From the tables, we see that success in linking religious faith and practice with moral choices and life plans varies with the degree to which a program emphasizes such connections. This pattern belies the view that this connection happens automatically.²⁶ The Boston Project and Summer of Hope programs make little direct effort to integrate belief and behavior; not surprisingly, their clients often fail to do so. In Discover Yourself, the link is emphasized through discussion, with the result that, to a moderate degree, girls see connections between their religious faith and their lives more generally. Connecting Youth is the most explicit in asking youth to make a connection between religious understanding or practices and their views of themselves, their life plans, and the

Table 8.3 Religious characteristics of teens in programs

Program	Belief in God	Practice of prayer	Religious knowledge	Use of Bible	Church attendance	Church attitudes	Strong relationships
Boston Project	Yes	Yes	No	Rarely	Little/none	Mixed	Weak
Summer of Hope	Yes	Yes	Some	Rarely	Some	Skeptical	Weak
Discover Yourself	Yes	Yes	Some	Little	Little	Good	Good
Connecting Youth	Yes	Yes	Yes	Some	Some/a lot	Very good	Very good

Table 8.4 Faith/practice connections to life

Program	Religious identity	Christian morality	Personal morality	Religious understanding	Sense of vision	Sexual purity
Boston Project	No	Little	Little	None	Little	No
Summer of Hope	No	Some	Some	Some	Little	Little
Discover Yourself	No	Some	A lot	Some	Some	Little
Connecting Youth	Yes	A lot	A lot	A lot	Some	A lot

moral issues they confront, and it is far more successful in getting youth to reexamine their behavior.

These findings suggest the potential influence that the "faith factor" of such programs can have on participants; in order to be effective, however, faith-based providers must actively connect beliefs and behavior. We should not be surprised at this; in her chapter, Bane demonstrates that even the Catholic Church, a setting in which the teaching is clear and members are much more committed, faces a serious challenge in translating social teachings into action.

Our research has a number of implications. First, we found that although religious teaching occurs in some programs (mainly the faith-infused program), this teaching is not in contradiction with previous religious beliefs, and the girls in all our programs are believers. Hence the worry that public money is being used for proselytization may not be a real issue in many circumstances. Rather, the real work of these faith-based programs may lie in determining how best to help individuals make connections between their religious faith and their lives more generally, through means such as teaching, participation in religious practice, or involvement in a community. What our research on these four programs suggests is that only highly religiously infused programs are likely to be successful at making these connections.

Although this research does not speak to the issue of whether public monies should go to faith-infused groups, it does show that the "faith factor" in such programs may be important to their programming and outcomes. The potential importance of this factor does not contradict the idea that faith-based programs should be evaluated in the public sphere on their ability to deliver services, but the research does argue that the religiosity of faith-based programs is essential to their ability to affect life choices and behavior, and may be important for a host of social service providers. This finding is important in discussions about requirements for faith-based programs operating in the public sphere. We must add the caveat that our research dealt with Protestant programs; further studies on other kinds of faith-based organizations in other communities would need to occur to generalize these results.

We make the following policy recommendations.

Increase religious understanding. Although the girls in all programs described themselves as believers, they appeared to have little understanding of their beliefs. They expressed a desire for more opportunities to discuss their faith. Most expressed appreciation of teaching that deals with life issues; it appears that at least some of them responded to such teachings with changed behavior. The Bible also appears to be an underutilized resource. Girls commonly had little understanding of the Bible or how to think about it. Although teaching may be seen as imbuing theological ideas, it was something the girls wanted and would not have been in conflict with their previous religious beliefs.

Support spiritual practice. Most of the girls we studied prayed regularly. Yet for many of the girls, prayer is not something that motivates them, except out of a sense of fear of God. Prayer and worship are spiritual practices that can help individuals connect their religious beliefs with their lives more generally.²⁷ Lacy suggests that reciting prayers as a group may help the girls see themselves as part of a larger community and help them put concern for others above themselves.²⁸

Integrate youth into the church community. Connecting the girls to a church community is not easy. Many who do attend church do not think of it as their community. Although some of the girls are disturbed by faults they perceive within certain churches or traditions, for others the issue may be more one of accessibility. The option to go to church is not easy or readily available; the girls may not feel welcome or connected. Most of the girls report they are willing to be more active in faith programs or enter into religious discussion; all seem to have a high level of respect for clergy. Churches associated with faith-based organizations could do more to be open to youth, letting them know they are welcome. Attendance at church activities like worship, community service programs, and study is often influenced by repeated invitation.

God, Abortion, and Democracy in the Pro-Life Movement

Ziad Munson

"EVERYBODY should be out in front of the [abortion] clinic whether you're Muslim, Christian, or Hebrew, it doesn't matter. You should be out there because it's a human rights issue." Andy, thirty-five, a pro-life activist from Charleston, South Carolina, is arguing that all Americans ought to resist legalized abortion.¹ "Six million Jews died during the Holocaust in Germany," he continues, "but over 100 million children have been murdered by abortion." Andy anchors such ideas in his religious faith. He explains his activism in terms of a personal encounter with Satan, and believes God called him to oppose abortion. This call occurred when "the grieving of the Holy Spirit from the hurt of all the innocent children who have been slaughtered and murdered by abortion came upon me."

Are Andy and others like him a threat to democracy? Certainly his views suggest the dark side of religion's role as a shaper of moral discourse and stimulus to political involvement: the potential for intolerance and exclusion. Yet despite the fervor with which proliferators express their views, and the real potential for violence, interviews with pro-life activists also show striking evidence of a simultaneous, perhaps even paradoxical, commitment to democratic principles. The pro-life movement's zealous pursuit of a moral imperative exists in tension with a respect for citizenship.

Andy takes his perceived calling from God seriously; he regularly