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**LATINO CONGREGATIONS AND SOCIAL SERVICE:  
THE PHILADELPHIA STORY**

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UNIVERSITY OF  
NOTRE DAME



## **LATINO CONGREGATIONS AND SOCIAL SERVICE: THE PHILADELPHIA STORY**

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The Center for the Study of Latino Religion conducts ecumenically focused research on the impact of religion on the political, social, cultural, and educational life of Latinos in the United States. It also examines the role that religious institutions and their leadership play in strengthening Latino communities.



The three wavy lines shown here are a symbol from ancient times representing the human intellect in action. From *The Book of Signs*, collected, drawn, and explained by Rudolf Koch (London: The First Edition Club, 1930, page 8).

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## Introduction

Recent attention to the role of religion in American public life has highlighted the important role that religious institutions play in generating social capital and volunteering and in helping people develop skills that are critical for effective citizenship (Putnam 2000; Dionne and Chen 2001; Wuthnow and Evans 2002). Numerous studies have demonstrated the economic, educational, and social impact of churches, particularly in disadvantaged minority communities (Verba, Schlozmann, and Brady 1995; Sherman 1997; Ammerman 2001; Chaves and Tsitos 2001; Cnaan 2002; Dionne and Chen 2001). Other research has shown that the mere presence of churches in blighted neighborhoods has a significant effect on improving life opportunities for church members and their neighbors, especially for young people (Freeman 1985; Sikkink and Hernández 2003; Regnerus and Elder 2003).

Religious institutions alone do not ensure the health of neighborhoods, which depend on a vibrant commercial life and employment opportunities, and on access to housing, education, health care, transportation, and the many other systems that fuel our complex society. But churches are a crucial part of this mix, and contribute vitally to the vision, creativity, social dynamism, and spiritual power of community life. Their presence is particularly important within immigrant communities, where they foster the social and civic incorporation of recent immigrants by helping them negotiate the social, economic, and political systems of their new land (Warner 1997; Warner and Wittner 1998; Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000).

One of the most important characteristics of the Latino community is its deeply rooted religious commitment. While other racial and ethnic groups also manifest strong religious faith, the relatively weak state of other institutions in poor, urban Latino communities often means that churches are looked to for assistance and support that can be otherwise hard to find.

The significant increase in the US Latino population over the last two decades has both changed the composition of existing religious congregations and precipitated a considerable rise in the number of Spanish-speaking churches in urban and rural communities. But though verifying the presence of churches in Latino communities can be accomplished by walking the streets of identifiably Hispanic neighborhoods, assessing the impact that these churches are having on their immediate and surrounding communities requires more intensive analysis. To that end, this report presents the findings of an investigation of the organizational behavior and social involvement of Latino congregations in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and identifies the demographic and social characteristics that shape their social and civic engagement. Drawing on Lester Salamon's (1995) insight that, "The only way to get a reliable profile of even the national nonprofit sector is to focus on one locale and examine a reasonable cross section of the local area," this study focuses on religious congregations in one large city and, while each metropolitan area has its own distinctive characteristics, suggests some trends that can be further investigated and compared in cities throughout the country.

Our report is divided into three parts. The first compares the Latino congregations in Philadelphia to their non-Latino equivalents by analyzing their respective demographic and institutional characteristics. The second examines the social-services provided by the participating congregations and assesses the value of these programs to their larger communities. The third and final part investigates what characteristics demonstrably impact whether and to what extent a Latino congregation will engage in social-service involvement. We hope that identifying what factors respectively encourage and discourage such provision will help the efforts of Latino clergy, community practitioners, civic leaders, and organizations interested in strengthening the social-service involvement of congregations and in fostering the

health and growth of urban Latino communities in the United States.



## **METHODOLOGY AND DATA SOURCES OF THIS REPORT**

The data analyzed in this report are derived from a comprehensive survey of religious congregations in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, that was conducted from 1999 to 2002 by the Program for the Study of Organized Religion and Social Work at the University of Pennsylvania. Through extensive list examination, consultations with local leaders, and canvassing the city on foot, the research team identified approximately 2,100 operating congregations in the city,<sup>1</sup> 148 (7 percent) of which were classified as ‘Latino’ on the basis of having a Spanish name and/or half or more of its members of Latino origin. Of the 2,100 congregations, 1,393 (66 percent) agreed to participate in the study, 109 (nearly 8 percent) of which were Latino. Our finding that between 7 and 8 percent of Philadelphia congregations are identifiably Latino corresponds to the Latino share of the population counted in the 2000 Census, which found that 128,928 of the approximately 1,517,500 people living in Philadelphia, or 8.5 percent, are Latino/a (US Census Bureau 2000).

The survey was conducted via face-to-face interviews with senior pastors and key congregational leaders. Interviewers used a three-part survey that first gathered background information about the congregation’s history, membership, finances, staff, governing structure, and relations with the wider community. They then took an inventory of the social service programs offered by the congregation during the past twelve months and, finally, collected

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<sup>1</sup> The team compiled this list from city tax records, the Yellow Pages listings, denominational and coalition groups, and census data; by asking locals to identify missing congregations; and by walking the streets. The resulting list was then gone over and the inactive churches removed. For more detailed information about data collection see the Appendix.

detailed information about each program (its purpose, clientele, staffing, budget, etc.) for up to five programs per congregation. This five-program cap was established out of concern for overtaxing the patience of respondents who were already submitting to a complex and time-consuming survey. (For more details on the data collection and methodology of this study, please see the Appendix.)

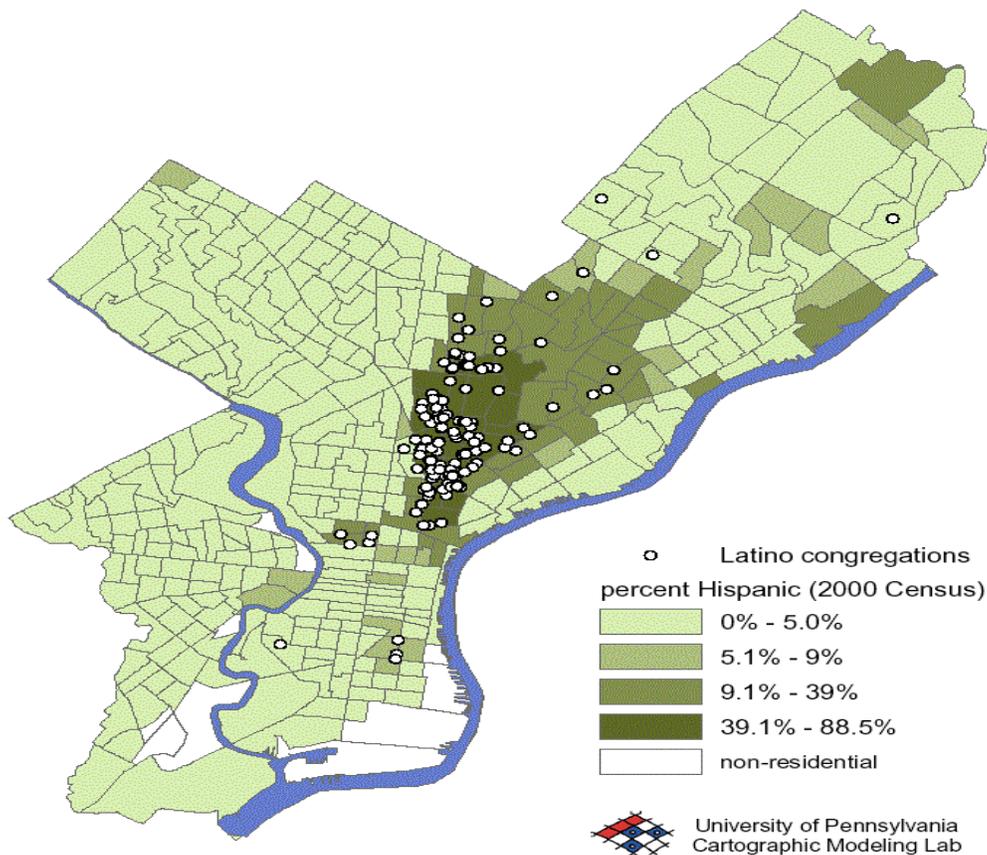
Though the non-Latino congregations in this study represent other racial and ethnic groups (679 African American congregations, 359 white congregations, 58 Asian congregations, and 188 mixed congregations), this report is primarily concerned with the behavior of the Latino congregations. In order to maintain this focus, the non-Latino congregations are treated without further differentiation and compared as a group with the Latino churches. Also, since our analysis is based upon the congregation as our unit of study, we count each congregation as a unit of comparative value, despite the considerable variance in congregational size (the 109 Latino congregations range from 12 to 6,500 regular and occasional attendees, and the congregations in the overall sample range from 6 to 13,010).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> As will be discussed below, the variability in congregational size is due in large part to the differences in church membership between Catholic parishes, which have the largest memberships in the sample, and the Protestant congregations, which are considerably smaller.

## PART I: A DEMOGRAPHIC AND INSTITUTIONAL COMPARISON OF LATINO AND NON-LATINO CONGREGATIONS IN PHILADELPHIA

The 2,100 congregations operating in Philadelphia are spread evenly throughout the city. Plotting these churches on a GIS map reveals that if someone were to walk from one congregation to another, the longest possible distance would be .88 mile. Amid this otherwise general distribution of churches, the Latino congregations are clustered in close proximity to the people they serve and thus are concentrated heavily in the sections of the city where the Latino population resides, as the map below illustrates.



As noted, according to the 2000 Census, Philadelphia's 129,000 Latinos comprise approximately 8.5 percent of that city's population (US Census Bureau 2000). This number represents an increase of almost 45,000 people from 1990, at which time Latinos comprised

approximately 5.5 percent of the city's inhabitants (Bartelt 2001). While most Latinos in the United States—63 percent—are of Mexican ancestry (Suro 2005), the vast majority of Latinos in Philadelphia—71 percent—are of Puerto Rican origin (Congreso de Latinos Unidos 2005). The city's other Latino residents identified themselves on the 2000 Census as: 12.8 percent “Other Hispanic or Latino,” 4.8 percent Mexican, 3.7 percent South American, 3.4 percent Dominican Republic, 2.2 percent Central American, and 2.1 percent Cuban (Congreso de Latinos Unidos 2005).

As a whole, Latinos in Philadelphia have the lowest median household income, the lowest level of formal labor force engagement, and the lowest level of formal education of any group in the city (Bartelt 2001). The 1998 median income for a Latino household was just \$12,744 compared to \$16,290 for Asian households, \$23,847 for black households, and \$35,245 for white households (Bartelt 2001). Only 29 percent of Latinos are employed in the official labor force (compared to 35 percent of Asians, 40 percent of blacks, and 53 percent of whites), though an additional 16 percent work in the unofficial labor sector (Bartelt 2001). And though 71 percent of the city's general population in 2000 had a high school diploma or higher and 18 percent a Bachelor's degree or higher (US Census 2000), nearly 48 percent of Latino Philadelphians in 1999 had less than a twelfth grade education, only 36 percent had a high school diploma, and just 16 percent had completed some college (Bartelt 2001).

Latino households in Philadelphia are also younger and more likely to contain children than any other sector of the population. Half of the city's Latino households have children, compared to just 34 percent of Asian and Black households, and 23 percent of white households (Bartelt 2001).

## Membership

Since the definition of church membership can vary from congregation to congregation, we calculated congregational membership on the basis of the number of people who attend at least once a month, rather than the number of people listed on a congregation's roster. The average Latino congregation has 186 members, including children, and half of the Latino congregations reported memberships of fewer than 68 individuals. An additional 108 people attend the average Latino congregation for major holidays or major life events. The non-Latino congregations surveyed were significantly larger, with an average membership of 320 and an average of 263 people attending each non-Latino congregation for special occasions.

Concerned that our one-time data collection might miss a trend in congregational fluctuation, we asked the respondents whether their congregation's membership had grown, remained static, or declined in the past three years. As Table 1 below indicates, the Latino congregations were significantly more likely to report an increase in their membership during the last three years than the non-Latino congregations were—63 percent compared to 47 percent. Only 11 percent of the Latino congregations said that their membership had declined during that period, compared to 22 percent of the non-Latino congregations. Thus while the Latino congregations represent a much smaller number of people, they are attracting and retaining members at a higher rate than the non-Latino churches surveyed.

<b>Table 1</b>	<b>3-Year Congregational Membership Trends</b>		
	<b>Latino Congregations (N=109)</b>	<b>Non-Latino Congregations (N=1284)</b>	<b>Total Congregations (N=1393)</b>
Membership Increased	63%	47%	48%
Membership Remained Static	26%	31%	31%
Membership Declined	11%	22%	21%

### **Denominational Affiliation**

Though most Latino/as in the United States are Roman Catholic (Espinosa, Elizondo, and Miranda 2003), only 7 of the 109 congregations interviewed were Catholic (6 percent). These seven churches are significantly larger than the Protestant participants, however, with each averaging 1,581 members and 3,078 occasional attendees. In contrast, the 102 Protestant congregations averaged only 90 members and 100 occasional attendees each. There are 40 different denominations/traditions represented among the 109 congregations. Pentecostal churches have the largest share of Latino churches with 29 congregations (27 percent), followed distantly by Assemblies of God with eight congregations (7 percent), and then the seven Roman Catholic churches (6 percent).

## Political and Theological Orientation

To better understand the political and theological outlook of Latino churches, we asked the interviewees whether the majority of their members would characterize their congregation as conservative, moderate, or liberal. These terms were not further defined, and thus respondents answered on the basis of their own interpretation of what each signifies. It should also be noted that since the results are based upon the congregational leader/interviewee's perception of how most of their members would characterize their congregation, they do not necessarily reflect the political or theological views of a congregation's members.

As Table 2 indicates, a significantly higher number of Latino congregations (50 percent) said their members would describe their congregation as politically conservative than did the non-Latino respondents (32 percent). Though the same number of Latino and non-Latino congregations said their members would characterize their church as politically liberal (19 percent), a considerably greater percent of non-Latino church leaders indicated that their members would characterize their church as politically moderate—50 percent compared to 31 percent.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> While the issue is beyond the scope of the present enquiry, it should be noted that black and white churches exhibit considerable differences with respect to theology and politics, and black and white church leaders may not have been interpreting 'conservative', 'liberal', etc. in precisely the same way.

<b>Table 2</b>	<b>Political and Religious Orientation</b>	
Based on the question: “ <i>What would most of the members characterize this congregation as?</i> ”	<b>Latino Congregations (N=109)</b>	<b>Non-Latino Congregations (N=1284)</b>
<b>Politically Conservative *</b>	50%	32%
<b>Politically Moderate *</b>	31%	50%
<b>Politically Liberal</b>	19%	19%
<b>Religiously Fundamentalist</b>	15%	16%
<b>Religiously Conservative *</b>	61%	38%
<b>Religiously Moderate *</b>	21%	35%
<b>Religiously Liberal *</b>	3%	11%

\* indicates a statistically significant difference between the Latino and non-Latino congregations.

The same tendencies are evident in their religious orientations. While 61 percent of the Latino congregations said their members would consider their church religiously conservative, only 38 percent of the non-Latino congregations did so. There is no significant difference between the percent of Latino and non-Latino congregations whose members would describe them as “religiously fundamentalist.” But only 21 percent of the Latino congregations said their members would consider their church religiously moderate compared to 35 percent of non-Latino congregations, and just 3 percent said they would say it was religiously liberal, compared to 11 percent of non-Latino congregations.

## **Congregational Age and Building Facilities**

As a group, the Latino congregations in Philadelphia are quite young compared to the non-Latino congregations. Only six Latino congregations were incorporated before 1900, and 73 congregations (67 percent) were incorporated since 1980. The average Latino congregation was established in 1975 and the average non-Latino congregation in 1936.

The Latino congregations also have been in their current locations for less time than their non-Latino cohorts. The average Latino congregation has been in its current location for 19 years, whereas the average non-Latino congregation has been in its place for 59 years. Protestant Latino churches are notably younger than their Catholic counterparts, with an average founding date of 1981 compared to 1890 for the Roman Catholic parishes that serve Latino communities.

Most of the Latino congregations own the space they occupy (78 churches, or 72 percent), and only 11 are still paying the mortgage on their buildings. Twenty of the remaining Latino churches rent space; 7 use space owned by a member of the clergy and the remaining 13 share a location with another congregation. In comparison, a larger segment of the non-Latino congregations—83 percent—own their buildings. Our survey also found that the Latino congregations are more likely to be housed in properties that need structural improvement than the non-Latino churches. Forty-five percent of the Latino congregations reported building problems such as roofing, leakages, and stress, compared to 30 percent of non-Latino congregations. This might be one of the reasons why 31 percent of the Latino churches indicated that they plan to relocate in the foreseeable future, compared to only 17 percent of the non-Latino churches.

## **Clergy**

Pastors often function as both chief executive officer and the key initiator of a congregation's service activity. Yet only 42 (39 percent) of the Latino congregations surveyed have at least one paid, full-time member of the clergy, six of which have two full-time pastors, while two congregations have three full-time pastors. Another twelve Latino congregations (11 percent) reported having one part-time paid pastor. The remaining 50 percent of Latino congregations either have unpaid clergy or were pastorally vacant at the time of the survey, suggesting that a significant number of Latino churches have pastors who work full-time elsewhere and serve their congregations on a volunteer basis.

Significantly more non-Latino congregations (63 percent) have at least one paid full-time clergy member, and just 21 percent of the non-Latino congregations had unpaid clergy or were pastorally vacant at the time of the survey. This difference is partly influenced by the comparatively small budgets of most Latino congregations, discussed below, which can make it difficult for these churches to compensate their pastors financially. The clergy serving the Latino congregations were also less likely to have graduated from a theological seminary. While 70 percent of the pastors in the non-Latino congregations surveyed had received this formal training, only 60 percent of clergy in the Latino congregations had done so.

## **Congregational Budget**

The majority of the Latino congregations surveyed have an annual operating budget of less than \$50,000 (70 congregations, or 64 percent). As Table 3 shows, 18 percent of Latino congregations (20 congregations) reported budgets of \$50,000 to \$100,000, and 13 percent (14 congregations) reported budgets of more than \$100,000 a year. In comparison, 32 percent of

non-Latino congregations have budgets of less than \$50,000, 24 percent have budgets between \$50,000 and \$100,000, and 44 percent have incomes of above \$100,000.

<b>Table 3</b>	<b>Annual Congregational Budget *</b>	
	<b>Latino Congregations (N=109)</b>	<b>Non-Latino Congregations (N=1284)</b>
under \$50,000	64%	32%
\$50,000-\$100,000	18%	24%
\$100,001 and above	13%	44%

\* Budgets as reported do not include building funds or school budgets.

There were no significant differences between the two groups' reported incidences of budget surpluses or deficits. Roughly 19 percent of both Latino and non-Latino congregations reported having had a budget surplus for the year prior to the study, 52 percent of Latino and 54 percent of non-Latino congregations said their budgets had been balanced, and 29 percent of Latino and 27 percent of non-Latino congregations reported deficits for that year. Just 9 percent of both groups said that their congregations were financially strong.

But the groups differed significantly when asked whether their congregations were financially struggling. While 55 percent of Latino congregations described themselves this way, only 38 percent of the non-Latino congregations did so. Further, only 37 percent of the Latino church leaders said their churches were financially sound, compared to the 52 percent of the non-Latino congregations' leaders.

### **Sources of Congregational Income**

The comparatively smaller budgets of Latino congregations might partly stem from their having smaller and less wealthy membership bases to draw upon for their congregational income.

While both groups rely on offerings for nearly half of their budgets (48 percent and 49 percent respectively), as noted above the median income for Latino households is considerably lower than the rest of the city's population—just over three-quarters that of Asian households, just over half that of black households, and just over a third that of white households (Bartelt 2001). Thus, though research has shown that wealthy people tend to give a lower percentage of their income to their churches (Ammerman 1997), our findings indicate that a vast majority of the Latino congregations have both a smaller number of members and a smaller income pool upon which to draw for financial support.

When asked about external sources of income, 7 Latino (6 percent) and 122 non-Latino congregations (10 percent) reported that they had applied for funding to local and government offices. Of the total 129 churches that applied, 66 percent received grants ranging from \$100 to \$80,000. The 7 Latino congregations variously cited the Board of Education, City Recreation Department, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and OHCD as agencies they had pursued to support after-school programs, a food bank, a summer camp, and a job placement program. Five of the 7 Latino churches received the grants they applied for, which ranged in amount from \$1,000 to \$30,000.

A slightly higher portion of Latino congregations than non-Latino—23 percent compared to 17 percent—pursued support from private foundations including the Connelly Foundation, The Pew Charitable Trusts, United Way, and the Northeast Interfaith Ministries. Twenty-one of the 25 Latino congregations (84 percent) that applied for such funding received grants ranging from \$500 to \$40,000. The majority of the funds requested by the Latino churches were for ESL (English as a Second Language) programs, hospital ministry, job training, and other services.

There was little difference between the portions of the two groups that sought corporate funding. Just 7 percent of Latino congregations (8 churches) applied for funding from corporations including the Philadelphia Phillies, Harvest Crusade, Cardone Industries, and Sovereign Insurance, with 7 of the 8 churches receiving grants from \$400 to \$100,000. Similarly, 6 percent of the non-Latino congregations (77 churches) applied for funding from corporations, of which 59 (77 percent) received grants ranging from \$400 to \$200,000.

However, there was a more evident difference in the number of churches seeking denominational help. While 17 percent of Latino congregations (18 churches) requested denominational help, only 9 percent of the non-Latino congregations did so. In both groups the overwhelming majority of congregations that applied for denominational grants were successful (94 percent of Latino congregations received grants ranging from \$100 to \$125,000, and 88 percent of non-Latino congregations received grants ranging from \$500 to \$400,000).

### **Collaborations and Funding for Programs**

Congregations often collaborate with other organizations to provide social and community services by sharing space, financial resources, staff, or supplies. Sixty of the Latino congregations in our study (55 percent) reported that they had collaborated with other faith-based organizations to provide social services, and 43 (39 percent) indicated that they had worked with secular organizations to do so. Non-Latino congregations demonstrated a greater tendency to collaborate this way, with 63 percent of them working with other religious groups and 58 percent with secular organizations for social service purposes. But though the Latino congregations collaborated less frequently than their counterparts with both religious and secular organizations in social service provision, they showed a greater inclination to engage in religious activities with other groups. Nearly 91 percent of the Latino congregations said they

had worshipped jointly in the past year with another congregation, compared to 85 percent of the non-Latino congregations. (It should be noted that this does not necessarily indicate that these groups worship with congregations outside of their own religious traditions.)

Given their demonstrated tendency to collaborate with religious groups rather than secular organizations, it was not surprising that very few of the Latino congregations in our study were familiar with Charitable Choice.<sup>4</sup> Of the 109 Latino churches surveyed, only four (nearly 4 percent) were familiar with this program, and just one congregation had convened a discussion about whether to apply for grants under its terms. No Latino congregation had formed a committee or group to draft a grant or contract proposal for Charitable Choice. But the non-Latino congregations were only slightly more familiar with this program. Of the 1,284 non-Latino congregations, 83 percent did not know about Charitable Choice, while 9 percent had some knowledge and only 8 percent said they were really familiar with it. Only 30 non-Latino congregations had formally discussed whether to apply for Charitable Choice grants, and just 10 had formed a committee to draft a grant or contract proposal.

To investigate whether these congregations would consider collaborating with the federal government to fund their social service programs, the interviewers provided a brief explanation of Charitable Choice and subsequently asked the participants if they would consider applying for government funds under its provisions. In response, 74 Latino church leaders (68 percent) and 790 (62 percent) of non-Latino church leaders answered affirmatively, indicating that they are open to the possibility of receiving government funds.



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<sup>4</sup> “Charitable Choice” is the Section 104 of the national government’s Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, which removes barriers that previously prohibited congregations that did not have a separate 501(c)3 organization from contracting with the government to provide social services.

## **PART II: SOCIAL SERVICES PROVIDED BY PHILADELPHIA CHURCHES**

### **Programs and Service Areas Offered**

To ascertain the service activity of Philadelphia churches, interviewees were asked to indicate which of a list of 202 potential services their congregation had provided in the previous twelve months on a formal, informal, or *ad hoc* basis. The list was limited to services intended for more than exclusively religious purposes (i.e., faith formation, prayer groups, and worship programs were not included).

Of the 1,393 congregations, 1,270 (91 percent) reported offering at least one social program that served the community. The overall average number of community-serving programs per congregation was 3.06, though because we did not collect data on more than five programs per congregation, the actual number could be higher. (As noted above, we did not want to overtax the patience of respondents who were already submitting to a complex and time-consuming survey.)

Ninety-two of the 109 Latino congregations (84 percent) reported that they offer at least one such social program, with the average Latino congregation hosting 2.5 such programs. In comparison, 1,178 of the 1,284 non-Latino congregations (91 percent) offered at least one program, with the average non-Latino congregation providing 3.1 programs. Thus the Latino congregations carried out 6 percent of the total programs reported and the non-Latino congregations 94 percent—numbers that closely parallel the percentages of the two groups in our sample (Latino congregations, 7 percent; non-Latino congregations, 93 percent).

Table 4 compares the types of services provided by the two categories of congregations, and includes only the program areas that were offered by at least 15 percent of the congregations.

<b>Table 4</b>	<b>Social Service Programs Provided by Philadelphia Congregations</b>	
	<b>Latino Congregations (N=109)</b>	<b>Non-Latino Congregations (N=1284)</b>
<b>Type of Service</b>		
Food pantries *	39%	51%
Recreational program for children	32%	38%
Recreational programs for teens *	28%	38%
Summer day camp *	27%	41%
Clothing closets *	23%	38%
Prison ministry	22%	22%
Summer programs for teens	18%	26%
International relief	18 %	24 %
Hospital visitation	15%	20%
Pre-marriage counseling	15%	20%
Marriage encounters (retreats)	15%	18%
Drug and alcohol prevention	15%	16%
Choral groups *	14%	24%
Music performances *	13%	31%
Music classes	13%	15%
Parenting skills	12%	18%
Neighborhood cleanups	12%	16%
Community bazaars/fairs *	11%	22%
Soup kitchens *	10%	25%

Educational tutoring *	10%	25%
Programs for gang members *	10 %	23%
After school care *	10%	23%
Inter-faith collaboration *	10%	19%
Health education *	10%	19%
Street outreach to homeless people	10%	17%
Visitation/buddy program for seniors *	9%	25%
Daycare (preschool) *	9%	19%
Homeless shelter *	8%	19%
Scout troops *	7%	19%
Health screening *	7%	17%
Visiting sick/homebound people *	6%	19%
Sports activities *	6%	16%
Scholarships for students in need *	6%	16%
Neighborhood associations *	5%	23%
Recreational programs for seniors *	5%	21%
Crime watch *	5%	18%
Organized tours (for the elderly) *	3%	17%
Mentoring/Rites of passage *	2%	17%

\* indicates the programs for which there was a statistically significant difference between the Latino and non-Latino congregations.

As Table 4 illustrates, Latino congregations are less involved in almost every area of social-service programming. This difference reflects the reality that these churches as a group

have fewer resources and smaller memberships and the fact that 61 percent of Latino churches function without a full-time paid pastor. Non-Latino congregations offer significantly more programs for the elderly and the youth, and Latino congregations provide less sick/homebound visitation. In addition to the lack of resources, the lesser involvement of Latino churches in caring for the young and the old might reflect a relatively greater expectation among Latinos that families will take care of family members. Other research on Latinos in Philadelphia found that only 15 percent of Latino households with children use any kind of childcare, of which the majority relies upon relatives or neighbors while just 30 percent send their children to programs outside of someone's home (Bartelt 2001). But this same study found that the need for childcare was one of the major barriers to employment in the Latino community and that the lack of availability, along with language and cultural barriers, were frequently cited as reasons for not having one's child in a formal childcare program.

Though food pantries are the most frequently offered service by Latino congregations, these churches are comparatively less involved in directly providing to the poor than are non-Latino congregations. Fifty-one percent of non-Latino congregations offer food pantries, compared to 39 percent of Latino congregations; and 25 percent of non-Latino congregations have soup kitchens, compared to only 10 percent of Latino congregations. Further, 38 percent of non-Latino congregations have clothing closets, compared to 23 percent of Latino congregations.

### **Beneficiaries and Volunteers**

Though the non-Latino congregations surveyed offer more programs than the Latino congregations, the Latino congregations' programs serve a higher number of non-church members for every church member than do the programs run by their non-Latino counterparts.

The average Latino congregational program benefits 27 church members and 105 non-members, compared to the 44 church members and 83 non-members served by the average non-Latino congregational program. While the comparatively small membership size of the Latino congregations clearly impacts this ratio, this difference might also reflect the significant evangelistic and outreach focus of many Latino Evangelical Protestant churches for whom reaching out to the community can be a critical aspect of their efforts to bring people into the faith.

To further explore how these congregations' efforts benefit their communities, we asked participants to indicate which of ten potential beneficiary groups their programs served and allowed for multiple listings since a single program might simultaneously serve more than one group (for example, young children and their older siblings or parents). As Table 5 indicates, the major beneficiaries of congregational services and programs are children, the community-at-large, and youth.

<b>Table 5</b>	<b>Beneficiaries of Congregational Services and Programs</b>		
<b>Beneficiary Group</b>	<b>Percent of Latino Programs Serving Group</b>	<b>Percent of Non-Latino Programs Serving Group</b>	<b>Percent of Total Programs Serving Group</b>
Community at Large	38%	44%	43%
Children *	37%	45%	44%
People with low incomes/poor	32%	35%	35%
Families	30%	35%	34%
Youth *	29%	39%	38%
Adults *	18%	24%	24%
Elderly *	10%	23%	22%
People with addictions *	8%	14%	14%
People with disabilities *	6%	13%	13%

\* indicates a statistically significant difference between the Latino and non-Latino congregations.

Here, again, we see that Latino congregations reported comparatively lower rates of service to older people and youth than the non-Latino churches, which further raises the question of whether this reflects the generally observed tendency within Latino communities to regard caring for the young and the elderly as a familial responsibility. Interestingly, here there was no significant difference between the percentage of the two groups that reported benefiting people with low incomes/the poor. But though approximately the same portion of Latino

congregations provide care for the poor and families as the non-Latino congregations, they are comparatively less likely to offer services for people with addictions or disabilities.

### **Replacement Value of Congregational Social Service Programs**

Another way to assess the impact of the social services provided by religious congregations is to determine their financial replacement value by calculating how much it would cost other parts of the civil or government sector to provide the same services or programs if the community-serving ministries ceased to do so. Assessing this involves more than tallying the direct dollar amount a church expends on a given program and needs to account for costs that the congregation effectively donates to the program like the host building and pastoral and staff time devoted to community-oriented services.

The seven costs we included in calculating the ‘replacement value’ of the social programs provided by the surveyed congregations were:

- 1) the direct financial support that the congregation gives to the program;
- 2) the value of in-kind support (i.e., transportation, food, clothing, printing, telephone, postage);
- 3) the value of the utilities used by the program carried out on congregational property (i.e., building wear-and-tear, heating and cooling, electricity, cleaning services);
- 4) the estimated value of what it would cost the program to rent an equivalent space from a commercial vendor;
- 5) the number of hours that clergy invest in the program;
- 6) the number of hours that other congregational employees (program directors, secretaries, custodians, etc.) spend working for the program;
- 7) the number of hours donated by volunteers to the program.

We calculated the financial replacement value of each program by assessing each cost on a per month basis. Clergy hours were valued at \$20 per hour and staff members at \$10 per hour, and volunteer time was calculated according to the \$16.27 per volunteer hour established by the Independent Sector.<sup>5</sup> Since, as mentioned above, we only counted up to five programs per congregation, congregations with more than five programs are not fully represented here, and thus these replacement values are a conservative estimate. We also took account of whether a given program yields any cash or in-kind income to the congregation, which we aggregated and then deducted from the program's total estimated value.

Table 6 shows the calculated replacement value for the social and community programs provided by Philadelphia congregations. To determine the average cost per congregation for the total sample we multiplied the average cost per program by 3.06, which is the average number of programs per congregation. The congregational costs for the two studied groups also reflect the average number of programs per congregation: 2.5 programs per Latino congregation, and 3.1 programs per non-Latino congregation.

As Table 6 illustrates, the direct financial support that congregations give to their social ministries represents only 15 percent of the replacement value of the non-Latino congregational programs and just 11 percent of the Latino congregational programs, whereas staff, clergy, and volunteer hours account for 57 percent of the replacement value for both groups.

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<sup>5</sup> Since the study was conducted from 1999 to 2002, we are using the 2001 estimated dollar value of volunteer time. For more information on the Independent Sector's calculations see [www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer\\_time.html](http://www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer_time.html).

<b>Table 6</b>	<b>Monthly Replacement Value of Congregational Social/Community Service Programs (N=2,439)</b>				
<b>Source</b>	<b>Average cost per program</b>		<b>Average cost per congregation</b>		<b>Percent of total value</b>
Direct financial support by the congregation	Total:	\$533	Total:	\$1,632	15%
	Latino:	\$366	Latino:	\$914	11%
	Non-Latino:	\$545	Non-Latino:	\$1,690	15%
Value of in-kind support	Total:	\$181	Total:	\$554	5%
	Latino:	\$280	Latino:	\$699	9%
	Non-Latino:	\$174	Non-Latino:	\$539	5%
Value of utilities for programs	Total:	\$168	Total:	\$515	5%
	Latino:	\$159	Latino:	\$397	5%
	Non-Latino:	\$169	Non-Latino:	\$524	5%
Estimated value of program space	Total:	\$653	Total:	\$1,997	18%
	Latino:	\$589	Latino:	\$1,472	18%
	Non-Latino:	\$657	Non-Latino:	\$2,037	18%
Number of clergy hours (@ \$20/hr)	Total:	\$273	Total:	\$835	8%
	Latino:	\$179	Latino:	\$448	6%
	Non-Latino:	\$272	Non-Latino:	\$844	8%
Number of staff hours (@ \$10/hr)	Total:	\$333	Total:	\$1,020	9%
	Latino:	\$267	Latino:	\$667	8%
	Non-Latino:	\$338	Non-Latino:	\$1,048	9%

Number of volunteer hours (@ \$16.27/hr)	Total:	\$1,437	Total:	\$4,396	40%
	Latino:	\$1,396	Latino:	\$3,491	43%
	Non-Latino:	\$1,439	Non-Latino:	\$4,462	40%
<b>Total</b>	Total:	<b>\$3,578</b>	Total:	<b>\$10,948</b>	100%
	Latino:	<b>\$3,235</b>	Latino:	<b>\$8,088</b>	100%
	Non-Latino:	<b>\$3,595</b>	Non-Latino:	<b>\$11,145</b>	100%
Income to the congregation	Total:	\$103	Total:	\$314	N/A
	Latino:	\$84	Latino:	\$211	N/A
	Non-Latino:	\$104	Non-Latino:	\$322	N/A
<b>Net replacement value</b>	Total:	<b>\$3,475</b>	Total:	<b>\$10,634</b>	N/A
	Latino:	<b>\$3,151</b>	Latino:	<b>\$7,877</b>	N/A
	Non-Latino:	<b>\$3,491</b>	Non-Latino:	<b>\$10,823</b>	N/A

Amounts have been rounded up to the nearest dollar.

Multiplying the monthly values shown above by twelve yields an estimated annual replacement value of \$94,522 for each Latino congregation and \$129,874 for each non-Latino one. Calculated by the number of congregations surveyed, the annual replacement value of the 109 Latino congregations can be assessed at \$10,302,887, while it would cost other sectors of the society \$166,757,903 to provide the services currently offered by the 1,284 non-Latino congregations.

The true replacement value of these churches' community-service activity is arguably even greater than this. First, as mentioned above, our estimate does not account for more than five programs per congregation and also employs conservative measures of alternate building

space, personnel, and so forth. Second, many forms of congregational support were not counted since they are informal and occasional, such as one-time rent-payment assistance for a community resident or *ad hoc* counseling. Third, the time that clergy spend at their congregation's expense in other community-serving activities—for example, visits to hospitals, schools, and police departments and involvement with community groups and civic boards—is not counted. Fourth, studies of the impact of faith and religion have shown a link between urban community-serving ministries and lower rates of violence, substance abuse, and young male unemployment, even among persons who live in communities with a high density of such ministries but who neither directly participate in nor directly receive any of the services (Regnerus and Elder 2003). And finally, our sample only includes 66 percent of operating congregations in Philadelphia. Though the data do not allow us to claim that the churches in our study are representative of the 34 percent that did not participate, whatever service provision these churches do offer would only increase these figures. If we could attribute our findings to the entire universe of Philadelphia churches, the total annual replacement value for the 148 Latino congregations operating in the city would come to \$13,989,241 and to \$253,513,572 for the 1,952 Non-Latino congregations.



### **PART III: PREDICTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN LATINO CONGREGATIONS**

The final stage of our investigation of the social-service activity of Latino congregations in Philadelphia examines what factors impact whether and to what extent a congregation provides social and community service programs. To do this we identified fifteen variables and then analyzed the data to see which, if any, coincided with higher levels of social-service engagement. In keeping with the focus of this report, this section only analyzes the Latino congregations in our survey.

#### **Defining the Variables**

Our analysis focused on three basic categories of congregational characteristics: membership, leadership, and financial resources. To examine how a congregation's membership demographics impact its social-service provision, we looked at: size of congregation, membership growth, percentage of congregants aged 65 years and over, change in age of congregants in past three years, and the percentage of membership comprised of single adults.

*(1) Size of Congregation:* The number of members in a congregation is a common estimator of its available volunteer pool (Ammerman 1997; Thomas et al. 1994; Ward, et al. 1994; Billingsley 1992). Mark Chaves (1999) found that congregation size is closely associated with involvement in social service provision, and a National Council of Churches study established that this is a key predictor of the number of community outreach health programs a church will offer (1992).

*(2) Membership Growth:* Growing congregations are also expected to be more active in service provision than are churches with static or declining membership, since this growth could be linked to institutional dynamism and a commitment to outreach into the community.

*(3) Age of Members:* Nancy Ammerman (1997) found that age is an important factor in a congregation's social involvement and that congregations comprised mainly of elderly members often can sustain little more than their Sunday services.

*(4) Change in Age of Congregants:* Following Ammerman's findings (1997), we expected aging congregations to have less money and energy to invest in social services and to be more change-averse than younger congregations. We also anticipated that congregations whose membership is becoming younger would be more involved with social and community involvement since they tend to recruit families and new members with the interest and energy to develop new ministries and programs.

*(5) Percentage of Single Adults:* This measure may cancel itself out, since single people are likely to be elderly, single parents, or unmarried. While the elderly and single parents might have limited time, energy, and resources to engage in social service activity, younger single adults might have comparatively more.

To assess the impact of a congregation's leadership on its social service provision we looked at: the number of paid clergy, the number of paid staff, and the clergy person's level of formal education.

(6) *Number of Paid Clergy*: The presence or absence of professional clergy significantly influences whether a congregation engages in social service provision, and previous studies have found that congregations with paid clergy and staff offer significantly more social and community services (Thomas et al. 1994; Ward et al. 1994).

(7) *Number of Paid Staff*: Staff size is an indicator of a congregation's resources and capacity to administer service programs.

(8) *Clergy Person's Level of Formal Education*: We expected that pastors with more formal training would be more involved in community service.

(9) *Annual Operating Budget*: We expected that congregations with a larger annual budget would engage in more programs, since this usually indicates more financial flexibility to support social programs.

(10) *Fiscal Status*: To measure a congregation's financial resources we examined the annual operating budget and fiscal health of the churches and the income level of church members.

(11) *Income Level of Congregants*: Though, as we noted above, wealthy people tend to give a lower percentage of their income to the congregation (Ammerman 1997), we looked at the percentage of member households with annual incomes above \$75,000, since more affluent members can influence a congregation's social service involvement.

The last category of variables we considered were particular congregational characteristics that other researchers have considered significant factors in a congregation's social service provision: age of congregation, political and theological orientation of congregation, percentage of congregational members who live within a one-mile radius of the congregation, and denominational affiliation.

*(12) Age of Congregation:* Several researchers have found that recently-founded congregations differ from long-established groups in a number of consistent ways. In a study of New Haven congregations Peter Dobkin Hall (1996) compared churches established before and after 1930 and found that the newer congregations tended to be located in African American or Latino communities and to follow theologically conservative Baptist, Methodist, or Pentecostal traditions while remaining unaffiliated with any particular denomination. Farnsley (2003) observed that older mainline congregations are more concerned with the welfare of others, while newer congregations tend to focus more on personal spiritual welfare. And other researchers have found that more recently founded congregations tend to be led by less-educated clergy who are less concerned with social problems and to attract younger members seeking personal gratification (Roof and McKinney 1987; Wuthnow 1988). According to Pearson and Anhalt's study of 80 black churches in Denver (1993), churches with "outreach programs" tended to be a decade older than those with only "community outreach." These findings somewhat challenge the expectation discussed above that younger and growing congregations will be more active than older more established ones.

*(13) Conservative Ideology:* Previous research has suggested that a congregation's political and

theological orientation affects its commitment to social-service provision (Billingsley 1992; Dudley and Van Eck 1992), and that politically conservative and/or fundamentalist churches tend to be more concerned with evangelism than with social-service provision. In at least one analysis conservative groups were found to make a sharper distinction between religious and secular matters and to give preference to what they considered religious concerns (Roozen, McKinney, and Carroll 1984). However more recent scholarship has questioned whether any real difference in social care between conservative and more moderate-to-liberal congregations could be found empirically (Mock 1992; Clydesdale 1999). Ammerman (1997) found no significant relationship between holding religiously conservative beliefs (indicated by ideas about the Bible) and caring for community needs.

Though a group's theological orientation is distinct from its political orientation, our preliminary analysis found the two to be strongly associated: politically conservative groups were theologically conservative, and theologically liberal groups tended to be politically liberal. Therefore, we combined the two into the single variable labeled "conservative ideology."

*(14) Members' Distance from Congregation:* To investigate whether social-service involvement is affected by whether a congregation's membership resides in the church's neighborhood we considered the percentage of congregational members who live within a one-mile radius of the congregation.

*(15) Protestant or Catholic Denominational Affiliation:* As noted in part one of this report, the small number of Roman Catholic Latino congregations in our study are significantly larger in size than the Protestant participants and have many non-Latino members. Thus, we considered

whether a congregation being Catholic affects social service involvement.

### **Measures of Social and Community Involvement**

The effect of the fifteen variables outlined above was calculated by assessing whether they coincided demonstrably with three measures of social and community involvement: the number of areas of social and community service in which a congregation is engaged, the percentage of a congregation's annual budget dedicated to social service provision, and the average monthly replacement value of a congregation's social-service programs.

*(1) Number of Areas of Social and Community Service:* This was based upon the number of social needs or populations a congregation had provided services for in the past twelve months. We did not simply count the number of programs offered by each congregation, since one program might provide services in several areas or for multiple populations. The weakness of this method is readily apparent. Since it cannot account for degree of involvement, a one-time contribution of \$100 counted as much as daily volunteer labor, even though a long-term volunteer's labor is worth far more. Despite this limitation, this measure indicates the scope a congregation's social-service involvement more adequately than simply counting the number of programs offered.

*(2) Percent of Congregational Budget Allotted for Social Programs:* This measure was based upon the percent of a congregation's budget designated for social programs rather than the actual dollar amount allotted, since the former is a better indicator of how highly a congregation prioritizes social service ministry.

*(3) Average Monthly Replacement Value of Social Programs:* This is derived from the calculations shown in Table 6 above.

Though each of these three measures has limitations, used together they compensate for one another's inadequacies. The number of areas of involvement indicates the breadth of a congregation's involvement but demonstrates nothing about the degree of involvement or duration of service and may simply reflect a congregation's size. The percentage of an annual budget allotted for social programs better represents the commitment of smaller congregations; while the monthly fiscal value of social programs indicates the size of a congregation's overall contribution to society, which helps account for groups that provide one or two large-scale programs.

## **Findings**

Table 7 below shows the bivariate findings of the relationship between the explanatory variables and the three measures of social service involvement.

<b>Table 7</b>		<b>Bivariate Statistics Regarding Social Service Involvement of Latino Congregations (N = 109)</b>		
<b>Variable</b>		No. of Areas of Involvement	Percent of Annual Budget	Replacement Value
1	Membership size	r = .30 ***	r = .37 ***	r = .51 ***
2	Membership growth in the past 3 years	F = 1.23 (NS)	F = .47 (NS)	F = 1.10 (NS)
3	percent of members 65 years or older	r = .14 (NS)	r = -.04 (NS)	r = -.06 (NS)
4	Membership got younger in the past 3 years	F = 2.28(NS)	F = .47 (NS)	F = 3.26 *
5	percent of single adults	r = .04 (NS)	r = -.10 (NS)	r = .02 (NS)
6	At least one full-time paid clergy	t = 4.39 ***	t = 3.93 ***	t = 2.57 *
7	Number of paid staff	r = .29 **	r = .14 (NS)	r = .44 ***
8	Clergy highest education	t = 5.67 ***	t = 3.87 ***	t = 2.34 *
9	Annual operating budget (below or above \$100K)	t = 5.20 ***	t = 2.24 *	t = 3.75 ***
10	Fiscal status (surplus, balanced, deficit)	F = 1.81 (NS)	F = .71 (NS)	F = .35 (NS)
11	Income of members (percent with \$75,000 +)	r = .28 **	r = .25 (NS)	r = .09 (NS)
12	Age of congregation	r = .37 ***	r = .11 (NS)	r = .33 ***
13	Conservative ideology	F = 3.24 *	F = 1.14 (NS)	F = 1.91 (NS)
14	Percent of members living within one mile of congregation	r = -.07 (NS)	r = -.16 (NS)	r = .03 (NS)
15	Congregation is Catholic	t = 2.83 **	t = .83 (NS)	t = 3.33 ***

NS = not significant; \* significant at the .05 level; \*\* significant at the .01 level; \*\*\* significant at the .001 level.

As the table indicates, five of the fifteen explanatory variables were found to have no significant bearing upon the service involvement measures—membership growth, percent of congregation members who are 65 years or older, percent of adult members who are single, budgetary fiscal status, and the percent of congregational members who live within a one-mile radius of the congregation. Thus though we anticipated that congregations that reported significant growth in the past three years might be more socially engaged, our findings indicate that growing congregations are no more or less likely to serve multiple populations and needs, to designate a larger portion of their budgets to community service, or to have a higher programmatic replacement value than congregations that remained static or even declined. So, too, being fiscally strong or having younger members, a higher percent of single adults, or members who live in the church’s neighborhood did not incline a congregation to be any more involved in social service provision than churches without any of those characteristics.

Another three of the explanatory variables—change in age, members’ income, and political and theological ideology—were moderately associated with only one measure of social service involvement and are thus of limited explanatory value. Whether or not a congregation’s membership got younger in the past three years impacted their fiscal replacement value but bore no influence upon the number of areas of involvement or the percentage of their annual budgets allocated for such programs. Among the percentage of households with an annual income of \$75,000 or more and those having a conservative ideology, both corresponded to a higher number of social service areas but not to the percentage of their budgets allocated or their fiscal replacement values. Our finding that the household income of congregants was unrelated to the portion of a church’s revenue designated for community service resonates with what we cited earlier about the presence of wealthy congregants being no guarantee of a larger operating

budget and also suggests that financial resources are not necessarily the most crucial component in a congregation's decision to respond to its community's needs.

The most telling explanatory variables—membership size, availability of full-time clergy, clergy's highest education, and operating budget—all correlated significantly to the three social involvement measures. Three other factors—the number of paid staff, the age of the congregation, and whether or not the congregation is Catholic—corresponded with a higher number of areas of social involvement and a higher congregational replacement value.

To assess which variables are of relative predictive value we ran three separate regression models, the results of which are presented in Table 8. This table does not include the five variables that Table 7 shows to have no significant correspondence to any of the measures of social-service involvement.

<b>Table 8</b>		<b>Regression Models Explaining Latino Congregational Social and Community Involvement</b>					
	Number of Areas of Involvement		Percent of Annual Budget for Social Service Programs		Replacement Value		
<b>Variable</b>	B (St. Error)	Beta	B (St. Error)	Beta	B (St. Error)	Beta	
<i>Constant</i>		-5.8		8.6		-8933.3	
Membership size					.82	3.73	
Membership got younger in past 3 years							
Have paid clergy			4.0	.5			
Number of paid staff	.42	.9			178.0	663.1	
Clergy highest education	2.9	9.4					
Annual operating budget (above \$100,000)	10.5	4.1					
Income of members							
Age of congregation							
Conservative ideology							
Congregation is Catholic					2717.6	5648.4	
<i>Variance explained</i>		$R^2 = .45$		$R^2 = .20$		$R^2 = .42$	

As the table illustrates, three variables—having a higher number of paid staff, having pastors with a college education or more, and having an annual operating budget of \$100,000 or above—all predict that a congregation will engage in a larger number of program areas than congregations without those characteristics. Interestingly, designating a higher percentage of one’s annual budget to social issues was not linked to having a higher operating budget but rather to the presence of paid full-time clergy. Less surprising is the finding that the replacement value of a congregation’s social programs was not predicted by budgetary size or congregants’ income levels but by a larger membership size, a higher number of paid staff, and being Catholic, since all of those factors indicate a larger pool of personnel and institutional resources from which to draw.



## **Implications and Conclusion**

Of the variables considered as potential predictors of social service provision, the number of paid staff emerged as the most significant. The more paid staff a congregation had, the more likely it was to serve a greater number of populations and needs and the higher the replacement value of those programs. Having a higher number of members and being a Catholic congregation also predicted higher congregational replacement values. These factors are clearly related in the Philadelphia context, where the average Catholic parish has 1,581 members and 6.6 paid staff members and thus can do more than the average Protestant church, which has just 90 members and 1.2 paid positions.

The presence of a paid full-time clergy person also was shown to be critical. This was the sole predictor of whether a congregation designated a higher percentage of its annual budget

to social services, indicating that it is a congregation's leadership even more than its resources that determine whether community service is a budgetary priority. The clergy's level of education was also shown to impact whether a congregation's social programming served a wider range of populations and needs. The importance of trained, full-time, paid pastoral leadership is striking in light of our survey finding that only 39 percent of the Latino congregations in Philadelphia have at least one paid, full-time pastor. So, too, is the significant role that a larger annual operating budget plays in a congregation's service activity. The reality that many of the Latino congregations in our survey do not have formally trained pastors, large memberships, or sufficient operating budgets to pay for staff members thus goes far to explain why these churches are comparatively less engaged in such activities.

Since this is the first known attempt to document the social service contributions of Latino religious congregations in one large city, only equivalent studies in other locales will indicate whether and to what extent our study is representative of Latino congregational life throughout the United States. The information we have presented provides a model for studying the determinants and/or impediments to realizing Latino congregations' social-service potential and the ways that Latino religion and congregations nurture and cultivate cultural and civic values that support broader civic life.



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## Appendix: Methodology

### Sampling

This study of Philadelphia congregations and their social services was conducted through in-depth interviews with clergy and lay-leaders, structured surveys, and document analysis. When we began this study, we discovered that there was no comprehensive list of Philadelphia congregations from which to draw our sample. To develop a list of operating congregations we first merged two data files: the City of Philadelphia Property Tax list and the Yellow Pages list of congregations. To identify unlisted congregations we requested lists from every denomination and interfaith organization in the region and received about fifteen different lists. We merged these with our master file manually to check for duplications, since congregations often use various names and may give more than one address. We also asked every clergy person or congregational leader we interviewed to identify congregations with which they collaborate and provide us with their telephone numbers and addresses. We then asked our advisory board, which is comprised of religious leaders throughout the city, to review the list and supply missing congregations. Finally, our research interviewers traveled block by block through neighborhoods to identify possibly unlisted storefront churches and other congregations not in our master file. We canvassed every block of the city and discovered many storefront congregations, especially ethnic and minority ones, that were unlisted. This combination of approaches brought us closer to a complete master list.

After three years of study, we estimate the number of congregations in Philadelphia to be approximately 2,100, of which 1,393 agreed to participate in the survey. The term *congregation* in this report includes all organized faith-based groups.

## Instruments

We used three research instruments. The first part of the interview (the General Form) gathered background information about the congregation's history, membership, financial status, staff, governing structure, and relations with the wider community. The second part (the Inventory of Programs) compiled information about the congregation's social services. The interviewers covered 202 areas of possible social and community involvement and asked numerous follow-up questions concerning the formal or informal nature of each program, where it was provided, and so on. We asked respondents to identify those services that had been offered in the past 12 months and to exclude those they no longer offered. We used a 12-month time frame to ensure that seasonal programs such as summer camps and heating assistance programs would be included and that responses would reflect the current social program agenda of the congregation.

The third part of the interview (the Specific Program Form) gathered information about the most important social programs provided by the congregation for up to a maximum of five programs. Interviewees were asked detailed questions about each program's history, legal status, staffing, beneficiaries, frequency, cost to the congregation, and much more. Due to the length of interview time, congregations with more than five social programs were asked to choose the five that they deemed most representative of their work. We asked respondents to start with those programs that have budgets and paid staff.

## Data Collection

We spent 3 to 10 hours in each of the 1,393 congregations studied. The survey questions were prepared and piloted. Many of the questions were closed ended but others were open ended and the responses were verified with documentation provided by the congregations. The interviews and collection of congregational documents were performed by a group of 20 to 30 well-trained interviewers. A face-to-face interview was selected to increase the response rate and to assist the interviewees with confusing questions, to probe for further explanation or detail when necessary, and to gather information that can be observed while visiting the congregation.

All of the interviewers received a lengthy orientation and weekly group in-service training that included the history and overview of the study, its benefit to the congregations and broader community, ways to use and disseminate data, and an introduction to the survey instruments. Each interviewer was also given a training manual that documents the information outlined above with specifications and clarification for the survey instruments. For more in-depth training interviewers observed an interview conducted by a trained researcher followed by a question and answer session. The interviewers were closely supervised and observed for the first three interviews and provided with feedback after each session. Interviewers received ongoing training and supervision through weekly meetings in which questions were answered and the survey instrument was routinely reviewed. This training and supervision helped ensure that the interviewers were familiar with the survey instrument, understood the intent of the questions, learned to phrase questions properly, recorded responses accurately and completely, learned to probe interviewees for more complete responses, and addressed issues of confidentiality. Interviewers were also trained to understand the religious customs and language of the particular congregation being interviewed.

We studied one key informant in most congregations and were aware of the possible bias that a clergy person or key lay leader might bring to his or her responses. But in a previous study we had tested for this and found that one leader can provide accurate data regarding the congregation. Similarly, McPherson and Rotolo (1995) measured four different characteristics (size, sex composition, age composition, and educational composition) by three different methods (reports from a group official, report from a randomly chosen respondent to a survey, and direct observation of a group meeting). They found very high correlations (between .8 and .9) among all three logged measures of size and sex composition and only slightly smaller correlations between the leader report and direct observation for age and educational composition (.73 and .77, respectively). They concluded that, for these four variables, “reports from an officer are just as reliable as direct-canvass measures and could reasonably be substituted for the latter” (McPherson and Rotolo 1995, 1114).

